Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces

AWEJ January-2023

www.awej.org
# Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023

## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Titles &amp; authors</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contents</strong></td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International E-Tandems: A Tool for Increasing Student Motivation in the Foreign Language Classroom Daniel Schug &amp; Thierry Torea</td>
<td>3-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moodle in the Algerian EFL Context during Covid-19: Exploring Students’ Attitudes and Academic Achievements Nadia GHOUNANE &amp; Hanane RABAHI</td>
<td>17-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Perceptions towards E-Learning as a Method of Instruction during Covid-19 Pandemic in Moroccan Universities Abdelouahed LAACHIR, Elhassane EL HILALI, Mohammed MOUBTASSIME &amp; Abderrahim EI KARFA</td>
<td>33-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian EFL Learners’ Use and Views of Electronic Dictionaries: a Case Study in Higher Education Nataliia Zamkova, Nataliia Tymoshchuk &amp; Nataliia Havryliuk</td>
<td>49-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the Intercultural Competence of Algerian University Students through Virtual Intercultural Exchanges Manal. H. B. Stambouli &amp; Hanane SARNOU</td>
<td>62-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools for Implementing Distance Learning during the War: Experience of Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine Veronika BANYOI, Olesya KHARKIVSKA, Halyna SHKURKO &amp; Maria YATSKIV</td>
<td>75-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Innovation between Unification and Purism: The Case of Corona-Related Terminology in Arabic-Broadcasting Media Taoufik DJENNANE</td>
<td>88-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Technology to Enhance EFL Learners’ Research Skills: The Case of Third-Year Students at Naama University Center, Algeria Nadja BOUSSEBHA</td>
<td>99-113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of Infographics, Collages, and Videos in the Learning of Medical English Dalal A. Bahanshal</td>
<td>114-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence and Student Autonomy through Project-Based Learning Nataliia Avsheniuk, Olena Lutsenko, Nataliya Seminikhyna &amp; Tetiana Svyrydiuk</td>
<td>130-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret Ahmed Mehdaoui</td>
<td>144-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Learners’ Intercultural Communicative Competence through Online Exchanges: Case of Third-Year Students in Algeria Nadia LOUAHALA</td>
<td>157-164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks and Language Applications, Other Means of Learning? Students of English at Tlemcen University</td>
<td>Mohamed El Amine DENDANE &amp; Zoubir DENDANE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Breach: Notions, Aspects, and Keys</td>
<td>Nadia HAMIMED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language Proficiency in Foreign Language Learning: Evidence from China</td>
<td>Ling Xu, Tina Abdullah, Qian Liu &amp; Nur ‘Ain Mohd Shahroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ English Language Usage of Facebook during the Covid-19 Pandemic</td>
<td>Wassila BOUKLIKHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impact of Social Media on Literature</td>
<td>Saed Jamil Shahwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Based Courses Versus Internet-Driven Courses in EFL Milieux: A Contrastive Proposal</td>
<td>El-Alia Wafaâ ZAGHAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Ph.D. Sojourners’ Construction of Identities on Twitter: An Online-Ethnographic Study in the United Kingdom</td>
<td>Badryah Almesfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating Technology in ESL Reading Classroom: Accounting Pupils’ Perspectives</td>
<td>Jane Anthony Pragasam &amp; Nur Ainil Sulaiman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of the Operational Skills of Using Information and Communication Technologies in the Professional Activity of a Future Pedagogue</td>
<td>Oleksii Anatoliiovych Lystopad, Iryna Kostiantynivna Mardarova, Irina Anatoliivna Kniazheva &amp; Olena Albertivna Kudriavtseva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International E-Tandems: A Tool for Increasing Student Motivation in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Received: 10/10/2022  Accepted: 12/06/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
This study presents findings from an online collaborative project involving students learning English at the University of Paris Nanterre (France) and students learning French at Cornell University (USA). Our main goal was to determine the impact of e-tandems on language learner motivation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all courses at these two institutions were offered online, a move that greatly complicated the use of interactive group activities. This change represented a major threat to learner motivation and the development of communication skills in the target language. To counteract these effects, language teachers from the two universities organized an online e-tandem program; pairs of students composed of one American learner of French and one French learner of English had three virtual meetings to complete activities relevant to their studies. During these meetings, they were to alternate between speaking English and French. Following each exchange, students completed journal entries about their experience using the target language. Results indicated that the e-tandem program was a positive experience for students, with many reporting higher levels of intended learning effort and being able to see themselves as competent language users. These findings highlight the didactic potential of virtual exchanges.

Keywords: e-tandems, foreign language classrooms, languages for specific purposes, motivation, online exchange, speaking skills

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.1
Introduction

This study presents findings from an e-tandem project organized by language teachers from Cornell University (USA) and the University of Paris Nanterre (France). This program was implemented at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, during a period in which France was still in lockdown and American universities were struggling to stay open. Many university courses were forced online, with teachers often receiving minimal training. For many students, these online courses meant long hours of staring at a screen and listening to lectures, with additional written work and few opportunities to interact with their peers.

Such a situation had the potential to limit effective language learning and drastically reduce Language Learning Motivation (LLM). The interactive activities and collaborative tasks that are the hallmark of a good language course had all but disappeared. In online courses, the opportunities for authentic language use are greatly diminished. Distractions at home, internet connection issues, and difficulties engaging in conversations virtually are just a sampling of the problems that make interaction in online courses complicated.

To respond to these issues, the researchers in this study had to be creative to ensure that students continued developing key oral expression skills and maintained LLM. An innovative e-tandem program was developed to provide learners with the chance to practice their skills in an authentic context with a speaker of their target foreign language. Anchored in research in LLM and online, collaborative learning, this study analyzes student feedback to an e-tandem project, to determine the impact of such programs on motivation and language learning. Guiding the study are two principal research questions:

First Research Question: What impact do online language exchanges have on learner motivation?

Hypothesis one: It is expected that e-tandems would have a positive impact on LLM. Indeed, research indicates that students become more comfortable speaking with their tandem partners over time and that they even make the effort to talk more, so that the exchange is successful (Develotte, Guichon, & Kern, 2008; Jauregi & Melchor-Cuoto, 2017). The element of authentic socialization is also a major advantage of tandem programs and provides a novel opportunity for language practice not possible in a traditional language classroom (Vassallo & Talles, 2006). This opportunity could help students see themselves as L2 users. The novelty, the social element, and the fact that students report progress throughout several meetings all point to e-tandems being powerful motivators.

Second Research Question: What impact do online language exchanges have on student language learning?

Hypothesis two: It is expected that these online exchanges will be beneficial to student learning. Three major changes are anticipated: in line Develotte et al.’s (2008) findings, students will improve their oral proficiency. Additionally, again due to the novelty, the socialization and the authentic communication, it is thought that students will report more positive feelings about their language abilities and language learning in general. Lastly, as a result of the conversation practice with a native speaker, it is assumed that students will acquire new vocabulary and develop their listening comprehension skills.

The paper is divided into the following sections: a literature review summarizing findings in both LLM and e-tandem research, a description of the research methodology and data collection...
instruments, a results section, followed by a discussion of the study’s findings, and finally, our conclusions.

**Literature Review**

As stated above, this study has been informed by research from several different subfields in foreign language learning. First and foremost, work from the field of LLM was crucial for interpreting our data. Additionally, research on e-tandems and online language exchange programs was analyzed to better understand their impact on language learning.

**Language Learning Motivation**

Though historically difficult to define and measure, LLM is thought to be key to language learning success (Al-Bhustan, 2009). For decades, Gardner’s work on language motivation has dominated research in the field. His research shows that motivation cannot be reduced to one’s desire to learn a language, as it is a complex variable relating to one’s identity, goals, actions, and experiences with the target language (Gardner, 2005).

The Socio-educational Model was developed to explain how a learner’s beliefs about the learning context, the target language and numerous other factors, can be mediated by the motivation to impact learning success (Yashima, 2000). Central to this model are the concepts of integrativeness and instrumentality. Integrativeness is a deep appreciation and respect for the L2 culture, often accompanied by the desire to associate with it; although not the only determining factor in learning success, integrativeness pushes students to interact with the L2 community and its culture, leading to higher proficiency and better course grades (Coleman, 1995; Gardner, 1960). Instrumentality, on the other hand, is a desire to learn a language for practical reasons, such as finding a job or obtaining a degree; this orientation is unlikely to lead to long-term learning effort once the goal is attained (Gardner, 1960).

Research has shown that university students often exhibit higher levels of instrumentality, as their principal motives are getting good grades in English classes and finding a good job. Even in cases where integrativeness is present, instrumentality is the prevailing orientation (Kırkgöz, 2005; Wimolmas, 2012). A common trend in research is that foreign language majors report high levels of both integrativeness and instrumentality, while non-specialist students taking a language elective are more instrumentally motivated (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Liu, 2007). Nevertheless, Moiinvaziri’s (2007) report on Iranian undergraduates in various majors shows that, even in a language elective class, both instrumentality and integrativeness can be present forces.

According to Aubrey (2014), “Identity has always been a distinguishing factor of L2 motivation”, (p. 155) even integrativeness defines motivation in terms of a learner’s identification with a target culture. The way that learners identify and view themselves as users of the target language can have an impact on their learning effort (Chen, 2012). These self-concepts are based on real-life experiences, so the language teacher and experiences using the L2 can help shape them (Murray, 2011).

To better account for the role of self-concepts, Dörnyei (2009) proposes the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). This theory describes three different motivational orientations that could impact learning behaviors. The first, and most relevant to this study, is the L2 Ideal Self (L2IS); people identifying with this orientation wish to learn the L2 because they have a very detailed vision of who they wish to become in the future and that vision includes L2 skills. Next, is the L2 Ought to Self (L2OS); those relating to this orientation try to learn an L2 because they
wish to avoid the negative consequences of not learning it, such as failing an exam. Lastly, the L2 Learning Environment (L2LE), which includes teachers, peers, classroom activities, the classroom setup and even the larger context of a learner’s life can also have an impact on LLM. The L2MSS goes a step beyond the Socio-educational Model and the concept of integrativeness. While integrativeness may be useful for explaining LLM in certain contexts, world languages like English are not associated with only one culture so students may be highly motivated despite not wishing to integrate into any anglophone society (Ushioda, 2006). The L2MSS compensates for this by showing that one’s self-concept may include becoming a globalized, well-rounded polyglot or working in a large, international organization; such objectives could feasibly lead to long-term motivation.

In research, the L2MSS has been used to show connections between the three motivational orientations and language learning efforts. In their study on Tibetan students learning Chinese as a second language, Li and Zhang (2020), used a questionnaire to better understand motivation in Chinese courses. Their results confirmed that a strong L2IS orientation was positively correlated to a student’s intended learning effort, while the L2OS was not. Similarly, Papi and Khajavy (2021) studied the motivation of Iranian university students learning English and found that the L2IS was a strong, positive predictor of L2 learning enjoyment. On a smaller scale, Lamb (2009) presents similar findings with two Indonesian students enrolled in high school English classes. One had very clear goals for wanting to study abroad and becoming an international person capable of working between Indonesia and the United States; this student regularly sought out opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom. The other student, however, simply wanted to pass state tests to graduate; this second student, consequently, did not report participating in any activities to learn English outside of doing the minimum in English class.

These studies highlight the need for helping students develop a detailed self-concept to help them establish goals that include language mastery. E-tandems can be useful for helping students develop their L2IS as well as also their sense of integrativeness. Indeed, e-tandems are referenced in the guide Motivating Learning as an activity that allows students to enter the L2 community and make their future L2 visions real (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2014).

**E-Tandems and the Foreign Language Classroom**

Bilingual language tandems have existed for well over fifty years and have recently attracted increased attention from researchers in language acquisition (Fuchs, Snyder, & Tung, 2022; O’Dowd & O’Rourke, 2019; Vassallo & Telles, 2006). Tandems are guided exchanges between speakers of different languages which allow participants to practice the native language of their partner (Aranha & Wigham, 2020); in the case of the present study, our tandems involve French students learning English and American students learning French.

Over the years, as technology has developed, so have the possibilities for organizing language tandems. Online tandems, or e-tandems, provide numerous benefits and even compensate for some of the shortcomings of the traditional classroom. For instance, the goal of De Martino’s (2020) e-tandem program between Italian and German university students was “to give them the opportunity not only to experience interculturality inside and outside the classroom but also to promote intercultural awareness” (paragraph 8). Furthermore, by allowing students some control over the direction of the conversation and its organization, teachers can increase learner autonomy, a major goal for many universities (Batardière & Jeanneau, 2020). Most importantly for the present
study, e-tandems are meant to be motivating and pleasant, as learners must be active and involved throughout the entire exchange to derive maximum benefits (Vassallo & Telles, 2006).

Research has also presented some potential difficulties in telecollaboration programs that this study has had to consider. In a description of an Italian university’s large-scale telecollaboration program with various countries, Longhi and Valero Gisbert (2020) pointed out that differences in personalities and common interests can make it hard for students to carry on a conversation long enough for it to have an impact on their communication skills. Debras (2020) points out that the absence of body language and visual cues can also impede online conversation stating:

A comfortable compromise in terms of cross-cultural interactional distance is probably easier to find during face-to-face interaction, since the possibility of mutual monitoring encourages the development of trust and closeness, allowing participants to look out for, or at least take guesses at, signs of awkwardness on the part of their partner. (paragraph 12)

Additionally, a report on European Union telecollaboration programs by Guth, Helm, and O’Dowd (2012) suggested that setting up online exchanges can be tricky and time-consuming; students need training on how to use the exchange platform and sufficient flexibility to find a meeting time that works for both participants. Being in different time zones, of course, complicates this further.

In addition to descriptions of online exchange programs, research on e-tandems gives insight into the impact on language skills and attitudes towards language learning in general. Fondo and Jacobetty (2020), for example, set out to explore the specificities of foreign language anxiety in online tandems. In their studies, Irish and American university students participated in online exchanges with Spanish and Mexican university students; results showed that factors such as communication apprehension and anxiety about the learning process were present, just as they would be in a typical language classroom, as were some factors unique to the online context, such as technophobia and anxieties relating to communicating online.

Highlighting the motivational potential of e-tandems, Develotte et al. (2008) describe their experience involving a French and an American university. They found that, even if students experienced some anxiety in their early exchanges, these feelings typically subsided after a few meetings, as students became less worried about making mistakes and more focused on communicating their message. Researchers observed that students appeared less inhibited as the program went on and made extra efforts to ensure that conversations were fruitful. They concluded therefore that e-tandems can be powerful motivators given the authenticity of the communicative experience. In a Spanish language tandem between a Spanish and an American institution, Sebastian and Souza (2022) found “students responded very favorably to the question asking if their interest in study abroad had increased due to their participation in the virtual exchange” (p. 102), such a result highlights a stronger feeling of integrativeness and desire to interact with the target language.

Method

To respond to the research questions, a two-month-long study was devised involving a series of online video conference calls and questionnaires. Both quantitative data, in the form of Likert-scale questions, and qualitative data, in the form of open-ended questions, were collected. This section presents the participants in this study along with the study design, research instrument and data analyzing process.
Participants

A small-scale convenience sampling was used to find participants for this project; it included students enrolled in the researchers’ language courses. Participants in the programs were enrolled either at Cornell University (USA) in the intermediate-level Medical French course or the University of Paris Nanterre (France), in the Faculty of Sports Sciences, in an upper-intermediate specialized English course.

While all students were encouraged to take part in the program, participation was ultimately optional, as it naturally required a time commitment. Initially, 10 pairs were formed, each including one student from the USA and one student from France. Pairs were formed based on observations from the two teachers regarding students’ proficiency levels in their target languages. Students with similar levels were matched, whenever possible. With some students dropping out and some not completing the feedback forms, data were collected and analyzed from seven Cornell University students and 10 University of Paris Nanterre students.

The Study

The study replicates the setup of the e-tandem program presented by Schug and Simon (2021), which featured Hungarian and French university students meeting to practice their English skills using Microsoft Teams and completing questionnaires to understand the impact on foreign language anxiety. As with their study, our e-tandem program required participants to complete at least 3 video conference calls and use a logbook (see Appendix A) with activities to do during each call. As the American students were focusing on medical sciences and the French students were focusing on sports sciences, the activities focused on the theme of health and exercise so that elements from both disciplines could be incorporated. The first tandem was meant to be an icebreaker, with interview and discussion questions to help students learn about their partners. The second tandem included some discussion questions as well as a role-play activity between a doctor and an athlete with a sports injury. The third tandem, again, contained discussion questions and an activity asking students to develop a business idea combining the studies of the two participants.

With permission from the participants, teachers shared the email addresses between pairs to facilitate the first contact. Students were told to initiate contact with their partners by a given deadline and organize the first meeting. From then on, they were in charge of organizing their meetings, on the platform of their choice at a rhythm of approximately one meeting every two to three weeks. While the University of Paris Nanterre and Cornell University offer students access to several video conferencing programs, many students opted for social media platforms, such as Whatsapp or Instagram to hold their calls.

Research Instruments

As in Schug and Simon (2021), the logbook contained a series of brief surveys asking students to comment on their e-tandem experience. After each of the three activities in the logbook, students were asked to complete a survey with five Likert scale questions and four open-ended questions; these questions asked for feedback regarding the tandem experience. The questionnaire items were divided as follows: the first three Likert questions related to self-efficacy and how students felt about their performance in the exchange, the fourth question asked for students’ impressions of the tandem experience, and the fifth question asked about the level of effort students exerted during the exchange. Open-ended questions asked students what they liked and disliked about the experience and the activities.
A pre-questionnaire containing 13 Likert scale questions and a post-questionnaire containing 13 Likert scale items and three open-ended questions were also included to measure changes over time. The questionnaire items were adapted from Jauregi and Melchor-Couto (2017) and Schug (2019). The questionnaire items were divided as follows: the first three Likert questions related to self-efficacy and how students felt about their level in the target language, the next five questions were items relating to the L2 Ideal Self, and the final five questions were about how much effort students planned to exert in learning their target language. In the post-questionnaire, open-ended questions asked students to describe their e-tandem experience and comment on how it impacted their language learning.

The choice of logbooks was intentional, as De Martino (2020) notes the importance of regular and frequent participant feedback in e-tandem programs. Also, logbooks allow researchers to see changes over time and note any periods marked by particularly positive or negative experiences.

**Data Analysis**

Responses in students’ logbooks constituted the principal source of data for this study. For the Likert scale questions, the means and standard deviations of students’ responses were calculated and tabulated for the factors of self-efficacy, L2 Ideal Self, and L2 Intended or Exerted Effort. Values were calculated for all three e-tandem meetings and for the pre-and post-questionnaires to show changes throughout the project.

Open-ended questions were also used to shed light on the student’s experience in the program and their thoughts on the different activities. To analyze these responses, a coding guide was created, found in Appendix A. It contains codes for positive and negative comments about the tandem experience (E+, E-), positive and negative experiences about the specific activity (A+, A-), positive and negative comments about the use of technology (T+, T-), and positive, negative and neutral comments about the students’ impressions of their language use and abilities (L+, L-, L0).

The coding procedure was based on the procedure explained by Schug and Simon (2021). Initial codes of E, A, T, and L were established before performing a detailed reading of student responses. These codes helped guide initial readings of the responses. Given the difference between positive and negative comments, positive and negative subcategories were created for the codes, so E became E+ and E-, for example. Responses were read and re-coded several times to ensure consistency in coding.

**Results**

This section presents the data obtained from the logbook questionnaires. Table one contains the quantitative data derived from the Likert scale questions. Items relating to the same variable were combined and the mean and standard deviation of students’ responses are presented. Cornell University values are tagged as CU and University of Paris Nanterre values are tagged as UPN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>L2 Ideal Self (Pre- &amp; Post-Questionnaires)</th>
<th>L2 Intended Effort (Pre- &amp; Post-Questionnaires)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Feelings about the experience (Tandems 1, 2, 3)</td>
<td>L2 Exerted Effort (Tandems 1, 2, 3)</td>
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Table 1. Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Results for Tandem 1, Tandem 2, and Tandem 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cornell University</th>
<th>University of Paris Nanterre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Questionnaire</td>
<td>CU: 3.76 (0.16)</td>
<td>CU: 4.03 (.41)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPN: 3.5 (0.1)</td>
<td>UPN: 3.96 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandem 1</td>
<td>CU: 3.85 (0.14)</td>
<td>CU: 4.57 (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPN: 4.03 (0.12)</td>
<td>UPN: 4.8 (0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandem 2</td>
<td>CU: 3.81 (0.82)</td>
<td>CU: 4.71 (0.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPN: 4.03 (0.32)</td>
<td>UPN: 4.6 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandem 3</td>
<td>CU: 4.11 (0.1)</td>
<td>CU: 4.5 (0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPN: 4.11 (0.38)</td>
<td>UPN: 4.78 (0.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Questionnaire</td>
<td>CU: 4.22 (0.1)</td>
<td>CU: 4.2 (0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UPN: 4.19 (0.23)</td>
<td>UPN: 4.11 (1.11)</td>
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</table>

*Values are rounded to the nearest 100th. Values in parentheses represent the standard deviation.

**Likert scale questions were phrased in such a way that values closer to five indicate a positive experience or a high level of self-efficacy, motivation or effort. Values closer to one indicate a negative experience or low levels of self-efficacy, motivation, or effort.

Table one illustrates that learner motivation fluctuated during the experience as did the number of effort students exerted during each online exchange. In each tandem, students expressed positive opinions about the activities and reported putting forth a little more effort as the meetings progressed. A comparison between the pre- and post-questionnaires shows that these positive results seem to have led to a net increase in L2 intended learning effort, the L2IS and self-efficacy for students in both universities.

Table two presents the distribution of students’ coded responses. Responses will be described in greater detail in the discussion section.

Table 2. Distribution of students’ coded responses to the logbook’s open-ended questions for the three e-tandem meetings (T1, T2, T3) and the post-questionnaire (Post-Q)

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<td>T2</td>
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<tr>
<td>E+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-</td>
<td>5</td>
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Technology

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>T+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-</td>
<td>3</td>
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Activity
Discussion

Throughout the tandem experience, regular student feedback was collected to understand how the program impacted students’ learning and attitudes. Participants commented on a wide range of topics and their remarks merit further exploration.

Students made several references to the specific activities offered during the three tandem exercises. Students greatly appreciated having activities that were specifically adapted to their fields of study; of the 44 responses coded as A+ for Tandems two and three, 22 of them expressed appreciation for an activity that was relevant to the participants’ fields of study. This may have facilitated conversation and helped prevent the awkward pauses and running out of things to talk about, a problem identified by Longi and Valero Gisbert (2020).

On the other hand, not all feedback on the activities was positive; as Table two shows, students from the University of Paris Nanterre had several comments coded as A-. As one student said, “I didn’t really like the second part with the role play because that’s not a natural discussion;” this comment seems to echo comments made by other students. While the activities were good in theory, in practice, they interrupted the spontaneity of the more open discussions, indicating that role plays, and simulations may not be suited to online lessons. Furthermore, as predicted, students experienced issues with finding a time to meet, coded as E-, and problems with internet connections, coded as T-. This appears to be a consistent problem in e-tandem research (Develotte et al., 2008; Longhi & Valero Gisbert, 2020), forcing one to wonder if these issues are simply an inevitable difficulty involved with this type of activity.

The following subsections discuss findings in greater detail to answer the two guiding research questions.

**RQ1: What impact do online exchanges have on learner motivation?**

Results from Table one show that between the pre-and post-questionnaire, students from both universities had more strongly developed L2IS and reported higher levels of L2 Intended Effort, with a particularly noticeable difference in L2 Intended Effort levels from University of Paris Nanterre students. These findings tend to validate the initial hypothesis that e-tandems have a positive impact on learner motivation, leading to increases.

A closer look at questionnaire responses sheds light on the reasons for this increase. First, Table one clearly shows that all three e-tandems received generally positive reviews from...
participants, with no exchange averaging lower than 4.5/5. Indeed, of the 53 comments coded as E+, 28 of them focused on the positive dynamic between partners; one student from Cornell pointed out “I liked how relaxed [the conversation] was; we were both helping each other” while a student from University of Paris Nanterre explained, “It’s the third time when we called each other, so it’s easier to communicate with [my partner] and I like this process of tandem in [its] globality.” As the program went on, it appears that the conversations became more fluid and relaxed. As Gardner (2005) explains that motivation is at least partially dependent on one’s experiences with the target language, it is not surprising that having initial positive e-tandem experiences would make one want to continue having positive e-tandem experiences. The result of these repeated positive experiences could have a long-term positive impact on LLM. This finding is consistent with past research on e-tandems (Vassallo & Talles, 2006), showing students do indeed appreciate the opportunity to learn about a new culture and practice their language skills in an authentic context.

A form of integrativeness may be at play here as well, though slightly modified from the concept described by Gardner (1960); of the 17 responses coded as E+ in the first e-tandem, eight of them describe appreciating the opportunity to learn more about the target culture. For example, one student from France said, “That’s really interesting to talk about life in the US,” while one student from the US said, “I loved having… the opportunity to talk to someone who lives in France and who knows the culture” (translated). While these comments do not explicitly indicate a desire to integrate into the L2 community, they show a willingness to learn more about the target culture, an opportunity these e-tandems provided.

Lastly, it is important to note that two items relating to the L2IS (1. When I think of my future [professional, academic, personal...] goals, English/French plays an important role & 2. In the future, I can see myself speaking English/French perfectly & effortlessly) increased for both groups of students between the start and the end of the program. As suggested by Hadfield and Dörnyei’s (2014) guide, having online exchanges can make the L2 learning experience more real, an important step in strengthening one’s L2IS. This stronger self-concept could have naturally led to higher levels of intended effort and learning motivation, as was the case in Rajab, Roohbaksh, and Etemadzadeh (2012) and Li and Zhang (2020).

**RQ2: What impact do online language exchanges have on student language learning?**

The initial hypothesis stated that students’ main gains would be in oral skills, self-confidence, and positive feelings about language learning. It was also expected that other language skills, particularly vocabulary and listening comprehension skills would also be mentioned. Data collected from this study tend to validate this hypothesis. As Table one shows, self-efficacy steadily increased for both groups of students after every tandem experience, leading to an overall increase in the post-questionnaire.

Concerning oral skills, of the 86 comments coded as L+, 18 related to improved communication skills, with some comments related to speaking fluency and others related to accent and pronunciation. One comment from a University of Paris Nanterre student captures the spirit of these responses quite well: “This allowed me to improve orally, [which] was my defect, my partner corrected me when I made pronunciation mistakes or when I lacked vocabulary.” Such findings echo what was found in Schug and Simon (2021) and Develotte et al (2008); students strengthened their communication skills in a very comprehensive way. It was not simply oral fluency that progressed, but also authentic speaking and interacting skills.
Additionally, other language gains were mentioned with some frequency in the open-ended questions. Seven responses, for example, referenced expanding vocabulary, particularly related to their field of study, as illustrated by one Cornell University student’s comment about the second tandem: “By this exercise, we could really apply all the vocabulary that we learnt to realistic situations like spraining one’s arms while playing a sport etc.” This finding is indeed encouraging, as the exercises were conceived to help students acquire vocabulary that would be relevant in their future professional lives.

An unexpected impact on language learning that resulted from these tandems was that some students seem to have revelations relating to their language difficulties. Indeed, 5 responses coded as L- featured comments where students reflect on what they need to do moving forward. One student from the University of Paris Nanterre represents this pattern with the comment “I realize now, that I have to learn to make fewer mistakes orally, what I think will come by practicing (sic).” The student recognized persistent difficulties throughout the tandem experience and acknowledged the importance of practicing to overcome them. This comment hints at increased learner autonomy, a benefit of e-tandems noted by Batardière and Jeanneau (2020). Future research should study the long-term impacts of immersion experiences on language learning, to see how or if these reflections translate into concrete actions from the learner.

Of course, this study has several of the limitations that are common in small-scale research. With responses from only 17 participants, results are difficult to generalize. Additionally, the unique context of conducting an online international exchange during a pandemic surely had some impact here; in times when students are not in lockdown, they will likely have other obligations competing for their attention, which will surely have an impact on their LLM. Nevertheless, the consistent, positive feedback gives reason to be optimistic about e-tandems in other contexts.

**Conclusion**

The present paper described an international e-tandem program, to understand such a program’s impact on students’ language learning and their motivation. American students learning French and French students learning English participated in a series of video conferences to have discussions and complete activities related to their fields of study. Data from the participants’ logbooks largely describe the project as a very positive experience. Learners were able to meet new people and learn more about a different culture, gain confidence in their speaking skills, develop fluency, and expand their vocabulary. Most importantly, it was found that e-tandems seem to have some capacity to increase learner motivation. Despite the small sample size used in this study, these findings suggest several benefits to using e-tandems; they should be considered a valuable tool in language courses.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Useful Documents

1) A copy of the logbook given to students at the Université Paris Nanterre can be found at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1meEMMqxYr5-HwvHO6F5kKqYfd4o2EMyrgNWP-Cup61E/edit?usp=sharing. An essentially identical version was given to Cornell University students, except references to learning English were replaced with learning French.

2) Link to the coding guide: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZWHn3W1HR5bmezCGpHOVI5RnNWNeTqQ7PJop_fjtcY/edit?usp=sharing
Moodle in the Algerian EFL Context during Covid-19: Exploring Students’ Attitudes and Academic Achievements

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Abstract
Algerian Universities hasten to implement online learning by using platforms like Moodle and Teams after the breakdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. Algerian Universities have recently included online learning; henceforth, teachers’ and students’ knowledge and attitudes toward these platforms impact teaching and learning achievements. This study intends to explore students’ attitudes toward the inclusion of the Moodle platform in learning during the pandemic by taking EFL students at Saida University as a case in point. The paper also seeks to explore the effectiveness of the Moodle platform. The researchers gathered data through a questionnaire that was distributed to 170 EFL Master students. To support the results, the researcher also employed a test and observation. The findings demonstrated that students had many difficulties in using the Moodle Platform. The analysis also revealed that the students had developed negative attitudes toward the use of the platform due to many reasons, mainly net problems and lack of knowledge. The results also indicated that online lectures via Moodle platform impact students’ academic achievements.

Keywords: Algerian EFL students, academic achievements, attitudes, Covid-19, Moodle Platform, online learning

Introduction

Education and other fields have benefited from technology and its integration. Education has witnessed a revolution against the traditional ways of learning due to innovations in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Studies have shown that the integration of Communication and Information Technology (ICT) results in collaborative and creative learning (Bransford, 1999, as cited in Trayek & Hassan, 2013).

Although universities and academic institutions integrated ICT into education years ago, the sudden shift to online learning during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the teaching-learning process. Institutions hasten to use or integrate Learning Management Systems (LMSs) through educational platforms like Moodle, Teams, Blackboard, etc. the sudden shift has no impact on some world universities since e-learning is an essential component in their educational system. In contrast, some institutions faced many issues because they have recently introduced ICT to their educational systems. Algerian Universities are among these institutions which have recently included educational platforms in education. The sudden shift sheds light on many problems that affected the use of these platforms during the pandemic. Teachers’ technostress and technophobia, students’ lack of motivation and ICT knowledge, technical problems, and lack of training are among these issues. They affect students’ attitudes toward online learning.

After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, most teachers tend to post their lectures informally through Social Media (SM) tools, mainly Facebook and Youtube, or applications like Google Meet, Zoom, Jitsi Meet, etc. Some Algerian universities did not accept the use of SM or apps as educational learning systems. Universities hasten to introduce formal educational platforms like Moodle and Team. The new situation obliged teachers to upload their lectures and replace face-to-face learning. They tend to use asynchronous online learning. This mode affected the learning process due to many reasons. Both teachers and students lacked knowledge of using Moodle platform. This fact led students to develop negative attitudes. The current study tends to shed light on EFL students’ negative attitudes toward the Moodle platform. It also sheds light on their positive attitudes towards apps like Google Meet, Facebook, and Zoom. To find a solution to the research problem, the current research paper attempts to investigate Master students’ attitudes toward the use of Moodle as a learning platform after the outbreak of the pandemic. The following research objectives spring from the main aim:

- It tends to shed light on the significant factors that affect EFL Master students’ attitudes toward using the Moodle platform.
- It also attempts to give an in-depth look at asynchronous online learning and how it affects the learning process.
- It also tries to find solutions so that students can benefit from online learning through the platform.

Based on these research objectives, the researchers set the following research questions:
Moodle in the Algerian EFL Context during Covid-19

- What are the attitudes of EFL Master students toward using the Moodle platform in learning during the pandemic?
- What are the significant factors affecting EFL Master students’ use of the Moodle platform?
- Did the use of asynchronous online learning affect EFL Master students’ attitudes?
- What are the possible solutions to change the students’ attitudes toward the use of educational platforms?

The research paper starts with a review of the related literature through which the researchers introduce the reader to concepts like Learning Management Systems (LMS), educational platforms, factors affecting online learning, etc. The paper will also introduce methods of data collection, sampling, instrumentations, findings, discussions, and conclusions.

**Literature Review**

To ensure the continuity of learning after the pandemic outbreak, all academic institutions worldwide launched the Learning from Home Strategy (LFHS). The strategy attempts to reduce physical contact between people. The teaching/learning process changes from face-to-face to online learning by using Learning Management Systems (LMSs). These institutions restricted the use of systems to educational platforms, like the case of Algeria.

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) or Learning Content Management Systems (LCMSs) have recently been integrated into education and encouraged researchers to search for new approaches to promote hybrid/blended learning. Scholars searched for solutions to incorporate into teaching and not to replace face-to-face learning (Yang et al., 2020).

Universities employ LMSs to organize the teaching-learning process by managing courses, providing a course calendar, and assessing students through quizzes and tests. According to Trisiana (2020):

Learning Management System help teachers to manage the curriculum, materials, and their use to evaluate the students; teachers use Learning Management System to track their students by monitoring students’ progress and knowing how far the students access the materials; Learning Management System provides a new atmosphere for students, teaching and learning process can be done without having face to face class. It gives a chance for learners to have a new experience to learn differently. The use of a Learning Management System (LMS) changes the interaction between teachers and learners. (p. 16)

This means that they help teachers to post their lectures, promote their interaction with their learners, and allow students to prepare their projects. The implementation of LMS in higher education has many benefits such as developing students’ self-directed learning, improving their learning styles, and the quality of learning i.e. how the student should learn and not how much he has to learn (Yang et al., 2020).

Before talking about the use of educational platforms like Moodle in learning, it is crucial to mention that many studies explored the effects of asynchronous and synchronous online modes
on students’ motivation and attitudes. According to Watts (2016), the asynchronous online mode can help students to download learning materials. These materials can improve their learning skills (Putri Utomo & Ahsanah, 2022). On the other hand, Martin et al. (2020) maintained that “synchronous online learning offers considerable benefits for the learning process such as providing immediate feedback, enhancing interaction among participants, being a part of audio-visual communications, and increasing motivation on doing tasks” (as cited in Putri Utomo & Ahsanah, 2022, p. 136). Rahayu (2020) found that synchronous online learning can provide good communication between teachers and their students, while Rehman and Fatima (2021) highlighted that the use of both asynchronous and synchronous online modes could increase students' engagement and motivate them.

Moodle is an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Environment. Brandl (2005) stated that Moodle is a learning system free of charge and has no licensing cost. Universities can use it in all Windows. Many countries have adopted the system as an educational platform. Moodle is an Open Access Source Software (OASS) that helps teachers to upload online courses, assess and provide online feedback on assignments (Suppasetseree & Dennis, 2010).

On the other hand, researchers like Salloum, Alhamad, Al-Emran, Monem, and Shaalan (2019) highlighted that using Moodle may be challenging since the teacher cannot control the learning process in comparison to traditional ways of learning. In their part, Esi Quansah and Essiam (2021) maintained that “the use of traditional lecture method could be more effective in terms of clarifying, explaining, and interpreting concepts as students and lectures interact face-to-face” (p. 420). Salloum et al. further claimed that Moodle is ineffective in some disciplines, mainly scientific ones, where they need the practical side and laboratory experiments. EFL teachers cannot also teach some modules through Moodle. They need classroom practice like oral expression, written expression, research methodology, and phonetics.

Some researchers claimed that Algeria introduced the platform years ago and has trained teachers on how to use the platform. Teachers were instructed to use the platform until the pandemic outbreak (Ghouali & Cecilia, 2021). They tend to train teachers on how to use the platform and upload lectures. Universities neglect to train teachers on how to prepare an online course (Ghounane, 2022).

Like many countries, Algeria introduced e-learning to Algerian Universities in 2007 through a project that supports using platforms like Moodle (Salaa, Bibi, & Nechad, 2020). Although the ministry of higher education has made efforts by providing net accessibility at the level of universities, infrastructure, and human sources, educators and students find difficulties in implementing online learning during the pandemic since both students and teachers depend heavily on traditional methods of learning. The sudden shift resulted in many pedagogical issues (Ghounane, 2022).

A bunch of scholarly investigations have explored how teachers and students face the sudden shift to online learning in the Algerian context. For example, Guessar (2020) tried to shed light on the effects of the pandemic on the delivery of lessons at Algerian Universities. Benadla
and Hadji (2021) explored students’ affective attitudes toward online learning after the sudden shift. Ghounane (2022) also conducted a study on the nature of the lectures posted on Moodle and their effects on students’ learning behaviors.

Although most universities trained teachers to use Moodle, they failed to change the teachers’ attitudes and students’ motivation toward the use of the platform. H. Sarnou and D. Sarnou (2021) highlighted that some teachers switch to using Facebook and apps like Google Meet to teach MA students. The poor social background of some students who live in rural areas or what Benadla and Hadji (2021) called “people of the shadow” (p. 63) has affected the learning process because most students have no computers, smartphones, or net. The lack of knowledge in using these educational platforms has raised their learning anxiety and affected their learning behavior and attitudes.

Although scholars have published an avalanche of research works on students’ attitudes toward educational platforms like Moodle, few studies explored the reasons behind students’ attitudes. Male et al. (2020) found that students hate the online mode of learning and prefer to return to the traditional mode. However, no studies investigated how motivation and engagement affect students’ attitudes. No researchers have measured students’ attitudes and their learning achievements before. Indriani and Widiastuti (2021) argued that:

Students’ perspectives on online learning determine their attitudes. If they think that online learning is the right choice, then they will be positive during the online learning process. Students’ skills in the use of technology are another significant factor affecting students' attitudes towards the learning process. The higher the level of students' ability to use technology, the more positive their attitude toward online learning (…) Students who can control their independent learning tend to make use of various existing facilities during online learning and are more active in discussion forums. (p. 193)

E-readiness is another factor that affects their attitudes i.e. they should acquire some techno-knowledge or skills that can help in the learning process.

Valantinaitė and Sederevičiūtė-Pačiauskiene (2020) maintained that many factors could affect students’ attitudes toward online learning. They claimed that lack of interaction with teachers, teachers’ lack of instructions, e-readiness and willingness, net problems, limitations of the e-devices, log-in issues, and financial problems are among the factors that affect students’ attitudes. Most of these studies have explored the impact of these factors; however, no studies investigated how the type of online learning can affect students’ learning motivation and attitudes.

Methods

The researchers selected mixed methods to collect data. The main aim behind selecting mixed methods is that the research work can benefit from both quantitative and qualitative data. Besides, combining both quantitative and qualitative balance can balance out the limitations of each method.
Participants
The participants were 170 Master EFL students from the department of the English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Languages, and Arts, Saida University, Algeria. The researchers selected the students randomly from four groups and different levels (Master one and two, both streams). Data were collected during the academic year 2020/2021. About 106 (62.35%) participants were females and 64 (37.64%) were males. All informants are up to 24 years old and live in rural and urban places. About 86 (50.58%) of the participants live on the university campus.

Research Instruments
The researchers used a semi-structured questionnaire and a test. The authors administered the questionnaire through Google Forms. She posted the link to the students in their group on Facebook during the first semester of the same academic year. The questions in the questionnaire are a mixture between open-ended and close-ended questions and the Likert scale to test the students’ attitudes. The main reason for using these varieties of questions is to collect varied data. The open-ended and close-ended questions were used to explore the difficulties and factors that affect students’ attitudes, while the Likert scale was employed to measure their attitudes. The first part of the questionnaire consists of the demographic characteristics of the sample such as age and gender. The second part contains information regarding the electronic devices being used, while other questions were about the use of the Moodle platform and the factors affecting its use. The researcher supported the study with a test conducted with the First Year Master EFL students during the research methodology course. The test was conducted during the second semester of the same academic year. The main reason is that some students had log-in problems during the first semester. Through the test, the researchers collected data from the log of accessing the platform in class. The results of these two research tools were supported by an observation of students’ access to the platform during the second semester in all modules taught for first-year Master's EFL students. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the data, the researcher used a triangulation of methods.

Findings
Students’ Questionnaire
The researchers selected the most important questions for data collection.

Table 1. Internet Accessibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owning ICT devices</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>54.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet availability</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>41.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first section, the researchers asked the participants about internet accessibility. About 93 (54.70%) of the students claimed that they own ICT devices like laptops, smartphones, or desktop...
computers. Approximately 71 (41.76%) of the students said they have the internet on their ICT devices. All students have net access on their mobile phones, while 99 (58.23%) of them have no internet access.

Table 2. *Students’ experience in using ICT devices before the pandemic*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ experience</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collecting information for lectures</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using emails to contact their teachers</td>
<td>5.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting information for thesis writing</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing books and lectures through Facebook</td>
<td>81.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table one indicates, 81.33% of the students highlighted that they share books and lectures with their peers through their groups on Facebook, while 11.76% of them claimed that they tend to do research when their teachers ask them to write essays or prepare exposes. About 5.83% of them used emails to contact their teachers, mainly for issues related to evaluation marks. The students claimed that most of them use mobile devices more than computers.

Table 3. *Students’ knowledge of learning platforms (Moodle)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platforms</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I master the platform</td>
<td>63.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somehow</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know how to use the platform</td>
<td>3.22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 63.45% of the students stated that they mastered the Moodle platform due to the help of their teachers and peers. The university did not train them on how to use the platform. For this reason, they develop anxiety toward online learning. About 33.33% of the informants argued that they still face difficulties using the platform, mainly in conducting online tests and assignments or joining video conferencing through Bigblue Buton.

Table 4. *Students’ experience in using the platform*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students experience</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>8.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>69.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>15.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table four indicated that 69.83% of the informants have good experience using the platform. About 15.88% have an average experience. They maintained that their accessibility to Moodle is to download lectures. About 5.88% of the students have a poor experience. They justified their answers by claiming that they have net problems and no digital mobile phones.

Table 5. Students’ access to Moodle during the academic year 2021/2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ access to Moodle</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily access</td>
<td>58.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly access</td>
<td>38.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly access</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the exams</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings showed that 58.61% of the students highlighted that they accessed the platform every day since most teachers uploaded their assignments and lectures via Moodle, while 38.22% of them maintained that they accessed the platform once a week due to network problems. About 2.11% of the students claimed that they accessed the platform monthly since their peers uploaded most lectures on their Facebook group. All students accessed the platform during the academic year 2021/2022.

Table 6. Reasons for accessing Moodle platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for accessing Moodle</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consulting lessons</td>
<td>84.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading handouts</td>
<td>10.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering assignments</td>
<td>4.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit for the tests</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact their teachers</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check announcements</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table six reveals that 84.11% of the students accessed Moodle to consult lectures that their teachers posted every week. About 10.33% of them claimed that they access Moodle to download handouts. About 0.66% of the students accessed Moodle to sit for the test.
Table 7. Difficulties facing students in accessing Moodle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing password</td>
<td>34.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to access the personal account</td>
<td>61.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to download lectures and handouts</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to share videos posted by teachers</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table seven indicates that 61.33% of students met difficulties accessing their Moodle accounts. They justified their answers they got new codes when they became Master’s students. They faced some problems during the first semester. About 34.55% of the students missed their passwords; hence, they could not access the platform. Between 3.62% and 0.5% of the students highlighted that they could not download handouts or share teachers’ videos due to network problems.

Table 8. Types of online learning used in Moodle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of online learning</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous online learning</td>
<td>96.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous online learning</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bichronous online learning</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through this question, the teacher asked students about the type of online found in Moodle and used by teachers. Students (96.41%) claimed that teachers posted lectures in the form of handouts and lessons i.e. all teachers followed the asynchronous mode, while 0.6% of the teachers used the synchronous mode through the BigBlue Button. Students (2.99%) argued that they followed the bichronous online learning.

Table 9. Students’ attitudes toward the online modes in Moodle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online modes in Moodle</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous online learning</td>
<td>33.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous online learning</td>
<td>26.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bichronous online learning</td>
<td>39.81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table nine indicates that 39.81% of the students prefer the combination of both the asynchronous and synchronous modes of online learning i.e., the bichronous online learning. They justified their answers by claiming that they tend to download lectures and handouts and get in touch with their teachers through video conferencing. They prefer video conferencing through Google meet or Zoom and not Moodle. They added that joining a video conference through Moodle is complicated compared to Google meet or Zoom. On the other hand, 33.86% of the students stated that they prefer accessing the platform to download lectures and handouts i.e., the asynchronous mode. They
justified that online learning cannot replace face-to-face learning but rather help students with additional sources.

Table 10. *Students' affective attitudes toward the use of the Moodle platform*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ attitudes</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer using Moodle for learning</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer face-to-face learning</td>
<td>34.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to study in class and through Moodle</td>
<td>65.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed that 65.33% of the students study in class and use Moodle. The platform provides lectures, handouts, and assignments. Students (34.16%) prefer face-to-face learning more than the use of Moodle, while 0.5% prefer Moodle. They claimed that it is effective, mainly during the pandemic.

Table 11. *Students’ opinions toward the course content in Moodle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ opinions</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures are well designed</td>
<td>21.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures are not well designed</td>
<td>79.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures are supported with activities and extra materials</td>
<td>45.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures are not supported with activities and extra materials</td>
<td>65.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through this question, the researchers aimed to check whether the students have developed negative attitudes from the content of the online courses posted on Moodle. About 79.11% of the lectures are not well designed. They argued that some teachers uploaded lessons without learning objectives or references, or they tend to upload handouts in the form of chapters. Other teachers uploaded just videos or links to lessons published online. Also, 65.96% of the students maintained that teachers uploaded some lectures without activities or extra materials.

Test

The teacher conducted the pretest just with 85 first-year Master's students during the session on research methodology. The experiment took two weeks to see students’ knowledge of using educational platforms. The teacher divided them into control and experimental groups. The experimental group had a session on how to access and use Moodle. They also had sessions on how to read teachers’ announcements, contact their teachers, and join video conferencing. At the same time, they also learned how to answer assignments and sit for tests. The teacher conducted the test during the second semester.

Table 12. *Results of the pre and posttests in relation to students’ attitudes*
Table 12 summarizes the results of the pre and posttests held with first-year Master EFL students during the first and second semesters. Affective attitudes of the experimental group have been raised after the posttest. Students, with a percentage of 89.41%, argued that they were satisfied using the platform. About 73.81% of the experimental group had positive behavioral attitudes. They like downloading what their teachers share as extra materials for learning through Moodle. About 96.15% of the students from the experimental group shared positive cognitive attitudes i.e. the platform helped them to improve their cognitive abilities.

**Observation**

Students of the experimental group accessed the platform either to download handouts or to do and send homework. The observation showed that the students of the experimental group had no difficulties in sitting for tests and sending the assignment through the platform, however, they had negative attitudes toward that before the experiment. They used to send their homework through emails.

The findings from the observation showed that most students from the experimental group were satisfied with participants’ privacy in Moodle after sending their assignments. The teacher also observed that students started using messaging for educational purposes. They contacted their teachers and kept contacting their peers through Facebook. They found it difficult to reach even their teachers since their teachers respond to their personal emails and not to their professional emails.

The findings also indicated that most students waited for the teachers’ feedback through the platform. They replied to the teachers’ feedback to improve their learning skills. Some features can develop teachers’ and students’ interaction and even collaboration with their peers.

Students received teachers’ feedback in Moodle to improve their work. They claimed that they did not receive this feedback in-class assignments or through their males. Students prefer quizzes and tests in Moodle since it contains quiz features. they have even multiple-choice questions.

Students also prefer the bichronous mode i.e. a mixture between the asynchronous and the synchronous modes. The asynchronous mode provides them with handouts and extra learning materials that they can download to revise for exams and assignments, while the synchronous
mode helps them to get in contact with their teachers through video conferencing where they can interact.

Regarding students’ engagement in the lecture, the observation showed that they are more engaged in the synchronous mode than the asynchronous one i.e. they are more engaged in video conferencing. Their engagement helps in their learning achievements.

![Students' engagement](image_url)

Figure 1. Students’ engagements in synchronous and asynchronous online modes

Figure one indicates that students’ attitudes are linked to other factors, mainly motivation, engagement, and achievements. Students become more motivated to attend courses in a synchronous mode after the teacher trained them to use the Big Blue app in Moodle. Their motivation helps in engaging them in all courses. Students’ attendance had an impact on their academic achievements. Students acquired positive attitudes toward the synchronous mode.

Discussion

The study aimed to test students’ attitudes toward using the Moodle platform in learning during the pandemic. The study found that students’ attitudes toward using the platform vary between negative and positive. Students, who did the experiment, shared positive attitudes, while students from the control group shared negative attitudes. This may answer the first question “What are the attitudes of EFL Master students toward using the Moodle platform in learning during the pandemic?”

The study also found that there are factors that affect students’ attitudes. During the first semester, students cannot access the platform due to many problems, mainly missing passwords, lack of knowledge on how to access and download lectures, network problems, and lack of ICT materials. These factors may affect students’ motivation to use the platform, henceforth, their
attitudes. Other factors can be the nature of the online lectures and the materials that teachers uploaded in Moodle. This means that teachers did not design acceptable online lessons. Lectures are delivered in an asynchronous mode. Few teachers tend to use the synchronous mode that can encourage students to interact and collaborate. These findings are in line with Valantinaitė’s and Sederevičiūtė-Pačiauskienė’s (2020) results. This may also affect their cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes. This may answer the second research question “What are the major factors affecting EFL Master students toward the use of the Moodle platform?”

The results also showed that most students, who participated in the study, shared negative attitudes toward the asynchronous mode. They highlighted that it helps them to prepare themselves and participate in class activities, courses, and assignments. The students prefer the combination of both asynchronous and synchronous online learning i.e. bichronous online learning. The study also found that students during the pretest claimed that they preferred Google Meet or Zoom as a synchronous mode. They showed negative attitudes toward BigBlue Buton in Moodle. They justified that these apps provide easy access compared to Moodle’s video conference app. Students from the experimental group became more motivated to use online learning after their teacher trained them in the research methodology module. This may answer the third research question “Did the use of asynchronous online learning affect EFL Master students’ e-learning?”

The findings also showed that the administration should solve technical problems before the beginning of the academic year. The study also revealed that students complained about the complex steps that they follow to access the platform. These steps are tiresome and time-consuming compared to other platforms like Facebook, Google Meet, and Zoom. Universities should train students before they start the academic year on how to access, sit for tests and assignments, and interact with teachers through BigBlue Buton as a video conferencing i.e. they should be familiar with both synchronous and asynchronous modes. This finding is in line with the study of Putri Utomo and Ahsanah (2022). Teachers should motivate students by adding features that may raise their creativity i.e. Moodle should not just be for downloading lectures and sitting for the test. Students can also download materials that can be evaluated by their teachers. The study also found that teachers should be trained on how to prepare the content of an online course since a lecture that contains no clear learning objectives, instructions, or assignments may affect the learning achievements and hence the students’ attitudes. This finding is in line with Ketut Santi and Widiastuti’s (2021) study. The study also indicated that the students should benefit from features of Moodle, including learning material, learning instructions, interaction through video conferencing, and assessment. It is also important that teachers’ should upload learning materials depending on students’ needs. This may affect their attitudes and motivations. This finding is in line with Rymanova et al.’s study (2015).

As far as the learning objectives and instructions are concerned, each course and activity should be accompanied by specific instructions to direct the learners. Clear and concise instructions may affect students’ performance as stated by Cerdan and Marin (2019). These
solutions may answer the last research question, “What are the possible solutions to change the students’ attitudes toward the use of educational platforms?”

Many motivating factors affect students’ motivation to use the platform and, henceforth, their attitudes. The sudden shift to online learning, teachers’ resistance to change and lack of training on how to prepare an online course or assignment, students’ lack of knowledge, lack of ICT materials, and the social background of some students are among the factors that affect the learners’ affective, behavioral, and cognitive attitudes toward the use of Moodle in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The paper attempted to test students’ attitudes toward the use of Moodle in learning during the pandemic. The study found that students had negative attitudes toward the platform before the experiment due to many factors that affect their affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes. The factors included the sudden shift to online learning, lack of ICT materials, network problems, lack of knowledge, positive attitudes toward social media (Facebook), lack of interaction with teachers, course content, and the online mode. These factors affected their motivation toward online learning and using Moodle. Lack of the students’ motivation led to their low engagement and influenced their academic achievement. All these factors resulted in students’ negative attitudes. The researchers recommended that teachers should benefit from both online learning modes to motivate students to use the platform. This will affect their attitudes and achievements.

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Moodle in the Algerian EFL Context during Covid-19

GHOUNANE & RABAHI


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Students’ Perceptions towards E-Learning as a Method of Instruction during Covid-19 Pandemic in Moroccan Universities

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Received: 10/08/2022    Accepted: 12/20/2022    Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning has become a required component of all educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities worldwide. The offline teaching process has been severely disrupted due to this unexpected event. E-learning is a powerful instructional tool that helps pupils achieve their full potential. This paper aims to investigate the E-learning process among semester 6 English department students of Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco who have experienced online learning as well as the challenges they faced. To find out the students’ perceptions towards e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, primary data has been collected from Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco (semester 6 students of the English department) through a Google forms survey questionnaire. The findings demonstrate that most students are dissatisfied with remote learning and believe it has negatively impacted their academic performance. The results lead us to the realization that a tremendous reform has to be made to the Moroccan educational system.

Keywords: COVID-19, Distance education, face-to-face learning, Online learning, Students’ perceptions

Students’ Perceptions towards E-Learning

LAACHIR, EL HILALI, MOUBTASSIME & EL KARFA

Introduction

Almost every aspect of life has dramatically changed due to the current circumstances imposed by the rapid emergence of COVID-19. The education sector is one of the areas in Morocco that has seen significant transformations. Moroccan authorities implemented a set of emergency measures after the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency worldwide. Online learning was quickly regarded as a technique for dealing with crises. The Moroccan Ministry of Education eventually switched from on-site teaching/learning to online learning on March 16th, 2020. This move was met with opposition from teachers, students, and parents. Public opinion was divided into those who take a cautious approach to crises and, understandably, appear to appreciate the decision, thanks to its advantages to its users in the development of online learning. For instance, students or even teachers did not need to travel to attend classes, which was cost-effective. It also provides students with a sense of comfort and improved time management, and several other benefits were discussed later. Those who believed that the transition from face-to-face to remote instruction was an overreaction by the authorities thought that online learning was putting students' academic progress at risk. Soon after the strategy was implemented, it became evident that neither the students nor the teachers could properly construct the learning and teaching process.

Similarly, several pupils indicated a need for more familiarity with ICT tools in addition to many other obstacles. Students need to be more motivated by factors such as a lack of essential devices, poor internet connection quality, and a lack of personal engagement with instructors and colleagues. Furthermore, despite the existence of Facebook groups, information or announcements are distributed to only some students. In this regard, the current study describes the theories, types of online learning, and their uses as a way of learning from students' perspectives. Thus, this paper aims to explore students’ perceptions towards E-learning as a means of education during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on students’ performance and motivation. In addition, this study focuses on the advantages offered and the challenges students face while using this innovative teaching method. Furthermore, this research aims to uncover the potential effect of distance education on the learner's effective filter.

This study makes a significant contribution in terms of research on online learning as a teaching method. The descriptive findings of this study will be helpful for both teachers and students; thanks to it, they will be more aware of the challenges faced during this period and hopefully will contribute to overcoming these obstacles.

To get a deeper understanding of students’ perceptions toward online learning, five significant goals can serve as a propeller of this study:

- To test students’ perceptions towards the use of e-learning
- To set the challenges faced when being involved in distance education
- To provide practical implications and recommendations on how to make distance learning effective.

The following research questions are addressed to achieve the study's previously stated objectives and understand better the efficiency or non-efficiency of distance learning.

a- What are the perceptions of students towards the use of e-learning?

b- How can e-learning be a valuable teaching and learning method to improve the Moroccan educational system?
Literature Review

Starting with the Covid-19 issue that erupted at the start of 2020, educational policies adopted many trajectories in the Moroccan context to address that unanticipatedly unfortunate circumstance. The importance of education has been recognized worldwide, and it is now distinguished by ways to make it affordable for everyone as well as by quick and efficient approaches to satisfy learning goals. The initial response to such conditions was to accept online education as the only replacement for traditional classroom instruction. Distance education was put into place by stakeholders in Moroccan higher education. Distance education is reflected in the integration of TV and radio channels for university students who cannot access the network and who reside in remote regions (Jamiai, 2021; Laachir, 2022; Mounjid, El Hilali, Amrani & Moubtassime, 2021).

According to Laachir, 2022, El Hilali, and Moubtassime, 2021, online learning using institutional platforms and other learning apps is the second type of education that has been deployed. Numerous voices supported or opposed these novel teaching and learning approaches between these two distinct categories, particularly among university professors and their students. This approach aims to determine whether the new methodology is suitable for students' learning and whether students regard online classes as a legitimate replacement for in-person instruction. The development of e-learning in the field of education generally and during the Covid-19 outbreak, particularly, in Morocco, has captured the attention of academics and the general public. Since academics' opinions on the validity and quality of online learning vary, the efficacy and quality of this kind of education is likewise a contentious topic. Research conducted during the Covid-19 conflict in Morocco heavily weighs the use of technology in higher education.

To give a better understanding of e-learning as a newly adopted concept during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to define some fundamental concepts of this topic by providing a quick overview of the background and history of the term and some of its advantages and disadvantages.

Definition of E-learning

E-learning is one of the central and most difficult concepts to define as it constantly evolves, which makes it hard to come up with a single definition that researchers and scientists would agree on. Different authors and experts define e-learning differently. For instance, Simonson and Seepersaud (2009) define distance learning as Institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunication systems are used to connect learners’ resources and instructors. A different view Simonson and Seepersaud characterized the definition of distance education by four components: institutionally based, separation of teacher and student, interactive telecommunications, and sharing of data voice and video (learning experiences) Garrison and Shale (1987) who offered only the following three criteria they regarded as essential for characterizing the distance education process which is: the communication occurs non-contiguously, that communication should be in two ways between teachers and students to have an effective distance learning, that e-learning uses technology to mediate the necessary two-way communication. Kaplan-Leiserson (2000) argued that online learning covers a broad set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes delivering content via the internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM. Another one by Marquès (2006), “E-learning is distance education through remote
resources” (p. 148).

The term "learning" was proposed by Elliot Masie at the 1999 TechLearn conference. This is the term's first use in a professional environment (Gutiérrez, 2014). However, the use of computers and other digital tools is older than about thirty years. In the mid-1960s, Stanford University psychology professors tried to use computers and teletypewriters to teach arithmetic and spelling to elementary school students (Jamison, 1979). In addition, in 1960, e-learning began to play an essential role at the University of Illinois. The university created an intranet for students to access course materials and listen to recorded lectures through a linked computer terminal system (Argawal & Pandey, 2013). By the mid-1980s, many university libraries followed suit, allowing students to access course content from the library terminal. The Electronic University Network provides the first batch of online courses that can be used on DOS and Commodore 64 computers. To access these courses, students must use proprietary software and telephones to communicate. With the emergence and popularization of the internet, thanks to local Internet service providers, online education has taken root not only in the United States but also in Europe.

In addition to schools, the company also invests heavily in developing technologies to improve e-learning methods. For example, in 1993, Cisco promoted a project to design practical and cost-effective networks for schools (Stanford-Smith & Kidd, 2000). This initiative led to the creation of the Cisco Networking Academy Program, which currently has more than 400,000 students in high schools, colleges and universities, and community organizations. Since the 1990s, online learning has continued to grow around the world. In the United States, from the fall of 2016 to the fall of 2017, the number of students who took at least some online courses increased by more than 350,000, an increase of 5.7% (Lederman, Evans 2018). In addition, according to Trines (2018), education trends in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia show that despite technological barriers, online education is becoming more popular in these regions.

**Types of E-learning**

The conceptual framework and some theories of e-learning are discussed to provide a better understanding of e-learning, including distance learning. The purpose of the distance learning program is that online learning is an integral part of distance learning. With the general answer to the question 'what is e-learning’, education scientists have identified different types and models of e-learning under categories such as learning styles, delivery methods and technologies, and educational tools used. Here are the types of e-learning currently in use.

**Computer-Managed Learning**

Computer-managed Learning (CML) can be defined as the systematic control of computer instructions. It is characterized by extensive testing, diagnostics, prescribing training and record keeping (Hofmeister, 1982, p. 45).

In a computer-managed learning environment, instructors use computers to provide learning goals and assess student learning outcomes (Day & Payne, 1987). Computer-driven learning systems can perform several functions, including creating tests, analyzing test results, and keeping records of learner progress (Sly & Rennie, 1999). The grading parameters used by these systems allow the learning process to be tailored to individual student preferences. Academies also use CML systems to store and retrieve educational aids and tools, such as conference information, training materials, and program information (Currie & Courduff, 2015).
**Computer-Assisted Instruction**

Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) is also referred to as computer-assisted learning, and it is not to be confused with CML since CML uses computers in teaching solely. In contrast, CAI is a type of online learning that uses computers along with traditional teaching. This method includes various activities, including drill and practice, tutoring and simulation activities (Cotton, 1991). These activities can be done alone or in addition to traditional teacher-led instruction. According to Tamm and Sander (2019), most online and traditional schools, today use different CAI methods to facilitate student skills development. Tamm further explains that the main value of CAI is interactivity, as it allows students to become more active in the learning process.

**Synchronous E-learning**

Synchronous e-learning happens in real-time. It consists of students and instructors interacting in a specific virtual place at a set time during which instructors usually take attendance, the same as they would during a regular face-to-face class. Due to instant feedback and interaction with peers and tutors, students actively perceive synchronized interactions online, increasing their participation in the online learning environment (Francescucci, Rohani, 2019). In a comparative study of asynchronous and synchronous online learning, Hrastinski (2008) believes that asynchronous online learning helps think through complex tasks without time limits, while synchronous online learning can stimulate participants to interact and participate in group activities with their peers.

**Asynchronous E-learning**

Asynchronous learning is usually applied to teacher-student interactions that occur in different places or at different times rather than an online learning experience that does not involve teachers, colleagues or peers. It is the most widely used method in online education (Parsad & Lewis, 2008) because students are open to time and can respond anytime and anywhere. The opportunity to delay the response allows them to use their advanced learning skills because they can think about the problem for a long time and can develop divergent thinking. A constructed response replaces the spontaneity of expression. Therefore, the asynchronous space leads to autonomous, independent, student-centred learning (Murphy, Rodríguez-Manzanares, & Barbour, 2011).

**Theories on E-learning**

Theoretical considerations are crucial in the study of distance education because they directly impact the field's practice. Theoretical frameworks for online education have always come from outside the United States. However, in the United States, the area of e-learning has recently grown to the point where indigenous definitions and theories have begun to develop. Keegan categorized theories of distance education into three classes in his book “The Foundations of Distance Education (1986)”: theories of independence and autonomy, theories of industrialization of teaching, and theories of interaction and communication.

**Theories of Independence and Autonomy**

According to Wedemeyer, Adelberg and McLanahan (1981), greater student accountability, widely available education, a compelling mix of media and methods, flexibility to individual differences, and a wide variety of start, stop and learn periods are all crucial features of
independent learning. He set a distance education system that includes some characteristics that emphasize learner independence and the adoption of technology as a way of implementing it. For instance: Place greater responsibility for learning on the student to offer them wider choices (more opportunities) in courses, formats, and methodologies; use, as appropriate, all the teaching media and methods proven effective; preserve and enhance opportunities for adaptation to individual differences, permit students to start, stop, and learn at their own pace.

Theories of Industrialization of Teaching
Keegan’s (2013) work on a theory of industrialization in the 1960s reflects the attempt to view the field of distance education as an industrialized form of teaching and learning. To explain the theory of industrialization, Peter created new categories of terminology coming from the same field of industries and related them to distance education. For example, Rationalization, division of labour, mechanization, assembly line, mass production, preparatory work, planning, organization, change of function, formalization, change of function, etc. Industry terms with educational definitions.

Theories of Interaction and Communication
The third theory, which integrates theories of interaction and communication, was formulated by Holmberg (1990)—outlining this notation of conversation in his book Status and trends and distance education. Holmberg stated, “A kind of conversation in the form of two–way traffic occurs through the written and telephone interaction between the students and the tutors and others belonging to the supporting organization” (p.30). Another saying to elaborate further on his concept of Guided Didactic Conversation,

My theory of distance education as a method of guided didactic conversation implies that the character of good distance education resembles that of guided conversations aiming at learning and that presence of the typical traits of such conversation facilitates learning.(p.25)
This means that distance teaching and learning play an important role in replacing face-to-face classes as a new teaching and learning method and a solution to the issue caused by the COVID-19 outbreak using different technology tools to keep the continuity of students’ schooling.

Benefits of E-learning
The adoption of E-learning in education offers multiple advantages and benefits, particularly for higher educational institutions. E-learning is regarded as one of the most significant ways of education due to its numerous advantages and benefits. Several studies and authors have discussed the advantages and benefits of incorporating e-learning tools into schools.

Safety is the most important reason to apply distance learning in Moroccan universities during Covid19. E-learning allows us to resume studies from home in a safe and calm environment without needing to attend classes.
Distance learning has given not only students safety but also time and freedom. According to Smedley (2010), every student has the option of choosing the location and time that is most convenient for him or her similar view; objectives can be accomplished in the shortest time with the least amount of effort. E-learning helps to remove barriers to involvement, such as the fear of speaking with other students. Students are encouraged to communicate with one another through e-learning, as well as to exchange and respect diverse points of view. In addition to all these
advantages, distance learning occurs at a lower cost. For instance, Zhang et al. (2006) stressed that e-learning permits the exploration of flexible learning ways with a much-reduced need for travel to attend classes.

Finally, the last advantage that would be mentioned, according to Codone (2001), is that self-pacing is possible with e-Learning. The online method, for example, allows each student to study at his or her own pace and speed, whether slow or fast. As a result, it boosts happiness while lowering stress.

Disadvantages/ Challenges of E-learning

Despite the benefits of e-learning in education, it also has certain disadvantages. Studies support that e-learning possesses some drawbacks. For instance, according to (Somayeh et al., 2016), the most significant disadvantage of using e-learning is the need for more important personal connections, not just between students and teachers, but also among colleagues.

Moreover, developing countries confront some problems when it comes to implementing e-learning, including a lack of internet access, a lack of expertise about how to use information and communication technology, and poor content development (Aung, Khaing, 2015). Many instructors, particularly at the higher education level in developing nations, still need to familiarize themselves with the provision of content such as video and advanced applications.

Finally, researchers such as Klein and Ware (2003) have argued that not all fields or disciplines can employ the e-learning method in education. For instance, the purely scientific fields that include practical cannot be studied adequately through e-learning.

Method

There are, in fact, two basic research methods to this paper, viz. quantitative methods and qualitative methods. The former involves generating data quantitatively and can perform rigorous quantitative analysis formally and rigorously. The latter “is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. Research in such a situation is a function of the researcher’s insights and impressions” (Kothari, 2004, p. 120). Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to find answers to research questions and verify research hypotheses.

Research Instruments

For this research, an online survey questionnaire was used. It is one of the best tools for collecting data since it ensures quick access to a large group of people and opinions quickly. According to Munn and Eric (1990), “questionnaires are a popular way of gathering information, and it is easy to understand why. In large-scale surveys, questionnaires are by far the cheapest way of gathering information from hundreds or thousands of people” (p. 23). Moreover, according to Kothari (2004), a questionnaire mainly consists of the following:

- a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The questionnaire is mailed to respondents who are expected to read and understand the questions and write down their replies in the space meant for the purpose of the questionnaire itself. The respondents have to answer the questions on their own. (p. 100)

Since this paper mainly aims to investigate university students’ perceptions, a survey questionnaire was administered to the S6 students of the English department of Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco, including not only close-ended questions but also open and closed-ended questions that should allow students to express their opinions more freely. This should eventually
support the statistical data with justifications. The questionnaire includes many multiple-choice questions since it provides a fixed list of answer options and gives structured survey responses.

To analyze the quantitative data collected from the survey questionnaire, Microsoft Office Excel will be used to present the participants’ answers and opinions. It will also be used to generate graphs and help with data analysis.

**Participants**

The target population of this study is the S6 students of the English Studies Department of Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco. The study was conducted during the second semester (from June 1st to July 2nd 2022). The participants were consulted through a virtual learning Facebook community called "The English Department of Moulay Ismail University. For the sake of reliability and subjectivity, the sampling technique used is random sampling. This population consists of 44 students, 29 of whom are females and 15 males. As for their age group, 34 of them belong to the “20-24” age group, and the other 10 belong to the “25-30” age group.

Quantitative methods are mainly used to investigate the degree of students’ satisfaction with distance education. Quantitative methods will allow researchers to obtain statistical results in digital form, which can draw generalized conclusions. On the other hand, qualitative methods have also been used to compensate for the weaknesses of quantitative investigations, giving reasons behind the answers given by participants.

It is critical to offer information about the study's target population before embarking on analyzing and interpreting the graphs that match the research questions and objectives. The participants in this study were picked randomly to increase the study's validity and credibility. The graph below (figure one) shows the background information of the students who responded to the questionnaire. It shows three characteristics of the participants, namely their gender, level, and age.

Figure one revealed a considerable gap between the two genders as the participants comprised 28 females, who comprise 63.6% of the population, whereas 16 males form 36.4% of the population.

![Figure 1. Distribution frequencies of gender](image-url)
Age-wise (figure two below), 77.3% of the population belongs to the “20-24” age group, while the remaining 22.7% belongs to the “25-30” age group.

![Figure 2. Distribution frequencies of age groups](image)

**Results**

**Students’ Preferences on Learning Methods**

The present section attempts to investigate the students’ preferences regarding learning methods, namely on-campus learning versus online one. Figure three shows the drastic difference between those who are learning more in an on-site context in contrast to online learning. Those who prefer on-campus learning comprise 77.3% of the population, and the rest comprise roughly 22.7% of the participants.

![Figure 3. Students’ preferences for E-learning versus on-campus learning](image)

*Importance of On-site Learning for Practical Learning*

Most students think face-to-face learning is essential for practical learning, while the rest are either unsure whether it is crucial or do not think it is necessary. As figure four demonstrates,
around 73% of the participants believe that on-campus learning is vital for practical learning, while 13.6% think that practical learning does not necessitate physical classes, and the remaining (13%) needed clarification.

![Figure 4: E-learning importance for the students](image)

Figure 4: E-learning importance for the students

![Figure 5: Students’ willingness to opt for e-learning if it were not for the pandemic](image)

Figure 5: Students’ willingness to opt for e-learning if it were not for the pandemic

Figure five above represents the students’ willingness to opt for e-learning if it were not for the pandemic. A marked tendency to be against distance learning is evident in the distribution of the student’s answers, as 63.6% would not choose e-learning as a method of learning if it were an option, while 36.4% would gladly take online classes; however, the situation would be.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of E-learning**

**Advantages**

The most frequent advantages of e-learning chosen by respondents were the time efficiency (59.1%), followed by the fact that e-learning is cost-efficient (43.2%), self-paced (36.4%), and
customizable learning environment (34.1%).

Table 1. The most frequent advantages of e-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>e-learning is time-efficient</th>
<th>e-learning is affordable for students</th>
<th>e-learning is self-paced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disadvantages

The majority of respondents chose the lack of motivation and engagement as the main drawback of e-learning (59.1%), and the lack of physical interaction with instructors as the second most frequent challenge (56.8%), in addition to low-quality internet (36.4%), and lack of required devices (15.9%), whereas (18.2%) did not face any challenges in e-learning.

Table 2. The most disadvantages of e-learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Lack of Motivation</th>
<th>Lack of physical interaction with instructors</th>
<th>Low-quality internet</th>
<th>Lack of required devices</th>
<th>no disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Preferable Applications Used by Students

According to the table below (table three), the most desirable applications used by students are the following, respectively: Google classroom (54.5%), Zoom (52.3%), and WhatsApp (25%).

Table 3. The most desirable applications used by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Google Classroom</th>
<th>Zoom</th>
<th>WhatsApp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Data

The qualitative part of this research explores whether students think the Moroccan educational system is ready for e-learning as a permanent tool of education. The research question primarily guides this portion," considering the structure of the Moroccan educational system, was e-learning beneficial for students?". This section was mainly added to allow the participants to express their opinion freely. Here are some of the most interesting answers we received from participants who believed that the Moroccan educational system was ready for e-learning as a means of learning.

“I think that e-learning made students more tech-savvy, in a sense that they started to make themselves familiar with the standard e-learning eco-system and other applications”. E-learning was beneficial for students. Especially students who are used to working by themselves and organizing their time” As for the students who were not so supportive, these are some of their answers:

“I think e-learning in Morocco still has not reached students' expectations due to the poor platforms used for the application of remote learning and the lack of facilities and technological tools for students, which make the accessibility to courses sometimes hard to reach”.

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
“Our experience with E-learning in the covid 19 era was not so successful due to the professors' lack of organization and responsibility, too much material, and there is no responsibility taken when it comes to the timetables”.

Based on the findings obtained from the current paper, it is evident that most participants express their readiness and willingness to continue their education through different online forms as the only option left by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite all the challenges and obstacles they face while taking online courses, they have shown excellent educational performance.

Discussion

In a nutshell, this research aimed first to provide an overview of the critical concept and determine the extent to which 6 English department students of Moulay Ismail university were satisfied with distance learning. In addition, the study attempted to quantify and qualify the reasons behind these attitudes.

The data analysis findings revealed that the majority of 6 English department students of Moulay Ismail University are dissatisfied with their distance learning experience during the COVID-19 epidemic. In another way, an estimated 77.3% of participants prefer on-site education for various reasons. According to respondents, the primary reasons for choosing on-site education include a lack of physical interaction with instructors, similar to Somayeh et al. (2016). People who adopt this thinking may think they would be more productive while interacting with professors. It would help them to organize their thoughts, reflect on their understanding, and find gaps in their reasoning. In addition to that lack of motivation, people may get bored with the same routine every day, and they rise to laziness as they have to stay all day in bed. Another obstacle is the low quality of the internet. In Morocco, for example, many rural areas still need WIFI in their place, the network access is very weak, and it would be costly to pay for it every day.

Moreover, students and teachers also need help in dealing with ICT tools. This could be due to the lack of unfamiliarity while using it. There are no courses to develop computer and ICT tools skills, and courses are not given the same importance as other courses at school, such as French and Maths. For instance, the researchers suggest starting teaching such subjects from a very young age (primary school an example) for students to get familiar with them. Finally, the last challenge suggested by students was the need for more devices. As it is known, not everyone can buy a phone or a laptop, and people are struggling to fulfil basic needs such as food and clothes. Many parents do not consider studies a priority for their children and would not bother to buy them new devices to learn.

Having such obstacles cannot nullify the advantages that e-learning has. Similar to Smedley (2010) and Raba (2005), about 56% of participants agreed that online learning is time and cost-efficient. Many students may not have to travel to attend classes. In the case of Moulay Ismail university students, many students come from Azrou, Errachidia, Guelmima... and have to rent a house to stay close to the university, while others coming from Fez, Boufekrane have to wake up early to take the bus or the train to be able to attend on time. Sometimes there is even difficulty in finding transportation. Unlikely, Bates (2001) thinks that changing to a new learning method is costly and time-consuming. We may attribute the opposition in opinion to time. Bates' perspective is on 2001 while we were in 2021. One last advantage that will be discussed is that distance learning offers students an opportunity to be self-paced. In other words, students can choose which course to follow and with which professor; in addition to choosing the time they find suitable, they can organize their schedules based on their program. Many students have argued
that they have adopted some self-confidence. In on-site learning, they could not participate in class nor interact with professors due to negative feedback from colleagues and instructors.

Moreover, the study aims to give insight into students' preferred applications. According to the quantitative data, most students prefer Google Classroom and zoom because of the facilities for using such applications in addition to the unrestricted use and the uncomplicated access. The study also demonstrates that almost 75% of participants agree on the necessity of on-site education for practical learning. Perhaps many students learn more efficiently by actually "doing" activities. For instance, such subjects as oral communication certainly need face-to-face learning as students would learn more about non-verbal communication and pay attention to appearances, gestures and facial expressions.

Limitations of the study

This research has several restrictions. The restricted number of participants who were interviewed in the first drawback. Additionally, although 44 students completed the questionnaire, the number of respondents needs to be increased. We cannot argue that 44 replies adequately reflect students from various Moroccan universities. As a result, it is impossible to generalize the study's findings. Second, since perceptions towards technology integration are a complicated phenomenon, it has to be researched more thoroughly and credibly. For instance, it is possible to comprehend better students' worries about learning a foreign language by spending much time monitoring them as they participate in a real or virtual language classroom. Unfortunately, this was impossible owing to several limitations, including the limited time we had. Finally, future research can make use of the methodology and findings of the study to compensate for all the weaknesses of this research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as mentioned earlier, this paper aims to discover students' perceptions towards e-learning during the COVID-19 crisis and uncover the main challenges students face while taking their courses. The contours of the education system are changing in response to efforts to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, with online education becoming the dominant mode of instruction. Universities and institutions are turning to online platforms to keep up with the curriculum. This study attempted to discover students' perspectives toward online learning during the pandemic period, specifically 6 English department students of Moulay Ismail University. To figure this out, the research starts by giving an overview of the central concept (online learning), its definition and history, and presenting its types and theories. The study clarifies the main advantages as well as the main obstacles and challenges faced by students during the use of this tool of learning. A mixed research method (qualitative and qualitative) was conducted to collect data from participants and give a glimpse of the situation of Moroccan universities by choosing 6 English department students as the sample population. We used questionnaires as a research instrument. The findings reveal that the main obstacles faced by students are related to technical, academic, and communication challenges. These challenges contributed to students showing a negative view of their experience with distance learning and their dissatisfaction with this method of education.
Students’ Perceptions towards E-Learning

LAACHIR, EL HILALI, MOUBTASSIME & EL KARFA

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Ukrainian EFL Learners’ Use and Views of Electronic Dictionaries: a Case Study in Higher Education

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Received: 09/25/2022 Accepted: 11/4/2022 Published: 20/01/2023

Abstract
Dictionary usage is one of the potential English as a foreign language learning strategy. The research paper investigates current tendencies in electronic dictionaries use for EFL learning at Ukrainian universities and the attitudes of Ukrainian students toward them. The scholars attempt to answer the following question: What are Ukrainian EFL learners’ use and views of electronic dictionaries? The current study aims to fill a gap in existing literature regarding Ukrainian EFL learners’ preferences and the use of different electronic dictionaries for language learning. The significance of this research lies in understanding the learners’ preferences and support of the electronic dictionaries will help to find effective teaching practices fostering student-centered approaches. We used a quantitative method to collect research data through online tools (Google forms). It was achieved due to analyzing responses to the survey-based questionnaire of 32 learners of Vinnitsia Institute of Trade and Economics of the State University of Trade and Economics, Ukraine. The findings suggest that students usually use various types of electronic dictionaries because they help them to develop four basic language skills. The participants preferred using electronic dictionaries as effective and motivating aids. We concluded that Ukrainian learners had a positive attitude toward electronic dictionaries implementation as they can improve both the teaching and learning process in educational institutions.

Keywords: case study, electronic dictionaries, English as a foreign language, higher education, Ukrainian EFL learners, Ukrainian universities

Introduction

Modern foreign language teaching is closely related to innovative processes in education. Growth and technological progress have drastically affected teaching methods. The role of digital resources and interactive techniques has increased recently. Using up-to-date electronic didactic tools makes learning much more effective (Tymoshchuk, 2022).

Electronic dictionaries have a unique role among modern learning technologies. They successfully compete with their paper counterparts because they optimize dictionary parameters, i.e., expanding dictionary entries, combining different forms of information (text, audio, graphics, and animation), and rational structuring of information using hypertext technologies. Logically, that the introduction of electronic dictionaries in the learning process is a requirement as it will enable the creation of the modern information society and will be one of the prerequisites for the formation of digital education. Electronic dictionaries have become a link between didactics, linguistics, and computer science.

Electronic dictionaries as instruments used in higher education to foreign language learning evolved from an optional technique to an indispensable tool. The popularity of electronic dictionaries among students is a motivating factor for English learning. This article aims to uncover Ukrainian EFL learners’ viewpoints regarding the role of electronic dictionaries in foreign language learning in higher education. The significance of this study is that understanding the learners’ preferences and support of the electronic dictionaries would help to find effective teaching practices.

Thus, the current study will provide insights into the pros and cons of electronic dictionaries from the perspectives of Ukrainian EFL learners. The following research questions guide our study: 1. What is the attitude of Ukrainian learners toward electronic dictionary implementation in foreign language learning? 2. What are the viewpoints of Ukrainian EFL learners on the obstacles to electronic dictionary implementation to learn English? 3. What is the present electronic dictionary implementation for learning EFL at Ukrainian universities?

Literature Review

There has been a growing interest in electronic dictionaries for the past two decades. Scholars have researched theoretical and practical aspects of electronic dictionaries implementation for learning purposes. Some scientists (Torres & Ramos, 2003; Rashid, Yunus & Mohamad, 2015; Mohamad, Rashid & Mohamad, 2017) have described and analyzed the potential and challenges of electronic dictionaries among ESL learners. Torres and Ramos (2003) highlighted such features of electronic dictionaries as interactivity, quick access, and multimedia effects. According to Mohamad, Rashid, and Wan Mohamad (2017), an electronic dictionary is time-saving and allows learners to look for new definitions. Weschler and Pitts (2000) concluded that the average look-up time for ten words was 168 seconds (about 17 seconds per word) while using a paper-based dictionary. According to his research data, an electronic dictionary requires 130 seconds per ten words (about 13 seconds per word). Thus, the students could look up words about 23% faster using an electronic dictionary than the paper one. However, Zorigt and Tumurbat (2022) have analyzed the difference between using paper dictionary and e-dictionary effects in memorizing new words. They surveyed to identify the use of paper dictionaries in the classroom. The scientists concluded ‘using a paper dictionary has many benefits for language learners, for taking a certain amount of time to look up for the new words definitely sends the information to our long-term memory’ (p. 15).
There are numerous studies on learners’ attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries for learning purposes. According to these researches, students adopt positive attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries and find them beneficial and facilitative for their learning (Nesi, 2002; Chatzidimou, 2007). The scientists argue that ‘since the introduction of electronic dictionaries in the mid to late 1990s, e-dictionaries have become an indispensable daily gadget for EFL learners and users’ (Park, 2006, p. 30).

Dashtestani (2013) claims that the electronic dictionary implementation for learning English vocabulary has attracted colossal attention lately. Chaker Hamdi (2015) has researched the effects of electronic dictionary use on vocabulary retention and reading comprehension of Algerian EFL second-year students. Rezaei and Davoudi (2016) have explored the different impacts of electronic dictionaries compared to paper ones on the Iranian EFL students’ achievement in learning vocabulary. According to Dashtestani’s (2013) comparison survey on Iranian EFL students’ and teachers’ perspectives on the role of electronic dictionaries, ‘both the EFL students and EFL teachers had moderately positive attitudes toward using of electronic dictionaries for learning EFL’ (p. 61). Levy & Steel (2015) analyzed electronic dictionary implementation by Australian university students. Their study has placed a particular emphasis on gauging learner perceptions of the electronic dictionary advantages. Alamria and Hakami (2022) have investigated Saudi EFL female students’ perspectives utilizing e-dictionaries to increase vocabulary learning. The research result showed that ‘students agreed more on the benefits of using e-dictionaries to verify vocabulary meaning, comprehension, alternatives, extensive definitions, word uniqueness, and examples’ (p. 1595). Furthermore, learners preferred to use electronic dictionaries to translate words. The scholars suggest EFL students should be aware of various types of online dictionaries specifically created to fulfill the need of a non-native English speaker.

There have been several studies (Yonally & Gilfert, 1995; Wescbler & Pitts, 2000; Shizuka, 2003; Koyama & Takeuchi, 2003; Koyama, 2004; Koyama & Takeuchi, 2007; Bower & McMillan, 2007; Filer, 2017) examining various aspects of electronic dictionaries implementation for EFL in Japan. According to Shizuka’s (2003) research data, Japanese EFL learners tend to consult electronic dictionaries more frequently than paper ones. Bower and McMillan (2007) investigated Japanese EFL learners’ attitudes toward the portable electronic dictionary implementation. The scholars have also found that the majority of participants used electronic dictionaries frequently.

Alhaisoni (2016) assessed teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward the use of electronic dictionaries. He reported that students use bilingual dictionaries more frequently than others, ‘technology such as smartphones and dictionary applications make accessing word information a convenient process for many language learners’ (p. 47). According to the research data, most learners check word meaning and spelling while paying little attention to pronunciation, illustrated examples, and collocations.

Chen (2010) has researched the implementation of electronic pocket dictionaries by Chinese EFL learners. The scientist concluded that they ‘are gaining increasing popularity among English learners in Chinese colleges and universities and that they are exerting a profound influence on users’ preference and patterns of dictionary use’ (p. 303). Park (2006) has analyzed the current status of electronic dictionary implementation in Korea and the Korean college students’ attitude toward its use. The researcher has also examined e-dictionaries’ usefulness and effectiveness in improving learners’ English skills.
Krajka and Campoy-Cubillo (2020) have analyzed the impact of electronic dictionary use training on students who took their BA in foreign language teaching degree and are training to become teachers in the MA program. Scholars conducted a semi-structured interview at a middle-sized private university in Poland. According to Krajka and Campoy-Cubillo (2020), ‘the major task of the language teacher is to equip them with the self-study procedures, strategies, and tricks, there is a great role for teachers to promote successful, conscious and wise e-dictionary usage’ (p. 1826).

Serbian scholars (Knežević, Halupka-Resetar, Miškeljin & Milić, 2021) have researched the use of dictionaries among the new millennium generation of English as a foreign language undergraduates. Applying the mixed-method approach (a questionnaire and interviews), they examined the types of dictionaries used, the frequency of dictionary use, information looked for, and problems faced in using dictionaries. Their findings suggest that the participants prefer bilingual online dictionaries; millennials use them primarily for looking up the meaning of unknown words.

The researchers argue that ‘the educational events of the last decade have given impetus to significant changes in the education system in Ukraine’ (Zahorodna, Saienko, Tolchieva, Tymoshchuk, Kulinich & Shvets, 2022, p. 78). The current study aims to fill a gap in existing literature regarding Ukrainian EFL learners’ preferences and the use of different electronic dictionaries for language learning. However, Ukrainian scholars have conducted very few surveys on electronic dictionaries use for teaching English as a foreign language. Thus, insufficient research on learners’ attitudes toward electronic dictionaries implementation in Ukrainian universities has caused the choice of the research topic.

Methods

We have used theoretical methods to analyze scientific literature on teaching English as a foreign language, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), emergency remote English learning and teaching, challenges and benefits of electronic dictionaries implementation. We conducted an online survey at Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics of the State University of Trade and Economics (VITE SUTE, Ukraine) in May 2022. We used online tools and techniques to obtain data; we analyzed research data employing computer-aided software; we interpreted the research results using texts and numerical information.

Participants

We selected the study population in a non-probabilistic way. The first-year students training at VITE SUTE to become interpreters in the MA program (Philology, Germanic languages, and literature (including translation), first foreign language – English) were under the research. A total of 32 students (four male and 28 female) participated in the interview. However, this figure corresponds to the contingent of students majoring in philology. We also asked the students about their ages. The most significant part of the participants is aged 21, with 20 ratings 62.5% of the population. Those aged 22 got a total number of six and scored a percentage of 18.75%. Four twenty-three-year-old students (12.5%) took part in the survey, whereas only two participants (6.25%) were older than 23.
Research Procedures

We have used a student questionnaire to collect quantitative data on the attitudes towards electronic dictionaries, preferences, and the frequency of their implementation. It has been created using Google Forms and administered online in a randomized and equal way to the students of VITE SUTE. We have reviewed the questionnaires of Lew (2004), Chatzidimou (2007), Dashtestani (2013), and Alhaisoni (2016). We have used particular criteria relevant to the learner questionnaire for our study. Firstly, we collected some demographic information. The respondents determined their gender (Male/Female) and age. Other questions were related to applying electronic dictionaries aimed at EFL. We measured part of the questions using a Likert-scale survey. We had the items related to the learner’s agreement, i.e., ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Disagree’, and ‘Strongly Disagree’. We also had items related to the frequency of EFL learners’ use of electronic dictionaries and their services, i.e., ‘Never’, ‘Occasionally’, ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’, and ‘Always’. Some other questions enable the learners to choose more than one option. We mean questions investigating the electronic dictionaries used by learners during English as a foreign language learning and EFL learners’ use of services of electronic dictionaries.

Results

This section presents the findings of the gathered data and the obtained results analysis. Figure one shows respondents’ answers on whether it is easy for them to use electronic dictionaries. The item ‘Agree’ has taken the most significant part with a total of 16 participants and a percentage of 50.0% of the population, it is followed by the item ‘Strongly Agree’ with a total of 11 students (34.4%). The last scored thing is ‘Neutral’, with a 15.6% percentage.

Figure 1. Ease of electronic dictionary use

According to figure two, the items ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ were the most frequent responses that scored 56.3% and 34.4%, respectively. Three respondents (9.4%) have ticked ‘Neutral’, answering if electronic dictionaries are easily accessible to students.

Figure 2. Electronic dictionaries accessibility
Figure three demonstrates the learners’ responses if audiovisual features are used in electronic dictionaries. Participants had choices ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. Twenty-five of the respondents who ticked ‘Always’ constitute 78.1% of the population; five students were neutral (15.6%); one (3.1%) of the respondents’ choice went to the option ‘Strongly Agree’. However, one respondent has claimed audiovisual features are not used in electronic dictionaries.

**Figure 3. Use of audiovisual electronic dictionaries features**

Most students (Figure four) have claimed that electronic dictionaries provide more detailed definitions than paper dictionaries. Fifteen learners (46.9%) have ticked ‘Agree’, and six students (18.8%) have chosen ‘Strongly Agree’. However, 25% of the students were undecided. The total percentage of those who disagree is 9.4% (three students).

**Figure 4. Electronic dictionaries provide more detailed definitions than paper dictionaries**

According to figure five, 19 students (59.4%) agreed that electronic dictionaries provide students with sufficient input, and two students (6.3%) ticked ‘Strongly Agree’, whereas 22.3% of the sample respondents preferred to remain neutral.

**Figure 5. Electronic dictionaries provide students with sufficient input**
Figures 1-5 illustrate that the EFL students had positive attitudes toward the electronic dictionaries use for foreign language learning. They held positive attitudes toward some benefits of electronic dictionaries, including audiovisual features, ease of use, access, and provision of sufficient input.

The study also finds that 81.3% of the students usually use electronic dictionaries. 15.6% of the sample respondents generally use both electronic and paper dictionaries. Amazingly, only one student prefers paper dictionaries to electronic ones. These results indicate that learners frequently use e-dictionaries to facilitate their learning process (Figure six).

Figure 6. Frequency of electronic dictionary use

The next question aimed to analyze the types of electronic dictionaries students use for foreign language learning. According to research data (Figure seven), 43.8% (14 participants) use various electronic dictionaries. 37.5% (twelve students) prefer online electronic dictionaries. Four participants (12.5%) use electronic dictionaries installed on their cellphones, and 6.3% of the students have electronic dictionaries installed on PC. Thirty-two respondents (100%) have answered that they use electronic dictionaries for learning purposes.

Figure 7. Types of electronic dictionaries used by learners

According to Figure 8, 25 participants (78.1%) use bilingual dictionaries more often than monolingual ones.
We used multiple items to investigate the electronic dictionaries used by learners during. This section enables the participant to select as many items as they need. According to Table one data, the Oxford Dictionary of English ranked first with 21 respondents (65.6 %), followed by other electronic dictionaries, with 18 representing 56.3 % of the population. Seventeen respondents (53.1 %) went for Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, and 13 students (40.6 %) were for Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, TheFreeDictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, and Longman Essential Activator is the least used electronic dictionaries by the participants.

The study intends to examine the frequency of electronic dictionaries used for various types of EFL activities. The findings presented in Figure 9 show that 6.3 % of respondents always use an electronic dictionary for reading, 12.5 % of learners always use it for writing tasks, 9.4 % of students always use an electronic dictionary for reading exercises, 6.3 % of the sample respondents always use an electronic dictionary for listening tasks, and 15.6 % of respondent students always use an electronic dictionary for translating lessons. The study finds that 28.1 % of learners have chosen ‘Often Use’ for reading tasks, 15.6 % of students have selected it for writing tasks, 6.3 % of the sample respondents have ticked it for speaking tasks, 9.4 % of the respondents have chosen it for listening activities, and 28.1 % of respondents have chosen it for translating. Respondent students sometimes use an electronic dictionary for reading (37.5 %), writing (56.3 %), speaking (34.4 %), listening (15.6 %), and translating (37.5 %). Option ‘Occasionally’ was chosen by 21.9 % of students for reading assignments, 15.6 % of learners for writing assignments, 31.3 % of respondent students for speaking activities, 34.4 % for listening, and 18.8 % for translating.
However, two students (6.3%) never use an electronic dictionary for reading activities, six students (18.8%) never use it for speaking activities, and 11 respondents (34.4%) never use an electronic dictionary for listening tasks. None of the respondents indicated ‘Never’ regarding using electronic dictionaries in activities such as reading and writing. The analysis of the obtained results proves that respondents often use an electronic dictionary for reading and translating activities.

Figure 9. Electronic dictionaries use for various types of EFL activities

The next question that participants had to respond to aims to investigate EFL learners’ use of services of electronic dictionaries. According to data collected (Table two), they often listen to voiced pronunciation and read the definitions of entries. The EFL learners reported that they rarely or never use examples, hyperlinks, and phonetics of words. Checking the etymology of entries available in electronic dictionaries is never used by 32.3% of the sample respondents.

Table 2. EFL learners’ use of services of electronic dictionaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to the voiced pronunciation of words</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking the phonetics of each entry</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading examples provided for each entry</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the hyperlinks available in electronic dictionaries</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the definition of entries</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking different parts of speech of an entry</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking the etymology of entries available in electronic dictionaries</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The presented study demonstrates that Ukrainian learners expressed positive attitudes toward using electronic dictionaries for EFL learning. The students consider electronic dictionaries essential and accessible tools for learning. The participants have also highlighted that electronic dictionaries provide sufficient input. They also prefer them to paper ones. The finding regarding
the positive attitudes of students toward the electronic dictionaries’ implementation for EFL learning concurs with other previous studies (Nesi, 2002; Chatzidimou, 2007; Dashtestani, 2013; Alhaisoni, 2016) on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs in using electronic dictionaries for learning EFL in other EFL contexts. Results from the interview suggest that language learners prefer electronic dictionaries over paper ones. This outcome aligns with previous findings (Tang, 1997; Deng, 2005).

Analyzing electronic dictionaries use for various types of EFL activities, students have mentioned that they primarily use them for reading and translating activities. The learners have also noticed that they have used the electronic dictionaries mostly in listening to the voiced pronunciation of words, reading examples provided for each entry, and checking different parts of speech of an entry. The EFL students occasionally or never use phonetics of words, illustrations, hyperlinks, and etymologies of the entries. These results coincide with those obtained in similar research by Dashtestani (2013) on EFL teachers’ and students’ perspectives on using electronic dictionaries for learning English.

Several surveys have revealed the general learner’s preference for bilingual dictionaries (Nesi, 2014; Alhaisoni, 2016). This finding supports our research results demonstrating that 78.1% of the participants use bilingual dictionaries more frequently than monolingual ones. They also agree with Altuwairesh (2021) as students’ perceptions were in favor of bilingual dictionaries, ‘the fact that the participants prefer bilingual dictionaries is not surprising with the sample being translation trainees’ (p. 78). Thus, the findings obtained from the analysis of the students’ questionnaire revealed Ukrainian students’ positive attitudes towards electronic dictionaries implementation in learning EFL.

Conclusion

The study aims to analyze using electronic dictionaries for EFL learning in Ukrainian higher education, to research various types of dictionaries used in EFL learning and the student’s attitude toward them. The research found that learners prefer and use bilingual dictionaries more frequently than others. Moreover, electronic dictionaries are used significantly more than print versions due to their convenience, comprehensiveness, portability, and up-to-date.

Implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies and techniques in the foreign language classes, such as electronic dictionaries, has increased the foreign language proficiency of students, providing the best conditions for gaining listening and reading skills, increasing motivation for learning, promoting personal development of students and made the teaching and learning process student-oriented. Analyzing electronic dictionaries used for various EFL activities, students have mentioned that they primarily use them for reading and translating activities. The learners have also noticed that they have used the electronic dictionaries mostly in listening to the voiced pronunciation of words, reading examples provided for each entry, and checking different parts of speech of an entry.

It is a fact that electronic dictionaries are gaining increasing popularity among English learners in Ukrainian and foreign educational institutions and have a profound influence on users’ preferences and patterns of dictionary use. As pointed out by Altuwairesh (2021), ‘the move to e-dictionaries is rather a global phenomenon’ (p. 79).

To conclude, an area worth further investigation is finding the teachers’ views and experiences toward electronic dictionaries implementation in EFL teaching.
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Developing the Intercultural Competence of Algerian University Students through Virtual Intercultural Exchanges

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Received:10/10/2022 Accepted: 12/24/2022 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Virtual milieus are becoming a setting for a great deal of intercultural contact. Learners engaged in virtual exchanges are likely to encounter users from different nationalities who bring with them their culturally-grounded behaviors, beliefs and expectations as to what is most appropriate for intercultural interactions. Against this background, learners need specific skills, attitudes and knowledge to establish working relationships and collaborate with distant partners, namely intercultural competence. The present paper explores the effectiveness and relevance of participating in virtual intercultural exchanges to develop Algerian University learners’ intercultural competence(or lack thereof). The particular significance of this study lies in shedding light on the importance of scaling up virtual intercultural exchanges to become an expected activity in Algerian Higher education. We opted for the quasi-experimental design as an appropriate research strategy for the present study. Data were gathered from attitudinal surveys administered to 38 students enrolled at the department of English language of Abou Bakr Belkaid University, Algeria. Participants were not selected randomly. They were grouped into two groups: a focus group entailing 19 students who participated in a telecollaborative partnership offered in the fall of 2020, and a control group of 19 students who were not involved in intercultural exchange programs. This initiative attempts to present some preliminary findings to show that virtual intercultural exchanges can assist Algerian learners in developing their intercultural competence under the guidance of their instructor.

Keywords: Algerian university students, intercultural competence, intercultural education, telecollaboration, virtual intercultural exchange

Introduction

This paper reports on the findings of a study investigating the development of Algerian University learners’ intercultural competence (IC) when engaged in virtual intercultural exchanges (or lack thereof). Such partnerships contain activities designed to help students become more flexible with different others and equip them with abilities needed for effective intercultural exchanges. Currently, little is known about intercultural teaching/learning in Algerian Higher education and whether telecollaborative partnerships are likely to help students develop their intercultural abilities. The following research question guides our study to learn more about the effectiveness of online intercultural exchanges in higher education: "To what extent can Algerian University learners' intercultural competence be promoted through online intercultural exchanges?" To develop the latter, the researchers used the framework provided by Fantini (2007) to determine the effectiveness and relevance of this technological tool and activities in developing Algerian University learners’ intercultural competence.

A major contribution of this research on virtual intercultural exchanges in a monolingual Algerian context, where English is used as a Foreign Language (FL), has been to add some findings to support previous studies in the same field. Furthermore, the insights from such studies have and continue to draw the attention of language instructors to integrate telecollaboration in their language classes to help university learners promote the required abilities and skills to communicate, learn and collaborate with different partners.

This research paper begins by stating the research problem, and the main aim of this study refers then to the contribution of these research findings to the field of intercultural education in Algerian Universities. Next, it reviews the concept of culture in language teaching in light of computer-mediated technology and how language learners might relocate their subject positions while interacting virtually with people from different countries and cultures. Then, it unpacks the concept of IC and its sub-dimensions. Also, it reviews previous research findings on the development of university students’ IC through telecollaborative partnerships (or lack thereof). It moves to describe the research design, instruments, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Finally, it attempts to answer the research question and then discuss and interpret the findings of previous studies from the literature review section.

Literature Review

Teaching a language as a foreign or a Second Language (hence, SL) can impact on the sociolinguistic aspect of culture (Kramsch, 2013). In the FL teaching context, where there is almost no immediate and/or daily communication with native speakers unless, in virtual encounters, culture embodies a journey of discoveries on how life would look like through the eyes of target people. FL students, not least Algerians, learn about the target culture with the only aim of satisfying their curiosity about otherness; they try to adapt to it or adopt it as their own only when communicating with native speakers, either while staying in the host country (Kramsch, 2013) or virtual contexts. Yet, in the SL teaching context, culture can be subjected to debates and concerns.
of living and working for immigrants; they acquire a national culture that is different from their own through schooling -as a secondary socialization process (Kramsch, 1998).

In the early 21st century, due to globalization and the rapid spread of computer-mediated technology, the ever-changing nature of the world's interconnectedness has changed the role of culture in language teaching (Risager, 2006, as cited in Kramsch, 2013).

However, the modernist perspective in which culture is researched and taught remains the same; culture is still regarded as linked to predefined social structures of particular speech communities (Kramsch, 2013). These speech communities are focalized on individuals sharing common goals –rather than common values and memories- and belonging to many communities of practice (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, as cited in Kramsch, 2013).

In their process of FL learning, language learners generally find themselves encountering other worldviews of joint activities and routines as well as different life goals, values and behaviors, thus, some applied linguists were incited to espouse a post-modernist (Giddens, 1991) or ecological approach to the teaching of culture (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). In this approach, culture has become a socially constructed discourse and is reconstructed by individuals through interactions; interlocutors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are likely to be displacing their cultural views in the process of understanding each other. Here, much stress is put on the relationship between the self and others over multiple timescales in a decentred perspective. In a post-modernist approach, learning a foreign language does not enhance language learners to change their identity but might lead them to change their subject positions; consequently, they might locate themselves in the third place of discourse (Kramsch, 2009). In fact, in face-to-face or online interactions, students construct their own and their interlocutors’ subject positions by asking questions about any ambiguity raised or choosing which topic to discuss or to avoid (Kramsch, 2013).

**Intercultural Competence**

IC remains a concept that much like culture is difficult to define. The problem lies in the multidimensionality of the construct and in the fact that many of its proposed components are abstract concepts. The most accepted definition among scholars is the one provided by Deardorff (2004) who defined it as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p. 196).

According to Byram and Zarate (1997), the sub-components of IC are Knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values that an individual holds as an agent participating in many social groups. The foundation of IC is in the attitudes (savoir être) of the intercultural speaker that refer to their ability to decentre. Another crucial element is Knowledge (savoirs), not essential knowledge about a particular culture, but rather a knowledge of how social groups and identities operate and what is involved in intercultural communication (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002).
To see how misunderstandings can occur and they might be resolved, intercultural speakers need the attitudes of decentring as well as the skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), that is, comparing ideas, events or documents of two or more cultures and seeing how the other perspective might perceive each. Because it is mainly impossible to anticipate knowledge of all cultures, intercultural speakers need to acquire the skills of learning new knowledge and integrating it with pre-existing one; this could be facilitated by asking appropriate questions about other people’s unconscious beliefs, values and behaviors which cannot be easily explained, and hence skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/ faire). Finally, individuals’ own beliefs, values and behaviors are deeply ingrained and can result in rejection; therefore, intercultural speakers need critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager) of themselves and their values and those of others (Byram et al, 2002).

The Development of Intercultural Competence through Virtual Intercultural Communication

Online intercultural communication, alternatively called virtual exchange or telecollaboration, encompasses instructional practices such as collaborative tasks, collective inquiry, and opportunities for social interaction between internationally dispersed partner classes using internet communication tools (e.g., e-mail, chat, blogs, videoconferencing) without the cost of travel abroad (Helm, 2015; Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016). Communication in telecollaborative activities occurs synchronously or asynchronously or combined utilizing various models and instruments. These online exchanges can be seen to promote: (a) learner autonomy through increased techno-pedagogical skills, (b) foreign language development and (c) intercultural communicative competence (Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016). The ensuing discussion will focus on the latter competence based on reviewing some previous research findings in university class-to-class telecollaborative programs.

As mentioned above, along with promoting language skills, telecollaborative learning aims at improving learners’ IC (Abrams, 2002; Belz & Thorne, 2006; Byram, 1997; Furstenberg, Levet, English, &Maillet, 2001; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010; O’Dowd & Ware, 2009; Toscu & Erten,2020). O’Dowd (2007) stressed the potential of telecollaboration in assisting learners in developing their IC as opposed to traditional teaching. When encountered with linguistically and culturally different others, learners are stimulated to reflect upon different worldviews (Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997). In a research synthesis of studies reported between 2010 and 2015, Çiftçi and Savaş (2018) reported that the main claim of telecollaborative studies was that learners increased their knowledge (Lee & Markey, 2014; Schenker, 2012), interest (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010), curiosity (Chen & Yang, 2016), and awareness (Angelova & Zhao, 2016; Chen & Yang, 2016) toward both their own culture and other culturally-grounded standpoints.

Furthermore, Liaw and Bunn-Le Master (2010) pinpointed a change in intercultural exchanges from a mere fact-based information exchange to a more advanced level of sharing personal views on the assigned topics. In their research on intercultural learning, Liaw (2006;
Developing the Intercultural Competence of Algerian University

Sambouli & Sarou

2007), Jin and Erben (2007), Schenker (2012), and Chen and Yang (2016), to name but a few, showed different levels of IC among their participants. Yet, a clear developmental process among participants could not be observed. Thus, it would be fair to say that, according to Furcsa (2009), and Ware and Kraus (2005), learners developed an awareness of the viewpoints of different individuals and their cultures. In a nutshell, virtual exchanges can be said to trigger learners to develop their IC to different extents, yet, IC was not easily measurable. Therefore, the shift in perspectives towards the target culture and reflections on own culture was used to capture instances of intercultural development (Elola & Oskoz, 2008).

Although the use of telecollaborative programs in educational settings has been reported with successful exchanges, there were still some instances of “failed communication” (O’Dowd & Ritter, 2006) between distant learners in different locations. Bueno-Alastuey and Kleban (2016) reported that their Polish participants thought their Spanish partners lacked motivation. In addition, Ware (2013) asserts that some factors, such as a lack of stimulating context, topic development, asking questions, and risk-taking evolved into a failed exchange. In the same line of thought, Ware and Kessler (2016) identified unsuccessful communication that includes questions that were out of context and lacking in depth.

More importantly, opinions differ with regard to assumed intercultural development through mere contact with speakers of other languages (Helm, 2013, 2016; Dooly, 2016; Flowers, Kelsen & Cvitkovic, 2019; Godwin-Jones, 2020; O’Dowd & Dooly, 2020, as cited in Dooly & Vinagre, 2022).

Method

This research was conducted following a quasi-experimental design. The researchers’ decision can be justified by the difficulty of finding university partners for virtual intercultural exchanges and, by contrast, the availability of a pre-existing virtual classroom. More particularly, the researchers used a “non-equivalent comparison group design without pre-test” within which an experimental and “a comparison group is used. However, the comparison and experimental groups are not equivalent because of the non-random assignment of persons to groups.” (Hartas, 2010, p.252). Also, researchers do not often have control over the treatment; they rather scrutinize pre-existing groups that have received different treatments.

Participants

Our case study labeled Global Virtual Classroom (Mouhadjer, 2010) at the English Department of Abou Bakr Belkaid University, Algeria, offered in the fall of 2020 during one semester, is one instance of a telecollaborative partnership. Under the guidance of their instructor, learners meet twice a week with their distant partners from Africa, Asia, Europe and America to have a first-hand experience through real-time videoconferencing, chat and emails. Participation in this partnership was a course requirement for American students. In contrast, it was a
supplementary class for Algerian keypals by which they can get a certificate approved from East Carolina University.

The focus group consisted of 19 Algerian students from Abou-Bakr Belkaid University engaged in virtual intercultural exchange with American partners from East-Carolina University. The control group also consisted of 19 Algerian students from the same University. The focus group consisted of 19 Algerian students from Abou-Bakr Belkaid University engaged in virtual intercultural exchange with American partners from East-Carolina University. The control group also consisted of 19 Algerian students from the same University. Participants enrolled in the Department of English Language were taken from both genders (14 males and 24 females). Their age ranged between 19 to 25 years old. The sample population was selected using convenience sampling; this is because, in educational contexts, true experimental designs with random assignments are rarely feasible (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

**Research Instruments**

The researchers opted for a self-report questionnaire as a research instrument to conduct this quasi-experimental study. It was divided into two parts: the first part concerned participants’ personal information such as gender, age, geographic area, grade level, familiarity with the concept of IC, reading about other cultures and prior intercultural experiences (traveling abroad for an extended time or virtual encounters); While the second part encompassed the “Intercultural Competence Scale” developed by Fantini (2007). This scale consists of 53 items, and they are formed as a 5-Likert type. It embraces 11 items addressing the respondents’ intercultural knowledge, such as culture-based information and linguistic proficiency; 10 skill items for assessing the participants’ capability to communicate with culturally different others; 13 attitude items for evaluating the participants’ respect for and openness to different cultures as well as their tolerance to ambiguities; and at last, 18 awareness items that are culture-related awareness about the self and otherness.

**Research Procedures**

The participants filled in the questionnaire that included statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “no competence” (0%) to “very high competence” (100%). Statistical analyses were conducted using Excel, and then, descriptive statistics were used to examine the participants’ IC level as it is disposed of in Table One.

The researchers used the visual inspection of histograms, Q-Q plots and box plots to test for normal distribution and to determine whether parametric or nonparametric tests should be used to analyze the recorded data. The findings indicated that participants’ IC scores followed a non-normal distribution; thus, non-parametric tests were preferred to analyze data. To compare participants’ IC scores of both control and focus groups, an initial null hypothesis needs to be formulated, which states that there is no difference between the two groups. It is expected that at the end of the study, the null hypothesis is either rejected or not rejected. To this end, the
researchers selected the Mann-Whitney U test to compare between control and focus groups’ IC scores as well as to disclose whether overseas experiences reveal any differences in participants’ IC.

**Results**

This study attempted to examine the effectiveness and relevance of engaging Algerian University students in virtual intercultural exchanges to promote their IC. The results are presented in terms of descriptive statistics, followed by a discussion concerning previously published research works within the field of telecollaboration and intercultural development.

### Table 1. Medians for participants’ self-evaluation of their IC and its components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Total IC</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>70.68%</td>
<td>50.90%</td>
<td>70.76%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>72.33%</td>
<td>67.27%</td>
<td>78.46%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table one, the results of descriptive analyses reveal that participants in focus groups achieved a good level of IC (n=19; Md=70.68%), and so did the control group (n=19; Md=72.33%). Scrutinizing the components of IC for more details (see table one), the results indicated that the median of focus group participants in intercultural attitudes, skills and awareness (n=19; Md=70.76%; Md=74%; Md=72.22%, respectively) was significantly more than the fourth component, i.e., intercultural knowledge (n=19; Md=50.90%). However, the findings display that the control group participants’ median in intercultural attitudes, skills and awareness (n=19; Md=78.46%; Md=70%; Md=71.11%, respectively) was slightly more than the fourth component, i.e., intercultural knowledge (n=19; Md=67.27%).

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test are shown in Table two, from which it can be noticed that there is no statistically significant difference in the IC levels of the focus group (Md=70.68%; n=19) and control group (Md=72.33%; n=19), U = 157, U-critical value=113 (using sample sizes n=19 in both groups, and two-sided level of significance α=0.05). Given that our U-test statistic is higher than the U-critical value, we can retain the null hypothesis that the two groups are equal. This means that focus group participants performed on the IC questionnaire on a similar basis as the control group.

### Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results and medians for IC within focus and control groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>U test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>70.68%</td>
<td>72.33%</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U-critical value =113, α=0.05
Next, while collecting data, it was noticed that eight participants from the control group (42.10%) said they traveled abroad for an extended time. Thus, the researchers speculated that this factor might have affected the results. Accordingly, they used the Mann-Whitney U test to disclose whether such overseas experiences may reveal different IC levels. The findings that are displayed in table 3 indicate a considerable dissimilarity in the IC levels of participants who traveled abroad for an extended time (Md=82.96%; n=10) and those who have never been overseas (Md=63.83%; n=28) U = 60, U-critical value=80 (using sample sizes n=10 and n=28; two-sided level of significance α=0.05). Given that our U-test statistic is less than the U-critical value, we can reject the null hypothesis that the two groups are equal. This means that participants performed differently on the IC questionnaire.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test results and medians for IC with regard to overseas experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Overseas experience</th>
<th>No overseas experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Md</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>82.96%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U-critical value =80, α=0.05

In sum, the previously displayed findings in this section demonstrate that control and focus group participants self-evaluated their IC to be at a good level. Concerning the sub-dimensions of IC, participants within both groups scored less in intercultural knowledge as compared to the other components (attitudes, skills, and awareness). Participants were then grouped concerning overseas experiences. Consequently, learners who have been abroad for an extended time exhibited a higher IC level than those who have never traveled overseas.

Discussion

The researchers used a control group with whom to compare the IC scores of the focus group. The above preliminary findings were discussed accurately to find an answer to the given main research question that helped us develop the present research study and confirm some hypothetical questions were in mind regarding the IC level of a selected Algerian University learners’ population. The current study found that participants in focus and control groups self-evaluated themselves as having a good level of IC. The median scores of focus group students in intercultural attitudes, skills and awareness components were significantly higher than within the fourth component, i.e., intercultural knowledge. Likewise, the difference in median scores between intercultural attitudes, skills, awareness, and the fourth component, viz., knowledge of control group participants has been reported to be less than within focus group informants. Accordingly, it can be concluded that both groups scored approximately the same overall IC level. More accurately, informants’ intercultural knowledge compared to the other IC sub-scales (attitudes, skills, and awareness) was relatively low.
The present preliminary results are not aligned with the findings of some reported studies (Abrams, 2002; Belz & Thorne, 2006; Byram, 1997; Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016; O’Dowd & Ware, 2009; Toscu & Erten, 2020). The hypothesis put forward at the outset of this research study could neither be confirmed nor rejected due to the interference of the third variable. This finding draws intercultural scholars’ attention to the need for further research by re-considering any third variable that might falsify the main findings of the investigation.

These preliminary results may be explained because 42.10% of the sample population of the control group reported being abroad for an extended period of time ranging from three months to three years. In other words, overseas experiences helped learners promote their IC compared to the pre-existing group of learners who participated in a telecollaborative partnership. Similar to some previous studies (Hismanoglu, 2011; Jular, 2007; Jung, 2002), participants who traveled abroad evaluated their IC as well as its sub-dimensions (intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills & awareness) to be at a high level and higher than that of those who have never been abroad. More importantly, participation in international exchange programs may not be afforded to every student, thus, as an alternative initiative, it has been suggested that teachers can assist their students’ IC development through telecollaboration projects (Lazar, 2014), which was the focus of the current investigation.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore the relevance of adopting a virtual exchange approach to develop learners’ IC in an Algerian University in a non-multilingual context. The findings revealed that participants’ IC level was good among control and focus groups. Some issues limit the findings of this preliminary study: (1) the pre-departure level of participants varied concerning various variables like their educational levels (2) there was a great variation in the length of stay abroad for those who traveled overseas (3) their familiarity with IC differed in the how the means and frequency of interaction with their distant relatives/friends, all of these factors mentioned above that the researchers did not control may intervene as a mediator variable, and thus, affect the research findings. The researchers focused only on overseas experiences as a third variable reported in the literature to have a direct link with developing IC and can be substituted with virtual intercultural exchanges, which is the independent variable of this investigation.

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References


Tools for Implementing Distance Learning during the War: Experience of Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine

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Received: 11/13/2022 Accepted: 01/04/2023 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
The article is devoted to describing tools for implementing distance learning in the educational process of higher educational institutions in Ukraine in the war condition. Due to the introduction of martial law in Ukraine and the need for the digitalization of modern education, distance learning tools contribute to better students knowledge acquisition. The current state of research on distance education in Ukraine is presented, and various kinds, types, methods, and means of training are clarified. Different types of tasks are described, and special attention is paid to test lessons, which is an effective way to check the level of mastering the educational material by students. The analysis is based on the characteristics of Moodle, Learning Apps, and Kahoot! used in the learning process at the Faculty of Philology of Uzhhorod National University. The advantages and disadvantages of using web resources in synchronous and asynchronous learning modes are determined. Distance learning tools are an integral part of achieving educational success under computer literacy and a sufficient level of motivation for all participants in the educational process. The prospects and improvement of the remote learning process by developing strategies using new information and communication technologies in distance learning are determined.

Keywords: distance learning, English language, Kahoot!, Learning Apps, learning during the war, learning tools and methods, Moodle platform, tests

Cite as: Banyoi, V., Kharkivska, O., Shkurko, H., & Yatskiv, M. (2023). Tools for Implementing Distance Learning during the War: Experience of Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023 DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.6
Introduction

The educational process in Ukraine today is a challenge to the whole world and humanity, a test not only for the younger generation but also for, the older generation of teachers who have to learn to work in new realities – in the conditions of war. We cannot but respond to the needs of today, and even move the educational process beyond reality. We must support it in any way because it is a struggle of light with darkness, which is obvious. The flexibility and accessibility of education necessitate the creation of educational content. It is worth noting that since the full-scale war in Ukraine, not a single higher education institution has ceased functioning, not a single academic institution has been disbanded, and employees have not been fired. Of course, the usual rhythm of life has changed, and, accordingly, the learning process has shifted. Still, education in the conditions of war continues to function because after the end of hostilities we will have to rebuild, update and reform our state and education. One of the directions of modernization of higher education in Ukraine is the introduction of distance learning.

Since 2019, worldwide education has changed because then we were not ready for such a form of education. Still, today it seems that a return to the classical educational process is impossible. Therefore, distance, remote or online education has rapidly burst into our lives. Distance education processes are understood as “educational technologies implemented mainly with the use of information and telecommunication technologies with indirect (at a distance) or direct interaction of the student and the teacher” (Distance Learning). The purpose of distance learning is to provide students with learning opportunities directly at their place of residence, work, or temporary stay. Such studying has a flexible nature, and students usually do not attend regular classes in the form of lectures and seminars. They are provided with the necessary textbooks, manuals, explicit curricula, and tasks of various natures. Consultations are usually conducted via the Internet using computer tools.

According to Kostiuchkov, (2020):

Distance education is not only a technical innovation but also a social innovation that ensures the effectiveness and productivity of the educational process, expands the range of opportunities for each person in choosing the optimal, corresponding to the realities of time, psychophysiological characteristics and social status, forms of realization of the constitutional right of a citizen to receive high-quality, modern, individually appropriate education (p. 45).

The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2021-2031, while analyzing global trends, states that education is currently lagging behind digitalization, so more efforts are needed to fully use the tools and strengths of new technologies (Strategy, p. 26).

Among the changes related to the digitalization of education, there are transformations of methods, forms, and means of teaching, a reduction of the number of classroom hours, and an increase in the hours allocated for independent work of students. In addition, the role of the teacher in the educational process has also changed: from the primary source of information, one turns into an organizer, consultant, supervisor, and expert in students independent work. All this requires the search for more effective teaching tools that would perform the following functions in the educational process: informing, forming, systematizing, controlling, and motivating. These requirements can be met by the latest computer-based learning tools, which include electronic manuals, multimedia courses, training programs, etc. (Vlasenko & Shynkarenko, 2013).

The strategic goal of higher education today is the introduction of innovative technologies and distance learning. The main tasks of higher education in this direction are “the creation of an
industry of innovative technologies and learning tools that meet the world scientific and technical level; digitalization of all processes in the system of higher education; regulation of distance learning as a form of higher education” (Strategy, p. 47).

For the effective implementation of distance education, it is equally essential to create the most favorable conditions for higher education students; professional development of the teaching staff and retraining based on the introduction of the latest information and communication and psychological and pedagogical teaching technologies (Tkachenko, Khmelnytska, 2021, p. 93). Often there are specific difficulties, in particular lack of desire and material interest of teachers, lack of computer skills, inadequate computer literacy, and biased attitude to innovative technologies (Osadcha & Sysoeva, 2019, p. 277). At the present stage, the difficulties are also external: massive missile strikes on the energy system of Ukraine have caused another big problem that hinders the implementation of the educational process, and effective and efficient interaction between teacher and student – daily blackouts. Accordingly, we all understand that the modern educational process should form some personal qualities that will help to cope with the existing problems that impede effective communication between teachers and students, in particular: creativity, artistry, independence, determination, etc. In this process, innovative teaching methods will become not a burden, but an effective tool for success.

Objectives of the Study
1. To find out different kinds and types, ways, and means of learning, as well as to present the current state of research on distance education in Ukraine.
2. To describe different types of tasks, including tests, which students use while studying at the Faculty of Philology of Uzhhorod National University using Moodle, Learning Apps, and Kahoot!
3. To identify the advantages and disadvantages of web resources for distance learning, to establish possible prospects for the development and improvement of the remote learning process through a variety of technologies and digitalization processes.

Literature Review
The problem of distance learning was considered in the works of many domestic and foreign scientists. Many scientific results are devoted to the study of general issues of content and organization of distance learning (Avdoshin, Bykov, Wheeler, Karpenko, Korsak, Kukharenko, Polat, Keegan & Moore, and others). The specifics of the development of electronic and interactive learning tools, their characteristics, and features of use in the works of Nosenko, Chekal, Zhaldak, Khutorsky, Mashbyts, Koval, Downes, Allen & Hiltz, and others are thoroughly analyzed. The use of information technologies in the pedagogical process was studied by Korsunska, Pasichnyk, Stefanenko & Toroptsov; psychological and pedagogical aspects and technologies of creating a distance course – Kukharenko, Oliynyk & Rybalka. Such a cohort of scientists indicates that distance education in Ukraine has significant achievements, and later will have undeniable results. All these areas of distance learning research are essential but, given the realities of the modern world, the issue of organizing high-quality, diverse feedback between the participants of the educational process in the context of distance learning, particularly in higher education institutions, is highly relevant. Students, as well as teachers, lack communication – live communication, so the creation of various types of chats, forums, search for platforms and opportunities not only to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of students but also to maintain
constant online communication with them, is no less critical in the organization of the educational process.

According to Koziy, (2020):

Modern capabilities of information and communication technologies, computer educational systems, and programs and the availability of the entire information space on the Internet make the distance learning process online more effective and comfortable for both teachers and students, develop creativity and personal potential of higher education students. During such an educational process, the possibilities of working in small groups and individual work increase. The student can communicate with the teacher online, solve problems, and model situations, including analytical and critical thinking, knowledge, and search abilities. At the same time, the widespread introduction of distance learning as an alternative education through online communication in the educational and scientific environment of universities, requires significant consolidated action of information centers, laboratories, and libraries to update it with new generation computer educational programs, by modern requirements, and filling it with quality information electronic resources to ensure the acquisition of knowledge (pp. 41-42).

According to Bykov, (2009) there are two factors led to the emergence and development of modern forms of distance learning. The first of them is a new educational paradigm, which defined and declared the principles of open education, which was the reaction of the education system to the challenges of objective globalization trends. The second is a large-scale informatization of education, which ensures the comprehensive implementation of ICT in educational practice (Bykov, 2009, p. 95). Distance learning implements modern requirements for education: flexibility of organizational forms, individualization of educational content, intensification of knowledge, and communication in the process of information exchange (Koziar, 2014, p. 81).

E-learning technologies can be used in full-time, part-time, and distance learning. They help to organize independent work, promote the development of practical skills, and also allow for continuous monitoring of the learning process.

Blended learning (classroom and e-learning) combines the best qualities of both forms of knowledge. Learning in the classroom provides social interaction, and develops skills for working in pairs, and in groups. Learning with the help of innovative technologies has a different effect. Koziar (2014) notes that

Modern ICTs provide students and teachers with access to non-traditional sources of information, increase the effectiveness of independent work, provide completely new opportunities for creativity, manifestation, and identification of their abilities, obtaining and consolidation of various skills, allow to implement fundamentally new forms and methods of teaching. These are such means of access as local and global information networks, teleconferences, webinars, etc. (p. 82).

The experience of implementing distance learning at Uzhhorod National University has already been characterized. Special attention is paid to the description and analysis of the most important methods of teaching foreign languages, in particular English, during the global pandemic caused by the spread of the coronavirus disease Covid-19 in early spring 2020, specifically, the technologies of the Moodle learning management system are described in detail as necessary means of implementing successful two-way interaction between a teacher and a student (Venzhynovych, Poluzhyn, Banyoi & Kharkivska, 2021).
Several, other interesting scientific works have appeared that draw attention to the peculiarities of distance learning implementation in current conditions in Ukraine (see, for example, Tymoshchuk, 2022; Dvorianchykova, Bondarchuk, Syniavska & Vyshnevskaya, 2021; Labinska, Zienia, Matiichuk & Danylovych, 2021; Volodymyrivna, Vasylivna, Anatoliivna & Anatoliivna, 2021).

Methodology
During the study, we used a set of methods – general philosophical, general scientific, and linguistic. In particular, empirical, synthetic methods, namely observation, and self-study, allowed us to generalize the process of distance learning at Uzhhorod National University, which has been ongoing since 2019 and is being actively implemented in 2022. Traditional methods were also used: descriptive, comparative, evaluation, searching, and constructive ways, the purpose of which is to discover new phenomena, processes, and forms of learning. From the general techniques, analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, abstraction, generalization, modeling, construction, analogy, association, etc., were involved.

Data Collection Procedure
The use of innovative computer technologies provides an opportunity to create a qualitatively new information educational environment without borders and with the possibility of organizing a global system of distance learning. Distance learning is a component of creating an open education system that provides nationwide access to educational resources.

Uzhhorod National University offers online learning via Google Meet, Classroom, and Moodle e-learning platforms (E-Learning. Uzhhorod National University).

Tests with automatic checking allow you to organize a quick assessment of the level of mastering the educational material students. Typically, test systems can create questions of different types (multiple choice, text or numerical answer, ordering, matching, etc.). Libraries of ready-made questions are often available that you can add to your testing sessions, modifying them as needed. Most services provide the ability to create questions, sometimes with multiple-choice answers, using images, audio, and video clips. This way, you can form a whole trajectory of a single topic. Typical settings for online tests include the ability to shuffle questions and answer choices within them, set time limits (time to attempt, time to open the quiz for completion), limit the number of attempts, and the method or time of reporting test results. If testing is used for educational purposes, you can loosen the strictness of these parameters. If the testing is for control purposes, then more severe restrictions can be applied, and students can be reminded of the importance of academic integrity. It should be noted that automated testing, although it dramatically simplifies the routine work of the teacher, is sometimes insufficient to reliably diagnose the success of mastering the topic. Therefore, supplement test tasks with practical tasks, exercises, essays, etc. The teacher can provide feedback on the test results individually or take into account the dynamics of student responses in planning different classes (Organization of Distance Learning at School Methodological Recommendations, 2020, pp. 33-34).

At the Faculty of Philology, training is organized in a mixed form. Some students work in the classroom, and some stay at home. The part of students who work remotely usually receives educational material via the Google Meet platform, and the systematic consolidation of what has been learned, self-study, etc., takes place on the Moodle e-learning site.
The use of distance learning technologies increases and improves the effectiveness of the educational process, which largely depends on the level of preparation of teachers for the implementation of distance learning, as well as on the readiness of students to study in distance education (Tkachenko, Khmelnytska, 2021, p. 91). In the conditions of war, mastery of information technologies and motivation to learn become the defining competencies of a modern student.

At the Faculty of Philology, a survey was conducted among students of 2-4 courses, which types of work on the Moodle e-learning site they prefer. In total, 247 students were interviewed. They were offered four options: essays, tasks, tests, and glossary. Students who prefer testing – 156, readings are chosen by 47 students, articles – 34, glossary – 10 (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Results of surveys of students of the Faculty of Philology on different types of work on the Moodle platform.](image)

Let us dwell on the three leading platforms that are actively used by students and teachers in the distance learning at Uzhhorod National University – Moodle, LearningApps, and Kahoot!

Playing the role of an educational learning environment, the Moodle platform has proven itself to be the best. Especially when our country was in a complete blackout, electricity appeared only at night, and the educational process has almost entirely moved to the Moodle platform. Moodle (an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is a learning platform designed to bring together educators, administrators, and students in one reliable, secure and integrated system to create a personalized learning environment (Moodle). Moodle has well-developed tools for organizing knowledge control. First of all, it provides the opportunity to accept written works through “Assignment”, to conduct online interaction between students through “Workshop”, as well as testing through “Quiz”. According to Ilyina, (2020), Moodle is a learning platform is designed to unite students, teachers, and administrators into a single integrated system the personalized learning environment. The Moodle learning platform is adapted for online learning and has significant didactic opportunities for creating innovative teaching tools (pp. 31-32).

*Testing in Moodle can be customized* for different requirements and needs. In particular, it is relevant today to conduct the final and examination control in a remote format (URL: https://ceit.ucu.edu.ua/news/testy-v-moodle/ Date of access: 29.11.2022).

It is worth noting that preparing tests for uploading them to the Moodle system is a long process. First of all, it is the elaboration of interesting, original theoretical and practical tests.
Usually, students like tests with one correct answer. Therefore, before uploading a test, it needs to be worked out (Figure 2). Developing tests with one right solution, we first create them in the usual Word format, and then prepare them for uploading to the Moodle system. Each test consists of two parts: the question and the answer block. The answer block should be separated from the question block by curly brackets {} (Figure 2). The answer block also has a peculiar design. Before the correct answer, we put the equal sign (=), and before the wrong answers, we put the tilde sign (~), after the tests are ready to be saved in the format as “plain text”, encoding the text “Unicode UTF-8” and only after that, our tests can be uploaded to the site by choosing the GIFT file format.

*Figure 2. Preparing tests for uploading to the Moodle platform.*

After uploading, the tests acquire a slightly different look and are suitable for processing by students (Figure 3). On the left, a test question with several answers opens before the student. The Moodle platform allows you to customize the number of queries on one page; usually one. On the right, the student sees a table with the number of test tasks. When the test is completed, correct answers are colored green, incorrect answers are colored red, and if the question requires the teacher's assessment, the test is colored gray (Figure 3).

*Figure 3. Test ready for processing on the Moodle platform.*

To repeat the learned material and assess its understanding, a good solution is to use the web resource Learning Apps (https://learningapps.org/), which allows you to use pre-designed exercises or create your developments. The website provides the opportunity to choose templates based on which you can make an exciting and informative product for students because the effect of teachers in the implementation of distance learning is an integral part of the digitalization of education due to the requirements of today. *The Learning Apps web resource was developed* to introduce interactive modules into the educational process. The platform’s advantages are a bright interface, straightforward navigation, and many sample tasks that can become the basis for developing your own. It is also essential that the site is available in Ukrainian, which allows teachers of Ukrainian higher education institutions to integrate the development into their courses seamlessly. The teacher can choose the desired type of task, including Matching Pairs, Group Assignment, Number Line, Simple Order, Freetext input, Matching Pairs on Images, Multiple-
Choice Quizzes, and Cloze Text. The type of interactive exercises depends on the educational goal, task, and subject specifics. When working with students to test their level of knowledge, exercises based on Simple Order templates (especially when working with international students) and Multiple-Choice Quiz work best. For tasks based on the Simple Order template, you need to fill in the essential elements: specify the App Title, Task Description, which will be shown when you start the exercise, Cards (you can enter text or attach Images, Text to Speech, Audio or Video Files). Here the teacher has no restrictions and can use all means to create the most engaging interactive product. It is worth noting that the Learning Apps platform is a vital tool in the educational interaction of teachers with international students: audio responses, live speech recordings, and text elements work well. Regarding the text elements, it is worth paying attention to some recommendations: the answers should be placed in the correct sequence, as the application will then change their line (Figure 4); it is also necessary to identify the correct right answer.

Figure 4. The task is ready for processing on the LearningApps platform.

It is essential that you can leave hints before completing the task and words for feedback after the successful completion of the exercise. This contributes to a better result, as the student feels the support of the teacher in the educational process (Figure 5). In the conditions of war, such a connection between the participants of the educational process is vital; students do not lose motivation, which in turn improves the quality of studying in the formation of relevant competencies.

Figure 5. Correct completion of the task on the LearningApps platform.

To work with the Multiple-Choice Quiz template, you also need to fill in the task elements: App Title, Task Description, which will be shown when you start the exercise, Cards (you can
enter text or attach Images, Text to Speech, Audio or Video Files). Here you can define multiple correct answers and leave hints (Figure 6).

![LearningApps test ready for processing](image1)

*Figure 6. The test is ready for processing on the LearningApps platform.*

In case of an incorrect answer, the student will receive the appropriate mark (Figure 7).

![LearningApps incorrect completion](image2)

*Figure 7. Incorrect completion of a test task on the LearningApps platform.*

Such interactive lessons allow not only to check the knowledge gained quickly but also to diversify the classical forms of teaching with elements of innovation. In addition, they ensure the maximum activity of participants in the educational process and the effectiveness of learning.

“Kahoot!” is a platform for checking the level of knowledge of students through online testing. This resource is trendy among students, as they can take tests through a web browser or mobile application. First, go to https://kahoot.com/ and go through the registration steps. We focus on the free version of the platform (Sign up for free!), and the primary registration option (Get Basic for free). After that, you must choose a social role: Teacher, Student, Home, or Business.

For example, when selecting the role of a teacher, you need to fill in the basic information about the place of work. After filling in the initial data about the teacher, access to creating tests is opened. Free access allows you to make only two types of questions: Quiz, i.e., multiple choice questions, when the student is given several answers and chooses one correct one (Figure 8), and True or False, when the student is offered two mutually exclusive answer options (Figure 9).
Figure 8. The multiple choice test is ready for processing on the Kahoot platform!

When preparing a test, the teacher sets the question type, time limit, and several points. An audio or video file, photo, or gif animation can be attached to the test base (Figure 9). The advantage of using audio files is that the program can read the text printed by the teacher. It is also convenient to add videos from YouTube and Vimeo (with the definition of the time of the video display). All this contributes to the maximum modernization of the educational process; such an interactive way of learning will interest students and provide top results.

Figure 9. Test True or False with gif animation is ready to be processed on the Kahoot! platform.

The Kahoot! platform allows testing in two ways: Virtual Classroom (testing can be done together with students in the classroom, questions and answer options appear on the teacher's projector or computer screen, and students give answers from their mobile phones or computers) and For self-paced learning (students take the test on their own, questions and answer options appear on their computers or smartphones). The teacher sets the date and period during which the testing will be open. To join the testing, students need to go from their computer or smartphone to the link https://kahoot.it/, and enter the testing code (provided by the teacher), and their name.

Discussion

Platforms Moodle, LearningApps, and Kahoot! can be ways of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Among the advantages of synchronous learning is the involvement of participants in the learning process directly during the lesson. This mode provides quick feedback from the teacher, correction, and explanation of unclear points; organization of group activities; development of communication and collaboration skills; motivation to learn in the process of communication (Tkachenko, Khmelnytska, 2021, p. 93). The disadvantages of synchronous learning include the current realities associated with problems with electricity and communication in Ukraine. The modern student of higher education does not always want to be squeezed into the
limited time frame of the educational process, so the synchronization of the schedule can also interfere with the mastering of the specialty. The asynchronous format is characterized by the flexibility of the program; lack of dependence on communication interference; the ability to learn the educational material at one’s own pace; availability of educational materials at a convenient time for the student; development of self-organization skills and knowledge to learn (Tkachenko, Khmelnytska, 2021, p. 93). It is clear that the lack of understandable organization of the educational process can be a disadvantage. In today's conditions, higher education students should strive to master soft skills, increase information and digital competence and build their trajectory of educational development. Therefore, web resources Moodle, LearningApps, and Kahoot! are effective ways to check the level of mastery of academic material by students, provided they are aware of the applicant’s role as an active participant in the educational process. A promising direction for the development of distance learning in higher education institutions of Ukraine is the close cooperation of developers of software products for distance learning, distance education methodologists, and teachers of higher education institutions to develop strategies for the use of new information technologies in distance learning (Osadcha, Sysoeva, 2019, p. 277).

**Conclusion**

Thus, the modern educational process in higher education institutions to improve and modernize, is in search of new information forms of education. The classical form of education cannot fully ensure the development of personal and professional competencies of higher education students. Modern tools for the implementation of distance learning make the educational process dynamic and exciting. The most effective in establishing optimal interaction between teacher and student during the war were web resources Moodle, LearningApps, and Kahoot! In addition, they teach students to organize their time, spending it on development. Higher education institutions in Ukraine face challenges in the conditions of war due to both current events and the requirements of digitalization. Today, specialists competent in information and communication technologies motivated to develop and improve are in demand. Therefore, the main task of higher education institutions is to create appropriate conditions for teachers and students to distance learning. The use of distance learning tools increases the motivation, and initiative of students, improves the quality of education and educational services, and increases the flexibility of educational goals of higher education institutions.

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Lexical Innovation between Unification and Purism: The Case of Corona-Related Terminology in Arabic-Broadcasting Media

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Abstract
Media is strong enough to influence different fields, including economy, politics, education, to name but a few. This influence is inevitable on languages of the world. Distant contact has proved to introduce interesting language contact phenomena just like direct contact does. The present paper investigated Corona-related lexis in the spoken language of Arabic-broadcasting media, namely Aljazeera and A3 (an Algerian public channel). The significance of the study lies in showing the extent to which such media can influence Standard Arabic and how journalists can be important language agents. The question guiding the research is to circle the main linguistic process(es) adopted by journalists when they are faced with a situation which calls for immediate lexical modernization to name new concepts or objects. The research built on a descriptive discourse analysis method within the language-in-use approach for studying a corpus of 9314 utterances. It was found that media plays a role of prime importance in the diffusion of new vocabulary. Such diffusion remains uncontrolled by linguistic bodies, and therefore the linguists’ role is, to a certain extent, divorced. It was found that the media language builds on borrowings, manifested in different types. Semantic expansion of already existing Arabic words was less attested. Coinage was found to be the least adopted method to introduce new items to name novel objects and concepts. Also, a point of prime significance is that English remains the main lending language on which Standard Arabic depends in the modernization of its dictionary. It was reported that some of the core borrowings of English origin are diffused even in the Maghreb region (namely Algeria) where French used to be a dominant foreign language.

Keywords: Arabic, borrowing, Covid-19, linguistic purism, media, modernization, semantic expansion

Introduction

The spread of Coronavirus pandemic worldwide resulted in significant effects on different walks of life, including politics, economy, education and so forth. This pandemic has also introduced a linguistic dimension. Because it is a novel concept, world languages were required to revise their dictionaries to name novel objects and concepts associated with the new pandemic. Some terms of this scientific jargon already exist in the dictionary; some other terms were coined (varying across languages). Because of its status as a global language, English remains a resource from which languages of the world fill in their linguistic gaps (borrowing, translating, etc). The main aim of this research is to identify the role of Arab journalists in the lexication process of Standard Arabic. This is done with consideration of Corona-related jargon. The point is to show how journalists can effectively contribute to the innovation and diffusion of new terms. Therefore, the main questions to probe relate to (1) whether the media language is controlled by language bodies (e.g. academies) throughout the Arabic-speaking states or journalists divorce the linguists’ role in their practices, and what linguistic process(es) is/are mainly followed by Arab journalists to introduce new lexis to Standard Arabic.

Literature Review

Revising the dictionary of a language requires language planners to take serious measures. In such cases, vocabulary elaboration stands at the very core of language planning activities. In this vein, Cooper (1989) defined language planning as “the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community” (p.8). The revision of a dictionary is generally associated with modernization of the language. Modernization is part of lexication which is, in turn, part of a larger corpus planning activity (one out of four types of language planning). In general terms, language modernization denotes the expansion of the lexicon by adding new words and expressions. Ferguson (1968) considered modernization as “the process by which (a language becomes) the equal of other developed languages as a medium of communication; it is in a sense the process of joining the world community of increasingly intertranslatable languages recognized as appropriate vehicles of modern forms of discourse” (p. 32). According to Neustupný (2005), modernization translates that language “must be adequate to the industrializing economy, society and culture’ and that ‘relatively equal access to language for all participants is essential’ (p.2219). As for Arabic, lexical modernization still generates hot debates among Arab linguists and researchers.

Although the need for modernization differs from one language to another, such a process sets “a major challenge for all languages” (Spolsky, 1998, p.70). As far as vocabulary modernization is concerned, linguists (lexicographers) usually have three options at hand: coinage, semantic expansion, or simply borrowing from other languages. As its name implies, coinage refers to the invention of new lexemes. Coinage is the least common process of word formation (Yule, 2006). Semantic expansion is taking an existing (or old) word and giving it a new meaning. Borrowing, on the other hand, is “the general and traditional word used to describe the adoption
into a language of a linguistic feature previously used in another” (Haugen, 1989, p.197). In a narrow sense, borrowing refers to “the incorporation of foreign elements into the speakers’ native language” (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988, p.21). Therefore, such words “are opposed to native words” (Haspelmath, 2009, p.38). Languages worldwide are borrowers and the lexicon of any language can be divided into indigenous and foreign. The lexical material is the most likely to borrow, and nouns come at the forefront of loanwords (Winford, 2003). This does not dismiss the verity that other materials (morphemes, inflections, etc.) are not borrowed.

Linguists identify different types of borrowing. Myers-Scotton (2006), for example, distinguishes between cultural borrowings and core borrowings. Cultural borrowings are words related to objects and concepts that do not exist in the lexicon of the host language. These words are therefore called to fill lexical gaps in the host language (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Core borrowings, on the contrary, are words that are already expressed by an equivalent lexical item in the recipient language. Such words are therefore gratuitous as they only duplicate meaning. In a broader sense, borrowing includes also calques which are literal word-for-word translations from one language into another- a reason to label them loan translations (Postan, 2020). In such a case, the linguistic unit has no foreign features. Loanblends are also a different kind of linguistic borrowing. A loanblend refers to a hybrid word composed of native and foreign elements. One example of loanblends in English is the compound word diglossia, which consists of the Greek prefix de (two) and the Latin root glossia (tongue), referring now to two varieties of the same language. The other type of borrowing is known in the literature as loanshift. This relates to the semantic expansion to denote a change in the meaning of a native item to accommodate a new concept acquired from another language. For example, a semantic extension from Portuguese to English is frio meaning cold infection (Winford, 2003). This word is formed under the impact of model of the native language usage.

In fact, it is in languages of developed countries that lexical modernization begins as these countries are associated with innovations and discoveries, which will certainly involve a need for new words to label novel objects and concepts. Of course, the lending languages are those of the powerful. In other words, the lending-borrowing attributes depend on the level of development a country enjoys in sciences, technology, economy, etc. For instance, English was at a point, as described by Crystal (2010), an "insatiable borrower" (p.267) as a result of foreign subjugation. In this vein, Klein (1966) claimed that only 30% of English words are native. Likewise, Green (2003) asserted “that today English contains twice as many words derived from French and Latin as from German” (p.11). Now, English is assertively the world’s major lending language due to the supremacy of the Anglophone World headed by the USA. It is simply a global language (Crystal, 2003)

Likewise, when the Arab-Islamic Empire reached its apex, Arabic also became a significant lending language, which enriched world languages with many items in different ways. English, among other languages, borrowed heavily from Arabic (see, for example, Shipley 2001; Smith 2007). With the decline of the empire and the rise of European domination of Arabic-speaking
states, the direction of borrowing has reversed. In the present time, Standard Arabic, like other languages, needs to extend its dictionary and modernize its lexicon to meet the necessities of contemporary communication. Because the Arab World consists of developing countries, elaboration of terminology remains a major challenge in the linguistic policy of Arabisation. As far as lexical modernization is concerned, there is a research gap about the Corona pandemic. The literature counts mainly glossaries about Covid-19 terminology with no detailed consideration of the different linguistic processes to introduce such terms into Standard Arabic (e.g. Aboelez and Diouri, 2020). As such, the present study follows a new drive with the aim to unveil the different modernization practices that are undertaken by Arab journalists.

Method

The present study considered in essence Corona-related vocabulary in Standard Arabic. As far as methodology is concerned, it has opted for a descriptive discourse analysis method within the language-in-use approach. Two samples of Arabic-broadcasting media were considered. The first one is Aljazeera, which seats in Qatar and hosts journalists of different Arab nationalities. This amalgam of journalists is important in the sense that some of them come from countries where English is the first foreign language (e.g. Egypt, Qatar, etc) and others are from countries where French is the dominant foreign language (mainly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). The second TV channel which formed a source for data collection is A3, an Algerian public TV channel.

News delivery and reports about Coronavirus formed the basis for data collection. This translates that forums and round-tables where journalists had little contribution were excluded from the study. Consideration was only given to the spoken language, with a particular focus on vocabulary to the exclusion of syntactic structures, phonology and other linguistic aspects. Also, no written products (reports, newspapers, etc) were included in the analysis. Data collection lasted for three months (from May 2021 to July 2021). A total number of 9314 utterances were considered. Table one includes a non-exhaustive glossary of the most recurrent English Corona-related terms with their Arabic equivalents (transliteration of Arabic terms in italics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Term</th>
<th>Arabic Equivalent (Transliteration)</th>
<th>Phonetic Representation of Arabic terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chloroquine</td>
<td>Chloroquine</td>
<td>Klo:ro:ki:n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicable</td>
<td>quabil liannaql</td>
<td>qa:bil liʔannaql</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corona</td>
<td>Corona</td>
<td>Koro:nah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>Covid-19</td>
<td>Kovid tiʃataçaʃar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>confirmed case</strong></td>
<td>hala muakkada</td>
<td>Ha:la muʔakkadah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>congregate settings</strong></td>
<td>alhushoud</td>
<td>ʔalhuʃud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>community spread</strong></td>
<td>Intishar ʃiʃimaie</td>
<td>ʔintiʃaːɾ ʃiʃimaːciː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>contact tracing</strong></td>
<td>Iqtifaa alittiʃissal</td>
<td>ʔiqtifaːʔ aliʃiʃisːal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>attashkhis</td>
<td>ʔattaʃkiːs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epidemic</strong></td>
<td>wabae</td>
<td>wabaːʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>îlm alawbia</td>
<td>ğilm ʔaɁawbiːʔa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>herd immunity</td>
<td>manît almujtamae</td>
<td>Manɑːʃat ʔalmuʃtamaːʃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incubation period</td>
<td>fatrat alhajr assihi</td>
<td>Fatrat ʔalhajr ʔaʃsiːiː</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Analysis of a total number of 9314 utterances extracted from the two Arabic-broadcasting channels (Aljazeera and A3) revealed a variety of results. It was noticed that the media language vis-à-vis Corona heavily builds on borrowing. As for the present study, the different types of borrowings are discussed below.

Core Borrowings

Table two sketched below, exposes the ratio of use when core borrowings occurred in a certain utterance and when viable Arabic equivalents could be used instead. The table only mentions borrowings that were frequently attested in the spoken media language. This implies that some other instances were not taken into consideration as they were used one or two times at best. It is evident that there is no need to use such terms as Standard Arabic, the formal language, already has viable equivalents (see table one). This implies that such terms only duplicate meaning.

Many times, journalists and reporters showed a strong tendency to opt for such foreign items (English) at the cost of their Arabic counterparts. Journalists use these terms with no to slight adaptation to Arabic grammar. For example, ‘mask’ or ‘screening’ were used with no integration into Arabic. This is not the case with ‘epidemiology’, which showed slight adaptation, being uttered as ‘epidemiologia’. The most important remark relates to the term ‘SARS’ as the utterances that were considered revealed no use of its Arabic equivalent. Journalists always opted for the easiest way, using the acronym as it exactly exists in the source language. The same remark perfectly works for ‘PCR test’ with the replacement of English ‘test’ by its Arabic equivalent (sometimes even the word ‘test’ was kept instead of Arabic ‘ikhtibaar’). As for the item ‘Coronavirus’, it showed a high percentage of use although its Arabic equivalent is more prevalent in the media. The only difference between Arabic and English in this case is a question of word ordering, i.e., Arabic inverts the term, starting with virus followed by Corona.
Table 2. *The occurrence ratio of core borrowings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Occurrence Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>epidemiology</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incubation period</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mask</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronavirus</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outbreak</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>screening</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-isolation</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social distancing</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARS</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transmission</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the terms sketched in table two do not show homogenous use in *Aljazeera* and A3 channels. Words like ‘incubation’, ‘mask’, ‘outbreak’, ‘screening’, ‘self-isolation’ and ‘transmission’ only appeared on *Aljazeera*. These are core borrowings of an English source. On A3, such words appeared under other types of borrowing as discussed below. What is evident is that many times core borrowings take precedence over Arabic equivalents, especially in the spoken language of the media. This covers all fields, including sciences, technology, economy, politics, etc.

**Cultural Borrowings**

Analysis of the results revealed many instances of what Myers-Scotton (2002) labels cultural borrowings. The items listed in table one that can be considered cultural borrowings include ‘Chloroquine’, ‘Corona’, ‘COVID-19’ and ‘SARS’. Such words form now an integral part of the Standard Arabic dictionary. One can easily notice that such borrowings show no adaptation to Arabic grammar. Concerning the listed examples, one must clarify that the term ‘SARS’ is actually open to discussion. It can be considered a cultural borrowing for the simple reason that it relates to an object new to the Arabic language. As such, it is directly borrowed from English with no integration into Arabic to the extent that it is the English acronym, which is borrowed instead of the full name. This term can also be considered an instance of core borrowing as providing an Arabic equivalent is a possible option (e.g. through calquing or coinage).

It should be noted that cultural borrowings are not always kept in their foreign state. For example, the English term ‘virus’, which is now an established loanword in Standard Arabic dictionary, shows a slight phonetic adaptation. Instead of its original pronunciation /ˈvɜːrəs/, it is realized as /veirus/. The term has also been subject to morphosyntactic integration as it can be captured in its Arabic plural form ‘veirusaat’ (/veiruːsaːt/). The addition of the inflectional bound morpheme ‘aat’ makes the word obey Arabic rules of plural formation (known as feminine plural in this case). Adaptation of cultural borrowings into Arabic grammar extends to cover other items associated with different fields. Such instances are abundant.
Calques

The data obtained from the analysis of the different utterances also divulged examples of ‘calques’ (loan translation). Examples of calques that can be extracted from table one are presented in Table three.

Table 3. Instances of Corona-related calques in Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Term</th>
<th>Arabic Equivalent (Transliteration)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>contact tracing</td>
<td>Iqutifae alittissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>herd immunity</td>
<td>Manāṭ almajtamae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incubation period</td>
<td>Fatrat alhajr assihi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>novel Coronavirus</td>
<td>Virus Corona almustajad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCR test</td>
<td>ikhtibar tafaoul albalma almutasalsil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-isolation</td>
<td>alhajr addati/attawie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/physical distancing</td>
<td>attabaud alijitimaie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words in column ‘B’ are no other than word-for-word translations of words in column ‘A’ (see table three). Although Standard Arabic counts such words for centuries, if not millennia, they only existed as separate terms not denoting the exact same meaning that they convey when they are used in Corona-related discourse. For example, the two words forming the concept ‘attabaud alijtimaie’ (social distancing) exist in Standard Arabic for ages. However, their combination in the form of a compound word was only popularized with the spread of Coronavirus. This was after popularizing the English compound word ‘social/physical distancing’. Therefore, one can argue with pose that the Arabic word is no other than a calque, although it apparently displays no linguistic elements of a foreign origin.

Standard Arabic is full of calques. Examples would include, beyond Corona-related terminology, words like ‘naatihat assahaab’ (/na:tiha:t assaḥa:b/) and ‘haassub’ (/ḥa:su:b/) which are, literally speaking, only an exact translation of the English words ‘skyscraper’ and ‘computer’, respectively.

Loanblends

Analysis of the data revealed another instance of borrowing, known as loanblend. In our data, two hybrid expressions occurred frequently (Arabic in italics). They are ‘protocol sihi’ (/ʃihːiː/, health protocol) and ‘ikhtibaar PCR’ (/iχtibaːr/, PCR test). One can easily notice that these are hybrid expressions containing Arabic and English elements. Our data showed that English ‘protocol’ always collocated with Arabic ‘/ʃihːiː/’. Also, the Arabic word ‘/iχtibaːr/’ is collocated most of the time with the English acronym PCR.

Loanshift

Data analysis also presented another interesting phenomenon, known as loanshift, i.e., ‘semantic extension’. As for our data, the Arabic term ‘jaaiha’ (/ʒaːçiha/, which stands for English...
Lexical Innovation between Unification and Purism: The Case of Corona

DJENNANE

‘pandemic’, is a perfect instance of loanshift. ‘Jaaiha’ has originally different meanings depending on the context where it occurs. It may mean ‘calamity’, ‘barren’, ‘locust’, ‘invasion’, and so forth. However, this word has been called into use to denote the high spread of Coronavirus. It received an agreement among the Arabic-speaking communities, and it has been largely popularized by the media to the extent that no other word could compete with it. This word has therefore undergone a semantic extension to denote another meaning that is acquired from a lending language (English ‘pandemic’ in this case).

Beyond Corona-related items, Arabic counts some other instances of loanshift. For example, the Arabic word /nadƷm/ originally meant star in the astronomical sense. However, this word is now also used to denote another meaning (e.g. celebrity). This semantic extension was built on the basis of another semantic extension which took place in English as the word ‘star’ has been extended semantically to denote ‘fame’.

Terminology Unification Issues

Data analysis also revealed another matter which relates to terminology variation and the need to meet unification. This requires serious discussion. It was noticed that Arabic-broadcasting media show some variation in use to refer essentially to two words, namely ‘mask’ and ‘self-isolation’. Arab journalists use two, supposedly, synonyms for the English item ‘mask’, which are kammama (/kamma:mal/) and quinaa (/qinaaː/), with the first item prevailing in most utterances that were considered. Likewise, the item ‘self-isolation’ was also found to have two equivalents which are hadjr tawii (/ħaƷr ˌtawːi/) and hadjr thati (/haƷr ザー:ti/). Again, the first item gained more ground in the discourse under investigation.

Terminology variation was not highly attested in the study. However, it remains a serious problem facing the modernization of Standard Arabic as it practically persists in most domains, including sciences, technology, economy, etc. Arriving at a compromise on terms is hard to meet across the Arabic-speaking World, even within one country, sometimes within the same institution. To put it another way, the same object or concept may be referred to by a variety of terms that may sound synonymous (Djennane, 2016). Djebbari (2005), for example, provides some instances where the English term has one French equivalent but more than two corresponding Arabic counterparts; suffice it to mention those terms related to the computer. For example, English ‘server’ corresponds to French ‘serveur’ but to four Arabic terms ‘mulaqqim’, ‘muzawwid’, ‘khadim’, and ‘mikhdam’ (/mulaqqim/, /muzawwid/, /χa:dim/ /miχda:m/, respectively). It goes without saying that lexical variation can create lexical chaos that may blind people in literature searches. The point is that any register (scientific, legal, economic, etc.) requires precision and refutes vagueness in terminology. This, of course, builds on the semantic rule that no two words are perfect synonyms.

Another point that also needs to tackle is that Arab journalists do not seem to differentiate between some Corona-related vocabulary. For example, it was noticed that the word alhadjr (/alhaƷr/, incubation) is the most widely used item to describe a situation. This can be misleading
since English uses three terms with different meanings: incubation, isolation and quarantine (note that the use of the three items was not probed in English-broadcasting media, and therefore one cannot imply that such media are characterized by terminology exactness). If Standard Arabic heavily depends on English in terms of Corona-related vocabulary (through different types of borrowing), Arab journalists (and other users) must take the semantic difference into account as the use of an item (/alha3r/ to mean incubation period) where other items (isolation and quarantine) fit would be a fallacy.

Discussion
Examination of Arabic Corona-related items that are frequently used by Arabic-broadcasting media indicated that many items are new or at least have acquired a new meaning. This is surprising in no way as Standard Arabic, like any other language, needs to extend its dictionary to host the rapid changes and unstoppable developments occurring in the present era. Such developments make it a must to revise the language and modernize it, especially when it comes to naming novel objects and concepts. Data analysis revealed that most of the Corona-related items are, in one way or another, of a foreign origin. Because of the supremacy of the Anglophone World, English has become the world lingua franca, or more precisely a global language (Crystal, 2003). Being associated with international trade, diplomacy, science and technology, etc., English is now de jure or de facto the main lending language. As for Standard Arabic, new vocabulary and expressions are now borrowed from English more than other world languages combined.

As for the Corona pandemic, the data showed that the media play an important role in the diffusion and popularization of new lexis. Reporters and news broadcasters were faced with a sudden situation, which imposed an urgent need for a jargon to talk about the new pandemic. This answers the first research question proving that journalists are an important agent of language planning to the extent that their role in the dissemination of new vocabulary is not strictly controlled by language bodies. As an answer to the second question that revolves around the methods used by journalists to talk about new objects and concepts, it was found that the Corona jargon is mainly characterized by ‘linguistic borrowing’. If fact, journalists showed a strong dependency to use loanwords which are, directly or indirectly, borrowed from English with/without integration into Arabic. Our data also revealed that ‘semantic expansion’ comes second in position in terms of the methods adopted by journalists to talk about new concepts/objects. The findings showed that ‘coinage’ remains the least used option in the media language. This echoes what Yule (2006) observed about English revealing that coinage is the least attested process of word formation.

Borrowing is certainly the simplest way to introduce new terms to a language. However, this is the least favorite solution for native ‘purist’ linguists who only approve of (total) reliance on indigenous resources. Arabic protectionists insist on using pure Arabic words to name anything new, be it a concept or an object. Proponents of linguistic purism see that borrowing must be kept
as the last option that may be used only when other alternatives cannot be met. Efforts towards linguistic purism are not Arabic-specific. Other examples include the continuous endeavor of native linguists to purge English from foreign origin— an activity popularized by the author Paul Jennings under the label ‘Anglish’ (Bidwell, 2017). Efforts of purism are also reflected in the ongoing activism of the Académie Française to rid French of the growing influence of English. Another instance may relate to Atatürk’s Turkey which fostered a strong demand to purge Turkish of Arabic and Persian linguistic elements.

Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to identify the role of Arab journalists in the lexication process of Standard Arabic, and how they can effectively contribute to the innovation and diffusion of new terms. It was found that direct borrowing is the main process they opt for to name new objects and concepts. The point is that overpopulating the language with foreign elements is not recommended by purist native linguists. Therefore, calquing (loan translation) becomes a good alternative. Semantic expansion and/or coinage will be, of course, the best options for purist linguists. Whatever the method used, the most significantly emphasized point among Arabic lexicographers is the need to meet terminology unification across the Arabic-speaking countries that share one standard language. Lexical variation in the scientific jargon is a flaw as it makes the language users experience confusion and they can easily fall in the trap of misunderstanding and misuse. Such linguistic issues cannot be fixed without cooperation between the different academies of Arabic scattered throughout the Arab World. This issue also calls for immediate political support, i.e., there must be top-down legislation which takes the linguistic dimension as a high concern. The aim of legislation must be controlling and regulating the language of broadcasting, be it verbal or written. This is an option not to divorce the linguists’ role in modernizing the language.

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References
Lexical Innovation between Unification and Purism: The Case of Corona


Educational Technology to Enhance EFL Learners’ Research Skills: The Case of Third-Year Students at Naama University Center, Algeria

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Received: 11/15/2022    Accepted: 01/04/2023    Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
To cope with the spectacular progress of technology, university education in Algeria has placed a lot of emphasis on delivering instructions through the eLearning platform. This paper explores the usefulness of eLearning in improving the students’ learning experiences to undertake research projects. No empirical studies have been conducted on the efficacy of online teaching research methodologies in Algerian EFL contexts. The current research tries to show an in-depth look at the efficacy of teaching the Research Techniques module online. It attempts to answer the question: To what extent has the e-Learning platform been effective in teaching/learning research methods to Algerian EFL students? To this aim, the researcher’s gleaning of data was from a questionnaire distributed to 86 third-year students of English in the department of foreign languages at Naama University Center and a semi-structured interview with three teachers from the same context. The findings reported that e-learning has influenced the educational process and positively affected students’ knowledge construction and reflexivity. It has also increased their personal and empirical skills to conduct research projects despite some challenging features. This research will be of broad interest to EFL teachers willing to use eLearning in their methodology courses besides improving their teaching. The reported acceptability of eLearning might be utilized to influence policy and counter the traditional teaching methods used in Algerian institutions. Furthermore, although the finding is not generalizable, it does include features that instructors in other contexts may find valuable.

Keywords: Digital literacy, educational process, EFL students, e-learning platform, empirical skills, knowledge construction, research techniques

Cite as: BOUSSEBHA, N. (2023). Educational Technology to Enhance EFL Learners’ Research Skills: The Case of Third-Year Students at Naama University Center, Algeria. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023: 99-113. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.8
Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the World Wide Web is one of the essential sources for instructors and students to receive and distribute information. The advent of new e-learning tools has resulted in sweeping reforms in the field of education in recent times. Universities have recently begun to embrace this pedagogical paradigm, exploring several e-learning approaches (Capogna, 2014). To prevent the Coronavirus, Algeria's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, like all governments and policymakers worldwide, directly requested universities to conduct online teaching and learning using regularly established eLearning platforms to ensure educational process continuity. For this purpose, it is essential that decision-makers must consider the need for financial and social support to successfully raise academic standards (A. Chelghoum & H. Chelghoum, 2020).

Employment of e-learning environments in line with physical classrooms stimulates students’ thinking about underlying material and internal understanding. It may become a resource that fosters a greater level of reflection. Participants in the e-learning experience actively reflect, evaluate, and create knowledge using various strategies and tools, in contrast to the traditional educational process, which consists of a single environment and regards the student as a passive consumer of information.

Knowledge building is the focus of the learning methodology that blends the physical classroom style simultaneously with the online mode for creating a collaborative context. Constructing knowledge is based on the fact that learning doesn't happen in a straight line, on doing tasks in a way that makes sense in the Context, and on social negotiation (Jonassen, 2004). The teaching and learning community improves through embracing eLearning and the physical dimension of the classroom to develop collaborative strategies with various activities from both models. Engaging with eLearning avoids several problems, including anxiety and loss of interest in knowledge acquisition. E-learning is needed to promote active learning that encourages the production of new knowledge. Those elements are essential in the process of learning research methodologies.

Research methodology constitutes the foundation of academic inquiry. It is a required part of the Algerian EFL undergraduate curriculum. Courses in research methodology provide a ground for research projects. Furthermore, mastery of research procedures is an essential skill in higher education. It prepares students to conduct original research and to critically evaluate research findings.

At Naama University Center, Research Techniques is a module called by the administration TTU, which stands for Techniques de Recherche Universitaires in French. It is taught beside the basic modules strengthening the learners’ English language skills and fluency in Grammar, Oral/Written Comprehension and Expression. The modules taught in the third-year License-Master-Doctorate (LMD) are Literature, Civilization, Linguistics, Translation, Phonetics, Human and Social Sciences, ESP, Didactics, and French in the first (L1) and second (L2) years. Cognitive Psychology is added to the former modules for the Third-year Level (L3). However, the Research Technique module is replaced by Methodology, Teaching Methodologies and Communication in Master First-Year Level (M1) and Methodology and Educational Research in Master Second-Year Level (M2).

In the same context, our students often struggle to understand and connect to research methodology courses despite the different strategies suggested by their teachers to reduce these challenges and improve the learning experience. In this sense, Tymoshchuk (2022), argues that e-
learning is a powerful and cutting-edge educational tool that may enhance teaching and learning. Thus, eLearning is intended to be one of the most influential and valuable instructional strategies in this context.

The current study investigates the effectiveness of an e-learning platform in teaching and learning research methods to third-year EFL students at Ahmed Salhi University Center in Naama, Algeria, during the academic year 2021–2022. During this time, Algeria was still struggling to recover from the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. As a result, a decision was made by the government that the number of in-person classes should be lowered and replaced with online sessions.

This research attempts to examine whether research lessons via eLearning have enhanced the various learners’ skills. Furthermore, it aims to illustrate the instructors’ perspectives on adopting an eLearning platform in the educational setting, as well as the difficulties they regularly face while teaching research methodologies. This work is significant in helping teachers address the drawbacks of teaching research methodologies via an e-learning platform. It is expected to remind decision-makers to consider new mechanisms (Ghounane, 2022) for encouraging students’ massive adoption of eLearning. This paper aims to examine the efficacy of online courses in fostering EFL students' research abilities.

The researcher anticipated that this study would find answers to the following research questions.

• To what extent has the e-Learning platform been effective in the process of teaching/learning research techniques to third-year EFL students at Naama University Center?
• What are the EFL learners’ abilities developed in the online courses?
• How does it affect the development of EFL learners’ research abilities?
• What are the EFL teachers’ impressions and the challenges they face regarding the use eLearning platform to teach research techniques?

The researcher structured this investigation in four steps. First, the present study endeavors to show the importance of technology in modern education. Second it intends to argue that teaching research methods need to be associated with the online mode. Third, the study recommends an online constructivist pedagogical approach to develop EFL learners’ research skills and competencies. Finally, the study provides evidence that Students increase their research abilities with the use of online research methods courses.

**Literature Review**

**Technology for Educational Pedagogy**

The development of new technologies is providing significant nourishment for modern classroom practices. Modern teaching methods must be geared toward the needs of 21st-century students. The practical approach to raising academic standards is to encourage new forms of teaching (Naz & Murad, 2017). As the internet and various digital devices become more widely available, it is clear that online learning will increase in vitality and diversity in educational institutions. Students and teachers can interact from any location and anytime thanks to a digital learning platform that promotes independence and flexibility (Levy & Stockwell, 2006).

The importance of eLearning in the Algerian context has been the topic of much research conducted mainly during and after the coronavirus pandemic such as, to name few, Ghounane (2022), Kerras and Salhi (2021), Guemid and Maouche (2020), Boukhaloua and Djaileb (2022),
Guessar (2020), Benadla and Hadji (2021) Notwithstanding, the idea of teaching research methodologies using an e-learning platform has not been investigated up to this point. So far, there has been no study on the feasibility of employing an online learning mode to instruct research methods.

E-Learning is a flexible and adaptable pedagogical open-source platform developed with the potential to create an effective learning environment for learners. It is primarily used to be constantly available for the digital allocation of courses and to maintain easy access to digital collections of documents. Lorenzi, MacKeogh and Fox (2004) referred to e-learning as the use of a wide range of web technologies to support knowledge acquisition. With such characteristics, if students are well equipped with digital devices, they will undoubtedly develop a familiarity with and experience with online courses. However, there is always a lack of digital materials in the learning community. In this sense, Benadla and Hadji (2021) opined that:

No doubt E-learning may have enormous advantages, but its downsides are ignored too, especially in Algeria. Information-processing depends on technology such as the Internet and computers, to which students may not have access. Often interruptions and other system errors may appear during courses. (p. 63)

The individual social and economic situations are undoubtedly the significant factors that facilitate the learners’ engagement in online education practices. Likewise, Bin Herzallah (2021) emphasized the co-existence of eLearning drawbacks with its advantages. He delineated that "the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education has spent considerable money on the success of e-learning. It has encountered several failures, but the recent results indicate that there are real signs of E-learning on the ground" (p. 89).

Moreover, Rahim and Chandran (2021) argued that "e-learning is considered an applicable approach in EFL education that enhances reliable language practices, motivates the learners and teachers, provides the opportunity of anywhere and anytime education, and reduces the students’ anxiety and costs" (p. 63). Furthermore, it is now possible to describe e-learning as developing skills using a variety of available technology choices ranging from reading content pages that are static to interacting in virtual worlds (Rock, Coventry, Morgan, & Loi, 2016).

A user’s ability to function in today’s digital world depends on the mastery of a range of skills and knowledge known collectively as digital literacy (Leanig, 2019). It refers to the individual’s mastery of using a computer and his understanding and ability to deal with the multiple input and output forms of information. Recent research in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has addressed a variety of issues, including teachers’ abilities in digital literacy and how they pertain to their practices (Jiang, Yu, & Zhao, 2021).

In addition, in shifting from face-to-face to online education, teachers needed to modify the traditional classroom courses for online delivery. Otherwise, the static instructional mode for different environments would place less value on their engagement. According to Lytras, Sarirete and Damiani (2020), the job of an educator is hanging from that of a knowledge provider to that of a co-partner to accomplish a substantial transfer of information. To address this need, several new types of educational facilities were developed. In this context, Algerian teachers scrambled to turn the content of their classroom lessons into virtual/online courses and to improve their digital skills as a crucial feature for professional development.

Views on Maintaining a Balanced Perspective

The advantages and disadvantages of online education for EFL students are becoming more
important to study. Al-Khatib (2009) proposed that the integration of information and communication technologies has to include the development of new frameworks that consider the environment in which the students are learning and their simultaneous experiences of practicing and reflecting on what they have learned.

Furthermore, Al-Samiri (2021) looked at over 40 articles that discussed the pros and cons of using the internet to teach English to non-native speakers throughout the Saudi context during the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. She found that online courses might assist timid and hesitant students becoming much more effective, yet, online classrooms are deemed a "less-than-optimal learning environment" (p. 150), which impacts the learners’ engagement when they confront technological challenges. Thus, it is crucial to maintain a balanced perspective. While it’s true that technology may assist instructors and students save time and energy by enabling them to conduct lessons and do assignments from the comfort of their homes, other factors might interrupt and impact a student's education. (Al-Samiri, 2021).

For their part, Tanjung and Utomo (2020) looked into how EFL students in Indonesia felt about using a fully online learning format to teach English. They found that students' perspectives of online education shifted in both positive and negative ways during the study. On the practical side, students develop research and critical thinking skills while becoming more comfortable with online tools and educational applications. As a result, the authors advocated for making certain technical adjustments to the platforms to get students more involved in their education.

Similarly, Diana and Catone (2016) made the case that adding online courses to traditional classroom instruction enhanced motivation for knowledge creation and reflexivity. This approach is becoming more prevalent in online education since it provides students with access to new environments and resources that foster the development of their knowledge, curiosity, and intrinsic desire to learn.

Learners' Engagement in Learning Research Methods

Despite their significance, classes in research methods are widely mentioned by undergraduate students as among the ones they dislike because they cause significant anxiety. (Slocum-Schaffer & Bohrer, 2019). Learning difficulties in research methods classes may occasionally have a negative influence on students' attitudes and interests in conducting research. In addition, Benson and Blackman (2003) mention that classes often concentrate on the teaching of theory instead of the application of research. They are frequently presented in the form of a receptive, lecture-based setting.

The results of recent studies reveal that passive, lecture-based techniques of teaching research methodologies have met with poor success and might result in a decline in student engagement and interest (Ball & Pelco, 2006). According to the available evidence, the most effective way for students to acquire research methodologies is to actively engage with the material (Nixon & Williams 2014). In this sense, since eLearning is widely acknowledged to be integrally connected to fundamental pedagogical theories and philosophies, it is understood that whatever eLearning's possible definition, it should explicitly include aspects of pedagogy. Tavangarian, Leybold, Nölting, Röser, and Voigt (2004), for example, pedagogically linked an eLearning model to a socio-constructivist approach to teaching.
Constructivist Approach to Teach Research Methods Online

With the development of the internet, the concept of eLearning was broadened, and it is now possible to describe it as the process of learning and developing skills using various online tools. However, eLearning focuses restrictively on knowledge and skills acquisition rather than on the educational process, which cannot be achieved if not systematically accomplished through pedagogical purposes. Hughes (2008, p. 438) explained that: “Technology, without the pedagogy, can be a fetishized and empty learning and teaching experience – stylized but without substance or simply electronic information push.” (as qtd in Rock, Coventry, Morgan, & Loi, 2016)

To fulfill the requirements of EFL curricula, institutions must incorporate new teaching approaches and tools to train students in research methodologies. Following the 21st educational stream, using digital resources supplemented with innovative educational approaches strengthens students' active participation in the learning experience. Al-Khatib (2009) and Kisling (2012) emphasized that this native digital generation is more likely to be interested in and receptive to technology resources in the teaching/learning environment.

Therefore, the cognitive theory, which was primarily based on a passive didactic learning method, was replaced by the constructivist approach that emphasizes active learning, reflection, independent thinking, and the sharing of knowledge through collaboration (Ertmer & Newby, 1993). More specifically, the constructivist learning theory holds that learners construct their knowledge of the world through shared experiences and reflective thought. Students need to learn how to do research and understand how to use information.

Consequently, the socio-constructivist pedagogical approach tends to be appropriate for the efficient instruction of research techniques via an eLearning platform. This approach encourages learners to be constructors of knowledge through their personal experiences and interactions with their peers and teachers. In this learning environment, teachers and learners together co-create knowledge and develop skills (Farkas, 2012).

This approach typically fits the Research Technique module via an e-learning platform where students connect to read and download the course content and the assigned activities. The instructor shows the lesson's goals and purpose before publishing the course material. Following the submission of the material, a second email is sent to students, inviting them to get access to the platform and to read and reflect on the course content. The instructor logs in to the platform regularly to monitor student presence/participation.

Since not everyone can get online simultaneously, the lecturer usually leads the discussion and gives out group projects through the Gmail app. The course's learning objectives are designed to help students improve their research abilities through (1) working effectively on empirical fields, (2) evaluating the information, (3) identifying suitable research methods and techniques for the project, (4) being disciplined and ethical researchers, and (5) developing a formal research proposal.

Method

The current research project is a case study. The researcher employs a mixed method approach since "mixing two methods might be superior to a single method as it is likely to provide rich insights into the research phenomena" (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021, p. 27).

Participants

A total of 86 third-year EFL students have been selected randomly in this study from the institute of foreign languages at Ahmed Salhi University Center of Naama, Algeria, during the
2021-2022 academic year. They were 26 males and 60 females. In addition, three instructors from the same context were interviewed.

**Research Instrumentation**

Malina, Nørreklit, and Selto, (2011) asserted that "quality criteria for quantitative research are well known and widely agreed, that is not necessarily the case for qualitative research." (p. 67) In this sense, the researcher designed a Likert-scale questionnaire to scrutinize the overall perspectives of EFL students regarding teaching Research Techniques online. The Likert scale included five gradual representations, from strong disagreement to strong agreement boxes, in addition to a neutral column. The questionnaire is divided into five sections.

To elicit teachers' opinions regarding the potential of eLearning in teaching Research Techniques, the researcher used a qualitative approach. Since semi-structured interviews are the finest qualitative research methods for acquiring a thorough description, they were used to collect information for this study (Bryman, 2012).

**Research Procedure**

Before collecting all data, the researcher informed the students about what was in the questionnaire and that the provided data would be disclosed anonymously and would have no effect on the actual course grades and that their participation is entirely voluntary. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, one of which asked students about their gender and age. The remaining sections demanded their thoughts on an eLearning platform's function in improving research proficiency and competencies. To ensure the questionnaire validity, it was piloted randomly with five students from the target population.

Additionally, after analysing the interview questions and defining their goals, the interview was available to teachers who used to teach Research Techniques via an eLearning platform. The researcher contacted EFL teachers via telephone to be interviewed. The researcher asks the same set of questions to all interviewees to standardize the data gathered (Bryman, 2012). The questions were open-ended.

The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study. They were respectfully invited to offer factual data to back up the validity and credibility of the study's findings. Four open-ended questions were asked to get data about the main research problems. The interviews lasted about 10 minutes. In the end, the researcher expressed gratitude to the participants and emphasized the guarantee of protecting their anonymity, and that their data remain confidential.

The interpretation of the questionnaire was derived from statistical analysis, while the analysis of the interview was accomplished through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Analysing the provided data carefully allowed the researcher to retrieve ideas and perspectives relevant to the study's goals for the eventual discussion.

**Results**

The input accumulated from the questionnaire was used to generate the analysis outcomes presented in the following five sections. As opposed to the first section, section two, three and four concern the gathered data obtained from the Likert-scale. The researcher manages to combine *strongly disagree* and *disagree* to denote *disagreement* while *agree* and *strongly agree* to signify
agreement. The "neutral" box has not been altered in any way. Furthermore, a table detailing the number and percentage of respondents for each statement is provided for each section.

**Questionnaire**

**Section One: Demographic Information**

The first table provides information about the gender distribution of the sample.

**Table 1: Percentage of participants’ gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td>69.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>30.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While male students made up only 30.23% of the sample, women participated at a rate of 69.76%. Since the department reports that more females than males are enrolled in the third-year LMD English section, this finding has come as no surprise.

The following table shows the gathered data about the participant’s age.

**Table 2: The participants’ age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 21 and 28 years</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 29 and 40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 41 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age of the participants was the second question the researcher asked in this section. The results reveal that 77.9% of participants are between the ages of 21 and 28, which represents the majority of the population. Compared to 13.9% of respondents aged between 29 and 40, just 8.1% of survey participants were over 40.

**Section Two: The Impact of Online Research Technique Courses on Developing the Learners’ Personal Skills.**

In the following sections, the researcher wants to determine if online courses in Research Techniques contributed to the students' personal development.

**Table 3: Personal skills developed along “Research Techniques” courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote autonomy</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(75) 87.20%</td>
<td>(9) 10.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop organization/time management</td>
<td>(5) 5.82%</td>
<td>(66) 76.74%</td>
<td>(15) 17.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase adaptability</td>
<td>(3) 3.49%</td>
<td>(70) 81.39%</td>
<td>(13) 15.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act with integrity</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(75) 87.20%</td>
<td>(11) 12.79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three displays respondents’ answers about whether online research lessons are beneficial in personal development. The items promoting autonomy and acting with integrity have equally scored the highest percentage of the population (87.2%) for each. Meanwhile, 10.46% of respondents were neutral toward the former item, and 12.79% of them toward the latter one.

The statement of increasing motivation and self-confidence followed with a rate of 81.39% and 15.11% of neutral voices. Developing organization and time management received the lowest...
score, with 76.74% agreeing and 17.44% expressing neither agreement nor disagreement. The data indicate that learning research methods via eLearning is fruitful and helps students developing their personal skills.

Section 3: The Effects of Online Research Technique Courses on Students’ Ability to Study

In this section, the researcher wants to uncover the impact of online lectures on improving EFL learners’ study skills.

Table 4: Study skills developed during “Research Techniques” courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(76) 88.37%</td>
<td>(8) 9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>(4) 4.56%</td>
<td>(74) 86.03%</td>
<td>(8) 9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical reading</td>
<td>(6) 6.97%</td>
<td>(61) 70.93%</td>
<td>(19) 22.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem-solving skills</td>
<td>(8) 9.30%</td>
<td>(66) 76.74%</td>
<td>(12 )13.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Four shows the students’ responses when asked if taking Research Techniques lessons through an online learning platform had improved their study skills regarding planning, critical thinking, critical reading, and problem-solving. The results show that 88.37% of the population ticked a box indicating their agreement with the development of planning skills, while 9.3% were silent.

The rate concerning critical thinking skills was 86.03% in agreement, with neutral responses similar to the first item (9.3%). The critical thinking item scored 70.93% agreement and 22.09% neutral. The last item for problem-solving skills received 76.74% positive ratings and 13.95% unbiased ratings. As a consequence, utilizing the eLearning platform to teach research methods has been efficient in improving the learners’ study skills.

Section 4: Effects of Online Research Technique Courses on Enhancing Students’ Research Abilities (see appendix A, Section Four Data of the Questionnaire)

This section includes multiple items to scrutinize the e-learning platform’s contribution to improving research abilities and competencies when used as a tool for teaching the Research Techniques module to Algerian EFL learners.

According to the obtained data in Table five, the majority of respondents, 79 students (91.86%), claimed that the eLearning platform has been useful in improving their research skills in terms of defining the research question and hypothesis, carrying out the related literature review, and prioritizing methodology. The unvoiced remarks were evaluated at 7.64% on average. Just 0.38% (on average) of people disagreed. When it comes to the item of know about research theories/philosophies, analyse critically the quality of research project, and develop research proposal 93.02% of the respondents selected the boxes of agreement except for 6.1% of indifferent views. In the same manner, 81 participants (94.18%) have admitted the advantage of learning online by acquiring some computer skills, identifying a research topic, and even conducting the research design and sampling. The neutral voices scored an average of 4.26%, while the disaccord average was only 1.55%.

Additionally, similarity in the obtained results shows that 78 students (90.69%), along with an average of 3 disagreements and 6 silent voices, were related to positive views about the clarification of the research problem and objectives, the independent work to develop a research, learning how to use web resources, and sketching the steps of research process. Moreover, the same number of students (74) mentioned their accord for two items: get prepared for research
work and acquire adequate linguistic register. The value was 86.03% of conformity on the statements, as opposed to 13.95% of unbiased voices.

On the same line, the item investigating the agreement about working on researching fields effectively received 88.37% (76 students) of the total responses, while 2.33% did not express any opinion. Students revealed their positive views when asked whether their empirical skills and analytical abilities have increased; the results were consecutively 97.67% (only 2.33% were neutral) and 96.51% (3.49% said nothing). The highest score for the development of teacher-learner communication, is 98.83% of confirmation. Thus, in this section, the participants confirmed the eLearning platform's positive contribution to their research skills.

**Interview**

The interview approach was used to determine the instructors’ opinions and tribulations while teaching online courses. The following concerns were raised throughout the interviews:

- What do you think about the e-learning platform?
- In what way is face-to-face instruction in Research Techniques different from online instruction?
- What are the benefits of eLearning in teaching the Research Technique module?
- What are the drawbacks of utilizing the eLearning platform to teach research methods?

The following statements summarize the teachers’ responses.

- Online courses have been beneficial for our students.
- Teachers adapted the physical classroom content into online courses.
- The benefits of online teaching lie in the fact that students are no more distracted and have become less bored while learning online.
- Some students attend only the first two classes, and the last two before the final test.
- Some students still have digital difficulties because they do not have a computer.
- For better teaching, we need to learn more and more about using technology.

The results showed that teachers of English in the department of foreign languages have a favorable outlook on the use of online resources. They are aware of the many benefits that come with using an eLearning platform for teaching their courses. The respondents have similar positive attitudes towards teaching in face-to-face classrooms and online ones. They reveal that students, who used to feel disengaged and lack interest in learning research methods in a physical classroom, are less bored when learning online, perhaps because they are learning in their preferred context.

Despite the specific positives, some drawbacks need to be considered. Both sets of features should be carefully weighed. All teachers comment that students show interest during the first courses only. There are peaks of presence in eLearning courses, and students’ participation dropped continuously until the few days before the exams. Regardless of the students' basic computer skills, a lack of digital literacy remains a barrier to effective learning. Other factors challenge their successful engagement, such as the low access rate to the websites because of the poor quality of the internet. In addition, some students do not possess a computer. They rely on resources in cyber-cafes.

In short, all instructors believe that online instruction has helped learners' language and research abilities. However, they all acknowledged that they lacked technical knowledge, and it has become challenging to pick up new digital skills.
Discussion

In light of the crucial role that online education plays for teaching/learning research approaches in the Algerian university context, the current investigation was carried out to question: (1) To what extent has e-learning platform been effective in the process of teaching/learning research techniques to L3/LMD students of English in Naama University Center? (2) Has the eLearning platform improved the EFL learners’ skills? (3) How does it affect the development of EFL learners’ research abilities? And (4) What are the EFL teachers’ impressions and the challenges they face regarding the use eLearning platform to teach research techniques?

As far as the effectiveness of online learning on learners’ acquisition of research skills is concerned, the results of the fourth section demonstrated that learners agree on its role in improving their multiple abilities to conduct research. This fits the research findings of Tanjung and Utomo (2020), who looked into how EFL students in Indonesia perceive online courses and discovered that both positive and negative changes occurred in students' views of online learning. The good news is that the e-learning has been effective since students learned how to conduct research and use their critical thinking. It also corresponds to Farkas’s (2012) and Ertmer and Newby’s (1993) accords about the benefits of online lessons in knowledge construction found in learners’ responses to Section four. This answers the first research question about the effectiveness of online platforms in enhancing the understanding of Research Techniques courses.

According to the findings, online research techniques lessons can accomplish a lot because digital materials stimulate their motivation and autonomy while also challenging them to improve their personal abilities regarding organization, time management, and honesty, as shown in table three. Furthermore, most students believed that the use of eLearning platform in teaching research methodologies could improve their study abilities, as Table four indicates. These results are in line with the revelation of Levy and Stockwell (2006), which they emphasize that online learning promotes learners’ independence and adaptability. Furthermore, the analysis of the current study shows that eLearning courses stimulate learners’ personal motivation and enhance their critical thinking and communicative skills. These results coincide with the perceptions of Rahim and Chandran (2021) and Diana and Catone (2016) that those are among the essential skills in today's classroom. These results answer the second research question.

The view that teachers require digital literacy to cope with the new learner-centered teaching approaches delivered to the native digital generation matches the opinions of Lytras et al. (2020), which indicate that to effectively transmit knowledge, the role of the educator shifts from that of a knowledge distributor to that of a co-partner. This opinion also fits Naz and Murad’s (2017) notion that supporting innovative teaching methods is significant in education nowadays.

According to the research findings, online material has been fruitful in helping students acquire the needed research skills and facilitating their engagement in prioritizing their research projects. These ideas correspond to those of Nixon and Williams (2014), who see that the most effective way for students to acquire research methodologies is to engage with the online learning material actively. This answers the third research question of the study.

The fourth research question is answered in the findings of the interview. The interview results show that the teachers’ opinion that students were less engaged in face-to-face courses than in online lessons aligns with the recent studies of Slocum-Schaffer and Bohrer (2019) and Ball and Pelco (2006), which demonstrate that lecturing and passive teaching strategies have had slight effectiveness and may cause a decline in student interest and involvement in learning research methodologies. The teachers’ perceptions regarding the learners’ interest in learning research
techniques via online platforms seem compatible with Al-Khatib’s (2009) argument that native
digital generations are more likely to be interested in and receptive to using technology resources
in the teaching/learning environment.

The three instructors acknowledged their lack of technological experience. They noted the
necessity to quickly pick up new digital skills, which are considered a factor of difficulty. The
outcome of the qualitative data aligns with Al-Samiri’s (2021) argument that even though
technology can help teachers and students save time and energy, other factors interfere with and
affect the learning process.

One limitation of the current study was that the sample was limited to only EFL students
from the third-year. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is constrained by the lack of
information on how Algerian students at different levels are impacted by online lessons in research
methods. It would be more fruitful to conduct research on a larger group of students over a more
extended period that involves repeated observations and an examination of how their attitudes
evolve and their skills improve.

Accordingly, for future research, the researcher suggests the use of a pre- and post-test
method in ascertaining students’ continuous attitudes and perceptions about the research subject
until its completion. In addition, examining a variety of courses/modules might provide additional
information about what works well in an online classroom.

The researcher recommends professional development opportunities for teachers to
improve their proficiency in using technology devices to access online materials and promote
student cooperation and engagement. Moreover, Research Techniques course developers and
instructors should be familiar with quality online course planning and design practices to provide
students with the best opportunity for success in conducting research projects. Developing
appropriate constructive research pedagogies for knowledge creation is imperative with the
effective use of eLearning technologies.

**Conclusion**

This study builds on the contemporary debate on the efficiency and effectiveness of using
online learning in teaching EFL students. It aims to investigate how effective online learning is at
teaching research techniques in EFL classrooms. The emerging findings demonstrate that the
educational process of Research Techniques is effective in online mode for EFL learners despite
its drawbacks such as network problems and device matters. Learners can gain motivation,
communication skills, adaptability, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and autonomy.
Besides, eLearning format develops not only their language skills but also their research abilities
and personal development.

Therefore, this research suggests that learning research methods and practices could be
more effective with the integration of technology. Students can significantly benefit from the use
of e-learning as a factual teaching tool in learning research methods. In this context, the education
system in Algeria should consider eLearning as a method of the educational process rather than a
plan under experience to better accommodate the expectations of the current and next generations
to be technologically savvy.

**About the author**

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Appendices

Appendix A

Section Four Data of the Questionnaire

This appendix represents participants’ responses regarding the effect of online education on the improvement of Algerian EFL learners’ research skills.

Table 5: Research skills developed during online Research Techniques lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get Prepared for Research Work</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(74) 86.03%</td>
<td>(10) 11.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn how to use web resources</td>
<td>(3) 3.49%</td>
<td>(78) 90.69%</td>
<td>(5) 5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire some computer skills</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(81) 94.18%</td>
<td>(3) 3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work on researching the field effectively</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(76) 88.37%</td>
<td>(8) 9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch the steps of the Research Process</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(78) 90.69%</td>
<td>(8) 9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire the adequate linguistic register</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(74) 86.03%</td>
<td>(12) 13.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the topic</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(81) 94.18%</td>
<td>(3) 3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know about research theories/philosophies</td>
<td>(1) 1.16%</td>
<td>(80) 93.02%</td>
<td>(5) 5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop empirical skills</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(84) 97.67%</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance analytical skills</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(83) 96.51%</td>
<td>(3) 3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop research project independently</td>
<td>(4) 4.56%</td>
<td>(78) 90.69%</td>
<td>(4) 4.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze critically the research project quality</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(80) 93.02%</td>
<td>(6) 6.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate student-lecturer communication</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(85) 98.83%</td>
<td>(1) 1.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize qualitative and quantitative methods</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(82) 95.34%</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify the research problem and objectives</td>
<td>(2) 2.33%</td>
<td>(78) 90.69%</td>
<td>(6) 6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define the research questions and hypothesis</td>
<td>(1) 1.16%</td>
<td>(79) 91.86%</td>
<td>(6) 6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out the related literature review</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(79) 91.86%</td>
<td>(7) 8.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize methodology and methods</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(79) 91.86%</td>
<td>(7) 8.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research design and sampling</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(81) 94.18%</td>
<td>(5) 5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a research proposal</td>
<td>(0) 0%</td>
<td>(80) 93.02%</td>
<td>(6) 6.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relevance of Infographics, Collages, and Videos in the Learning of Medical English

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Received: 11/09/2022  Accepted: 12/19/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Medical education is extremely important. Knowledge of English is essential to pursue medical education. Therefore, policymakers and educators usually focus on English for Specific Purposes (medical English in this context). The present paper studies the relevance of infographics, collages, and videos in teaching medical English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The paper elicits insights and inputs from the latest socio-cultural and pedagogic perspectives across the globe by researching the sheer possibility of cognitive development and learning medical English through the integration of infographics, collages, and videos. The paper also sheds light on medical classrooms where the learners have had very limited exposure to English. As a result, technology could be one of the motivational and teaching-learning strategies. The objectives were to elicit the perceptions of medical English teachers on the relevance of infographics, collages, and videos and to explore the possible effect of multimedia on the learning of medical English. The research question is: what is the significance of multimedia (infographics, collages, videos) in teaching-learning medical English. The teacher sample was selected from the applied college, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This study was qualitative-exploratory, as the data was elicited from interview questions. Later, responses were coded to do thematic analysis. Multimedia (infographics, collages, and videos) was found useful and effective in learning medical English. Medical teachers should incorporate such tools to make the learning process easier for target learners. Professors of medical subjects, i.e., Anatomy or physiology should also integrate such tools for better learning outcomes.

Keywords: Collages, infographics, Medical English, multimedia, strategies, videos

Introduction

The English language is the key to medical education. Many aspirants fail to join medical or health-related programs due to low proficiency in English. Similarly, quite a lot of students have issues grasping lectures because of language issues, especially in a country like Saudi Arabia where Arabic dominates and English only serves Specific Purposes (ESP). Typically, medical terms are included in the curricula of various medical or health-related programs. However, ESP strategies can be employed in other classes such as anatomy, physiology, etc., especially because the learners' proficiency with the medium of instruction (English) is not appropriate.

Technology's role in hospitals and the educational sector has clearly emerged as a necessity, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, these days, digital ecology is an essential requirement for teaching students in general and medical students in particular. Though quite many studies have been conducted in the context of the utilization of computers and the integration of technology and web resources, the effect of infographics, collages, and videos in an English classroom for medical students has not been much researched. It is a fact that all medical teachers cannot be aware of the tools and techniques for creating collages, designing infographs, or integrating appropriate videos of medical or health contexts to create a proper learning environment for medical students. Nearly all modern institutions in Saudi Arabia are technologically equipped, and teachers are appropriately trained to integrate technology. Multimedia can be employed as a strategy that depends on integrating text, graphics, collages, and videos in the process of teaching. It is believed that the integration of some interesting media can yield far better learning outcomes. It was hypothesized that multimedia can enhance learning English because these are interesting tools that can attract learners and make learning easier and faster.

Following are the objective of the present study. Research questions are based on the objectives of the study.

1- to elicit the perceptions of English language teachers on the relevance of (infographics, collages, and videos)

2- to explore the effect of infographics, collages, and videos on learning medical English.

Research Questions

1- What is the significance of multimedia (infographics, collages, videos) in teaching-learning medical English at KSA?

2- What are the perceptions of English language teachers on the relevance of (infographics, collages, and videos)?

The study aims at exploring the relevance of multimedia in general, and infographics, collages, and videos in particular. As mentioned, this is a qualitative-descriptive study which elicited data from interviews conducted with teachers of king Abdulaziz university, Saudi Arabia. Following literature review includes studies belonging to the relevance of multimedia especially infographics, collages and videos.

Literature Review

The literature review of the present study focuses on the concept of multimedia in general and infographics, collages, and videos in particular. The approach follows from general to specific studies. In other words, certainly important, relevant, and latest studies have been included that
support the integration of multimedia in general. A specific review includes certain significant studies belonging to infographics, collages, and videos that are found helpful in teaching-learning.

Recently, the use of digital media in tertiary-level classrooms has gone through significant phases (Khan, 2014). But COVID-19 pushed institutions and teachers to make use of technology at any cost. Wantulok (2015) has provided a long list of reasons why technology is so crucial to education. Learners can acquire knowledge and skills through self-learning strategies in multimedia.

Visualization is considered information architecture or infographics, says Smiciklas (2012). Visuals, visualization, and visual effects are quite important in the process of learning and teaching. Visualizations provide a chance to make their idea visible, derive meaning, and finally organize the thinking process (Chen & McGrath, 2004). By using visual presentations, one can configure, organize, and edit information.

The main purpose of visual creations (such as infographics) is to transfer the acquired knowledge and to memorize it for future use. To visualize information, one can utilize various interesting tools such as graphic organizers, pictograms, etc. (Nuhoglu & Akkoyunlu, 2015). Borkin et al. (2013) found a close connection between visualization types and memory levels.

### Concept, Relevance, and Utilisation of Infographics

According to Newsom and Haynes (2004), an infographic is made from graphic and visual graphic information, its representation, and knowledge or data words. Multimedia as an educational tool combines some basic types of media such as text, graphics, sounds, videos, and animations (Asthana, 2006). Another study by Al-Obaid (2020) says that the integration of various technologies can enhance the learning environment and better learning outcomes. Aoki (2010) revealed that the students who were exposed to ICT technology demonstrated better 'knowledge', presentation skills, and innovative capabilities than those who were not experienced. Aloraini (2012), in his full-length article on the impact of using multimedia on students' academic achievement, concluded the significant effect of multimedia on learning outcomes.

Heer et al. (2010) considered infographics as the architecture of information. Infographics serve the purpose of informing and motivating the target audience (Krum, 2013). In addition, an infographic image can be employed for meaningful interaction (Vanichvasin, 2013). A teacher can use infographics in a classroom to engage students in discussing a point either face-to-face or online (MacQuarrie, 2012). Researchers have found that the visual impact of an infographic increases interaction and understanding (MacQuarrie, 2012; Smiciklas, 2012). Bunmak (2021) proved that multimedia help teaches vocabulary in English classrooms in Thailand. Mahartoyo and Aryusmar (2022) and Tang (2022) confirmed the impact of a multimedia-based English language teaching model to improve proficiency. In addition, Li (2022) also studied the effect of Multimedia Technology application in the English Teaching of College Students Majoring in Art and contended its relevance.

An infographic can be utilized as a tool for the meaningful transfer of complex content into a simple one. Nowadays, with digital technology, information and visuals are frequently integrated through academic platforms and social media. Besides, infographics are also being used to transfer complex information related to economics (Lankow et al., 2012). Learning with infographics creates a mental scheme (Hart, 2013).

The canvas of infographics may alternatively depict a story, process, or idea. Hence, it should be taken well into consideration that infographics can be designed through the effective use
of appropriate visual presentation (Lamb & Johnson, 2014). Huseyin (2017) studied the psychological impact of infographics in education and concluded that such visuals and multimedia exert an effect on learners’ minds that ultimately results in achievement or better performance. In sum, infographics are significant tools for learning or teaching because they include visuals, design elements about the content, and context (such as maps, tables, diagrams, typography, color, etc.).

**Figure 1.** Infographics (designed by the researcher)

Similarly, different infographics can be designed to teach a concept related to medical, health, or hospital-related topics. Such an attempt will enhance learners' perception, conceptualization, and, finally, cognition. In addition, it will attract some passive learners who may take a more active part in classroom activities.

**Relevance of Collages**

Collage, in apparent perception, reveals the visual appearance of objects and events (Acharya, 2007). Osborne (1970), for instance, defined collage as a pictorial technique that uses "photographs, news cuttings, and all kinds of objects in certain arrangements by pasting and often combining with painted passages" (p. 251). Matusiak (2019) hinted at other issues, indicating that some students are not good at selecting, evaluating, and using images. Therefore, they can be trained in this direction as well.

Ghada et al. (2012) described one strategy—that of creating a collage—that promoted interactive learning. Williams (2000) studied collage work as a medium for guided reflection in the clinical supervision relationship. Collages can be described as one form of art that serves as a means of enhancing communication and developing self-expression. Norris et al. (2007) studied the application of collage to explore very young adolescents’ knowledge about HIV and AIDS in four senior primary classrooms and found it useful.

Sometimes textual data does not attract much attention; therefore, it is accompanied by images to help the user better understand the content. Taking clues from this, we can utilize collages to convert any given text into a digital image collage. Kannan and Khuri (2018) worked on creating digital collages inspired by English texts and concluded that the experiment was effective and result oriented.
Relevance of Videos

Educational videos have become an essential part of higher education, providing an important content delivery tool in many classroom settings, whether blended, online, or virtual (Brame, 2016). The importance of technology integration is evident, especially in light of the current pandemic situation. Schmid et al. (2014) contend that technology can increase learning probabilities. Numerous studies have proven that videos can be exciting tools for learning any subject (Lloyd & Robertson, 2012; Rackaway, 2012; Kay, 2012; Allen & Smith, 2012; Hsin & Cigas, 2013).

Another study conducted on English and management students reported that digital videos helped promote context-based learning. Videos are usually attractive, especially for visual learners, as they create emotional involvement (Hakkarainen et al., 2007; South et al., 2008). Pedagogically, it has been observed that videos can connect learners with the knowledge, tasks, and target activities.

It has been noted that video enables learning via reflection. On the other hand, face-to-face or traditional teaching is characterized by more participation via conversation (South et al., 2008). The idea is supported by another researcher, Lange (2008), who thinks that video may also stimulate interactive learning. Prensky (2005) feels students generally receive information well through videos as they enjoy watching them, especially those students who are said to be introverted but can participate well, like extroverts.

Studies have already revealed facts and findings about the inappropriate impact of educational policies, practices, and curriculum design on learning and teaching outcomes. Learning objectives can never be attained without adequate planning, suitable curriculum designs, efficient professional staffing, proper teaching strategies, evaluation, etc. However, if some of the recruited staff members are not well equipped with teaching strategies and are not ready to take up the challenges of teaching, in-house training, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), this is an ultimate demand. The training may be related to textbook-related materials, teaching strategies for using technology in classrooms, and other areas where improvement is needed.

Abrahamson (1978) conducted many studies by visiting almost half of the American medical institutions and found specific existing curriculum problems described as "diseases of the curriculum." Through extensive analysis, the researcher identified nine different entities. According to him, the basic sciences supporting the study of education as a discipline were not well developed to thoroughly understand the disease process or health-related issues.

Figure 2. A collage sample (designed by the researcher)
In an exciting initiative, the society's curriculum development team focuses on the launch of a novel curriculum to attain skills development while using animals for experiments in biomedical research (British Pharmacological Society, 2018). Based on new educational insights and pedagogic inputs, many factors, including the teaching methods and learning process, would make teaching pharmacology quite challenging.

**Studies Related to English for Specific Purposes**

ESP in language teaching and learning is an approach related to specific disciplines and oriented to respond to the learners' needs. It helps learners connect what they have learned and enables them to use the target language in the intended subject (Ahmed, 2014; Hans & Hans, 2015). One of the aims of learning English for specific purposes is to enhance the learners' proficiency level in the English language concerning the subject matter. That will also increase learners' motivation and interest in the subject.

ESP is studied comprehensively, and conclusions were drawn regarding teaching English to pharmacy students. Some of the findings emphasized three aspects in detail. These are the resources, the significance, and the applications. It was concluded that there exists greater exigency regarding language proficiency within medical professions as competition for jobs is rising. Additionally, it was suggested that there has always been a need to modify the curricula of pharmaceutical and medical schools to enhance communication skills (Coroban, 2018). The same case applies to health professionals like pharmacists. Albert (2000) investigated the importance of medical writing, which has grown in the field of the pharmaceutical industry, where the connections cannot be overlooked. In another study, Ahmed (2014) discussed some issues concerning the tasks and challenges of ESP teachers, such as the basic concepts of ESP, teaching issues like ESP effectiveness and teaching strategies, ESP curriculum development, and course design, and ESP teachers' under-preparedness.

The researcher primarily contends that ESP teachers are not specialized in the field but in teaching English. Therefore, one cannot ignore the limitations. In an attempt to analyze both textbooks of English and ESP for legal English published abroad and by Romanian experts to improve the quality of these print resources, the researchers opined that the teacher might not be a law expert. However, he/she can improvise on teaching strategies by self and peer development if he/she has real intentions of effective teaching (Medrea&Rus, 2012). Moreover, it was found that ESP teachers may face crucial challenges since they may lack the necessary knowledge of the subject to teach 'Business English'. That is due to the belief that business English should be taught by the subject teacher rather than by English instructors/professors (Otilia, 2015). Therefore, ESP practitioners must be well-equipped in curriculum development, teaching strategies, and technology integration. It was also explored that ESP courses for pharmacy students are ineffective, particularly in teaching methods that did not attract many students' attention. English competence of final-year students and pharmacists was at a moderate level. In an earlier study, Graham and Beardsley (1986) concluded that a good combination of content-area ESL and ESP was team-taught by a pharmacist who specialized in pharmacy communication and an ESL specialist.

In this connection, Khan (2016a; 2017) concluded that English, in general, and ESP, in particular, are crucially important in academics and professions. Students of medical and pharmacy colleges may face more specific difficulties in learning English, initially because of their humble English backgrounds and secondarily due to complicated terminologies. On the other hand, many
other students encounter problems and difficulties in mastering and using medical terms in English. The aspects in which the difficulties were faced by the participants observed were as follows: the borrowings from Greek and Latin, different types of roots, and lack of practice and opportunities. It was suggested that to deal with the learners' language learning issues, the curriculum be revised and updated following the learners' current and future needs. In addition, teachers should attend professional development and training programs, especially ESP, to be well-prepared for better teaching strategies and maximum outcomes. In this regard, Khan's (2016b) book could be a good starting point as it composes several health-related topics with language practices and different language elements such as sound, words, spelling, meaning, and grammar.

**Technology Integration as a Strategy**

Teaching English for specific purposes for medical and health students requires significant effort to integrate learning materials and technology to communicate well with the target learners. Content- and Language-Integrated Learning (CLIL) may be used as a strategy to impact the learners' skills. It was suggested that teachers and learners could read or listen to interesting online content and learn different skills (Motteram, 2013). Regarding technology integration, Cyrus (2004) shared his valuable thoughts on using electronic media, including computers and other technologies. It was widely agreed that some good and experienced instructors and teachers can boost their self-confidence even more by taking advantage of opportunities for technology training, in particular, to help them and their students master the subject(s) and skills (Villacrés, 2018). Technology can also be integrated into skill development in general and writing skills in particular (Mai et al., 2019).

Another study revealed the effect of Computer-Based Simulation Learning (CBSL) on pharmacy students and concluded that CSL significantly improved knowledge acquisition over didactic lecturing. CBSL and lecture-based learning have different strengths regarding deep processing skills. A study by Lean et al. (2018) on the effectiveness of e-learning in pharmacy education disclosed that e-learning had been studied as an instructional format across various pharmacy education-related subjects. However, it was noticed by the researchers that no systematic reviews had been done on the effectiveness of e-learning. In their review-based study, it was found that e-learning can yield effective results and outcomes. The study concluded that there is a possibility for improvement in the quality of e-learning effectiveness research in pharmacy, for example. In addition, it was also noted that properly validated tools and follow-up research could be essential to cater to the need for effective pharmacy education through e-learning modes.

Almaghaslah et al. (2018) found that students were interested in online learning methods, particularly in specific courses. They recommended setting relevant rules and policies to maximize the benefits of utilizing this technology to promote pharmacy education and enhance students' experiences with online learning in the current research context. A module on e-learning and its effect on online learning in pharmacy education was validated (Suda et al., 2013). In addition, it was checked if its effect on students' insight was also meaningful. Eventually, initial findings supported the idea of the effectiveness and acceptability of online learning as a complementary tool for the hospital pharmacy course. This module was found to have effectively increased students' knowledge of the evaluated topic. To conclude, this study supports the concept of blended learning, which is entirely appropriate in many academic settings.
The preceding reviews did not go into detail about the topic at hand, but there were enough differences in content, dimensions, and approaches to identify the gap in research and justify the current study. The current study is of a unique type as it deals with teaching ESP to students in a health program and different learning issues in pursuing health-related courses through English as a medium of examination or instruction. It is felt that both kinds of teachers need specific training for teaching ESP (medical English) and teaching health-related subjects through an effective medium (English). Training in general, as well as specific training in technology integration, is essential for blending purposes to deal with various issues encountered in learning or teaching.

Due to the limited scope of this paper, many reviews of research in the present context could not be included in all the related areas. However, based on the humble knowledge of the researcher, it was systematically inferred that no study has been found as comprehensive as the present one that directly deals with the teaching of ESP for health subjects in the Saudi context, the teaching of health subjects through general strategies (using English), blended learning, and perhaps a need for training. The most crucial area that has been ignored maybe English as a language of medicine, which is perhaps the most important tool for the delivery of ideas and knowledge that leads to effective learning. Saudi students and teachers encounter more crucial issues in communication channels than any other factor. Most of the teachers and students feel demotivated by the lack of communication.

Method
The present study employed a qualitative descriptive design which may be quite appropriate as it considers the subjective nature of a research problem. Participants are likely to have varied crucial experiences that reflect the initial research question (Bradshaw et al., 2017). This method suits the present study as it generates data related to the questions like who, what, and where of events or experiences from a subjective perspective (Kim et al., 2017, p. 23). Doyle et al. (2020) advocate that qualitative descriptive research enables researchers to understand individual human experience in its unique context. Therefore, the present design is quite appropriate for the present research.

Participants
Purposive sampling was employed in the present study for data collection as it was appropriate in the present context. Palinkas et al. (2015) supported that Descriptive research generally uses purposive sampling and a range of purposive sampling techniques have been described. Usually, a small sample size is qualitative descriptive research, yet the researchers need to consider that they have collected sufficient data to attain the study aims (Ritchie et al., 2014).

Research Instruments
Interviews were conducted to collect the required qualitative data. It has been contended that data collection methods in qualitative descriptive research are multiple and primarily discover the phenomena of who, what, and where (Sandelskiwski, 2000). Mostly, a semi-structured face-to-face interview is conducted for data collection (Kim et al., 2017). Yet focus groups, telephone interviews, and online techniques can also be utilized.

Procedure
Aiming to find out the relevance of multimedia (infographics, collages and videos), the researcher identified the areas of concern to include in the structured interview questions (Appendix A) which could later be analyzed thematically and qualitatively. Six concerned teachers were intensively interviewed at the campus of King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Data Analysis

Responses gathered through the interviews were written, coded, and then thematically analyzed. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012), data analysis in qualitative descriptive research is based on the nature and type of data, therefore it does not follow a fixed approach. Chafe (2017) believed that in qualitative descriptive research, it is always essential to keep the analysis at a level which the research relates (Chafe, 2017). The analysis in qualitative-descriptive research is dictated by the objectives, inductive approaches are generally employed for data analysis and interpretation (Kim et al., 2017).

It has been seen that most researchers utilize content and thematic analyses in qualitative descriptive research. In this connection, Vaismoradi et al. (2013) contend that content and thematic analysis is often required in qualitative descriptive research, however, these techniques are not properly justified as these are unevenly utilized. Sandelowski (2000) pointed out that qualitative content analysis is one of the choices in most descriptive research. On the other hand, there exists a confusion between content and thematic analysis. Some researchers use both types of analyses.

Findings

Thematic Analysis of Interview

Theme 1. Relevance of multi-media (infographs, collages, and videos)

Interview responses confirm that multi-media (infographs, collages, and videos) are highly relevant and useful for teaching in general and medical terms and English in particular.

Theme 2. Preparedness of instructors

Most of the teachers confirm that they are ready to create, and all of them integrate multimedia (infographs, collages, and videos) in an English medical class.

Theme 3. Multimedia Utilization in the class

It has been confirmed that the teachers utilize the multi-media (infographs, collages, and videos) in medical English classes.

Theme 4. Advantages & Benefits of multimedia (infographs, collages, and videos)

There are numerous advantages of multimedia with special reference to infographics, collages and videos. They make the learning process easier and more interesting. All the teachers confirmed that multimedia (infographs, collages, and videos) is beneficial for the teaching of medical/health English in Saudi Arabia.

Theme 5. Issues in the integration of multimedia (infographs, collages, and videos)

Different viewpoints emerge on account of the feasibility and utilization of multimedia (infographs, collages, and videos).

Discussion

Data for this study were analyzed using qualitative methods. As research question two was conceived based on the findings of research question one, data were analyzed sequentially. The following findings for both research questions are presented under?
Research Question One: What is the effect of infographics, collages, and videos on the teaching-learning medical English in KSA?

The purpose of this research question was to explore the effect of multimedia (concerning infographics, collages, and videos) on the teaching-learning medical English in KSA. Based on the thematic analysis, it is concluded that the use of infographics, collages, and videos leads to better learning of medical English. Some teachers are ready to create and use multi-media for medical English, whereas others struggle with designing collages and infographics. Hence, the integration of videos can easily be done from different websites. Some expert teachers can create their own videos for teaching effectiveness.

Research question Two: What are the perceptions of English language teachers on the relevance of (infographics, collages, and videos)?

Teachers' perceptions indicated that they agreed with the idea that multimedia is relevant in the teaching of English. Some of them were more positive towards different media such as infographics, collages or videos. The findings of this paper are consistent with the findings of Khan (2021) who studies the relevance of multimedia with special reference to infographics. They explored that most teachers generally have a positive attitude toward the role and significance of multimedia in English classrooms. Consistent with the findings from a previous study by Alrwele (2017) which contended that infographics improve students' learning processes. The findings on the effect of collages are in line with the study done by Kannan and Khuri (2018). Similarly, videos are highly effective in motivating learners of medical English. However, in learning English, the findings concerning the impact of video correspond to the findings of Qadha and Alward (2022). This study discovered that concerned teachers had syncretic perceptions towards the use and relevance of multimedia in general. In a modern learning setting, it is no more a thing of surprise that teaching remains monotonous and boring in the absence of active and effective use of multimedia.

The study is qualitative; therefore, a quantitative or mixed study can be undertaken on larger samples to generalise the findings.

Implications

The findings from this research are expected to impact curriculum design in general and ESP in particular. The teaching methods should incorporate a sophisticated blend of traditional and modern approaches, including the blending of technology.

Recommendations

Multimedia can be utilized to teach medical English in KSA to facilitate learners of EFL backgrounds. Multimedia can fill in the gap between teaching and learning consequently leading to better communication and delivery of content. Professors teaching medical subjects such as anatomy and physiology can also try such tools and get better learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The main aim of the paper was to explore the relevance of multimedia (infographics, collages and videos) in the teaching of English. The interview responses proved that infographics, collages, and videos can be effective tools for teaching or learning medical English. Nearly all the
teachers are aware of such tools and are ready to create infographics, collages, and videos. Infographics improve students' learning processes. Collages also enhance the learning process especially vocabulary learning. Similarly, videos are highly effective in motivating learners of medical English. English and ESP teachers participated in the study and perceive that using multimedia in teaching and learning as it makes the class more interesting and interactive. Many Multimedia tools can be employed by English teachers to make the learning process easier and better. English teachers perceived that multimedia enable instructors to deliver content to the target learners in better ways, allowing them to create a more interactive environment which is learner-friendly.

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https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21768.


https://doi.org/10.1145/3551708.3551712


**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Teachers Interview**

1. Why do you think Infographics, collages and videos can be important teaching tools?
2. Can you create simple and instructional infographics, collages and videos if you have software?
3. Do you use these three tools very often in your classes? If yes, why?
4. What are the benefits of Infographics, collages and videos in teaching medical English?
5. Why do you think Infographics, collages and videos enable students to learn complex content in easy ways?
6. Do you face, and if yes, what kind of issues do you face in the integration of multimedia?

**Appendix B**

**Teachers' Responses**

**Participant-1**

R/Q.1. These are digital media, and these days, students are very fond of such tools which catch their attention.
R/Q.2. Well, I can't create my own, but I can integrate them very well in my class of medical and general English.
R/Q.3. I mostly use videos and infographs. As regards collages, I emphasize when I get an appropriate one.
R/Q.4. The use of these multimedia facilitates learning as these clarify the concept in addition to retaining the interest of the target learners in the classroom.
R/Q.5. These tools are prepared to keep the psychology of the learners as well as the complexity of the content (i.e., medical context), therefore the learners find them interesting and useful.
R/Q.6. Not exactly, there are facilities, resources, and enough background training to integrate multimedia.

**Participant-2**

R/Q.1. This is the digital age, and most of us are attracted towards digital media. Our students also like such tools for many reasons.
R/Q.2. Yes, I can create infographson my own as I was trained at my university.
R/Q.3. I almost always use videos and sometimes use collages and infographs.
R/Q.5. These tools are somewhat like teaching aids which aim to support the learners in understanding a complex concept.

**Participant-3**

R/Q.1. Technology has been in practice for two decades. In this digital age, students use computers and mobiles to access web materials. If multimedia is used, students may be motivated more.
R/Q.2. Well, I can create collages, but not infographs. Videos are available online that can be utilized for better learning.
R/Q.3. I use videos to provide additional material as an aid for learning medical and general English.
R/Q.4. These multimedia help learners to learn complex concepts easily.
R/Q.5. The theory behind the creation and use of infographics, collages and videos advocate an effective domain of learning. Visuals always affect the cognition process.
R/Q.6. I don't face many issues.

**Participant-4**

R/Q.1. Multimedia is a fascination these days. Our students are also attracted towards such tools.
R/Q.2. Yes, I can't create infographicson my own, but I often use them when needed.
R/Q.3. Videos are a very effective means of teaching. I use them on daily basis.
R/Q.4. Multimedia is an asset these days.
R/Q.5. Infographics, collages and videos can be integrated easily even if there is no internet connection. In that case, we need to save them in advance.
R/Q.6. Usually issues are encountered, but we overcome them.

Participant-5
R/Q.1. Technology has been in practice for two decades. In this digital age, students use computers and mobiles to access web materials. If multimedia is used, students may be motivated more.
R/Q.2. I am not good at creating such tools or media, but I can use them easily as I have been doing for not less than 12 years at King Abdulaziz University.
R/Q.3. Videos are a great help to learners.
R/Q.4. These multimedia make the learning process easier and more interesting.
R/Q.5. This multimedia is designed to keep cognitive and affective factors in view. Thus, they provide learners with a comfortable zone in which self-learning can be easily possible.
R/Q.6. I face problems in making infographics and collages.

Participant-6
R/Q.1. Digital media is inevitable these days.
R/Q.2. Yes, I can create infographics on my own as I was trained at my university.
R/Q.3. I frequently use videos and sometimes use collages and infographics as per need.
R/Q.5. These tools aim to support the learners in understanding a complex concept.
Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence and Student Autonomy through Project-Based Learning

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Received:9/21/2022 Accepted:12/03/2022 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
In today's internationalized learning environment, intercultural communicative competence is deemed insufficient for students. Academic mobility presents challenges and opportunities due to language, culture, and learning background differences. The number of international students in Ukrainian universities is increasing. The efficacy of project-based learning in foreign language acquisition is recognized and incorporated into the English language syllabus in Ukraine. The current study investigates the effectiveness of project-based activities in English classes at Ukrainian University for improving students' intercultural communicative competence and autonomous learning. It included seven university English language teachers and five groups of 59 students from various cultural backgrounds. Classroom observation and case study design were carried out to describe how the teachers and students used project-based learning. This research will provide new perspectives on the effective incorporation of project-based activities in English classes to boost students' communication confidence to collaborate with diverse cultural groupmates and develop autonomy in learning. The study revealed that project-based learning allowed students to interact with the target content, focusing on long-term memory and promoting attitudes about education. Several advantages of this technique over traditional methods of improving international communicative skills and increasing confidence in language acquisition were highlighted by teachers and students. It engaged students in collaborative and cooperative language learning, improved their digital literacy, and promoted student autonomy. Thus, the project-based learning approach is highly recommended for educational use by teachers and students and should be encouraged in universities.

Keywords: English language learning, intercultural communicative competence, international students, project-based technology, student's autonomy

Cite as: Avsheniuk, N., Lutsenko,O., Seminikhyna, N., & Svyrydiuk, T. (2023). Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence and Student Autonomy through Project-Based Learning. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023: 130-143. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.10

130
Introduction

With the development of society and the economy, the relationship between people from different countries and backgrounds is getting closer and closer. Therefore, in the 21st century, individuals with high levels of intercultural competence are more needed than ever. Understanding foreign cultures and the contributions of foreign language teachers have helped a growing number of teachers in Ukraine recognize the value of developing learners' communicative competence to learn languages effectively.

In today's internationalized learning environment, intercultural communicative competence is deemed insufficient for students. Academic mobility presents challenges and opportunities due to language, culture, and learning background differences. A large number of students from different countries of the world (about 148 countries) study in Ukraine. Moreover, every year, the number of visiting students tends to increase. Thus, from 2011 to 2014, the number of international students increased by 20,000 (from 50,000 to 70,000). This figure is currently at an all-time high since the number of students declined dramatically, by around 60,000, due to the country's unfavourable circumstances. About 240 educational institutions train international students. Almost 150 different countries annually send their students to have the opportunity to get an education in Ukraine, but most of all students go from the following countries: Azerbaijan (10,000), Turkmenistan (9,000), India (6,000), Nigeria (3,000), Morocco (3,000), Georgia (2,000), Jordan (2,000), Iraq (2,000), China (2,000), Uzbekistan (1,000). In addition, European students (about 5%) also go to Ukraine for higher education. The number of international students in Ukrainian universities is increasing; only the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv hosts 1762 international students from 57 countries (Admin, 2022).

The teachers' roles in fostering learner autonomy are direct. They are strategic in creating autonomous language classrooms for learners, from understanding their needs and interests to designing activities accordingly, from negotiating all assignments with learners to supporting multi-role teachers' self-assessments. Teachers recognize the need to develop students' ability to learn independently and should create a supportive environment that addresses the need for new and different assessment techniques in the learning process. In addition, foreign language teachers should focus on cultivating a positive attitude of learners to become autonomous learners.

Everything in the classroom should be supportive and encouraging so that learners gain the confidence to take control of their learning. These roles provide learners with autonomy, thus creating an autonomous classroom. First, learners are encouraged to be active in their learning. Second, effective communication can take place by actually using a language. Finally, since the speed of learning a foreign language and some other variables will vary from learner to learner, the problem of personalization and individualization finds a solution in the concept of learner autonomy.

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of project-based activities in improving students' intercultural communicative competence and boosting their autonomous learning, as well as to investigate teachers of English perceptions of the effectiveness of using project-based learning in improving students' intercultural communicative competence and boosting their autonomous learning. Furthermore, the current study determines whether teachers and students support integrating project-based technology to enhance students' international communicative competence and autonomous learning in the university. Therefore, the following research questions were explored:
1) What are the teachers of English perceptions of project-based learning as a strategy to improve students’ communicative competence?

2) What are the teachers of English perceptions of project-based learning as a strategy for boosting students’ autonomous learning?

3) What are the students’ perceptions of project-based learning as a learning strategy to improve their communicative competence?

4) What are the students’ perceptions of project-based learning as a learning strategy to improve their autonomous learning?

This research will provide new perspectives on the effective incorporation of project-based activities in English classes to boost students' communication confidence to collaborate with diverse cultural groupmates and develop autonomy in learning in universities.

Literature Review

Teaching English as a foreign language has adopted a project-based learning approach to reflect student-centred teaching principles (Hedge, 1993). Project organization is a successful method of effectively combining language and content. (Stoller, 1997). Project work is more effective when teachers relax control and students view teachers as mentors and facilitators (Sheppard & Stoll, 1995). Teacher-led curriculums allow teachers to teach lessons and engage students. In the field of language education, project-based language learning is beneficial for improving learners' language skills and metacognitive skills because project-based learning “creates purposeful opportunities for language input, language output and explicit attention to language-related features” (Stoller, 2006, p. 32). Newprasit and Seepho (2015) conducted a pre-experimental study in Thailand. They found that the overall English language skills of the English language learners in their study improved significantly after the implementation of project-based learning in the English course. Shaalan I.E.A. (2020, p.475) added that project-based learning "add more positive attributes to the students’ characters in the classroom". Since project-based learning facilitates interactions with peers, the social environment is essential to learning (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019).

Intercultural competence is becoming increasingly important in many disciplines, especially language learning. Byram (1997) claimed that "language proficiency teaching and intercultural competence teaching are inseparable" (p. 22), reflecting the critical relationship between language and culture in English teaching. Cultural differences can conflict because it becomes difficult to convey meaning without a common language, behavioural patterns, and shared values (Bennett, 1993). Therefore, teachers must develop learners' communicative competence to use English as a foreign language in and out of classrooms.

Learner autonomy is mainly developed through project-based learning. Students use a range of learning approaches, create their questions, plan their study, organize their research, and solve challenges in the life context (Bas, 2011). To improve learner autonomy in language education, project-based learning is employed with English language learning. Learner autonomy, according to Littlejohn (1985), is based on the assumption that if students are involved in decision-making processes over their language, they are more excited about learning, and learning may be more focused and purposeful for them. According to Benson (2011), learner autonomy is a prerequisite for effective language learning; as learners gain autonomy, they become not only better language learners and more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they reside. Moreover, learner autonomy has played a significant role in lifelong communicative
competence, particularly in an environment where learners have limited opportunities to interact with native speakers and use English. As a result, boosting learner autonomy in the English as a foreign language classroom should be developed to improve students' autonomy and motivation for language learning.

The results of the case study by Omar, Taib, and Basri (2012) showed that students with low to medium English language levels were more comfortable completing projects and subsequently gained more confidence in speaking English as an outcome of the project-based language learning environment. The study also showed that project-based language learning promoted communication even among students who had a lower level of English proficiency owing to its ongoing activities and collaborative nature. The less competent English language learners may learn the language more successfully because they obtained the required assistance from the more proficient group members. Kalabzov (2015) claims that project-based learning may negatively impact the weaker students' lack of teacher supervision. There is strong support for project-based language learning as a promising teaching strategy for English language learners. In Ukraine, the effectiveness of project-based learning in foreign language acquisition is acknowledged and implemented into the English language curriculum at the tertiary level.

Based on the literature review, many educators have indicated that project-based learning may be one of the most effective methods of teaching English. Students can develop their autonomy and increase cross-cultural awareness. As a result, project-based learning is recommended to be used in English classes in higher education. Nonetheless, there is little literature on the obstacles and issues that both instructors and students face with project-based learning in English language classes in diversified settings.

Method

This study investigates the attitudes towards the effectiveness of project-based learning to increase communicative competence and learner autonomy among English language teachers and students at a university in Ukraine. One of the qualitative research methodologies used in this study was a case study. Case studies analyze an event in its current and authentic context, provide extensive descriptions and explanations, and aim to investigate a system with defined limits (Merriam, 2010). Classroom observation and an online survey with open-ended questionnaires were carried out to describe how the teachers and students perceive project-based language learning. A criterion sampling strategy was used to choose participants. In addition, a literature review on project-based learning and its benefits was undertaken, and studies on the subject were explored to establish the participants' questions.

Participants

The study group included seven university English teachers and five groups of 59 students from various cultural backgrounds from different faculties at the university in Ukraine, ranging in age from 18 to 21. A criterion sampling model, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to choose participants. As a result, teaching and studying in different faculties at the university in Ukrainian were used as a factor for selecting participants. Students who took part were assigned the codes S1, S2, ... S59 and teachers T, T2……T7. It is emphasized that received information would only be exploited for scientific purposes. Data collection was undertaken during the fall semester of 2020-2021.
Data Collection Process

The qualitative data were collected through open-ended questionnaires distributed to university students and teachers. The survey form was distributed to the student in the second year of study using "Google Forms", and the students responded via "Google Forms" and sent it out to English language teachers of different faculties, and the teachers answered via "Google Forms".

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using content analysis. Before the questionnaires were sent to the participants, detailed instructions were given to ensure the reliability of their replies. The data included only direct quotes from the teachers and students to reflect their opinions accurately.

Research procedure

The survey form was distributed to the student in the second year of study. Questionnaires were also distributed to English teachers to obtain data on how incorporating project-based technology enhanced students' communicative skills and autonomous learning. Consequently, seven teachers and five groups of students from different faculties who were reachable and answered all questions were included as research participants.

Results

Findings Related to English Teachers' Opinions on Project-based Language Learning as a Strategy for Improving Communicative Competence

The study's first sub-question aimed to determine teachers' opinions on project-based language learning as a strategy to improve students' communicative competence in English classes. It was seen that students' opinions were grouped under two themes, "advantages" and "disadvantages". The obtained themes, codes and frequencies are presented in Table one.

Table one in Appendix A shows that some opinions were grouped under the theme of "advantages". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "assistance by the proficient students" (f=6); "students encounter new words while researching for information" (f=6); "promoting interactive surroundings" (f=6), "reduction of anxiety" (f=4); "linking English learning with inter-cultural communication" (f =6); "reduction of linguistic barriers" (f=3). On the other hand, the participants stated their opposite opinions under the theme of "disadvantages". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "imbalance of workload" (f=3), lack of supervision" (f=2) and "student's fears" (f=2). Direct quotations from the participants on these topics and codes are given below.

"…. What I noticed was that students' communication inside the project helped them overcome difficulties in interacting, especially when they had groupmates from other countries to overcome linguistic differences. In a multicultural society, we need to understand each other and communicate effectively…." (teacher 2).

"……I see the involvement of weaker students in the project and assistance from stronger ones……"(teacher 3).

"Some students with a higher level of English take more tasks to complete than with lower level, and obvious imbalance of workload is evident……" (teacher1).

"I like how students are involved in researching information and processing it……" (teacher 4).
"…. linking English learning with inter-cultural communication……."(teacher 7).

**Findings Related to the Opinions of English Teachers of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Boosting Autonomous Learning**

The study's second research question aimed to determine teachers' opinions on project-based language learning as a teaching strategy for boosting autonomous learning. Table two in Appendix B shows that some opinions were grouped under the theme of "Sufficiency to develop autonomous learning". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "opportunity to set the plan" (f=7); "opportunity to choose individual timeline of study pace"(f=7); "sharing experience with the peers" (f=4), "measure input of a groupmates" (f=4); "justification of methods and techniques chosen for project accomplishment" (f=4). On the other hand, the participants stated their opposite opinions under the theme of "Insufficiency to develop autonomous learning". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "lack of student’s responsibility" (f=4); "lack of students’ motivation" (f=3) and "the importance of teachers' training" (f=3). Direct quotations from the participants on these topics and codes are given below.

"…. To my mind, with the projects, students have an ample opportunity to learn at their own pace and build on the content knowledge……." (teacher 1).

"…….Teammates have different interests, so interaction is easier and more dynamic for. After the project, friendships last longer than work assignments so future projects go smoother…." (teacher 4).

"….. What I would like to emphasize is that groupmates should have different interests to enhance interaction and cooperation..." (teacher 2).

"…….Additionally, having students from diverse backgrounds promotes multiculturalism…." Friendships form during project assignments and can benefit everyone involved in a group……."(teacher 2).

"……. In my class, I have a few demotivated students who resist working in groups…. I always strive to understand their motivations so they can succeed……."(teacher 3).

"……. I encounter problems with the assessment. I need supplementary training and guidelines on assessing projects…."(teacher 4).

**Findings Related to Students' Opinions of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Improving Communicative Competence**

The third research question of the study aimed to determine students' opinions on project-based language learning as a learning strategy for improving communicative competence. Table three in Appendix C shows that some opinions were grouped under the theme of " advantages". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "confidence development in speaking than before" (f=50); "interactive environment" (f=49); "excitement of learning new vocabulary" (f=49), "increase communication opportunities in authentic contexts" (f=35); "acquiring intercultural knowledge" (f=48); "taking into consideration cultural background"(f=46); "acquiring intercultural knowledge" (f=48); "develop cross-cultural empathy" (f=48). On the other hand, the participants stated their opposite opinions under the theme of "disadvantages". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "anxiety to communicate" (f=29), "lack of class hours’ discussions" (f=20) and "anxiety to work in groups" (f=20). Direct quotations from the participants on these topics and codes are given below.
"..... Learning from mistakes reinforces my confidence and makes me a better speaker……" (student 27).
"Overall, projects improve my English language content knowledge by learning new things and using them in everyday situations. Therefore, using English well in my daily experiences will improve dramatically over time…." (student 58).
"......Working together is one of the most important skills that I can possess. We use it every day when working on projects at university .... I love it...." (student 7).
"......Our teachers also encourage us to practice public speaking in our projects during the presentations. It is so helpful for building my self-confidence……" (student 10).
"Ultimately, receiving positive feedback from your peers strengthens your abilities……" (student 52).
".... The experience of receiving feedback is stressful when my performance is not what I want it to be……" (student 14).

Findings Related to Students' Opinions of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Boosting Autonomous Learning

The fourth research question of the study aimed to determine students' opinions on project-based language learning as a learning strategy for boosting autonomous learning.

Table four shows in Appendix D that some opinions were grouped under the theme of "sufficiency of project-based language learning to develop independence". Under this theme, the most frequently expressed codes were: "ability to manage my work according to my plan" (f=52); "improvement of investigating skills" (f=50); "appreciation of feedback from groupmates" (f=49), "fostering independent learning (f=48)”; "freedom to determine study pace” (f=47); "provides opportunities to coach groupmates” (f=46). On the other hand, the participants stated their opposite opinions under the theme "insufficiency of project-based language learning to develop independence”, "lack of supervision from the teacher” (f=28), "imbalance of workload among group members” (f=18); “difficulties to measure own input” (f=14); "fear of public assessment” (f=13); "tight deadlines decreases motivation” (f=13). Direct quotations from the participants on these topics and codes are given below.

"I guess receiving feedback can be tough, but it is essential to your development as a person……"(Student 25).
"Working on projects in a group at our English classes with foreign students encouraged me to learn about the cultures and improve my communication skills…"(student 27).
"Receiving feedback helps you learn from your mistakes so you can succeed in the future……"(Student 34).
".... you must learn how to push yourself if you want to learn effectively…"(student 5).
".... In addition, you must learn how to self-regulate your study habits if you want to succeed at all time-of-the-day levels of performance…" (student 51).
"I think it is important to study outside the class, and it is engaging…"(student 21).
"Overall, I do not like tight deadlines because I have to finish everything on time…” (student 33).
"It is stressful for me……"(student 12).

To investigate students' and teachers' feedback concerning the effectiveness of project-based learning in increasing communicative competence and autonomous learning, structured surveys were conducted. Analysis of the responses indicates that almost all respondents agreed
that project-based learning fostered their autonomous learning and increased engagement in task completion. Tables one and two, appendices a and b, consecutively, show the teachers’ responses concerning project-based language learning to improve students' communicative competence and autonomous learning in English classes. The teachers’ responses showed high agreement with the students' opinions that the introduction of projects in English classes enabled them to grasp some intercultural knowledge, be aware of cross-cultural issues, and become more sensitive to the intercultural context. Furthermore, as indicated in table three, four appendices c and d showed a consensus among students that project-based learning enhanced their collaborative and group skills.

However, despite enjoying the activities, the results show that the students still had reservations about the project-based learning in eliminating their anxiety about communicating in English. From the above results, project-based learning boosted students' communication confidence to collaborate with diverse cultural groupmates as they gained information in authentic contexts through interviews and data collection. Additionally, project-based learning allowed students to choose how quickly they wanted to learn, and it encouraged student autonomy and involved students in cooperative and collaborative language acquisition.

Discussion

The present study aimed mainly at investigating students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of project-based activities in improving their intercultural communicative competence and boosting their autonomous learning, as well as to investigate teachers of English perceptions of the effectiveness of using project-based learning in improving students' intercultural communicative competence and boosting their autonomous learning in English classes at the university in Ukraine. The study’s findings indicate that teachers of English and students at the university were satisfied with the introduction of project-based learning for improving intercultural communicative competence and autonomous learning. Furthermore, according to the teachers’ and students’ questionnaires, participants were optimistic about the project-based teaching and learning process. Students’ reflections on project-based learning were highly rated. They expressed that introducing projects in English classes can help them grasp intercultural knowledge, be aware of cross-cultural issues, and become more sensitive to the intercultural context. It also can broaden their horizon and improve their communication skills. In addition, some students mentioned that project-based learning is more autonomous learning and is beneficial for them to improve their abilities to think and cooperate. The student's evaluation of the efficacy of project-based learning is in agreement with Beckett's (1999), which is cited in Beckett and Slater (2005) finding that teachers reported having achieved various goals for implementing projects in their classrooms, such as boosting independent learning, enhancing collaborative learning skills and facilitating the language communicative competence of students of different cultures. However, findings reveal that while most students recognize the value of projects, on the whole, they cannot satisfy the needs of students with different language proficiency; it calls for an overall innovation of curriculum standards, teaching, learning and assessment, also in course compilation.

The findings of the study also show support for Stoller's theory. However, these results are significantly related to the communication opportunities in project-based learning and authentic context while completing the project, which improves language skills (Stoller, 2006).

Project-based language learning requires students to work together in groups for a continuous period. Having plenty of opportunities to interact and communicate with their group
members during group discussions, contact inside groups is also inevitable, given that all members are working toward the same project objective. Based on Miller (2016), project-based learning enables students to collaborate and apply academic vocabulary to new situations. In project-based learning, incorporating authentic contexts makes the language learned by the students more effective since it is relevant to its use in the real world. As group members adapt to interacting with one another, regular communication with them helps learners feel less nervous while speaking. In much the same way, the learners in the present study were exposed to authentic contexts as their project was designed to be realistic and applicable to the real world based on their field of study. The language mastered while collaborating on the project is certainly important and will be useful to the students in their future lives, particularly at work. Project-based learning was a favourable component of the English classes that demonstrated positive affective benefits in content knowledge and helped build relationships and collaboration between groups, communication and reflection within diversified natural settings. Siwatu (2007) also listed knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity as essential. It provides cultural awareness of individuals' and others' cultures.

The students believed that the project-based activities benefited them in developing their English language skills, intracultural competence, and increased motivation and autonomous learning. Interestingly, the students showed reasonably strong agreement with the overall benefits of project-based learning in developing communicative competence and improvement of collaborative skills. Project-based learning has been determined to be appropriate for students with a lack of English competency, who reported that project-based activities helped to increase students' proficiency in English communication. Omar et al. (2012) support that project-based language learning facilitates communication even among students with lower English levels through its continuous activities and collaborative character. In the current study, the reason for reported anxiousness is a conflicting finding brought on by the participants' varying English language competency, which may have affected the students' speaking confidence. While enjoying the projects’ activities, the findings also indicate that the students still had doubts about the project-based learning's ability to relieve their anxiety about speaking English. Additionally, they expressed somewhat less satisfaction with their ability to speak English fluently during the course. This outcome supports the idea of Kalabzov (2015) that the absence of instructor supervision over the students with less speaking skills in project-based learning may severely affect their learning.

The study's scope is a significant limitation. This study has raised several concerns in need of further investigation. First, more objective data may have been acquired to avoid subjective data. Second, it may be possible to study a bigger group of participants to collect more data in future studies. As a result, more research should be carried out utilizing alternative samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings achieved in this study and compare the findings.

Conclusion

The present study's findings conclude the efficacy of using project-based activities for enhancing students’ communicative competence and autonomous learning. First, this study is based solely on teachers' and students' evaluations of project-based language learning at a few faculties, which cannot identify all of the English language program's strengths and shortcomings. Second, the study was done with a limited number of participants, only seven teachers and 59 students, which may have impacted the study's generalization. Finally, the study's broad scope is a significant limitation. This study has raised several concerns in need of further investigation.
First, more objective data should be acquired to avoid subjective data. Second, it may be possible to study a bigger group of participants to collect more data in future studies. As a result, more research should be carried out utilizing alternative universes and samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings achieved in this study and compare the findings. The study's findings suggest that project-based learning boosted students’ intercultural communication confidence to collaborate with diverse cultural groupmates. It also increased their self-directed learning as they gained information in authentic contexts through interviews and data collection. In addition, project-based learning allowed students to interact with the target content, acquire intercultural knowledge, enhance the number of authentic contexts for communication, and opportunities for sharing experiences with peers. Teachers and students highlighted several advantages of this technique over traditional methods that improve communicative skills. It engaged students in collaborative and cooperative language learning, improved intercultural communication competence and promoted student autonomy.

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Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence  Avsheniuk, Lutsenko, Seminikhyna, & Svyrydiuk


Appendices
Appendix A

Findings Related to English Teachers' Opinions on Project-based Language Learning as a Strategy for Improving Communicative Competence

Table 1. Teachers’ opinions on the improvement of students’ communicative competence with the project-based language learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>students encounter new words while researching information</td>
<td>f 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>the stronger ones assist weaker students in the project</td>
<td>f 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>linking English learning with inter-cultural communication</td>
<td>f 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>promoting interactive surroundings</td>
<td>f 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>provides an opportunity to work and use academic language for authentic purposes</td>
<td>f 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>reduces the learners’ anxiety to speak</td>
<td>f 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>provides positive effects on low-proficient English language students</td>
<td>f 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>reduce the linguistic barriers within the context of the project</td>
<td>f 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>workload difference between participants</td>
<td>f 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>threaten students who are weak in English due to a lack of control over them</td>
<td>f 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>lack of control of everyone’s involvement in discussions</td>
<td>f 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Findings Related to the Opinions of English Teachers of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Boosting Autonomous Learning

Table 2. Teachers’ opinions of project-based language learning as a strategy for boosting autonomous learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to set the plan</td>
<td>f 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunity to choose an individual timeline of study pace</td>
<td>f 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sufficiency in developing autonomous learning

- ability to select a plan, and methods for the project
- justification of methods and techniques chosen for project accomplishment
- reflection on personal learning
- sharing experiences with the peers
- evaluating own and groupmates
- measuring input of a groupmates

Insufficiency in developing autonomous learning

- lack of student responsibility
- lack of students’ motivation
- lack of class hours
- importance of teachers' training

Appendix C
Findings Related to Students' Opinions of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Improving Communicative Competence

Table 3. Students’ opinions of project-based language learning as a learning strategy for improving communicative competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>confidence development in speaking</td>
<td>f 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>than before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interactive environment</td>
<td>f 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the excitement of learning new vocabulary</td>
<td>f 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helpful to reflect inter-cultural</td>
<td>f 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>communication competence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>taking into consideration cultural</td>
<td>f 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement in content knowledge</td>
<td>f 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increase communication opportunities</td>
<td>f 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in authentic contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acquiring intercultural knowledge</td>
<td>f 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>develop cross-cultural empathy</td>
<td>f 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>anxiety to communicate</td>
<td>f 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anxiety to receive feedback from peers</td>
<td>f 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lack of class hours for discussions</td>
<td>f 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anxiety to work in groups</td>
<td>f 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D
Findings Related to Students' Opinions of Project-based Language Learning as a Learning Strategy for Boosting Autonomous Learning
Table 4. *Students’ opinions of project-based language learning a learning strategy for boosting autonomous learning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency of project-based language learning to develop independence</td>
<td>ability to manage my work according to my plan</td>
<td>f 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement of investigating skills</td>
<td>f 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appreciation of feedback from groupmates</td>
<td>f 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provides opportunities to coach groupmates</td>
<td>f 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>freedom to determine study pace</td>
<td>f 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fostering independence</td>
<td>f 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficiency of project-based language learning to develop independence</td>
<td>lack of supervision from the teacher</td>
<td>f 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inequality of workload among group members</td>
<td>f 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>difficulties in measuring own input</td>
<td>f 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fear of public assessment</td>
<td>f 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tight deadlines decrease motivation</td>
<td>f 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret

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Received:11/15/2022   Accepted:12/28/2022   Published:01/20/2023

Abstract
Today's education places a strong emphasis on helping students become interculturally competent. Given its significance, the current study aims to evaluate the development of intercultural competence of undergraduate EFL students at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. Because there are not many studies assessing or how to assess university EFL students’ intercultural competence in Algeria, it is necessary to research how much intercultural competence is incorporated into the current university English education program. Thus, the main question addressed is whether Algerian undergraduate EFL students have intercultural competence. To address this question, 36 third-year English major students at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret were randomly chosen to participate in the study. The measurement tool was a questionnaire with inquiries regarding the following three intercultural competence dimensions: attitudes, knowledge and skills. The findings of this study showed that although the participants' intercultural attitudes and knowledge are high, they lack the intercultural skills that are essential for attentive intercultural speakers to interpret and use appropriate expressions associated with the cultural environment. As a result, this study strongly recommends that it is crucial to incorporate all the elements of intercultural competence in the current English curriculum at Algerian universities.

Keywords: Algeria, assessment, EFL students, higher education, Intercultural Competence

Cite as: Mehdaoui, A. (2023). An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023: 144-156. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.11
**Introduction**

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world experienced social and cultural changes, including globalization, the transition to a post-industrial and informal society, and the increase and expansion of intercultural interactions. These changes are forcing people to learn how to live together in the modern world and how to build effective and mutually beneficial relationships with representatives of other nations and cultures.

To meet these geo-cultural and geo-economic challenges, it has become necessary to direct foreign language teaching toward an approach that focuses on developing skills that help learners mediate between cultures and achieve successful cross-cultural communication, ultimately leading to the development of intercultural communicative competence as a goal of foreign language teaching (Byram, 1997; Council of Europe, 2007).

Importance of effective cross-cultural communication has also been identified as a desirable and more important competency by various employers worldwide (Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, & Liu 2016). In *the Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning*, the Council of Europe (2007) presents intercultural competence as key to effective participation in social and professional life.

Recognizing that the problem of misunderstanding due to language barriers and cultural differences is also common in the 21st-century workplace, we understand that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become the reality of modern workplaces where workers from different cultures interact and collaborate regardless of where they are located (Deardorff, 2015). That is, ICC has become an essential employability skill in today's global markets (Deardorff, 2015). Griffith et al. (2016) assert that ICC is vital to developing a workforce fit for the twenty-first century. In a similar vein, British Council (2013) states that because the workplace of today is filled with diversity, including workers of various religions, cultures, beliefs, ways of thinking, and ways of communicating, the majority of employers seek employees who are not only technically skilled but also culturally astute and able to thrive in a global work environment. This is because effective communication between team members is necessary for working successfully on various teams with partners or coworkers.

Given the growing recognition of the value of intercultural competence for global mutual understanding and employment, in Algeria, intercultural learning in the EFL classroom is considered important by the Algerian government. As stated by officials, the promotion of English is crucial to "become part of an international community of people who use English to exchange and share ideas and experiences in the fields of science, technology, culture, and civilization' (Ministère de L'Education Nationale, 2003, p. 53, as cited in Logbi & Meddour, 2010, p. 19). This means that the Algerian government views English as a window to access technological and cultural networks around the world.

With this in mind, the study raises the question of whether Algerian EFL students have sufficient intercultural communicative skills to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural encounters. Since assessment is part of the development of students’ intercultural competence, as Griffith et al. (2016) and Borghetti (2017) emphasize, this study aims to evaluate the development of intercultural competence of EFL undergraduate students at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret in terms of three intercultural competence dimensions: attitudes, knowledge and skills. In this way, this investigation will help determine the extent to which intercultural competence is integrated into the current university English program in Algeria.
The significance of this research lies in the fact that the results obtained from the assessment are not only used to identify students' weaknesses, but also provide school leaders and policymakers with more comprehensive information about the quality of education in a particular school or country (Martyniuk, Fleming, & Noijons, 2007). Thus, since there is a lack of empirical evidence of the development of intercultural competence and the identification and measurement of it among the Algerian university EFL students, the overall objectives of this study is to raise awareness of the benefits of assessing students' intercultural competence and to provide higher education teachers, instructors, and administrators with some essential assessment questions that can be used as a guide and for more thorough assessment and evaluation of intercultural competence.

With this purpose, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the undergraduate EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University possess intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills?
2. In what area do they need to increase to develop intercultural competence?

The present paper is structured as follows. It first reviews the theoretical framework related to intercultural competence definitions. The next section outlines the main intercultural dimensions that make up intercultural competence. Subsequently, it explains the methodological procedures applied in the present study, such as the sampling, the research instruments and the procedures. Following, it presents the findings and a discussion of the results obtained from it. Finally, the last section is dedicated to the conclusion.

**Literature Review**

Intercultural competence must first be defined to demonstrate what should be assessed.

**Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence**

Educational researchers have claimed that there is a significant cross-linguistic influence between languages when people speak two or more languages. This means that their communication takes on an intercultural form. In simpler terms; therefore, intercultural communication can be viewed as “the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 81).

When it comes to teaching and learning, educators refer to the ability to communicate successfully in cross-cultural encounters as ‘intercultural competence’. However, according to Griffith et al. (2016), both experts in the field of intercultural education and higher education administrators have not agreed on a consensus definition of intercultural competence and its underlying dimensions. In the words of Deardorff (2006), "Scholars throughout the past 30 years have defined intercultural competence in its various iterations, but there has not been agreement on how intercultural competence should be defined" (p. 242).

Some relevant studies use the terms “multicultural competence,” “cross-cultural awareness,” “global competence,” and “intercultural sensitivity” to refer to the competence necessary for intercultural interaction (Fantini, 2009). Also, some researchers use the terms 'intercultural competence' and 'intercultural communicative competence' interchangeably to refer to the same concept (Deardorff, 2006) while some use them to designate different concepts (Fantini, 2009).
Deardorff (2006) cites the complexity and ongoing evolution of the field of intercultural competency as a reason. Additionally, in scholarly literature, the term ‘competence’ is itself a contentious one (Martyniuk et al., 2007). The term competence has frequently been conceptually equated with comprehension, satisfaction, effectiveness, achievement, efficiency, and appropriateness, while at other times it has been conceptually equated with a set of abilities, capacities or skills (Martyniuk et al., 2007; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

In light of such, Deardorff (2009) called for a more straightforward definition of the concept of intercultural competence to determine both the aspects that will be assessed as well as the level of assessment (481). In a similar vein, Fantini (2009) stresses the importance of arriving at a specific definition of intercultural competence before advancing any further assessment steps. Byram (1997), also affirmed that the delimitation of terminology is of paramount importance as it would help in the development of curricula, identifying the specific components that learners need to know, and the development of assessment required for competence, which, in the end, is the main objective of foreign language teaching.

With this in mind, Deardorff (2006) regards Byram (1997)’s definition of ICC as “knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self” (p. 34), more suitable for pedagogical purposes. Based on this definition, Deardorff (2006) defines ICC as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 247). According to Byram (1997), Sercu (2004), Deardorff (2006), knowledge, skills and attitudes form the basis for students’ intercultural competence.

As such, the process of becoming interculturally competent involves much more than knowing the rules of English (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009) or simply being aware of differences (Deardorff, 2006). To communicate cross-culturally, English language learners must be aware of what Hall (1959) calls ‘the silent language’ or the hidden dimensions of language, namely attitudes, beliefs, and communicative style or mode of interaction. Since teaching many of these invisible cultural aspects seems to be more complex, the question becomes how to help students develop them.

Based on this challenge, Deardorff (2006) and Fantini (2009) pointed out that ICC development is a lifelong developmental process. Accordingly, Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) acknowledge that “a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence” (p. 11), but it rather requires an ability to understand and communicate effectively, but not necessarily perfectly, with others.

Having defined intercultural competence, the question now becomes how to develop and assess students' intercultural competence. The following section briefly discusses the specific elements of intercultural competence based on the definition presented above.

The Development of Intercultural Competence: What to Assess?

Although there are many definitions and models of intercultural competence, in this research we have relied on Deardorff’s (2006) definition, mentioned above, to determine the aspects that will be assessed. As mentioned earlier, Deardorff’s (2006) definition of ICC highlights three key components that are essential to the development of intercultural competence: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills. Sercu (2004) and Fantini (2009) also pointed out that these three components
are integral to intercultural competence and therefore need to be addressed and assessed. Bennet (2009) summarized these three key components of intercultural competence as we need to cultivate attitudes that motivate us, we need to acquire knowledge that informs us about our cultural position and that of others, and we need to develop skills that enable us to interact effectively and appropriately.

According to Byram (1997), the development of these three key competencies leads to the development of an intercultural speaker who can interact with, mediate between, and accept different perspectives from people of different cultural backgrounds, and who can transform intercultural encounters into intercultural relationships (Guilherme, 2000). Lussier et al. (2007) emphasized the need to consider 'knowledge, attitudes, and skills’ as core components of intercultural competence development and evaluation.

Based on this, we use these three overarching elements (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) as a guide for evaluating the intercultural competence of third-year students majoring in English at Ibn Khaldoun University in Tiaret, which are presented below:

**Attitudes/ Savoirs-etre**

Deardorff (2006) and Bennett (2009) stated that the development of intercultural competence begins with attitude, which refers to the ability and willingness to view other cultures in comparison to one’s own with openness and curiosity (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). According to Lussier et al. (2007), the development of attitudes allows individuals to move from self-awareness to sensitivity to others, acceptance, and respect for the values of other cultures. Byram (1997) argued that attitudes are the foundation of intercultural competence and that without this foundational skill, the other components cannot truly be developed. Similarly, Deardorff (2006) asserted that to acquire the other intercultural components, learners must have respect and openness to what they will learn and discover about other cultures because, without such motivation, the desire to learn something new will be absent.

For assessment, Lussier et al. (2007) view that self-evaluation and surveys, using portfolios, are suitable. Learners here are assessed on their attitude changes such as openness, respect of cultures or tolerance of cultural differences using portfolios (Deardorff, 2006).

**Knowledge/ Savoirs**

According to Deardorff (2006) and Bennet (2009), after developing attitudes that respond appropriately to the foreign culture, the search for knowledge is the next step. According to Lussier et al. (2007), knowledge refers to collective memory related to culture (history and geography of other cultures), civilization (art, literature, music, painting), way of life (daily life, habits, traditions, customs, norms, stereotypes, etc.), and sociocultural context of target societies (values, beliefs, attitudes considering national identity, etc.). Byram (1997) argued that knowledge about others will help foreign language learners observe differences and similarities and will allow them to establish a relationship between their world and the target community, and the lack of thereof will not allow them to appreciate and accept cultural differences. Lussier et al. (2007) indicated that learners should not only discover differences but also be able to explain, analyze and interpret any cultural differences they learn by relating them in depth to their own experiences and local and national traditions.
According to Byram (1997), the assessment of knowledge is less problematic as it is possible to quantify the knowledge acquired at a given point on a given topic. Teachers can assess their students' knowledge using various methods such as closed-and-open-ended questions, true/false questions, multiple-choice questions, matching items, and quizzes (Fantini, 2009).

**Skills/Savoirs-faire**

This dimension focuses on the linguistic aspects of communicative competence, which indicate students' ability to use appropriate expressions in different cultural contexts (Lussier et al., 2007). They explained that students should learn to (i) interact in the target language and culture in the context of ways of life, taking into account practices, traditions, values, etc., (ii) interact with other groups through experiences, e.g., through exchange programs in the target language, which requires making effective use of communicative competence associated with the cultural environment, cultural competence, and acquired knowledge, (iii) interpret and negotiate discoveries and misunderstandings while developing critical awareness and social responsibility and using cultural mediation when necessary.

Unlike intercultural knowledge, according to Lussier et al. (2007), the assessment of intercultural skills requires less memory but more skills. This is because a large part of this dimension, as can be seen, is related to pragmatic competence, and it, therefore, needs a pragmatic evaluation (Byram, 1997). Therefore, the skills to use appropriate expressions in a different cultural context and interact in the target language and culture in the context of ways of life requires assessment activities like interactive activities in pairs or groups, discussions, role-plays, and written activities, as Fantini (2009) suggested.

What has been outlined above, describes the components of ICC and the tools of assessment. However, according to Deardorff (2006), the important question related to assessment is, "How do we know what works and what does not work in assessment, especially concerning assessing students' intercultural competence? Similarly, Sercu (2004) asks whether it is possible to develop instruments and tasks to assess competence in each of the different dimensions. For example, according to Sercu (2004), it is possible to test and assess students' understanding of factual information (knowledge), but the challenge lies in assessing cultural interpretation, i.e., explaining and interpreting cultural differences. Byram (1997) also commented on the validity of assessing savoir-faire and part of savoir-engager by saying that “there is no guarantee that success on one occasion means success on a later occasion which might be more complex” (p. 109). Another prominent problem is the assessment of abstract skills like tolerance, empathy, and problem-solving. For example, according to Sercu (2004), if learners cannot solve a particular intercultural problem, is it because they are not skillful concerning the intercultural skills dimension or the inadequate skills the reason for their failure to complete an assessment task adequately? It is also important to note that assessment should consider the learners' different levels of language proficiency. To refer to our context, for example, if we consider the problem of students' writing weakness, what might a cross-cultural writing task look like? In other words, how can we evaluate and grade cross-cultural writing assignments properly?

To address this, Byram (1997) and Lussier et al. (2007) suggested ongoing assessment at various intervals. Deardorff (2009) recommended the use of a multi-method and multi-perspective assessment approach to ensure validity and reliability for better measurement of intercultural
An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence

Mehdaoui

competence. On the other hand, Fantini (2009) added that it is important to think of the correct format that best aligns with the assessment objectives.

**Method**

The present research is a case study that intends to investigate the development of intercultural competence among undergraduate English major students at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, Algeria. To assess the three dimensions of intercultural competence, mentioned above, it was necessary to base the questions on the objectives contained in the three dimensions. As a method, the study employed a quantitative descriptive method, using a test as an appropriate measurement instrument to know how much the participants know about the British culture’s way of life and language use.

**Participants**

This research was conducted at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, Algeria. It included a sample of thirty-six third-year students EFL from the Department of English. The gender was covered almost equally with 46% males and 54% females. Their ages ranged from 22 to 25 years. The selection of such a sample was based on the premise that this population had studied English for a sufficient time that might allow them to develop a level of ICC that would in turn enable them to mediate and communicate effectively and appropriately in cross-cultural communication encounters.

**Research Instruments**

As mentioned above, ensuring the validity and reliability of the ICC is not an easy task for the reasons outlined above. Also, as some research has shown, there has been a decline in response rates among university students in recent years (Steinmetz, Thompson & Marshall, 2020). It has become a global phenomenon of daily practice at universities, as Chepikov (2012) reports. Factors attributed to the response rate decline include survey length, confidentiality, use of multiple contacts and offering of incentives, and survey fatigue (Steinmetz, Thompson, & Marshall, 2020).

To avoid this and to align the assessment with the research goals, we developed a tool, a yes/no and a true/false questionnaire to assess the three dimensions of intercultural competence: knowledge, attitudes and skills, which included 18 questions divided equally into three sections: Knowledge /Savoir (six questions), Attitudes/Savoir être (six questions), and Skills /Savoir Faire (six questions).

As Yes/ No and true/false questions are not only easy to complete as participants are less ‘resistant’ to such a survey, but it also meets the students’ different levels of competence. In addition, the benefits of this method of measurement can also help determining the consistency of the participants’ responses.

**Research Procedures**

Data was collected on October 4, 2022. First, the volunteer participants were placed in a classroom and then informed about the purpose of the data collection. The researcher informed the respondents that the data to be collected were to be used for academic research. The researcher also stressed the confidentiality of their answers as no names should be given. The participants were also informed that the results would be shared once published.
Findings

The results of the assessment of the intercultural communication competence—attitudes, knowledge, and skills—of the third-year EFL students at Ibn Khaeldoun University of Tiaret are presented in tables one, two, and three below:

Attitudes/ Savoir-être

Table one below represents students’ responses to the first intercultural dimension (attitudes).

Table 1. Students’ response to intercultural attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes (Savoir-être)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. British people are so open to religious differences</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I think the majority of British people are racists</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I find it acceptable to have fish and chips at breakfast if asked by my British colleague</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Would you wear a Scottish kilt (skirt) if you happened to visit Scotland because you were asked to participate in a national cultural festival there?</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel embarrassed when I see my Scottish colleague wearing a skirt.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When I study in the UK, I have to be curious to learn about their cultural background so I know how to treat them properly and avoid misunderstanding.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data used to evaluate students' attitudes toward British culture revealed that the majority of students have a high level of respect for others and acceptance of differences by being open to embracing British culture—a profile that is consistent with what is expected of foreign language learners. As question one, for instance, reveals, the majority of students (70%) believe that people in the UK are open to religious diversity, and not racists (75%). Additionally, the majority (63%) say that they will not feel uncomfortable wearing a Scottish "Skirt" or embarrassed when they see their Scottish colleagues do so (56%). This indicates that they value the traditions and beliefs of other cultures. They do, however, state that they will pass on the breakfast-time tradition of eating fish and chips. This should not be linked to their distaste for British cuisine; rather, it is a result of different cultural eating customs.

In short, this result indicates that students' ICC can be developed because, as they respond to question six, they demonstrate a desire and a curiosity to learn about British culture so to treat them properly and prevent misunderstandings (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Lussier et al., 2007; Bennett, 2009).

Knowledge/ Savoirs

Table two below represents students’ responses to the second intercultural dimension (knowledge).

Table 2. Students’ response to intercultural knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/ Savoirs</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The United Kingdom consists of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Like Algeria, the UK consists of a large of language and cultural variations that need awareness (the language, traditions and customs in Wales or Scotland are different from those of England).</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. National days in Britain are not celebrated to the same extent as national days in other countries like Algeria, in which each region in Britain has its national days.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the assessment of students' intercultural knowledge revealed that they have a significant understanding of both cultural products, such as national identity and diversity, as shown in questions one, two, and three, and dynamism that distinguishes British culture, such as social norms of visitation (taking a small gift for the host, a similar to Algerian culture), to social taboos (avoiding eye contact with strangers in public, unlike Algerian culture), as shown in questions four, five, and six. This demonstrates that students possess the ICC knowledge of cultural differences in social norms and taboos in everyday contexts (Byram, 1997).

In contrast with Algerian culture, where it is common to arrive early, the participants are unaware of various British social standards, such as coming a little bit late when invited to a British house. Since students are not expected to be flawless intercultural speakers (Byram, 1997), this does not imply that their ignorance of certain cultural behaviors indicates a lack of ICC. Personal experiences or exchange visit programs can help them learn some cultural behaviors more effectively (Lussier et al., 2007).

**Skills/ Savoir-faire**

Table three below represents students' responses to the third intercultural competence dimension (skills).

Table 3. Students’ response to intercultural skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills / Savoir-faire</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When I make an acquaintance in an informal situation with a British person for the first time, I make sure to make a firm shake hand rather than a soft one to show my interest.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I make an acquaintance in an informal situation with a British person for the first time, I make sure to ask about their life such as marital status, income, job, etc.</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I’m busy and my British colleague invites me for a drink outside, I tell him “sorry, I’m Busy”</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If I asked a British colleague about the price of some items, I consider it impolite if they avoid responding</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Generally, British people consider indirect requests like “I think my pen is not working” more polite than using direct requests like “would you hand me the pen?”.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Like the Algerian culture, if my British colleague offered me food or drink, I have to decline the offer one or two times before accepting it.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from questions five and six, which show that students are aware of British standards for polite requests and accepting offers, Table Three above shows that participants lack intercultural skills, which students’ communicative competence (i.e., interpreting and using appropriate expressions associated with the cultural environment). For example, students are not aware that the British, unlike Algerian culture, prefer a light handshake to a heavy one (Question one). It might be perceived as less friendly if an Algerian shakes hands vigorously with a British person.
Students also do not know the value of privacy in Britain (Question two). British people do not like to be asked about private or intimate matters, such as their income 'How much money do you make?' or their marital status "Why are not you married?". If English students do not use the greeting correctly in a cross-cultural conversation, it can lead to unforeseen misunderstandings.

Algerians often inquire about names, hometowns, occupations, salaries, and other personal details. When Algerians meet on the street, they ask: "Where are you going right now? In the British environment, this could be perceived as an invasion of privacy and could be offensive. Therefore, Algerian English students should not consider it unfriendly or rude if their British counterpart does not answer personal questions, such as how much certain things cost (see Question three). In this case, they should be aware that it is more effective to use appropriate communicative strategies to talk about some common "safe" topics, such as the weather, to avoid misunderstandings.

Also, in the UK, it is important to meet up with colleagues after work, and the most common way to do this is to invite a colleague for a drink to break the ice. However, Algerian English students rarely digest this social norm. In this case, English students should be aware that it is better for them to talk about some common “safe” topics such as the weather is more effective to avoid misunderstanding.

Furthermore, in the UK, it is important to socialize with colleagues after work, and the most common way to do this is to invite a colleague for a drink to break the ice. However, Algerian English students rarely digest this social norm. In this case, English students should be aware that it is better to accept the invitation than to say "sorry, I am Busy" as they responded to question four.

Discussion

Using the case study of third-year students at the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, this study aimed to assess the development of intercultural competence among Algerian English major students based on intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes which, according to Byram (1997), Sercu (2004) and Deardorff (2006) form the basis for the intercultural competence of the students.

In relation to the first research question, “to what extent do the undergraduate EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University possess intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills?”, based on Byram’s (1997), Sercu’s (2004) and Deardorff’s (2006) perception of the intercultural profile, interacting effectively drawing on attitudes, knowledge and skills, the participants do not meet the requirements on the intended profile of an intercultural speaker.

As the results showed, the participants displayed openness and positive attitudes towards the British people and culture, which, according to Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006), form the foundation of intercultural competence – it is the profile, in the view of Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006), that will help them show readiness to discover and learn about other cultures. The respondents also showed sufficient knowledge of British cultural products and practices. Based on Byram (1997) view, their knowledge about the British people and culture will help them observe differences and similarities and will allow them to establish a relationship between their world and the British community. The participants’ intercultural knowledge could be related to adequate exposure to the British culture at the EFL department, especially through the programs of civilization and culture studies. Of course, the participants were unsuccessful in understanding British social standards, like the importance of “coming a little bit late when invited to a British
house”, but this does not indicate that their intercultural knowledge dimension is low. As Byram (1997) contended, students are not expected to be flawless intercultural speakers or perfectly competent. Lussier et al. (2007) suggested that personal experiences or exchange visit programs can help them learn some cultural behaviors more effectively.

However, despite the participants’ intercultural attitudes and intercultural knowledge, they displayed inadequate intercultural skills, which is an answer to the second research question, “In what area do they need to increase to develop intercultural competence?” This means that the participants have not yet met the requirements of the intercultural speaker profile in the area of intercultural skills. Therefore, they need to increase their intercultural competence in this area.

This could be interpreted concerning the fact that the participants, like many Algerian EFL learners, are not familiar with the communication style of English or 'the silent rule of language' as stated by Hall (1954), which can be attributed to the lack of opportunities for students to communicate with native English speakers. The reasons for this discrepancy have to do mainly with the pedagogical practice of teaching English in English departments in Algeria, which is based on teaching and learning theory-based information and factual knowledge. Within this pedagogical practice, not enough time is devoted in English classes to implement or discuss the communicative style of English people or to show how they use the language in their daily life. This situation can be problematic for students if the communicative style of English, which is a crucial cross-cultural component, and the teaching methods that support and enhance students' understanding of how English speakers interact continue to be ignored. According to Lussier et al. (2007), learning the skills to interact in the target language and culture is important to socialize and have successful interactions; whereas, the lack of thereof can lead to confusion and a negative impression.

To sum up, the findings revealed that the EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University have not yet met the criteria of an intercultural speaker profile in the area of intercultural skills (savoir-faire), and therefore, they need to increase their competence in this area to meet the profile of the intercultural speaker.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study sheds light on the place of intercultural education in Algeria’s higher education, some limitations should be noted. First, there are no empirical studies on the assessment of university EFL students’ intercultural competence in Algeria for the researcher to compare and relate to. Therefore, further research is needed to fill the research gap in the Algerian context. Since this study used only closed-ended questions to collect data, which is a drawback of this study, future studies using multi-method assessment tools are needed to confirm the findings. Participants in this study were 36 English major students from the Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret; future studies may select a larger and more diverse sample that could be useful. Finally, as the research also implied the issue of students’ English proficiency problem, which was taken into consideration in the research design, future studies may use ICC assessment instruments that can accommodate all students’ levels of English proficiency.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to evaluate the development of intercultural competence of EFL undergraduate students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, based on Byram’s (1997), Sercu
An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence

Mehdaoui

(2004) and Deardorff (2006) perception of the intercultural profile, interacting effectively drawing on attitudes, knowledge and skills. More importantly, the current study aimed to investigate the extent to which intercultural competence is integrated into the current university English program in Algeria.

The study concluded that although the EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University held a positive attitude of showing openness and curiosity and intercultural knowledge, they need to enhance the intercultural skills needed in intercultural encounters. From this point of view, the findings suggest that there is a need to enhance Algerian EFL students’ intercultural skills. Accordingly, the teaching of English in Algerian higher education should promote all the ICC dimensions. This should not only be through exposing students to isolated cultural facts, but also through providing them with in-depth cultural knowledge that links different culturally relevant practices, products, and communicative styles and skills.

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An Assessment of Undergraduate EFL Students’ Intercultural Competence


Developing Learners’ Intercultural Communicative Competence through Online Exchanges: Case of Third-Year Students in Algeria

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Received: 10/18/2022  Accepted: 12/06/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract

Foreign Language Education generally aims to produce intercultural speakers who develop relevant language skills necessary for communication and work. In fact, online exchanges provide an excellent opportunity to enhance learners’ analytical and critical thinking skills. They can enormously help develop learners’ intercultural awareness making them ready to accept cultural differences. This paper examines the relevance of using virtual or online exchange development in language teaching and learning, focusing principally on virtual task categories and the use of Information Communication Technologies, which has become an everyday reality of the 21st century. It seeks to answer the following research questions: Do online exchanges help to develop learners’ intercultural communicative competence? Are online communication tools effective for promoting the teaching and learning processes? A student’s questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with teachers are adopted as instruments to collect the necessary data. The participants are undergraduate third-year students and EFL university teachers from the Department of English Language at University Djillali Liabes of Sidi Bel Abbes (Algeria). Findings showed positive feedback from the students toward using online exchanges to foster intercultural competencies. They also revealed that teachers know the importance of online tools when teaching cultural issues. Thus, it is worth noting that Information Communication Technologies and online interactions contribute significantly to creating spaces where learners, particularly develop cultural tolerance, improve communication, exchange and promote knowledge besides becoming self-autonomous.

Keywords: EFL learners, exchanges, intercultural competence, online learning and teaching, technologies

Introduction

As technological tools have rapidly developed in language education, most teachers are eager to employ them in their classrooms to cope with updated, practical learning and teaching. However, the current digital era has enhanced innovative teaching methods and techniques that directly develop learners’ motivation. Educators consider using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as the best means to provide learners with the ability to check differently for information. ICTs enhance learners’ research possibilities, language skills, and autonomy. The present paper proves that online communication tools are necessary to promote learners’ proficiency in the foreign language. It also shows that online exchanges can rapidly develop learners’ intercultural abilities, and foster the teaching and learning processes. It tends to answer the following research questions: Can online exchanges help to develop learners’ intercultural communicative competence? Do online communication tools promote the learning and teaching processes? It presents a practical study to identify online exchanges and their worth in boosting intercultural abilities. Semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire are adopted to investigate the raised research questions. Since, there are still potential problems with distance learning and teaching, the researcher provides specific recommendations to improve methods, techniques, and materials and to create a good learning environment that will ensure learners’ progress in the future.

Literature Review

The Use of ICTs in Education

Nowadays, educational systems adopt an ICT integration policy to develop all pedagogical practices. Grabe, M., and Grabe, C. (2007) emphasize that integrating innovative technologies in education completely change the way people behave and think. Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) argue that integrating Information, Communication, and Technology in educational institutions refers to using computer-based communication that incorporates into the daily classroom instructional process. Rahimpour (2011) focuses that using computers in language teaching and learning can offer a wide variety of multimedia content and other communication channels between learners. Jeong-Bae, Robb and Charismiadji (2010) reveal the advantages of networking the learners can have to confront the challenges of the 21st century, while Pina and Bohn (2015) consider internet technology an imminent variable in educational settings. Using ICTs can develop students’ motivation and interest permitting them to promote language proficiency. It can further help to enhance learners’ autonomy.

Online or Distance Learning versus Traditional Learning

Researchers generally mention that technology is helpful in language teaching and learning. Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) argue that integrating Information and Communication Technology undoubtedly helps teachers to substitute traditional teaching methods with technology-based approaches. Indeed, using ICTs represents a critical competency to acquire, especially to better adapt to a constantly changing society with relevant linguistic and cultural skills in today’s globalized world.

Online learning can quickly benefit foreign language learners and teachers, allowing them to develop intercultural communication and language skills. Contrary to traditional classrooms, teachers can find themselves in such situations, whereby they have to manage various interactions with learners and focus on learners’ attention via an electronic platform. Stickler and Shi (2015)
explain that this fact necessitates them to make extra efforts to enhance the learning process. Worley and Tesdell (2009) mention that because every task online is done differently in traditional classrooms, teachers make more efforts. Baralt (2014) adds that tasks functioning well in person do not work at a distance. Jarvis (2009) argues that distance learning requires specific administration and pedagogical management, such as technical support, quality assurance, course design, and learning support.

**Advantages of Online Teaching and Learning**

In recent years, online teaching and learning emerged as an alternative to the physical classroom setting and further expanded by the covid-19 spread. Garcia-Penalvo, and Seoane-Pardo (2014) mention that online education can help to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Buckley (2022) distinguishes three types of online learning notably: asynchronous learning, whereby learning does not take place in real-time; synchronous learning, whereby students and teachers are required to interact simultaneously; and finally, blended (hybrid) learning that allows for both in-person and online interaction.

All in all, online or distance teaching benefits learners as it offers many opportunities to study languages. It provides students with the possibility to develop web-literacy abilities, to write reports or articles, and to conduct oral communications in meetings or seminars. It further helps them to learn particular words, and gives them the possibility to promote intercultural abilities. While students depend on themselves to achieve academic success, they can further develop a certain level of autonomy and spontaneity.

In virtual learning; knowledge can be shared by video-conferencing, uploading videos from youtube, word-pdf documents, social media, and other e-systems; which is strongly practical in promoting learners’ digital literacy. According to Stanley (2013), this latter refers to the ability to perform tasks in a digital environment. Gadbury, Bray, and Austin (2014) argue that digital literacy includes the ability to read media and apply new knowledge obtained from digital environments. Korporets (2019) adds that it permits a wide range of information to circulate quickly among students.

Online teaching and learning platforms become fundamental in teaching, particularly, after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This latter was the principal reason that stimulated the use of distance learning in teaching languages and other disciplines to confront severe in-person problems, notably from the serious damage that the virus may provoke. Although, there exists a considerable number of resources like those of Chapelle (2014), Thomas and Reinders (2012), and Gonzalez-Lloret (2016), which tend to focus on technology, distance language education, and online video-based interaction; there are still no good methodological guides for teachers to explain to them how to undertake successful distance teaching and learning. Compton (2009) emphasizes that teachers may fail online to develop socialization, which is pertinent for language education. Indeed, there is no doubt that video-based interaction is entirely different from traditional face-to-face interaction, as no direct human interaction occurs.

**Methods**

The researcher adopted a mixed-method approach research focusing on experimental methodology. Both qualitative and quantitative were used to examine learners’ responses to online interactions and explore EFL teachers’ points of view toward the use of online exchanges in teaching English as a foreign language; while promoting learners’ communication competencies.
Participants

The participants are EFL university teachers, who were directly interviewed. Third-year LMD students were also randomly selected to fill in a questionnaire. However, both participants are from the Department of English Language at Djillali Liabes University, Sidi-Bel-Abbes (Algeria). This study took place at the beginning of the year 2022/2023.

Research Instruments

This study includes two research instruments: a semi-structured interview with 10 EFL teachers and a survey addressed to three groups of third-year undergraduate students at Djilali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria. Each group consists of 40 students, approximately 120. However, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire, which was randomly distributed among them. It is composed of a set of semi-open and closed questions in order to obtain general information, and to explore their attitudes via online interactions. Teachers were directly asked about their own experience with online teaching to explore the difficulties they constantly confront and the solutions they may provide. A combination of both approaches, quantitative and qualitative, helps to determine the results.

Research Procedures

Further, once data were collected through the students’ questionnaire and the teachers’ interview about perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs toward online interactions and cultural competencies, the researcher proceeded the analysis of findings. For the treatment of results, the researcher used Microsoft Office Excel 2010. The practical procedure relied on the validity, credibility of data, and respected ethics of academic researches with the agreement of participants and anonymity of their identity.

Findings

Interview Results

The data obtained from the interview are as follows:

Question One: Do you use online tools while teaching EFL learners? What do you think about online teaching?

The obtained result for this question is that: six teachers responded positively, confirming that it is pertinent to shift to online teaching, to cope with technological advances, and to face any further pandemics. They usually rely on social networking sites, Facebook pages, posts on social media, WhatsApp, PowerPoint, zoom, Email, SMS, moodle, etc. They also confirm that such tools can bring advantages to learners, for they can watch, listen, analyze, discuss, argue and communicate, etc. Other four teachers mentioned that they are still not ready to engage in online or distance teaching because of their lack of experience and the unavailability of materials.

Question Two: What kind of difficulties do you find while teaching online?

The respondents strongly agree that they may confront a set of difficulties, which are sometimes hard to solve immediately, such as the problem of connectivity and fatigue. They can have people other than students, who may disturb their online meetings. They also may be obliged to do many things simultaneously. For instance, they can type an answer for a student while
simultaneously doing their best to solve any technical problem. They also agree that certain students remain reluctant. However, these learners are still dependent on face-to-face learning.

**Question Three:** Do online exchanges help to enhance learners’ communicative competence?

All the interviewed teachers approve that video-based interactions and online exchanges are effective to develop learners’ language skills, and to train intercultural speakers. They constantly encourage learners to maximize interaction in order to enhance their oral skills. They also mentioned that they have to diversify online tasks and activities to boost learners’ motivation and intercultural abilities.

**Question Four:** Do you have any suggestions to resolve major problems of online teaching?

The respondents suggest training for teachers and learners to enable them to do their tasks successfully. They urge higher educational institutions in Algeria to make specialized materials available for teachers and learners.

**Students’ Questionnaire**

The data obtained from the student’s questionnaire are as follows:

**Question One:** Do you interact online with teachers and other people from other cultures?

All the respondents approve that they constantly interact online with teachers, classmates, and people from around the world. However, these interactions help them to open up to new experiences and cultures.

**Question Two:** How do you communicate with them?

All the participants agree on using Whatsapp, Facebook, Moodle, phone calls, forum, SMS, posts in social media, Email, zoom, etc.

**Question Three:** Do you face any challenges in doing online learning?

Most of participants insist on the problem of poor internet debit that may hamper their tasks.

**Question Four:** What benefits can online interaction bring to you?

All of the respondents agree that it principally helps them to develop language skills and promote inter-communication. It also motivates them to learn and start new experiences.

**Discussion**

The semi-structured interview with teachers revealed that online communication tools play a crucial role in developing the learning and teaching processes. They tremendously help to change teacher-centered approaches towards learner-centered ones. They can further enhance learners’ intercultural communication skills.

Online teaching helps learners improve language skills, notably reading, writing, speaking, and listening. For instance, students can watch videos and learn from them. They can also analyze, express ideas and thoughts, and give arguments or clarifications on specific issues. They can even become more imaginative and creative.

Students’ questionnaire indicates that learners can promote language skills. They can broaden their knowledge by exchanging ideas and points of view with teachers, learners, and people from different parts of the world. In fact, learners can identify, know and understand other cultures. They can also enhance intercultural tolerance.
While technology has an essential function in acquiring techno-literacy, it is difficult to ascertain that it facilitates all kinds of learning. Indeed, there are difficulties that every teacher may confront when doing distance or online teaching. They may result from certain factors that can be summarized as follows:

- Learners can be reluctant towards distance education because they get used to traditional or face-to-face learning in which the teacher is the spoon-feeder. They can be de-motivated because they are not familiar with this type of teaching.
- In distance learning, learners’ attention is mostly devoted to technical and social features. Stickler and Shi (2013) argue that technical problems can disturb both learners’ and teachers’ expectations. Gleason (2013) confirms that teachers must provide extra cognitive efforts to strengthen interaction and attract learners’ attention.
- There might be specific technical problems and weak trainings.

**Research Implications**

To overcome significant problems that can hamper online learning and to ensure successful teaching and learning, the researcher presents the following recommendations:

- Teachers and students need to use different materials for online teaching and learning. In fact, advanced technology and communication devices should be available for students; wherever they are, either at school or home.
- Professional experts must ensure effective e-learning; because not all teachers are well-trained in using e-platforms. They should be literate and capable of using ICTs and network technology.
- Teachers must depend on the new teaching methodologies that suit the transfer from traditional learning to e-learning.
- Teachers must diversify online courses to attract students’ interest.
- Teachers should make sure to have a good internet connection.
- Teachers must play the role of chairpersons and facilitators of learning. Harmer (2001) argue that a teacher performs eight functions in language teaching, notably controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant, facilitator, tutor, and investigator. Indeed, teachers must organize and coordinate online rather than monopolize the learning process.
- Teachers have to emphasize the learners’ needs. Needs analysis or what learners need to know should be the starting point for the design of courses.
- Teachers must focus on online tasks related to culture, linguistics, literature, and civilization to foster learners’ intercultural abilities.
- They must encourage learners to become autonomous. They must also show them primary techniques on how they can participate at a distance in the planning of the lessons.
- Teachers must rely on up-to-date materials; that may contribute effectively to developing learners’ skills and autonomy.
- Teachers must be curious, self-confident, and helpful. Accordingly, Bell (2002) confirms that teachers in language education can not improve their knowledge and skills in a particular discipline; unless they develop three essential features notably: curiosity, confidence, and collaboration. This means that teachers must give importance to the courses. They must also be ready to start new experiences, and to work in collaboration with their experienced colleagues.
Teachers must include short breaks between online sessions to avoid learners’ problems of anxiety and fatigue or boredom.

**Conclusion**

This study aims to shed light on some aspects of online teaching, particularly the formation of intercultural speakers. Online education is more effective in comparison to traditional education, because using ICTs helps develop a learning milieu that is more attractive for teachers and learners. In fact, using the internet or online exchanges enhances learners’ confidence to communicate better. Learners can express thoughts and ideas with teachers, classmates, and other people worldwide. Online contacts and exchanges can further help them develop intercultural tolerance and understanding. Implementing technology in schools and universities in different countries of the world, particularly in Algeria, still needs severe consideration related to sound teacher training to better develop the systems of education at different levels.

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Social Networks and Language Applications, Other Means of Learning?  
Students of English at Tlemcen University

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Received: 10/10/2022  Accepted: 12/13/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
In recent times, at the turn of the 21st century, there have been significant developments in the use of technological advances for teaching languages. Following the use of traditional language laboratories, and then the emergence of computer-assisted forms of language teaching, language-oriented social networks such as YouTube and Facebook and other types of language applications have been used for that purpose, particularly in teaching English. Learners’ attitudes are aroused in significantly different ways compared to feelings about traditional forms of language teaching, including learner-centered approaches. One aim of this paper is to elicit learners’ interest in Internet use and to consider the degree to which social media and language applications enhance in-class formal learning. This study brings forth learners’ digital experience in the use of social media and we argue that it will raise awareness as to the importance of these media in improving their language skills. We thus attempt to explore the extent to which language learners benefit from their out-of-class Internet use. A small-scale survey, based on an online questionnaire addressed to Algerian students of English at Tlemcen University, reveals increasing interest in using such applications and social networks outside the class and their positive attitudes towards English in virtual spaces, particularly when having the possibility of discussing with native speakers. The results also show that communicating with others allows them to share intercultural aspects and mutual understanding. Indeed, respondents’ positive attitudes towards mixed-culture conversation are attention-grabbing and significantly encouraging. However, it is believed that such informal, non-systematic methods of teaching/learning a foreign language can only complement formal teaching in class with non-virtual teachers.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, Language applications, Social media, Online learning

Introduction

Technologies have long given significant support to the development of language teaching and learning as institutions and educators have acknowledged the positive outputs of using various media in language classes, including language laboratories and tapes, CDs and videos, computers and the Internet, recently. Countless researchers in education and language teaching, particularly those versed in English language teaching, have defended their views on the forms of and approaches to teaching based on various perspectives, including positions of behaviorists, psychologists, nativists and language acquisition scholars. Recent multidisciplinary research, cognition theories and communication studies, have had substantial impact on the development of teaching and led to the switch from teacher-centered methods to learner-centered approaches. The learner is no longer regarded as a passive element receiving information but as actively participating in acquiring knowledge and language practice. Technology-based practices have entered the classroom and the use of the Internet, particularly with Web 2.0 platforms, has become additional means that enhance the learners’ autonomy and collaborative work. This small-scale study tries to question the interest that students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL henceforth) display in using Internet platforms. We attempt to examine the extent to which social media and language applications can improve their skills, on the one hand, and enhance in-class formal learning, on the other. Would it be beneficial to introduce social media use in formal EFL instruction?

This article is structured as follows: considering historical development of EFL teaching/learning and focusing on today’s use of digital learning. The first section considers some background of language teaching in its two approaches, teacher-centered vs. learner-centered. Then, it provides an overview of further developments in technology-mediated teaching/learning since the emergence of digital computing and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as an accessory method of teaching languages, mainly when brought into the English classroom. Next, the paper focuses on students’ informal use of complementary means of learning English through web platforms, social media and language applications. The section is then followed by fieldwork carried out based on a multiple-choice questionnaire addressed to some Algerian students of English at Tlemcen University and a semi-structured interview with some of their teachers. The aim is to check the use of these virtual means and the participants’ attitudes toward learning English outside the classroom context. In so doing, two research questions have been put forward:

1. To what extent do Algerian EFL learners use social media to improve their English?
2. What attitudes do students and their teachers have towards using social media?

➢ We hypothesize that students use social media believing that these can improve their English, as they have the opportunity to practice skills they are not exposed to in class.
➢ We assume that both students and teachers have positive attitudes toward the use of social media in EFL learning. However, we believe that these practices can only be supplementary to in-class lectures, though formal instruction could benefit from adequate, controlled use of social media and mobile technology as para-instructional ways of practicing language skills.

The observation and study of the gathered data will help us test these hypotheses.
Literature Review

Language Teaching/Learning

Various methods of teaching foreign languages were used in the past, some enjoying popularity, like the Direct Method in the late 19th C, or the Audio-Lingual Method throughout the 1950s which focused on language structure though it started using visual aids and audio tapes. But these methods failed, mainly because they did not consider the role of context and authentic communication in the language taught. Starting in the 1970s, with the development of linguistic and psychological theories, an approach referred to as CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) emerged. Educational reforms had to continually adapt curricula to scholars’ theorizing on language teaching (Chomsky’s ‘deep structure’, psychologists’ views and sociolinguistic perspectives) and the learners’ needs. Dramatic changes have occurred since Chomsky’s view (1959) that habit formation could not explain language acquisition which, for him, is the result of an innate capacity wired in the child’s brain. The cognitive processes involved in second language learning are similar to first language acquisition in many respects. Therefore, an L2 learner should be seen as an active element in class rather than a passive imitator, though teachers’ role habits die hard!

The emergence of the learner-centered approach to teaching languages is based on the principle that the learner is an active member of the learning environment, while the teacher remains in the background as a passive member, playing though the role of facilitator. Thus, more importance is given to learners for more effective instruction. However, despite all efforts made to adopt such principles, teacher-centered methods have been hard to drop and teachers continue to control the scene, while learners are passive recipients most of the time spent in class. Despite their awareness of the recent learner-based approaches, teachers remain dominant in the classroom as they cannot get rid of traditional teaching habits. Even language laboratories, introduced in the US by the 1950s and generalized in the decades that followed, did not fulfill the purposes meant to be realized. The methods used in the lab were still based on behavioristic views, convincing teachers that repetitions of language forms and exercise drills, in particular, were the best way of teaching a foreign language. But computer-based instruction and online learning enhance learner-centered principles as the learner experiences language activities they construct at their own pace. Most importantly, learners have the opportunity to be exposed to authentic language which allows them to experience some sort of immersion into the language and culture of native speakers.

CALL: Computer Technologies and Language Learning

The use of computers in language teaching began at a slow pace in the 1960s; but soon some programs started integrating computer-based teaching, as in the case of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Defined by Levy (1997) as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in teaching and learning” (p. 1), CALL was first affected by behavioristic views, focussing on repetitive drills, grammar exercises, explanations and translation (Ahmad et al., 1985). With the advent of cognitive orientations and communication theories, in parallel with the decline of behaviorism, CALL shifted its focus on language use and interaction, thus giving learners a better opportunity for autonomy and active work on computers, both individually and in groups. However, by the early 1990s, CALL came under criticism for its lack of social considerations and genuine environments in language teaching. It then took a new perspective that integrates language skills with authentic use in social contexts, on the one hand, and more effective
use of technologies and multimedia, on the other. Warschauer and Healey (1998) write in this respect:

The multimedia networked computer – with a range of informational, communicative, and publishing tools now potentially at the fingertips of every student – provides not only the possibilities for much more integrated uses of technology, but also the imperative for such use, as learning to read, write, and communicate via computer has become an essential feature of modern life in the developed world. (p. 58)

Students of today’s generation have grown up in an environment of computer-based technologies and multimedia Internet resources that allow them to be virtually in touch with others’ languages and cultures, and thus to learn to communicate.

Consequently, CALL devoted its potentialities to the Internet for online teaching and learning, highlighting at the same time the benefits of social interaction and intercultural exchange, including most importantly learners’ interaction with others in authentic contexts, in particular with native speakers of English. Such interactions encompass the four skills, as learners can text messages, voice chat and read files sent to them.

**Web 2.0 for Online Communication**

Eventually, CALL invested itself in the use of web platforms, later on commonly known as ‘social media’ (Reinhardt 2018; Warschauer 1996), to promote novel forms of teaching and learning languages, ways that started fascinating teachers and educators, particularly in EFL learning. Reinhardt (2019) describes the development of web platforms, saying: “Beginning in the mid-2000s, technologies based on Web 2.0 platforms became popularly known as ‘social media’, including blogs, wikis, social networking and a variety of related platforms, services, and media technologies” (p. 1).

While the first generation, referred to as Web 1.0, offered ‘read-only’ stuff through the use of information-oriented search engines and other applications, Web 2.0 offers interactivity and thus allows users not only to connect but also to upload or obtain various types of data. Learners of English, for example, can send their exercises both in the form of text and audio, and even videos, to be checked by their teachers. They can also find ‘friends’, on Facebook for example, with whom they can practice their spoken English. Students now have the possibility for distance learning, particularly on specific platforms like Zoom which offers video-conferencing and recently Microsoft Teams and Moodle platforms, both officially used here in Algeria as online resources since the COVID-19 pandemic. These online platforms have led to a higher degree of digital literacy. The point we would like to make at this level lies in the extent to which Web 2.0 and social networking as a whole can be made to change learning and learning environments if adequately applied in class and outside the classroom. Putting forward an optimistic view on the use of social media, Solomon and Schrum (2007) wrote:

The shift to Web 2.0 tools can have a profound effect on schools and learning, causing a transformation in thinking. This will happen because the tools promote creativity, collaboration, and communication, and they dovetail with learning methods in which these skills play a part.” (p. 21).

They also argued that students can now write directly online in a blog and get immediate feedback from peers and others who could be anywhere. They can collaborate with peers near and far — in a wiki, and also
directly online. They can post photos, videos, podcasts, and other items online. The difference is that they can do the posting. They control the tools of production and publication. (p. 2)

In the meantime, the spread of social networks for communication purposes, the availability of the smartphone and English globalization encourage learners to fully participate in various social media, including Wikis, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., some of which are of great significance for foreign learners of English. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown have led to deeper integration of the Internet into the world of education and language learning, providing teachers and learners alike with the possibility of benefiting from various sources and materials on the one hand and, on the other, from the flexibility of the learning environment, a form referred to as another culture of learning, free from the bounds of traditional classroom situations. As an obvious instance, Algerian students of English here, in this third decade of the 21st century, are daily exposed to the latest information on communication technologies and thus have acquired a higher degree of digital literacy. Owning a mobile phone and a laptop, they have gotten used to the various social media at hand to communicate online with their classmates for feedback and their teachers who can easily send teaching materials. In parallel, they have also discovered the many forms of improving their language skills through social media use and specific language applications, though such practices remain informal ways of additional learning.

**Social Media and Language Applications**

With borderless Internet possibilities, the advent of more powerful wi-fi connections and the ease of owning a PC or a smartphone, the digital world has become extremely complex. A plethora of websites are used daily by millions of people in the world, Facebook being undoubtedly the most popular social networking site allowing users to connect with online communities and share documents, photos and videos and much more. YouTube and Twitter as well are very popular, though their design and services are different from those of Facebook. But other social media too are gaining ground in popularity; TikTok, for instance, has been a fast-growing social medium since its launch in 2016. Other web-based networks and applications can be mentioned, but here we are only interested in those resources used in education, giving the opportunity to learn languages, particularly English as a global language.

Students of English show strong engagement in using various types of social media and sites where they can express themselves, share ideas and documents, upload and download files and videos and much more, to the extent that some authors have started analyzing such Internet practices and communications from an ethnographic perspective, under labels like ‘virtual ethnography’ (Hine, 2000), ‘digital ethnography’ (Murthy, 2008) or ‘cyberethnography’ (Robinson & Schultz, 2009). One aim behind these digital approaches to Internet communities is to reveal new social values that affect users’ behavior and cultural practices, including addiction to websites and applications, particularly with the advances of mobile technologies that allow people to connect anywhere any time. But language improvement can only arise with a positive attitude toward practicing English on social media and most importantly motivation, particularly in its integrative form which refers to the learner’s openness to another linguistic/cultural group. Such ‘integrative motivation’ (Gardner, 1985) may even lead to the learner’s desire to assimilate into the target language community and their culture. This requires, of course, continual use of authentic materials dealing with the foreign language. Rodgers and Richards (1986) remind us that
authentic materials “will involve different kinds of texts and different media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks.” (p. 25).

The issue that we deal with in this article concerns Algerian EFL students’ use of learning materials from various social media that might be useful in their English studies, and to see whether they benefit from these media in a more or less systematized way. In the following, we shall see what language skills can be associated with the social networks and websites available to the students of English.

**Facebook, Reading, and Writing**

Founded in 2004, Facebook “is now unquestionably the largest social network in the world with over two billion monthly active users and over a billion daily active users”, as revealed by FB 2022 Statistics and Facts. Most students have a Facebook account and thus are always connected either in the groups they have created, like the one for EFL Master 2 students, or with any other ‘friends’, virtually in the whole world. Such contacts allow them at least to practice their reading and writing skills, though the two other language skills are sometimes used through voice chat on Facebook Messenger, but also on TikTok recently.

One question we put forward about Facebook – the most often used social medium – is whether it can be effective in English learning when we know that EFL students are neither oriented nor organized in such informal practices. Rather, they are involved in ‘posts’, ‘feeds’, ‘friends’, ‘walls’, ‘likes and shares’ and information and events that have structurally nothing to do with formal education. However, EFL students can perform their own identity in the target language and even assimilate to other cultural identities, particularly when they become ‘friends’ with native speakers of English. But no focus can be obtained in such a virtual world, except for some reading and writing when done consciously by selecting specific Facebook pages where students can improve these two language skills. Listening comprehension, however, can be practiced through other media such as YouTube and Ted Talks.

**YouTube, TED Talks, and Listening Comprehension**

YouTube is the second most important search engine after Google. It is a free video-only platform that receives/offers content of virtually all types of interest, including movies, historical or scientific documentaries, education and of course lessons in English for all levels. Thus, provided that EFL students have enough motivation, they can gradually develop their listening skills by being exposed to language that fits their needs in YouTube videos of their choice and interest; this will hopefully enhance their enthusiasm in class. In addition to visiting the platform as consumers of content, EFL students may also upload videos about any topic, which allows them to practice their speaking skills as well, though with no assessing feedback.

Driven by the slogan ‘Ideas worth spreading’, the American-Canadian Ted Talks organization posts videos that cover various types of topics, usually academic, presented by experts in different fields in many languages, but English takes the lion’s share. Just as in YouTube videos, there is no live interaction with the viewers in Ted Talk videos. But EFL learners can reap significant benefits from such videos, in particular in listening and comprehension skills, but also reading as the ‘read transcript’ button allows viewing the whole text.
Podcasts and TikTok

Launched in 2005, podcasting was an innovative mobile technology that uses the Internet to distribute digital materials and allows the possibility of quickly downloading audio and video podcasts, particularly in learning. Integrated into education, podcasting has led to the notion of mobile learning and MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning), a subfield of CALL. Many applications are offered on podcasts, but Algerian EFL teachers and students alike do not seem to be aware of this technological development and its benefits for classroom use, particularly for listening skills. Rüscoff (2009) remarks that podcasting is indeed among those platforms which are “increasingly beginning to enter the standard repertoire of language teaching and learning” (p. 56). We wonder. Will social media be seriously considered for educational use at the university? Or will they infiltrate the formal education setting in force as students are becoming addicted to Web 2.0 and mobile technologies?

In addition to its attractive but very short videos, produced by users and viewed by users, the video-based app TikTok may be used for educational purposes, particularly for teaching languages. Some people in the TikTok community use the platform to teach English casually, with short videos but influential effects on learners as each video concentrates on one point that can refer to one item in a given language skill. Such videos, particularly those made by native speakers, seem to support learners of English worldwide and enhance their pronunciation and comprehension skills.

Method

This small-scale study considers Tlemcen University EFL students’ involvement in, and attitudes towards, the use of social media and language applications to improve their language skills in the target language. The study is based primarily on a quantitative analysis of the data obtained from students at Master and 3rd-year levels from the Department of English. Using their Facebook groups, a closed-ended questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms, which made it easy for respondents to complete the form quickly and with no constraints. The questionnaire also helped us save much time as we collected the data in just a few days. The responses received allowed gathering a significant amount of data to be dealt with from a quantitative perspective, but also reveal some qualitative information on the students’ behavior regarding the use of social media and other web platforms. Some questions were presented in the form of a Likert scale (1932) which allowed measuring the informants’ perception of some issues and elicit their attitudes or perception of social media use for learning English.

On the other hand, a semi-structured interview was administered to teachers to obtain information regarding their perception of, and attitudes towards, students’ use of social media and language applications with the aim of getting better in English language skills. The interview consists of a small number of questions asked to three teachers of the department of English where these students are enrolled. Thus, our investigation is based on a mixed-method approach, considering the collected data on a quantitative-qualitative continuum.

Participants and Instruments

To conduct the study, we thought it would be appropriate to use the web as students today are continually connected, using their smartphones, particularly now that they have become used to online lectures since the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 / 2021). Precisely 109 anonymous
students’ responses to the Google Forms questionnaire were received and three teachers were interviewed.

**Results and Discussion**

**Questionnaire**

The data obtained from the online questionnaire reveal the overall interest that EFL students show in using various social media and language applications to improve their English skills. Very few respondents said they did not think these media helped in their studies. Around 85% of the respondents were female students, but gender is not taken into consideration in this study because in our faculty of languages, girls have always outnumbered boys in choosing to study a foreign language while males prefer technical streams like engineering, hard sciences or business studies. As expected, the responses to the first question clearly show that most of the students (66.6%) use social media and language applications to improve their English skills, with an additional 27.3% doing it ‘sometimes’, while only about 6% say ‘not often’. Figure one below shows the results:

![Figure 1. Social media use and applications for improving English language skills](image)

To know what social websites the students think are more appropriate for learning English, they were asked to classify five commonly used media in order of preference and the following results were obtained:

![Figure 2. Social websites that improve EFL learners](image)
YouTube is the most visited platform for its English, while Ted Talks and TikTok came in second and third positions, respectively. Students can enhance their listening skills and comprehension by using these three web platforms, with Podcasts classified second, while Facebook requires other skills in reading posts and chat writing. The aim of the next question is to elicit students’ association of social networks with the four language skills, and Facebook is classified first for reading and writing while listening and speaking can be improved through the use of Ted Talks and YouTube. Podcasts and TikTok are also associated chiefly with the listening skill, through various degrees of association with the skills can be elicited from the respondents’ answers, as shown in Figure three below:

![Figure 3. Effectiveness of social media in improving particular English skills](image)

Another question was meant to know the frequency of students’ use of these platforms and a straightforward response shows the dominance of Facebook and YouTube over the other media. But a more interesting question concerns students’ perception of whether these media are sufficient for learning English. The statement is given in a negative form, i.e., ‘not sufficient for EFL’, and right away, around 70% of the respondents express their awareness that these media are not enough, believing that such informal, non-systematic methods of teaching/learning English can only be complementary to EFL formal learning in class, with non-virtual teachers. Consider the bar chart below:

![Figure 4. Language applications and social media are not sufficient for learning English](image)

In any case, most students disagree that classroom lectures are enough; they strongly believe that social media do help them in getting better in language skills, in particular as they find in these media authentic material of all types, native speakers of English and entertainment.
Another interesting question relates to understanding others’ cultures by using their language. As expected, almost all respondents agreed which shows how aware they are of the tight relationship between language and culture. Getting in touch with native speakers of English, by typing or voice chatting, clearly results in knowing more about their culture and ways of life, something they can hardly get in class with non-native teachers of English.

![Social media help understand others' culture](image)

*Figure 5. Social media, language applications and other culture*

As for attitudes towards the use of social media, most of the students (93.9%) were positive in their replies; we could not determine the reason why 3% had a negative attitude toward using social networking for EFL, while even teachers approve of such practices.

![Attitudes towards using social media for EFL](image)

*Figure 6. Students’ attitudes towards using social media in EFL*

**Interview**

The overall feeling that we gain from the interview with the three teachers is one of agreement on the importance, and even necessity, of utilizing various social media for the sake of improving EFL learners’ language skills. Regarding the question of whether students draw significant benefits from social networks and language applications, the teachers’ responses are unanimously positive, and even encouraging. One teacher said, “It is obvious that EFL learners can and do improve their skills provided that they know how to use social media appropriately for that purpose.” Some teachers occasionally use these media as complementary instructional means online and even in class. Thus, positive attitudes towards social media use can be elicited from their replies.
Conclusion

Introducing the Internet and technology-based devices in formal instruction can be regarded as revolutionary in educational settings and pedagogical practices. However, the use of network-based platforms remains almost inexistent here in the Algerian university, except for online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic and some teacher-student interaction through Facebook or Moodle platforms and Microsoft Teams for the sake of pedagogical information and document uploading for student groups. This study reveals EFL learners’ self-directed, autonomous use of social media, which they believe, almost unanimously, can and do help them in improving their language skills. The findings suggest that appropriate use of these network-based media can serve for implementing supplementary pedagogical practices at an institutional level as they provide authentic materials that will be of great help to EFL learners but also to their teachers. In particular, students can benefit from conversations with native speakers of English, which they can easily incite and thus gain listening and speaking practice, skills that they hardly achieve in classroom settings. The data gathered also show that communicating with the ‘others’ allows Algerian EFL students to share intercultural aspects of life, which eventually leads to mutual understanding.

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Copyright Breach: Notions, Aspects, and Keys

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Received: 10/18/2022    Accepted: 01/04/2023    Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
This paper aims to re-examine the scientific notions linked to plagiarism, its aspects and origins, its occurrence in society, and ways of ascertaining it to enhance the alertness and consciousness of teachers and learners of plagiarism. The objective of information yielding is the detection and finding of data and strengthening the individual conditions. By itself, plagiarism and employing different evil ways are not well-matched with this objective and purpose. A good number of scholarly researchers consent that plagiarism is a grave breach of issuing moral principles. In the latest decennaries, the knowledge-based body is truly worried about the rapid increase of plagiarism. Despite being prevalent, plagiarism is not coherent with the values and ethics of knowledge. Currently, certain mass media announce alarming reports of plagiarism within research-based issuings, comprising information usage by renowned researchers. The occurrence scale of plagiarism has been divulged in diverse inquiries and grows dissimilar in different spheres, nations, instructive extents, and eras. Effective prevention by employing appropriate directives at a convenient time, the proper communications between instructors and learners, and working out practical strategies, for this purpose, are attainable methods of undertaking plagiarism.

Keywords: Aspects, copyright breach, keys, notions, plagiarism

Introduction

Searching aims to bring in data, and the goal of bringing about information is to cultivate the person's circumstances, whereas examining through using dishonest or unethical ways guides scientific cheating, which is opposite to research-based creation. Undeniably, plagiarism is present in the scientific bulk despite being against basic knowledge-based principles. Plagiarism is unproductive, fruitless, unethical and, thus forbidden (DeVoss & Rosati, 2002). The legal ethos in culture joins the exciting parts of the relationship among individuals. Dishonest issues are quickly increasing in the domain of science. Henceforth, these issues in gathering facts, and alliances between scientists and publications will surely turn out to be more complicated to undertake.

The worldwide competition between the scientists of developing countries, especially Asian nations, is a current reality for western researchers who wish to be the former ones and the most outstanding in whole research areas. Researchers in developing countries are increasingly loving additional examination accounts, and this development has been accompanied by a governmental and conservative need for generated keys and more publications in methodologically attributed issuings. Plagiarism is a controversial topic in institutions of higher education, and it is increasingly widespread among students. Many taunts in university deeds result from the rise in the number of students (Roberts & Toombs, 1993).

If plagiarism becomes a common and regular activity, it will touch the well-being of science and damage the entire communal sphere. In this circumstance, no one will make an effort to do an investigation; instead, everyone will employ ready-made information made by previous scientists and will damage all facts. Such irrational actions will destroy the basis of scientific development and the whole thing. And if a nation mislays its solid scientific base, it will stay in previous accomplishments and will not come across as advancement.

Plagiarism is of the most severe issues in the University recently. In the latest years, the development in computer technology, i.e., management web pages to provide university help, followed by copy and paste tools, and many pre-manufactured articles, have led to an increase in plagiarism. Currently, some mass media reveal worrying accounts about plagiarism in scientific periodicals, including data management by renowned scientists. The values of research-based issuing are candidly related to the concepts of copyright in writing knowledge-based papers and concerning the violation of the patent. Sporadically, issuing editors deduce the skillfulness of authors for their lack of familiarity with issuing decrees.

The author of a book, paper, poem, or knowledge-based extract, goes along the daytime of developing a subject and puts down on paper the product of a life span of their continuous hard work. Of their own accord, the plagiarists do not only steal the writing of these efforts but also write down that product to their name. Plagiarism is not current however, due to the growth in information technology, it has got modern and different ways in opposition to the former era. Plagiarism was a relatively uncommon reality till 1990, yet it has expanded around the world in the previous years and has frightened the academic body (Hart & Friesner, 2004). In earlier times, several scholars acquiesced to data and some of them would not produce more than two articles in...
their careers. Formerly, grave reevaluation values existed, and a small number of journals and scientists had trouble convincing the knowledge-based body to identify their ideas.

The problem in the 19th century was getting information, and that was the cause of why many results and productions have contended. Currently, nonetheless, scholars, students, issuings, and, papers have very much increased. If there was no problem with the growth in the number of documents, peer-reviewing the document is the main problem. It is undoubtedly presumed of analysis to master the subject of a piece. Nevertheless, are there enough specialists to reevaluate the significant number of articles? No specialist can corroborate that they have studied the whole expert articles in their area of knowledge, and this guides certain plagiarists to take advantage of the situations. In the early 17th century, the word plagiarism was initially litigated by Ben Jonson. It was extremely tough for authors to preserve their writing before founding copyright decrees. However, as plagiarism increased in the 18th century and copyright regulations were thus plainly named and established by the middle of a similar century, raiders tackled a change in society's opinion and strong ethical views concerning plagiarism. Given the happening of plagiarism in the Knowledge-based group and its destructive consequences on research-based growth, this article aims at analyzing the aspects, notions, and keys to the plagiarism issue. This study aims to re-examine the scientific ideas linked to plagiarism, its characteristics, and origins, its occurrence in society, and ways of ascertaining it to enhance the alertness and consciousness of teachers and learners of plagiarism.

**Literature Review**

**Copyright Breach: An Overview**

Copyright breach elicits a parcel of college exercises, both for makers and clients of copyright-protected fabric. In Canada, copyright is administered by Act Copyright. The Copyright Act was initially approved in 1921 and substantially revised in 1988 and 1997. The Copyright Act is presented through five main concepts: work, ownership, infringement, exceptions, and balance.

1. Work: Copyright concerns any “original scholarly, sensational, melodic and aesthetic work” (s.5(1) of the Act), subject to some specifications. Copyright ensures the first expression of thought instead of the idea itself. No copyright exists within the essential actualities, but there can be copyright security for the depiction, manifestation, or portrayal of those realities.

2. Ownership: In most cases, the creator or maker of a work is the first proprietor of the copyright (s.13(1) of the Act), and copyright is promptly upon the production of the work. For united origin, the proprietorship is allocated among the creators. In case you are the proprietor of the copyright in work, at that point, there are particular things that nobody else can do with that work unless you unequivocally allow it. These incorporate publishing, duplicating, distributing, conveying, acting, or passing on the piece or any significant parcel of the work (subject to certain exemptions). The proprietor (s) of copyright may dole out or permit their rights, in entirety or portion, through a composed understanding (s.13(4) of the Act).
3. Infringement: In case you're not the copyright proprietor of a given work and you are doing something with that work without the owner’s authorization that regularly as it were, the owner can do beneath the Act, at that point, you're encroaching that owner’s copyright (s.27(1) of the Act). Be that as it may, copyright encroachment isn't continuously dark and white. There are several circumstances, mainly including “exceptions,” where much remains open to elucidation.

4. Exceptions: The Copyright Act presents the rights of proprietors, yet it also traces “user rights” via express exemptions. Some of these express exemptions to copyright encroachment relate to “educational institutions” (s.29.4) of the Act) in addition to “libraries, chronicles and historical centers in instructive institutions” (s.30.4) of the Act). There is as well a particular exemption that connects to works accessible on the web (s.30.04) of the Act). Be that as it may, “fair dealing” may be the foremost imperative source of client rights (s.29) of the Act). Fair managing pertains when the utilization of work falls inside an extent of particular reasons, counting “private study,” “research,” and “education,” and in which some variables are fulfilled. In case your utilization of somebody else’s copyright-protected work is seen as good managing, at that point that utilization does not infringe on copyright and, the proprietor’s consent is not needed. Be, that as it may, whether or not a utilization is a reasonable management may be a question of elucidation.

Some Preeminent Court of Canada choices has given direction on deciding what tallies as proper managing. Yet, these choices have too clarified that deciding the decency of coping with copyright-protected fabric is ideally executed on a case-by-case premise. Further particularities approximately suitable management will take after in an afterward post.

5. Balance: There exists a couple of challenging series of rights that copyright law endeavors to maintain in poise. The Copyright Act characterizes the rights of makers and proprietors, yet it moreover diagrams the exemptions that frame the premise for the rights of clients. This adjustment pondered the genuine conspiracy in suitably securing the financial rights of makers with the open intrigue in permitting a few restricted utilize of copyright-protected works by clients. Keeping up this adjustment is crucial to elucidation in copyright law.

Recognitions of these five key concepts ought to assist both makers and clients of copyright-protected materials to consider their rights. Copyright statutes have been set up to assist the open intrigued, which is ideally achieved when clients get it and regard the reasonable rights of makers and when makers get it and regard the sensible rights of clients.

Plagiarism, on the other hand, is an infringement of academic integrity. The Persian dictionary of Dehkhoda characterizes the word “steal” as robbing someone’s ownership with double-dealing and traps or taking hold of something without the proper to do so. The term plagiarize starts from the term "plagiarise," meaning ruffian, cheat, cheater, and academic
outlaw. Copyright infringement, for the most part, indicates victimizing contemplations or terms which are prevalent to the degree of society data (Fialkoff, 1993).

Plagiarism implies the use of tools from unknown sources, or citation of materials from reported references, and not acknowledging that the words have been stolen word by word from those references. Copyright breach is taking others' thoughts, words, or work as if they were yours. Scott Stebelman perceives plagiarism as “claiming as your own the writings and research papers that originally belong to others” (Stebelman, 1998, pp. 48-50). Karim Vessal and Farrokh Habibzadeh define it as "ascribing others' ideas, processes, results, and words to oneself without due acknowledgment" (Vessal & Habibzadeh, 2007, p. 641).

Utilizing sections from print writing with modest changes within the terms without conceding the beginning is also an illustration of literary theft. Using not-in-print pictures without the proprietors’ assent is also considered academic theft. Literary theft is a shameless activity in research-based writing. Plagiarization can occur in assorted shapes: ransacking considerations and taking pieces of sections. Self-plagiarism happens when an author utilizes his individual once in past printed composing without recognizing this truth (Dellavalle, Banks, & Ellis, 2007). The self-copyright breach is portrayed in three diverse strategies within the relevant writing:

1) Publishing a paper that crosses a modern work without acknowledging it.

2) Isolating an enormous portion of work into some modest parts and publishing them one by one.

3) Re-publishing the indistinguishable work.

Obvious, on the other hand, means progressing data and supportive expressions via providing limited period security for journalists and manifestations employing full privileges concerning their work and developments. Journalists of analytical work are requested to convey the obvious of their jobs to the editor or the diary. Analysts' veracity depends on earnestness and clarity in giving and transferring data (Hayes, 2005).

Publishing results is distributing the indistinguishable discoveries in a few or a few issuings, various computations of the break-even with answers within the ponder and thus in grave deficiencies within the investigation. Antiquated distributions happen when closeness exists, without recognizing it, among one or two publications as to their results about data, reasons, or keys. It may contain coordination with assist scholars, their results, or their models. The foremost critical and severe occasions incorporate the nonattendance of recognizing the beginnings. Most scholarly analysts concur that copyright infringement could be a genuine issue within the morals of distribution. Literary theft shows up in numerous shapes: taking thoughts and taking writings, (word-by-word plagiarism). Plagiarism is no doubt an occasion of wrongdoing. Taking a portion of the content and rethinking it may be an extreme issue within the humanities and writing where development in stating and persuasiveness are essential. But within the domain of science, it is the logical substance itself, not its expert articulation, which is important. Knowledge-based
Copyright Breach: Notions, Aspects, and Keys  

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Distributions point to some degree different from the non-research-based ones. For illustration, therapeutic distributions are issued to improve restorative science and community physical condition by putting out the discoveries of the knowledge-based consider. In some areas like writing and social sciences, differing scholars have disparate suppositions. Creators endeavor to duplicate their comprehension and assumptions of wordings through a choice of predominant and fitting terms. Hence, each word, with its coordinated foundation, claims a position in communicating the noteworthiness to the group of onlookers. (Hayes, 2005)

In any case, in scholarly writing, the writer's perusers involve scholastics looking for data established on real verification. Hence, the author is expected to see and donate an account precisely. Unlike scholarly researchers, a research-based distribution author ought to seek a specific and well-recognized research-based way and affirm that he will not be affected in his decisions since it can put in peril the genuineness or consistency of the discoveries. Subsequently, on the off chance that or not the writer is influential, to the degree he is, as it were, an onlooker whose paper is established on built-up knowledge-based ways, confirmation, and truth, he can publish his answers about and might be expressed to have sought after a by and prominent typical manner

Plagiarism, on the whole, involves attaching someone else’s writing to yourself and not providing acknowledgment to the original writer, duplicating somebody else’s thoughts or terms, not offering acclaim to the author, without inserting quotation punctuations, presenting false data concerning credentials, altering the words at the same time maintaining the arrangement of a passage from a different basis and not recognizing it, and reproducing a big number of terms or thoughts from different sources with or with no due credit to the authors. (Maurer, Kappe, & Zaka, 2006).

One more description of plagiarism calculates the methods of plagiarizing with: “copy-past” which suggests duplicating word for word, copying thoughts, which involves hiring a notion that is not usually recognized, paraphrasing, which signifies altering the syntactic arrangement, employing equivalences, reorganizing the initial passages, or writing again the identical matter in distinct wording, creative copying, which implies submitting others’ writings by utilizing a dissimilar means like passage, tone, or picture, reproducing cyphers, specifically, employing further plan’ cyphers, data and meanings without the accurate authorization or sources, utilizing disused links, inserting citations punctuations or further sources marks and not giving the true source data, wrong utilization of quote signs, not acknowledging the cited passages of a passage, false referencing, that is, inserting bad sources data or sources which are not real and copying by translating, which involve a translation of a quote and not proving the source to the initial passage.

Some examples of learners’ plagiarism are the following: taking data from a basis and attributing it as their information, for example, purchasing a preordered writing, plagiarizing a whole work and not identifying it, displaying other learner’s paper without informing them,
exhibiting another student’s writing and ascribing the article as his work, reproducing ideas of a couple of passages and giving the correct quotations and not utilizing citation signs to render the person who reads think that they have rephrased the information without citing them, and summarizing phrases from different origins and acknowledging them (Park, 2003).

Identifying plagiarism is confronted with several issues. Among the issues is distinguishing the quantity of plagiarism since it can wrap a broad range. Another issue is the query as to what extent the modification in the initial data can cause plagiarism (Roig, 2001). Roig states that a lot of learners strive between paraphrasing and recapitulating since they are unable to make the difference between them. The further problem is that the majority of writers consider that they do not need to give the source of general information; however, one may inquire what ordinary information is and who describes this knowledge.

Two kinds of plagiarism can be identified relating to purposes. Number one is intended plagiarism, in which the writer is entirely conscious of copying and desires to commit it. Number two is unintended plagiarism in which someone copies because he is not good at writing. Such a kind could be averted (Park, 2004). Further categorization, there are four classifications of plagiarism,

1) Accidental plagiarism, which occurs because of a lack of awareness of plagiarism, or insufficient understanding of referencing or citation;” 2) unintentional plagiarism, where, due to the wide amount of knowledge in the scientific area, a person may unknowingly present ideas similar to those of others;” 3) intentional plagiarism, where a person deliberately and knowingly copies part or all of somebody else’s work without giving credit to them; and 4) self-plagiarism consists of reusing one's published work in a different form without acknowledging it.

(Maurer et al. 2006, pp. 1050-1084)

These types are further explained as the following:

- Intentional plagiarism is the word-for-word translation of a field of somebody else's work without attribution and citation marks. They consider literary theft of somebody else's work unscrupulous, scholastically untrustworthy, and grounds for disciplinary activities, counting removal. (Maurer, Kappe, &Zaka, 2006).
- Self-plagiarism happens when a learner submits their claim of past work or blends parts of past results, without consent from all teachers included. For case, it would be unsatisfactory to consolidate a portion of a term paper you composed in tall school into a paper doled out in a college course. Self-plagiarism applies to submitting the same piece of work for assignments in entirely different classes without past consent from both teachers. (Maurer et al., 2006).
Copyright Breach: Notions, Aspects, and Keys

- Unintentional plagiarism happens when a student borrows expressions from a source without utilizing citation marks or finding equivalent words for the author's dialect while keeping to the same standard structure and meaning as the first. Some of the time called "patchwriting," this kind of rewording, whether purposefulness or not, is scholastically untrustworthy and culpable – indeed, in case you reference your source. (Maurer et al., 2006).

- Accidental literary theft happens when an individual ignores to quote their sources or misrepresents their head, or inadvertently summarizes a source by utilizing similar words, bunches of words, and, or sentence structure without attribution. Learners must learn how to quote their references, and to require cautious and precise notes when doing investigations. The need for aim does not absolve the understudy of obligation for plagiarization. Cases of inadvertent plagiarization are taken as indeed, as any other plagiarization and are subject to the same results as different sorts of plagiarization. (Maurer et al., 2006).

Aspects of Copyright Breach

Peter Ashworth states that plagiarism is so ambiguous that many learners are frightened of unintentional plagiarism at the same time as writing what they consider to be their thoughts (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997). Investigations reveal that learners' and instructors' dissimilar comprehensions of copyright breaches. For specific instructors, particular meanings are affected by university ethics like the patent, individual exertion, and union in higher education (Flint, Clegg, & Macdonald, 2006). The increase of data, within the entire of its advantages, has as well produced a fast escalation in plagiarism.

Many aspects influencing learners' approaches concerning copyright breach are unawareness, the need for the individual asset in their instruction, circumstantial values, and the need for reliable methods surrounded by and in various fields (Auer & Krupar, 2001). Other aspects provoking copyright breaches are weak engagement in the knowledge procedure and concentrating on obtaining a university level, the learner's living way, relatives' weights, etc., are among the reasons that push learners to attempt to obtain the highest scores with no effort and within no time (Macdonald, 2000). Previously, learners used books in libraries to get back knowledge and rewrite it. Nowadays and with the fast advance of the web, the such procedure has altered, and most instructors think that laptops have facilitated cheating and copyright breaches. Shelley Angellil-Carter states that transparency does not exist on aspects affecting plagiarism all over a college. Knowledge is effortlessly easy to get through the Internet, and text-treating applications can be done with no trouble plagiarizing data (Grover, 2003).

In certain nations, a heavyweight is on scholars to issue, i.e., they must publish their work in journals with great influence features or other globally cataloged journals. Otherwise, they will not be upgraded despite owning elevated educational abilities. Thus, several researchers may
commit principled errors because of such conditions to advance and speed up with issuing. Literary problems are mainly taken into account in the issue of copyright breaches.

Deceiving and copyright are tolerable actions among instructors and learners of nations in which little consciousness of plagiarism exists. An investigation shows that learners with greater confidence in identifying copyright breaches do this less than other students and happen to own superior writing talents, self-assurance, and inventiveness (Martin, 2005). Learners’ search for rapid cuts, their weak attention to the study topic, their weak scheduling abilities, misconduct of time, their need for skillfulness in research-based writing, and their notice in disregarding rules are the causes of why learners commit copyright breaches.

Another investigation reveals that among the most causes of why learners commit copyright breaches are the following:

1. An actual shortage of comprehension. Some learners copy involuntarily, for example, if they are unfamiliar with correct methods of citing, rewording, citing, and referring to or/and if the significance of ‘ordinary information’ and the phrase ‘in their personal wording’ is not clear to them.

2. Competence reward. Learners commit plagiarism to obtain a superior position and to gain time.

3. Schedule organization. Many calls are on learners’ management of time, comprising friends' pressure for a dynamic community living, engagement in university activities, relatives’ duties, and weight to finish diverse work exercises in a brief period. Thus, it is not surprising that Silverman (2002) wraps up that learners’ overburdened existence makes them so weak to commit plagiarism.

4. Individual principles/approaches. Specific earners see that there is no motive why they must not commit copyright breach or commit it as a result of community weight since they feel good doing it, or for the reason that they consider small cuts as intelligent and tolerable.

5. Disobedience. For many learners, a copyright breach is a concrete method of revealing opposition and conveying disrespect for authority. The student may as well see the mission given as not significant and not defying.

6. Learners’ approaches towards instructors and classroom. Many learners plagiarize since they have unenthusiastic methods toward activities and exercises that instructors believe have significance, but do not matter to the student (Howard, 2002).

7. Refusal or renunciation. Other learners refuse to think that they are plagiarizing or find means of codifying it by putting the guilt on others.
8. Inticement and occasion. It is more straightforward and enticing for learners to cheat because knowledge turns out to be easier to get on the net and web search means to render it effortless and faster to locate and plagiarize.

9. Shortage of prevention. According to some learners, the advantages of copying are more important than the dangers, especially if they are sure that there is a tiny or no possibility of being detected, and if so, there is a minor reprimand (Park, 2003).

A number of the apparent obstructions to altering the organization of copyright breach are: an unwillingness by personnel to treat a situation of assumed plagiarizing because of the time and amount of work comprised in verifying cheating; an unwillingness to be the only one who has the guts to disagree where it has been to some extent frequent run through to be silent to specific relatively slight occurrences of copying; an insight that the University is unwilling to proceed on alleged copyright breach and that consequently the exertion used by personnel is probable to be unproductive with regards to detering or penalizing copying; a concern of endangering friendly rapports with learners by appearing or being strict by a concentration on reducing copyright breach; a fear that pursuing through with occurrences of recurring copying which can guide to learner ejection might harm the worldwide status of the university; and a additional unease that this harm to quality can bring about decreased worldwide staffings; fright of pestering from the learner(s) indicted of copying or/and from their classmates; concern of learners’ protests if charges of copyright breach are comitted, this can be a problem for certain sessional personnel who were worried that a student protest may signify being fired from their job.

**Keys to Avoid Copyright Breach**

1. Understand the directives for writers given by the journal.
2. Never forget to recognize the parts and involvement of others and the origins of thoughts and terms if they are reworded or abridged.
3. Utilization of literal or word-for-word passage/data must be surrounded by citation punctuations.
4. Recognize the origins employed in the publication.
5. While rewording, comprehend the information entirely and paraphrase what you have understood.
6. If you are unsure if the idea or data is general information, you must reference such knowledge.
7. Check and proofread references to be sure they are accurate.
8. Provided that the answers of one multifaceted research are best produced like a unified totality, the work should not be divided into various distinct papers.

9. When handing over work for publication having problematic/theory, approaches, information, debates, or deductions that have previously been issued or circulated critically (for instance, already printed as a paper in a distinct journal or as an article published on the web), warn the copyholders and the persons who read. Copyholders should be notified in the motivation letter, and readers should be updated by emphasizing and referring to the former printed publication.
10. When handing over work for possible publication, in case of distrusts or hesitation about repetition or replication of a document coming from identical research, the writers should update the copyholders of the kind of the product and include the other works (printed, in the media/handed over, unprinted) that may belong to them an article under deliberation. Increasing previous information that was already brought out with new extra information and introducing it like original research can be a moral violation and should be entirely divulged to the copyholders.

11. Write effective cover letters to the editor, especially regarding the potential for overlap in publication. The cover letter should detail the nature of the overlap and previous dissemination and ask for advice on the handling of the matter.

12. Be acquainted with the fundamental aspects of patent rules.

Moral issues in science are rapidly augmenting and have become contentious problems in colleges and instructive study institutions. These issues have as well been mirrored in mass media reports lately. The development of knowledge automation, the rivalry between nations, the fast expansion of information, and the express increase of based-research journals, the need for excellent illumination of copyright breaches and diverse comprehension of it, the need for consciousness, misuse of time, and weak culture, etc., have entirely been a factor to the occurrence of copying in the scientific area. This has concerned scientific universities and has pushed them to respond to it.

Conclusion

This study has examined the scientific notions linked to plagiarism, its aspects and origins, its occurrence in society, and, ways of ascertaining it to enhance the alertness and consciousness of teachers and learners of plagiarism. So far, the results have generally indicated that several institutions concentrate on finding out and hounding, whereas others focus on avoidance and instructing the correct action. Constant pressure on uncovering copyright breaches has made for the growth of information recovery methods in the current time. Still, these are not sufficiently efficient, and even if they existed, they would not be the greatest keys. Efficient deterrence employing appropriate instructions at the right time, the proper communications between instructors and learners, and working out suitable strategies for this purpose are possible ways of undertaking plagiarism.

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Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language Proficiency in Foreign Language Learning: Evidence from China

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Received: 10/23/2022  Accepted: 12/12/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Critical thinking is among the variables that have recently become increasingly prominent in foreign language learning. However, there is a biased research focus on the role of CT skills, and empirical evidence on the relationships between CT disposition and foreign language learning is scant. This cross-sectional study aimed to bridge this gap by examining the effects of overall CT disposition as well as its sub-constructs (open-mindedness, perseverance, reflectiveness, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence) on foreign language proficiency. The study mainly discussed the research questions of how CT disposition was related to and to what extent it could predict learners’ foreign language proficiency. This research employed Pearson correlation analysis, regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA to analyze the data collected from a sample of 391 Chinese foreign language learners at Jiangxi Normal University and Zaozhuang University. The instrument adopted to assess the participants’ CT disposition was newly proposed in Chinese in the current study. The results demonstrated that both overall and sub-constructs of CT disposition were positively related to learners’ foreign language proficiency. Foreign language learners embracing different levels of CT disposition displayed significant differences in their foreign language proficiency. Except for perseverance, the other four dispositional traits (open-mindedness, reflectiveness, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence) toward CT were found to be significantly positive predictors of learners’ foreign language proficiency in the Chinese context. The positive impacts of CT disposition triggered in foreign language learning in the present research give an empirical grounding to the cultivation of foreign language learners’ CT dispositional factors to facilitate their foreign language development. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future exploration and research were also discussed.

Keywords: Critical thinking disposition, Chinese EFL learners, language achievement, foreign language proficiency, relationship, scale

Introduction

Critical Thinking (CT) has been identified as one of the 21st core competencies that students should cultivate across diverse subject curriculums (Yuan, Liao, Wang, Kong, & Zhang, 2022). Accordingly, it has become increasingly prominent in foreign language education (Din, 2020; Li, 2016). CT cultivation has been placed as a premium stipulated in foreign language curriculum guidelines and textbooks used in foreign language contexts (Yuan et al., 2022). Moreover, it has been highlighted as an essential requirement for foreign language study (Din, 2020) for its contribution to enhancing general language proficiency (Liaw, 2007), facilitating the development of language skills (Wang & Henderson, 2014; Wu, Marek, & Chen, 2013), and stimulating foreign language learners’ linguistic awareness (Wijnands, Rijt, Stoel, & Coppen, 2022). Empirical evidence also confirmed the effectiveness of its incorporation into foreign language instruction (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). As for CT, there are various conceptualizations, among which is a consensus referring to it as a concept composed of both cognitive skills and dispositional traits (Cheng & Wan, 2017), which are two different aspects of CT, namely cognitive aspect, and emotional aspect respectively (Ennis, 1987; Toplak & Stanovich, 2002). From a cognitive perspective, CT involves using conscious and suitable skills or techniques to attain a particular goal (Halpern, 1998). From an emotional perspective, it is a tendency to use specific thinking skills (Norris, 1992; Valenzuela, Nieto, & Saiz, 2011), and a consistently stable internal motivating force for deciding what to do and believe based on CT skills (Facione, 2000). Students with CT disposition tend to employ CT when solving and analyzing problems (Giancarlo & Facione, 2001; Orhan, 2022b). Based on previous research, ideal critical thinkers are open-minded, inquisitive, self-confident (Facione & Facione, 1992), reflective (Quinn, Hogan, Dwyer, Finn, & Fogarty, 2020; Sosu, 2013), and perseverant (Dwyer, Hogan, Harney, & Kavanagh, 2017; Quinn et al., 2020). However, foreign language students who can apply CT skills in language learning may be unable to employ these skills if their disposition toward CT is constrained (Valenzuela et al., 2011). Moreover, the disproportionate focus on one dimension of CT would lead to pre-critical (indicating high skills and low disposition) (Wan & Cheng, 2018), or over-critical (showing low skills and high disposition) of CT (Brink-Budgen, 1999), and thus hinder foreign language learners’ CT development.

Unfortunately, although research on CT has developed to encompass both CT skill and disposition (Facione, 2000), previous studies on CT in the field of foreign language education have almost exclusively devoted to examining the role of the skill aspect of CT in foreign language learning (e.g., Afshar & Movassagh, 2014; Heidari, 2020). Little progress has been made in disclosing the associations between disposition toward CT and foreign language learning (Ku & Ho, 2010). To put it another way, what role CT disposition play in foreign language learning is still veiled and unclear. Additionally, a reliable Chinese scale used for assessing Chinese learners’ CT disposition is not available (Fan & See, 2022).

Grounded on the urgent need mentioned in the study, this study aims to uncover the effects of CT disposition on foreign language learning in the Chinese context. Before that, a Chinese CT disposition scale would be developed to measure Chinese foreign language learners’ CT disposition. The impetus for conducting the present study stems from drawing educators’ attention to nurture foreign language learners’ CT disposition to enhance their foreign language learning. The findings of the current research could bring new insights to the understanding of the vital role of CT disposition in facilitating foreign language learners’ language development and arouse...
researchers as well as educators’ awareness of boosting foreign language learners’ dispositional traits toward CT to generate a better development of foreign language. For the aims mentioned above, the research questions in the study were constructed as follows: (RQ1) How reliable and valid is the newly proposed Chinese Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (CHCTDS) used to measure foreign language learners’ CT disposition? (RQ2) How are the general score as well as subscale score of CT disposition related to students’ foreign language proficiency? (RQ3) To what extent do foreign language learners’ CT disposition predict their foreign language proficiency? (RQ4) How do foreign language learners with a high, middle, and low disposition toward CT differ in their foreign language proficiency? The paper was structured by reviewing the previous research investigating CT and foreign language learning in the body. Then, the research design of the study was introduced, which was followed by the results and discussion of the study. The conclusion of the study and recommendations for further research were provided in the last part.

Literature Review

The pivotal role of CT for foreign language learners to achieve success in foreign language learning has been identified (Davidson, 1998) in many studies. Meanwhile, several empirical studies have also investigated the correlations between CT and different language skills, with a majority of them focusing on reading (e.g., Aghajani & Gholamrezapour, 2019; Heidari, 2020; Hosseini, Khodaei, Sarfallah, & Dolatabadi, 2012), and writing (e.g., Afshar, Movassagh, & Radi Arbabi, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). As for the link between CT skills and foreign language writing, contradictory findings have been reported. One explanation of the mismatch was that only writing ability in the previous studies was surveyed, without knowing the participants’ general foreign language proficiency, which could also hinder students’ demonstration of their writing ability (Pei, Zheng, Zhang, & Liu, 2017). Another possible reason was that there were two different dimensions in CT: skill and disposition (Cheng & Wan, 2017). Individuals have the skill and ability to think critically but may lack an attitudinal disposition toward CT, thus generating inconsistent results with the previous studies (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). To put it another way, CT disposition was another factor possibly playing a critical role in influencing students’ foreign language learning.

Disappointedly, unlike the abundant studies focusing on the role of CT skills, very minimum studies have provided empirical evidence on the impacts of CT disposition on foreign language learning (Ku & Ho, 2010). Among the limited studies, Ünaldi and Yüce (2021) conducted a correlational study among 126 university language learners in Turkey by measuring participants’ CT disposition with the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory scale (CCTDI) to investigate the possible connections among foreign language vocabulary size, grammatical competency, and CT disposition. They found that foreign language vocabulary size scores were associated significantly with some constructs of CT disposition, such as inquisitiveness and confidence in reasoning (Ünaldi & Yüce, 2021). Whereas different from their vocabulary size scores, participants’ grammar proficiency scores were significantly associated with truth-seeking, systematicity, maturity subscales, and their overall CT disposition scores (Ünaldi & Yüce, 2021). In addition to the scarce research investigating the relationship between foreign language learning and CT disposition in general, several previous studies on personal traits have revealed the close tie of language development to some constructs of CT disposition, such as self-confidence (e.g., Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Özdemir & Papi, 2021), and perseverance (e.g., Pawlak, Csiszér, Kruk, & Jawodniak, 2022; Teimouri, Plonsky, & Tabandeh, 2020). Moreover, the positive
influence of inquisitiveness (e.g., Tang, Duan, Wu, & Cheng, 2019), open-mindedness (e.g., Jackson, 2016), and reflectiveness (e.g., Reeve, 2009; Wijnands et al., 2022) on school achievement have also been documented. Given this point, it was assumed that CT disposition would exert significantly positive impacts on foreign language learning, and the influence of each dispositional factor may differ as well (Ünaldı & Yüce, 2021).

However, although studies concerning the association between CT disposition and different language skills or the relationship between individual CT dispositional traits and language learning existed, empirical research about how general disposition toward CT as well its constructs are related to general foreign language proficiency is rare, and the investigation of the CT disposition of Chinese students are even rarer (Fan & See, 2022). Moreover, whether foreign language learners with various levels of CT disposition differ in their foreign language proficiency, and to what extent foreign language learners’ CT disposition can predict their foreign language proficiency is unclear too. Additionally, some problems such as a weak internal consistency across factors (Ip et al., 2000), low subscale alpha values (Orhan, 2022a), and high cross-factor loadings (Walsh & Hardy, 1997; Walsh, Seldomridge, & Badros, 2007) were identified in the instrument California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory scale (CCTDI) Ünaldı and Yüce (2021) adopted in their study. Apart from that, the original English version of the CCTDI was adopted in their study, which might result in an inappropriate justification of participants’ CT disposition due to the formidable barrier caused by insufficient foreign language proficiency (Fan & See, 2022; Keihaniyan, 2013).

Due to the dearth of research efforts on disclosing the influence of critical thinking (CT) disposition on foreign language learning, and based on the research gaps mentioned in the literature, there is still room for more studies to be conducted on the topic to shed more lights on the relationships between CT disposition and foreign language learning to make them more generalizable (Snider, 2017). To bridge this research gap, the purpose of the current cross-sectional study is to explore the effects of foreign language learners’ CT disposition on their foreign language learning in the Chinese context by adopting a quantitative approach. In this study, not only the general performance of CT disposition would be investigated, but also their sub-constructs which included open-mindedness, perseverance, reflectiveness, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence. Since most measurements of CT were developed in the language of English (Fan & See, 2022), the reliability of those assessments would decrease due to the barriers to English language proficiency (Moosavi, 2022). To improve the reliability and accuracy of the assessment of Chinese learners’ CT disposition, the Chinese Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (CHCTDS) was proposed and validated to assess foreign language learners’ CT disposition in the Chinese language to address the gap of lacking an appropriate instrument tailored for assessing foreign language learners’ CT disposition in Chinese language (Fan & See, 2022).

**Method**

To fulfil the purpose of examining the effects of CT disposition on foreign language proficiency in foreign language learning in this research, a correlational quantitative research design was employed as it could facilitate generalised findings to a larger population, provide broader information (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007), and analyze the data at a lower cost in a precise and easier way (Patton, 2002).
Participants
A total of 391 (330 female and 61 male) Chinese foreign language learners were recruited from Jiangxi Normal University and Zaozhuang University in China in convenience sampling. To make the National Matriculation English Test (NMET, whose score would be used to represent the participants’ foreign language proficiency in this study. The detailed introduction to it was in the next section) score more comparable, students in this study should be of the same grade. Because first-year students newly enrolled have just finished their NMET this June, and they have a more accurate memory of their NMET score than students in any other grade, thus, all the participants in the current research were first-year students in the academic year 1/2022.

Research Instruments
Demographic Information Survey
A demographic survey was developed to gather information on the student's age, grade, gender, and NMET score. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is offered as a compulsory academic subject from the third year in primary school to the second year at universities nationwide in China (Jiang, 2003), which means that every Chinese EFL learner spends at least over ten years on English language learning. Hence, Chinese EFL learners are equilibrium to Chinese foreign language learners in this study. As one of the three compulsory tests for all test takers in the National Matriculation Entrance Test (called Gaokao in Chinese), the largest and most significant university entrance test in China (Liu, 2010), NMET seeks to measure Chinese students’ EFL proficiency. Since it is the national test that every Chinese university EFL learner must attend and is a high-stake English test with high reliability (Li, 1990), validity (Lin, 2015), fairness (Zhang, 2019), and discrimination power (Cheng & Qi, 2006), Chinese students’ foreign language proficiency in this study would be represented by their score in NMET.

The Chinese Critical Thinking Disposition Scale (CHCTDS)
In the current study, the CHCTDS was newly developed to measure foreign language learners’ CT disposition specifically. It was a Chinese instrument freshly proposed by the researchers to measure Chinese foreign language learners’ CT disposition based on previously existing dispositional scales. Its reliability and validity were validated by employing exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis in a preliminary study. The results of the factor analysis showed that the CHCTDS composed of five constructs was an acceptable model fit with good reliability and validity. The Cronbach’s α of the overall scale was 0.93 (ranging from 0.78 to 0.85 for the five subscales). The CHCTDS is a seven-point Likert scale instrument (One represents “strongly disagree and seven means “strongly agree”) with 17 items in five constructs: open-mindedness (four items); perseverance (three items); reflectiveness (three items); inquisitiveness (four items), and self-confidence (three items). A score was given for each item, in the range of one score for “strongly disagree” to seven scores for “strongly agree”, thus generating five subscale scores and a total score. The maximum and minimum score for the general scale is 119 and 17. A score less than 68 suggests a deficiency in CT disposition, 68-102 moderate, and more than 102 indicates a strong overall disposition toward critical thinking. It took about ten minutes to finish.

Data Collection Procedures
The data were collected according to the following procedures. Firstly, the questionnaire of sociodemographic information and the items in the CHCTDS were all set up online on a widely
used investigation tool in China called Wenjuanxing. As it is smartphone-based, first-year students who volunteered to participate in the study could fill in the questionnaires easily by clicking the link shared by the researchers on the smartphone. In addition to the questionnaire items, consent forms were gained online using a participant information sheet that clarified the goals of the study and assured participants of the confidentiality of their data. Data were then downloaded for analysis, and only the researchers had access to them.

**Data Analysis**

SPSS 23.0 and Amos 25.0 were employed in this study to analyze the data gathered online. As the data were collected online and participants could only submit the questionnaires when all the items were finished, there was no missing data. Before analyzing the data to find out answers to the aforementioned questions of the current study, error checking, and descriptive statistics were conducted. The first research question in the present study was to assess the reliability and validity of the newly proposed CHCTDS. To this end, Cronbach’s alpha was used to evaluate the internal-consistency reliability of each scale, and EFA as well as CFA were performed using SPSS 23.0 and Amos 25.0 to examine the construct validity of the measurement. For the second research question, Pearson’s bivariate correlation analysis was performed to probe whether foreign language learners’ CT disposition was significantly correlated with their foreign language proficiency. To find answers to the third research question, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to explore how well the participants’ CT disposition could predict their foreign language performance. Lastly, one-way ANOVA was conducted to address the last research question in the study to find out whether there were differences in foreign language proficiency among learners performing differently in their CT disposition.

**Results**

**Descriptive Information of the Participants**

According to Table one, we can see that the average age of the participants in this study was 18.32 (SD= .891), and their mean NMET score was 121.22 (SD= 15.17, Min= 67, Max=145). The participant’s total score of the CHCTDS ranged from 58 to 116, with a mean score of 89.77 (SD= 10.67). The participants were classified into three CT disposition levels (high, moderate, and low) based on their total score in the CHCTDS. The distribution of each group was 3.6 % (n=14) in the low level, 85.9% (n= 336) moderate level, and 10.5% (n= 41) high level, which suggested that most of the Chinese foreign language learners in this study indicated a strong tendency to think critically. Detailed information on participants’ characteristics was displayed in Table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMET score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>121.22</td>
<td>15.17</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT Disposition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language

Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom

The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>89.77</th>
<th>10.67</th>
<th>58</th>
<th>116</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low level (Group 1)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate level (Group 2)</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level (Group 3)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CT disposition construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall CHCTDS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89.77</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>[.896 .922]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.28</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>[.801 .856]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.62</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>[.634 .740]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflectiveness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>[.662 .761]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquisitiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>[.694 .779]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.46</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>[.779 .844]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Reliability and Validity of the CHCTDS

As Table two showed, the reliability of the overall CHCTDS was considered very good for the total scale (α = .91), and acceptable for its five sub-scales (ranging from .69 ~ .83) as well, indicating that the CHCTDS utilized to assess foreign language learners’ critical thinking (CT) disposition in this study had a very good internal consistency. Moreover, each of the five subscales was moderately correlated to each other, and highly related to the overall scale, suggesting good internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) (see Table six).

Concerning the construct validity, the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed first on the 17 items employing the Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation. According to Table Three, we could see that the CHCTDS was suitable for EFA with a KMO value of .934, and the evaluation of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant (p < 0.001) (see Table three).
Table 3. KMO and Bartlett’s Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy</td>
<td>0.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
<td>2635.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s test of sphericity</td>
<td>df 136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table four displayed, the results of the EFA revealed a five-factor solution, with items one, four, six, and 11 loading on Factor one (labeled as open-mindedness), items three, eight, 13, and 15 on Factor two (labeled as inquisitiveness), items two, seven, and 14 on Factor three (labeled as self-confidence), items nine, 12, and 17 on Factor four (labeled as reflectiveness), and items five, 10, 16 on Factor five (labeled as perseverance). The cumulative variance of the five-factor structure CHCTDS with 17 items contributed to 65.129% of the overall scale variance, meeting the standard of > 60%, and the communalities (from .546 to .793) were sufficiently high (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 4. The results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Factor 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>.754</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14</td>
<td></td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td></td>
<td>.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td></td>
<td>.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>.720</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td></td>
<td>.677</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>.586</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 16</td>
<td></td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>.655</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalues</td>
<td>6.985</td>
<td>1.342</td>
<td>1.104</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative (%)</td>
<td>16.557</td>
<td>29.849</td>
<td>41.884</td>
<td>53.542</td>
<td>65.129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Subsequently, a one-factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted employing the robust maximum likelihood estimator (ML) to validate the scale. The results revealed that all...
standardized factor loadings were significant at \( p < .001 \) and above the cutoff criterion of .50 (Hair et al., 2010; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Moreover, the inspection of modification indices indicated a satisfactory model fit for the data: \( \chi^2/df = 1.432, \) NFI = .942, CFI = .981, TLI = .977, IFI = .982, RMSEA = .033, [90% CI: .021 ~ .045] (Kline, 2015) (see Table five).

### Table 5. Confirmatory factor analysis model fit results for the CHCTDS (n=391)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>( \chi^2/df )</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA [90% CI]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cut value</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>&lt; 4</td>
<td>&gt; .90</td>
<td>&gt; .90</td>
<td>&gt; .90</td>
<td>&gt; .90</td>
<td>&lt; .80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCTDS model</td>
<td>156.094*</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1.432</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>.982</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.977</td>
<td>.033 [.021 ~ .045]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( \chi^2 \) = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; NFI = Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; 90% CI = 90% confidence interval; * \( p < .05 \).

**Correlational Relationships between Critical Thinking Disposition and Foreign Language Proficiency**

Pearson correlations between foreign language learners’ NMET score, overall score of critical thinking (CT) disposition, and its five sub-scales were reported in Table six. It was found that there were statistically significant positive correlations between NMET score and overall CT disposition (\( r = .638 \)) as well as its five sub-scales: open-mindedness (\( r = .531 \)), self-confidence (\( r = .501 \)), inquisitiveness (\( r = .506 \)), perseverance (\( r = .473 \)), and reflectiveness (\( r = .540 \)), all the \( p \) values < .001.

### Table 6. Pearson correlations among NMET, overall critical thinking disposition, and its five sub-scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Open-mindedness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.575**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.572**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.773**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-confidence</td>
<td>.575**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.643**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.500**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.574**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inquisitiveness</td>
<td>.523**</td>
<td>.643**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.572**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.773**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perseverance</td>
<td>.498**</td>
<td>.543**</td>
<td>.572**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.500**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.574**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflectiveness</td>
<td>.591**</td>
<td>.500**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.574**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.773**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Overall CTD</td>
<td>.823**</td>
<td>.816**</td>
<td>.818**</td>
<td>.764**</td>
<td>.773**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. NMET</td>
<td>.531**</td>
<td>.501**</td>
<td>.506**</td>
<td>.473**</td>
<td>.540**</td>
<td>.638**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); CTD = critical thinking disposition; Open-mindedness, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, perseverance, and reflectiveness are the five sub-scales of CTD.

**Predictability of Critical Thinking Disposition for Foreign Language Proficiency**

To further identify how well the variables of critical thinking (CT) disposition could predict foreign language proficiency, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. As Table seven revealed, five constructs of CT disposition explained 40.5% of the variance (\( F = 54.19, p < 0.0001 \)) in foreign language proficiency. Open-mindedness (\( P < .001 \)), self-confidence (\( P < .05 \)), reflectiveness (\( P < .01 \)), and inquisitiveness (\( P < .01 \)) emerged as significant positive predictors in the model, with reflectiveness and open-mindedness showing the strongest positive predictability according to the raw (\( B \)) and standardized (\( \beta \)) coefficients. But perseverance didn’t emerge as a significant predictor of foreign language proficiency in the current study. The beta and confidence intervals for the predictors of CT were presented in Table seven.
The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language Proficiency

Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom

Table 7. Regression analysis summary for variables predicting foreign language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B [95% CI]</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>.89 [.11, 1.37]</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>.72 [.068, 1.36]</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquisitiveness</td>
<td>.83 [.28, 1.37]</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>.60 [-.19, 1.38]</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflectiveness</td>
<td>1.53 [.85, 2.21]</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²/F = .405/54.19***

Notes: * Dependent Variable: NMET score; R²= adjusted R square; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval; *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The Differences in Foreign Language Proficiency among Critical Thinking Disposition of Various Levels

Due to the significant F ratio in an analysis of variance, A Welch ANOVA with the Tamhane post hoc test (Wu, 2001) was adopted to examine differences in foreign language proficiency across three critical thinking (CT) disposition groups. The results of one-way ANOVA indicated foreign language learners of various levels of CT disposition showed significant differences in their foreign language proficiency (Welch F = 44.81, p = .000). To be specific, Tamhane post hoc tests revealed significantly higher NMET scores in the group with a higher level of CT disposition compared with both the moderate level and low-level group, and learners with a moderate level of CT disposition displayed higher score in NMET than those in the low-level group (see Table eight).

Table 8. ANOVA and post hoc analysis of critical thinking disposition on foreign language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group(M±SD)</th>
<th>Low level (n=14)</th>
<th>Moderate level (n=336)</th>
<th>High level (n=41)</th>
<th>Welch F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Post hoc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NMET</td>
<td>-2.32±1.31</td>
<td>0.00±0.86</td>
<td>0.77±0.68</td>
<td>44.81</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>High level &gt; Moderate level &gt; Low level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: NMET= National Matriculation English Test; ** p<0.01.

To sum up, the findings indicated that CHCTDS was a valid and reliable scale. CT disposition was positively associated with learners’ foreign language proficiency. Foreign language learners performing differently in CT disposition displayed significant differences in their foreign language proficiency. Moreover, four dispositional traits: open-mindedness, reflectiveness, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence toward CT were significantly positive predictors of learners’ foreign language proficiency in the Chinese context.

Discussion

The current study examined the validity and reliability of the construct of a scale targeted at measuring foreign language learners’ Critical Thinking (CT) disposition in the Chinese language based on a sample of 391 Chinese foreign language learners. The results for the first research question suggested that the CHCTDS was a psychometrically sound tool, with an alpha coefficient (α=.91) for the overall scale and the reliability of five sub-scales in the range of .69-.83 as measured by Cronbach’s alpha. The correlations among the five CT disposition factors, labeled as open-mindedness, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, perseverance, and reflectiveness, were medium in size, with the correlations ranging from .493 to .643; the correlation between the overall scale and
its five sub-scales was stronger, in the range of .773-.823. Furthermore, the robust internal structure of the scale was evidenced by the EFA and CFA results. That is to say, psychometric analyses in this study confirmed that the CHCTDS was a reliable and valid measurement for assessing foreign language learners’ CT disposition in Chinese. Open-mindedness, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, perseverance, and reflectiveness verified as the vital compositions of CT disposition in this study are the dimensions that gained consensus among researchers (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2017; Ennis, 1996; Facione & Facione, 1992; Quinn et al., 2020).

This study also probed how foreign language learners’ CT disposition would correlate to and predict their foreign language proficiency. An essential finding of this study was that general CT disposition was positively associated with general foreign language proficiency ($r = .638$) and could significantly predict it, which echoes the previous findings of CT disposition’s role in different language skills (Ünaldı & Yüce, 2021). Moderate correlations also existed among the five sub-scales (open-mindedness, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, perseverance, and reflectiveness) and foreign language proficiency. Furthermore, our study provided support that there were significant differences in foreign language proficiency among learners performing differently in CT disposition. Learners with better performance in CT disposition would enjoy a higher possibility of success in foreign language learning. Moreover, the significantly positive beta weight displayed in Table seven indicated that increases in open-mindedness, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, and reflectiveness, four of the five factors of CT disposition, could increase their foreign language proficiency. In other words, foreign language learners who possess these dispositional traits toward CT tend to perform better in foreign language study than those lacking. The contribution of self-confidence and perseverance to foreign language development was in line with past studies (e.g., Clément et al., 1994; Ozdemir & Papi, 2021; Pawlak et al., 2022; Teimouri et al., 2020), and the positive influence of inquisitiveness (e.g., Tang et al., 2019), open-mindedness (e.g., Jackson, 2016), and reflectiveness (e.g., Reeve, 2009; Wijnands et al., 2022) found on school achievement has also displayed in foreign language achievement in this study.

However, it is interesting to note that the findings of the correlation analysis and one-way ANOVA indicated that perseverance was significantly positively correlated with foreign language proficiency. Unexpectedly, it did not show significant predictability of proficiency in a foreign language, which is not consistent with the findings of Teimouri et al. (2020). The reason could be attributed to the neglect of considering language anxiety in the current study, which could exert negative influences on language learning (Teimouri et al., 2020). Moreover, the difference between foreign and second language learning could be another explanation because Teimouri et al. (2020) conducted their research among second language learners while our study was examined in a foreign language context. Second language learners with perseverance or maintaining efforts in second language learning could gain a higher degree of exposure to opportunities to communicate and apply what they have learned in various circumstances (Ringbom, 1980). They enjoy a much more immersive learning environment than foreign language learners, which could result in a more significant influence of perseverance on language development in a second language context.

The findings in the current study provide significant pedagogical implications for cultivating foreign language learners’ CT disposition to enhance their language development in foreign language classrooms. Considering the positive correlations of open-mindedness with foreign language learning, it is suggested that teachers create an open-up atmosphere to facilitate students being more open to new experiences, exotic cultures, or language forms in the classroom.
(Wucherer & Reiterer, 2016). Besides, boosting foreign language learners’ curiosity and self-confidence, which could promote their knowledge-building and involvement in class activities, is beneficial to their foreign language development as well. Moreover, learners should not be passive participants in class but be driven by personal reflection and interests in the hope of achieving ultimate proficiency (Ushioda, 2008). Therefore, teachers need to provide foreign language learners with sufficient space to think about language by themselves and the necessity to formulate reflective questions in class to nurture their reflective personalities. The findings of the current study give weight to the above arguments. Regarding theoretical implications, the present study contributes to improving language pedagogy. The results of the present study would help educational officials increase their awareness and understanding of the pivotal role of cultivating foreign language learners’ CT disposition so that they would devise educational programs and policies to assist students in fostering their disposition to think critically. Additionally, it would benefit material and textbook developers in developing materials and textbooks in line with the purpose to boost foreign language learners’ disposition toward CT, thus enhancing their foreign language development.

However, although our study represents one of the preliminary attempts to examine their associations, several limitations in the present study must be identified for future research. To begin with, all the samples are recruited from foreign language learners in China and may not be representative enough of foreign language learners across other countries. Secondly, there was an asymmetrical gender distribution between men and women in this study, with about 84.4% of the participants being female. Thirdly, this is only a cross-sectional study, and a longitudinal investigation may be needed to further confirm the results.

Conclusion

The current research reported herein targets to bridge a significant research gap by probing the validity and reliability of the newly developed Chinese scale of critical thinking (CT) disposition, and the effects of CT disposition on foreign language proficiency. Returning to the first research questions of this study, we conclude that the CHCTDS is a sound instrument for measuring foreign language learners’ CT disposition in Chinese. To summarize the results of the exploration of the impacts of CT disposition on foreign language learning in the Chinese context with correlational analysis, five dimensions of CT disposition (open-mindedness, reflectiveness, perseverance, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence) indicated significantly positive correlations with foreign language proficiency. The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences in foreign language proficiency among learners with different levels of CT disposition. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that only four CT dispositions, including open-mindedness, reflectiveness, inquisitiveness, and self-confidence, significantly predicted learners’ foreign language proficiency in this study. Overall, the findings of the study suggested that CT disposition could be an essential factor exerting a significantly positive influence on foreign language learning. To gain a deeper understanding of the effects of CT disposition on foreign language learning, longitudinal investigations in a mix-method design by adopting multiple methods such as interviews and questionnaires are recommended in future studies. Empirical studies conducted among participants from various regions and countries in the world would also be necessary for verifying the cross-cultural replicability of our findings.
The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language Learning
Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom

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References


The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language

Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom


The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language

Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom


The Effects of Critical Thinking Disposition on Foreign Language

Xu, Abdullah, Liu & Shahroom


Students’ English Language Usage of Facebook during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Received:11/15/2022 Accepted:01/07/2023 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Social network sites such as Facebook are constantly experiencing enormous changes, arousing the attention of many researchers who wish to integrate technology into education and create innovative methods in English Language Teaching; several technological devices can facilitate teaching and serve learners’ needs. Therefore, teachers started to use and adopt modern techniques in education, mainly because of the pandemic of covid-19 and, thus making the teaching process safe and effective. The current study aims to investigate students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning during an acute crisis. The main questions that established the research work are what are the students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning? What are the benefits of Facebook during the pandemic of covid-19? To answer these questions, the researcher conducted a case study of 2nd year English as Foreign Language students in the English Department at Tlemcen University, Algeria. The researcher used two research instruments to collect data; a questionnaire addressed to the students and a structured interview administered to the English teachers. Findings revealed that Facebook adoption has a significant positive relationship with usefulness and ease of use; there was also a considerable influence of Facebook adoption on educational usage. Additionally, both teachers and students stated that Facebook could improve students’ academic performance, and recognized its importance during this crisis period in making teaching and learning more accessible and productive. Based on the findings, the researcher made some recommendations about using Facebook in education, and future research can deal with more communities.

Keywords: Covid-19, English language usage, Facebook, learning, teaching, technological devices

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.16
Introduction

Social network sites such as Facebook are constantly experiencing enormous changes, arousing the attention of many researchers who wish to integrate technology into education and create innovative methods in English Language Teaching; numerous technological devices can facilitate teaching and serve learners’ needs. Therefore, the teacher started to use and adopt modern techniques in education, mainly because of the pandemic of covid-19. The government closed all universities and teachers had to find out new solutions to continue preparing and finish the curriculum without any virus contamination, making the teaching process safe and effective.

This study investigates students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning during an acute crisis; that is why the researcher asks the following research questions:
- What are the students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning?
- What are the benefits of Facebook during the pandemic of covid-19?

The research questions stated above led to propose the following hypotheses:
- The students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning may be usefulness, ease of use, social influence, facilitating conditions, community identity, communication, collaboration, resource and material.
- Using Facebook during the pandemic of Covid-19 can help enhance the interaction between teachers and students and improve the teaching experience in different ways. Using Facebook allows seeing the student as an essential part of the teaching and learning process and can also help teachers to finish their classes safely. Facebook is easy and free and can aid the students to have lessons from any place and at any time. It allows the teachers to share additional information, like videos easily, and gives students a chance to ask any question about any lesson at any time.

This study first goes through a literature review to overview of e-learning and the use of social networking sites, especially Facebook, for educational purposes because of the spread of the pandemic.

Literature Review

The digital era, the e-generation, the need to be updated, and the different devices offered during the pandemic of covid-19, made the teacher forced to use technological tools and from them Facebook. An overview of e-learning and social media, especially Facebook, seems necessary to synthesize different views, studies, and approaches and identify the literary gap existing in the literature on the use of Facebook in education, especially during the pandemic.

E-Learning

E-learning, also called online learning or electronic learning, means acquiring knowledge through electronic technologies and media. To define e-learning and fix the critical elements for better and more operative use of this type of teaching and learning, it is essential to comprehend the nature of e-learning as an educational novelty sufficiently, and to develop contextually resulting frameworks for change that support organizational culture and practice (Rossiter, 2007); thus, to find a single and comprehensive definition of e-learning is not easy as Renold and Barter (2003) state a complete and broader report that covers a more comprehensive range of the concept and can cope with the complexity of its illustration/characteristics. All in all; e-learning refers to
using computer network technology to carry information and instructions to individuals (Wang et al., 2010). The role of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in learning is so essential.

**Social Networking Sites**

The main aspects that facilitate the usage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in e-learning are collaboration, communication, resource sharing, social influence, usefulness, and ease of use; social network sites such as Myspace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have concerned millions of users; they have integrated these sites into their daily practices and education. Boyd, D.M, & Ellison, N.B (2007) define social network sites as web-based facilities that permit people to (1) build a public or semi-public profile in a limited system, (2) make effective a list of other users with whom people share a link, and (3) view their list of links and those made by others in the system. The nature and vocabulary of these links may vary from one site to another.

**Facebook Social Networking Site**

Facebook’s origins, as a form of networking site, are now well established, as is its extraordinary rise since it is one of the most widely used online services globally; it has an initial connection to a university setting. Therefore, it seems suitable for educational uses, as seen by Roblyer et al. (2010), to summarize Facebook’s history and development from an academic research perspective. A group from Harvard University; composed of Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, created Facebook in 2014. The notion of Facebook started before that, and it was called Facemash, where students could talk to each other at University. Nowadays, Facebook has become the leading social networking site used by over a billion users. About half of that number is using Facebook every day since registration is free using an active email or a phone number. Recently, Facebook has become a job for some people, especially those who own pages with a significant number of friends in which they earn money by advertising products or places. Actually, the absolute “online ubiquity of Facebook is astounding” Wilson et al. (2012, p. 203).

In this line of thought, Demski (2009) looks at the possibility of using social networking in an academic setting; that is to say “A secured social networking site allows schools to incorporate the technology into academics while preparing students to the perils of online communities.”(p.1) Demski adds that it is an “activity that has embedded itself into the way work gets done” (p. 2); Computer-mediated communication in an academic background could reinforce student-teacher relationships and thus lead to more positive student outcomes. There are various reasons to integrate Facebook into the classroom; it is a valuable teaching resource, the network is operational, and most students are already using it. Moreover, it is in the category of internet-based learning. It dynamically involves students, unlike a traditional lecture, since students are active and engaged in learning using web-based tools. Consequently, Towner et al. (2007, p. 7) state that “By increasing student involvement with the material, instructors can tailor courses to a variety of learning styles.”(p. 7) and so, Towner et al. (2007) conclude the benefits of Facebook as follows:

The benefits of Facebook networking and social communication capabilities can significantly enhance the learning experience of both the teacher and the student by tapping into a more significant number of learning styles, providing recommended relief from the traditional lecture format, and building a community already well-known by the students (p. 13).
Impact of Integrating Facebook during the Pandemic of Covid-19

In the last three years, the world has witnessed a new pandemic that surprisingly dominated the world and still looming; this pandemic is called “covid-19”. It causes respiratory infections, including pneumonia, colds, sneezing, and coughing, while in animals, it causes diarrhea and upper respiratory diseases. The pandemic is transmitted from human to human or human to animal via airborne droplets and began in China on 21st December 2019. Since then, Covid-19 has changed everything in the world. It also changed the educational system in Algeria, especially in higher education, and urged the teachers to find new methods to deliver their lessons safely without being in danger of being affected by the virus.

Among those methods is the integration of Facebook in education, which was an alternative means of communication serving as an e-Learning Platform. Since March 2020, governments from all over the world have locked all public places, especially schools and universities. For this reason, apart from using teams, Moodle, and other e-platforms used by Algerian universities, Facebook becomes a solution since it is easy and free. Facebook, also allowed teachers to create virtual classes or groups to explain and send their lessons. Moreover, students can do and deliver their exercises and assignments online. Furthermore, students can ask any question to teachers and clarify difficulties between students themselves at any time and from any place. Besides, Facebook helps teachers share information and additional resources, like videos, books, articles, or pictures, easily. Furthermore, Facebook allows students and teachers to become more familiar with ICT skills. Finally, it makes teachers and students aware of the updates and novelties, especially during the pandemic.

Method

The current research work relies on a case study of 2nd year EFL students in the English Department; at Tlemcen University, Algeria, to identify the students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning and recognize the benefits of Facebook during the pandemic of covid-19. In this concern, Woodside (2010) states that a case study is an experimental inquiry that explores a current phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the limits between phenomenon and context are unclear. The researcher used two research instruments to collect data; a questionnaire addressed to the 2nd year students, and a structured interview administered to the English teachers.

Participants

Good research does not need method relevance and instrumentation only, but also a fair sampling strategy; the problem of choosing an appropriate sample falls in finding the most suitable setting which will provide reliable data. Therefore, sampling implies an acknowledgment that it is not possible to investigate absolutely everything of interest simultaneously, and consequently, we have to choose a “sample” (Johnsons, 1998, p. 275).

The target student population in this study was 2nd year EFL students in the Department of English, University of Tlemcen, Algeria. Students were 30. They were of the two genders, with different ages, and varying English proficiency levels. The second group of participants concerned English teachers who participated in a structured interview; they were eight with varied specialties, different qualifications, and teaching experience at the university.
Instruments

The researcher used two main instruments, a student’s questionnaire, and a teacher’s interview, to arrive at reliable data, test the hypotheses, and answer her research questions. The questionnaire comprised a section on the participants’ profiles. Then, the first set of questions was close questions where the participants had to choose one or many answers depending on the question. The second set of questions is the close-ended ones where respondents had to express their opinions, attitudes, or feelings. To better understand the current situation, the researcher used the teacher’s interview, which consists of nine questions divided between yes/no questions and close-ended ones.

Results

First, concerning the familiarity of students with e-learning, the majority of the students (68%) were familiar with e-learning, whereas the rest of the participants (32%) were not (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Familiarity with E-learning](image)

Then, when dealing with the use of social media by students, the results obtained and shown in (Figure 2) below assured that all the participants (97%) who responded were using social media except 3% who did not respond to this question.

![Figure 2. The Use of Social Media](image)
Regarding the most social media site used by students, the findings showed that most of the participants stated that they used Facebook, 35% of them declared preferring Instagram, and the last part of students representing a minor percentage, said using Twitter or Snapchat (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Different Social Media Sites**

When using social media for their studies, 32% of students responded using social media accounts in their studies, in contrast with the rest of the sample (68%), sometimes used their social media platform for studying (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Using Social Media for Studies**

Concerning the results of the teachers’ interview, the data revealed that (63%) of the participants said that they found the social media platforms somehow helpful, and (14%) stated finding them very helpful, as seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Social Media in Education**
Concerning the significance of using Facebook during the pandemic of Covid-19, the results revealed that (60%) of the participants did not find it beneficial, while (40%) said the contrary, as shown in Figure 6.

![Figure 6. Facebook during Covid-19](image)

As a whole and after gathering data from the sample, using the two research instruments, findings revealed that adopting Facebook in teaching has a positive relationship with effectiveness and accessibility. In addition, both teachers and students supported the idea that Facebook could help to improve students’ academic performance; they recognized the importance of Facebook during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic in making the teaching and learning process more accessible, fruitful, and even more possible.

**Discussion**

The discussion and interpretation of the main results were in two parts:

**Students’ Perspectives**

- Facebook allows students to communicate with their teacher outside the classroom, which may help establish a closer bond between teachers and students since the students feel that the teacher is available for them anytime they need them.
- It allows students to actively engage in the learning process, contrary to being negative recipients of material presented orally in the classroom.
- It gives students a sense of reliability and accountability.
- It gives students who are shy to participate and speak aloud in the classroom the opportunity to express their thoughts through writing.
- It helps students to improve their writing skills since they will practice expressing their thoughts and reflections on specific course topics.
- It allows students to develop their problem-solving skills through collaboration with a wide range of contacts having different backgrounds and capabilities.
- Students choose the most suitable time to log in and engage in discussions and can reflect on topics and comments and decide the appropriate time to reply.


Teachers’ Perspectives
- Facebook can enhance the interaction between teachers and their students and improve the teaching experience in many ways.
- To view the student as a partner in the teaching/learning process.
- It can help teachers in finishing lectures in a very safe way.
- It aids the teacher in sharing additional information, like videos, easily.
- It encourages a student-centered approach.
- To enhance social interactions among students and improve the quality of engagement between them and their teacher, which can help create a more effective learning environment.
- To feel closer to students by breaking the traditional formal barriers of classroom student/teacher relationships.
- They learn more about the students simply by viewing their profiles or reading their comments on Facebook.
- To provide helpful educational input in various ways and at different times other than the limited lecture time.
- To analyze and compare the achievement of students and the knowledge they acquire in different ways.
- To practice different pedagogical approaches depending on the needs of the students.
- To practice different social and psychological interaction skills that help establish a closer relationship between the teachers and students.

Conclusion
The current study investigated students’ perceptions of using Facebook to enhance their learning during Covid-19. The researcher took the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria, as a case study. The current study was limited to a small sample of EFL students at Tlemcen University. Still, future research can deal with more communities. Social networking sites have become an essential part of many individuals’ lives, especially the new generations; it has changed people interaction and has had a significant effect on their personal, social, and political lives. The popularity of SNSs, especially Facebook, among the youth has encouraged some educators to exploit these sites to enhance teaching and learning. Although using SNSs for educational purposes still seems to be at an early stage, such networks have great potential in the academic field.

About the Author
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Students’ English Language Usage of Facebook during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Changing Nature of English Tourism Discourse: A Linguistic Approach

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Received:07/21/2022 Accepted:01/2/2023 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
In the modern world, the tourism business is becoming more and more popular and is developing at a tremendous speed. Different changes connected with the spreading of pandemic viruses, global and geopolitical changes influences all spheres of life, and tourism is not an exception. Such sciences as sociology, economics, psychology, and linguistics are trying to research the results of such changes. The study aims to explore the reasons of changing nature of English tourism discourse and their consequences which can be viewed at lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels. The relevance of this topic is due to the fact that, despite the presence of a large number of works devoted to the study of tourism discourse, the issue of its typological status has not been resolved. The methodology of the research is represented by a complex approach to the analysis of linguistic facts, which implies the mandatory consideration of any phenomenon in close relationship and interdependence with all elements included in the unified system of the text. In this work, the following methods of analysis of English tourism discourse include descriptive method (observation, interpretation and generalization), analysis and comparison of dictionary definitions, method of contextual analysis. The research findings of the study show the linguo-stylistic features of different genres of tourism discourse in changing conditions.

Keywords: changes, English tourism discourse, globalization, linguo-stylistic features, the geopolitical situation,

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.17
Introduction

Today, interlingual communication is becoming a necessity for social life. Tourism is one of the most rapidly developing and successful areas of human activity, the key to the success of which is effective intercultural communication. It attracts participants in tourism activities, as well as tourists and residents of the visited countries.

The information and technological boom, the fast pace of life in society, and geopolitical and global changes undoubtedly influence the formation of different discourses and tourism discourse in particular. New linguistic units - neologisms in various spheres of human activity can be traced. By a new lexical unit (neologism or innovation), scholars understand lexemes that "acquire a broader meaning, if we take into account the fact that there is a large number of units that existed in the language before were limited in their functioning by certain "sub-conditions" or subsystems." Neologisms do not arise in language as a system of socially fixed signs capable of objectively existing but in the implementation of this system - in the speech of specific speakers.

The field of tourism has also experienced a neological boom. In modern English, tourism is not only about health and entertainment but also about recreation, pleasure, new ideas, and life experiences. When exploring tourism vocabulary, researchers mainly focus on the language of tourism as a terminological subsystem. The aim of the study is to explore the reasons of changing nature of English tourism discourse and their consequences which can be viewed at lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels. The relevance of this topic is due to the fact that, despite the presence of a large number of works devoted to the study of tourism discourse, the issue of its typological status has not been resolved. The objectives of the research include distinguishing between the notions "discourse" and "text", defining the notions of "tourism discourse", analysis of linguistic and stylistic features of tourism discourse genres; trace changes in lexical, grammatical and stylistic composition of the tourism discourse.

Literature Review

The theoretical basis for the research work was the works of authors in the field of discourse analysis, theory and practice of translation, tourism and advertising discourse, and Internet discourse. The term discourse is more and more relevant for research in the field of modern linguistics. A particular interest in this phenomenon arises from the general tendencies in the desire of scientists to determine the relationship between language and consciousness within the linguistic direction that dominates everywhere - cognitive linguistics.

One of the central areas of modern linguistics is discursive research. Here are some definitions of the term discourse. Arutyunova (1985) offered the following definition of discourse: “Discourse is a coherent text combined with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors, a text taken in a conceptual aspect; speech, considered as a purposeful social action, as a component involved in the interaction of people and their mechanisms of consciousness (cognitive processes).” (p. 56).

The term discourse in modern linguistics is close to the term text. The difference is that text refers to a fixed result of linguistic activity. At the same time, discourse includes both a process of linguistic activity, i.e. communication, perhaps a dialogue that occurs in time, and is the result of such communication, i.e., text.

Dijk and Kintsch (1983) identified two approaches to understanding "discourse" in their research, characterizing it in a broad sense "as a complex communicative event that occurs between the speaker, listener (observer, etc.) during a communicative action in a certain time-space" (p.
pointing out that “a communicative action can be verbal, written, have verbal and non-verbal components,” the scientist quotes “an everyday conversation with a friend, a dialogue between a doctor and an intern, reading a newspaper” (p. 90).

Defining the term "discourse" in a narrow sense, distinguishing "only the verbal component of a communicative action," suggesting that it is referred to later as a "text" or "conversation." In this sense the term "discourse" means the "oral product" performed or in the course of communication action. It is a written or oral result which is interpreted by the recipients (Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).

In intercultural communication, a special role is played by national features of the linguistic image of the world, as well as the connection between national identity and language. The interrelation and interaction of different cultures take place in tourism. In addition, the language of tourism is characterized by its uniqueness since several genres and styles are intertwined here, which makes us define the notion of tourism discourse (Collins, 2008). The discussion about tourism includes communication between people belonging to different social and linguistic groups. Still, at the same time, communicators have a clear understanding of the gender characteristics of the discourse about tourism, as well as how to exchange information.

Tourism discourse is an independent type of discourse based on a specific thematic focus (travel and leisure), focus on a particular destination, uniqueness of purpose (informing the addressee about a specific tourism product and therefore advertising; to promote and at the same time help this product, focus to use a specific set of language tools). Since the tourism discourse is focused on informing the mass reader, it can be attributed to the mass-oriented institutional discourse. A specific feature of the tourism discourse is its limited coverage (tourism). In the discourse of the tourism sector, the following public institutions are distinguished:

1. tour operators developing tours;
2. travel agencies offering services in the field of tourism;
3. airlines, transport companies that transport tourists;
4. advertising agencies promoting tourism products;
5. organizations, publishing houses that develop and publish advertising and information materials for tourists, etc.

The characteristics of tourism discourse noted above correspond to the main features of tourism, such as the presence of an organizational structure, the appointment of a certain group of communication objects, the presence of certain norms and rules, and the increase in its socially significant role. It is worth noting that because of these signs, in recent years it has become customary to single out tourism as an independent part of the system of modern social institutions.

Tourism is a term that comes from the French language. Even though people began to travel thousands of years ago, the word "tourist" appeared only at the end of the eighteenth century in England, and France, its first mention dates back to 1816.

Before proceeding to the classification of tourism discourse genres, we note that a genre in linguistics is traditionally understood as a combination of more or less stable characteristics of a text: the style of narration, the generally accepted form of discourse sanctioned by society, and the usual ways of combining speech units, speech structure, etc. The basis of the pragmatic study of the genre of speech is the understanding of the dialogical nature of the genre of discourse, considered as a verbal concept of a typical situation of social interaction between people.

As a rule, the genres of modern tourism discourse are divided into two types:

1) Genres presented in written or printed form:
1. A guide is a printed, electronic or audiovisual guide to a city, historical site, museum, or tourist route.

2. A booklet is a sheet of paper folded into two or more folds, on both sides of which text or graphic information is placed. As a rule, advertising information is placed in booklets, hence the name "advertising booklet."

3. A catalog is a multi-page printed publication with a list of certain information, which is usually of a commercial nature. Depending on the purpose and target group, catalogs can be divided into two groups: representative and informational. Information catalogs are multi-page publications with detailed information about prices, features, and a list of goods or services. They are printed on cheap paper, often with ink, usually without reprinting.

4. An article is a genre of journalism in which the author is tasked with analyzing social situations, processes, and phenomena, especially from the point of view of fundamental laws. In the article, the author considers individual situations as part of a broader phenomenon. The author argues and forms his position using a system of facts.

5. If we are talking about leaflets, this means a sheet, as a rule, with one-sided marking, in A4 format (210 x 297 mm). Close relatives of leaflets - brochures (folded double-sided leaflet, 1-2-3 times for convenience), stickers (self-adhesive leaflet, modern "sticker"), and others. Leaflets are a widely used advertising material and stand out as an advertising medium, as well as ways and means of their distribution: they are distributed on the street, distributed by mail, and distributed using special distribution racks.

2) Kinds using a computer:

1. A virtual tour is a three-dimensional scene published on the Internet, which allows a potential client to learn about any real object. The created model allows you to move around the virtual object, rotate the object, and place interactive elements - as a rule, this gives you complete freedom of movement. Thus, the user, without leaving home and without any effort, can evaluate this product.

2. Website of a travel agency (we will take a closer look at this type of view in one of the paragraphs).

3. E-mail of the client in the travel agency. The most convenient way to advertise is to send an E-mail to the client's mailbox. It is very important that the client is interested in this letter from the first minutes. In the mailing list, the user communicates directly with his target audience. Each contact with the audience should be interesting and useful for the consumer. If the user is takes care of himself from the company, he will be ready to buy from this company.

Method

In the modern language of any country, there is a considerable variety of discourses, each of which covers a specific area of human life. For example, in articles and studies, one can find pedagogical discourse, political, sports, philosophical, everyday, artistic, legal, religious, and many others. All discourses have something that unites them, namely the presence of figurative speech. Consider the place of figurative speech in the texts of various discourses.

In no other area are so many different cultures connected as in tourism. We are always interested in something new, due to which tourism is becoming more and more popular every year, and communication with users of different cultures is global. In other words, with the advent of tourism services, the tourism industry is growing and developing day by day, and at the same time, there is a need to learn foreign languages (Crystal, 2012).
The discourse on tourism does not imply taking into account the social conditions belonging to certain linguistic communities or social groups in their direct communication with each other. However, communication participants have no problems with respecting the gender characteristics of tourism discourse, and the organization of communication and information exchange methods is formed under the influence of goals, which creates conditions for creating trusting relationships from an emotional point of view, between the sender and recipient, under tourism specifications, which are mainly focused on increasing consumer demand.

When identifying the characteristics of the tourism discourse with the help of descriptive method (observation, interpretation and generalization), analysis and comparison of dictionary definitions, method of contextual analysis it was possible to single out distinctive features of tourism discourse and to trace its linguistic changes due to the globalization, the geopolitical situation.

It is extremely important to take into account the type of participants in the relations that are implemented in the tourism business. Thus, as participants in communication, large segments of the population can be considered real and potential tourists, and on the other hand, various organizations of the tourism industry.

If we compare tourism discourse with other types of discourse, then in terms of its pragmatic focus (selling a tourism product) and the wealth of information, tourism discourse is close to advertising discourse. However, a comparative analysis of both types of discourse suggests that there are differences between tourism discourse and advertising discourse.

Another distinguishing feature of the tourism discourse from the advertising discourse can be considered the presence of responsibility for the services provided throughout the entire time of consumption of the product. Thus, if the main purpose of advertising is the sale of a certain product or service without further guarantee of its successful use, the travel agency will not be able to relieve itself of responsibility until the end of the client's use of the provided travel service.

In tourism discourse, there is always a description of real objects in real space and time. Advertising is the idea of another, fabulous reality in which the advertised product is revealed through something fictional. In this regard, fictional characters, artificially created conditions and conditions are more often presented in advertising discourse.

In addition to the above, advertising discourse is characterized by the selectivity of information, which, in turn, can be interpreted as a distortion of information - one of the methods of manipulative influence. The authors of travel brochures and forms want to provide the most complete information about a particular tourist site or destination - a geographic region that has a certain attraction for tourists.

Another characteristic feature of tourism discourse texts is the obligatory application of the principle of visibility when compiling texts containing information about the offer of a particular service to a potential client, since the text accompanied by illustrative material is undoubtedly positive, evokes emotions and a desire to see what you see with your own eyes. Eyes on the brochure and therefore buy the service. Thus, a comparative analysis of tourism and advertising discourses, carried out according to several criteria, allows us to draw the following conclusion.

Tourism discourse, due to some common features, is almost identical to advertising discourse. At the same time, the identified differences emphasize its specificity, in particular, the advantage of the information function, the presentation of sufficiently complete information about the real potential reality, the dominance of cultural, historical, and popular science aspects, as well as universal national values in the presentation of information.
It is also worth noting that tourism discourse is associated with other types of institutional discourse: historical, political, commercial, religious, legal, sports, arts, and many others, and such a complete character of the socio-economic phenomenon is associated mainly with the specific characteristics of the tourism sector, which consists mainly to cover all spheres of society within the framework of its functioning.

**Findings**

Reviews of tourists (the author informs the Internet community about a tourist trip with the dual purpose of conveying something meaningful and at the same time appreciating this content. The expression can be distinguished by several types of reviews: review - advice, opinion - gratitude, warning). We have identified some distinguishing features of websites with brochures and other print media (Jacob & Strutt, 2007).

First of all, the distinguishing feature is the page layout. Internet sites have an unlimited ability to post a huge amount of photos than printed brochures or other types of genres. Also, these photos tend to be updated from time to time to grab the user's attention. In addition, fast-changing images allow you to display short phrases (titles) that encourage the reader to click and go to a new page.

In addition, we may leave notes or comments on travel websites, which cannot be done in print media (brochures, booklets, etc.). I would like to point out that some sites offer forums where we can share information, experiences, and even photos while traveling around the world. In conclusion, most travel sites link to partners who help you book a hotel, train, or plane ticket, arrange insurance, or even arrange a vacation. Following the model of the language genre proposed, we observe the following genre-forming elements in the genres of tourism discourse that we are considering:

1. General communication goal, which is to inform the addressee and further influence his awareness.
2. A picture of the anonymous author of the message - the addressee. It is indicated that the widely spoken language is used in the tourism discourse, which reflects the collective and anonymous nature of the addressee, its dialogic character, competence, identification with the image of the addressee, etc.
3. Image of the recipient.
4. Image of the past.
   In tourist brochures, of course, there is a retrospective - an appeal to the plan of the past, to historical facts as one of the attractive and informative elements.
5. Image of the future.
   He is the guarantor of the implementation of the proposed tourist trip.
6. Form of the language implementation.
   Linguistic and stylistic characteristics of brochures and travel brochures are due to the presence in the tourism discourse of such characteristics as information content, dialogue, didactics, incentives, evaluation, and persuasiveness.

The term system of the tourism industry in recent years has increasingly been the focus of attention due to the rapid development of this branch of human activity. The main areas of research in the field of industry terminology are:

1) lexicographic terminological activity;
2) unification of terms and term systems, implying the ordering, standardization, and harmonization of terms, the work of the editor on the terms (terminological editing);
3) translation of terms in scientific, technical, and other special texts;
4) creation of terminological databanks or terminological databases;
5) organizational and methodological activities of terminological institutes and centers at different levels - from sectoral to international.

The specific characteristics of the tourism vocabulary include, first of all, the fact that the means of representing the notion of "tourism" includes not only the vocabulary of tourism (tourist terms, professionalism) but also the vocabulary of "many other thematic areas: economics and finance, construction and architecture, hotel business, sports, medicine, psychology, education and culture, politics, international relations, crime, fashion, entertainment, national customs and traditions, religion, etc., which can be represented by both terminological and commonly used verbal signs, including colloquial, colloquial and slang ones (Thomas, 1996).

Among the main trends that are typical for the vocabulary of the tourism sector in the English language are an expansion of the lexical subsystem due to new language units; redistribution of verbal signs between the various categories included in the named subsystem; changes in terms of the content of verbal signs at the level of the semantic structure of the word and the level of the structure of a separate meaning.

In recent years the mobility of the terminological system of tourism has been the subject to the constant influence of new terms in connection with globalization processes. This leads to significant variability within the terminological system (at the level of pronunciation, spelling, and comprehension) and a constant change in paradigmatic relationships (synonymy, relationships with other characters in the terminological system).

In the text of the tourism discourse different types of vocabulary can be found:

- neologisms
- archaism
- own names
- jargonisms and slang
- professional vocabulary, etc.

Lexical means of expressiveness of the tourism discourse are realized through the use of various metaphors, as well as epithets. The latter are represented by such typical adjectives as good, better, friendly, best, free, wonderful, welcoming, special, real, easy, bright, extra, and rich.

The common grammatical means of expressiveness include the use of rhetorical questions "Isn't it time you treated yourself to a holiday?"; the active use of abbreviations and various graphic means of expression “Alaska B4UDIE.” (Alaska, before you die.)

In addition, these designs are distinguished by considerable information saturation and the linguistic economy as the use of personal and possessive pronouns. Type constructions like "we are ours," and "you are yours" give more persuasiveness. A vivid example of the use of such structures is the advertisement of a travel agency: "We work so you do not have to"; the use of the imperative and a hidden command or call to action (try, get, take, send for, call, make, let, come on, hurry, come, give, remember, discover, choose, look for).

Among the phonetic means of expression, the most common is the use of alliteration ("Tour to Turkey!!"). Another feature of the English tourism discourse is the use of antonyms, for example: “Trishaw. ↔ Shadow of skyscrapers” (Manson & Struff, 2007).
Discussion

Large-scale globalization, the spread of pandemics, the computerization of our lives, and the development of the latest scientific technologies, which are taking place in the countries of the English-speaking world give the ground for the appearance of a great number of neologisms. In most cases, such neologisms include lexical and semantic neologisms, which either denote new realities specific only to a given culture or express cultural-historical associations in their connotative meaning. Such neologisms not only reflect milestones in the development of this national language community but also contain national-semantic particles that cannot be compared with similar lexical meanings of words in other languages. For the most part, such units are non-equivalent. It is impossible to find cross-linguistic lexical-semantic variants for them (Crystal, 2012).

In the innovative vocabulary of tourism discourse, which was formed by affixation, suffixes of Germanic, Latin, and Greek origin are the most productive (Ungerer, 2007). All suffixes used for the formation of derivatives in the field of tourism are divided into suffixes with a high degree of productivity, which play a large role in the formation of new words, with a low degree of productivity, and non-productive suffixes, which do not play an important role in the formation of derivative tokens. Productive suffixes that are actively used in the formation of innovations are the suffixes -ing, -er, and the suffixoid -ation. Less productive suffixes are suffixes -ism, -ist. The suffix -ster was the least productive.

According to the classification of suffixes, regarding the designation of a part of the language, it is determined that innovations in tourism discourse are formed with the help of suffixes used to form nouns. One of the most productive suffixes in the field of tourism is the suffix -ing. This suffix is used to form nouns from the bases of nouns and is formed according to the model N + -ing → N. The semantics of the suffix -ing indicates the process of activity (backpacking "hiking trip"; canyoning "combination of mountaineering with swimming on boats (rafts), overcoming rapids (waterfalls)"; coasteering “overcoming a certain distance of the coastline, by swimming or on foot”; kayaking "swimming on narrow, long boats - kayaks"; longboarding "sports exercises on a skateboard (an instrument in the form of a longboard)"; mountainboarding "a sport in which a special mountainboard is used"; snorkeling "swimming under the surface of the water.

Another productive suffix in the field of study is the suffix -er, which is added, first of all, to the base of verbs and indicates specific characteristics of a person with the model: V + -er → N. The suffix -er is multi-meaningful and conveys the meaning of words according to three directions: agency, qualification characteristics, and utility (backpack, n – backpacker “hiker,” mountainboard, n – mountainboarder “one who moves on a special mountainboard”).

The suffix -er is used to form nouns from words formed by telescoping: daycation, n + -er – daycationer “a traveler who makes a short trip without overnight stay”; mancation, n + -er – mancationer “one who spends vacation among men”; naycation, n + -er – naycationer “one who rests without unnecessary expenses”; fakeation, n + -er – fakeationer “a person who takes rest, which is work”.

Telescoping as an active way of word formation creates conditions for the emergence of new suffix and prefix formants. A productive affix formed by the action of the telescoping mechanism is the prefix para-, which is the result of the apocope of the unit parachute: paradocoral "a doctor who is parachuted into remote areas"; paragliding "paragliding"; paramotorizing "moving through the air with the help of a parachute and a special engine"; parahawking “flights of paragliders with trained birds of prey".
Another less productive affix in the field of sports and tourism is the suffix \(-ist\). This suffix functions with a noun and adjectival stem and is responsible for an agentive meaning or a qualifying characteristic. Derived lexemes are formed according to the model: N + -ist \(\rightarrow\) N. According to the meaning of the suffix, lexical units of the sports and tourism sphere designate persons who are engaged in the activity indicated by the base (paralpinist "performer of paragliding"; poorist "a person who travels through slums and other dangerous places.")

Note that prefixing is significantly inferior to suffixation in the formation of innovations. In percentage terms, the productivity of suffixation is 87.5\%, and the productivity of prefixation is 12.5\% of the total number of studied units formed by the affixal method of word formation.

The analysis of complex neologism words showed that the most productive model for the formation of complex neologisms is the model N + N(-ing) \(\rightarrow\) N. The productivity of formations according to this model is 62\% of the entire number of studied units formed by word formation. The innovations created according to this model include the following complex neologisms (bushwhacking "making a hiking trip outside of civilized transport routes"; casterboarding “overcoming a certain distance of the coastline, by swimming or on foot”; kneeboarding "performing sports exercises while sitting on your knees on a board attached to a boat by a cable"; riverboarding "moving on a board using special fins"; waymarking "marking the pedestrian route with brightly colored signs."

In the formation of innovations in the vocabulary of the English language in tourism discourse, the method of telescoping contributed to the formation of 14\% of innovations. There are several word-forming models of telescopism formation mechanisms. The most productive word-formation model is the reduction of a fragment of the base of the first source word (apocope) with the full base of another. This model is ab + cd > acd. The productivity of this model is 55.5\% of the total number of units formed by the telescopic method (voluntourist (volunteer + tourist) "one who combines tourist trips with the voluntary performance of certain works"; paradoctor (parachute + doctor) "a doctor who is parachuted into remote areas"; parahawking (paragliding + hawking) "paraglider flights with trained birds of prey").

A third of the word-forming models of the formation of telescopisms are telescopisms formed from the full base of the first source word and a fragment of another (apheresis). Graphically, this model is represented as ab + cd > abd. The productivity of innovation formation according to this model is 33.3\%. Examples of telescopisms are the following units: travelcade (travel + cavalcade) "column of tourist cars"; thrillaxation (thrill + relaxation) "an activity that fascinates and relaxes."

A significant number of telescoping lexical innovations are formed according to the considered models, but the least productive models can also be singled out. Among them is the fusion of apocope with apheresis. For example, the model ab + cd > ad: glamping (glamour + camping) "a light form of hiking tourism; touron (tourist + moron) "ignorant and annoying tourist"). Productivity of innovation formation according to this model is 11.2\%.

**Conclusion**

The growing popularity of cultural and educational tourism, based on cultural values and not on consumption, indicate the perception of tourism as a powerful vector for the transferring of culturally specific information and a tool for obtaining and sharing knowledge. Under the influence of global, pandemic, and geopolitical changes, the world tourism discourse is extremely changing. The largest number of innovations in the vocabulary of the English language in tourism discourse can be traced recently, which is mainly formed by affixation - 49\%. Productive suffixes are the
suffixes -ing, -er, as well as the suffix -cation. Less productive suffixes are -ism and -ist. Among the prefixes in the field of tourism para-, micro-; multi-, nano-, ultra-, and retro- are marked, which are characterized by low productivity in the formation of innovations in the studied area. It should be noted that the productivity of suffixation is 87.5%, while the productivity of prefixation is only 12.5% of the total number of units formed in an affixal way. A significant part of neologisms (32%) is formed with the help of word composition. The most effective model for the formation of complex neologisms is the model N + N (-ing) → N. The less productive model is the model N + N → N. The smallest number of complex words was formed according to the model Adj + N (-ing) → N. For detailed exploration in the field of sports and tourism, we used morphological, phonetic, orthographic, and semantic criteria for its identification, as well as logical and operational techniques for determining the status of a complex word. Telescopy turned out to be a less active way of forming tourism neologisms (14%). The most productive word-forming model of telescoping is the model ab + cd > acd. A smaller part of telescopisms is formed according to the model - ab + cd > abd, and the least productive model is the model ab + cd > ad. The semantics of the telescoping units may be based on the meaning of the original units, and the overall meaning may be based on components of the telescoping units that complement or refine the meaning of the original unit, or the meaning of the entire telescoping may be determined by one component that prevails over another.

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The Impact of Social Media on Literature

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Received: 09/24/2022  Accepted: 12/29/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Literature is one of society's broad and significant elements because it shows how people interact and socialize. The objective of literature is education and entertainment through songs, poems, stories, and drama. However, a challenge that limits production and access to literary content is media. Traditionally, media used to convey literature material, such as books, television, radio, and theatres were limited to people who could afford or access venues. Consequently, the spread of literary content was limited to specific areas. However, media and information technology advancement has created a paradigm shift in the production and dissemination of literary content. This research evaluated the effects of media advancement in enhancing literature's production, dissemination, and consumption. Importantly, this research will explain the types of media technology and how they affect literature. Literature has experienced changes because media provides advanced methods of producing and disseminating literary content. There is a significant difference between literature produced during the Elizabethan era and the industrialization period and those produced in the digital age. Writing technology was the earliest approach to generating literature, and this has evolved into digital technology that generates audio-visual content. Media has also influenced the globalization of literature by enabling access to literary works across countries and cultures. Media technology has simplified the production of literature and provided digital channels for showcasing literary work, making digital a significant contributor to social and economic development. Media development has supported advancement in literature.

Keywords: Digital Content, Evolution of Literature, Literature, Media Theory, Social Media

Cite as: Shahwan, S. J. (2023). The Impact of Social Media on Literature. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on Communication and Language in Virtual Spaces, January 2023:226-245. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/aiej/comm1.18
Introduction

The evolution of media has transformed the processing and transmission of information. Specifically, information technology significantly influences developments in the media industry. According to the study by P. Helo and H. Hao (2019), “media” refers to the many physical means by which information may be distributed. The academic fields of media studies and media theory are dedicated to better understanding and studying the wide variety of media used to transmit data. Because of the influence of these areas, the dissemination channels for literature are no longer considered secondary to the literary substance or form but as important in their own right. Literary content and form may also be, and frequently are, significantly influenced by the channels through which they are communicated and the particular forms of media prevalent at the time and place in which they were created. Popular forms of media may also influence how readers respond to a text. To continue, the researcher will look at historical examples of literary and media interaction, as well as examples from a variety of different cultural contexts. Media theory refers to research into mass media's impact on society, specifically how the public perceives news and other forms of content. Humans employ various media forms for information transmission and storage, and this diversity is studied in media studies.

Literature is important because of its impact on education, entertainment, socialization, and politics. People have different preferences in the literature depending on the type of literature and delivery approach. Different types of literature, such as songs, poems, novels, short stories, comics, and plays, have different delivery approaches, although they have similar objectives. However, the mode of delivery of different literary content influences the number of people accessing the content. Traditional media, such as print media, radio, television, and theatres, limits access to literary content. Additionally, the media also influences the production of literary content depending on the types of production equipment, such as cameras, printers, and computers. Generating audio-visual content was complex before the invention of cameras. Similarly, traditional printers had limited printing capacity, limiting access to printed literary content, such as novels. In contrast, in the digital age, literary material is easily accessible due to digital content. The developments in literature are largely influenced by development in media technology. Understanding how media influences literature is important because it enables the development of technologies that contribute to these literature changes. Therefore, this research evaluates how media contributes to the development of literature.

The objective of this research is to investigate how media affects literature. This research will discuss how different media technologies affects literature.

The research question that will guide this research is how developments in media affect the evolution of literature.

This research is structured into five sections: introduction, literature review, methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The introduction gives an overview of the research, the topic's significance, and the study's objectives. The literature review includes an analysis of different research studies on related topics, including social media, literature, media theory, and oral transmission. The methods sections outline the research process used in this study. The research also has a findings section that discusses the research findings. The research then has a discussion section that elaborates on the findings by linking to theory. Lastly, the study has a conclusion section that summarizes the research, gives the application of the findings, and recommends future research.
Literature Review

Social Media

McLuhan, often regarded as the field's progenitor, sparked the media studies revolution with his assertion that "the medium is the message" (Mitchell, 2022). The general trend in the humanities and social sciences to refocus on the process, social context, performance, and other ostensibly secondary or non-essential aspects of texts or artifacts was influenced partly by McLuhan's insistence on viewing the medium as a primary rather than secondary focus for analysis. Recent media theory, but also literary theory, has followed this trend and given greater attention to the material circumstances of communicative actions, from the study of the technology of writing to the phenomenology of new media and how it impacts our sense of the world. For instance, because of the seminal writings of German literary theorist Friedrich Kittler, a whole generation of academics now approach literature as if it were a distinct kind of media (Trüper, 2019). His historicist methodology views literature as a form of data generation whose characteristics are primarily dictated by the reproduction and archiving technologies accessible in the time and place in which it was written.

Before the 19th century, the press was the sole means of disseminating knowledge to the public. Press and media were synonymous back then, but as new information sources have emerged, the scope of the word “media” has broadened to include these other forms of dissemination as well (Lewis, Guzman, & Schmidt, 2019). The media, whether online or in print, is always present in our lives, and its original function of education has expanded to include providing entertainment. It is the media's responsibility to convey the public's thoughts, emotions, and responses since whatever is shown in the press form the foundation for what people believe, feel, and say. Media outlets may be found anywhere, even in seemingly unrelated fields. Something that has a significant impact on many people's lives is just as significant as anything else (Hou, Kong, Cai, & Liu, 2020). Media covers many topics, from the severe (war) to the most frivolous (fashion). The media always focuses on famous people. Even anything as mundane as a sneeze, cough, or yawn becomes newsworthy when it comes from them. Everyone who has made it big in the world owes much of their prominence to the media. Many former journalists now work as novelists or book authors.

However, the constant relevance of the media makes it impossible to ignore its influence on rapidly shifting social norms (Cornelissen, 2020). Because it reflects the reality of the situation, it might inspire individuals to take immediate action. The rapid dissemination of news and information in the modern day is largely attributable to the widespread use of electronic and social media. In contrast to the introspective nature of literature, it may elicit knee-jerk responses like large rallies and picketing. Though the impact of literature's message may not be immediately felt, once it takes hold, it tends to last for a very long time. Literature transforms and affects fundamental change because it speaks to people where they are at, in their hearts and souls. The phrase "the medium is the message" was popularised by media scholar and "father of media studies" Marshal McLuhan. According to German literary theorist Friedrich Kittler, literature is only a genre within the larger medium of media (Trüper, 2019). It is only one way that information is generated. Foregrounding the need for new literary practices, technological progress has drastically reframed and is continually rethinking the connection between media and literature.

Given the above, it seems reasonable to conclude that sharing written works on social media is one such behavior that has eradicated not only traditional forms of literature but literature altogether (Gorkhali & Chowdhury, 2022). One fundamental cause is a lack of time, which works
against developing masterpieces. Developing a timeless masterpiece is a laborious process that demands enough time, rest, and active thought. The modern, mechanized way of life leaves little time for reading lengthy works, but it also cannot function without literature, and the type of literature that resonates with this way of life is widely accessible on social media. Oral literature, such as folktales and folksongs, were popular in pre-literate societies because they could be shared without needing a written medium. They performed musical numbers, spoke poetry, and gave speeches. Through the evolution of scripts, humanity eventually figured out how to put pen to paper to record the range of human experiences. Since the development of written language, humans have been documenting the people, places, and things that have had a profound impact on our lives, given us hope, and propelled us forward, turning them into tales that live on in legend and inspiration. Modern literature has taken on a new shape due to technical developments and the proliferation of media outlets (Kumar, 2020). Due to the widespread accessibility of literature and many methods to articulate one’s innermost thoughts and feelings, there are probably more authors and readers in the world now than at any other time in history.

According to the study by Kramsch (2019), only the elite of ancient societies had access to Education, and only they could read and write. As a result, word of mouth passed the period’s literature down from person to person. It would undergo transformations and changes throughout this process and maybe even deteriorate into something useless. According to data, 2.2 million books are released annually, which does not even account for the vast amounts of literature available online in PDFs, blogs, vlogs, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Modern writing styles are far more rapid than those of the past. The rate of both invention and dissemination is accelerated.

Every day, hundreds of brand-new works are published and shared across various online channels, where they rapidly gain an audience and quickly elicit reactions from readers in the form of likes, retweets, and comments for their creators. That is why there is so much quick gratification writing on social media. When life becomes hectic, and it is hard to find time to see loved ones, social media may be a great outlet for letting out inner Shakespeare and stimulating a creative outburst. As a result, several authors have found success after first gaining exposure via social media. Writing a three- or four-line article is not difficult for individuals who have had a formal education since information is readily available online and can be checked and corrected if the user knows how to utilize the available online tools (Al Hilali & McKinley, 2021). To put it optimistically, these sites appeal to both persons with a talent for writing but no interest in pursuing it professionally and those who have never picked up a book.

**Evaluation of Social Media**

Media has transformed from traditional brick-and-mortar communication systems to digital communication systems. These changes are influenced by changes in information technology to support communication through digital channels. The use of digital communication technologies is shaping how society conducts social, economic, and political activities. The quest of people to align their activities with technology is to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Social media use in learning has changed the delivery of teaching methods and access to learning content. One of the effects of social media in the classroom is the increased potential for student participation (Latif, Hussain, Saeed, Qureshi, & Masqood, 2019). The multimodal and participative affordances of social media facilitate communication among persons who may not otherwise come into contact with one another (Sobko et al., 2020). While classroom-based projects have a limited audience,
those presented on social media have the potential to make use of other internet resources (Reinhardt, 2019). The ability to submit comments and engage in two-way communication also helps students get more comfortable with a wider variety of communication forms (e.g., visual, linguistic, color, style, design) and open up additional avenues for more productive, real-time collaboration (Ozanne, Ballantine, & Mitchell, 2020).

In a college course on business and technical writing, Reinhardt (2019) looked at how blogs were used in tandem with other social media (Facebook and Twitter). They discovered that by facilitating more student-to-student and teacher-to-student contact and course material distribution, the collaborative and interesting tools positively impacted the learning outcomes for everybody involved. Moreover, Abdullah, Hussin, and Ismail (2019) observed that the 53 high school students who participated, in his focus group were worried about having no one listen to them speak in class but found that they had a larger audience on social media. Information exchange, student-created material, debates about this content, and enhanced social rapport are all facilitated by this kind of engagement, as stated by (Ferrer, Lorenzetti, & Shaw, 2020). Students may shape their communication settings Marich, Brandon, Greenhow & Hartman, (2021) and decide when to respond, using hashtags to organize and classify their multimodal writings and generate their content.

Moreover, Williams and Beam (2019) examined how 17 educators and their students used digital tools to create texts in the classroom. Successful technology users, she discovered, gave students access to additional opportunities for collaboration and a broader, more "genuine" audience for their work. Edwards-Groves' primary emphasis was on teaching staff and their use of technology in the classroom, but she also included student perspectives on their digital work, which emphasized the benefits of catering to a realistic, broader audience, such as paying more attention to visual representation styles and more effectively organizing information for the viewer. As with the study mentioned earlier, O'Connor et al. (2019) discovered that their target students responded well to being in front of more than just the instructor. Consequently, they started interacting and engaging more online and in the classroom. There were 78 students registered (10 of them were ELL), and Niu but Zheng, Wu, Sun, Rong, and Li, (2021) zeroed in on two because of their remarkable progress during the semester. It is possible that not all of the students were as invested in or even aware of their audience. It is also not apparent if any of these initiatives have reached an audience outside the classroom or have the potential to do so. Given the importance of audience and context in shaping how students engage with media, this disparity may impact how students adopt social media and the learning concepts within the project.

While the benefits of an interactive audience may be limited to interactions between students in the classroom, many study designers hold out hope that the benefits can extend beyond the school's walls to a wider audience that may have similar interests and be able to "jointly construct contexts through their interactive textual practices" (Singer, 2019, p. 578). For instance, (Crawford, 2020) highlighted one exceptional kid (Jack) who utilized his time in English to compose The Hunger Games fan fiction and shared his work with a receptive and engaged audience on Mockingjay.net. He also participated in the “Panem October” online game and created interactive games for people to enjoy. Jack personalized a school project to represent his interests and reach out to others outside the classroom. On the other hand, this illustrative case study shows the most successful pupils, like Lowie and Verspoor (2019), who seized the opportunity by using social media in the classroom.
In addition, Lewis et al. argue that social media, although participatory, are extremely limiting and one-dimensional since they are “focused on the communal circulation of artifacts and individual meaning-making, rather than the co-construction of meaning” (Filimonov, 2021, p. 37). YouTube and Facebook are used as examples by Lewis and co-workers to illustrate how sites with strict posting timelines and noncollaborative features (such as rating and sharing) may alter users' and students' conceptions of what constitutes participation and even collaboration. Others have pointed out that while there may be numerous contacts on social media, these interactions may be fairly shallow (e.g., assignment due dates, worries over the syllabus) rather than the broad ties suggested by others. Researchers and teachers could confuse kids' free-flowing involvement for the co-construction of meaning if they assume that their goals mirror those of adults in the professional world rather than the world of play.

For a larger audience and a more engaging style to be beneficial in the classroom, however, students must actively embrace and be engaged in utilizing them. Some students may have a more conventional view of classroom instruction, in which the instructor's expertise and judgment on the course material are held in the highest esteem (and are ultimately examined) (Carpenter, Witherby, & Tauber, 2020). That is why they may not see the need to use social media to communicate with and learn from their peers or the general public (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Even when they are communicating with a larger audience or in plain sight, the tools for interactive communication achieve relatively little in such situations.

Lastly, some academics believe that the underlying notions of social media, such as collaborative and participatory audiences, may conflict with the education setting. According to Crook, “tasks are often confined and restricted under tight deadlines; while more fun cooperative participation in social media is permitted to wander more and is less commonly handled in the structure of discrete projects” (Silva, 2021, p. 497). Affordances for a larger and more engaged audience may have been discovered in the experiments addressed in this section by shifting the setting and power dynamics generally associated with conventional ideas of school and Education.

**Literature**

Literature is sometimes contested by those who believe it is not a talent but rather a set of behaviors that must be worked on, reinterpreted and refined through time (Kenny & Donnelly, 2020). In light of this understanding of literacy, educators and students alike should work to improve their understanding of the concept through time and use flexible teaching resources. Therefore, some researchers argue that students' usage of social media to support their multimodal learning and literacy practices and to incorporate student-centered communication into the classroom is a promising direction for future research (Niu, 2020).

Education research on social media usage in the classroom typically focuses on intricate ideas, learning, and literacies that are difficult to test, quantify, or even articulate in qualitative case studies. This has led to a plethora of research on the possibilities of Education and the methods used to foster it. For instance, Guckian et al. (2021) discovered that upon reviewing 23 radical papers investigating Facebook's efficacy as a teaching tool, students found that the majority of the research focused on students' attitudes about using social media as learning aid rather than on the actual "learning" that resulted.

The authors of this review, Cavalcante (2019), argued that social media can bring together people with different backgrounds, experiences, and ways of thinking. Supporting and interacting with novel concepts, abilities, and information resources, this breadth may aid students in
developing meaning (Vaughan, Mallet, Davids, Potrac, & Lopez-Felip, 2019). Some claim that students may be able to communicate their ideas in new ways and engage in self-reflection via the use of social media and that this has important consequences for both formal and informal learning. For instance, Terre Blanche, Fourie, and Segalo (2021) employing the introspection of graduate students provides some insight into how people think they learn when they use social media. When asked about his experience in the course, one participant said that he felt pushed to think more deeply about the content since he was digesting it and then expressing his views in both written and graphic modalities.

In addition, 21 students between the ages of 14 and 15 studying science were asked to complete a project on acid rain using a range of media (pictures, text, and videos) to assess their level of participation in a multimodal project (blog-based). Siefert, Kelly, Yearta, and Oliveira (2019) stated that students could better integrate and build meaning via multimodal technologies in activities like blogging. Watkis (2020) promoted multiliteracies and conventional literacy techniques in their work with ELLs, stressing the need to use social media. They discovered that the social media's multimodal features gave pupils difficulty expressing themselves in writing various options for doing so. Students with trouble with literacy might benefit from using non-traditional forms of communication, including photos, drawings, and videos (Mardievna, Mukhamadjanovna, Nematovich, & Azamovich, 2020), to augment their written language.

As stated by Kayumova and Sadykova (2019), Multimodal features provide children with difficulty gaining literacy and learning access to the resources they need to feel included. Han and Xu (2020) found that in their final interviews with students, those students reported feeling more confident in their ability to read and write in English. These were, however, self-reported numbers from the same two students that Hughes and Morrison noticed the biggest improvement; thus, they should be treated with caution.

However, it is important to remember that context is always important, even if multimodal texts offer great promise for allowing students to express themselves in novel ways. Students might like working with multimodal texts, but they may not yet be prepared to do so or have the knowledge necessary to develop texts that accurately convey important academic content discovered that although students were interested in incorporating multimodal texts into their coursework, they mostly linked video with leisure and humour rather than the academic rigour associated with serious school tasks (Jorm et al., 2019). Therefore, it is possible that students will not know how to use the possibilities presented by multimodal social media platforms in the classroom.

Scholars argue that social media's participatory aspects, such as posting and commenting, make students' learning more transparent (Zavattaro & Brainard, 2019). Features like this allow students to demonstrate not just their ability to think creatively and independently but also their ability to bring their ideas to fruition. They may benefit from seeing other students' contributions and responses to their postings. For instance, Schiavio, Biasutti, and Antonini (2021) research suggested that students' more open Facebook interactions with their teachers and classmates revealed more information about their perspectives, habits, and potential literacy deficits. However, this concept was not well explained in the text, making it unclear how the educator and the researcher saw these.

Students are heavy Facebook users; however, recent research by Niu (2019) found that they usually use the platform for superficial encouragement rather than for discussing course material or academic issues. Ruhalahi (2019) also discovered that although students using Facebook chat
successfully formed learning communities to co-construct knowledge, it was challenging to generate in-depth academic conversations. Metcalf (2021) proposed several solutions, including rewarding focused behavior, reducing professors' power, and integrating social media into lesson plans. Each of these requires rethinking the intent of formal Education as a whole. To better promote learning and enhance academic literacy practices, instructors may choose to include repurposing into their lessons that centre on students' usage and interaction with social media for academic objectives (i.e., teachers may need to guide students to understand expectations for how to use social media academically).

Students' familiarity with social media's norms may be gauged via the platform's public, trackable features. College student Ronnie's adept use of social media and the range of literacies he could express in that usage was the focus of Amicucci's (2020) research. She discovered that Ronnie's use of each platform showed his different literacy practices, including an awareness of the unique discourses, audiences, and semiotics. Ronnie's deep knowledge allowed him to effectively use the characteristics of social media to share the material that, in his opinion, belonged to each site. Buck remarked that researchers might gain a better understanding of the literacy practices that students bring into the classroom if they investigate how the literacy practices displayed on social media are "connected to academic literacy practices and how these different influences on the literacy work together" (Magnifico, Lammers, & Curwood, 2020, p.58). In turn, this may instruct educators on effectively adapting and utilizing social media in the classroom.

**Media Theory**

As the name implies, new media theory focuses on digital (as opposed to analog) media; data transmission and storage in digital form are examples of digital technologies (McMullan, 2020). Afterward, the data is reassembled in an interface that is more appropriate for the intended recipient. In contrast, information may be sent and stored using analogue technology without first being converted into code; however, the information itself may be changed. To illustrate, the vibrations in the air caused by a speaker's vocal cords are converted into an electrical pattern by a telephone utilizing analogue technology, which is then re-created in the receiver at the other end of the line. Encoding such patterns into binary code and decoding them with a proper interface allows a telephone or computer to accomplish the same result. Much of the work done in new media theory has focused on proving that the transition from analogue to digital technology represents a sea change in how people store and retrieve information. Theorists of new media who study literature contend that this sea shift is reflected in the works being produced and consumed (Jurgenson, 2019). Theorists of cinema have also been eager to point out the influence of the information technology revolution on the medium. Indeed, Computer-Generated Imagery CGI now makes up a significant component of the bulk of today's big Hollywood blockbusters.

**Digital Content**

Billions of people across the globe rely on the internet, social media, smartphone applications, and other forms of digital communication to carry out their daily activities. Recent data for January 2020 indicate that 5.9% of the world's population, or 4.54 billion individuals, are active internet users (Statista, 2020). Many individuals all across the globe rely heavily on their use of social media. There were an estimated 2.95 billion active social media users in the globe in 2019. By 2023, this is expected to rise to almost 3.43 billion. The use of digital media marketing
supports marketing activities while keeping expenses to a minimum. More than fifty million businesses have set up Facebook accounts, and more than eighty-eight percent of companies utilize Twitter for promotional reasons. Technology and apps based on digital and social media have also been extensively employed to raise public awareness of government offerings and promote political campaigns. More and more people are turning to the internet as their primary means of gaining knowledge about and interacting with businesses. In light of the shift in customer habits, businesses have included digital and social media into their marketing strategies.

**Oral Transmission**

According to the study by Havelock (2019), people have always classified cultures as either oral or literate; a society that relies solely on spoken communication is said to be an oral culture. There is widespread literacy when everybody in society can read and write. Scholarly consensus on the canonical texts that gave rise to western, literate culture was shifted by the seminal work of Milman Perry and his disciple Albert Lord. More specifically, Homer's epic poetry was supposed to be created by a single individual and then remembered and repeated by poets. Perry visited the area that was formerly known as Greece but is now known as Kosovo to record the guslars, a group of sometimes illiterate singers whose songwriting technique is strikingly similar to that of Homer's epic poetry (Juric, 2019). He believed that the Iliad and other works of epic poetry were not penned by a single author but were created orally by storytellers who handed their tales down through the ages. However, a contemporary study has started to question this black-and-white dichotomy between orality and literacy, claiming that the medium through which knowledge is transmitted is more vital than whether or not the culture uses writing.

**Pictography**

The term "pictography" refers to a kind of writing in which images are used to convey meaning. Some researchers suggest that the first writing forms evolved in accounting systems rather than pictographs, but the fact remains that the oldest known pictograms were employed in Mesopotamia and may have developed into the cuneiform writings of the Sumerians in the fourth millennium BCE (Laack, 2020). While a pictogram should ideally resemble the idea, it is meant to represent it; in fact, it often is not and serves as the building block for even more complicated pictorial writing systems like ideograms and hieroglyphs.

Ideograms are pictures used to express concepts, and hieroglyphs are a kind of sign often associated with ancient Egypt that combines ideographic images with letters (Reale et al., 2021). As scripts evolve, signs representing nouns and verbs start to function according to the rebus principle, standing in for the phonological element in the spoken language. Since this phonological component may convey a great variety of concepts, alphabetic systems often provide more versatility than pictorial ones. Reasons exist to think that pre-Columbian Mesoamerican pictographic systems had phonetic components.

Scholars have contended that most Mesoamerican cultures knew about phonetic writing systems' potential but chose not to create them because they were inferior to a well-developed pictographic system (Rampersad, 2022). Completely pictographic or ideographic writing systems would still rely heavily on context. For example, suppose society did not often link ladies with dresses and men with trousers. In that case, they could have trouble understanding the pictographic symbols used in many nations to designate women's and men's toilets.
By definition, literature from societies that use pictographic writing systems must rely heavily on uniquely cultural modes of expression (Huang et al., 2019). Consequently, this makes deciphering pictographic writing systems somewhat more challenging than first anticipated. Until the Rosetta stone was discovered in 1799, the interpretation of the hieroglyphs remained a mystery, although it included the same text in two ancient languages (Egyptian and Greek) based on three separate writing systems (Demotic Egyptian, Hieroglyphic, and Greek).

**Manuscript**

Any media that convey information using handwritten text on paper, parchment, or another similar substance is considered a manuscript. The difference in these types of content is the inscription in which a tool is used to write letters or numbers into a pliable surface, and printing, in which blocks or movable type are used to imprint letters or numbers on a surface, allowing replication (van Lit, 2019). Manuscripts have been around for centuries in various civilizations, and it is clear that they are here to stay. However, the era in which manuscripts were the only or even primary means of communication is long gone.

Due to Johannes Gutenberg’s introduction of the printing machine to Germany in the 1450s, the use of manuscripts in European culture gradually declined (Hellinga, 2019). However, Gutenberg cannot claim exclusive credit for developing the printing press. Although block printing had been used for millennia in Europe and Asia, the invention of movable type in China’s early fifteenth century made the arrangement of pages far more efficient. Many medieval literature and culture experts believe that using manuscripts as the primary means of storing and disseminating information inevitably resulted in a unique set of customs and assumptions. For instance, the information in a manuscript would have to be copied by hand to spread.

Scholars of mediaeval French literature used the term *mouvance* to describe the process by which a text copied over and over again would gather small and substantial alterations and remarks, becoming the work of several writers along the way (Brown, 2019). Because of mouvance and the strong tie between a particular manuscript and its setting of creation, the text throughout the age of manuscript had a significantly less autonomous relationship to its many material representations than is often considered to be the case now, following centuries of growing abstraction and independence due to shifting media.

Manuscripts and other forms of hand-written media have historically and now been closely associated with religious practice and feeling partly because of the tight tangible link between anything written by hand and the substance of the writing (Dekker, 2019). Words written by hand have significance and even a mystical quality in many cultures that are not shared by printed text. Words scraped off a hand-written paper were said to have magical properties when drunk as a potion in medieval Europe, and a well-known or respected individual’s signature is highly sought even in the modern day.

**Method**

This research will use a quantitative research method. Full-text papers offering empirical investigations of social media’s usage in the context of higher education were the primary focus of the search, with a particular emphasis on its application to computing-related disciplines. To control the depth and breadth of the analysis, the following standards were used to select the papers for the review.
The research uses digital media to collect data. This approach is chosen because the target group has access to social media and is involved in online communication. Respondents were given questionnaires with questions about the research topic. The questions were easy to match the educational level of respondents. Additionally, respondents had online support to ask for clarification for unclear questions. Respondents sent answers through social media because it allows easy and faster transfer of files. Respondents were also allowed to record answers and send them as audio or visual files.

**Participants**

The research used purposive sampling. This method identifies participants who understand the research subject. This method is appropriate because the research involves literature, and most students understand the subject. College of Arts and Computer Science at the University of Hail 2022 were the primary participants, especially those majoring in computer-related fields. Therefore, this evaluation did not include any elementary or secondary school studies.

**Data Analysis**

This research uses thematic data analysis. This approach entails data analysis across data sets to identify trends and repeated patterns. This analysis method has five processes that help identify trends and make conclusions about data. The first step involved familiarization with the data. This step involves reading through data sets to have general knowledge of the content. The second step is coding by highlighting important data and giving them codes. The third step is generating themes from the codes and related codes. The fourth step involved a review of the themes in determining whether they align with the research objectives and questions. The fourth step involved defining and naming themes to match the research topic and questions. The last step was writing the report.

**Findings**

What follows is a discussion of what the researcher learned from this literature review; the study's primary views serve as the organizing principles for the results.

**Student Perspectives**

Most of the studies surveyed students' opinions on how they felt when their teachers used social networking sites like Facebook, Blogs, and Wikis in the classroom. Much of the study has been carried out on Facebook. According to Pearson's research on the impact of social media on Education, this is the case (Li & Liu, 2020). According to a poll of 191 students' experiences with using Facebook for a closed group discussion, Singh (2021) found that students' anticipated benefits of using Facebook in the classroom included improved performance, communication, student participation, and motivation. The effectiveness of the tool and how students received it as a learning aid has been the primary foci of studies.

**Student Perceived Learning Experience**

Many scholars have undertaken exploratory studies to look at how students feel they learn best while using social media in a higher education context. De Marcos-Ortega et al. (2020) studied how students in an online course who used Elgg as their social networking platform thought about the course. The pupils' responses indicated that they had a positive time. Most students said they
favored utilizing Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for schoolwork rather than Learning Management Systems (LMS) when given a choice. Students' usage of the tool was first thought to be widespread for social networking and sharing purposes, but further research revealed that students mostly used it for grading and course-related tasks. Information overload is a real risk while utilizing SNS and students have asked for help dealing with it. Some students complained that they could not efficiently identify and organize information for future retrieval, although SNS provide additional means of communicating and the opportunity to access more resources. All of their results, however, relied on students' reports of their use and impression. No study was conducted to determine how often students visited the site.

Naeem (2020) administered an online survey to 300 students and followed up with interviews with nine respondents to learn more about students' favorite means of online communication and social networking. As a whole, they found that students favored Facebook. Facebook is favored for socialising, while email is favoured over Facebook for discussing course-related subjects. Network speed, security, and privacy were all concerns that impacted students' ability to utilize SNS for educational purposes.

The researcher Famularsih (2020) interviewed 15 students about their experiences with using LMSs that were backed by social networking services. To supplement a Blackboard platform, they have implemented. When questioned about their impressions of Ning as a whole, students said that although the chat feature had the potential to improve communication, it was misused, causing more distraction than assistance with their studies. Consequently, it is recommended that additional pedagogical concerns be taken into account while introducing SNS to the classroom setting. The key to enhancing students' impressions of their educational experience may lie in determining the right degree of integration with the pre-existing LMS and implementing the most beneficial activities.

Several studies looked at the precise factors that may impact students' learning when SNS were introduced into the classroom, in addition to the broader learning opportunity and preferences of students. The positive influence of SNS on users' social lives has been the subject of several studies. For example, Wang (2019) reported on an experiment with first-year college students using Spartan Connect, a social media site they created, to examine the impact of SNS on increasing students' perceptions of social support. Before the start of the semester, students were required to register for an account on the site. After the first two weeks of school, researchers sent out a pre-test survey to all incoming freshmen, followed by a post-test survey after students had had a chance to use the website for a whole semester. Among the 1616 first-year students who participated in the post-test survey, 265 responded to both. Users reported feeling more socially supported after engaging with the platform.

In a quasi-experiment, Yoo (2019) had students utilise an in-house OSN for peer assistance recommendations. In addition, they discovered that students' perceptions of the amount of course engagement and peer support had increased as a result of using OSN, which may have positive effects on students' ability to study.

Fitri, Andreswari, and Hasibuan (2019) did a case study to see whether social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter impacted students' decision to continue taking introductory computer science courses. With the use of Facebook in CS1 class, the author claims to have seen a rise in students' ability to remember what they learned.

While many studies in the past by Zhou and Yao (2020) have shown positive results, including increased student satisfaction with their Education and feelings of social support, some
have found negative effects. Tartari, E., Tartari, A., and Beshiri (2019) surveyed students to understand how Facebook usage affects their motivation to study. Student involvement was inversely proportional to the number of times students said they used Facebook. The self-reported data also reveals a negative correlation between the time spent on Facebook chat and studying for classes. Overuse of chat may constitute a distraction for learning, as stated by Do, Yang, Choi, Fu, and Bailey (2021), who found that students who did not set aside enough time for study did so because of chat.

**Student Learning Achievements**

However, the effects on students’ actual learning outcomes were not studied as thoroughly as their perceptions of the learning experience. Twenty-one students worked on a wiki project in groups of four or five over 12 weeks for a case study (Xu, Banerjee, Ramirez, Zhu, & Wijekumar, 2019). The students were introduced to social media platforms such as ShoZu, Flickr, Google Reader Mobile, Wordpress.com, Wikispaces, FeedBlendr, and FeedBurner RSS. Video recordings, social media use logs, and pre-and post-tests of students’ conceptual grasp of the contents were used to collect data. Better performance on the test of conceptual knowledge was seen after the intervention was completed compared to the baseline period. The researchers discovered that the greater the number of wiki-related activities, the better the students’ test results could predict their future performance on the same material.

Deslauriers, McCarthy, Miller, Callaghan, and Kestin (2019) studied how various aids for students’ learning and their sense of interaction affected their performance. Students were divided into groups that either utilized Google Docs, an LMS discussion forum, or a Facebook group that included a wiki-style document creation and wall/comment function. A comparison of group activities and output across different settings showed that Facebook groups reported greater levels of perceived involvement, shorter times between posts, and a larger number of total posts compared to other groups. However, the end outcome was the same for all groups. When comparing groups that used the same and different technologies for group communication, there was no discernible difference in the reported learning result.

Many studies either failed to account for the potential influence of SNS on learning outcomes or relied solely on students’ self-reported data Astatke, Weng, and Chen, (2021) rather than an objective assessment of learning accomplishment when SNS was employed. In addition to the influence on the learning experience, further study is required to examine the impact of SNS on student learning.

**Student SNS Usage Pattern**

The potential benefits of SNS for Education and the post-patterns across various platforms were studied. As a result of a case study comparing student engagement on Facebook and Blackboard, Bastida-Escamilla, Elias-Espinosa, Franco-Herrera, and Covarrubias-Rodriguez (2022) shared their results. They found that Facebook postings were different from those on Blackboard in that they were more often used for community building and questions to the lecturer, as well as the expression of unhappiness, course administration, encouragement, discussions outside of programming, and general advice. Furthermore, students noted that they preferred using Facebook for learning help when no instructor was present.
After having students utilise an internal wiki to collaboratively modify a paper and having them complete an online lesson on how the wiki works, Luo and Chea (2020) conducted a survey. They tracked students' wiki activity to see how it changed over time. Despite students' increased proficiency using wiki over time, the authors saw a gradual decline in its utilization. They dug further into the survey instrument and discovered that students disliked being asked to alter the work of their peers. Students overwhelmingly chose the latter when given the choice between using a wiki and a regular online forum for group work.

**Faculty Perspectives**

Few of the research researchers looked at staff members' usage of SNS, in contrast to the many that focused on students' viewpoints.

**Faculty Perception**

The faculty's view of students' usage of SNS for educational purposes has been more divided than that of the students themselves. According to a poll by Iqbal and Bhatti (2020), instructors do not utilize SNS since they see it as a distraction. Webster and Paquette (2022) said they had a different impression of the teachers than the pupils. Students were shown to be more receptive to using Facebook as a means of communication than email. Traditional forms of communication, such as email, were preferred by academics. Brown also conducted a poll and a follow-up, in-depth interview with faculty members to learn more about their experiences using Web 2.0 tools in the classroom. Instructors saw potential advantages in increased student engagement, better distribution, and easier access to learning materials chosen or created by their instructors.

**Faculty Concerns**

Prior research has shown several potential problems with using SNS in the classroom, which may account for teachers' reluctance to use this strategy. Faculty members' primary issues include the lack of "added value" to instruction, too many limits (due to university policy), and misalignments between the rising quantity of collaborative group work required and continuous individual evaluation, to name a few. In addition to the challenges already described, Czerniewicz et al. (2020) noted that teachers are worried about the following: workload issues, problems with the functionality of the SNS being used to communicate with students, and problems with grading and monitoring student work.

**Discussion**

Some empirical results have been presented in the literature that this study will try to explore. There is some evidence in the literature that answers the issue of whether or not social media contribute to better learning of computing-related disciplines in higher Education. Student self-reported data demonstrates the great potential for the efficacy of SNS usage in higher education, even if the empirical research severely lacks objective performance data to highlight learning enhancement. Further, research has shown that proper pedagogical thought must be given to SNS before they can be used effectively in the classroom. Of course, further research is required.

Case studies and survey data have shown the general objective advantages of using social media in higher Education for studying computer-related disciplines. Increased social support, higher retention rates thanks to peer support, and enhanced perceptions of engagement were all noted as positive outcomes. However, empirical research found that using SNS might have a detrimental effect on student's motivation to learn.
The advantages of using social media to learn about computers are widely seen as positive by students and higher education teachers. SNS-based activities are popular among students because they are seen as a way to boost communication and interest in studying. Professors appreciate the potential of SNS to improve distribution and access to tutor-selected or created learning material, in addition to the advantages mentioned by students.

The literature analysis did not reveal the particular worries of computing faculty members. However, the literature review reveals a list of possible worries most faculty members share. Teachers are just as concerned about the safety, privacy, and efficiency of the site or tool their students are using as their students are. The workload problem, the difficulties of performance assessment and monitoring, and the necessity for careful pedagogical design are all issues that worry professors when it comes to using SNS for educational purposes. As a result of their knowledge of the technology, computer science professors may be more worried than other faculty about the potential distraction of social networking sites and their security risks. However, this was not recognized in the literature, so further research is required.

Conclusion

Even while the literature analysis demonstrates that the use of social media for educational purposes has promise, the technology is not widely used, and there have not been many controlled assessments or in-depth research carried out in higher education settings. To begin, further empirical research is required to explore the real advantages of "added" by using SNS instead of standard LMS. The fact that most of the studies relied on self-report data to determine the impact of the technology is one of the most significant shortcomings of the existing body of research. For this reason, the actual use and the learning result should be addressed and examined in more detail.

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The Impact of Social Media on Literature


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The Impact of Social Media on Literature

Shahwan


The Impact of Social Media on Literature

Shahwan


Abstract
In a world more advanced than ever, where the digital whiteboard classroom and electronic books are replacing the chalkboard classroom and printed textbooks of yesterday, the teacher seems to remain the source of knowledge who performs the noble task which calls for boosting the best in people to bring out their greatest fortes. This research espouses this belief and its basic significance is to show that a teacher imparting knowledge to a group of learners will remain an integral ingredient in formal teaching despite the unprecedented impact of technology on the sphere of education. The major research question in this work intends to contrast two different English as foreign language (EFL) learning situations in Licence/ Master/ Doctorate (LMD) environment: one based on the internet and the other on a learning assisted by a teacher. This digest looks at the implications of both learning models and pores over the changes that teachers may encounter within their classes as digital technology penetrates every area of the nation’s life. To comprehensively examine the predicted effects of both learning cases, the data have been amassed both quantitatively and qualitatively through a triangular approach using a questionnaire administered to students, interviews conducted with learners, classroom observation procedures, and evaluation of the learners’ exams. Based on the analysis of the gathered information and answers, the results highlighted remarkable distinctness in both learning methods. Still, there are specific facets of each learning modality.

Keywords: Algerian Higher Education Institutions, English as foreign language milieux, Licence/Master/Doctorate students, internet-based learning, teacher-based learning

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.19
Introduction

With the wide prevalence of internet-based learning and advancement in technologies, profuse Algerian Higher Education Institutions have integrated modern and technological methods into their educational curricula to catch up with scientific, technological, and global growth. Since the advent of technology, numerous changes in the teaching/learning process have affected the interaction between teachers and learners. Consequently, there has been a shift from teacher-centred learning to autonomous learning. Being an integral constituent of individuals, the complex and multifarious concept of learning polishes a person’s mind and strengthens one’s thoughts. Learning is a process that aids human beings to acquire necessary skills and valuable knowledge. Despite the many merits of the inclusion of technology in education, the role of the teacher will always remain irreplaceable. This study seeks to answer the following research question:

− How can teacher-led courses be distinctive from technology-based learning?

It is hypothesized that:

− Learning assisted by a qualified teacher can positively affect students’ performance and encourage them to invest their potential in learning to develop their academic expertise, in contrast to web-based courses which seem to be dry-focused on the instruction of assessable abilities.

In this respect, this paper aims to analyze the learner’s views and perceptions of technology-driven instruction in EFL contexts, to contrast and find out the differences between web-based courses and teacher-led courses in EFL classrooms, and to highlight the undeniable role of the teacher. Its chief objective is to accentuate two teaching modalities, one ensured by an instructor and the other covered through the internet.

This paper is split up into three fundamental sections. The first one offers a review of the literature about the teaching profession, the key roles of the teachers and learners, and the importance of integrating technology into academic contexts. The second part comprises the practical side that deals with the research design, the utilized data gathering instruments, the setting, and the participants. The last section concerns the obtained findings, their analysis, and their interpretation.

Literature Review

Teaching: a purely human activity

Teaching is an art and science grounded on strategies, principles, and practices to attain a practical accomplishment of goals; it is not only providing minds with knowledge, but it is also, above all a system of actions and a creation of appropriate conditions that aid learning to take place. Regarded as an equivalent to learning facilitation, teaching is an enterprise that produces successful learners equipped with the needed skills of interpretation, criticism, and argument. In its broader sense, education is a process of knowledge production, one that substitutes surmises and presumptions by scientific evidence, logical thinking, and knowledge (Irzik & Nola, 2005, p. 51).

The Role of the Teacher

Teaching remains one of the intellectual jobs that demands systematic thought and reflection to deliver a potentially fruitful instruction. It requires a sound grasp of content and pedagogy to be able of developing a spirit of criticism and improving the curriculum.
In teaching, it is elemental to realize that the principal focus is on the teacher’s role. Their prime task is to influence learning and to remain up to date. This is akin to the view of the humanitarian Eugen P. Bertin who declares “Teaching is leaving a vestige of oneself in the development of another. And surely the student is a bank where you can deposit your most precious treasures” (in Cooper & Ryan, 2010, p. 471). To mark one’s trace calls for a qualified teacher who can create novel, unique, relevant, and creative opportunities for learners to build a brighter future.

It is argued that teachers have special needs at different times throughout their careers, and the requirements of their learners also are not stable over time. The chief role of teachers is to prepare their students for the present-day scheme when they have to clash and work vigorously. To complete such a task, instructors should be extremely aware of the fundamental aims of education, as emphasized by Rogers (1969):

The goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. The only person who is educated is the person who has learned how to learn; the person who has learned how to adapt and change; the person who has realised that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security. Changingness, a reliance on process rather than on static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education (p. 152).

Teachers are the candid picture of whatever an educational system desire to install in students, and it is the educational institution that offers an essential source for further professional progress. To be an effective teacher does not only entail having a thorough content knowledge, but also being responsible for establishing a comfortable and engaging classroom climate, for sustaining enthusiasm, and for encouraging teacher-learner rapport. It is said that good teachers can make decisions about practices by adjusting their teaching methods to help learners achieve the intended outcomes. Teachers bear the burden in their classes; they play diverse roles and can be:

- Monitors: teachers are in complete charge of the entire activity in the class, they control the social and learning behavior of learners.
- Evaluators: teachers assess the performance of their students and provide corrections and feedback.
- Supporters: teachers who can encourage, bring assistance to their students and motivate them when necessary.
- Managers: teachers organize and manage all the components included in the teaching/learning process.
- Reliable Resources: teachers who can bring credible information to their learners.
- Partners: teachers who are involved and participate in some activities, and who can establish a solid rapport with their students.
- Facilitators: teachers who create a conducive learning atmosphere, and who promote comprehension.

To maintain students’ focus on learning and a well-run classroom, teachers need to be capable of switching over from one role to another.
The Role of the Learner

Being convinced that the teacher is the primary impetus for change in education does not preclude the call to the learner’s autonomy. Autonomy is a multidimensional notion and a significant educational goal. Stevens (2007), in explaining the meaning of autonomy, writes that:

Autonomous does not mean isolated or ‘by oneself’ – an autonomous learner is one who self-starts him/herself in the direction of a learning strategy in which, these days, a learning community might figure highly. Therefore, learning strategies leading to community and network building might be productive in producing autonomous learners (p. 28).

Thus, learners should see their learning process as a personal discovery and responsibility to reflect and make independent choices. At university, instructors aim to allow students not just to gain knowledge but also to become avid, confident, and accomplished. It should be acknowledged that rewarding instruction takes place when we have learners who are:

- Motivated and engage actively in their learning.
- Risk-takers and willing to face challenges.
- Determined to be successful.
- Ready to learn from their mistakes and develop critical thinking skills.
- Aware of the role of the internet and technology as instruments that allow access to a mass number of data and not as the only resource of credible information.
- Conscious that the teacher will always remain the real source of knowledge.

Incorporation of Technology in the Domain of Education

With the fast expansion of globalization as a powerful force around the globe, recent developments in modern technologies continue to increase at a rapid pace for the removal of information barriers. Technology promotes opportunities for heightening and reinforcing international relations and social acts; it also polishes the ways human beings operate both in the virtual and actual world. Further, technology is used widely to integrate formal and informal education in the context of L2 learning and teaching (Khabir et al., 2022).

In the area of EFL, teachers adapt technological systems to allow their students to gain easy access to limitless resources despite their location or cultural identities. Defenders of technology see it as a complementary means that can improve the learning experience, augment self-knowledge and self-confidence, and better monitor the students’ progress. They view its use in ensuring language courses as a crucial and vital part of education and learning experience (Altun & Khurshid Ahmad, 2021).

They also argue that digital learning formats are flexible in terms of time and space, save time to travel to the learning location, provide easy access to learning materials, and make them useful for a longer time (Hameed et al., 2008; Jefferson & Arnold, 2009; Hill & Wouters, 2010; Al-Qahtani & Higgins, 2013; Becker et al., 2013). Additionally, online learning modes allow a free exchange of information, and access to lectures and presentations at conferences that used to involve considerable travel cost (Kamarianos et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020). On the other side, learners may encounter hindrances while using the internet such as lack of reliable sources, loss of network connections, limited or no communication opportunities and interactive capacities with peers, escalation in social isolation, and absence of computers or other technological devices.
because of socio-economic situations. Detractors, moreover, view that learning via the internet can be ineffective because of many distractions, no adequate learning environment, or contact with the teacher (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

It should be noted that despite the unprecedented role of technology in providing learners with helpful knowledge, the profession of teaching will always be considered as purely human; that is technology can gradually refine the traditional methods of teaching and learning but it can never replace the human touch. Moreover, in spite of the barriers encountered by some teachers when using technology in the domain of language education, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the technology merging process (Aghaei et al., 2022).

**Methodology and Context**

Questionnaires are helpful data gathering instruments used to elicit information about distinct kinds of opinions and issues. Brace (2018) opines that “in the questionnaire, the researcher articulates the questions to which he or she wants to know the answers” (p. 5).

Being a way to assemble facts as well as to obtain knowledge from individuals, interviewing is seen as a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience (Seidman, 2019).

Observation as a research process provides the opportunity to capture the quality of teaching and to collect live data from naturally occurring contexts. Classroom observation has emerged as a pivotal tool for measuring, assuring and improving the professional skills and knowledge base of teachers and lecturers in schools, colleges and universities (O’Leary, 2020).

The assessment of the learners’ exams is a form of evaluation that can reveal critical elements that permit teachers to determine some weaknesses, better address their instruction, and adjust the delivery of their courses in the future. They offer aid to the teachers so that they can:

- Emphasize the basic demands of the learners.
- Identify some difficulties faced by the students in terms of misspelling, structure, etc.
- Determine whether or not the course objectives are being met.

This study was undertaken at the University of Oran 2 in the department of English. It targeted 57 students (1st year Master’s students). The students were divided into two groups:

- The 1st Group: 28 students were given articles at the end of each course. They attended the discussion, the explanation, and the debates in the classroom assisted by their teacher.
- The 2nd Group: 29 students whose unique source of learning was the internet and related websites; they did not attend any of these classes.

This research seeks to explore the learners’ opinions about the utilization of technology in EFL milieux, to stress the dissimilarities between an instruction ensured by a skilled teacher and a learning based on the internet, and to accentuate the valuable role of the teacher. Data were amassed by administering a questionnaire to students, pre- and post-interviews were conducted with the participants, in addition to the process of classroom observation, and the assessment of the learners’ exams.
Major Findings

Students’ Questionnaire
The questionnaire seeks to get a profound overview of the students’ perceptions of the use of the internet for academic purposes, their opinions regarding the crucial role of the teachers, and their attitudes towards online instruction modes and teacher-based classes.

Figure 1. Frequency of the use of the internet for learning purposes

As indicated by the results, the great majority of the learners (64.91%) declared that they use the internet in their studies regularly. Whereas, 26.32% claimed that they utilize the internet on rare occasions.

Figure 2. Frequency of the use of the internet for personal purposes
According to the participants’ answers, almost all of them (91.23%) do use the internet for personal purposes.

!*Figure 3. The way courses should be covered*

As indicated by the findings, approximately all the informants (94.74%) strongly believe that instruction should be ensured by the teacher.

!*Figure 4. Students’ satisfaction from the learning experience (teacher-based courses)*
The obtained results revealed that all the respondents (100%) express their total satisfaction of the courses covered by the teacher.

![Figure 5. Students’ satisfaction from the learning experience (web-based courses)](image)

As it is demonstrated, nearly all the students (96, 55%) give a negative response regarding the internet-led courses.

![Figure 6. The possibility of replacing the teachers by technology](image)
Pretty near, a massive number of learners (96, 49 %) asserted that technology can serve and improve the field of education but it can never replace the teacher.

*The Learners’ Interviews*
On both occasions, the students expressed their views concerning the two learning formats. It was agreed upon by the entire participants that despite the tremendous development in the area of technology, the process of teaching seems to remain better performed by a high-profile instructor who combines remarkable content knowledge with effective communication and interaction with their learners.

*Classroom Observation*
Being a vital data collection tool, classroom observation allowed the researchers to gain tangible data by getting feedback and recording what happens in reality within the classroom. It was used to check the learners’ behaviors, determine their needs, verify their understanding, and get a thorough idea about their engagement in the course.

*Assessment of the Learners’ Exams*
The evaluation of the exam sheets constitutes a powerful method that enables the teacher to examine the learners’ grasp, analysis, and criticism of the information they gained during their in-person courses and the internet. Through these exam papers, we could identify the learners’ strong and weak points in terms of language mechanics, their capacity to express their thoughts, and their ability to provide constructive feedback as graduates.

*Discussion*

*Students’ Questionnaire*
It can be concluded from the learners’ questionnaire that the most significant number of informants affirmed that they prefer receiving their knowledge directly from their teacher because they believe that attending classes, listening to the explanation, posing queries, receiving feedback, and interacting with their peers will contribute efficiently in helping them getting fully involved in their learning process. On the negative side, it was stated that surfing the internet and picking up articles from different websites without being sure about the credibility of the information, and without any guidance from the teacher will lead them to an unsuccessful learning experience.

*Pre- and Post-Interviews*
The learners were interviewed on two occasions:

a) The first occasion: Before dividing them into two groups and asking some of them to learn through the internet and the others to further their learning in the classroom under the supervision of their teacher.

b) The second occasion: By the end of the year, after obtaining all the required data.

The students’ pre- and post-interviews revealed the following points:

- Internet is a helpful learning tool but not a reliable one.
- Some scientific competencies, such as critical thinking, the art of leading a debate, analyzing, criticizing, building bounds between the teachers and their students, etc., can be offered and reinforced by a qualified teacher.
- Learning through the internet fails to build up and strengthen the learners’ curiosity, desire to deepen their knowledge, and capacity to innovate.
• The learners who pursued their courses with the assistance of their teachers have noticed that their creativity emerged as they became absorbed in actively exploring new ideas and opinions. All of these interviewees rated the learning experience as positive and indicated that they recommend such a situation to others. Conversely, students whose courses were web-based asserted that they faced severe difficulties in being involved with their peers, who were the key actors within the classroom. Many of the students complained that they came across some technical words that were not understood even if they were checked on the Internet due to the non-availability of some online specialized dictionaries as well as the non-availability of reliable online translations.

Classroom Observation Sessions
When observing the learners in their natural setting, as their teacher, I felt that each student was absorbed and engaged in the learning process. Most of these students seemed to have the potential to succeed. Moreover, these students appeared to be sure about the answers they provided. They did not show any avoidance behavior, and were eager to take part in their debates and enrich the discussion.

Evaluation of the Learners’ Exams
a. Students who learned through the internet: when analyzing the learners’ exam papers, the following aspects were noticed:
   − Poor achievement in terms of coherence of ideas and relevant information.
   − Superficial thoughts.
   − Lack of references because the students were not sure about the sources.
   − Some information were untrue because the students picked some passages from the forums and some articles written by non-specialists.

b. Students who attended the courses assisted by their teacher:
   − They demonstrated a deep knowledge of the topic under study, rather than simply knowledge of isolated facts.
   − They focused on central ideas and were not apart from the topic.
   − They have shown good achievement in their written productivity and better fulfillment.

It is important to note that due to the status of English in Algeria as a foreign language (FL), our students do not have enough exposure to FL outside the classroom (Ziashahabi et al., 2020; Jamali et al., 2021). Therefore, it is recommended that these learners get more engaged in widening their knowledge and enriching their vocabulary by attending their in-person classes.

From the analysis of the data, it was concluded that the obtained results confirm the hypothesis that efficient and beneficial learning is the one provided by a skilled teacher and not through the use of technology.

Conclusion
It was deduced that for the learners whose courses were teacher-led ones, this has served their communicative and writing ambitions, and has helped them satisfy their needs. This has been expressed through a high degree of involvement and rapport in their participation. Through their conversational interactions and exam sheets, they negotiated a shared line of discussion and argumentation, and engaged in honest debates. In the matter of Web-based courses, the students explained that they deviated from their assignments. For these students, the internet was a tool that
did not help them accomplish their authentic tasks and appropriately meet their needs. It is worth noting that effective teaching, whether carried out by a teacher or technology-based, is the one that should be standards-based and help enhance learners’ proficiency in the target language through interactive, engaging learning experiences, taking into account the cognitive as well as the affective sides of learners, supported and facilitated by a qualified teacher who masters the manipulation of technological devices. To recapitulate, technology has its limitations and is not a real panacea for the learners, whereas a competent teacher without technology cannot be described as being limited.

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Negotiating Identity through Multimodal Meaning Making: Investigation of Investment, Imagination and Choice in a Virtual Saudi EFL Context

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Received: 10/23/2022 Accepted: 01/16/2023 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions worldwide were forced to rely on online platforms, whereby teaching was remotely undertaken. Although these platforms were gradually replaced by or supported with traditional, face-to-face methods as the pandemic came under control, this reliance on online platforms had a deep impact on different aspects of education in general and language education in specific. Examination of learners’ engagement with literacy and the impact of learners’ experiences on their identity construction represent some of the growing research interests in language education. The present study adopts a qualitative case-study approach, using interview, artefact collection, student-authored reflections and observational fieldnotes. The study aims to explore the literacy practices and identity construction and negotiation that underlies how a first-year female undergraduate engages with individual and group presentations in a mixed-level, English as a foreign language (EFL) course at a Saudi university. The study pays special attention to how the learner constructs and negotiates her identity in relation to multimodal meaning making which helps her to move beyond the limitations imposed by weak linguistic skills to negotiate more powerful identity positions associated with her investment in the event and the imagined community she aspires to join. The findings highlight the need to reconsider how learners’ multimodal meaning making in language classes should be approached and assessed and how it can empower language learners and encourage them to adopt more powerful identity positions to sustain their language learning trajectories.

Key Words: English as a foreign language, identity construction, literacy practices, multimodal meaning making, online classes, oral presentations, qualitative case study, Saudi university

Introduction

Despite being a health crisis first and foremost, the impact of COVID 19 on all aspects of our lives cannot be denied. This is especially evident in education with the increasing reliance on online platforms for teaching and learning. Millions of schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions have been globally forced to close and rely on online teaching platforms at the early days of the pandemic and many educational institutions continue to use online platforms to substitute or support traditional, face-to-face teaching platforms. In Saudi Arabia, the situation was not different. Various means of synchronous and asynchronous distance-learning methods were used to combat the negative impact of the pandemic on education. In relation to Saudi universities, in specific, Blackboard® was used as the primary learning management system at the early days of the pandemic and continues to be used to teach many courses either solely by itself or in combination with on-campus classes. This increasing reliance on using online platforms for teaching in tertiary education has been a source of interest for scholarly research in education.

Prior to the pandemic, language research has looked at technology as a tool that supports learners’ access to language education (Sheera, 2020). Technology was often described as the means through which language instruction can be enhanced in relation to delivery and assessment (Gordon, 2014). Because of the pandemic, however, investigation of the use of technology as a necessary and emergent solution for the absence or limited access to traditional modes of learning examined a wide range of issues. These include common challenges and obstacles (e.g., Aljuaid, 2021), teachers’ and learners’ perspectives (e.g, Almekhlafy, 2020; Bin Mahboob, 2022; Sheera, Yadav, Fadl Allah & Abdin., 2022) and benefits of e-learning (e.g., Albatti, 2022). Despite the importance of these issues, there is, however, a clear gap in the literature regarding in-depth exploration of learners’ experiences while engaging with online learning during the pandemic. Learners’ voices and identity construction and negotiation have been particularly missing from scholarly research within the Saudi context. This study addresses this gap by investigating how a first-year female undergraduate draws on specific literacy practices and manages to construct and negotiate her identity while engaging with oral presentations in an online EFL course at a Saudi university.

Background

Within tertiary education at Saudi universities, compulsory courses teaching English to first-year students are highly prioritized. First, they are essential for students’ grades which impact their future specialization after finishing their first year. In addition, attention to these EFL courses reflects the increasing number of departments which rely on English as the main medium of education, especially for science and technology tracks, such as medicine, engineering and computer sciences. As these EFL courses are usually given to classes with mixed levels of language proficiency, using English to address academic tasks can represent considerable challenges for many learners.

This case study focuses on one of these learners and seeks to answer two research questions:

1. Which literacy practices does the participant in this study draw on while participating in this literacy event?
2. What are the identity positions that this participant claims and negotiates in this literacy event?
Negotiating Identity through Multimodal Meaning Making

Alghamdi

Theoretical Framework

Identity Construction among Language Learners

This study builds on a social understanding of literacy in which engagement with reading and writing can only be understood and appreciated as a situated and contextualized practice (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006; Street, 1993). Literacy can be understood through looking at literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events refer to “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes” (Heath, 1983, p. 50). Literacy practices refer to “the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives” (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 7). Examination of literacy practices is significant to understand learners’ identity positions. Barton and Hamilton (1998) note that asserting and constructing identity represent some of the purposes of engaging with specific literacy practices over others. Looking at identity as “the filter through which we present ourselves to the world” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012, p. 119), examination of how learners engage with literacy can inform our understanding of their identity construction. In this case study, the oral presentations represent the literacy event under investigation. This literacy event is observed and investigated to bring to light the literacy practices that the participant draws on and to examine the identity positions the participant claims and negotiates as she works on each of these presentations.

The study adopts a post-structuralist approach to identity which looks at language learning as a socially situated practice. It refers to “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 4). Identity, therefore, is not a fixed thing, but rather changing. Two analytic concepts are essential to examine identity in this approach: investment and imagined communities. The construct of investment provides “a way to understand learners’ variable desires to engage in social interaction and community practices.” (Norton, 2013, p. 6). The concept of imagined communities refers to “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (Norton, 2013, p. 8). These concepts offer significant insights into understanding language learners’ engagement with literacy and their identity construction as their learning trajectories are significantly shaped by the extent to which learners invest in their classroom’s literacy practices and the imagined communities which they aspire to join.

Identity and Meaning Making

English language learners’ identity construction is directly connected to the means through which they make and communicate meaning. Rather than focusing on language only, this study examines the modes and semiotic resources on which the learner relies to make her presentations and establishes herself as a competent speaker. A mode is “a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 171). Multimodality refers to “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). It offers a significant angle through which learners’ identity construction and negotiation can be examined and understood. Examination of language learning takes account of how learners use language and other modes to construct and arrange meaning in a way that highlights their active agency as designers and sign makers (Jewitt, 2008). According to Jewitt (2009), multimodal approaches to meaning making emphasize the role that people play in orchestrating meanings through the specific choices they take. These choices are mediated by
Negotiating Identity through Multimodal Meaning Making

Alghamdi

factors, such as meaning makers’ interests, contextual constraints, modal affordances and aptness of resources (Bezemer & Kress, 2015). Understanding these aspects paves the way for a deeper understanding of learners’ agency which is essential to examine identity because it allows us to understand how language learners “reframe their relationship with others and claim alternative, more powerful identities from which to speak, read or write, thereby enhancing language acquisition.” (Norton, 2013, p. 2).

Literature Review

Following the start of COVID 19 pandemic, many studies surfaced to examine online learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia which employ different quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies. Many studies focus on examining learners’ perspectives towards learning during the pandemic. For example, Al-Jarf (2020) uses a survey with open-ended questions to investigate students’ agency in distance learning during the pandemic and examine factors which negatively impact teachers and students’ satisfaction with online teaching and learning. Al-Nofaie (2020) relies on students’ written logs to explore their views of online learning and compare the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of online learning via Blackboard. Almekhlafi (2020) builds on survey data to examine learners’ perceptions towards the use of Blackboard for online teaching during the pandemic.

Other studies worked to provide a deeper understanding of learners’ experiences with online learning. Akhter (2020), for instance, uses an online survey, semi-structured interviews and learner-authored reflections to explore the problems and challenges that EFL learners face in online classes in relation to listening skills. Dahmash (2020) draws on focus groups and interviews to explore the benefits and challenges surrounding learners’ experiences with blended learning in English courses during the pandemic. Alghamdi (2021) relies on qualitative methods to explore learners’ identity construction and negotiation and the challenges that shape their engagement with oral presentations before and during the early days of the pandemic. Mohammed and Mudsh (2021) use a quantitative questionnaire to look at the effects of the pandemic on EFL learners’ anxiety while learning online. Albogami (2022) uses semi-structured interviews to examine the impact of online teaching and learning on improving EFL learners’ language skills.

Teachers’ experiences were also highlighted in many of these studies. Rahman (2020) adopts quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the challenges that teachers face while teaching English as a foreign language online during the pandemic. Alkhannani (2021) looks at the possibilities created by online teaching and learning and the challenges that teachers and learners faced in EFL settings. Alvi, Bilal, & Alvi (2021) adopt quantitative and qualitative methods to examine teachers and students’ views regarding the challenges that surround teaching and learning English. Sheera et al., (2022) use semi-structured interviews to explore teachers and students’ perceptions of online learning during the pandemic with a special focus on writing.

Despite the richness of data obtained within these studies and their invaluable input, there is a considerable gap regarding in-depth, qualitatively driven exploration of learners’ experiences and voices while learning online amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially in relation to issues, such as how learners engage with literacy and how their identities are constructed and negotiated as they navigate through their learning journeys. This study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative, case-study approach to explore the learning experiences of a first-year female undergraduate in an EFL course at a Saudi university. The study specifically focuses on...
the participant’s literacy practices and the identity positions that she constructs and negotiates to claim more powerful identity positions as she engages with oral presentations.

Methods

Data Collection Techniques

Research on identity and language learning is often associated with the use of qualitative research paradigm and with a strong methodological focus on narratives (Norton, 2013). For this study, a qualitative, case-study approach was adopted to answer the research questions. Data collection methods included informal interviews, observational fieldnotes, student-authored reflections, research journal and artefact collection. These methods are appropriate to pave the way for a better understanding of the complexity of the learner’s personal experience, motivations, aspirations and challenges as she engages with language learning. An EFL class was observed for one academic semester which lasted around four months. Learners in the class were given information and consent sheets regarding this study. They were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews and write detailed reflections about their participation in oral presentations in this course. This case study focuses on one of the learners, i.e. Nada (pseudonym) who volunteered to participate in a one-hour, semi-structured interview and agreed to share her presentation slideshows and written reflections to conduct this study.

Obtained data were analysed drawing on qualitative coding (Saldaña, 2016) and thematic analysis (Mackieson, Shlonsky & Connolly, 2019). For thematic analysis, I rely on the two stages described by Spencer, Ritchie, Ormston, O’Connor, and Barnard (2014) which consist of data management and data interpretation. These help to organize the obtained data and delve into their complexities in order to “understand the patterns, the recurrences, they whys” which characterize the richness of learners’ experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 67).

In this EFL class, learners were required to make three individual presentations about specific topics assigned by the teacher. Learners were also required to form groups and each group was responsible for making a group presentation conducted near the end of the semester. For group presentations, students chose topics that related to themes covered throughout the semester in their class. Individual and group presentations were all conducted online through Blackboard. For Nada, the topics of her presentations are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Nada’s Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Presentation</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Mode of Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Popular Sports in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>A Special Event in My Life</td>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>My Dream Job</td>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>The Cave Children in Thailand</td>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Participant

Nada is a first-year undergraduate in the science track. Although, at the time of conducting this study, Nada repeatedly described her command of English as “very bad”. She often highlighted how she enjoys English language classes at the university and the different activities
they offer. Oral presentations were repeatedly highlighted by Nada because she had always enjoyed public-speaking activities in school and she considered presenting in front of her classmates a way to stand out and show her skills and knowledge. This excitement towards public speaking activities in school extended to her EFL course in the university when she learned about the required oral presentations. In general, she described these presentations as beneficial in developing basic skills, such as giving feedback, collaboration, self-evaluation and self-control.

First Individual Presentation

For their first presentations, learners were asked to present during their online classes and post their visual displays in a Padlet assigned to share their work with each other and embedded in Blackboard. Despite learners’ general focus on attaining good grades, Nada appeared to be more preoccupied with the impact that her first presentation would have on her teacher and classmates. To address that issue, Nada focused on two aspects: topic choice and slideshow design (Table 2).

Table 2. First Presentation (Extract 1)

| I chose old stuff something no one would think about. It was difficult but it was something to try. You have to. If you don’t try, you won’t make something special. At the beginning, I wanted to choose something old, so I saw these three pictures and merged them together. I felt that these were specially I felt that (. ) the colours I focused on the colours (. ) so that when a person sees it, they will be attracted to the topic and I merged them together and I felt that was better because I chose three other pictures before, but I compared them and felt that these colours were going to be better and more attractive to them (. ) indicates a short pause in participant’s talk |

She decided to choose a topic that she considered to be ‘out of the box’ in comparison to her classmates. She used the class’s WhatsApp group chat to find out what her classmates were going to talk about before choosing her topic. As she noticed that her classmates’ choices were directed towards popular sports, such as football, tennis, boxing or swimming, Nada decided to talk about two old and traditional sports; archery with horse and camel riding. While this choice allowed her to avoid presenting any repeated information, it also helped to set her aside from other presenters. In addition to choosing a different topic from others, Nada worked to create a visual display that was different from what other learners employed in their presentations. Unlike the majority of her classmates who relied heavily on photographic representations of sports, Nada created a poster in which she merged three oil-paintings of her chosen sports. She believed these paintings reflected the old-fashioned and traditional nature of these sports which would help her to attract the viewers not only to look at the poster, but also to listen to her talk (Figure 1).
In relation to language, the first task was significant for Nada because it provided her with an opportunity to consider improvement in language skills as a possibility. English appeared before as an obstacle, not only in her education, but also in her ability to interact successfully with her classmates. This was a common issue among many learners in this context because of the mixed-level nature of the class. While there were advanced learners who did not seem to struggle with academic task, such as oral presentations, many learners struggled to manage their participation in the course. Working on her presentation and observing her classmates’ admiration of her work at this early stage encouraged Nada to anticpate a future in which her language skills improve and imagine the potential feedback she would get when that happens (Table 3).

Table 3. *First Presentation (Extract 2)*

I really benefited, first skill was the language. When I was in high school English for me was an obstacle that I just needed to go through, but now my view of English changed. It is now literally one of my goals to be excellent in English. You know after the first presentation, I checked my Whats App messages and saw the girls’ reactions; they were asking: who is this? They made me excited. If this is how they see me when I am not that good, how about tomorrow when I become better?

This was especially significant in this context at this early stage as none of the students knew each other and there were limited opportunities for students to get to know each other personally because of the pandemic. Their only way to get to know each other appeared to be through their work and the impact it evoked.
Second Individual Presentation

In comparison to the efforts exerted in the first presentation, the second presentation did not receive equal attention from Nada as she was overloaded with her midterm exams and tasks. She made her presentation about a trip she took with her family to describe a special event in her life and uploaded her talk as an audio file without any visual display. Working to fulfil the task at hand, this second presentation did not seem to represent for Nada any special memory as the first one. It was barely highlighted by Nada in her interview and written reflections. Instead, her focus was more directed towards the other two individual presentations and the group presentation and this was manifested through the efforts she exerted to design the visual display in each presentation.

Third Individual Presentation

Despite the accumulating academic responsibilities near the end of the term, Nada’s desire to come up with a distinguished and an unforgettable presentation resurfaced in her third and final individual presentation. To talk about her dream job, Nada used a digital story to make her presentation. Her choice of creating a digital story was not, however, without obstacles. In addition to the exams and tasks she had in other subjects, Nada had never really created a digital story before. She was fascinated by YouTube and Instagram accounts which creatively rely on digital stories and as a result, she decided to learn how to create a digital story in which she could use an animated character to represent her and accommodate for her inability to present her talk in person. She searched YouTube for inspiration and found tutorials of Plotagon which is a storytelling app that allows its users to create stories with animated characters. Although Nada knew how laborious learning to use this app from scratch could be within the one-week timeframe dedicated to finish this task, it was important for her to create something different from every other student in her class. In addition to her desire to stand out among her classmates, Nada was moved by the teacher’s frequent recollections of distinguished students she had taught in previous terms. These recollections were used to give advice to learners regarding the making of their presentations. Nada wished that one day she would also be seen as an inspiration and an example of success to other classes in the future.

As a first-time user of Plotagon, Nada worked to understand the steps involved in designing and creating a digital story. She was particularly fascinated by how it allowed her to create an animated character to speak on her behalf. (Table 4).

Table 4. Third Presentation (Extract 1)

Once I thought of the idea, I designed and created my story on the same day and tested it and it came out nice. I did not know before how to create things like that in a short time on the same day. I used an app called Plotagon (.). It took me the whole day. The app was easy, but what took a lot of my time was creating reactions. In this topic, there had to be specific reactions. This is what consumed a lot of my time.
As a result, Nada devoted her attention to creating realistic, facial expressions that would match her own performance if she was going to present it in person in class (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Selected screenshots of visual display in third individual presentation

Although she was not required to exert such efforts in her speaking task, Nada’s work on her visual display paved the way for her to achieve her goal, i.e. creating an unforgettable presentation, especially that it was her last individual presentation and the term was coming to an end (Table 5).

Table 5. Third Presentation (Extract 2)

| I felt you would take a better impression of me. You must have noticed how my English was not good, but I did not want to go unnoticed. I wanted to leave a touch. I love creating my own touch before I leave any place. |
|أحس حتاخذي انطباع عنني أحلى ، أكيد لاحظتي ابو لغتي الإنجليزية مو حلوة فما أبغى أمر مرور الكرام ، أبغى كدا حاجة بصمة، احب احص بصمات قبل ما أطلع من أي مكان |

Exerting these efforts served two purposes for Nada. First, they enabled her to compensate for what she considered to be poor language skills in relation to other more advanced learners in her classroom. Furthermore, they also reflected her aspirations to create her own unique and unforgettable personal touch that would be remembered afterwards in the future.

Group Presentation

The group presentation represented a different experience for Nada. She was the leader of her group which consisted of six students. They discussed the rescue of the cave boys in Thailand in 2018. To make their presentation, Nada and her group relied on different ways to facilitate their work. They used the time assigned during the online lectures to work on the final presentation. They also used WhatsApp and Zoom to communicate with each other, exchange feedback, coordinate their work and practice their performance. Nada relied on a different approach to work on this group presentation. In her individual presentations, Nada worked to shape how her teacher
and classmates viewed her through setting herself aside from other learners and moving beyond her weaknesses in English. In her group presentation, however, she aimed to change how she viewed herself as a team member and a group leader through addressing her past, negative memories of group work in school (Table 6).

Table 6. *Group Presentation (Extract 1)*

I focused on my mistakes in the past. For example, if one of my group comes to talk only to me, I would tell her no. Go back to the whole group. You know! At the beginning I was afraid that there would be some negligence. I was really scared of this. That’s why the first thing I did was I distributed the tasks. No, I did not distribute the tasks. I sent the tasks that needed to be done. For example, Layla was responsible for writing. Nuha was responsible for sending the whole presentation. Samaher was responsible for editing and correcting mistakes. Everyone would send her script to Samaher and she would edit. Rahaf was responsible for (.) you know how? We distributed the responsibilities. I sent the responsibilities, and every member chose what was suitable for her.

Working on this group presentation represented an invaluable opportunity for Nada to move past her previous experiences. She worked to create a harmonious rhythm that avoided domination of decision making and focused on accepting and prioritizing members’ decisions in different aspects, such as distributing tasks, revising, editing and designing their slideshow. Thus, her experience with group work reflected a significant shift in her priorities from focusing on how others perceived her to how she perceived herself as a group leader and a team member.

Nada’s positive view of how she and her group worked on their presentation was supported by the positive feedback they received from their teacher and classmates. Nevertheless, there were certain aspects of Nada’s personal experience that she was not totally satisfied with. The efforts that she exerted to facilitate cooperation and smooth workflow among her group were successful, but they created different challenges. There were instances in which she did not always approve of her classmates’ decisions. For example, in comparison to the care and attention she dedicated to designing the visual display of her individual presentations, she was more focused on coordinating her choices with others even if that lead to accepting semiotic choices of which she did not really approve. This appeared in the semiotic choices that appeared in the group’s slideshow in terms of the size and amount of writing and also the colours used (Figure 3).
Reflecting on her group’s slideshow design, she commented that …. (Table 7)

**Table 7. Group Presentation (Extract 2)**

I could change the colours, I like light colours, and the pictures I would bring pictures that are more effective and also the words I would focus on the words. I would put a sentence that summarizes the whole thing, I want less writing so they would read and get excited about what we are going to say. I think writing should be minimized. A lot of writing is very boring. In high school when students projected slides full of writing, I used to feel bored as soon as I saw that. I wouldn’t get excited about their talk unlike where there is little writing. For me if I write on the slideshow, I would make the words less and choose black better than blue and red, I feel words should be medium size.

Furthermore, Nada felt that her focus on facilitating a smooth workflow with the members of her group came at the expense of the attention she dedicated to practicing her own performance (Table 8).

**Table 8. Group Presentation (Extract 3)**

In the final project the slideshow, I was so focused on group work that I neglected the individual work a bit, that I sit by myself and practice and study my part. So when we were presenting, I felt that it was really important; there was tension in my voice, I did not...
want that. When I talk, I love it when my voice is loud and it shows confidence. Even when I am not perfect, there has to be confidence. This affected me a bit after the presentation: why didn’t I work a bit more on presentation?

Albeit the positive feedback from the teacher and other classmates, Nada’s reflections of her experience were burdened by her awareness of the imbalance between how she skilfully and cooperatively managed her work with other group members and how she inadequately practiced her part in the presentation and prepared for her performance.

Discussion

This case study attempted to answer two questions: what are the literacy practices that the participant draws on while engaging with oral presentations in an EFL course and what identity positions does this participant claim and negotiate? Looking at the literacy practices she drew on to participate in this event, the analysis showed how the participant’s approach towards each of her presentations reflected her changing priorities over time. In her individual presentations, she worked to stand out among her classmates in this specific event and to create an unforgettable impression to be remembered and reflected upon by the teacher in future classes. In her group presentation, the participant’s attention was directed towards moving beyond past, negative experiences in group projects in school to establish herself as a committed and cooperative team member and group leader.

The analysis highlights the changing nature of identity construction in this case study as the participant moved beyond the marginalized identity position of a weak language learner that initially shaped her view of herself at the beginning to draw on literacy practices that paved the way to embrace more powerful identity positions. Putting in mind that this is a mixed-level English language class, there is a considerable risk that social power and powerful identity positions could be mainly ascribed to learners with advanced linguistic abilities (Thornborrow, 1999). These learners are likely to easily navigate through academic tasks and practices which may corner other learners within marginalized identities. In this case study, however, the analysis sheds light on how one language learner can invest in specific literacy practices to move from identity positions ascribed by their language proficiency level to embrace more powerful positions created by the choices they make and embrace.

Multimodal literacy practices surfaced as an essential component for identity negotiation in this study. Engaging in these practices highlights the changing and dynamic nature of identity which creates invaluable opportunities for self-transformation among learners and guides them to establish their sense of agency (Forbes, Evans, Fisher, Gayton, Liu & Rutgers, 2021). According to Ahn (2019, p. 147), examination of learners’ multimodal designs provides a rich source of data to understand “an individual’s formation and potential transformation of identity”. While scholarly research in applied linguistics and language learning and teaching acknowledges that it is “through language that we think, define ourselves, and represent ourselves to others” (Forbes et al., 2021, p. 434), using various semiotic choices to make meaning represents a “routine dimension of language in use” (Prior, 2009, p. 27). The aptness and affordances of semiotic choices should be used by language educators to create guided opportunities for learners to explore their creative potential and navigate through multimodal meaning making practices in a way that supports their
needs and interests. Such opportunities “can invoke literacy engagement and make students’ identities visible in and outside class” (Veum, Siljan & Maagerø, 2021, p. 1006). Furthermore, learners’ multimodal texts do not only reflect how they see themselves, but also how they are seen by others (Kajee, 2011). This appears in the participant’s investment in specific semiotic choices to support her path to join future, imagined communities. Because of that, it is important to pay attention to and raise learners’ awareness of the role that multimodal meaning making can play to enhance their learning trajectory.

This case study also sheds light on how learners’ identities are shaped by their current and past experiences (Vasudevan, Schultz & Bateman, 2010). This appears in the participant’s approach to semiotic choices throughout this literacy event and her belief in their impact on her classmates and teacher. For her individual presentations, her investment in efforts to create multimodal ensembles that would bring to light her competence as a speaker, presenter and designer beyond the weaknesses of her language skills proved effective in the feedback received from her classmates and teacher. This is also echoed in her hope that her multimodal designs can facilitate her access to join a community of distinguished presenters who will be recalled and reflected upon by the teacher in future classes.

The participant’s approach to semiotic choices in the final group presentation, on the other hand, was different as she directed her focus towards coming to terms with her past experiences in school. Rather than searching for specific semiotic choices appropriate for her design plans, the participant preferred to get along with her classmates’ multimodal choices, regardless of her view of these choices. Her engagement with multimodal meaning making echoes how “sign-makers can meet the complex, often contradictory demands of their own interest, the needs of the matter to be communicated, and the characteristics of the audience” (Bezemer and Kress, 2008, p. 172). Because “authorial power in presentations is not unlimited” (Zhao, Djonov and Van Leeuwen, 2014, p. 357), factors, such as meaning makers’ interests, affordances of resources, past experiences and situated, meaning making expectations shape semiotic choices in learners’ multimodal texts.

For language teachers and other stakeholders, these are important issues to consider in language education. For instance, the participant’s compliance with her colleagues’ semiotic choices in her group presentation calls for the need to reconsider how assessment of multimodal texts produced by learners in group tasks should be carried out. Despite the obvious advantages of using group work in language classes in developing learners’ skills, educators must pay attention while assessing the contribution of each learner in group projects. As a prospective process (Cope & Kalantziz, 2000), meaning making is made in texts in relation to meaning makers’ “particular interest and their own hopes and imaginings regarding their future lives” (Simpson & Archer, 2017, p. 666). Scholarly research points out that the agency of meaning makers is indicated through the semiotic choices they embrace in their multimodal ensembles. This is not only confined to the choices they willingly include, but also the choices they may reluctantly embrace.

Another important point lies in the need to empower language learners in a way that encourages them to actively participate in different activities. Cummins and Early (2011) consider encouraging learners to express their identity and agency as one way to empower them in language classrooms. Efforts should be exerted to acknowledge the different modes with which learners can engage in addition to language because this will acknowledge language learners as active meaning makers in language classes beyond the possible limitations of their language proficiency levels (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Acknowledgement of these modes is important to raise learners’ awareness.
of the opportunities available to them for making meaning and optimize learners’ participation in their learning journeys. Language educators should work to provide real opportunities and adequate time, and they should also strive to create a safe environment in which learners’ voices are acknowledged, appreciated and guided.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

Due to limitations of time and space, there are several limitations in this study that are important to point out. This case study focused on one participant only. It is not uncommon within qualitative case studies to focus on one participant only, especially in relation to identity research which generally tends to be small in scale. Yet, further research on literacy and identity can benefit from reasonably enlarging the number of participants in a way that maintains researchers’ ability to address the depth of qualitative data. In addition, this study focused on the social practices and semiotic choices that shaped the learner’s engagement in this event and her identity construction. Further research can move beyond investigation of practices to include detailed, textual analysis of the semiotic choices employed in texts produced by learners. Furthermore, this study examined the social practices and meaning-making choices in visual displays in each presentation. Speech, however, was not equally examined despite being an inseparable component of oral presentations and the participant’s performance which can provide rich data in future research. Finally, future research should also look at other skills to examine literacy and identity, such as writing because of its importance in academic contexts.

**Conclusion**

This case study investigated two issues: the literacy practices that a first-year, female undergraduate draws upon to engage with oral presentations in an online EFL course at a Saudi university and the learner’s identity construction and negotiation in this literacy event. The study explored how the learner’s approach towards each of her presentations differed in relation to her past and current experiences and her future aspirations. The learners’ choices and decisions provide a glimpse into the learner’s identity as she moved beyond a marginalized identity imposed by her limited linguistic skills to claim a more powerful identity position that was enabled by her multimodal designs. These issues have significant implications for language educators who should strive to move beyond a rigid focus on linguistic skills to include other valuable skills, including multimodal meaning making. As language educators, it is our responsibility to empower language learners to explore the potential power of multimodal designs to support their meaning-making decisions and facilitate their identity transformation as language users. The study additionally calls for the need to examine the tools that learners use to represent and communicate knowledge and broaden assessment practices to raise learners’ awareness of meaning making and guide them to explore their potential and develop their identities.

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Negotiating Identity through Multimodal Meaning Making

Alghamdi


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Abstract
This paper reports on a descriptive, inductive study that aimed to contribute to the knowledge of the creation of online identities among international students. It draws on online ethnographic observation of Saudi Ph.D. sojourners in the U.K. on Twitter, one of the most popular social media platforms, from May 2019 to January 2020, followed by Twitter interviews. Social media platforms have become part and parcel of the daily lives of many people. For international students, such platforms are perhaps even more essential as they are used for educational and social purposes, as well as staying in contact with family and friends at home. The study addresses three questions examining the identities Saudi Ph.D. students construct on Twitter and how and when. Previous studies of international students have focused mainly on the pedagogical use of technology or intercultural competence. This research explores how, when, and why the participants constructed and developed their different identities on Twitter. Thematic analysis of the data was employed, informed by the grounded theory approach. The findings showed that the development of identities on Twitter is complex. The participants constructed various identities comprising many dimensions and involving complex perceptions of capital, power, and social identity. The construction of their identities entailed idioms of practice, using linguistic and non-linguistic cues, and forming communities of practice through audience design.

Keywords: Ethnographic study, identity, international, Saudi Ph.D. students, social media, sojourners

Introduction

This study examined international students’ construction of their online identities over a while on social media. Social media is a vast online environment that comprises many platforms accessed constantly by many people. Indeed, social media applications have become an integral part of people’s lives. For international students particularly, social media applications may be a crucial part of daily life, enabling them to communicate with family and friends at home. Studying how international students express their identities in such contexts is an emerging field. A few studies, such as those of Alhejely (2020) and Zhu and Procter (2015), have looked at Twitter and Facebook, largely focusing on showing how people express online identities through language practices or how international students use these platforms. This study considers an overlooked group—international students and sojourners in the U.K.—and explores how they express their identities on Twitter. It focuses on two aspects of how identity and the self are represented: (i) through the participants’ Twitter profiles, which tend to be a semi-static gate through which they introduce themselves to others; (ii) their tweets, which tend to be dynamic, making it possible to see how identity is performed over time. Little research has been carried out to date looking at international students and their identities online.

The significance of this study lies first in its theoretical contribution to understanding identity representation and construction on social media, specifically on Twitter. Second, it is significant in terms of the method and approach adopted. The study took a grounded approach and contributes to the emerging field of online-ethnographic research by incorporating various insider perspectives. It provides empirical evidence illustrating how online ethnography can be used to explore identity construction on social media.

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

RQ1. What identities are constructed by Saudi Ph.D. sojourners in the U.K. in Twitter profiles and tweets?

RQ2. How are these identities constructed (e.g., through images, text, and display of membership in specific communities)?

RQ3: When and how are different identities enacted in tweets?

The study examined two sites providing a rich presentation of identity—Twitter profiles and tweets—to gain insights into how the students constructed their identities.

The study was ethnographic. According to Hammersley (2017), the main force behind ethnography is the desire to find out what people do and how. This study aimed to capture the enactment of identity among a particular group of international Ph.D. students in the U.K., four male and four female Saudis living in different cities. In this study, the researcher focused on how the self is expressed in profiles and through tweets, considering identity as a complex concept. The findings reveal significant patterns of similarities in how these international students enact particular identities. Moreover, the study examines how identity can be expressed through showing affiliation with and membership in certain groups.
The remainder of this paper is as follows: The next section provides a review and discussion of the most relevant literature. The following section outlines the methods employed. Then, there is a section presenting the findings before a brief discussion. The final section concludes.

**Literature Review**

This section discusses the relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings of the study under four main subheadings: identity, social and cultural identity, identity in social media, and international students’ online identities.

**Identity**

Identity is a highly contested concept, and there is no single agreed definition. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) argued that theoretical trends related to identity fall into two main categories: first, the essentialist view of identity as a product of mind, a knowable object, which was a typical view in the Renaissance; second, the constructivist view of identity as a non-fixed, socially constructed object, a view that influenced social interaction scholars such as Goffman (1990) and was espoused by Benwell and Stokoe (2006).

Generally, identity is understood to be who one is. However, as noted by Harrison (2019), Lemke (2008), and Omoniyi and White (2006), it is not as simple as this; it is complex, multiple, and unstable. In an early, highly influential work on identity that attracted the attention of conversation analysts and ethnographers alike, Goffman (1990) addressed performance as a critical aspect of identity that the interactant(s) (audience) and the environment influence. From a somewhat broader perspective, Lemke (2008) pointed to the diversity of identities, noting that time and setting can be significant influencing factors and stating that “Identities develop and change, they are at least multi-faceted if not in fact plural. Their consistency and continuity are our constructions, mandated by our cultural notions of the kinds of selves that are normal and abnormal in our community” (p. 18).

From another standpoint, Riley (2007) considered the role of social norms in identity construction, how it is possible to view the self and identity, and whether these terms might be interchangeable. Riley (2007) proposed a triangular model that demonstrates how the self and identity can come together but also the respects in which they differ (see Figure one).

![Figure 1. Model of identity (Riley, 2007, p. 87)](image-url)
According to the model, identity encompasses two distinct concepts: the person and the self. While a person is a social identity that others construct about the being (“you”), the self involves a subjective awareness of the being (as “me” and “I”). This implies that the self and individual awareness are private and subjective, whereas social identity is a public quality that is attributed to others.

Building on the above, this study views identity as a plural concept that is not fixed. This is in line with Lemke's (2008) theoretical conceptualization, which encompasses a plurality of identities that can be informed by time and setting, as well as being rooted in cultural norms. This emphasizes the multiplicity and complexity of identity, arguing that identity is constructed by the individual and decreed by community perceptions of what is normal and abnormal (Lemke, 2008). The researcher also drew on Riley’s (2007) conceptualization of identity, which is compatible with Lemke’s (2008) approach but contributes additionally by incorporating the influence of language, culture, social aspects, and the setting. The study thus employed the works of Riley (2007) and Lemke (2008) as the theoretical lens in addressing identity, the self, and social identity and how they can be constructed and enacted online.

**Social and Cultural Identity**

Concerning social identity, the study drew on the seminal work of Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1982), viewing social identity as a practice of self-categorization through which individuals categorize themselves and express their membership of specific categories through their behaviors, such as defining oneself as a supporter of a football team and then wearing its kit, or as a member of the clergy wearing clerical clothing and thus communicating a particular social identity. Tajfel and Turner (2004) then expanded on this to explain intergroup behaviors and discrimination in psychology.

An contested aspect in terms of social identity is the role of culture. One’s cultural identity lies in the sense of membership and belonging to a particular ethnic group and culture, with shared beliefs and norms. Cultural membership of a group entails familiarity with the language, heritage, religion, and traditions. Thus, being Saudi Arabian, for example, can be described as a national cultural identity, that is being Arabian, being Muslim, and sharing beliefs, traditions, and social values. This also reflects the different perspective offered by Jenks (2005) that integrates the cultural and the social, considering that culture can be a social category encompassing “a whole of life of a people” (p. 12).

Riley (2007) pointed to the complexity of identity as a concept influenced by culture, education, and society. While social and cultural identity can be referred to interchangeably in some instances, this is not always the case. Both identities tend to be attributed by others rather than acquired. Social identity is what others attribute to one (you) based on other social parameters, such as language, with a membership of that group demonstrated through behaviors and other signals of belonging. In contrast, cultural identity tends to be related more to heritage, religion, and language as shared aspects that define ownership of that identity. In this vein, Spolsky (2003)
and Suleiman (2019) are alike in their view of how religion and nationality play significant roles in how identity can be constructed through language. As Spolsky (2003) put it, “Islam is basically and strictly associated with Classical Arabic” (p. 84).

Riley's (2007) work is also noteworthy in highlighting two important aspects: First, how identity can be enacted as a social identity (i.e., who the person is), and second, how it relates to individual awareness (i.e., what one knows about the “self”). Riley's (2007) theoretical perspective not only highlights the differences and similarities between language and identity but also explains the correlation between them. In social identity, language is one of the main parameters.

Identity in Social Media

Identity studies have expanded their scope to cover online and social media platforms, given the powerful role they play in the daily lives of people around the world. Many studies have explored identity and self-presentation online. Dewing (2010) defined social media as follows:

The term "social media" refers to the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute to users-centered content, or join online communities. The kind of internet service commonly associated with social media (sometimes referred to as "Web 2.0"). (p. 1)

Social media, therefore, can be used as an umbrella term to refer to many social networking websites that people can access through mobile phones and smart technology.

Furthermore, Dewing (2010) described different categories of social media, one of which is a status update service, such as the microblogging service Twitter. This category differentiates platforms such as Twitter from others, represented in their short posts and sharing or checking the updates of others.

The context of this study was Twitter, a highly popular site. Identity in this study was thus primarily explored through tweets and profiles. Marwick and Boyd (2011) contended that the Twitter identity could take different forms, ranging from the semi-static presentation of the self on personal homepages known as "profiles" to the dynamic nature of tweets. As noted by Robinson (2007), homepages are a specific kind of expression of the self that is explicit, revolving around “who I am,” whereas in posts and other interactive aspects, it is more about “it is me.” Therefore, tweets and profiles can be considered two different ways of presenting the self.

Marwick and Boyd (2011) also examined the imagined audience concept on Twitter and concluded that tweets could target different and multiple audiences; this they considered a unique feature of audience diversity and identity construction. Indeed, identity online, according to Barton and Lee (2013), is not only about who we are but also how the self wants to be seen by others; therefore, the management of identities and audience (as imagined) are central issues in online identity research. In addition, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) pointed out that “identity on the internet is playful, creative, impressive and limitless, and (so popular discourse would have it) an entirely different proposition from identity in the ‘real world’” (p. 243). Moreover, online identity and the “social media identity” can be “unstable,” or “more fluid.” This is a point worth noting and thus
this study undertook ethnographic observation of eight participants' authentic, identified Twitter accounts using their real identities over eight months to address the fluidity of online identity.

**International Students’ Identities Online**

Not everyone can study abroad, but the number of international students is continuously increasing (Schartner & Young, 2020). Studying abroad has always been perceived as a privilege, given the valuable experience of globalization it offers. In this regard, Lewin (2009) pointed out:

> The revolution in study abroad is thus not only numerical, but indeed philosophical. Historically, study abroad has been caught up in the pursuit of high culture. Throughout the late 19th century and during the 20th century, it was primarily an outgrowth of the Grand Tour, which began in 17th-century England, where aristocratic young men were sent to European capitals to complete their classical education. (p. xiv)

Considering this, studying abroad can be viewed as one form of social capital highlighted by Bourdieu (2011) in terms of enhancing one’s educational background. In addition, Urry (2012) argued the travel experience can be globally enriching.

Many studies have researched international students. Some, such as Fabricius, Klitgård, and Preisler (2011), Kim (2001), and Schartner and Young (2020), have focused on their adaptation and integration and intercultural experience. Others, for example, Gang, Wei, and Duanmu (2010), have focused on their pedagogical and learning experience. This study concerns international students’ use of Twitter, the focus of many studies in different areas. While most, such as Al-Jenaibi (2016), and Rogers and Jones (2021), have tended to explore political subjects, some, like Li, Stokowski, Dittmore, Malmo, and Rolfe (2017), have approached identity presentation in people’s Twitter bios on their Profile pages.

International students use social media for various reasons, including staying in contact with family and friends at home (Gomes, Berry, Alzougool, & Chang, 2014), and enhancing their academic networks and learning. Zhu and Procter (2015) found that Ph.D. students in the U.K. used Twitter and Facebook differently, employing the former to enhance and expand their professional identity and networks and the latter more “for personal use rather than research-related purposes” (p. 37). Moreover, the Ph.D. students shared several practices when using Twitter, particularly in using Ph.D. hashtags as significant markers to enact their professional identity and engage in Ph.D. encounters on Twitter.

In Gershon’s (2010) terms, this could be an idiom of practice. Gershon (2010) proposed the notion to explain how different groups of people develop—mostly “unconsciously”—their own ways of using communicative media with each other. These unique practices might be observed by other groups. Idioms of practice are a potentially interesting yet overlooked subject in social media despite there being empirical data that support this theory.

In another instance of idioms of practice, Alhejely (2020) found a significant pattern in the interactions of Arab students in the U.K. on Twitter when using standard Arabic to articulate their religious practices, thus enacting their Muslim identity. This is in line with the work of researchers...
such as Albirini (2011) and Alsaawi (2017), highlighting the strong connection between standard Arabic and religious discourse in Islamic contexts. Equally, an idiom of practice found in many online studies of international students is the use of English to signal their identity as global citizens (Schreiber, 2015; Tagg & Seargeant, 2012).

International students’ use of social media platforms can be an invaluable means of exploring perceptions and identities. Liu (2012) advocated researching online and cyberspace as an arena for intercultural communication. However, most existing studies that have examined international students’ online presence are in the sphere of education and online learning. The topic of international students and their online identities is still an emerging field. Identity can appear in many forms. For example, on Twitter, it can have a strong presence in profiles (Rogers & Jones, 2021). Studies undertaken with Twitter, such as those of Alhejely (2020) and Seyri and Rezaee (2022), have examined students and their identities but have not considered the participants’ Twitter profiles. Moreover, existing research has highlighted significant issues, including language, mobility, and how the online bilingual and multilingual practices of different international students can enhance our understanding of social and cultural identities and online communities (Alhejely, 2020; Gomes et al., 2014; Tagg & Seargeant, 2012). However, we know little about the identities students are keen to portray. Is being an overseas student something visible in their presence online, and if so, how is it constructed? If this is not the case, which identities do international students construct and how?

Methods

This study was purely qualitative, seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of how a small group of Saudi international students in the U.K. constructed and manifested their identities on Twitter through an online ethnographic approach. Thus, the study was data-driven rather than theory-driven. The approach adopted was consistent with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2002) view that qualitative researchers seek to understand the phenomenon in its natural setting.

This study was undertaken within an interpretive paradigm (Bryman, 2012), considering multiple realities and accounting for different viewpoints to understand a specific, context-bound topic (identity construction on Twitter). The study adopted an online-ethnographic approach, seeking to unearth the identities constructed, and find out how and why. This entailed spending considerable time in observation (from May 2019 to January 2020), followed by interviews with four participants conducted in June 2020, and later three follow-up interviews (until 2022).

Participants

The participants in this study were eight Saudi Ph.D. students (four males and four females) at universities in the U.K. They were all employed as lecturers by universities in Saudi Arabia and were undertaking doctoral studies on scholarships. The sample was obtained through the snowballing technique, in which the researcher identifies some participants who then help recruit others. The study setting can be described in terms of where the research was undertaken (place),
when (time), and with whom (participants). The study site was primarily Twitter, and observation of the participants’ Twitter profiles and tweets took place over eight months. Table one provides demographic information.

Table 1. Study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant identifiers</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Ph.D. field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sussex</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph.D. D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. E</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Arts and media</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ph.D. F</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. F</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments

The three research questions determined the tools and procedures employed in data collection and analysis. To explore the identities the Saudi Ph.D. students constructed in their Twitter profiles and tweets, the researcher followed their accounts and observed them for eight months, capturing their Twitter profiles and tweets and keeping notes. For the online observation, the researcher used snipping tool software to take screenshots of the participants’ Twitter profiles and tweets, which were date stamped according to the time they were taken. The researcher sought further insights using the direct messaging feature on Twitter to interview four participants, asking “why” questions and gaining their insider perspectives to enhance the validity of the results.

Research Procedures

The researcher spent three hours each day checking the Twitter accounts and enabled notification alerts for the eight accounts to be informed whenever the participants posted. In all, 298 tweets were collected, excluding replies and retweets, associated with the 8 Twitter profiles of the participants. The researcher analyzed the various data (Twitter profiles, tweets, observation notes, and interviews) manually from June 2020 to October 2022 using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and implementing Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory approach to coding. Themes emerged and were generated based on the criteria advocated by Ryan and Bernard (2003), with significance determined in terms of their frequency, relevance to the research questions, and forceful presence across the datasets.

Results

The data analysis revealed interesting findings about how this particular group of Ph.D. students constructed their identities while in the U.K. This section presents the findings under four main themes in response to the first and second research questions.
Theme One: Ph.D. Identity

For Saudi sojourners, undertaking their Ph.D. abroad takes four years on average, meaning they are away from home (and possibly family) for a considerable period. The experience of living in a different country and spending many years away from the home environment is a critical aspect for international students. Being a Ph.D. student overseas was highly significant for the participants, forming a lifestyle and an aspect of identity. This was the most notable of the themes identified in terms of its frequency and re-occurrence throughout the observation period. The review of Ph.D. identity here draws on examples from the participants’ Twitter profiles and tweets, my observation notes, and excerpts from the Twitter interviews.

Figure 2. Ph.D. F’s Twitter profile

Figure two shows a screenshot of Ph.D. F’s Twitter profile (with parts obscured for confidentiality). Participants’ profiles can be seen as a gateway to seeing how the Twitter user introduces the self, showing “who I am” in a semi-static way (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). In Figure two, the first notable element was Ph.D. F’s bio (No. 1 in the image) and how he introduced himself as a Ph.D. candidate in the first line. Within the profile, the bio can be read as related to his identity, and this prime positioning of “Ph.D. candidate” indicates its significance. There is then further information concerning his interests, which also seem to be related to his Ph.D. identity in referencing his research topic. He also describes himself as an “occasional Twitter-er,” implying that he makes only intermittent use of the platform.

Ph.D. F’s profile picture (No. 2) shows his face and appears to have been taken in an office or a workplace as he sits on an office chair while engaged in writing. His Twitter header (No. 1) similarly shows various objects related to his work: a notepad, pen, and laptop. The header also includes his name and the link to his personal website. This aligns with the Ph.D. identity he constructs and the objects can be seen as further emphasizing this identity.

Thus, the most significant aspects of Ph.D. F’s Twitter profile relate to his Ph.D. identity, which he constructs and emphasizes through several resources, including his bio, the header, and external links to websites (e.g., his LinkedIn profile) and his personal website. It should be
highlighted that this construction of the Ph.D. identity was present in the profiles of all eight participants in this study.

Moreover, this identity was the most significant theme in terms of its frequency in the participants’ tweets, being a constant presence throughout the observation period. However, the tweets constructed the Ph.D. identity in a different way: It did not appear explicitly as a statement, as in the profiles. Figure three presents an interesting example that illustrates the construction of the Ph.D identity in tweets.

![Tweet posted by Ghassan](image)

*Figure 3. Tweet posted by Ghassan*

Ph.D. F’s tweet is addressed to a specific audience, explicitly indicated in “To all the PhD folks.” He advises his followers to take care of their mental health and well-being, and to remember that there is a life outside their studies. This is an interesting tweet that implies the difficulties and stress Ph.D. students experience. Ph.D. F demonstrates self-awareness and offers relevant advice to his audience of fellow Ph.D. students. The tweet acknowledges that students can become overwhelmed, feel isolated, and forget that there are other activities they can engage in. Emphasizing the need to enjoy life, Ph.D. F’s tweet reminds Ph.D. students to overcome their stress by taking care of their well-being.

Ph.D. F addresses his Ph.D. audience in two ways: First, the tweet is directed to “Ph.D. folks,” which can be seen as an explicit form of addressivity (Sargeant, Tagg, & Ngampramuan, 2012); second, Ph.D. F adds two hashtags—#PhDchat and #PhDlife—which occurred in many of the tweets posted by the research participants during the observation period. This implies a sense of affiliation with these communities, as well as being a way of designating an audience.

Ph.D. G also constructed his Ph.D. identity by showing affiliation and engaging with the #Ph.D. community (see Figure four).
This tweet reveals another challenging situation that Ph.D. G seems to think is common. His use of present tense suggests that it is normal for a Ph.D. student to read many articles, then struggle to write a sentence about what they have read and experience uncertainty. This tweet received 12 likes, mostly from other Ph.D. students, which implies a sense of agreement. The reply from another student also confirms the agreement. Ph.D. G’s tweet suggests personal experience—that he has “been there, done that,” to put it informally. Ph.D. G’s tweet recognizes such difficulties and seems to be reassuring other students that this might happen, so they should not panic. Furthermore, the Ph.D. identity in this tweet is constructed by showing a sense of association with Ph.D. communities in #PhD_life.

The hashtag #PhD_life indicates that Ph.D. G is aware of which sections of society will relate to this tweet, as well as demonstrating his identification with that community. Moreover, the Ph.D. identity Ph.D. G constructs in this tweet reveals the need for strength, resilience, and hard work, while simultaneously retaining a sense of humor. Although such problems can cause pain, this does not mean that Ph.D. students should be ashamed of their struggles; the tweet encourages them to keep going. The Ph.D. identity emerges in the ways Ph.D. G, as a Ph.D. student, can build resilience in response to the challenges he faces himself in pursuing his studies.

The Ph.D. identity in this study appears to have a social value for the participants, which might be one reason for its frequency and forceful presence throughout the observation timeline. During the interviews, it became apparent that being an overseas Ph.D. student was highly regarded in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, in a follow-up interview conducted with Ph.D. E in April 2022, he addressed why most Ph.D. students tend to disclose that they are studying for a Ph.D. in their profiles:

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you think Saudi Ph.D. students overseas feel that it is important to others on Twitter to know that about them?
**Ph.D. E:** Yes
**Interviewer:** Why is it important to know that?
**Ph.D. E:** They believe that most Saudis are active on Twitter and thus help establish direct links and relationships with other Saudis at home about their Ph.D. journey and specialty
Interviewer: Is it something important (socially speaking) in Saudi Arabia to be a Ph.D. student overseas? What is the importance of that in society?
Ph.D. E: It is not important but appreciated
Interviewer: What do you mean by appreciated?
Ph.D. E: I mean that it (Ph.D. overseas) has its certain appeal (in terms of personality and quality of the person) among many Saudis.
Ph.D. E: In many positive ways.
Interviewer: So, you are saying that people in Saudi Arabia see Ph.D. students overseas in a good way and it is attributed as being a good person?
Ph.D. E: A good person and future leader
(Interview with Ph.D. E, April 2022)
However, the other side of the coin was that the significance of this identity could impose some conditions on behavior. The Ph.D. students seemed to have certain perceptions about how they should conduct their interactions on Twitter. Ph.D. B explained that having to present oneself as highly educated entailed some constraints:

Interviewer: Do you think that the education level can impact the language choices people make on Twitter?
Ph.D. B: Umm I would say the education level could be one of the constraints that could limit your freedom to choose the language you want. It is not appropriate for a Professor to tweet about funny topics. I rarely see that in our culture, although it is common in western culture.
Interviewer: What about English in Saudi is it regarded as a choice of highly educated people?
Ph.D. B: Yes, especially among science academics who study abroad. You will find them speaking in English most of the time during the day.
(Transcript of interview with Ph.D. B, June 2020)
This exchange conveys interesting insights from Ph.D. B about how those who are highly educated (a categorization that can be applied to Ph.D. holders) might be expected to tweet, that is in ways that reflect certain manners. However, Ph.D. B explains that this is only in “our culture,” meaning in Saudi Arabia. This suggests that these participants are aware of how to tweet in particular ways to construct their highly educated Ph.D. identity.

The observation notes showed that the Ph.D. was among the topics most tweeted about by the participants, and it was so pervasive that it continued even if they were not in the U.K. or were away from the Ph.D. environment. For example, the following notes concern Ph.D. C, after she posted a tweet about the Ph.D. when she was on a data collection trip in her home city (Riyadh).

Ph.D. C posted one tweet today when she was on a study leave for her Ph.D. for three months to collect data in Saudi Arabia. (Observation note – Ph.D. C, October 2019)
#Riyadh season events
The presence of this hashtag in this tweet about Ph.D. implies that Ph.D. C is so immersed in her Ph.D. work even when she is back home and amid this season she cannot enjoy and take a break. (Observation note – Ph.D. C, October 2019)

These notes show how the Ph.D. identity becomes part of “who I am” and “what I do” for these Ph.D. students. It is something that they cannot detach themselves from. Ph.D. C was in her home city at the time of a significant seasonal festival but she could not enjoy it as she was thinking about and feeling overwhelmed by her Ph.D. work.

Therefore, these examples illustrated how the Ph.D. identity may be constructed in various forms on Twitter, primarily through Twitter profiles and identifying the self as a Ph.D. student, and in tweets and participation in Ph.D. hashtags that imply their sense of membership of the group. Ph.D. identity in this study is a highly significant theme that has social value for the participants.

**Theme 2: Cosmopolitan Identity**

In this study, cosmopolitanism emerged as another significant theme relating to how the participants constructed their identities on Twitter. Many scholars, such as Liang and Schartner (2022) and Schartner and Young (2020), have addressed how intercultural competence can enhance communication in internationalized educational contexts. Lewin (2009) explained how studying abroad can be a rich experience, offering a global or cosmopolitan perspective. Similarly, Delanty (2006) contended that cosmopolitanism entails openness and willingness to transform, i.e., being able to embrace or tolerate what is different. This theme emerged in this study in several ways, some of which are reviewed in what follows, beginning with an example tweet from Ph.D. G (Figure five).

![Figure 5. Tweet posted by Ph.D. G](image-url)

*Figure 5. Tweet posted by Ph.D. G*

In Figure five, Ph.D. G announces his participation in an international conference—the European Respiratory Society (ERS). He starts by using two formulaic fixed expressions, one in English and the other in Spanish: “see you soon” and “hola amigo.” Between these, he adds two hashtags indicating where he can be seen and later uses them for the conference he is shortly to attend.

The fact that the conference is in Spain explains his use of the Spanish greeting “hola amigo” (meaning “hi my friend”). Although this is all he knows of Spanish, this gesture shows a sense of friendliness towards the country he is visiting and the language spoken there. In this tweet, Ph.D. G constructs his identity as a global citizen—an international Saudi Ph.D. student in the
U.K. who is also participating in an international congress in Spain. Tweeting about his participation is an implicit way of showing his sense of membership in international organizations.

In his tweet, Ph.D. G appears to be excited about this event. The conference was organized by an international, mainly European-based, body, whereas Ph.D. G originates from a different, non-European background, leading him to portray the cosmopolitan aspect of his identity as a mark of membership. My observation notes also reflected Ph.D. G’s enthusiasm as he posted many tweets from the event:

Over the past three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) posted many tweets and replied to many that all have one or both of these hashtags: #ERS2019 #ERSCongress. He was actively engaging with others who shared the same interest in that conference. (Observation note – Ph.D. G, September 2019)

His use of Spanish in the first tweet was intriguing and led to further questioning, resulting in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Can you talk about this tweet? Why did you mix here and use English and then Spanish?
Ph.D. G: That’s funny. I was going to a conference in Spain and wanted to joke about my limited Spanish.
Ph.D. G: Even after coming back from the conference my Spanish didn’t change.
(Interview with Ph.D. G, June 2020)

In this extract, Ph.D. G describes his use of Spanish as “funny” and wanting “to joke.” Hence, he was being humorous. However, in this context, there is a sense that he was also being friendly, showing an outgoing and funny person stepping out of his comfortable linguistic and physical zone (travelling to Spain) to participate in the event. These all signal his cosmopolitan identity. Moreover, in a follow-up interview, he explained how the experience of studying abroad made him more open, or as he put it, “easy going”:

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about how you see the Ph.D. experience (abroad in the U.K.)?
Ph.D. G: I have received my Master’s from the U.S. and getting a Ph.D. from the U.K. allowed me to live a different experience, specifically with differences in education and health care systems. For example, in the U.S., higher education requires students to attend regular courses and submit assignments, while in the U.K. it is more self-paced and self-learning. I was able to attend any training session I want. I am in health care but I have attended sessions related to phone applications for example. The healthcare system in the U.K. is very cost-effective and it is based on equal care for everyone, which fits very nicely with the governmental healthcare system in Saudi Arabia.
Ph.D. G: In addition to the mentioned above, my supervisor taught me many lessons in attitude and respect for others. He is very kind and always keen to help. I had extreme difficulties and he was always supportive and kind and helpful. This reflected on me deeply and now I am trying to be as good as he was with my students. Show passion and love to
my students and support them and help them learn better. Allowing open and easy communication with them.
Ph.D. G: I hope that wasn't too long. Happy to rewrite a shorter answer.
Interviewer: Not at all! Do you think this experience has changed you?
Ph.D. G: It did! Not only in knowledge and experience but more toward being easygoing with others and trying to be simple and humble.
(Follow-up interview with Ph.D. G, October 2022)

This exchange is engaging in what it reveals about how the whole experience of studying abroad can expand both the global and knowledge horizons of international sojourners like Ph.D. G. He gave a detailed response about what he had learnt studying in the U.S. and the U.K., being able to see and experience different educational systems, and find out more about the health systems (his field). He described how his experience had changed him, making him more open and better able to communicate and engage with others. This articulation of the change he underwent and the cosmopolitan identity that grew out of the study abroad experience aligns with Delanty (2006) in terms of the cosmopolitan perspective, and also Lemke (2008) concerning the constantly changing nature of identity. Ph.D. G’s experiencing of studying abroad enhanced his global citizenship. In addition, these tweets reflect that Ph.D. G constructed a cosmopolitan identity in different ways, including switching to other languages, traveling, and participating in international conferences.

The cosmopolitan identity also emerged through the open attitudes participants showed toward adopting new ways of living and thinking. This is illustrated by Ph.D. B’s tweet in Figure six.

Figure 6. Tweet posted by Ph.D. B
Translation: I have started withdrawing from any discussion that can upset my mood and use my energy and avoid them. This style of minimalism is new in my life. I wasted many hours in discussions that did not add any (quality) to me. Calmness, calmness, calmness, the blessing I wish I could be enveloped by

This tweet reveals an approach recently adopted by Ph.D. B to deal with several issues, including wasting time on fruitless arguments. The term “minimalism” is distinctive in several ways, including that it is the only English word employed and represents an approach that has not appeared in Arabic culture until recently. The term in Arabic, “Zohd,” implies simplicity and humbleness. Minimalism (“less is more”) first appeared during the 1950s, primarily to describe sculpture, and was subsequently developed and adapted by many other fields. This tweet was intriguing and in a follow-up interview, Ph.D. B shed light on her perceptions and how she came to be familiar with the concept:
Interviewer: One more question for you: I’m just curious to know when you learnt about and started practicing minimalism?
Ph.D. B: I would say maybe after one year of my Ph.D. journey. I was in a workshop on time management and the presenter mentioned quality time and how to minimize any kind of distraction that can impact your productivity or cause more stress. I started to minimize any discussion I considered irrelevant. It was the right decision. I also cleaned my house and removed any extra things that I didn’t need. Kind of a minimalism house.
Interviewer: Was this the first time you had learnt about it?
Ph.D. B: Not really. I was familiar with the term, as I had watched a documentary on Netflix. There it was explained in contexts such as home decor and clothes style. However, I learned about applying minimalism in other contexts, such as time management, after the first year of my Ph.D., as I said before. I started practicing the concept during my Ph.D. journey as well.
Interviewer: Do you think it is a common or well-known concept in Saudi Arabia?
Ph.D. B: I don’t think it is a common concept in Saudi Arabia. It is somehow known among the new generation since they are more open to new Western concepts and can adopt new lifestyles.

(Interview with Ph.D. B, May 2022)

This extract indicates that Ph.D. B found she could apply this concept to her Ph.D. studies in the first year, having previously only been aware of it in connection with home décor. Ph.D. B then started to practice it in her daily life. However, the concept remains comparatively unknown in Saudi Arabia, as noted by Ph.D. B, except among the younger generation. This is significant, as it implies that Nora is a member of this new generation, with the ability to absorb Western concepts. Thus, her adoption of minimalism as a lifestyle demonstrates openness toward different ideas and views, as well as the ability to tolerate change.

Thus, the participants depicted their cosmopolitanism in many ways, but it was clear through these examples that the cosmopolitan identity involved having the ability to accept and adapt to change.

**Theme Three: Saudi Identity**

During the observation of interaction on Twitter—and particularly in the week commencing September 23—several participants posted tweets about Saudi National Day. The observation notes at that time revealed that most of the tweets this week, especially those posted on September 23 and 24, were about Saudi Arabia. As an insider (Saudi), the researcher was aware that this was a public holiday, memorializing the country’s unification and the royal decree changing the name of the country from the Kingdoms of Hijaz and Najad to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia proclaimed by the former king, Abdulaziz Al Saud. This is known in Arabic as “alyoom alwatan i,” meaning “National Day.” A representative example of the tweets observed at this time is one posted by Ph.D. B (see profile in Figure seven and tweet in Figure eight).
First, Ph.D. B’s Twitter profile was distinct from those of other participants, showing three members of the Saudi royal family in the header (background), with the former king, Abdulaziz Al Saud, in the middle and higher than the other figures. She seems to intend this to reflect her national identity and it differs from most other profiles, which show landscapes or personal pictures (e.g., Figure two). The header is part of how the participants construct their identities and Ph.D. B shows her strong national identity through the images of the royal family and the inclusion of the Saudi flag. Moreover, she puts a green heart beside the country flag in her bio. These are all multimodal resources she employs to construct who she is and how she feels about her country.

Looking at her tweet concerning the Saudi National Day (see Figure eight), Ph.D. B posts part of a national (Arabic) song filled with emotions of love and devotion towards Saudi Arabia (see translation), again adding a green heart and the Saudi flag. Indeed, the green heart appears twice (in the middle and at the end before the Saudi flag), in the same order as in her bio. Such non-linguistic resources play a significant role in showing her feelings of love for her country. In addition, they emphasize and help construct her Saudi national identity. Hence, Ph.D. B’s Twitter profile and tweet align with each other and construct her identity as a Saudi-loving national. The tweet location shows it was posted while she was in Coventry (U.K.). Thus, her sense of belonging does not change even when away from her home country. The linguistic resources used in the tweet are also worth noting. The tweet is in Arabic (Fusha classic), aligned with the official language in Saudi Arabia, and could be an unmarked way of constructing national identity.

Translation: I would give my soul and everything I own for it (green heart emoticon), who else would I love other than my beloved country (green heart and Saudi Arabian flag)
Choosing the song to reflect her feelings suggests an emotional sense beyond this identity (see translation in Figure eight).

It was notable that the participants posted about celebrating National Day while they were in the U.K., these posts being a significant aspect of their Twitter feeds at this time. Some attended National Day celebrations organized by the Saudi communities where they lived. Examples of this can be seen in Figures nine and ten, suggesting that the participants wanted to highlight the importance of this national occasion for them.

**Figure 9. Tweet posted by Ph.D. D**

The two tweets pertain to two participants (Ph.D. D and Ph.D. E) and were both posted on the same day. Ph.D. D posted from where she was studying, in Belfast, whereas Ph.D. E seemed to be in Edinburgh preparing to fly to London to celebrate the National Day at the Saudi Embassy.

These examples demonstrate the participants’ strong sense of belonging to their home country. Their Saudi national identity was constructed in various forms, including the use of non-linguistic cues such as the national flag and the green heart. Their language was also a powerful resource that expressed their strong sense of affiliation, for example, “our national day.” Thus, their Saudi identity is part of how they view themselves; it is an identity that brings unification as part of a social group.

**Theme Four: Muslim Identity**

Being Muslim was the fourth significant theme that emerged during the observation. Time played a strong part in how and when this identity was constructed. For example, tweets before Ramadan differed from those posted near the end of Ramadan in terms of word choice and order. Before discussing this theme and how and why the participants constructed it in these ways, we
should revisit the role of religion for this group (Saudi Arabians). Religion plays a significant role in the culture and background of Saudi Arabia. For Muslims worldwide, their religion is a sacred subject and a system of beliefs.

The participants in this study constructed their Muslim identity at marked times (during religious festivals), reflecting the importance of their religion in their lives even when away from home in a different and multi-denominational country. In addition, they did so in particular and noticeably similar ways, showing that they were aware of how this identity could be constructed and seeming to adhere to certain norms and practices. When discussing religion in this context, it is important to note that it is intertwined with the cultural background of these participants; Islam and Islamic laws are at the core of how Saudi Arabia defines its law and culture. Saudi Arabia is the homeland of Mecca and Madinah, the two most holy cities for Muslims worldwide. Hence, the researcher agrees with Rodrigues and Harding (2009) that religion may be part and parcel of how one gains a greater understanding of a given society, in this study Saudi students in the U.K.

This theme of Muslim identity appeared at marked times but not throughout the observation, as were other themes such as the Ph.D. identity. In addition, it was notable how language, predominantly classical Fusha Arabic, was utilized as the primary linguistic resource in the careful construction of that identity, illustrated in Figure eleven.

Figure 11. Tweet posted by Ph.D. B
Translation: May this holy month be blessed for all #Ramadan_2019
Ph.D. B’s tweet on the first day of Ramadan is in Fusha Arabic, reading “Mubarak alaykom alshahr alfadheel” with a hashtag indicating the year and the month. In the interview with Nora, she discussed this tweet and the use of Arabic:

Interviewer: Do you think the religious occasion here has inclined you to use Arabic?
Ph.D. B: Yes of course.
Interviewer: Why do you think so?
Ph.D. B: Tweeting about religious topics in English is appropriate in my opinion unless you do have Muslim followers who speak English. I would prefer to say it in Arabic to Arabic speakers. It is the greeting that we get used to hearing since years ago.
(Interview with Ph.D. B, June 2020)
Another informant (Ph.D. A) articulated the same sentiment regarding the use of Fusha Arabic in association with religion:

Interviewer: Does Arabic have cultural values to you?
Ph.D. A: Yes, no doubt.
Interviewer: Why?
(Interview with Ph.D. A, June 2020)

This exchange reflects the strong association between language and religion, and also implies identity perception. This appears mainly in Ph.D. A’s emphasis on Arabic being her mother language (meaning mother tongue), and then she adds quickly “my religion language.” The use of “my” here shows a passive stance, the feeling of something that is part of “me” or “myself.” This demonstrates how Ph.D. A associates Arabic and religion with each other and considers them both part of her identity.

Ph.D. F also posted a tweet showing that the Muslim identity could be a social identity, evidenced by the language used (see Figure twelve).

Figure 12. Tweet posted by Ph.D. F
Translation: May this month be blessed for all and may Allah accept our good deeds

This tweet, posted by Ph.D. F on the first day of Ramadan, uses a phrase repeated in many tweets posted by the participants at this time, indicating that it is a social and cultural ritual aimed at wishing happiness on this religious occasion. Using Arabic in this ritual is normal practice and thus Arabic was the main resource these participants used in constructing their Muslim identity. There is another noteworthy aspect of this tweet and other similar tweets posted by the participants during this month, which is the image of the lantern. In Arabic, this is called “Fanous Ramdan” and it is used to decorate homes and streets during the month of fasting. This and the use of Fusha Arabic represent the construction of a social, cultural Muslim identity, in line with Riley’s (2007) conceptualization.
Interaction and Interrelation over the Timeline

The findings of this study reveal another important aspect of the multiplicity of identities, namely that they sometimes overlap with each other, which makes it impossible to establish a dichotomous distinction. For example, being a Ph.D. student and being cosmopolitan intersect in many instances. Thus, it would not be an accurate representation to suggest that the participants constructed either their Ph.D. identity or cosmopolitan identity in isolation. Indeed, it seems that the former involves the latter in many ways, an example being Ph.D. G’s tweet (Figure five) about participating in the European conference, in which he presented himself as a member of the community based on his Ph.D. work and the abstract he submitted to take part. Thus, his Ph.D. identity is part of his cosmopolitan identity as it concerns the conference.

This also suggests that going abroad to study, as in the case of these Ph.D. students, could provide opportunities to take part in cosmopolitan events and enhance their Ph.D. and cosmopolitan perspectives. Indeed, this is what Ph.D. G recounted in the interview about his experience of studying abroad. This is in line with the findings of other studies, such as Lewin (2009), ALQahtani and Hezam (2015), Han (2018), and Almuarik (2019), all of which discuss how the sojourners’ experience enriches their global background. The interrelation between these aspects of identity is illustrated in Figure thirteen.

Figure 13. The interrelation between Ph.D.ism and cosmopolitanism
The international students developed both a Ph.D. and a cosmopolitan identity. Doing a Ph.D. overseas seemed to expand their cosmopolitanism, enabling them to demonstrate openness and self-transformation (Delanty, 2006). This also aligns with the theoretical approach concerning the constant change in identities (Lemke, 2008).

The same can be said for the other two themes: Saudi and Muslim. The exchange with Ph.D. A reflected the strong association between language and religion but also implied perceptions of identity through her emphasis on Arabic being both her mother tongue and the language of religion. Ph.D. A associated Arabic and religion with each other and considered them both part of her social identity. The two themes are not only significant but also marked and timed, appearing at certain points across the observation. In addition, they are related to social and cultural perceptions of the participants’ identities.
On May 14, 2019—a Tuesday—there was a notification from Twitter that three of the participants had posted about Saudi Arabia. It did not take long to gather from Twitter that there had been Hothi rebel attacks on Saudi oil facilities (see Figure fourteen).

![Tweet](image)

*Figure 14. Tweet posted by Ph.D. F*

*Translation: Allah, protect our country and our guardians from every evil, Allah, keep our enemies from us as you see fit*

This tweet, posted by Ph.D. F, who was in Newcastle, is representative of others at the time, as found in the observation notes recording notes on similar tweets posted by other participants. He uses Fusha Arabic, asking God (Allah) to protect the country. His feelings of belonging are made clear in his use of “our country” and “our guardians,” referring to the royal family, who appear in the image of the King and the Crown Prince, and behind them, the Saudi flag. The tweet conveys a strong sense of belonging and love for his home country. In addition, it reflects how his religion and prayers play a role in conveying his strong sense of Saudi Arabian and Muslim identity. The Saudi Arabian identity constructed in this tweet is portrayed through a religious tone, which is similar to the construction of the Muslim theme using the “religious genre,” particularly of the Arabic type (Fusha). Moreover, the Saudi Arabian identity is constructed in a similar way as in Theme three, using Arabic, a sense of affiliation through pronouns, and including the national flag and pictures of the royal family. The link between the two themes—Saudi national and Muslim identity—is apparent. Being Saudi is part of being Muslim, the Saudi Arabian flag is a symbol of believing in God (Allah) as it carries the Islamic shahada (there is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the prophet of God [Allah]). The intersection is broadly inclusive, as presented in Figure fifteen.
Figure 15. Links between themes

Unlike the link between Themes one and two, which meet at an intersection, these two themes seem rooted together and linked to social and cultural perceptions of identity. This supports the argument made by Lemke (2008) that identity can be complex, multiple, or indeed multiplex. For this reason, examining the concept of identity on social media can be challenging and requires a flexible, open approach. In this regard, Lemke (2008) potentially offers a way of operationalizing such qualities in dealing with identity.

To sum up, the findings of this study revealed four main themes reflecting the identities this group of Saudi Ph.D. sojourners constructed. The Ph.D. identity was the most significant in terms of representation throughout the data. Another theme was the cosmopolitan identity, which sometimes intersected with the Ph.D. theme. The participants also constructed identities that reflected their social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, namely Saudi and Muslim.

Discussion

This section revisits the findings with reference to the research questions. Concerning the first, which addressed the identities Saudi Ph.D. sojourners in the U.K. constructed in Twitter profiles and tweets, the study identified four main identities: the Ph.D. identity, the cosmopolitan identity, the Saudi identity, and the Muslim identity. In response to the second research question, regarding how the students constructed these identities, the study revealed a range of resources, most prominently language choice and Twitter hashtags. Finally, concerning the third question, time played an important part in the construction of certain identities, such as the Muslim identity linked to religious festivals.

The data revealed that the participants constructed their Ph.D. and cosmopolitan identities throughout the observation period, unlike the Muslim and Saudi Arabian identities. These were time-constrained, constructed at certain times during the observation. The construction of these themes of identities took various forms. The “Ph.D. identity” was most prevalent in terms of its
frequency and strong presence in the data throughout the observation and interview periods. For example, the participants highlighted this identity in their Twitter profiles, constructing it dynamically through various practices but mainly through Ph.D. hashtags in tweets. Indeed, these hashtags played a significant role in constructing the Ph.D. identity. The profiles presented the Ph.D. identity as part of who the participants were in a semi-static form, while in the tweets this identity was more dynamic, showing “what I do as a Ph.D. student.” Hence, it can be argued that the Ph.D. identity moves towards the practice of Ph.D.ism. These findings align with Almuarik’s (2019) contention that studying for a Ph.D. in the U.K. can be perceived as having both cultural and social capital.

The participants and society viewed being an international Ph.D. student in the U.K. as something of social value that gave the students a sense of power. The status of international students and the association with being highly educated, can be seen as a form of capital in line with Bourdieu (2011). The Twitter profiles, for example, presented an explicit portrayal of capital, using the Ph.D. as a title in the bio to introduce the self (see Figure two). This identity was also constructed implicitly as a form of capital through their tweets about Ph.D. life in general and what Ph.D. students encounter, as well as Faisal’s accounts that Saudi Ph.D. students are regarded socially as having the potential to be “a good person and future leader.” Moreover, it is important to recognize how the participants constructed this capital through a system of practices, namely tweets and Ph.D. hashtags, representing idioms of practice, in line with Gershon (2010).

The cosmopolitan identity, which comprised the second significant theme, was constructed in different forms, including being global and open-minded, consistent with Delanty’s (2006) notion of cosmopolitanism. According to this view, cosmopolitanism is not only about adaptation to other cultures but also involves a transformation of the self that paves the way for new cultural forms. This can be seen in the way Nora portrayed her ability to accept and indeed embrace a different lifestyle and way of thinking. It was also borne out in the interview, in which she described her shift towards minimalism, stating that the ability to learn and adapt to new and different experiences was due to her doctoral studies. In contrast, Mohammad thought that the study abroad experience had changed him for the better by making him more “easygoing.” Thus, it is challenging to provide a single definition that encompasses the cosmopolitan identity and the researcher concurs with Lemke (2008) that identity is a highly complex concept. The participants in this study constructed their cosmopolitan identity in many forms. In this vein, Urry (2012) maintained that cosmopolitanism naturally results from being abroad or traveling extensively.

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was the Saudi identity, marked at certain times, such as Saudi National Day. The construction of this identity seemed unique, given how the participants used English in its construction. This is in contrast to the notion of “one language, one nation” and argues against the view that it is language (Arabic in this case) that conveys the sense of nation and national identity (Suleiman, 2019). This study shows that national identity can be conveyed through other languages, including English. Therefore, the theme of
Saudi Arabian identity is somewhat fluid linguistically, as the participants did not seem to subscribe to a particular language ideology.

Being Saudi Arabian was part of the participants’ social and cultural identity. This appeared in different data, including their Twitter profiles, for example. The male participants in this study constructed this identity through their profile images, in which they appeared wearing the Saudi male dress. The study established that the participants constructed their Saudi identity in various ways that conveyed many ideas about how they viewed this identity. Again, this is in line with Lemke’s (2008) view of identity as complex and not fixed. The participants supported this view through the many ways in which they depicted the various meanings they attached to this identity. The different examples in the data also show the importance they attached to the Saudi National Day. The tweets contain emotional expressions of belonging and love and express the significance of this theme. Despite being in a different country, this was an occasion for signifying their bond with home. Moreover, this identity was social in terms of how they established it through a sense of membership in a group and having an emotional attachment to that group or named country. The participants constructed this theme as a social identity based on who they were and their homeland.

Being Muslim was the fourth significant theme that emerged during the observation, mostly at marked times in the Islamic calendar. Time played a considerable part in how and when they constructed this identity. It is essential to consider the role that religion plays in the culture and background of Saudi Arabia. The interviews with Nora and Bushra highlight that Fusha Arabic is perceived as the main resource associated with their religion (Islam). Indeed, Nora reported the choice to use Arabic when tweeting or discussing Islam was something rooted in their culture; using another language would be “inappropriate” when tweeting about Islamic-related topics. These examples demonstrate that there is no set line between what is perceived to be part of culture and religion for these participants.

Moreover, Arabic has a spiritual value for Muslims, as found by Alsaawi (2017) in a study of imams’ language practices in Jumaa (weekly sermons) in different U.K. mosques. The imams and Jumaa attendees were from different linguistic backgrounds, including English. The study concluded that Arabic has a forceful function and is described as “spiritual,” even by non-Arabic speakers, as it is the language of the holy Quran. Therefore, it can be argued that the use of Arabic in Islamic discourse may be a taken-for-granted practice, in line with the construction of the Muslim identity not only for these participants but also for most Muslims. Many studies have highlighted the complex relationship and interplay between language and religion. Fishman (1966), for example, discussed how Islam reserves a single language for religious practices and as noted by Spolsky (2003, p. 84), “Islam is basically and strictly associated with Classical Arabic.”

The participants not only constructed the Muslim identity in Classical Arabic but also to a great extent using the same formulaic phrases. The tweets are all clear examples showing the participants follow certain protocols: They know what, how, and when they should say or tweet using formulaic phrases at certain times. This study thus adds to the existing literature showing
that the Muslim identity can be constructed in virtual environments such as Twitter with and through diligent adherence to certain linguistic practices, mainly using Classical Arabic in relation to religious festivals. Another important aspect concerns the remarkable similarities in the construction of this identity, which suggests that the Muslim identity in this study is a practice of social identity. Riley (2007) is among those who argue that language can play a significant part in the construction of social identity. In this study, the participants manifested their Muslim social identity through Classical Arabic as a strong pillar that supported them in their tweets.

The participants construed their Muslim social identities as something rooted in “we” as a group. This is exemplified in the interview with Nora in which she explicitly considered her Muslim identity and her use of Arabic as something “we get used to.” The “we” here either references herself and other Saudis or herself and the researcher (in the interview) as Saudis. In either case, it is clear that she perceives it as something that is shared and that was part of her upbringing. Hence, the Muslim identity can again be an identity that presents both the cultural and social backgrounds of these participants; these practices might not be observed among other social groups, especially those related to what precisely should be said at certain times, such as Eid and Ramadan. In this vein, the findings agree with Jenks’ (2005) perspective concerning the coexistence of the cultural and the social.

The theme of Muslim identity was manifested through particular and fixed linguistic practices, indicating the influence of a social and cultural system to which the participants adhered. This also means that the Muslim identity tends to be semi-static. Thus, it is crucial to examine how individuals use Twitter and for what – how they tweet and what they tweet – in addition to scrutinizing different aspects of their Twitter profiles when examining any aspect of their identities on Twitter. The study established that this would give a holistic and clear view and would certainly enrich the understanding of how identities can be constructed on Twitter. The relationships between the themes and how they could sometimes co-exist in what looked like mutually inclusive relationships lead to the conclusion that identity is not only complex but also multiplex, concurring with the theory of identity proposed by Lemke (2008), which offers a flexible and open approach to dealing with identity in different contexts, including the online environment, as in this study.

However, as in all studies, this has its limitations. First, the findings are not generalizable to all Saudi or international Ph.D. students abroad. This study targeted a small number of Ph.D. students in the U.K., and other overseas students in other countries might provide different insights based on new empirical data. Another limitation that might apply to all studies conducted on social media is that the platforms keep changing and adding new features. For example, late in 2020, Twitter enabled its users to tweet voice recordings lasting 120 seconds. The observation of Twitter in this study lasted eight months and concluded before this feature was added and thus it was not necessary to deal with this issue. Researchers examining social media, such as Twitter, might wish to consider unexpected changes before embarking on their research, as it might entail undertaking multi-modal analysis of texts, emojis, voice recordings, and videos. While it is possible to analyze
Twitter data and interviews through software, such as CAQDAS or NVivo, the latter has issues with Arabic script.

**Conclusion**

This study focused on providing an in-depth perspective concerning identity construction by exploring the multiple realities of the insiders (the participants and the researcher). The study employed an online ethnographic approach to address three main research questions. The study provides empirical data and detailed descriptions that can add to the understanding of how sojourners, here Ph.D. Saudi students, construct their identities around four main themes: Ph.D., cosmopolitan, Saudi Arabian, and Muslim. The study contributes to existing online ethnographic research in social media. Finally, Twitter can be a rich field for further studies examining identity construction.

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**References**


Saudi Ph.D. Sojourners’ Construction of Identities on Twitter


What’s Next? Challenges of Teaching English in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic in Kuwait

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Received:10/20/2022 Accepted:01/10/2023 Published:01/20/2023

Abstract
The migration from the traditional teaching to online learning has affected both learners and educators at all levels. In Kuwait, this switch to online has been employed during three semesters. In this paper, we examine the challenges faced by the Teachers of the English Language in Kuwait Post COVID-19. After the temporary on-learning that lasted three semesters, the present study investigates the impact of English language skills on school learners. The survey of the recent study consisted of a total of 58 English female government secondary school teachers. While other studies have focused on the learners’ challenges during this pandemic, this study chiefly investigates teachers. The significance of this study is to provide remedial plans to respond better to emergencies. The study aims to answer the following question: ‘What are the challenges that governmental ESL teachers faced during the pandemic? And what are the remedial plans? The study uses a mixed methodology to achieve the research goal in which data are collected through an open-ended questionnaire and by interviewing three randomly selected participants. Teachers' questionnaires (closed-ended) and semi-structured narrative interviews revealed that COVID-19 has positively and negatively impacted English language skills. Teachers will need to improve the poor level of proficiency of the students. There are numerous challenges facing English Language teachers in the traditional classroom and remedial plans are being implemented to fix the impact that the pandemic left on students' language skills. Keywords: COVID-19, challenges, English as Foreign Language, English language skills, Online classroom, Traditional classroom,

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.22
Introduction

A nation's education is one of the most essential elements contributing to its development. Instruction has been provided to people traditionally for centuries. Conventional education is where knowledge and information are provided within classrooms; hence, teacher-student center. Because of the spread of COVID-19, many countries, including Kuwait, have temporarily switched to online teaching-learning. Frallion and Meinck (2022) state that “in April 2020, over 1.1 billion school learners were affected by the pandemic (at that time) with countrywide school closures affecting 117 countries” (p. 202), according to UNESCO, 2021.

The terms online learning, distance learning, and e-learning have been used interchangeably; however, AlAjlan (2011) makes a clear distinction. E-learning refers to classroom activities that involve any type of technology (mobile, computer, smart devices) without necessarily being connected to the internet. Distance learning, on the other hand, means that students receive course material online, or they can be present in the classroom following the lecture via virtual screens. Finally, online learning is a twofold concept; first, students use the internet in the school to work on online exercises/exams, and the instructor's presence is significant to show guidelines of the materials. The second is what is being widely spread, the online courses, where teachers and students interact via blackboard, Zoom and MS meetings. In early 2001, the first distance-learning university in Kuwait has been established - Arab Open University (AOU) in coordination with the Arab Ministers of Higher Education. Moreover, in the same year, Kuwait University established the Distance Learning and Videoconferencing Center in three Faculties: Science, Administrative Sciences, and Arts. The center aims to promote the use of technology in teaching. In the present time, and even pre-Covid times, many instructors use the internet to interact with their students; this could involve discussion boards, emails, or online submission of assignments and online exams.

After the spread of the Coronavirus, the Ministry of Education approved the suspension of the study for both schools and universities for five months; if it were not for the coronavirus, we would not have seen the education crisis faced today (Al-Ebrahim, 2020). In 2020, we encountered both the coronavirus pandemic and the lack of preparation for online learning, causing 35,000 students at Kuwait University to stop their education which consequently delayed the graduation of 4000 students (Motab, 2020).; Coronavirus crisis has shown us the hidden failure of the Ministry of Education, as education is not a priority for the government (Al-Ebrahim, 2020).

Online learning is not a different or a replacement system for traditional education; it is a backup for formal education (Al-Mulaifi, 2020). Online instruction is one of the most up-to-date strategies presently utilized; novel advancements are used to encourage correspondence among students and educators. In this educational method, students learn how to rely on themselves to self-understand the lessons. Further, the online approach can also improve the quality of education by speeding up information.

The pandemic affected the educational system in several countries, including Kuwait. Education everywhere shifted to online. In Kuwait, this only lasted for three semesters. During
this period, there has been a noticeable difference in how students learn and acquire their lessons and languages. Traditionally, students were educated in schools that used traditional classes to impart knowledge and teach languages. According to the Top Hat Glossary (a teaching platform that engages students-teachers all in one place), a traditional classroom is one in which the teacher regulates and controls the flow of information and knowledge. As an assignment for the students, exercises and tasks will accompany the development of the data. This is the conventional teaching method, which is followed for generations. According to Schrader (2013), traditional teaching is a technique that assumes students will learn by being told to. As for online learning, a teacher and students are physically separated in distance learning, according to Newby, Stepich, Lehman, and Russell (2000).

As a result of the spread of COVID-19, online learning was implemented and adversely affected the language skills of Kuwaiti students. English language teachers traditionally employ different methods to teach foreign language skills, but this changed with the use of e-platforms. Everything was displayed on screens, and the emphasis was mainly on speaking. There was insufficient teacher-student contact since teachers could not see the students on the screens and their work was not monitored the same way it would have been in a conventional classroom. Students hardly wrote and barely spoke due to several reasons. Everything was shown and submitted digitally back then. Thus, English Language Teachers today face many challenges. Students are unable to employ the four skills of English adequately. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the difficulties that schoolteachers face; the objective of this study is to propose possible solutions to improve the English Language skills of students Post COVID-19.

The research questions for this study are as follows: What are the challenges that governmental ESL teachers faced during the pandemic? And what are the remedial plans that could be implemented? Research documents the effects of replacing traditional English classes with online ones on the four language skills. Then it provides strategies for enhancing the skills of Kuwaiti students based on the literature available at the time. In this investigation, we investigate the impact of the temporary replacement of face-to-face English classes with online teaching impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic on English language proficiency among students. How is the students’ performance in the English language Post COVID-19?; and what are the challenges of teaching English Post COVID-19 and what is the plan to improve the student's level in the English language?

In what follows, we review the relevant research to our study, and then present the methodology, instruments, procedures and how the participants were recruited. Then we outline the results and discussion, and finally, we provide remedial plans, suggestions, and recommendations.

**Literature Review**

Before delving into the relevant literature, we bring to the fore the situation of education in Kuwait during the pandemic. Since this study emphasizes the challenges of teaching English post-pandemic, we must note that online learning is not a replacement system for traditional
learning; it is a backup for conventional learning during emergencies. Online instruction is one of the most up-to-date strategies that is presently utilized; novel advancements are used to encourage correspondence among students and educators. In this educational method, students learn how to rely on themselves to self-understand the lessons.

Private institutions in Kuwait have used online learning at the start of the pandemic. Government schools, including higher education (Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training), were suspended for five months without any explicit declaration of when learning will resume. This has negatively affected both teachers and students. The acting director of Kuwait University explained the delay, stating, “We will not start with distance education right now because students are not currently ready for online learning; students and faculty members should be trained for this type of education” (Motab, 2020). Indeed, while online facilities have been available since 2000 at Kuwait University, these were barely used. Even official email addresses were not activated by students. Therefore, the Ministry of Education declared in August 2020 that all teachers and learners are encouraged to undertake training to use the available platforms (Ms Teams and Blackboard).

Nowadays, English is more important than ever as the language of international communication. Therefore, foreign language classes are more valuable than ever before. Due to the online learning switch, some countries have founded weblogs for English Language Learners where they can enhance and acquire the skills ideally. Kuwait's English classrooms were given through the Microsoft Teams program. Thus, language acquisition was not practical for those students who were not interacting with the English Language teachers much. Students did not have the freedom to express themselves and interact or communicate because the platform was mainly used for receiving information during the online sessions. English classes were timed, and the curriculum was compressed. Due to that fact, going back to the traditional classrooms caused a shock to most of the learners. They are struggling a lot with using the four skills of English sufficiently. English Language Teachers usually use different teaching methods in common language classrooms to enhance the employment of the skills. The Direct method is the most famous method being used in teaching the language.

The Direct Method is an intelligent extension of the Natural Method. This branch of psychology is also part of the Behaviorist school. Language learning requires affiliation. The focus is on the requirement for a direct connection between experience and articulation. The goal is to empower students to think in remote languages and to develop an unerring sense of language. Language sense is believed to have its origins in the spoken language and emphasizes the oral approach (Verghese, 1989). It is a method where the target language is used to give the learners all the instructions. Students are not allowed to speak in their mother tongue. Grammar rules usage is avoided, and the emphasis is on pronunciation. After the comeback, the direct method was difficult to be employed with the students because they are using their native language to express themselves instead of using English language. Thanks to the temporary shift that occurred the past three semesters. A huge linguistic gap happened among most language learners. The language
components in the assigned texts are often complex for students to read and understand. As a result of limited language proficiency and insufficient teaching materials, Kuwaiti school students are not motivated to read words, sentences, or even texts (AlDarwish, 2006).

Additionally, following the pandemic and the remote learning approach, the student's writing skills deteriorated, and the effects of online sessions are apparent. Students face issues with subject-verb agreement structure, grammatical problems, and how to compose a paragraph correctly and coherently. The online sessions also reduced their use of imagination and their minds; instead, they used Google Drive or whatever was available through the online resources to find ideas. Hence, coming back to reality proved to be a severe challenge for the majority of the learners because during the online teaching, no writing tasks were given. It has never been easy to teach English as a foreign language. It has become even more difficult since the pandemic. Prentiss (2021) states that:

The fundamentals of good teaching are the same regardless of the modality, and the foundational pedagogical practices are also similar, yet the primary difference is that solid online education has been designed for a virtual modality, not adapted to fit it. (p. 2)

We believe that students will face many and varied challenges beyond COVID-19. We, as educators, are all working together to help students learn more effectively again by enhancing the language acquisition of teachers, educators, and professionals. They are facing numerous challenges and want to increase their confidence and language skills. Any nation can gain something from adversity. In partnership with COVID-19, we will reorganize people and programs to work together more effectively in schools, universities, and community organizations to provide education to young people and mentorship. A crisis should not be gone to waste. Together, educators and other professionals can tackle challenges and develop innovative solutions (Berry, 2020). Due to its recent comeback, the literature only includes reports of implementations of online learning and suggestions for a post Covid19 education. Therefore, this research attempts to fill the gap in the impact of online learning on English language teaching Post COVID-19 in Kuwait. It highlights the teachers' experience, views, and learning attitudes towards traditional classes again. This study also investigates the challenges facing English Language Teachers and the remedial plans being set to improve language skills post the pandemic.

**Challenges of Teaching Language Online**

Since online teaching began, scholars and educators started investigating the effect of this pandemic and the migration to online education, emphasizing the emotional and psychological impact on learners. Prentiss (2021) stated that “Educators need to be mindful of and responsive to the challenges COVID-19 presents to the health and well-being of our students, colleagues, and communities” (p. 3). Indeed, Pawlack, Derakhshan, Mehdizadeh, and Kruk (2022) investigated the boredom that learners expressed during online sessions. Their study investigated Iranian university students and teachers and found that both groups think online classes are boring. This
boredom led to, in some cases, skipping the class. To tackle this, Yazdanmehr, Shirvan, & Saghafi (in press) explain the reason behind boredom caused by online sessions. They state that insufficient attention, low perceived control over tasks, and unfriendly use of technology all contribute to this boredom. Yazdanmehr et al.’s study helps us understand how language learning online should be and provides solutions to overcome this boredom.

On the other hand, other studies found online classes to be more enjoyable. In other words, while the previously investigated boredom, Resnik and Dewaele (2022) explored foreign language classroom anxiety in a survey of 510 European learners. They found that learners were more confident behind the screen. This has revealed that they scored better in courses, unlike the cause of boredom in that low academic outcomes were found.

**Language Teachers and Online Teaching**

The lack of utilizing online platforms was the main challenge, primarily for educators at all levels. With the migration to online teaching, scholars in the field conducted studies from different perspectives of online teaching. For instance, the retention of language teachers using technology (Moser and Wei, 2022), lack of technological skills (Tarrayo, Paz, & Gepila, 2022), anxiety and stress in online teaching (Gregersen, Mercer, & MacIntyre, 2021), the necessity to include technology in conventional pedagogy (Sayer and Braun, 2020), the piloting of new online platforms such as Classmoto (Bonner, Garvey, Miner, Godin, & Reinders, 2022). Other studies investigated students’ perspectives on online learning. Ji, Park, and Shin (2022) investigated students’ attitudes toward online learning. They found that students were taking notes, recording, and searching for additional materials, which consequently assisted in teacher-learner engagement. Another study by He and Loewen (2022) also investigated teacher-learner rapport. This was achieved by constructive feedback during online sessions and motivated students to self-study. Other studies looked into the effect of online teaching on ESL learners’ language skills and the inappropriate feedback during online teaching (Işler & Elmas, 2022; Tosun, 2021). These studies suggested that feedback was reported during online classes. However, some claimed that feedback was merely uploading “course materials as power point presentations, worksheets, home assignments or videos via their Learning Management Systems and left the students with no spontaneous feedback” (Işler & Elmas, 2022, p. 39).

**Method**

This study explores the perceptions of English Language Teachers on COVID-19 and the effects on the English language skills level post-pandemic. The study adopts a qualitative method using a narrative inquiry approach. Therefore, the study utilizes a qualitative approach to gain more insight from participants. The significance behind using a qualitative approach is “to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). In other words, the researchers’ positionality assists in interpreting the findings shaped by our own experiences. Therefore, qualitative research is referred to as interpretive research.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that exploring a central phenomenon requires a qualitative study since it is defined as a process, key concept, or idea that should be examined.
study was conducted during the academic semester of Fall 2021 when online learning is switched back to traditional education. The study included all Kuwait districts (Hawalli, Asima, Al-Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Al-Jahra, and Al-Ahmadi), totaling 58 schools.

Participants

In the Fall of 2021/2022, the survey of this research was distributed to all female English Language Teachers in Kuwait's governmental secondary schools. The reason behind focusing only on female teachers is the ease of access to this community of practice. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalized, and it only represents the sample used in this study. The teachers were asked to participate in the survey voluntarily through personal contacts. However, only fifty-eight teachers took part in filling in the questionnaire. Unlike the survey that was distributed to all educational governance, the interviews were conducted with three of the participants. The teachers were all selected randomly, and all of them work at a secondary school in Jabriya. They all possess a bachelor's degree in English.

In Kuwait, to be hired as a teacher of the English language, one must be qualified with a minimum degree of Bachelor of Arts in English or Bachelor of Education in English. All teachers recruited for this study have either a BA in English (N=49) or a Master of Arts (N=9). The status of the English language in Kuwait lies in the third Circle of Kachru’s Model (for details of English status in Kuwait, see AlAjlan & AlQinae in press).

Research Instruments

The study uses two instruments: the first was a closed-ended questionnaire to investigate teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the impact of distance learning for three semesters on the four language skills. As a tool to elicit data, an in-depth interview was conducted. Creswell (2014) and Jackson (2012) claim that an in-depth interview is a qualitative method of analysis to ask participants questions where they will be able to answer questions openly and truthfully, and through their answers, probe more questions (Bernard, 2000; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Pathak & Charatdao, 2012, as cited in Krishnan et al., 2020). In-depth interviews conducted by the researchers were well received by the participants. Interviews give more information about the study because it is based on the experiment of using that language, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007):

interviews enable participants – be they, interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself; its human embeddedness is inescapable. (p. 349).
Research Procedures

The teachers, who were engaged in the study to fill in the questionnaire, were informed by sending a text message via WhatsApp application. The text message highlighted the aim of the questionnaire and the study. As for the interviewees, a consent form was given to them to seek their confirmation to be part of this study. Interviewees were interviewed after giving their consent to the study. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face in English at the secondary school.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed using the Otter.ai website. Within minutes, you can get free transcriptions using the website. The transcriptions can be reviewed immediately after recording. Additionally, you can search, play, edit, organize, and share your conversations from any device. A variety of sign-up options are available. If you have a Google, Microsoft, Apple or any other e-mail account, you can continue to use it. The data were categorized into themes and sub-themes based on the questionnaire and the interviews. Refer to Table one (appendix A) for the demographic background of the participants.

Based on the questionnaire and the interviews, Table two (see appendix B) represents the themes and sub-themes. Participants generally agreed on three fundamental issues: (1) the Effectiveness of the online course on English Language skills, (2) the Challenges of teaching English post-pandemic in Kuwait and (3) the need for a remedial plan to fix the damage done. Both themes and sub-themes are covered in detail in the results and discussion of this study.

Results

All 58 participants were English Language Teachers in the government secondary schools of Kuwait. They were 100% female teachers from the six academic areas, which are Hawalli, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Al-Jahra and Asima.

Online learning in Kuwait has lasted only for three semesters, during which students have been deprived of direct contact with their teachers and their mates. Still, it affected the language skills of the English language learners massively. Both a survey and interviews were conducted to highlight the impact of the pandemic, the challenges of teaching English traditionally again post COVID-19, and the best enhancement approach for enhancing English skills properly in traditional classes again. We will present the questionnaire results, and then the interview responses will follow.

Questionnaire

The following table displays the teacher’s perceptions of the language skills that were affected.
Table 3. The English Language skill that students face difficulty with the most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language skill</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In questioning the participants about which teaching methods they prefer to teach language, the following table (Table four) outlines their responses.

Table 4. Teachers’ preference for language teaching method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching method</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We note how participants in this study believe that traditional teaching is more effective and preferred (47%). Even those who prefer online education still opt for integrated education (53%); however, online instruction is not effective solely (0%).

Interviews

Three teachers were selected randomly for a one-to-one interview. All three teachers were from Jabriya (Hawalli District) because it was easier to access them through personal contact. Before the interview, the three teachers signed a consent form and were informed of the study’s intention.

All the participants were excited to be back to physical teaching. One teacher stated, “It feels great to go back to the traditional way; the face-to-face sessions are so different.” Prestiss (2021) says that “Faculty are expected to engage and connect with students and do so in intentional, innovative, and impactful ways” (p. 3). The overload for online class preparation that teachers need to go through was very overwhelming. The lack of administrative support, lousy internet connection, and the lack of digital pedagogical competence have all contributed to the discouraged environment. Students have been behind the screen for three semesters, that the load was on the teacher. Some students were sleeping as claimed by one teacher. This agrees with Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina and Bruce (2020) who claimed that difficulties in accessing the Internet led to irregular and low student attendance.

Thus, when online teaching migrated back to the traditional one, students were “waiting for the information to be given. More likely they like to be spoon fed, and they hardly use English.”
as claimed by one participant. She continued, “Before the pandemic, students were way active in the class, they used to engage themselves in their discussions and come up with brilliant ideas, creative ideas, and they were so creative in using the English language”. When it comes to productive language skills (speaking and writing), some studies claimed that students were more active behind the screen because they were anxious in class to speak; this study found that online sessions “boosted up the skills because, in online sessions, they used to be engaged using the microphone. But other skills like writing and reading deteriorated a lot. And that's because they never wrote while they were going through the online sessions. That's why they are now facing and struggling a lot in terms of writing.”

The participants faced challenges teaching English in terms of students' performance. One teacher has already planned to “targets their [students] writing skills mostly. I am assigning writing tasks to prove their level by writing introductory paragraphs about themselves composing short stories using random words, and composing poems, and that task is for high achievers. As for speaking skills, I try to engage them in discussions by asking general questions.” The post-pandemic has affected the students not only academically but also socially. One teacher noted that "The hardest part was having passive students that it was weird for them to be back in the class with others. They felt it was socially awkward. They were very shy and barely spoke. It was really hard to teach with satisfaction. When no one wanted to respond in their class, especially in the first week. It feels like talking to myself loudly.” Indeed, Ro (2021: 1) tells us that:

We’ve been forced to be asocial, at least in physical terms, for a year now. As a result, many are finding that any in-person social interaction is awkward – it feels like we have to re-learn how to sit in a room with another human. (p. 1)

Migrating back to physical education led students to wonder about how to socialize again. This is critical, specifically for kids whose brain at this age is still developing social abilities and defining connectivity. This prologue isolation during lockdown will lead to social phobia and therefore, impact learners on social and academic levels.

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the study’s findings and tend to answer the research questions. First, we have shown how online learning was challenging for Kuwaiti educators and students. The challenge lies behind the fact that educators, more than learners, have proven to be illiterate when it comes to utilizing technology in teaching. It was only in 2020 that they were finally forced to use different platforms. While this use was effective, it negatively impacted the learner’s language skills when conventional teaching returned to normal in the Fall of 2021/2022.

Effectiveness of the Online Learning Course on English Language Skills

All the participants agreed that the insufficient ways of teaching and assigning homework for the students over Microsoft Teams influenced the four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The skills were either impacted positively or impacted negatively. Mainly, most of the participants agree that the writing skill was the most skill that went down.
Students rarely used paper and a pen to note back in the online session. Therefore, most of the students are not capable of composing correct sentences in terms of structure or coherent paragraphs. They face difficulties in planning their ideas in the pre-writing sessions and they do not know how to form sentences that follow the correct structure of Subject-verb agreement. The impact went far beyond the structural and grammatical errors. It significantly affected cognitive levels too. Students’ critical and creative thinking level is moderate (See Figure one below). Students are not using their minds to criticize, analyze or even express their opinions openly. Most students do not do well on their exams when the exam is centered on analysis and inventive vitality, essential considering, and problem-solving; thus, students complain and mostly fail to answer. However, they excel when exams are based on memorization and repetitive learning (Fareh, 2010). As for reading skills, it is the second most affected skill after writing. Many students are not able to read properly. The struggle lies in pronouncing the words.

Fluency in a language depends on correct pronunciation. However, it is difficult to pronounce correctly. Neuro-scientifically speaking, Lenneberg (1967) stated that a second language could not be learned after puberty (cited in Taqi, Algharabali, & Akbar, 2018). Although many researchers disagree with Lenneberg’s theories, they still agree that mastering a language ultimately can be difficult.

Interference between the learners' first and second languages significantly contributes to pronunciation errors. In addition to pronunciation, interference between the learner's L1 and L2 extends to other skills, including reading and writing. Thus, it is not uncommon for errors found in one skill to be found in another skill. Baloch (2013) stated that Arab students had been accused of spelling errors due to 'pronunciation misconceptions' cited in (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018). When the consonant /p/ appears before or after vowels, mainly the vowel /o/, students often confuse it with the letter /b/.

Second language pronunciation can be affected by several factors. Usually, adult language learning is complex due to interference from L1 (Brown, 2000, as cited in Taqi et al., 2018). According to Carter and Nunan (2001), non-native speakers make most of their errors due to L1 transfer. First language habits of speaking might differ in perception, organ use, and suprasegmental features. Different phonemes, intonation, and tones distinguish a foreign language from a native language (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018). Learning English pronunciation may also be hindered by L1. Since the English vowel system is considered to be complex, speakers of L2 might employ a vowel from their L1 to “compensate for the lack of their knowledge of the L2 vowel structure” (p. 4). As Gimson and Cruttenden put it, "qualitative opposition" causes L2 strategies (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018, p. 4). Learning English is difficult because learners create generalization rules. The learner in this scenario would recognize vowels due to overgeneralizations in English spelling conventions.

On the other hand, distance learning impacted speaking skills positively. Students became fluent speakers; thanks to the constant usage of the microphone to be engaged in the lessons back in the virtual classes on Microsoft Teams. Most of the participants rated their speaking skills after
going back to the traditional styles as middle-level. This supports AlZamil's (2021) study on the comparison of face-to-face learning and online learning. He found that 77.7% of his participants improved their speaking skills through speaking tasks. Moreover, 83.4% of the participants believed that videotaping their speaking tasks has enhanced their skills by editing the quality of their speaking.

**Figure 1. Rating English language skills**

The figure above shows the percentage of the items that were investigated in the study. The participants rated the students’ skills (i.e., speaking, writing). We noted that almost in all items explored, students’ skills were rated as low. This is due to the lack of proper interaction with students during online teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language fluency</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, we note that all teachers' participants have agreed that the students’ levels in the first semester back to traditional learning were highly influenced by online teaching. All skills were significantly impacted. This is prominent specifically in the writing skill (67.2%) and vocabulary acquisition and use (56.9%).
Challenges of Teaching English Post COVID-19 in Kuwait

According to both the survey and the interviews, English Language Teachers are facing a lot of challenges in teaching post COVID-19 face-to-face again. One of the biggest challenges is that students love being spoon-fed by their instructors. Having unmotivated and passive students creates a massive challenge for teachers. They seldom love to interact or add any information using English to answer a question or express a thought. Also, teachers are struggling with activating the class to make it student-center again rather than teacher-center. Yukhymenko, Brown, Lawless, Brodowinska, and Mullin (2014, p. 102) claimed that “In a PBL [Problem-Based Learning] environment, the teacher is not the information provider or classroom controller. Rather, the teacher facilitates, coaches, and models good problem-solving skills for their students” (cited in Keiler, 2018, p. 102). Many students would rather have the teacher lead the lesson because of their anxiety and fear of using English. Anxiety is ranked as the essential psychological phenomenon related to fear, unpleasantness, and worries (Batiha, Noor, & Mustaffa, 2014). This is also applied to teachers who were overwhelmed with online preparation. Moder & Wei (2022) categorized teachers into three groups: stayers, leavers, and conditional stayers. They call for the inclusion of using technology during physical classes to develop students’ language skills enhancement.

In a study based on Malaysian's foreign language learners, a random survey was conducted of 700 ESL students from the University of Putra Malaysia for an oral communication test. Language learning is being affected by students' fear. In addition, significant levels of communication anxiety, fear of negative assessment, and test anxiety have been found among the students. Another survey was distributed among 115 EFL learners in China to test the participants' level of fear. The authors explained that fear of negative assessment was the primary source of anxiety among the students (Batiha et al., 2014).

The lack of language skills among the students is evident. The inability to use English appropriately in the different language skills, especially in writing and reading is quite problematic. The flow of the classes decreased, thanks to this barrier. Students became slow writers, and they lack neat and clear handwriting. It resulted in postponing instant feedback due to the unreadable handwriting. The two productive skills are writing and speaking. Writing is a vital communication skill that cannot be neglected. Said (2018) stated that among the four language skills, writing is the most challenging skill that EFL learners struggle with (As cited in Ahmad, 2019). Native students and non-natives alike find that writing properly is a significant challenge. The most common difficulties arise due to incompetence in syntax, lack of coherence, and an absence of vocabulary, critical thinking, content selection, sentence subject, technicalities, and lack of organization, as well as the inappropriate use of vocabulary. It would be beneficial to discover and survey the factors that negatively affect students' writing skills; this is due to the fact that issues in writing can be better managed if factors that generate them are identified (AbuRass, 2015, as cited in Ahmad, 2019).

In addition, the curriculum that is given to the learners by the teachers is intensive compared with the intended given time. Teachers are neither able to focus on teaching the required
materials nor able to enhance the student’s skills properly. AlDarwish (2006) claimed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is often taught ineffectively in Kuwait (As cited in AlDarwish, 2014). The Kuwaiti Ministry of Education supplies schools with materials based on the English language curriculum of a particular stage, so English teachers seldom use authentic material in the classrooms. Having graduated from the same system in the past, AlDarwish (2014) found that learning consisted of memorizing English words and grammar forms. Although this could be done relatively soon, students would soon forget what they learned about English. As a result, English has always been a crucial aspect of education in Kuwait. English language learners shy away and shield from using English to express their ideas of a lack of self-confidence. This shyness causes an obstacle that deprives having fun from grasping the target language. Finally, the ultimate challenge here is enhancing the four skills in a fun and less pressured way.

**Remedial Plan**

There is a need to fit into a globalized world today, where communication and foreign languages have a greater impact than in years past. These days, English is the international language of communication. Due to this, foreign language lessons today are of more significant importance than in the past. Therefore, English teaching should not only focus on the study of the grammar of language but should also focus on using the language in different contexts to adapt to this new reality (Díaz Merino, 2010, as cited in Renau, 2016).

The pandemic has negatively affected English learning in Kuwait and most areas worldwide. Thus, there should be more exposure to the language to make up for the extended lockdowns of schools. The learners are intrinsic in the educational process, and they should improve their language skills through different exercises and ways. Hybrid education can also help in language acquisition and improvement. Participants of this research believe that this hybrid system can benefit them and plays a vital role in L2 learning. This also agrees with Paechter and Maier’s (2010) and Gorra and Bhati’s (2016) findings. Teachers, educators, and professionals are working hand in hand to execute a remedial plan to improve the English language skills in Kuwait among the learners traditionally. The emphasis is chiefly on writing and reading skills which were adversely affected. AlZamil (2021) emphasized that 61.1% preferred traditional face-to-face teaching, especially in reading and writing skills.

Students will be provided with different reading and writing tasks from level zero to advanced levels to enhance their reading comprehension skills and writing as well. Tasks like reading sentences to match a particular highlighted word with its correct definition; reading an e-mail to fill in the blanks with correct vocabulary. Also, read different writing questions to compose a writing plan before creating an essay/ e-mail related to the head of the question.

Most of the tasks and exercises will be irrelevant to the curriculum because improving the language should be the focus. Moreover, everything being done in a fun and creative way is memorable and enjoyable. Thus, the enhancement progress of the skills will go up quickly. Students love reading and writing things that capture their attention and interests.
This study has mainly focused on female teachers. Most studies conducted in this area investigated the impact of Covid19 on learners. In other words, the study’s limitation is the ignorance of the learners’ perceptions of learning language post-pandemic.

Conclusion

This study tended to provide solutions to emergencies that will help educators perform and respond better. The unreadiness of online teaching and the force to use it later have affected both learners and teachers. This was clear in the academic performance during the post Covid19 period. It is fundamental to fill the gap in the student's performance in the English language post COVID-19 in Kuwait during the traditional classes again. As a result of the pandemic and being away from classes, many students find it challenging to maintain or improve their English language level. They tend to avoid doing their assignments by relying on others to do them, whether colleagues who might be fluent in English or through using an online resource. Thus, it results in unmotivated and uncreative language learners. Learners waste their time; they may have the opportunity to access the internet for academic purposes. Instead, they surf, browse, play online games, and even use unproductive social networks. In most online classes, feedback is not helpful for writing assignments and is primarily focused on grammar and other subjective questions. As a result, the majority of learners are facing significant difficulties in writing English correctly in traditional classes. Let us not forget the cheating issue that students undergo during online courses. Cases of cheating rose post-pandemic since learners relied on getting information and answers from different sources (i.e. Wikipedia or textbooks).

Suggestions and Recommendations

We believe in fixing the language gap among Kuwaiti students, a corrective program should be designed in a fun and irrelevant way to the Kuwaiti English curriculum. Teachers should improve remedial plans by asking students to use English in their daily communication. Regardless of grammar, the emphasis should be on the correct pronunciation of the words. Engage the students in reading more passages and completing other types of assignments. Additionally, teachers should develop interactive activities encouraging students to be more engaged with the subject. The learning process becomes memorable if it is fun or you assign tasks that capture their interest, such as writing about a favorite hobby, a person, or even a video game. Inside and outside the EFL classroom, the remedial plan can address the four skills jointly. Students can reorder sentences to create a cohesive paragraph, which can indirectly help them identify the correct form of a coherent paragraph. Furthermore, critical questions can be incorporated into the plan that focuses on the learners’ opinions about any general topic. The enhancement here will focus on two skills instead of just one since students must read and write.

Due to technology's dominance nowadays, creating a listening-based writing task is easy and creative. The QR code exercise can allow learners to listen to an audio or watch a video in English to write about something specific. Furthermore, students can be given a list of general vocabulary to memorize, followed by testing them through a spelling-bee competition. In addition,
students can use words from the list to improve their writing skills and stimulate their creativity. If students are asked to create a short story, a fairytale for children, or even a poem, they can unleash their inner creativity and without fear of making mistakes, they will be using English more in their writing.

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Appendix A
The following table displays the demographic characteristics of the study’s participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Demographic features of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor (BA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (MA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawalli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Farwaniya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubarak Al-Kabeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jahra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ahmadi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Teaching English</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
The following tables outlines the themes and sub-themes of both interviews and questionnaires data

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes of interview and questionnaire guide response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the online learning course on English language skills</td>
<td>Negative effects on writing skill&lt;br&gt;Negative effects on reading skill&lt;br&gt;Positive effects on speaking skill&lt;br&gt;Effects on the cognitive level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of teaching English post COVID-19 in Kuwait</td>
<td>Passive/ unmotivated students&lt;br&gt;Intensive curriculum&lt;br&gt;Lack of teaching time&lt;br&gt;Lack of the Language skills among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Plan</td>
<td>Reading tasks from level 0 to advanced&lt;br&gt;Writing tasks from level 0 to advanced&lt;br&gt;Irrelevant exercises to the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integrating Technology in ESL Reading Classroom: Accounting Pupils’ Perspectives

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Received: 10/04/2022  Accepted: 10/25/2022  Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Technology integration in language teaching has become a more prominent option for more effective teaching and learning process. However, few studies have examined the use of technology in reading classrooms, especially in the Malaysian context. This study aims to investigate pupils' perceptions of technology use in ESL (English as a second language) reading classrooms. In order to fulfill the research objective, the research question, ‘What is the perception of Year 6 primary school pupils on using technology in the reading classroom?’ was formulated to guide the study. The present study investigates the pupils' perceptions towards the integration of technology in reading classrooms by collecting data from 70 participants of a semi-urban primary school in Pahang using a questionnaire that is adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model model. The findings indicated that pupils have positive perceptions towards the use of technology in reading classrooms in terms of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude towards the use of technology and behavioural intention of using technology. Significantly, this study’s findings offer teachers and stakeholders with evidence to embrace technology in language teaching. Understanding pupils’ perceptions of technology use in reading in language learning classrooms provide significant information for teachers, school administrators and stakeholders.

Keywords: language learning, pupils’ perceptions, reading classroom, technology integration

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.23
Introduction

Technology integration has been regarded as an important instructional instrument in language classes because of the extensive use and convenient access that technology offers in improving the quality of teaching and learning. According to Shafie, Majid, and Ismail (2019), there is a drastic change in the traditional teaching method with the introduction of technology in the classroom because technology opens a window of learning opportunities. The proliferation of media technology has caused teachers and pupils to adapt and utilise technology in the classroom. The nature of education in today's classroom is highly dependent on taking full advantage of the use of technology, including open educational resources, social media, augmented reality, virtual reality and other sources of technology (Bagul, 2020). Technology has been defined as a key to facilitating the learning process because technology provides unlimited resources for language learning. The integration and application of technology in teaching and learning is a need in today's classroom, reflecting on the transformation of education (Hashim, 2018).

Acquiring English as a medium of communication is paramount in this globalised world, for the English language is known as the world's lingua franca (Yaccob & Yunus, 2019). In line with the eminence of the English language, the Malaysian government has highlighted the importance of ESL (English as a Second Language) with the implementation of many efforts that range from primary education to tertiary level education (Ahmad, Hamid, & Renshaw, 2019). Nonetheless, there are many concerns raised regarding second language learning because learners are required to master four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, which is a difficult and challenging process (Ahmad et al., 2019). Reading skills present as a demanding skill for second language learners because of the lack of exposure to the English language (Yunus, Zakaria, & Suliman, 2020), lack of socialisation with people of adept linguistic abilities (Hassan, Latiff, Muhamad, & Abdullah, 2021) and inadequate learning skills and reading strategies (Miyane, 2020). These are the contributing factors to learners' challenges in the reading classroom, which inhibit the mastery of the language.

In an attempt to overcome the challenges, English teachers have adapted and customised reading lessons with the use of technology. According to Ahmad et al. (2019), implementing technologies in English classrooms is to dominantly help second language learners learn better and solve probable challenges in language learning. The case is also reflected in Malaysian language classrooms when language teachers have begun welcoming the idea of technology integration in education (Bujang, Selamat, Krejcar, & Maresova, 2020). Similarly, a study conducted by Mustaffar, Baharuddin, and Yunus (2019) revealed that the integration of technology provided maximum exposure promoted excitement and provided better learning opportunities. Ahmadi (2018) also argued that technology could boost teaching and learning processes when it is implemented successfully with the guidance of teachers. However, there are also studies revealing that the integration of technology has posed some challenges despite the benefits and positive feedback obtained from previous studies (Bakar & Lynn, 2019). The challenges include inadequate infrastructure, facilities, low bandwidth and internet connectivity (Ahmad et al., 2019; Roy, 2019), lack of teachers' skill, competence and training in adapting technology in classrooms (Ahmadi, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2019) and preparation time for materials and lessons (Hameed & Hashim, 2022).

Researchers and practitioners in education, policymakers, parents, and the general public are all concerned about the adoption of ICT tools such as computers and modern technologies in Malaysian schools. Despite several disputes and arguments regarding the efficacy of technology...
in ESL classroom instruction, the majority of researchers continue to believe and agree that technology may be deployed effectively as a cognitive tool in ESL classrooms. According to researchers, technology is an effective tool for enhancing ESL classroom teaching and learning (Kumar, Bervell, & Osman, 2020). The Malaysian education system has been reformed to suit the needs of today's learners by employing technology in classrooms. Through the 1BestariNet initiative, the Malaysian government has made substantial investments in infrastructure to connect the nation's 10,000 primary and secondary schools (Zainal & Zainuddin, 2020). The implementation of the project is motivated by a desire to expand Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access for students and revolutionise teaching and learning.

The discussion of the effectiveness of technology extends to the reading classroom. Teachers have a crucial role in providing students with active, hands-on learning and authentic activities and audiences for their work through designing the learning environment. The research on learner-centred, active learning strategies shows the usefulness of these approaches for enhancing student learning and achievement. Moreover, under a learner-centered paradigm, teachers foster social relationships among students and encourage collaborative learning. Students' reading skills, vocabulary acquisition, critical thinking, and learning assistance are enhanced by mobile devices and social media platforms (Han & Niu, 2019; Haerazi & Irawan, 2020). In addition, numerous instructional strategies and models are utilised to assist students in the development of their reading skills and to foster collaborative learning. According to Baharuddin and Hashim (2020) study, the customisable features and user-friendly layout of digital tools have also contributed to the digital reading choice of many readers. The results also revealed that by employing the application or software tools to the greatest capacity, readers could examine the text. The learner perspective is taken into consideration when implementing technology in the reading classroom. Studies focusing on students' perceptions are eminent because the researchers examined the advantages of student-centered education, such as students sharing responsibility for their learning with their teachers, students interacting with the teachers, and students collaborating and communicating with one another (Layali & Al-Shlowi, 2020).

Consequently, studies on pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in reading classrooms will provide insights into their acceptance and preference concerning technology in improving reading skills. Pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in reading classrooms will provide insights into their acceptance and preference with regard to technology in improving reading skills. Furthermore, their acceptance and preference would enable teachers to design reading lessons that would suit primary school pupils. It is crucial to comprehend how the integration of technology is impacting teaching and learning for educators and learners from all levels of education. There is a need for research on investigating the technological perception of students to discern the impacts of technology integration, especially among primary school pupils (Balkan, 2018; Yunus et al., 2019). This study centers on the perceptions of pupils on the use of technology in learning English to address the research gap. The study aims to investigate pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in ESL reading classrooms. It is important to understand what perceived factors influence pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology which sheds light on their behaviour and acceptance towards the use of technology. Students and teachers will benefit from the findings of a study on pupils' perception towards technology which can be used as an evaluation of the teaching and learning process (Sari, Santihastuti, & Wahjuningsih 2020).
Literature Review

The Integration of Technology in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

Successful teaching and learning are now synonymous with the use of technology in ESL classrooms. ESL teachers in Malaysia have additional options and resources to improve teaching and learning, ultimately improving the experience gained by the students. The performance of pupils in Malaysian schools, as well as their overall fluency in English, has been the focus of multiple initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of Education. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 emphasises the teacher's responsibility to incorporate ICT into teaching and learning process as it relates to globalised learning (Bakar, 2020). The Malaysian government prioritises Information and Communication Technology (ICT) innovation to enhance teaching and learning processes. Based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint, the Frog Virtual Learning Environment (Frog VLE) is one of the methods proposed to meet the educational needs of Malaysian students (Mai & Muruges 2018). The Frog virtual learning environment is a method of instruction under the "I Bestari Net Project." It employs 4G high-speed wireless broadband for the use of technology in classrooms. According to Majid and Hashim (2019), Frog VLE provides the learning experiences that inspire and motivate students to have a positive outlook on their education, which is highly significant and powerful in terms of engaging learners whether they are in traditional classrooms or online. Similarly, another initiative by MOE is the introduction of DidikTV with the primary goal of helping students who have less access to the internet. DidikTV aired lessons on television taught by teachers for many subjects for primary and secondary school students. According to Harun (2021), students in Malaysia find DidikTV easily accessible and easy to use as the students can always rewind lessons that they have missed. The efforts and initiatives made by MOE helped learners of a second language need to be exposed to a variety of language skills to become proficient in that language, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The traditional method of teaching has been modified and changed with the infusion of technology which has altered instructional strategies in the classroom. The integration of technology has changed the way teachers teach and pupils learn because the modern methods of teaching have shifted from the traditional recalling of information, facts, concepts and principles into thinking processes involving creative thinking, problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills Rou and Yunus (2020) added the implementation of technology in language learning has become more popular because of the flexibility, dynamic and interactive content creation that technology offers for a more active learning experience. The shift toward modern teaching methods equips learners with the necessary skills required in the globalised world. Based on a study conducted by Rahman, Azmi and Hassan (2020), the use of technology such as social media, Learning Management System (LMS) tools and other forms of web platforms and multimedia has encouraged learners to be more active in discussion, developed self-directed learning and improved learning experience. Similarly, a study conducted by Samat and Aziz (2020) revealed that the use of multimedia had improved pupils' visualisation skills and process of the information presented in the reading text, which ultimately contributed to the comprehension of the text and improvement in their language learning.

The integration of technology has irrefutably spearheaded language teaching in this era. However, in the process of the integration of technologies in language classrooms, several issues have impacted pupils' learning. Pupils' reading behaviour is highly influenced by their preferences for the media and the use of teaching strategies based on the learning media. (Baharuddin &
Hashim, 2020). Based on Gharawi, Bidin, and Choo (2020) study, pupils' motivation and engagement are affected when the selected use of technology media does not suit pupils' learning styles and preferences. Teachers' consideration in implementing technology during language classes is imperative for an effective lesson. Additionally, screen text brings possible distraction and misuse when pupils are given tasks to complete as they can easily surf the internet for entertainment purposes (Pazilah, Hashim, & Yunus 2019). The lesson carried out would only be successful when the teacher uses the technology effectively while monitoring the pupils to be on task. Pedagogical limitations, elements of distraction and classroom disruption are some of the concerns that teachers have to be mindful of when integrating technology to facilitate learning (Metruk, 2020).

**Reading skills in primary ESL classrooms**

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted and taxing cognitive process that takes place through active interaction between the reader and the text (Choi & Zhang 2021). Reading comprehension often becomes arduous for pupils with poor reading ability since they do not acquire the necessary knowledge, vocabulary and skill to understand the text. Reading impacts learners' development through the acquisition of phonics, vocabulary, and sentence structures which lead to comprehension of the reading material. Reading comprehension requires understanding at the word level and actively engaging with the reading content to create a mental representation of the text. The study conducted by Abdullah and Yunus (2019) revealed that pupils face difficulties in deriving and understanding information from texts due to their lack of schemata and vocabulary, which ultimately leads to poor reading skills. Lim, Eng, Mohamed and Ismail (2018) also supported that reading comprehension becomes challenging, and disadvantageous for pupils with poor reading ability. However, to become successful users of a second language, there is a great need to improve reading skills. Pupils will be able to learn and read with comprehension provided with the right aid, technique, media and teaching strategies (Putri & Tiarina, 2021).

The issues faced by ESL learners during reading class can be improved with the integration of technology. This generation of ESL learners is more exposed to technology and has more interest in learning with the introduction of technology in the classroom. Learners interact with text effectively with the help of technology in the reading classroom and proper classroom strategies (Ariffin & Razali, 2019). Pupils gradually have the potential to understand the reading processes and the interaction needed with the text when the learning processes are eased with the integration of technology. The use of technology in reading classes has significantly improved pupils' learning experience, supported comprehension of the text and developed reading skills (Bani-Hamad & Abdullah, 2019; Samat & Aziz, 2020). Reading activities can be supported by an array of social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Whatsapp. The integration of multimedia and social media enabled pupils to extract information that eases the understanding of reading the text through the multimedia elements of graphics, audio, video and animation (Hasin & Nasir, 2021). The inclusion of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) further spurred the changes in language teaching that benefits teachers and pupils by transforming and elevating the learning processes in classrooms. AR and VR technology integration allows immersive learning experience and limitless exposure time to learners while boosting motivation, engagement, comprehension, cognitive skills and long-term memory retention (Adnan, Shak, Karim, Tahir, & Shah, 2020; Jamrus & Razali, 2021).

Additionally, the integration of technology in reading classrooms helps shape learners that
acquire 21st-century learning skills. According to Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari, and Lee (2021), learners that obtain 21st-century skills would be more prepared to face the complexities in today's global and knowledge-driven economy as the learners would be equipped with skills of critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, written and oral communication skills, adaptability, collaboration and responsibility. The enthusiasm towards learning grows with the integration of technology and the application of multimedia mainly because of the exploration and fun elements that technology brings into language learning. Ahmadi (2018) added that learning becomes more active, fun and meaningful for learners with the inculcation of technology while teachers play the role of facilitators. The integration of technology is synonymous with the theory of constructivism learning (Azhari et al., 2020) where the learners are actively involved in the learning process through the process of constructing new knowledge and understanding by building upon prior knowledge. The function of technological instruments in education, such as the computer, has been primarily considered as an educational tool and a means of creating a more engaging and stimulating learning environment. By focusing on the learner, the function of technology can help the development of new understandings and skills, thereby providing a cognitive tool to support cognitive and metacognitive processes (Mattar, 2018). Through photographs, narratives, and multimedia programmes, technological instruments provide diverse cultural views. The learning experience for learners would be enlightening whilst enhancing their comprehension through engagement in the learning process.

Nevertheless, there are challenges in the process of incorporating technology in reading classrooms such as the mental retention of text that learners have to retain while scrolling and reading digital materials. A study conducted by Yang (2020) found that learners were overwhelmed due to the cognitive load of scrolling pages of reading text while trying to comprehend the text. In the same vein, though using learning platforms has improved learners' language learning, factors such as time and difficulty constraints accompanied by appropriate teaching strategies influence the delivery of successful teaching and learning (Bujang et al., 2020). Consequently, the implementation of technology in improving reading skills and shaping 21st-century learners is highly dependent on factors such as learners' styles and preferences, appropriateness of media and teachers' skills and strategies in incorporating technology into reading classrooms.

**Pupils’ Perceptions of the Use of Technology in the Classroom**

Technology has been widely used in teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils. Technological applications assist pupils in having visual representation, using graphics and simulations to form connections and supply contextual information on the reading texts. Technologies provide opportunities for pupils to learn based on their individual learning needs and various learning styles, which progressively motivate pupils to learn. Akhmedov and Shuhkrat (2020) exemplified that technology complemented with teaching strategies and suitable materials impacts learners of various learning styles to benefit from the advancement and integration of technology through the use of visuals, graphics, animations, audio, videos and other forms of media. Pupils become more enthusiastic about language learning with the integration of technology. This is also supported by Yee and Zainuddin's (2018) research signifying that utilising E-books increased pupils' engagement and motivation which helped pupils' comprehension by listening attentively and participating in discussions. Advanced learners can explore more depth regarding a topic, whereas intermediate and starters can learn more efficiently. The changes in the
teaching methods address pupils of different backgrounds and cultures. Ultimately, language learning becomes a space for learning opportunities of different forms of meaning-making where the textual equips to the visual, audio, spatial and behavioural aspects. Integrating technology goes beyond building knowledge, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation but also supports learners in becoming an effective communicators, and developing critical thinking skills and soft skills (Yunus, 2018).

Additionally, students welcome the use of technology positively. A supportive learning environment is established with the inclusion of technology as the emphasis will shift to making learning more personalised and relevant for the varsity learners while encouraging student engagement (Elmahdi, Al-Hattami, & Fawzi, 2018; Ovbiagbonhia, Kollöffel, & Brok, 2019). Active participation in learning can be influenced with the help of technology through engaging class contents and fun activities, enabling students to communicate and socialise with peers. A technology-integrated environment is more integral for language learning rather than environments where students from universities work on tasks alone and receive negative feedback from teachers, which inhibits learning (Ghory & Ghafoory, 2021). A study conducted by Baba and Affendi (2020) also found that Malaysian students had better reading habits and an overall positive attitude towards reading when exposed to digital materials as opposed to printed texts due to students' preference for technology and accessibility. This was also evident in Pandian, Baboo and Yi (2020) study where Malaysian students were self-confident and aware of their digital media skills. Likewise, a study carried out by Azmuddin, Nor and Hamat (2020) showed that Malaysian students' learning progresses effectively with the addition of technology in the learning environment. The results of a study by Halim, Hashim and Yunus (2020) conceded that primary school pupils have higher motivation, interest, and positive perceptions towards learning English because online quiz games like Kahoot! and Quizizz provides elements of excitement, fun, and enjoyment while promoting healthy competition between individuals which makes learning more interesting.

There is a need for additional studies to assess the efficacy of technology in the teaching of languages to students in elementary schools, particularly with regard to the improvement of language abilities from the perspective of learners (Fithriani, Dewi, Daulay, Salmiah & Fransiska, 2019; Dalim, Sunar, & Billinghurst 2020). There exists a necessity to account for learners' perspectives when implementing technology in the reading classroom, as this could reveal insights about their acceptance of technology. Hoi (2020) emphasised that there is relatively little empirical evidence has been offered to understand the acceptability of technology among learners, particularly in the context of a developing country. There is not enough research investigating pupils' perceptions, especially primary school pupils towards the implementation of technology in language classrooms. In this study, the research gap is addressed by examining learners' perspectives, particularly primary school pupils' perspectives towards the integration of technology in the reading classroom. The success or failure of the integration of technology is contingent on the degree to which ESL learners are prepared to embrace technology as an educational tool (Moorthy, Yee, T’ing, & Kumaran, 2019).

Method

This study employed a survey research design conducted in a semi-urban primary school in Pahang. Survey research is the process of doing research through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents. The researcher wanted to investigate the phenomenon of pupils'
perception when dealing with technology integration to provide an understanding of the propriety of integrating technology in classrooms.

**Participants**

Seventy ESL Year 6 primary school pupils which consist of twenty-seven boys and forty-three girls participated in this study. All of the participants were of Malay race from a low socioeconomic background with a mixed level of English language proficiency. The majority of the time, the Malay language is utilised because it is the pupils’ mother tongue, whereas the English language is utilised rarely outside of the educational setting. The participants also reported having experienced learning English with the integration of technology, specifically during reading lessons.

**Research Instruments**

A set of questionnaires based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was adopted from Quadir and Zhou (2021)’s study with five points Likert scale. TAM is proven to be a reliable foundation for this study based on previous research on the evaluation of the perceptions of teachers and learners, acceptance towards technology, and interventions (Rañée & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2021). The items and scale indicators in the questionnaire were also translated into Malay language because the participants mostly communicated using their mother tongue. Translation serves the purpose of communicating the context's true meaning from English to Malay while maintaining the text's original meaning, style, and effect. To obtain a high-quality translation, attention was placed on the instrument's reliability, fluency, and suitability (Hawkins, Cheng, Elsworth, & Osborne, 2020). The translated questionnaire was evaluated by a Bahasa Malaysia teacher with 30 years of experience. The teacher had a comparatively good command of English and Malay language. This was to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire items. The participants’ parents filled in a consent form that was given out physically to the pupils to be brought home to their parents. Participants' parents were required to provide written consent of their agreement for their child's participation in the study.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through the computation of Cronbach alpha coefficients for each subscale. The outcome of the Cronbach alpha coefficients should demonstrate a reliable coefficient that is greater than 0.70 (Taber, 2018). The results of each subscale in this questionnaire are presented in Table one. All of the subscales have scores of more than 0.70, which indicates that the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 1. *Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Usefulness (PU)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude (AT)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural intention (BI)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Procedures

The research was carried out by distributing the questionnaire via Google Forms. Social media platforms which are Whatsapp and Telegram were utilised to share the link to the questionnaire as the participants were largely active using these apps. The participants were informed and briefed on the purpose and type of data collected as well as that their participation was voluntary, data was collected anonymously and confidentiality was assured. The data was collected from 11th April to 15th June 2022. IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26 and the descriptive analysis method were used to analyse the data collected.

Findings

The first section was to know the technological tools that the pupils have used in their reading classrooms. Some of the technological tools frequently used are television, smartboard, and Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) whereas some of the common technological media tools integrated during reading lessons are Youtube, Whatsapp and Telegram. Table two (refer Appendix A) shows the results of each item in the perceived usefulness section.

Most of the pupils, 45 (64.3%), perceived the use of technology in reading classrooms to be very helpful in their learning, but some of the pupils, four (5.8%), did not perceive the same. This finding signifies that pupils agree that technology improves reading skills (M=3.91, SD 1.108). Correspondingly, 41 (58.6%) of the pupils indicated that technology helps them score better during reading lessons (M=3.57, SD=1.111) because most pupils perceive that technology improves their reading skills. 46 (65.7%) of the pupils have agreed that technology makes reading easier (M=3.87, SD=1.115), in which the pupils use educational technology to simplify the understanding of a reading text. Besides, some pupils with a percentage of 36 (51.5%) find that the integration of technology is effective (M=3.67, SD=1.164). The (M=3.51, SD=1.126) shows that pupils, 33 (47.1%) equally agree that the integration of technology is also useful in reading classes. These pupils apply reading skills better with the help of technology such as educational videos and online games. Only eight (11.4%) of the pupils find the integration of technology to be ineffective in reading classes.

The next construct is the perceived ease of technology use among pupils which is shown in Table three (refer Appendix B). A large number of pupils, 52 (74.2%) with (M=4.24, SD= 1.021), strongly agree that they find it easy to use technology to look for information during reading lessons. Pupils would look for information on the meanings of words, pictures related to the text and other forms of facts that help during reading processes. Furthermore, 50 (71.5%) of the pupils agree that it is easy to become skilful in using technology (M=4.10, SD=0.976) with the teacher’s guidance during reading classrooms. This finding that pupils can be easily skilful in using technology expresses that pupils are technology savvy. On top of that, 47 (67.1%) of the pupils agree that learning to use technology is easy (M=3.87, SD= 1.115). However, two (2.9%) of the pupils find it difficult to use technology during reading lessons, whereas 43 (61.4%) believed otherwise. The (M=3.84, SD=0.973) implies that pupils agree that using technology for reading lessons is easy.

Another factor is examining pupils' attitudes towards using technology as shown in Table four(refer Appendix C). 51 (72.9%) of pupils with (M=4.24, SD=0.924) show that pupils strongly agree that the use of technology in reading classrooms increases enjoyment during the learning process. This correlates with the percentage of 50 (71.4%) and (M=4.13, SD=0.931) that indicates pupils agree with being positive toward the use of technology in reading classrooms. However,
only two (2.9%) of the pupils disagree that technology does not create enjoyment during reading lessons. Contrastingly, 45 (64.3%) of pupils with (M=3.77, SD=0.820) exhibit that pupils agree that using technology to acquire reading skills is a good idea. Besides, 46 (65.7%) of pupils agree that technology helps improve engagement during reading lessons (M=3.76, SD=0.892).

The last factor is pupils’ behavioural intention towards the use of technology in reading classrooms. The results are shown in Table five (refer Appendix D). 58 (82.8%) of pupils strongly agree with the construct of feeling confident in using technology during reading classrooms (M=4.40, SD=0.875). There are only three (4.3%) of the pupils who lack confidence in using technology. This finding corresponds to the intention of using more technology in reading classrooms where 54 (77.2%) of pupils agree with the statement (M=4.06, SD=0.961). Likewise, (M=3.83, SD=0.851) shows that 49 (70%) of pupils agree that technology should be used repeatedly during reading lessons. However, four (5.7%) of pupils do not want to use technology very frequently in reading classrooms.

According to the data collected, it can be inferred that pupils positively perceive using technology during reading lessons. The highest and lowest mean reported implying that the overall pupils' perceptions towards technology in the reading classroom are highly positive.

Discussion

The data collected from the questionnaire aims to answer the research question investigating pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in ESL reading classrooms. The results of the study indicated the plausibility of TAM as a reliable model to gauge pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in Malaysian ESL reading classrooms. The statistical analysis of pupils' perceptions revealed that the participants considered their level of acceptance moderately high, with all construct mean scores reported higher than 3.5. This was revealed by the means computed through the pupils' perception analysis. The findings imply that pupils widely embrace technology for their use in reading classes. A study by Elmahdi et al. (2018) supports the results of this study. They found that students are aware of the impact technology has on their education which boosts student involvement, shortens the amount of time spent learning and ensures equal participation opportunities while producing stimulating learning environments. Similarly, Azmuddin et al. (2020) found that digital annotation tools promoted reading comprehension among Malaysian students in an online reading environment. However, this contradicts the results of a study conducted by Yang (2020) which affirmed that students expressed their concerns when using technology as students needed support and guidance from the teachers despite the benefits that come with the use of technology. In a similar vein, another study by Bujang et al. (2020) also implied that some educators do not prefer online learning platforms due to time and difficulties constraints, although these platforms allow Malaysian students easy access to teaching materials, quizzes and tests.

Perceived Usefulness

Based on the results of this study, most pupils have a positive perception of the use of technology in the reading classroom. The positive perceptions arise from the impact of using technology when reading text, namely improving reading skills, quiz or test scores, and easing reading processes. Reading becomes easier and less demanding when integrating technology simplifies the reading processes with visual aids, videos, online games and other forms of media. A study carried out by Hasin and Nasir (2021) reflects the results of this study where the students...
have shown improvement in reading and learning performance when using multimedia and social media in the classroom. This is further supported by studies that found that the integration of technology into reading instruction has greatly boosted the quality of the students' educational experiences, enhanced text comprehension, and fostered the growth of their reading abilities (Bani-Hamad & Abdullah, 2019; Samat & Aziz, 2020).

**Perceived Ease of Use**

Results also indicate that the use of technology allows pupils to search for information easily during reading lessons. This is corroborated by Tong (2022), who discovered that pupils had a new reading experience when they had access to the most recent ideas and information on the internet. The new reading experience is interactive and engaging which has been developed through dynamic interactions with digital media. Besides, pupils agree that it is easy to become skilful in using technology. This result is consistent with the findings of Altameemi and Al-Slehat (2021) which showed that the students’ use of e-learning systems did not depend on academic qualifications or gender. Most of the pupils are IT literate and can be guided easily by teachers to use technology during reading lessons. However, the results of a study conducted by Hasin and Nasir (2021) signified that some pupils and teachers need technological training to be competent users of technology in classrooms.

**Attitude towards the Use of Technology**

The findings of this study also show pupils’ attitudes towards the use of technology in reading classrooms. The increased enjoyment that students experience in reading classrooms is significantly associated with the use of technology. This is in line with the findings of a study which revealed that the utilisation of technological tools like social media, web platforms, and multimedia has fostered the development of self-directed learning, enhanced the quality of the learning experience and improved learner engagement (Rahman et al., 2020). Likewise, Rou and Yunus (2020) reported that the technological tool, the Seesaw platform has gained Malaysian primary school pupils’ motivation and engagement to be present on a reading task as their interest in accomplishing reading tasks is aroused. Pupils are also being positive towards the use of technology in reading classrooms. The findings of this study are synonymous with Baba and Affendi (2020) where Malaysian students had better reading habits and an overall positive attitude towards reading when the students were exposed to digital materials as compared to printed texts due to students’ preference towards technology and availability.

**Behavioural Intention to Use Technology**

Apart from that, the questionnaire results show that pupils have a positive behavioral intention to use technology in reading classrooms. Pupils felt confident in using technology for reading lessons because they were well-versed in using technology. Previous research by Pandian et al. (2020) corroborated this study's findings that Malaysian students were confident in their abilities and aware of their digital media skills. Their competence in using technology, sufficient technological knowledge and problem-solving skills when working with digital devices are contributors to their confidence in using technology. Pupils also agreed that more technology should be used in reading classrooms. Students felt encouraged to learn due to the integration of technology although technology inculcation has its barriers (Ghory & Ghafory, 2021). Equivalently, Halim, Hashim and Yunus (2020) disclosed that many opportunities arise and the
learning process is enhanced with the integration of technology in language classrooms as Malaysian students are more motivated by the presence of technology and are generally technologically savvy.

**Conclusion**

This research focused on pupils' perceptions towards the use of technology in reading classrooms, specifically on Year 6 primary school pupils in a school. The highest and lowest mean reported imply that the overall pupils' perceptions towards technology in the reading classroom are highly positive. This research has shown that pupils' positive perspectives towards the use of technology emerge from the awareness of technology's impacts and confidence in using technology. However, the study was carried out only for Year 6 pupils from a school which indicates that the results of survey yielded positive for this particular group of respondents. Including more research participants would produce higher accuracy of the results. Nonetheless, the findings of this study aid teachers in developing an understanding of the impact of technology in reading classrooms from the perspective of learners who are active participants in the learning process. Their perceived usefulness, ease of use, attitude towards using technology and behavioural intention to use technology shed light on how pupils discern technology as a tool for improving their reading abilities. Additionally, the results benefit educators in exploring the appropriate technological tools and strategies to maximise language learning, particularly in reading classrooms. Perceptions and satisfaction of learners are vital and are considered favourable to the success of learning (Hromova, 2019). Hence, the results of this study are evidence to stakeholders, academic institutions, administrators and schools regarding the impact of technology on pupils' language development from the pupils' perspectives. Technical support should encourage teachers to integrate technology into reading lessons. Therefore, further research should be conducted on the impacts of using technology in reading classrooms from the perspective of pupils to collect important information on the influence of technology on language learning.

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Integrating Technology in ESL Reading Classroom

Pragasam & Sulaima


Integrating Technology in ESL Reading Classroom

Pragasam & Sulaima

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Integrating Technology in ESL Reading Classroom


Putri, S. W., & Tiarina, Y. (2021). The Effectiveness of Storybook on Students’ Reading Comprehension on First Grade Students of SMPN 2 Padang Panjang. *Journal of English Language Teaching, 10*(1), 153-159.


Sustainable Development Education and Research, 2(1), 33-34.

Appendices

Appendix A
(Perceived usefulness)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Never True of me</th>
<th>Generally Not True of me</th>
<th>Somewhat True of me</th>
<th>Generally True of me</th>
<th>Almost Always True of me</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Technology improves my reading skills.</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>21 (30.0)</td>
<td>20 (28.6)</td>
<td>25 (35.7)</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Technology helps me score better.</td>
<td>5 (7.1)</td>
<td>5 (7.1)</td>
<td>19 (27.1)</td>
<td>27 (38.6)</td>
<td>14 (20.0)</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Technology would make reading lessons easier.</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>7 (10.0)</td>
<td>15 (21.4)</td>
<td>20 (28.6)</td>
<td>26 (37.1)</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I find the integration of technology makes reading lessons more effective.</td>
<td>4 (5.7)</td>
<td>4 (5.7)</td>
<td>26 (37.1)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>23 (32.9)</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I find the integration of technology useful for reading lessons.</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>11 (15.7)</td>
<td>24 (34.3)</td>
<td>15 (21.4)</td>
<td>18 (25.7)</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B
(Perceived ease of use)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Never True of me</th>
<th>Generally Not True of me</th>
<th>Somewhat True of me</th>
<th>Generally True of me</th>
<th>Almost Always True of me</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
1. I find technology easy to use for reading lessons.  
   |   |   |   |   |   | 3.84 | 0.973 |
   | 2 | 5 | 20 | 18 | 25 |  |
   | (2.9) | (7.1) | (28.6) | (25.7) | (35.7) |  |

2. Learning how to use technology is easy for me.  
   |   |   |   |   |   | 3.97 | 1.006 |
   | 0 | 5 | 18 | 21 | 26 |  |
   | (7.1) | (25.7) | (30.0) | (37.1) |  |

3. I find it easy to use technology to look for information during reading lessons.  
   |   |   |   |   |   | 4.24 | 1.021 |
   | 0 | 5 | 13 | 12 | 40 |  |
   | (7.1) | (18.6) | (17.1) | (57.1) |  |

4. It is easy to become skillful in using technology.  
   |   |   |   |   |   | 4.10 | 0.976 |
   | 0 | 7 | 13 | 16 | 34 |  |
   | (10.0) | (18.6) | (22.9) | (48.6) |  |

Appendix C
(Attitude towards technology)

Table 4. Attitude (AT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Never True of me</th>
<th>Generally Not True of me</th>
<th>Somewhat True of me</th>
<th>Generally True of me</th>
<th>Almost Always True of me</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Acquiring reading skills using technology is a good idea.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5.7)</td>
<td>21 (30.0)</td>
<td>32 (45.7)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I enjoy using technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>17 (24.3)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>38 (54.3)</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I believe that the use of technology helps me to be more engaged during reading lessons.</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>20 (28.6)</td>
<td>33 (47.1)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am positive towards the use of technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (4.3)</td>
<td>17 (24.3)</td>
<td>18 (25.7)</td>
<td>32 (45.7)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D
(Behavioural Intention)

Table 5. Behavioural Intention (BI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Never True of me</th>
<th>Generally Not True of me</th>
<th>Somewhat True of me</th>
<th>Generally True of me</th>
<th>Almost Always True of me</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Acquiring reading skills using technology is a good idea.</td>
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<td>4 (5.7)</td>
<td>21 (30.0)</td>
<td>32 (45.7)</td>
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<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I enjoy using technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>17 (24.3)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>38 (54.3)</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I believe that the use of technology helps me to be more engaged during reading lessons.</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>2 (2.9)</td>
<td>20 (28.6)</td>
<td>33 (47.1)</td>
<td>13 (18.6)</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am positive towards the use of technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (4.3)</td>
<td>17 (24.3)</td>
<td>18 (25.7)</td>
<td>32 (45.7)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.931</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (10.0)</td>
<td>9 (12.9)</td>
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<td>27 (38.6)</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.961</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I intend to use more technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel confident in using technology in reading classrooms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (4.3)</td>
<td>9 (12.9)</td>
<td>15 (21.4)</td>
<td>43 (61.4)</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I intend to use technology repetitively during reading lessons.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (4.3)</td>
<td>17 (24.3)</td>
<td>35 (50.0)</td>
<td>14 (20.0)</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.851</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Omani Students’ Satisfaction with Independent Learning Tools during Covid-19

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Received: 11/09/2022 Accepted: 01/10/2023 Published: 01/20/2023

Abstract
Omani students were introduced to Independent Learning Tools, such as MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams, during the Covid-19 pandemic. They used these tools for their study throughout the pandemic. Hence, this research investigated how satisfied were Omani students with independent learning tools during Covid-19. This study is significant because it has pedagogical implications for all the stakeholders, such as teachers, students, and policymakers. This study adopted a quantitative research method. A self-prepared questionnaire was distributed to students for data collection. Study participants were students from Level one, Level two, Level three, and Level four of the General Foundation Program in the English Language Center at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibra, Oman. About 227 (N=227) students participated in the survey. Study findings suggest that students’ satisfaction with independent learning tools is above average. Conducting similar research studies in other Higher Educational Institutions in Oman will help make and sustain policy decisions.

Keywords: covid-19, independent learning, learning management systems, Omani students’ satisfaction

Introduction

The recent shift from traditional learning environment to student-centered learning environment integrates both the physical and virtual learning environments to foster meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students. Gunduz and Ozcan (2017) pointed out that blended learning, a combination of face-to-face teaching and an e-learning program, facilitates student-centered learning. Apart from the basic computer-based programs such as PowerPoint presentations and audio-visual education, many educational institutions have started using various digital tools in the classrooms, such as Edmodo, Socrative, Thinglink, TED-Ed, cK-12, ClassDojo, eduClipper, Storybird, Animoto, and Kahoot, widespread among teachers and learners. These tools play a fundamental role in teaching and facilitating communication between teachers and students. Also, the following digital tools perform a significant role in digital classroom management: Scratch, SelfCAD, Quizlet / Quizlet Live, Google Classroom, Adobe Spark Video, Khan Academy, Seesaw, and Class Dojo.

According to Orabah, Bijani, and Ismail's (2022) study on student-centered learning, online discussion (Moodle-based practices) was found to be the only activity that English teachers rarely used when compared to other student-centered learning-related activities before Covid-19. Teachers' justifications varied, but the most frequently cited reason was teachers' lack of Moodle knowledge. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of the integration of digital tools in teaching and learning. Students had to use digital tools, such as MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams, to attend online classes and meet the requirements of continuous assessments. During this process, these tools have provided students with opportunities for independent learning.

According to a study conducted by Allen and Seaman (2017), there were six million students who participated globally in at least one higher education online program in 2015, in contrast to 1.6 million in 2002 (cited in Kashoob & Attamimi, 2021). However, the number of students who participated in online programs increased dramatically during Covid-19. Nevertheless, few research studies have been conducted concerning Omani students’ satisfaction with independent learning tools in Oman, especially at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibra, Oman. Hence, this study aims to determine Omani students’ satisfaction with Independent Learning Tools. The study is significant because it has pedagogical implications for all the stakeholders, such as teachers, students, and policy-makers. The study adopted a quantitative research method.

The study has four objectives: To determine (1) students’ level of satisfaction with MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams, (2) the difference between the mean of two factors in students’ level of satisfaction with ILTs, (3) the difference among levels studied, (4) relationship between factors of student satisfaction. This study seeks to answer the research question of how satisfied Omani students were with independent learning tools during the Covid-19 pandemic. To answer the research question, six null hypotheses were formulated:

1. Opinion regarding the statement on students’ level of satisfaction with MyELT
2. Opinion regarding the statement on students’ level of satisfaction with Moodle
3. Opinion regarding the statement on students’ level of satisfaction with MS Teams
4. There is no significant difference between the mean of the two factors in students’ level of satisfaction with ILTs.
5. There is no significant difference among levels studied regarding factors of students’ level of satisfaction with ILTs.
6. There is no relationship between factors of student satisfaction with ILTs.
Literature Review

Learning Management System (LMS) is a web-based technology used by instructors to manage the teaching and learning process. Although LMS has been used in different sectors, the educational sector got benefitted a lot during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research studies, in general, show that online learning has increased significantly ever since the COVID-19 pandemic hit globally in 2020. Every educational institution moved into online teaching mode using various online platforms, such as MS Teams and Google, to ensure continuity of teaching and learning. One of the main advantages of the advancement of online teaching tools is that students can learn anywhere or at any time. Rojabi (2020) and Wichanpricha (2021) argued that using a platform like MS Teams allows students to improve all four components (reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills) in learning English as it will enable students to converse with the facilitator during the video conference or leave a message in the chat. However, one of the main questions is whether this vital tool optimizes learning for students who have never done or even trained to be part of an entire online learning course. Salih and Omar (2020) concluded in their research that more than 50% of the students in their study have positive views about online learning. Still, it comes with many challenges, which made the experience challenging for some. This finding does not come as a surprise, as the switch to full-time online learning happened without warning, and most students weren’t ready for the sudden switch. A few recent studies have shown common issues that EFL students face during video conferences online classes, such as weak internet, problems with devices, insufficient time to discuss in class, and lack of reply from their facilitators (Salih & Omar, 2020; Rojabi, 2020; Wichanpricha, 2021).

Previous studies point out that Moodle is one of the most used LMS in the educational industry as a form of supplementary platform even before the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because Moodle allows educators to create personalized digital lesson materials and exercises to cater to their students’ needs. A study conducted by Acar and Kayaoglu (2020) pointed out that Moodle can play a positive role in the revision and reinforcement of what is taught in English lessons. In addition, it could be used as a supplementary tool to motivate students as it moves beyond the traditional method of paper and pen learning. Al Bataineh, Banikalef, and Albashtawi’s (2019) study also revealed that blended learning could help students improve their computer skills and understand their lessons better in more relaxed settings that account for all differences. Buczek-Zawila’s (2021) study findings showed that Moodle online assessments eliminated the fear of failure and poor self-esteem of students as they could confidently attempt the exercises multiple times, which could encourage positive reinforcement of independent learning among students. Ghounane’s (2020) study also confirmed that Moodle provided a safe environment for students and teachers to conduct assessment activities and share feedback.

Alameri, Masadeh, Hamadallah, Ismail, & Fakhouri (2020) studied E-learning platforms (Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom platforms) at the University of Jordan Education and their Relation to self-study and Academic Achievement during the Covid-19 pandemic. His study argued that “e-learning using Moodle, Microsoft teams, and Zoom platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic is highly known to respondents and has a positive effect on their self-study and academic achievement.” (p. 31). A similar study by Kashoob (2021) explored Omani EFL Students' Perceptions of the Newly Adopted Online Learning Platforms at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Salalah. The findings of the study suggested that “the online learning environment is very conducive in motivating them towards learning English through an admittedly complex and challenging framework, that not all members of a learning community can take...
comprehensive advantage of.” The studies carried out by Alameri and Kashoob confirmed that MS Teams, and Moodle have positive effects on learner autonomy.

Unlike Moodle, MyELT is a platform (created by National Geographic) where teachers do not need to prepare and upload any materials, but only monitor the usage. According to a research study by Tayşı and Başaran (2018), including MyELT as part of the LMS keeps students motivated in English language learning. A similar study by Ali, Kalarikkal, Ismail, and Oumayma Khenfer (2021) has demonstrated that the more students use MyELT, the more knowledge they gain. The previous studies suggest that independent learning tools such as MS Teams, Moodle, and MyELT have been practical and valuable for students.

In the Omani context, higher educational institutions incorporated various digital tools to continue teaching and learning during the pandemic. For example, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Oman integrated digital tools such as MS Teams, Moodle, and MyELT for teaching and learning purposes. A study conducted, during the pandemic, by Chinnathambi et al. (2021), concluded that “the abrupt transition from face-to-face to online teaching has not obstructed teaching and learning”. Other studies by the same author (2022a) and (2022b) at UTAS-Ibra, Oman, confirmed that online teaching via digital tools positively affects teaching and learning. Findings of the research conducted by Kashoob (2021), and Alameri et al. (2020) validated that MS Teams and Moodle have been very conducive to motivating students and promoting self-study among students. Another study by Ali et al. (2021) at UTAS-Ibra, Oman, suggested that My ELT has played a crucial role in helping students gain more knowledge. Few research studies were conducted regarding Omani students’ satisfaction with independent learning tools. This study aims to fill the research gap.

**Method**

The study adopted a quantitative research method. As this method was suitable to answer the research question, a questionnaire was distributed via Moodle to students to collect numerical data.

**Participants**

The students who participated in the survey were from the General Foundation Program (GFP) in English Language Centre at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibra, Sultanate of Oman, during the academic year 2021-22. About 227 students from Level one, Level two, Level three, and Level four participated in the survey. The study participants were from the Sharqiyyah region, and they shared similar regional, cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds. A simple random sampling method was used to collect data.

**Research Instruments**

A questionnaire with close-ended questions was used as a research tool to collect data. The questions were prepared based on classroom experience to answer the research question and aims. A random sampling method was used to collect data. After proper validation and proven reliability, the questionnaire was distributed to the study participants to collect data. Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis and interpretation.
**Research Procedures**

The data collected from the partakers were coded and entered into SPSS to find out Students’ level of satisfaction with independent learning tools. Statistical descriptions and graphs of students’ satisfaction with independent learning tools were demonstrated through SPSS analysis. The format was a five-part Likert scale varying from one (‘strongly disagree’) to five (‘strongly agree’ in response to specific statements regarding students’ perceptions of the use and efficacy of writing error correction symbols. Biographical information obtained via the questionnaire was included, such as age, gender, location, and levels studied. The findings were analyzed and displayed as statistics, bar charts and graphs. Figures one and two given below are the results of normality tests. The figures show the graphical representation of the normal distribution.

![Figure 1. Density](image1.png)

![Figure 2. Histogram](image2.png)

**Findings**

Table 1. *Frequency Distribution of Four Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>29.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 1, Levels one and two have the highest number of respondents, with 67 and 68 students, respectively. On the other hand, Levels three and four have 45 and 47 respondents, respectively.

Table 2: *Opinion Regarding Statement on Students’ Level of Satisfaction with MyELT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on MyELT</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
According to the findings, the grand mean score of all statements on the level of satisfaction with MyELT is 3.66, which proves that the students’ level of satisfaction is above average. The p-value is <0.01. From this result, it can be inferred that this tool has promoted independent learning among students and is proven effective in advocating autonomous education among students. This result is an added advantage to the administration to sustain the use of this tool as a continuous support to learner autonomy.

Table 3. Opinion Regarding Statement on Students’ Level of Satisfaction with Moodle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on Moodle</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>5.2791</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>5.1788</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.5517</td>
<td>0.1221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.6939</td>
<td>0.09161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2.7694</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the result, the mean scores of three statements on the level of satisfaction with Moodle are above average. From the mean score of 3.40, 3.36, and 3.21, it is evident that students confirm: (a) it is easy to find the learning materials, (b) enough materials are available for them, and (c) the teacher’s feedback on their written output is easily accessible. The p-value is <0.01. In the case of the other two statements, the mean score is 3.12 and 3.14, which indicates that the level of satisfaction is nearly above average, and the p-value is above the 5% level of significance, 0.12 and 0.09, respectively. Overall, this tool has contributed to learner autonomy. Hence, it is recommended to sustain the use of Moodle.

Table 4. Opinion Regarding the Statement on Students’ Level of Satisfaction with MS Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement on MS Teams</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS1</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>9.2188</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS2</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.9843</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the findings, the grand mean score of all statements on the level of satisfaction with MS Teams is 3.59, which proves that the students’ level of satisfaction is above average. The p-value is <0.01. It is clear that this tool has promoted independent learning among students and is effective in advocating autonomous learning among students. This result is an added advantage to the administration to sustain the use of this tool as a continuous support to learner autonomy.

Table 5. There is no significant difference between the means of the two factors in Students’ Level of Satisfaction with Independent Learning Tools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two Factors</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T Value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELT Moodle</td>
<td>18.28418</td>
<td>4.696967</td>
<td>9.0708</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT MS Teams</td>
<td>18.28418</td>
<td>4.696967</td>
<td>1.6972</td>
<td>0.09099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moodle MS Teams</td>
<td>16.21761</td>
<td>4.618562</td>
<td>-8.2749</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. ** denotes significant at 1% level.

The result shows a significant difference between the means of MyELT and Moodle (18.28 and 16.12) and between Moodle, and MS Teams (16.22 and 17.97). The p-value is <0.01 and the t-value is 9.07 and 8.27. This implies that students do not share the same level of satisfaction regarding the above-said factors. Regarding MyELT and Moodle, students did MyELT activities weekly compared to Moodle. Similarly, in the case of Moodle and MS Teams, students did more activities regularly on MS Teams than on Moodle. This is because students chose the assignments or activities on Moodle, unlike the other two platforms, where they had specific activities to complete every week. On the other hand, there is no significant difference between MyELT and MS Teams (18.28 and 17.97). The p-value is 0.09, and the t-value is 1.69. All students are equally satisfied with MyELT and MS Teams as the best independent learning tools.

Table 6. There is no significant difference among levels studied regarding the factors of Students’ Level of Satisfaction with Independent Learning Tools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyELT</td>
<td>19.42 (3.17)</td>
<td>18.57 (5.14)</td>
<td>18.17 (5.28)</td>
<td>16.31 (4.93)</td>
<td>3.258</td>
<td>0.0127 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. ** denotes significant at 1% level.
The findings show that there is a significant difference among students studying at different levels regarding MyELT ($F = 3.26, p < 0.05$), Moodle ($F = 4.32, p < 0.01$), MS Teams ($F = 4.52, p < 0.01$), and Overall Satisfaction Level ($F = 4.38, p < 0.01$). The result suggests that students of all four levels do not share a similar opinion on the use of the three independent learning tools. A close look at the mean score of each factor, it is found that Levels one, two, and three are highly satisfied with MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams. However, the mean score of Level four is comparatively less than the other levels. This may be because the number of assignments and activities assigned to Level four in each of these independent learning platforms were comparatively more and time-consuming, which might have affected the students’ level of satisfaction. Even though the mean score of Level four is low, the data inference shows a positive impact on students from Level one to Level four, so it is recommended to sustain the use of all three independent learning tools.

**Table 7. There is no relationship between factors of student satisfaction with Independent Learning tools.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>ELT</th>
<th>MOODLE</th>
<th>MS Teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOODLE</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Teams</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The findings reveal that the correlation between MyELT and Moodle is 0.72, which indicates $(0.72^2 = 0.5184)$ 51.84 percent strong positive relationship between MyELT and Moodle. The correlation between MyELT and MS Teams is 0.82, which means $(0.82^2 = 0.6724)$ 67.24 percent strong positive relationships between MyELT and MS Teams. The correlation between MS Teams and Moodle, is 0.78, which means $(0.78^2 = 0.6084)$, 60.84 percent strong positive relationships between MyELT and Moodle. Since the p-value is <0.01, there is a strong positive correlation between factors of independent learning tools. This means that students have expressed a similar opinion regarding independent learning tools as they directly contribute to the development of learner autonomy.
Summary of the findings

The grand mean score of MyELT (3.66), MS Teams (3.59), and the mean scores of Moodle (3.4, 3.36, 3.21, 3.12, and 3.14), show up that the level of satisfaction of students is above average. There is a significant difference between means of MyELT and Moodle (18.28 and 16.12) and between Moodle, and MS Teams (16.22 and 17.97). It is evident from the differences that the students are more satisfied with MyELT and MS Teams than Moodle. Similarly, the difference among students studying different levels does not affect Omani students’ satisfaction with independent learning tools. The correlation study also confirms that students benefit from the independent learning tools. Overall, the study findings show that the students are satisfied with independent learning tools.

Discussion

This study attempted to answer the research question of how satisfied Omani students were with independent learning tools during Covid-19. To answer the research question, six null hypotheses were formulated. According to the results of the null hypotheses, the level of satisfaction of students with MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams is above average. Although there were slight differences among the levels studied and the mean of two factors concerning independent learning tools, overall result is that the students are satisfied with MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams. It is evident that independent learning tools such as MyELT, Moodle, and MS Teams promote independent learning among students and play a significant role in developing learner autonomy. The results of the quantitative data collected from 277 participants also confirm previous research findings that (a) MS Teams promoted effective learning (Rojabi, 2020; Wichanpricha, 2021; Kashoob, 2021; Alameri et al., 2020), (b) Moodle, as a supplementary tool, help students revise and reinforce the lessons learned in the class, improve their computer skills and help understand their lessons better (Acar & Kayaoglu’s, 2020; Buczek-Zawila, 2021; Kashoob, 2021; Alameri et al., 2020; Al Bataineh, Banikalef & Albashtawi, 2019), and (c) MyELT helps students gain more knowledge and affects students’ motivational level positively (Tayşi & Başaran, 2018; Ali et al., 2021). However, the present study has limitations. The data were collected only from UTAS-Ibra, Oman. Therefore, the study results cannot be generalized for all the institutes in Oman.

Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate how satisfied Omani students were with independent learning tools. The findings of the study show that students’ satisfaction with the use of independent learning tools such as Moodle, MyELT, and MS Teams is above average. Although students were more satisfied with MyELT and MS Teams than Moodle, study results clearly show that all these tools have promoted independent learning among students and have proven effective in advocating autonomous education among students. Hence it is recommended to sustain this practice to encourage learner autonomy among the students in General Foundation Program at UTAS-Ibra. Also, conducting similar studies in other higher educational institutes in Oman will help in policy decision makings.
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