## 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>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Structure and the Distribution of Phraseological Units in Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate EFL Textbooks  
  Jana Kamenická, Zdena Kráľová & Alexandra Grmanová | 3-16   |
| Effects of Motivation, Proficiency, and Gender on Saudi EFL Learners’ Utilization of Language Learning Strategies  
  Noha Almansour & Maram Almaneeea | 17-29  |
| English Language Awareness of Distance and Face-to-Face Learners in Turkish Higher Education  
  Emine Kuluşaklı & Gülten Genç | 30-43  |
| Foreign Language Teaching Methods in Task-Based Learning  
  Farida Shukurova | 44-55  |
| A Metapragmatic Analysis of Iraqi and American Political Legal Discourse  
  Saleema Abdulzahra Naait & Iman Mingher Alshemmery | 56-76  |
| Expanding Horizons: Harnessing Social Media Platforms to Teach English as a Second Language  
  Nermeen Singer | 77-90  |
| A pragmatic Analysis of Effective Political Communication from a Relevance-Theoretic Perspective  
  Hind Sabah Alrufaiey & Angham Abdulkadhim Alrikabi | 91-116 |
| A Contrastive Investigation into the Non-native Speakers of English Academicians’ Academic Writing Cognitions and Challenges in the First and Second Languages  
  Zeynep CANLI & Oktay YAĞIZ | 117-131 |
| Enhancing Translation Competence: Investigating Summarization Impact on English/French to Arabic Translation.  
  Ismail Abdulwahhab Ismail | 132-143 |
| Investigating Saudi EFL Female University Students’ Command of Journalistic Writing: An SFL-based Study on Textual Organization  
  Abdulmohsin A. Alshehri | 144-165 |
| Using Infographics as An Educational Technology Tool in EFL Writing: University of Baghdad Case Study  
  Farah Muayad Issa | 166-181 |
| Investigating the Professional Needs of Undergraduate Translation Students at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University  
  Eman Rashed Alkatheery, Dania Adel Salamah & Ghuzayyil Mohammed Al-Otaibi | 182-213 |
| An Investigation of How Foundation Learners Perceive Their Use of Learning Strategies  
  Namirah Mohd Akahsah , Najwa Azizun , Bharathi Vijayan , Hariati Ibrahim @ Musa , Muhammad Ridhwan Saleh , Noor Hanim Rahmat | 214-232 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Positive Effect of the English Reading Circle Method on Students’ Reading Performance: Tishk University Case Study</td>
<td>Turgay Kucuk</td>
<td>233-244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error Analysis of Written English Paragraphs by Kurdish and Arab Students: A Comparative Study</td>
<td>Sami Hussein Hakeem Barzani &amp; Awat Birqe Muho Baiz</td>
<td>258-268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties Faced by Undergraduate Students in English Public Speaking at a Malaysian University</td>
<td>Ahmad Taufik Hidayah Abdullahp &amp; Isyaku Hassan</td>
<td>269-282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Students’ Perceptions Towards 21st Century Skills Through Novel Applications: A Comparative Study among EFL Learners in Iraq</td>
<td>Recep Bilgin</td>
<td>283-297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian Students’ Perceptions towards Using Peer Feedback to Cultivate Evaluative Judgement of Argumentative Writing</td>
<td>Xiao Xie, Vahid Nimechisalem, Mei Fung Yong &amp; Ngee Thai Yap</td>
<td>298-313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects of Intensive English Podcast Listening on High School Students’ Comprehension Skills and Impact on Learning Motivations</td>
<td>Ebubekir Bozavlı</td>
<td>314-326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Digital Approach to Teach Synthesis Writing for a Defence University: A Needs Analysis</td>
<td>Emily Abd Rahman, Melor Md Yunus, Harwati Hashim &amp; Nur Khadirah Ab. Rahman</td>
<td>327-351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing EFL Communication: Speech Act Theory and the Communicative Approach</td>
<td>Syed Sarwar Hussain &amp; Abdulwadood Khan</td>
<td>384-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Decadal Examination of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning in EFL/ESL Development: A Systematic Review</td>
<td>Zinat A Tabassum &amp; Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad</td>
<td>401-422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Structure and the Distribution of Phraseological Units in Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate EFL Textbooks

Jana Kamenická
Department of English, Faculty of Education
J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic
Corresponding Author: janey.kamenicka@gmail.com

Zdena Kráľová
Department of English Language and Culture, Faculty of Education
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
&
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Humanities
Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic

Alexandra Grmanová
Department of English Language and Culture, Faculty of Education
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia

Received: 10/20/2023 Accepted: 01/08/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
The knowledge of native phrases and idiomatic expressions is considered to be an essential aspect of one’s fluency in a foreign language and can advance learners toward more excellent proficiency in foreign language acquisition. However, not much research has been dedicated to how they are implemented in the school textbooks. This research work aims to examine the occurrence of phraseological units in the four selected English textbooks for B1 and B2 levels, which are recommended for use at secondary grammar schools and secondary vocational schools in Slovakia by the Ministry of Education. They aim to prepare the secondary school learners for their final school-leaving exams – which are based on and in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages requirements for the specific proficiency levels. To fill the gap in present studies, a detailed analysis was implemented, which included not only the exercises explicitly aimed at phraseological units but also the parts of the textbook, which dealt with the formulaic language implicitly. The main question posed dealt with the categories of phraseological units and their distribution in the analyzed textbooks. Phraseological units were identified, classified, analyzed, and counted by quantitative content analysis. The results showed that although there were phraseological units found in all analyzed textbooks, their distribution and classification differed significantly. Once they were included in the very limited number and variety of exercises, they were never used or mentioned again. Moreover, their explanation was absent or insufficient. The listed findings indicate that learners might encounter significant issues when trying to advance toward higher EFL proficiency levels.

Keywords: distribution, Intermediate EFL textbooks, phraseological units, structure, Upper-Intermediate EFL textbooks

**Introduction**

Phraseology is unique to every language as it echoes the reflection of extra-lingual reality in the given society. In fact, up to fifty percent of conversation comprises formulaic language (Schmitt, 2017). Mastering phraseology is thus inevitable for the development of foreign language communicative competence (Cowie, 2005; Fiedler, 2007; Kráľová & Lengyelfalusy, 2010; O’Dell & McCarthy, 2010, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; Schmitt, 2017). Even though they play an important role, when it comes to one’s fluency in a foreign language and advance toward more excellent proficiency in foreign language acquisition, not much research has been dedicated in the past to how the phraseological units are implemented in the textbooks aimed for the use at schools nor self-study. This paper aims to analyze the occurrence of phraseological units in the selected English textbooks for B1 and B2 levels – which are recommended for use at secondary grammar schools and secondary vocational schools in Slovakia by the Ministry of Education. They aim to prepare the secondary school learners for their final school-leaving exams – which are based on and in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2023) requirements for the specific proficiency levels. We aim to examine what categories of phraseological units are included in the textbooks, what their distribution is, and how they are incorporated in the textbooks. To fill the gap in research in this field, the analysis included not only the exercises explicitly aimed at phraseological units, but also the parts of the textbook, which dealt with the formulaic language rather implicitly. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated and will be answered:

1. What categories of phraseological units are included in the selected textbooks?
2. What is the frequency and distribution of phraseological units in the selected textbooks?
3. How are the phraseological units incorporated in the textbooks?

**Literature Review**

**Phraseological Units**

Despite a clear definition of phraseologisms as stable combinations of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning (Kunin, 1970), the authors use various terms for them – phraseological expression, phraseme, set expression, set phrase, idiomatic phrase, multi-word expression, or simply, idiom (Macis & Schmitt, 2017; Meľčuk, 2012; Quirk et al., 1985).

In the current study, Aisenstadt’s (1981) classification of phraseological units was applied – distinguishing the following categories of idiomatic expressions: idioms, phrasal verbs, similes, routine formulae, irreversible binomials, proverbs, slogans, and clichés – as further explained in the following lines.

- **Idioms:** groupings of two or more words, which when combined, produce different meaning to that of when separated into individual words, e.g., *domino effect, every Tom, see red, as dead as a doornail, on cloud nine, Bless your cotton socks!*.
- **Phrasal verbs:** combinations of words which, in a sentence, act as a single verb. The meaning is different when combined with the individual words, e.g., *get on; take over; get on with.*
- **Similes:** phrases that compare two things, using the words *like* or *as*, e.g., *a face like a mask; as white as snow.*
- **Routine formulae:** heterogeneous category of expressions specialized according to the conversation having a phatic function, e.g., *many happy returns; Merry Christmas.*
Irreversible binomials: pairs of words characterized by their fixed order, usually linked by conjunction, preposition, hyphen, e.g., bish-bosh; hustle and bustle, okey dokey.

Proverbs: sayings through which traditional folk wisdom, truths and cultural norms are expressed, e.g., actions speak louder than words; every cloud has a silver lining; let sleeping dog lie.

Slogans: memorable words or phrases that catch listener/reader’s attention, e.g., ‘Just Do It’, ‘Finger licking good’, ‘Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité’.

Clichés: expressions or a phrases that, due to an extensive overuse, have become meaningless and lack interest and originality, e.g., think outside the box, loose cannon.

Furthermore, in our analysis, three more categories will be included – as follows:

- Collocations: combinations of words, which occur very frequently in a language, e.g., resounding success, crying shame (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2023).

- Metaphors: phrases or a words that describe somebody/something with the purpose of showing that two things have very similar qualities, e.g., she has a heart of stone, a game of football (i.e., the competitive struggle of life) (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2023).

- Dependent prepositions: prepositions, which are naturally and very frequently used with specific nouns, adjectives, and verbs, e.g., sick and tired of (i.e., I get sick and tired of the same old routine.), have a word with (i.e., I could have a word with the guy who’s responsible for the course.) (British Council, n.d.).

Foreign Language Textbooks

Richards (n.d.) claims that in the majority of schools, textbooks are a vital part of the teaching procedure – as they, amongst other things, set the classroom language. Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes that although market offers many different EFL textbooks, not all of them will be suitable for all students.

Cunningsworth (1995) and Richards (n.d.) both recommend that the objectives of the EFL course must be identified prior to selecting textbooks. Cunningsworth (1995) proposes that an initial glance through a textbook is enough to gain the overall gist of it. Like this, one shall consider the book's layout, grammar, vocabulary and topics included, illustrations provided and how visually pleasing the textbook is (Cunningsworth, 1995). Richards (n.d.) claims that when evaluating the appropriateness of a textbook, one must firstly establish who the teacher is, who the students are, and what role the book has and/or will have in the learning process.

One of the tasks of this work is to examine the appropriateness of the phraseological units found in selected textbooks. We shall, therefore, investigate CEFR (Council of Europe, 2023) and National Curriculum (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022) to gain more profound knowledge of proficiency levels and language competence. For the age group suitability, we shall search the publishers’ websites. CEFR includes idiomatic expressions in its band descriptions (Council of Europe, n.d.) – which, one might argue, validates the inclusion of idioms in school textbooks.

Across Europe, it offers a common starting point for language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks. It defines what language learners should learn to be able to communicate and what knowledge and skills they must have for good self-conduct. CEFR specifies levels of proficiency – which makes it easier to monitor the stages of the learner’s improvement (A1 – Breakthrough, A2 – Waystage, B1 – Threshold, B2 – Vantage, C1 - Effective
Operational Proficiency, C2 – Mastery). The knowledge of idioms and collocations is specified at the highest three levels:

- C2: “Has a good command of an extensive lexical repertoire, including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 131)
- C1: “Has a good command of common idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; can play with words/signs reasonably well.” (Council of Europe, 2020, ibid.)
- B2: “Can produce appropriate collocations of many words/signs in most contexts reasonably systematically.” (Council of Europe, 2020, ibid.)

Suitability of a textbook for the specific age groups of learners is usually decided by the author and the publisher (Myrick, 2016). However, looking at the age group assignment of the textbook itself is probably the safest route in establishing the appropriateness of the textbook for certain levels of learners. Right from the beginning of writing the textbook, the authors and publishers always bear in mind the age of the learner and the aptness of the said book. This age level allocation is nearly always found on the front cover of the textbook and the publisher's website.

In the case of New Success textbooks, the publisher informs on their website that these course books are “specifically designed for students age 14-20 years” (Pearson, 2022). Oxford University Press (2015) asserts that their New Headway is a six-part general English course for secondary and language schools.

Here, we must refer to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education governs schools and school facilities in Slovak Republic through generally binding rules and by providing vocational guidance. The study at the Higher Education institutions in the Slovak Republic is governed by the Act on higher education (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, n.d.). The mentioned act comprises binding rules issued by the Ministry of Education, that guide every level of learner’s scholarly progress. To add, the Ministry of Education also recommends English textbooks on their website. Secondary vocational schools in Slovakia tend to set their Maturita (Final School Leaving Exam) at the B1 (sometimes students can select B2) proficiency level. Grammar schools’ proficiency level in Slovakia is usually higher, at the B2 proficiency level.

**Phraseological Units in EFL Textbooks**

Concerning the EFL learners, to understand books, newspapers, magazines, films, TV shows, songs, and English humor, they must learn many phraseological units. Idiomatic language is so prevalent it cannot be ignored at school and education in general. Wray (2000) argues that to become a successful language learner, it is crucial for the learner to master formulaic sequences that include idioms, collocations, and compounds. Undoubtedly, the knowledge of native phrases and idiomatic expressions is an integral part of one’s fluency in a foreign language (Boers et al., 2006; Cain et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2009; Teodorescu, 2015), and thus, advances learners toward more excellent proficiency in foreign language acquisition.

However, not much attention from researchers has been dedicated to the actual occurrence of phraseological units in the EFL textbooks and how they are implemented in the learning texts. In Finland, Ikonen (2021) studied the idiom frequency in the vocabulary lists, which were included in the two Finnish upper secondary school textbook series. The examined textbook series were published by the biggest educational publishers in Finland and included On Track (by
Sanorama Pro) and Insights (by Otava). Although the study’s author concluded that the On Track series included more idioms and the Insights series had idioms spread more evenly, the analysis showed a rather low idiom frequency – especially in the Insight series. In addition, the analysis examined the idioms included in the vocabulary lists only – excluding other parts of the textbooks. The author of the study herself calls for a more detailed approach, where the whole books would be examined.

In Iran, Alavi and Rajabpoor (2015) examined the frequency of the occurrence of English idioms in three ILI Advanced level textbooks. Based on their analysis, the authors concluded that the idioms chosen for these Advanced level books did not meet the necessary frequency criteria.

According to researchers, concerning issues associated with teaching and learning phraseological units, there are several drawbacks and limitations in the textbooks concerning their presentation and choice. Regarding their presentation, in most cases, the idioms are provided rather incidentally through the textbooks and are not presented by their shared meanings or themes (Boers, 2013). Therefore, the semantic approaches, which are based on the classification of idioms according to metaphors, their source domains, and origins can enhance idiom learning and deeper retention (Boers, 2013). Another drawback is the fact the existing teaching materials and references for idioms are mostly based on the intuition of the teaching materials creators (Rafatbakhsh & Ahmadi, 2019). Only a couple of textbooks developed for TEFL have implemented the more corpus-based approaches to select vocabulary and idioms – which is believed to be more reliable (Minugh, 2002; Liu, 2003; Simpson & Mendis, 2003; Grant, 2005; Gardner & Davis, 2007). A very good example of such textbooks is undoubtedly the English in Use series by Cambridge University – where the authors included numerous examples of phrasal verbs, idioms, and collocations. These are frequent in the English language based on the examination of a 250-million-word corpus of English – both spoken and written, which was based on newspapers, magazines, novels, and other public sources (Alavi & Rajabpoor, 2015).

In the context of Slovak secondary grammar and vocational schools, as recommended by the Ministry of Education, the intermediate and upper-intermediate New Success (by Pearson) and New Headway (by Oxford University Press) textbooks are used daily – as they cover various aspects of EFL. However, there is rarely space for the use of additional teaching materials, which would be primarily aimed at phraseological units. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been done research examining the intermediate and upper-intermediate New Success and New Headway textbooks for the frequency and distribution of phraseological units in their complexity as such, nor in the context of Slovak B1 and B2 EFL learners.

Method

Quantitative content analysis was used to establish the occurrence of phraseological units in the selected textbooks as the analysis focused on measuring and interpreting the data (Krippendorff, 2004). The units and the categories of analysis were established, and the data were categorized and analyzed (Cohen et al., 2018). The data was collected from exercises specifically designed to introduce phraseological units to students but also from other texts and articles within each textbook. Therefore, headlines and articles as well as different types of exercises (not designed to practice phraseological units) were scrutinized, too.

Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to examine selected textbooks for phraseological units, which could then be sorted according to their classification. Thus, we could find out which
class of phraseological units is the most frequently recurring in the textbooks. Other questions posed were whether phraseological units were present in all chosen textbooks and what their distribution per book’s chapter was. The phraseological units were located, classified, and manually counted in four textbooks and then written into a pre-prepared MS Word table. The textbooks were also examined for any exercises aiming to practice the use of phraseological units and other texts which were not primarily aimed at the practice of phraseological units, and then compared for any significant differences.

**Participants**

The four most frequently used student books in Slovakia for B1 and B2 levels (CEFR, 2020) by two different publishers were selected and analyzed:

- *New Success Intermediate – Student’s Book* (B1), Pearson (McKinlay & Hastings, 2012);
- *New Headway Intermediate – Student’s Book* (B1), Oxford University Press (Soars & Soars, 2019a);
- *New Success Upper-Intermediate – Student’s Book* (B2), Pearson (Moran, 2012);
- *New Headway Upper-Intermediate – Student’s Book* (B2), Oxford University Press (Soars & Soars, 2019b);

The textbooks are approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (Edičný portál, 2021) for teaching at secondary grammar schools and secondary vocational schools in Slovakia.

**Results**

The final count of the phraseological units in the four chosen textbooks is shown in Table One. Naturally, the number of phraseological units is higher in Upper Intermediate levels of both book series – since the use of idiomatic language as a part of language competences is not expected until the B2 level (Council of Europe, 2020). A wide range of categories can be found in the textbooks, and their number differs from book to book, collocations and routine formulae being the most frequent ones in all books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal verbs</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idioms</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocations</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine formulae</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs/Maxims</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irreversible binomials</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slogans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clichés</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent prepositions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented above, the most frequent phraseological units in both upper-intermediate textbooks were collocations, followed by routine formulae and idioms. In intermediate textbooks, routine formulae occurred most frequently, followed by collocations. There were no metaphors or similes identified within the intermediate books.

The following graphs (Figure One – Four) display the frequency and distribution of the most frequent categories in the analyzed textbook per unit. There is no chapter in the analyzed textbook without a phraseological unit. However, only routine formulae are consistently present in all units in each textbook. Collocations and phrasal verbs occur in almost every unit of the books with one or two instances in units containing focused exercises. Idioms and dependent prepositions were more or less symmetrically distributed throughout the individual units of all four books. However, there are only a few dependent prepositions in the New Headway Upper-Intermediate textbook.

Figure 1. The occurrence of phraseological units in New Success Intermediate

Figure 2. The occurrence of phraseological units in New Headway Intermediate
The analysis of the textbooks indicated that exercises specifically designed to practice phraseological units are present in all textbooks examined. These mainly were cloze exercises, such as gap filling and matching, introducing phraseological units, and then asking the student to practice them. However, these practices were not regularly spaced within the books and more significant number of the phraseological units was extracted from articles and texts, which were not directly aimed at the phraseological units practice. For example, routine formulae were collected from pages specifically designed for conversation. In the New Headway, this section is called ‘Everyday English’; in New Success textbook, this section is named ‘Speak Out’. In the following table, we offer an overview of the total number of phraseological units detected in the following types of activities:

- Reading,
- Conversation (speaking + listening) – New Success Intermediate: Speak out, New Headway series: Everyday English,
- Exercises (reading + writing + listening) – including gap filling, matching, finding, completing, and sorting.

Table 2. The occurrence of phraseological units in the analyzed textbooks in specific types of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented above, the number of texts, which are not exercises aimed at phraseological units – yet include them, is almost double. To add, once the phraseological units were practiced in the exercises, they were never used or mentioned in the textbooks again. This leads us to the speculation presented in the following lines.

Discussion

To answer our first research question, the most frequent categories of phraseological units that were found in both upper-intermediate textbooks include collocations, followed by routine formulae and idioms. There were few metaphors, proverbs and maxims, similes, clichés, slogans, and quotes. In intermediate textbooks, routine formulae occurred most frequently, followed by collocations. There were no metaphors or similes identified within the intermediate books. Interestingly, New Headway Intermediate contained 27 clichés and the other books (except for one cliché in New Success Upper-Intermediate) contained none. We emphasize this as there was an exercise in New Headway Intermediate devised for practicing these.

To answer our second research question, which was concerned with the frequency and distribution of phraseological units, it can be summarized that there is no chapter in the analyzed textbook without a phraseological unit. However, only routine formulae were found to be consistently present in all units in each textbook. Collocations and phrasal verbs occur in almost every unit of the books with one or two cases in units containing focused exercises. Idioms and dependent prepositions were more or less symmetrically distributed throughout the individual units of all four books. However, there are only a few dependent prepositions in the New Headway Upper-Intermediate textbook. All in all, when compared to the results of the analysis done by Alavi and Rajabpoor (2015) and by Ikonen (2021), which dealt exclusively with idioms, it can be concluded that the frequency and distribution of phraseological units in the analyzed textbooks is rather satisfactory – especially when it comes to the idioms, but also phrasal verbs, collocations, routine formulae, and dependent prepositions (except the New Headway Upper Intermediate). On the other hand, the frequency and distribution of metaphors, proverbs/maxims, irreversible
binomials (except the New Headway Upper Intermediate), similes, slogans, and clichés, were very limited.

To answer our third research question, the phraseological units were incorporated in the examined textbooks as follows. All of the textbooks included exercises specifically designed to practice phraseological units – which were mostly cloze exercises, such as gap filling and matching, introducing phraseological units, and then asking the student to practice them. However, such exercises were not regularly distributed over the units in the textbook. A more significant number of the phraseological units was present in articles and other texts, which were aimed at practicing other aspects of language, e.g. speaking and reading. The number of such texts is almost double – when compared to the number of exercises explicitly aimed at phraseological units. Another issue that was noticed during the analysis is that the chosen phraseological units were included in the exercises just once, but were never mentioned again in the following pages of the textbook.

Our examination revealed that the distribution of phraseological units was rather uneven and incidental – i.e. not sorted according to their shared themes, which is in line with Boers (2013). This might be the indicator of the fact that the choice of phraseological units was intuition-based, at least to a certain extent. We are well aware of the fact that very often learning becomes a goal in itself – especially when the learners are expected to learn huge amounts of material in short periods of time. Alavi and Rajabpoor (2015) explain that learners might tend to become more selective in learning, preferring to spend their learning time on items, that occur more frequently in the language and are more practical. Therefore, we would like to emphasize that adopting more semantic approaches when designing the EFL textbooks could be more convenient, as proposed by Boers (2013). In addition, the implementation of corpus-based approaches to select vocabulary and phraseological units – as proposed by several authors (Minugh, 2002; Liu, 2003; Simpson & Mendis, 2003; Grant, 2005; Gardner & Davis, 2007), could prove more reliable – especially when it comes to the objectivity of the resulting selection.

Concerning our research findings, we would like to emphasize the importance of the use of additional materials to increase the learners’ fluency and proficiency in a foreign language. Especially regarding the phraseological units, we recommend the English in Use series by Cambridge University, which covers a great deal of EFL material that is not included in the multispectral textbooks designed for regular EFL classes at schools.

Last but not least, ideally, future studies should collect more data on idioms included in various English corpora – which should be implemented in the new learning materials. That would ensure that the textbooks would be up-to-date and would include the practical language useful in real life.

Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the occurrence of phraseological units in the selected English textbooks for B1 and B2 levels, which the Ministry of Education recommends for use at secondary grammar schools and secondary vocational schools in Slovakia. For this purpose, phraseological units in the textbooks were identified, classified, analyzed, and counted by quantitative content analysis. In the analysis, the following categories of phraseological units were distinguished: idioms, phrasal verbs, similes, routine formulae, irreversible binomials, proverbs, slogans, and clichés. The results showed that although there are phraseological units found in all analyzed textbooks, their distribution and classification differed significantly. Even though the
knowledge of formulaic language can increase one’s fluency in a foreign language, it can be concluded that only a limited number of such exercises were present in the analyzed textbooks. Additionally, once collocations, routine formulae, idioms, phrasal verbs, and dependent prepositions were included in the exercises, they were never used or mentioned in the textbook again. Moreover, the analyzed textbooks contained a minimal variety of exercises – predominately cloze exercises. A more significant number of the phraseological units was extracted from the headlines, articles, and other texts – which were not primarily aimed at phraseological units. In addition, concerning the fact that the textbooks were designed not only for classroom use but also for self-study, an insufficient explanation of the opaque phraseological units was given. While the scholars agree that formulaic language is essential for fluency, our analysis showed that an insufficient number of exercises were present throughout the textbooks. Another issue noted was that once collocations, routine formulae, idioms, phrasal verbs, and dependent prepositions were practiced in the exercises, they were never used or mentioned in the textbooks again.

The present study offered a complex view of phraseological units included in the detailed examination of all the texts incorporated in the analyzed textbooks. We hope that a small step has been taken towards a greater understanding of learning and teaching phraseological units as a part of EFL.

About the Authors

PaedDr. Jana Kamenická, PhD. is a skilled ELT teacher and currently an assistant professor at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic. Jana has previously taught in Slovakia – including the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and several grammar schools. Her research interests focus on neuroscientific and psychological aspects of teaching and learning foreign languages, especially the role of emotions and brain-based learning and teaching. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8903-1943

Prof. PaedDr. Zdena Kráľová, PhD. is a skilled ELT teacher and currently a professor at the Department of English Language and Culture, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia as well as at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic. Her research interests broadly focus on the psychological aspects of teaching and learning foreign languages, especially foreign language anxiety and enjoyment. Email: zkralova@ukf.sk ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6900-9992

Bc. Alexandra Grmanová is a skilled ELT teacher and currently a student at the Department of English Language and Culture, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. Her research interests focus on using informal language, formulaic language, and phraseological units in ELT. alexandra.grmanova@student.ukf.sk ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8441-5442

References


Effects of Motivation, Proficiency, and Gender on Saudi EFL Learners’ Utilization of Language Learning Strategies

Noha Almansour
Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Corresponding Author: nohaalmansour@gmail.com

Maram Almaneea
Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Received:11/28/2023 Accepted:02/21/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
This study aims to investigate the use of language learning strategies among English as a foreign language university students and examine the effect of motivation, proficiency, and gender on learners’ use of these strategies. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to the field of second language learning and its potential to inform language educators, teachers, and curriculum developers about the strategies learners employ to enhance their learning experience. The study addressed two questions: a) what language learning strategies do Saudi EFL learners utilize most frequently in learning English? b) what is the impact of learners’ gender, motivation, and proficiency on their use of language learning strategies? The sample consists of 395 Saudi EFL students selected through purposive sampling. The study utilized a self-reported questionnaire to assess learners’ motivation and language learning strategies. The results revealed that EFL learners predominately utilized metacognitive and cognitive strategies, whereas affective strategies were the least frequently employed. The study demonstrated that motivation had the most significant effect on learners’ utilization of all strategies, with statistically significant differences observed across the different motivation groups. Furthermore, language proficiency had a notable impact on learners’ use of metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies. However, there were no significant differences in the utilization of LLSs among male and female learners. The study has several pedagogical implications that can inform language educators, teachers, and learners in EFL settings.

Keywords: gender, motivation, language learning strategies, proficiency, Saudi EFL learners

Introduction

Research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has shifted its focus from teaching methods to learning processes, emphasizing the role of learners’ characteristics, context, motivation, proficiency, attitudes, and Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) in language learning (Lassard-Clouston, 1997). Oxford (2003) asserted that effectively utilizing LLSs is vital for learners to successfully acquire a second or foreign language (Oxford, 2003).

Numerous studies have investigated LLSs in SLA (Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Oxford, 1990). These studies have highlighted the importance of LLSs as a contributing factor to successful language learning. Several factors influence learners’ selection of LLSs. Ellis (1994) identified individual differences, social factors, and situational factors as the key elements affecting learners’ use of LLS. Several studies have examined the impact of individual differences such as age, gender, proficiency, motivation, and learning styles on learners’ selection of LLSs (Al-Buainain, 2010; Chang & Huang, 1999; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Liao, 2000; Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 2001; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983; Wu, 2008).

Despite the recognized importance of LLSs in language learning, there is limited research on the use of LLS among Saudi EFL learners and the effects of individual differences on their choice of strategies (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alrashidi, 2022). This lack of extensive research on EFL learners’ use of LLS limits our understanding of the field.

The study aims to investigate learners’ use of LLS and explore the impact of gender, motivation, and proficiency on their utilization of these strategies. By doing so, this study contributes to the existing literature on learners’ use of LLS in the context of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for language teachers, educators, and curriculum developers in the Saudi context concerning the vital role of motivation and proficiency in utilizing LLSs in the learning process.

This study aims to seek answers to the following questions:
1. What LLSs do Saudi EFL learners utilize most frequently in learning English?
2. What is the impact of learners’ gender, motivation, and proficiency on their use of LLSs?

Review of Literature

LLS Definitions and Classifications

Various definitions of LLSs have emerged as scholars in SLA have taken a keen interest in researching this subject. Chamot (2004) defined LLS as “the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take to achieve a learning goal” (p.14). Oxford (2001) described LLSs as operations learners utilize to enhance acquiring, retaining, recalling, and applying information. Similarly, Wenden (1991) described LLSs as the mental operations or steps learned to learn a foreign language.


Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy of LLSs provided a comprehensive framework widely utilized in LLS research. Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy comprises two major categories: direct and indirect.
strategies. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation (Oxford, 1990). Memory strategies enhance the retention and retrieval of information in the language learning process. These strategies focus on improving the learners’ ability to remember new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and other language components. Compensation strategies involve methods that help learners overcome their lack of knowledge or skills to communicate in the new language. These strategies enable learners to compensate for gaps in their language by employing alternative methods. Cognitive strategies involve actively manipulating language perception and production (Oxford, 1990).

Contrarily, indirect strategies facilitate language learning without direct engagement with the target language. Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy included three types of indirect strategies: metacognitive, affective, and social. Metacognitive strategies help learners organize and evaluate their learning. Affective strategies encompass methods that aid learners in managing their attitudes and emotions. On the other hand, social strategies are techniques and behaviors that involve interacting with other individuals.

**Previous Studies on LLS**

Several studies explored learners’ preferences for LLS (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alrashidi, 2022; Budiarti, 2022; Liu, 2004; Oxford, 1990). Liu (2004) and Alrashidi (2022) found that the most frequently used strategy among EFL learners was metacognitive, while the least frequently used strategy was memory strategy. Similarly, Budiarti (2022) found that most participants frequently used metacognitive strategy in their language learning. Alhaisoni’s (2012) study revealed that Saudi learners commonly used cognitive and metacognitive strategies, whereas they showed a minor use of affective and memory strategies.

Numerous studies reported in the literature have investigated the relationship between LLSs and other learners’ variables, such as gender, age, language proficiency, motivation, achievements, learning styles, and occupation. The following sections reviewed studies examining the relationship between LLS and gender, motivation, and proficiency.

**Gender and the Use of LLSs**

Several studies have explored the impact of gender on the use of LLSs (Nyikos, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983; Wharton, 2000). These studies yielded conflicting results regarding the effect of gender on LLSs. Most studies found that female learners utilized LLSs more frequently than males, demonstrating a general superiority of females in overall strategy use and specific categories (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983). Politzer’s (1983) study revealed that female learners utilized more social strategies than male learners. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that EFL female learners exhibited stronger preferences for cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategy, while male learners preferred visual strategy. Differences in social orientation, linguistic development, and learning styles account for the variations in gender strategy use (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). However, certain studies revealed insignificant variations between males and females regarding using LLSs (Alhaisoni, 2012; Budiarti, 2022; Lou, 1998; Wharton, 2000).

**Motivation and the Use of LLSs**

Motivation is a pivotal element in language learning and is often regarded as the driving force behind learners’ engagement and progress (Gardner, 2001). Cohen and Dornyei (2002) emphasized the significance of motivation in language learning. Dornyei and Skehan (2003) argued that motivation in foreign language learning could be associated with using LLSs and “may
give encouragement to the learner, provide benchmarks for evaluation and progress, and enable motivating goal-setting” (p. 623).

Many researchers have explored the relationship between motivation and LLSs (Chang & Huang, 1999; Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996). These studies proposed a reciprocal relationship between these two constructs, where motivation leads to using strategies, and strategy use enhances motivation. Schmidt et al. (1996) revealed that learners who displayed a greater level of instrumental motivation tended to utilize cognitive and organizing strategies, which fall under the category of metacognitive strategies. Chang and Huang (1999) identified a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and using cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Conversely, extrinsic motivation positively correlated with adopting cognitive and affective strategies.

**Language Proficiency and the Use of LLSs**

Several studies have investigated the relationship between LLSs and language proficiency (Al-Buainain, 2010; Oxford, 1990; Wu, 2008). These studies have shed light on how proficiency levels influence the use of LLSs and provided insights into how learners’ strategy use may vary across different proficiency levels. Most of these studies revealed a positive relationship between language proficiency and the utilization of strategies, indicating that students with higher language competence tended to employ the more comprehensive strategy more frequently than those with lower proficiency levels. Wu (2008) found that higher-proficiency learners employed a more comprehensive range of LLS combinations particularly “cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies” (p.75). Al-Buainain’s study (2010) also revealed that advanced learners utilized more LLSs than beginners.

**Method**

**Participants**

The study involved 395 Saudi undergraduate students majoring in English at the College of Languages and Translation, who were selected using purposive sampling. The study participants consisted of students in their first two academic years. They comprised 211 females and 184 males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. The language proficiency levels of the participants were determined using Standardized Test of English Proficiency (STEP) scores, which ranged from 51 to 97.

**Research Instruments**

This qualitative study utilized two instruments to address the research questions. The first instrument was the Standardized Test of English Proficiency (STEP), a reliable assessment tool. The test consists of 100 questions that assess learners’ reading comprehension, listening skills, writing skills, and grammar.

The second instrument utilized was a self-report questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first part aims to elicit the demographic information of the participants. The second part elicits learners’ LLSs, adapted from Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This part included 50 items categorized into six subcategories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. The third part was a motivation questionnaire based on Gardner’s (1985) framework. This part consisted of 20 items measuring learners’ integrative and instrumental motivation, using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”
By utilizing these two instruments, the study aimed to gather data on participants’ English language proficiency levels, their use of LLSs, and their motivational orientations. These data were crucial for examining the relationship between LLSs and learners’ differences, including their proficiency level, motivation, and gender.

Validity and Reliability

The study implemented several measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. The study used Cronbach’s alpha coefficients to assess the reliability of the instruments. The LLS questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.97 for all participants. Data revealed that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for each category of the LLS questionnaire ranged from 0.85 to 0.94. These coefficients demonstrated a good level of reliability.

Furthermore, the motivation questionnaire also exhibited high reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.95. Additionally, the reliability of the motivation constructs ranged from 0.95 to 0.89, indicating very high reliability.

The Research Procedure

The researchers conducted this study in the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023. Using a self-reported questionnaire, collecting the data took two weeks. The self-reported questionnaire assessed learners’ motivation and preferences for LLS. Before administering the questionnaire, the researchers sent an email inviting students from levels one to four majoring in the English language in the College of Languages and Translation to participate in the study voluntarily. The participants had no time limit restrictions to complete the questionnaire.

Before analyzing the data, the researchers grouped the participants into three proficiency levels: upper intermediate (scores 83-100), intermediate (scores 67-82), and low intermediate (scores 66-50). Additionally, the researchers classified the participants into three motivation levels: low, medium, and high. The classification relied on deriving the students’ cumulative frequency percentile scores from the data of each class using SPSS. The low motivation group encompassed 0-40% of the data, the moderate motivation group included 41-70%, and the high motivation group comprised 71% - 100%. Larson-Hall (2010) provided the basis for adapting this categorization. Table One displays the distribution of participants according to their characteristics.

Table 1. Population distribution by individual characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>33.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>Low intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>33.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>45.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>20.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

The study employed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to analyze data quantitatively. Initially, the researchers conducted a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to assess data distribution. The result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov revealed that data were not normally distributed (p = 0.200). Therefore, the study employed nonparametric tests to compare the mean score of the variables and determine any significant differences. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants’ demographic information, STEP scores, responses to the 50 items on the five-point Likert scale in the SILL questionnaire, and responses to the 20 items on the five-point Likert scale in the motivation questionnaire. The study used the Kruskal-Wallis test to examine potential differences in LLSs’ use among different groups with varying levels of proficiency and motivation. Additionally, the researchers used Pearson correlations to explore the relationship between the variables and address the research questions.

Overall Strategy Use

The first question examined learners’ preferred strategies in language learning. Descriptive analysis provided an overview of the data. Table Two presents the means and standard deviations for each of the six categories of LLSs. The results revealed that learners frequently utilized metacognitive and cognitive strategies (mean = 3.29; SD=1.11; mean = 3.24, SD=1.03, respectively). On the other hand, the least frequently used strategies were affective and memory strategies (mean= 3.01, SD=1.05; mean= 3.05, SD= 0.98, respectively). Furthermore, Table Two reveals that learners were medium strategy users based on Oxford and Burry-Stock’s (1995) criteria.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the subcategories of LLSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std deviation</th>
<th>Level of Strategy use</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, Table Three displays the correlations between the different types of LLSs. The correlations indicated the strength of the relationships between the strategies. For example, memory strategies positively correlated with cognitive strategies (r=0.782) and metacognitive strategies (r=0.738). Similarly, the study revealed a positive correlation between cognitive and compensation strategies (r=0.792) and metacognitive strategies (r=0.830).

Table 3. Correlation between the subcategories of LLSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>0.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.830</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effects of Motivation, Proficiency, and Gender on Saudi EFL Learners’

By examining the overall strategy use and the correlations between different strategies, the study provided insights into the patterns and preferences of LLSs among Saudi EFL students. The results highlighted the prominence of metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the learning processes of Saudi EFL learners.

**Gender and the Use of LLSs**

The second research question investigated the relationship between gender and the use of LLS. The results showed that male students had higher mean scores in three strategies: memory, affective, and social compared to female students. On the other hand, female students exhibited higher mean scores in cognitive and metacognitive strategies. However, it is essential to note that both male and female students utilized LLSs at a moderate level. Furthermore, Table Four displays that male and female students employed the same order of preference in using LLSs: metacognitive strategy being the most frequently utilized, followed by cognitive, compensation, social, memory, and affective strategies.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of LLSs as used by male and female students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study employed the Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a statistically significant variation between male and female learners’ use of LLSs. Table Five revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female learners’ use of LLSs, with a p-value greater than 0.05. These findings suggested that gender may not be an essential factor influencing the choice of LLSs.

Table 5. Mann-Whitney U-test for males and females use of LLSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U-test</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>19292.500</td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>19252.000</td>
<td>0.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>19275.000</td>
<td>0.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>18638.000</td>
<td>0.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>18790.000</td>
<td>0.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>19338.000</td>
<td>0.948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivation and the Use of LLSs**

The third research question explored the relationship between the selection of LLSs and motivation levels of learners. Table Six presents the descriptive statistics of LLSs among the three motivation groups. Results revealed learners with moderate and high motivation preferred metacognitive strategies, while learners with low motivation favored cognitive strategy. Affective strategies were consistently the least utilized by all three motivation groups.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of LLSs as used by low, moderate, and highly motivated learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th></th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th></th>
<th>Highly</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study employed the Kruskal-Wallis test to examine whether there were statistically significant variations in the utilization of LLS among the three motivation groups. Results revealed that there were indeed substantial differences in the use of LLS among students with low, moderate, and high motivation with a p-value of 0.001 (see Appendix A).

**Language Proficiency and the Use of LLSs**

The fourth research question explored the relationship between learners’ choices of LLSs and proficiency levels. Table Seven presents the descriptive statistics of LLSs used by each proficiency group. The results indicated that all proficiency groups preferred metacognitive and cognitive strategies, respectively. This finding suggested that learners with different proficiency levels prioritize strategies that involve planning, monitoring, and regulating learning processes.

The Kruskal-Wallis test assessed whether there were statistically significant variations across the three proficiency groups’ use of LLS. The results revealed statistically significant differences among the three groups’ utilization of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies (see Appendix B). This finding implied that learners at different proficiency levels have distinct preferences and tendencies when utilizing these strategies. However, the results revealed no statistically significant variations observed across the three proficiency groups’ use of memory, affective, and social strategy.

These results provided valuable insights into how learners at different proficiency levels approach language learning and utilize specific strategies. The preference for metacognitive strategies among all proficiency groups suggested a shared recognition of the effectiveness of self-regulation and reflection in the language learning process.

**Table 7. Descriptive statistics of LLSs as used by the three proficiency groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Upper intermediate</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Lower intermediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The discussion focused on the main findings related to the study questions. To answer research question 1: What LLSs do Saudi EFL learners utilize most frequently in learning English? The descriptive analysis of the quantitative data revealed that metacognitive and cognitive strategies are the most commonly used strategies by EFL Saudi learners, consistent with previous studies (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alrashidi, 2022; Liu, 2004; Oxford, 1990). On the other hand, learners rarely used affective strategies. This finding suggested that Saudi EFL learners may need more support in developing emotional and attitudinal strategies to enhance their language learning experiences.

To answer research question 2: What is the impact of gender, motivation, and proficiency on Saudi EFL learners’ utilization of LLS? The findings revealed that gender had no significant
Effects of Motivation, Proficiency, and Gender on Saudi EFL Learners’ Use of Language Learning Strategies

Almansour & Almaneea

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of motivation, proficiency, and gender on Saudi EFL learners’ use of language learning strategies (LLS). The study involved 200 EFL learners from different educational institutions. The findings revealed that language proficiency and motivation had a significant effect on learners’ selection of LLS. However, language proficiency and motivation had a significant effect on learners’ LLS. Concerning the effect of gender on the utilization of LLS, the study found no significant differences between male and female learners. Both genders demonstrated similar levels of strategy use. This finding is consistent with previous studies that reported no significant gender differences in LLS use (Lou, 1998; Wharton, 2000). In terms of the impact of motivation on learners’ use of LLS, the results revealed a significant influence of motivation on learners’ utilization of LLSs. Learners with moderate and high motivation preferred metacognitive strategies, while low-motivated learners favored cognitive strategies. All three motivation groups rarely used affective strategies. These findings align with previous studies that confirmed the impact of motivation level on the choice of learning strategies (Chang & Huang, 1999; Oxford, 2003; Schmidt et al., 1996). Concerning the impact of language proficiency level on learners’ utilization of strategies, the study revealed significant differences across the three proficiency groups in their utilization of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. On the other hand, memory, affective, and social strategies did not appear to vary significantly among learners at different proficiency levels.

The findings of this study offered valuable insights into the use of LLSs among EFL learners, with implications for language teaching and learning. Firstly, the findings showed that Saudi EFL learners are moderate users of language learning strategies, suggesting a lack of awareness among learners regarding the effectiveness of LLSs in enhancing language learning outcomes. Therefore, language teachers should introduce and incorporate strategy training into the curriculum, as several researchers recommended that strategy training can be beneficial in enhancing learners’ competence in the L2 (Chamot, 2008; Liu, 2010; Oxford, 1990). Secondly, the study highlighted the impact of individual differences, such as motivation and proficiency, on learners’ use of LLS. Consequently, language teachers must adjust teaching methods to accommodate the varying levels of learners’ motivation and proficiency. Thirdly, motivation emerges as the most influential factor; thus, language teachers and educators should consider learners’ motivation levels when designing language learning activities. Finally, language teachers and educators must treat male and female learners equally regarding strategy instruction and support, as gender does not influence the utilization of LLS.

However, the current study has certain limitations. Firstly, the data collected relied on self-reporting questionnaires, which may not guarantee that participants consistently employed reported language learning strategies. Therefore, further studies could use alternative methods such as interviews, diaries, or class observations to gather information and mitigate this issue. Secondly, the sample of this study was limited to EFL undergraduate students. Future research should explore these strategies among Saudi students at different educational levels and ages. Lastly, the study focused on the impact of three individual variables: motivation, gender, and proficiency, neglecting other potential factors that may impact strategy use. Thus, further studies should investigate the effects of additional variables, such as learning styles, beliefs, and age.

Conclusion

This study shed light on EFL learners’ use of LLS and the impact of gender, motivation, and proficiency on their use. It revealed that EFL learners commonly utilized metacognitive and less frequently employed affective strategies. Furthermore, the finding indicated no significant gender differences in strategy use, highlighting the need for equal treatment and support for all learners. Motivation was the most substantial factor influencing learners’ choice of LLSs.
Language proficiency also played a role in strategy use, particularly for cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. By recognizing the importance of metacognitive strategies, addressing gender equality, considering learners’ motivation levels, and tailoring instruction to different proficiency levels, educators can better support EFL learners in their language learning process.

**Funding**
This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**
Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity**
This manuscript is an original work

**Artificial Intelligence Statement**
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the authors:**
**Dr. Noha Almansour** is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics. She has been teaching different courses in linguistics and language skills. She is interested in second/foreign language teaching and learning, pragmatic development, e-learning, and teacher cognition. [https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5212-4240](https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5212-4240)

**Dr. Maram Almaneea** is an Assistant Professor at the College of Languages and Translation. She received her PhD in Applied Linguistics, and her research interests include motivational studies and bilingualism in early childhood education. Dr. Almaneea has presented many workshops for university students concentrating on voluntary work and required skills for language learners. Dr.maram.almaneea@gmail.com
ORCID [https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1616-5611](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1616-5611)

**References**


### Appendix A

**Kruskal-Wallis test for strategy use across low, medium, and high motivation group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Motivation level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean rank</th>
<th>sig</th>
<th>Kruskal-Wallis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>109.19</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>181.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>225.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>296.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>110.89</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>172.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>227.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>291.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>121.76</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>142.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>215.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>290.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>107.78</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>191.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>223.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>300.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>124.27</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>128.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>218.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B

**Kruskal-Wallis test for strategy use across three proficiency groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Proficiency level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean rank</th>
<th>sig</th>
<th>Kruskal-Wallis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>233.84</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>11.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>192.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>182.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>227.74</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>7.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>194.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>183.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>207.81</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>1.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>199.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>189.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metacognitive</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>225.51</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>7.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>196.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>183.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>197.99</td>
<td>.990</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>197.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>199.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>219.88</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>4.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>195.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>187.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall strategies</strong></td>
<td>Upper intermediate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>225.26</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>6.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>195.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower intermediate</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>184.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English Language Awareness of Distance and Face-to-Face Learners in Turkish Higher Education

Emine Kuluşaklı
School of Foreign Languages
Malatya Turgut Özal University, Malatya, Türkiye
Corresponding Author: emine.kulusakli@ozal.edu.tr

Gülsen Genç
English Language Teaching Department
Faculty of Education
İnönü University, Malatya, Türkiye

Received: 10/20/2023 Accepted: 02/26/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
The main aim of the current study is to explore the profiles of language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners. The study sheds light on the need to consider the effects of language awareness in distance and face-to-face education as language awareness is essential in foreign language learning in both education types and needs to be improved to make learners know much about how to use English. The main question addressed by the research is whether there are any differences between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners regarding course type, gender, and age. The context of the study is Türkiye, where English is taught as a foreign language in higher education institutions. The study uses a survey method and includes 157 language learners distance and 225 face-to-face, 382 learners attending a state university in Türkiye. The study’s results unveiled significant differences between distance and face-to-face language learners regarding language awareness. There was an apparent disparity between distance-learning and face-to-face approaches in linguistic awareness and communicative awareness, as the face-to-face learning group scored significantly higher in these dimensions. While distance and face-to-face learners had close scores in the dimensions of cultural awareness and metacognitive awareness, the findings revealed that face-to-face learners scored somewhat higher, which helps to explain how the physical classroom setting may have some influence on learners’ cultural sensitivity and metacognitive awareness. The results suggested that distance education learners should improve their consciousness about language and have the necessary instruction to enhance their language awareness.

Keywords: Distance education, face-to-face education, foreign language learning, higher education, language awareness, language teaching

Cite as: Kuluşaklı, E., & Genç, G. (2024). English Language Awareness of Distance and Face-to-Face Learners in Turkish Higher Education. Arab World English Journal, 15(1): 30-43. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.3
Introduction

With the help of advancements in technology, distance education has increased its effectiveness and applicability in the field of education worldwide. Recently, online learning has become necessary due to the pandemic and natural disasters such as earthquakes. Distance education has also gained prominence in foreign language education in higher education institutions along with traditional face-to-face education with the spread of the internet and computer use. It is an essential part of language education to offer flexibility in time and space, which face-to-face education does not provide. Distance education also "reaches a broader student audience, better addresses student needs, saves money, and more importantly uses the principles of modern learning pedagogy" (Tucker, 2001, p. 1). As these kinds of education primarily try to provide effective teaching and learning on behalf of learners, it is evident that learners are at the center of both education types, so it is crucial for learners having distance or traditional face-to-face education to be aware of their learning. At this point, raising learners' language awareness becomes vital in foreign language education as it helps learners understand the knowledge and mechanisms of the target language (Bourke, 2008; Tulasiewicz, 1997). Therefore, the present study mainly aims to investigate the profiles of language awareness of distance and traditional face-to-face EFL learners. The study is significant as language awareness is essential in learning a foreign language in both distance and face-to-face education and should make learners know much about how to use the target language. The research objectives of the study aim to give a more realistic picture of how EFL learners differ in language awareness levels regarding course types, age, and gender.

From the above observations, it is evident that language awareness is a significant subject in foreign language learning in distance and face-to-face education. Nevertheless, there needs to be more empirical studies that compare the distance and face-to-face EFL learners' language awareness levels among Turkish EFL learners, so the current study seeks to fill this gap in the literature on distance and face-to-face foreign language education. With this aim, the current research addresses the following research questions to find out proper responses:

1. What are distance and face-to-face EFL learners' profiles regarding language awareness?
2. How does language awareness of EFL learners differ regarding course types such as distance and face-to-face instruction, gender, and age?

Literature Review

Distance Education

Researchers describe distance education in many ways. They define it as “any form of learning in which the teacher is not present at the same time or place as the student” (Hassenburg, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, they describe distance education as a type of technology used in education that supports independent and individual learning, and it provides flexibility in time and space for the learners (Uşun, 2006, as cited in Erdoğan, 2020). Some characteristics of distance education distinguish it from face-to-face education. These are “two-way communication, influence of an educational organization, learner as individual or privatization of learning, teacher-learner separation, participation in an industrialized form of education and use of media” (Keegan, 1980 as cited in Bollinger, 2017, p. 49). Among the benefits of online distance education are providing greater flexibility in learning and saving time, money, and logistics. However, self-discipline and internet connection are among the requirements for distance education implementation as it lacks
human interaction (Behzadi & Ghaffari, 2011). The differences between traditional face-to-face and distance education have often occurred in literature. Those who support distance education consider face-to-face education as teacher-centered, unchangeable, static, and inflexible (Fitzpatrick, 2001, as cited in Tucker, 2001), while distance education is more student-centered, providing a more flexible learning environment in terms of time and space (Cabi & Kalelioglu, 2019; Mather & Sarkans, 2018). It explains that the students and the teacher are in the same place in face-to-face education and learning and teaching occurs at the same place and time. Ramnarine (2018) defines face-to-face education as a “traditional classroom environment where the instructor and the students are not separated by geographic space or time.” (as cited in Bi, Javadi, & Izadpanah, 2023, p. 13740). From these explanations, it is evident that these types of education differ in many ways. In online distance learning, learners need to make more effort, find a chance to direct their learning, and raise their consciousness of language (Wang & Zhan, 2020).

**Language Awareness**

At the end of the 1950s, the concept of awareness appeared with the help of Hawkins and Halliday, who considered that the goal of language teaching should focus on assisting the students in mastering the target language and dealing with the subjects of language itself in general. If learners know the language they wish to learn and understand how it works, they will improve (Wright & Bolitho, 1993, as cited in Jung & Chan, 2007). There are many definitions of language awareness (ALA, 2012; Barjesteh & Vaseghi, 2012; Borg, 1994; Carter, 2003; Griva & Chostelidou, 2011; Ellis, 2012). Language awareness is “the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language” (Carter, 2003, p.64) and “the understanding of an empathy with the challenges faced by the learners of an additional language” (Ellis, 2012, p.15). According to The Association for Language Awareness (2012), language awareness is “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching, and language use." Besides, it is “a mental attribute that develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work” (Barjesteh & Vaseghi, 2012, p. 1). It includes awareness of structural patterns and phonological, morphological, and pragmatic awareness (Griva & Chostelidou, 2011). It is also described as an approach that aims to improve individuals’ awareness of learning and explicit understanding of language “by involving them in discovery-oriented tasks” (Borg, 1994, as cited in van den Broek, Oolbekkink-Marchand, van Kemenade, Meijer & Unsworth, 2019, p. 60). According to Borg (1994), language awareness emerges in case learners self-reflect and continue to talk in their language production, and it "should be continuous, taking language as a vital and changing phenomenon, instead of unchanged facts of language knowledge” (as cited in Huang, 2022, p. 674).

There are many advantages of awareness in teaching foreign languages. Firstly, language awareness assists in developing users' performance and competence and makes it possible for them to be an effective tool for transactions in the context of their mother tongue. Secondly, it enhances the knowledge of the language learning processes and acquisition by facilitating “the study of modern foreign languages by drawing learners’ attention to similarities and differences with their mother tongues, for example in the recognition of patterns” and thirdly, “encourages the acquisition of linguistic sensitivity…. To other languages…” (Tulasiewicz, 1997, p. 394). One of the reasons behind the importance of language awareness can be the applied perspective of it. That means that assisting learners in internalizing, investigating, and comprehending the target language
is very important to teachers. The second reason is related to the individual investigation of the L2 supports the learner to understand “how language works and thereby enriches and extends one’s knowledge of the language… by noticing and reflecting on the linguistic data all around them” (Bourke, 2008, p. 15). Similarly, integrating language awareness in foreign language classes improves learners’ knowledge and experiences concerning related culture and language elements (Farahian & Rezaee, 2015). Thus, students can enhance their self-awareness of why they learn English at universities through learner-centered activities with the help of instructors (Kang, 2022).

There are three components of language awareness: learning awareness, communicative awareness, and linguistic awareness. To be more specific, learning awareness refers to thinking, learning, problem-solving, and the capacity to manage these strategies and interpret them; communicative awareness is about knowledge, including the functions of language, while linguistic awareness consists of linguistic abilities and skills (Rampillon, 1997, as cited in Kaya, 2010). In addition to these components, cultural awareness related to “perceptions of our own and other people's cultures,” which were “likely to be internal, dynamic, variable, multi-dimensional and interactive” (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, as cited in Kaya, 2010, p. 39). It is necessary to increase cultural awareness about the learners’ own culture and the target culture in that learning a foreign language is an intercultural experience. Moreover, this helps learners know different languages and make contact with other realities (Longo, 2008, as cited in Barany, 2016).

Empirical research has investigated language learners’ awareness from different perspectives in the context of higher education, and mixed findings have been reported (Amjadiparvar & Zarrin, 2019; González Castell, Codina Espurz & Jara Jiménez, 2023; Huang, 2022; Jung & Chang, 2007; Saka & Asma, 2020; Umida & Abdulkhay, 2023; Vesna & Vedrana, 2012; Yang, 2013). Amjadiparvar and Zarrin (2019) examined the correlation between EFL learners’ awareness and the variables of achievement, motivation, and gender. Specifically, female students outperformed male students, following language awareness, achievement, and motivation. In another study, Yang (2013) examined how to enhance learners’ awareness when learning English for Specific Purposes. For this reason, Yang (2013) created a Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Community (CSCL) to include teachers and students from various countries in intercultural communication. He concluded that the language awareness of the participants was encouraged when they assessed their language performance and monitored the accuracy of their language usage during intercultural communication. Intercultural aspects of the CSCL community promoted the participants’ language awareness since they obtained expressions from various contexts and cultures on the levels of textual, lexical, and syntactic organization (Yang, 2013). Vesna and Vedrana (2012) examined students’ learning and linguistic awareness. The students studied German, French, Italian, and English foreign languages at an elementary school. The research demonstrated that the participants could use grammatical, lexical, and phonetic parts of language properly, but there were significant individual differences. Saka and Asma (2020) explored the levels of English language teaching students’ intercultural awareness regarding different variables such as grade, gender, and being abroad. The research findings demonstrated that the participants’ intercultural awareness did not significantly indicate any changes regarding their grades, genders, or being abroad. Jung and Chang (2007) aimed to raise learners' language awareness by employing scaffolding as an instructional strategy. The study displayed that the learners’ attitudes towards the target language were affected positively by raising language awareness. Moreover, the learners' awareness of the target language increased when they
could apply the scaffolding strategy when they learned an activity and the instructor paid deliberate attention. According to Huang (2022), students’ language awareness could improve if they engaged in activities and took control of their learning. Umida and Abdulkhay (2023) examined whether integrating digital technologies into EFL classrooms could increase learners’ motivation and awareness. The findings indicated that learners’ active participation and linguistic awareness could be positively affected by incorporating digital technologies in EFL classrooms through enhancing collaborative interaction and autonomous learning. González Castell, Codina Espurz, and Jara Jiménez (2023) explored the impact of explicit strategy instruction and awareness-raising on EFL learners’ written and oral production in a multilingual context. The research findings displayed a positive effect of awareness-raising and explicit instruction of compensatory strategies in learners’ oral production right after intervention.

In Türkiye, different studies explored language awareness from different perspectives (Bilgin, 2017; Cesur & Ertaş, 2018; Dönmez, 2022; Keskin, 2023; Tüzel & Akcan, 2009). Cesur and Ertaş (2018) examined the pedagogical content knowledge of the prospective language teachers in an ELT department of a Turkish state university. The study findings suggested that EFL teacher education programs should seek to increase prospective teachers’ awareness to improve their content knowledge, investigate the reasons for the problems they encounter in their classes, and think of effective strategies to deal with these problems as they were not aware of their ability to overcome the difficulties. Similarly, Keskin (2023) investigated prospective ELT teachers’ language awareness at a state university in Türkiye. The results revealed an average level of participants’ language awareness in teacher and analyst areas. Besides, the concept of teacher language awareness needed to be integrated into the curriculum of teacher training programs in higher education to solve the awareness-related problems and to enhance the quality of language education in Türkiye. Bilgin (2017) investigated pre-service teachers’ views on language awareness in a Turkish state university. The results displayed that the participants thought that meta-linguistic knowledge of a teacher, effective teaching, and using correct methods related to language awareness. The study suggested that teacher training programs could integrate language awareness to improve pre-service teachers’ language awareness. Tüzel and Akcan (2009) studied how to increase prospective English teachers’ language awareness in the context of English as a foreign language. The results indicated that the participants shared similar problems, such as the authenticity of the classroom language, using language according to students’ proficiency, and explaining unknown words to students. Language awareness training including discussion meetings, semi-structured interviews, feedback sessions, and classroom observations affected the participants’ use of target language positively. Dönmez (2022) explored university preparatory class students’ L2 writing anxiety and the impact of language awareness activities on it. The findings indicated that raising language awareness could have a significant effect on dealing with students’ L2 writing anxiety.

Method

The current study intends to identify the profile of EFL learners’ language awareness in terms of gender and age and determine the difference, if there is, between EFL learners’ language awareness levels in distance and face-to-face education. The current study designed a descriptive general survey research with a quantitative method to give responses to the research questions.
Participants

The present study carried out at a state university in Türkiye in the 2016-2017 academic year. The university’s Senate unanimously allowed faculty members to teach English through online courses in 2013. Since then, the university has offered online courses for students to study English. The School of Foreign Languages’ instructors teach English for three hours each week, with the goal of students finishing the course at the A1 level according to the Common European Framework. The participants comprised three hundred eighty-two students; one hundred ninety (49.7%) were females, and one hundred ninety-two (50.3%) were males. They were all first-grade students aged between 17 and 34, with a range of 19.8 (SD=2.08). Of the participants, one hundred fifty-seven learned English through online distance education at the same university by the same teachers.

In contrast, two hundred twenty-five participants studied English as a foreign language through traditional in-class instruction in the School of Foreign Languages. Three hundred eighty-two students from different academic departments including the faculties of dentistry, pharmacy, education, arts and sciences, fine arts and design, law, economics and administrative sciences, engineering, and medicine were randomly chosen. The researchers informed the students of the study's goal and that participation was voluntary. The individuals’ mother tongue used to deliver the surveys.

Research Instruments

The data obtained through a questionnaire developed by Kaya (2010) (Appendix A). The questionnaire evaluating learners’ language awareness consisted of sixteen items under four sub-dimensions: Linguistics Awareness (six items), Communicative Awareness (four items), Cultural Awareness (two items), and Learning Awareness (four items), and delivered to the students face to face. Cronbach's Alpha Analysis calculated the reliability coefficient of the scale and found to be 0.89, which was considered highly reliable. The participants took a Likert-type scale in their native language (Turkish) following the aim of the research. The participants marked the appropriate option for them among “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “undecided”, “agree” or “strongly agree”.

Research Procedures

The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential analysis using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. After the analysis, the results illustrated tables in the findings section. The statistical significance level was $\alpha<.05$ for all the analyses. In the context of the research, first, data normality was assessed through graphical methods, including histograms and Q-Q plots, as well as statistical Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. After confirming a normal distribution, parametric statistical analyses such as t-tests and Pearson Correlation were employed to answer the research questions.

Results

The mean scores regarding four dimensions of language awareness, namely linguistics awareness, communicative awareness, cultural awareness, and learning awareness, were calculated and compared to analyze the data. The researchers used the interpreting procedure designed by Best (1981) to interpret the results obtained from the data as in Table One.
Table 1. Interpretation of mean scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean range</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Score range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>4.50-5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.50-4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.50-3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.50-2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>1.00-1.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first research question asked to understand the profiles of distance and face-to-face EFL learners regarding the four dimensions of language awareness. For the data analysis, the mean scores of the learners were calculated and compared in terms of these four dimensions. Table Two shows descriptive statistics of language awareness of face-to-face and distance education learners.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of face-to-face and distance education learners’ language awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Dist Ed</th>
<th>Ff Ed</th>
<th>Dist Ed</th>
<th>Ff Ed</th>
<th>Dist Ed</th>
<th>Ff Ed</th>
<th>Dist Ed</th>
<th>Ff Ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics Awareness</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Awareness</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Awareness</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dist. Ed. Refers to Distance Education  
Ff. Ed. Refers to Face-to-Face Education

Table Two indicates that the students from both groups seem to feel moderately competent in all dimensions of language awareness, namely communicative, cultural, learning, and linguistic, considering the mean values. When compared the mean scores of both groups, both groups generally show similarities. However, participants from face-to-face education have higher scores in all dimensions of language awareness than those from distance education, as illustrated in Table Two.

The second research question asked to determine whether the language awareness of EFL learners differs regarding course types such as distance and face-to-face instruction. To find whether there are statistical differences between the two groups regarding the four dimensions of language awareness, an independent samples t-test conducted, and exciting results were found, as demonstrated in Table Three.

Table 3. Mean scores, standard deviation, and range of language awareness scores in terms of course type as distance and face-to-face education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Type of education</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>t/F Value*</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.678</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td><strong>0.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td><strong>0.02</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Edu</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Distance Edu</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table Three, despite the similarities between the mean scores of both groups, dimensions of “communicative awareness” and “cultural awareness” are statistically significant. Specifically, the participants of the two groups report that they can assess and respond to others' intentions, thoughts, and feelings while communicating, employ some strategies, and use English appropriately according to the context at moderate levels. Additionally, moderately interested in how their own culture and the target culture differ and are connected, the students are aware of the cultural load of English. However, students of face-to-face education seem to feel more confident in the dimensions of communicative and cultural awareness. Linguistic awareness and learning awareness of the participants from distance education and face-to-face education groups did not differ statistically. Specifically, they moderately pay attention to grammar and how it works; they can read and make sense of various English texts. The participants also consider that they can be in charge of it and reflect on their learning at a moderate level.

The second research question also asked whether there was a difference between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners and gender. To understand if there was a difference between gender and language awareness, an independent-measures t-test applied the data collected from the students, and the findings were displayed in Table Four.

Table 4. Mean scores, standard deviations, and range of language awareness scores in terms of gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Awareness</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>t/F Value*</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Awareness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table Four, the results indicate that gender is not a significant factor in any of the dimensions of language awareness.

Finally, the second research question also asked to determine whether there was a significant difference between the language awareness of distance and face-to-face EFL learners and age. Concerning the effects of age on students' language awareness, Pearson correlations were conducted, as indicated in Table Five.

Table 5. Pearson correlations between language awareness scores and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics Awareness</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Awareness</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Awareness</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table Five, similar to the findings of gender, age is not a significant factor in both groups as there is no relationship between age and any dimensions of language awareness.

Discussion

The findings revealed several conclusions using the statistical analysis of the data. First, the first research question concerned identifying distance and face-to-face EFL learners' profiles regarding language awareness. The current study does not intend to measure or evaluate correct or incorrect respondents’ knowledge compared to a standard but rather to examine their answers and compare within two groups and reveal their commonalities or differences. This study provides a general background to language awareness and gives a general situation of EFL learners’ language awareness. Hence, research findings showed that students from distance and face-to-face groups have an average level of language awareness in all dimensions. This finding supports some other studies conducted in the Turkish EFL context, with pre-service English teachers receiving their courses through traditional face-to-face education (Cesur & Ertaş, 2018; Keskin, 2023).

Moreover, when compared the mean scores of both groups in all sub-dimensions of language awareness, a remarkable result emerged: Face-to-face English language learners had higher mean scores than distance learners. Although the scores are close to each other and there is no significant difference, face-to-face students expressed higher levels of language awareness in every dimension. Studies in the literature show that language awareness activities can be integrated into lessons to increase language awareness levels of learners. For example, two experimental studies indicated that language awareness levels of pre-service English teachers and EFL learners in preparatory classes were increased through language awareness activities (Tüzel & Akcan, 2009; Dönmez, 2022). In this case, students at the point of language learning should familiarise with language awareness activities to increase their awareness of language awareness.

Firstly, an apparent disparity was demonstrated by the contradiction between face-to-face and distance-learning approaches, particularly in the sub-dimension of Linguistic Awareness. This finding highlights the possible influence that direct interaction and personal proximity have on the development of language awareness in the conventional classroom setting. Face-to-face training facilitates interactive conversation and provides direct exposure to spoken and written language structures, contributing to face-to-face learners' strong performance in the linguistic domain. These results empirically support the discourse on successful language education and motivate more research into how instructional approaches affect learners' linguistic awareness.

Secondly, the face-to-face learning group scored significantly higher in the "Communicative Awareness" sub-dimension. This finding supports that face-to-face instruction's physical presence and interactive nature contribute positively to developing communicative language awareness. The higher scores in this sub-dimension among face-to-face learners may be attributed to the dynamic, real-time linguistic interactions in traditional classroom settings, fostering a more immediate and contextualized grasp of communicative distinctions. Such insights contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on effective pedagogical strategies in foreign language education, emphasizing the multifaceted role of instructional modalities in shaping students' language awareness.

Thirdly, “Cultural Awareness” is the sub-dimension where the scores of both groups are closest to each other. However, the results show that on this dimension, face-to-face learners scored somewhat higher, which helps to explain how the physical classroom setting may have some influence on cultural sensitivity and awareness. This superiority might be because...
conventional classroom environments are holistic and interactive, allowing real-time involvement with various cultural contexts. Face-to-face learners had a higher level of cultural awareness, which shows that direct interpersonal interactions and shared physical space work together to provide a more sophisticated knowledge of cultural factors interwoven within language usage.

Finally, the statistics show that students who received face-to-face instruction also scored higher in this particular area. The difference suggests that the physical classroom setting, which marks direct interpersonal contact and instant access to instructional materials can enhance learners' metacognitive awareness and reflective involvement with the language learning process. The better learning awareness performance of face-to-face learners highlights the complex interaction between cognitive aspects of language acquisition and instructional modes.

Regarding the second research question, it addresses the effects of some demographic variables and whether distance and face-to-face education students differ regarding language awareness. The starting point of this research question is assuming that learners with a high level of language awareness would be in a strong and secure position to accomplish various tasks in their EFL studies. The study indicates that face-to-face class learners have higher levels of language awareness in all dimensions. Besides, they differ significantly in “Communicative” and “Cultural Awareness” dimensions in favor of face-to-face class learners. More specifically, face-to-face class learners are moderately aware of using English and several strategies in communication appropriately according to the context. They are also interested in how their culture and target language differ and are connected. As Carter (2003) stated, language awareness contains sensitivity toward the cultural properties of language. The study displays that distance EFL learners are less sensitive than face-to-face EFL learners regarding cultural awareness. It is necessary to monitor the accuracy of language use during intercultural communication to raise the learners’ language awareness, as suggested by the previous study (Yang, 2013). Integrating language awareness in learning a foreign language is essential to enhance the experiences and knowledge of learners regarding related language elements and culture (Farahian & Rezaee, 2015). Consequently, the findings indicating the direct and significant relationship between the two groups regarding communicative language awareness approve the previously claimed relation between communicative language teaching and language awareness.

In addition, the second research question also attempts to uncover whether there are any significant effects of such variables as gender and age. The study’s findings demonstrate no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of subdimensions of language awareness. This result aligns with the study's findings, indicating no significant difference exists between learners' intercultural awareness and gender (Saka & Asma, 2020). Nevertheless, this finding is inconsistent with the results of other studies indicating that female learners outperform males by motivation, achievement, and language awareness (Amjadiparvar & Zarrin, 2019).

**Conclusion**

The conclusion of the research is meaningful, indicating the failure of distance education EFL students' experiences to understand how the target language works. For this reason, distance education learners need extra help to develop consciousness about language and its role in their lives. Furthermore, the research implies a requirement for deliberate instruction to increase students’ language awareness in the EFL setting to make them more sensitive towards the language and develop tolerance for other languages and nations. The findings also suggest that future
research can address integrating language awareness activities into EFL studies of distance education EFL learners.

The current research aims to deal with the issue of language awareness of distance and face-to-face learners. Nevertheless, it is limited to only first-year students studying at various departments of a state university in Türkiye, decreasing the generalizability of the research findings. Further studies with a larger sample of participants from other grades in other educational settings can be done. In addition, it requires future investigation using qualitative data collection instruments, including keeping diaries, semi-structured interviews, or observation to authenticate the results. Furthermore, a more in-depth investigation of the mechanisms underlying the observed differences can contribute to targeted improvements in language teaching methodologies. In addition, it suggests to focus research efforts on improving pedagogical approaches to increase language awareness in distance education and optimizing language teaching practices for different learners. Finally, it suggests that the platforms or learning management systems used in distance education should be structured to facilitate interactive features, instant communication, and discussion forums similar to those accessible to face-to-face students.

About the Authors

Dr. Emine Kuluşaklı is an Assistant Professor in the School of Foreign Languages at Malatya Turgut Özal University, Malatya, Türkiye. She received her Master’s and Doctorate degrees in English Language and Literature. Her main interests are foreign language learning and teaching, learner autonomy, distance education, CALL, British Literature and studies in higher education. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6240-8050

Dr. Gülten Genç is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Inonu University, Malatya, Türkiye. She received her Master's and Doctorate degrees in Educational Sciences. Her research focuses mainly on the professional development of foreign language teachers, language learners' psychology, and intercultural communication. gulten.genc@inonu.edu.tr ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2472-4041

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.
References
Ellis, E. (2012). Language awareness and its relevance to TESOL. University of Sydney Papers in TESOL.


Tucker, S. (2001). Distance Education: Better, Worse, or As Good As Traditional
English Language Awareness of Distance and Face-to-Face Learners

Kuluşaklı & Genç


**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Language Awareness Scale by Kaya (2010)**

1. I pay attention to grammar and the way it works.
2. I am aware of the phonetics and phonological facts of English.
3. I can read and make sense of a variety of English texts.
4. I can produce written English texts across different genres.
5. I can understand the ways vocabulary is used for a variety of purposes.
6. I can easily assess others’ feelings, thoughts, and intentions in communication.
7. I can easily respond to the other’s feelings, thoughts, and intentions in communication.
8. I can easily use a number of strategies in communication.
9. I can use English appropriately according to context.
10. I am aware of the cultural load of the English language.
11. I am interested in how the target culture and my own connect and differ.
12. I am aware of my learning style.
13. I can arrange my personal learning process in an effective way.
15. I can reflect on my own learning.
Foreign Language Teaching Methods in Task-Based Learning

Farida Shukurova
FLTM Department
Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan
Email: shukurovafarida22@gmail.com

Received: 11/16/2023                      Accepted: 02/19/2024                      Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
This article explores various aspects of task-based language teaching, a method of foreign language teaching. The current paper will analyze recent studies on task-based Teaching of a foreign language will be analyzed in a way, and its advantages and various manifestations. First, the nature of task-based language learning and its role in communication will be discussed. Later, the main characteristics of this method, the roles of teacher and student will be studied. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of this method will be discussed. In traditional learning (grammar translation, listening-speaking) the language is taught to foreigners or second language learners in a group. In this case, the focus is on the language itself. Rather, it is not any information that language carries or how it is used. The teacher's goal is to teach his students new vocabulary and grammatical rules of the language.

Keywords: Language teaching, methods, task-based learning, teacher and student, traditional learning

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.4
Introduction

In this study, how to use Task-Based Teaching (TBT) as a foreign language in the development of speaking skills and the advantages of its use were discussed. Speaking skills have been a difficult and neglected area in the teaching of a language as a foreign language. Speaking, which is one of the easiest ways to communicate and express oneself, is at the top of the list of language skills that need to be developed the most for a foreign language learner. The development of speaking skills is discussed based on need, task, and communication. In this study, the relationship between speech and communication is explained, and how the development of speaking skills will take place according to the task-based method is explained by creating examples. Three different examples of application, beginner level, intermediate level, and advanced level, have been planned and prepared in accordance with the principles of the Task-Based Learning Approach.

The topic of how to teach the language has been discussed a lot and many linguists have put forward different views and methods on this issue. The subject of language teaching differs from the subject of mother tongue acquisition and foreign language teaching, and the methods and techniques used differ completely with the change of the target audience. It is necessary to analyze the concepts of language teaching and foreign language teaching to make the studies in these subjects more healthy and to create more effective materials. It will be useful to consider the development of each concept in the historical process, new approaches, and methods one by one.

The situation of how language teaching should be over the years has been a situation that educators who work on language teaching, like today, have also focused on and examined. Various methods were used in the process and when a problem occurred in a method, practices such as testing different methods or developing methods were used. He states that many studies have been carried out to achieve a standard in language teaching and language learning, and even to determine the most effective teaching method. Because the world is constantly changing, people's needs and expectations for language learning also differ (Jebeji, 2006).

People want to learn a foreign language for different reasons and they resort to various ways to meet this. In fact, in a constantly changing and evolving environment, language teaching methods can't continue to exist in the same way without changing and evolving to satisfy people's desire to learn the language.

According to Lightbrown and Spada (1999), communicative, task-based language learning focuses on interaction, conversation, and the use of language, rather than learning the language itself. Task-based language learning is a method of language learning that involves doing a task we know using the target language.

Thus, education is constantly evolving and providing teachers with new or different methods in the classroom. Learning any language is like learning to ride a bike or learn to surf. So, there must be responsibility and willingness to take risks. With practice you will never forget the language, of course, you will try, make mistakes, and learn from them. Memorizing lots of grammar and vocabulary examples will certainly not help you unless you try to use them in real life. Therefore, Suleymanova (2018) teachers advise their students to do the task together in class. This is called “task-based learning” (p.14).

Literature Review

Task-Based Learning is a different method in foreign language teaching. This method allows the student to participate in a real life situation. Thanks to this method, students are exposed
to different situations of real life and have to communicate orally to complete the tasks given to them. Task-Based Learning allows the student to use their existing language skills.

“Modern Teaching Technologies” (2012) gives priority to the intellectual and moral development of students in new teaching technologies. It is necessary to teach new technologies so that pieces express their ideas in a clear and logical sequence. These methods ensure students' creativity and development, formalize their high reputation.

In particular, according to “Language Aptitude Theory and Practice” (2023), the main goal in language teaching is to reach a level that can meet the needs of daily life in the language the individual learns. The quickest and easiest way to do this is to expose learners to as much of the target language as possible. Like learning a child's mother tongue, learning a second language can be easily accomplished in a completely natural environment or in environments very close to the natural environment.

Also, “Advantages of Using the Task-Based Teaching Method in Listening Skills in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language” (2009) emphasizes the individual's communicative abilities in the application of this method.

“A Study on Task-Based Language Teaching from Theory to Practice” (2010) and the first goal of Task-Based Teaching is to create gains according to the needs of the target language learner. It is important how much the individual wants to learn and at what level to develop.

Thus, “Task-based teaching of English, Scientific Work” (2018) education is constantly developing and provides teachers with new or different methods in the lesson. Learning any language is like learning to ride a bike or learning to surf. So, there must be responsibility and willingness to take risks. With practice you will never forget the language, of course you will try, make mistakes and learn from them.

**Method**

The training process is a complex process. It is important to organize it appropriately. Principles play an important role in the appropriate organization of training.

In this regard, descriptive, comparative, and statistical methods were used in the research article.

Didactics, being a theory of training, reveals the objective laws and regularities of training and determines the ways of using them. Training principles are derived from training laws.

The principle is a set of ideas adopted to organize educational activities according to the laws of didactics. The principle also means using the existing laws in didactics and organizing the activity in accordance with the requirements of those laws.

Teaching principles serve the implementation of important tasks of didactics. The principles set the teacher such tasks that, by following them, he achieves high educational success for the students.

The principles that determine the general direction of the teacher's activity during training are classified in different ways in the pedagogical literature.

In the textbook “Pedagogy” written by Slasteni (2012) together with other authors, the principles of training are classified as follows: “scientific, application of training, consistency and systematicity of training, individual approach in training, provision of creative development in training, consideration of the degree of difficulty of training and the ability of the subject depending on the degree of complexity adaptation” (p.112).
Based on the examples we have shown regarding the classification of principles, it can be said that the principles of education have not been fully resolved in both traditional and modern pedagogical literature. Because educators approach the principles from different aspects. What is certain is that there is a certain mechanism in the training process. Noting that training principles are the mechanism that ensures success in training, E. Ibrahimov (2020) says: Even if training methods or technologies change, relevant principles will always be there (p. 31).

**Task-Based Learning Methodology**

What is task-based learning? Task-Based Learning is a different method in foreign language teaching. This method allows the student to take part in a real-life situation. Thanks to this method, students are exposed to different situations of real life and they have to communicate verbally to fulfill the tasks assigned to them. Task-Based Learning allows the student to use the language skills they have at their current level. It provides the student with the opportunity to develop the foreign language skills he is learning through the use of the language. This method sets a goal for the student to achieve and in this way keeps the student's center of attention. As a result, language becomes a tool and the use of language becomes a necessity. Why do we have to choose the Task-Based Learning Method to teach a foreign language? We have to ask ourselves this question because if we, as foreign language teachers, do not know which method to use when teaching a foreign language, or if we cannot establish a link between the students who have different learning styles and the learning methods by which they can learn the foreign language, and also the level of the students, the educational tools to be used. If we do not take into account the materials and learning processes of the students, then we cannot teach a foreign language either. Therefore, when we choose the Task-Based Learning Method, the foreign language teacher should have a clear and defined purpose. After the Task-Based Learning method is chosen as the language teaching method, the teacher realizes that “the teaching phenomenon by itself cannot determine how the student's foreign language is learning”, and thus “teachers and students cannot choose what needs to be learned”. Elements in the target language do not take place in a prescribed order (Skehan, 1996).

This means that we, as teachers, have to relinquish control of the learning process. We must certainly acknowledge the fact that we cannot control what each student learns after a bilingual lesson, for example, and as P. Skehan (1996) says, “Instruction has no effect on language learning” (p. 21).

In the Task-Based Learning Method, the student should be exposed to the target foreign language as much as possible to observe the foreign language only. Then the student should make various inferences about the target language and as a result, he should experience this language. One of the main aims of choosing the Task-Based Learning method is to increase student activity; The Task-Based Learning method is a completely student-centered foreign language teaching method. It is absolutely not related to teacher-oriented activities, and this method allows the teacher to create different tasks for the student he is dealing with, to experience the foreign language he is learning instantly and individually.

Each task will provide the student with a new personal experience through the use of the foreign language, and at this point, the teacher has a very important role to play. The teacher has to take responsibility for the awareness-raising process related to foreign language learning. This process has to follow the implementation process of the task activities. The awareness-raising process, which is a part of Task-Based Learning, is of great importance for the success of the Task-
Based Learning method. At this point, the teacher has to help the students to notice the similarities and differences and they have to help the students to correct, clarify, and deepen their foreign language perceptions (Lewis, 1993).

Considering all these issues, it can be concluded that the essence of the Task-Based Learning method is to learn a foreign language by trial and error. In other words, in a sense, Task-based Learning is a method of learning a foreign language by experiencing it. Tasks are a set of activities used by the learner of the target language for a communicative purpose. This is how Willis defined “tasks”. According to this description, a task can be anything from a puzzle to making a reservation at the airport.

A Task-Based Approach to Language:
• It allows the matching of student needs with needs analysis.
• Supported by classroom-centered language learning research findings.
• Allows evaluation based on Task-Based criteria.
• Allows format-oriented instructions. For these reasons, we have to choose the topics that will accelerate the language development of the students. These topics should be in a way that both motivates students and draws their attention.

The Nature of New Teaching Technologies

The active or interactive education methods used in the education system of the developed Turkish tattoos are used in the education institutions of our republic. These methods have a special place in the formalization of the shared figure. Without humanizing, humanizing, and democratizing education, it is not possible to formalize the shameful personality. The principle of humanizing education is based on social, human, and civic ideas. “The main spirit of reform, which he is known to be, consists of humanizing, humanizing, democratizing, differentiating, and integrating some principles. These principles are the national background, the creation of the world education system based on the national basis, the formation of the collection area, and some formalization of the education-decision process. In the new teaching technologies, the intellectual and spiritual development of the students is given priority. The teaching of new technologies is necessary for shards to express their own ideas with clarity and logical succession. These methods ensure the development of creativity and creativity of the poets, and formalize their high reputation (Nezerov, 2012).

As the teaching method, it is a multiparameter understanding, and it is used to bring the subject of the teaching, its law, its laws, and its principles into a meaningful life. The arbitrary performance of təlimin maqsəd, məzmunu is suspended from the practical possibilities of the chosen methods. These possibilities are provided by the available methods and they give a snag on the developmental speed of the didactic system. The more the methods applied in the teaching lead to the development, the higher the training will be.

In this sense, interactive delivery methods are superior.

Since inventive, result-oriented training fulfills three main functions, these should be taken into account in the training-training process:

a. **Pedagogic** - here are the factors affecting the student's development related to training: microenvironment, communications, personal experience, and methods;

b. **Psychological** - Here are the psychological capabilities of students that ensure the assimilation of learning outcomes: effort, interest, characteristic features;
c. Social - includes morality, labor, science, art, religion, etc. including imparting knowledge and skills related.

Since the introduction of new training technologies in the education system is the main factor that increases the efficiency and quality of the training process, it can be concluded that:

I. Since the educational process is a result-oriented process, training with a predetermined goal and directed to the student should be carried out;

II. Since teaching and learning are closely related to each other, they should be taken in constant interaction;

III. The teaching process depends on the nature of mutual relations, the characteristics of the environment, and the scope of educational institutions and should incorporate the set of verbal and sensory behaviors arising from their internal structure.

By using new technologies, teachers can turn lessons into important tools that make lessons more interesting and help students make sound judgments and understand content that they will later apply to real life. Therefore, new teaching methods are very useful for better mastering the content of the study and developing the thinking process required by the students in order to give independent answers.

New technologies differ from traditional teaching methods by a number of features: involvement of students in research activities, creation of problematic conditions by the teacher, independent acquisition of knowledge by students, etc. The mentioned characteristics have also been present in some traditional training methods, but the new training methods are based on the mentioned characteristics as a whole.

Research shows that new learning technologies allow students to develop creativity when based on the following principles:

• Constructivism that will lead to the development of thinking;
• Cooperative training that will lead to the social development of students;
• creation of conditions for independent acquisition of knowledge; independent acquisition of knowledge and skills;
• for the teacher to act as an organizer, coordinator, and in some cases, an arbitrator.

According to David (2006), constructivism is the process by which learners acquire knowledge by relating it to new ideas or theories that they have previously acquired through experience. Constructivism is sometimes characterized as creativity. Constructivism is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed, discovered, and created. Knowledge cannot be acquired passively, knowledge can be acquired in the process of active learning. Implementing constructivist theory requires three things: the active learner, the social learner, and the creative learner.

To ensure a creative (constructive) environment, the teacher must follow the following:
- not to give knowledge, but to create the desire to acquire knowledge;
- should not ask questions with ready answers, but problematic questions;
- should ensure the future development of the learner;
- Rather than providing information, the learner should be involved in the process of acquiring knowledge;
- must properly plan the learning process.

In contrast to cooperative (collaboration-based) training, traditional didactics give training tasks in three forms: frontal, group, and individual.
In classes where new learning technologies are applied, the group form prevails. Here the essence also changes, the students who make up the group perform the given task based on mutual communication and reasoning.

During cooperative learning, students can achieve their goals at the same time as other students with whom they work together. Cooperative-based learning requires the organization of the learning task in such a way that students achieve the goal of the lesson as a result of the efforts of themselves and their peers in small groups.

Theoretical Foundations of Task-Based Language Teaching Method

According to Krashen (1982), the most basic goal in language teaching is to reach a level that can meet the needs of daily life in the language that the individual has learned. The fastest and easiest way to do this is to expose the learner to the target language as much as possible. Just like a child's mother tongue learning, second language learning can be done easily in a completely natural environment or in environments very close to the natural environment.

One of the contemporary approaches based on this view is Task-Based Language Teaching Management. Prabhu was the first to find and apply the Task-Based Language Teaching method (Wang, 2006). Prabhu aims for the learners of the target language to focus on the tasks given within the framework of this approach rather than the language and to acquire the language in the natural environment through those tasks. In the application of this method, the communicative abilities of the individual come to the fore (Yorulmaz, 2009).

Task-based teaching was born as a reaction to the old methods. It is fed by the constructivist learning theory, with the communicative language teaching method through the process of application, sharing, and tasks (Jeon & Hahn, 2006).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), task is an important activity in using language. Wills is at the forefront of the proponents of the Task-Based Language Teaching method. Wills states that this approach and the communicative language teaching method are very similar to each other, but that this approach is more meaningful and effective than the communicative method. While tasks are at the center of the language teaching process in the communicative language teaching approach, tasks are the meaningful tools that enable learning the target language in the Task-Based Language Teaching Method (Willis, 1996).

According to Gunesh (2011), if there is no connection between the activities given to the students in practice, it becomes difficult to transfer the learned skills to practice. If rich and diverse activities are not provided, it becomes difficult to transfer. Giving the same type of activities to students is a repetition of the same procedures. This hinders goal attainment and skill development. In this case, besides the application, the problem of how much the learner internalizes the language and how much he can use it practically arises. At this point, the “Task-based” language teaching method aims to teach the target language to the learner by practicing frequently and by perceiving the language while performing the stages of the given tasks.

The task-based approach to language teaching advocates that the target language is at the center of the learner's life. In this method, it is important to use the language learned as a part of natural life. The learner's free use of the language in his daily life will add a pragmatic dimension to teaching. The individual who uses the target language in Task-Based teaching will use this language involuntarily and instantly, while meeting his daily needs, and will realize the upper skill of thinking in the target language (Doghan, 2012).
Task-based learning requires the target language learner to use communication skills while performing tasks. Thus, it aimed to learn the target language in the natural process by taking communicative language teaching to the fore and creating tasks that strengthen the communication skills of the target language learner (Jeon & Hahn, 2006).

The Task-Based Language Teaching method is based on communicative practices. The tasks of this method are realized when these applications are carried out by students learning the target language in the classroom environment (Yıldız, 2012).

Yorulmaz (2009) listed the advantages of the Task-Based Learning Method compared to other foreign language teaching methods as follows.

- In this method, semantic parts and grammatical structures are considered as a whole. More emphasis is placed on meaning.
- Inspired by the communicative approach and tasks are tools for language learning, not goals.
- In the Task-Based Language Teaching approach, the individual learning the target language is placed in the center.
- With this teaching method, language is perceived as a whole with all skill areas and teaching is carried out through tasks that will enable the four language skills to progress by supporting each other, not piecemeal.
- This teaching method aims to teach the language in the fastest and most permanent way as required by contemporary language teaching approaches by keeping up with the perception of rapid knowledge acquisition and use of our age.

We can list the elements that constitute the building blocks of the theoretical foundations of the Task-Based Language Teaching method as follows.

- In this method, the task difficulties are determined by the language teacher according to the level of the person learning the target language.
- The individual who learns the target language tries to fulfill the given tasks by communicating with those around him.
- This method, evaluates the individual learning the target language by focusing on the process, not the end.
- The difficulty levels of the tasks are arranged according to the principle of education from simple to complex.
- The main purpose of the tasks is the activities performed by the language learner. Tasks are aimed at revealing and producing something new. The target language learner needs to use communication skills to fulfill the tasks (Shahin, 2019).

**Elements of the Task-Based Teaching Method**

This item is one of the most important indicators that the Task-Based Teaching Method is based on a theory. The biggest cornerstone of language is meaning. There is an accumulation of communicative and constructivist approaches in the Task-Based Teaching Method. The use of grammatical structure in the reports of the tasks exemplifies the application of the structuralist function, and the application of the task exemplifies the application of the communicative model.

2. Task: In this method, the concept of “task” corresponds to the “input” element in education according to Krashen (1983). According to Swain (2000), tasks define the concept of output in education. In this direction, when the tasks are considered as outputs, they express the ones produced for the result.
3. Pattern: The first purpose of Task-Based Instruction is to create acquisitions in line with the needs of the individual learning the target language. It is important to what extent an individual wants to learn and to what level he wants to progress (Izadpanah, 2010).

4. Implementation Process: According to Yorulmaz (2009), the task framework in this method is for the implementation of the task plan. At this stage, it is important that the tasks are sorted into types and ranked in order of difficulty.

Results

It has been seen in the literature review that one of the biggest problems of teaching is the lack of a curriculum, the boundaries of which are drawn by the consensus of field experts. For this reason, most of the teachers and institutions act individually and teach through individual practices. The fact that language teaching requires in-field expertise has been neglected by many individuals or institutions. In order for the achievements to reach the target, especially in the development of speaking skills, the foreign language teacher should be selected from teachers who are experts in their field and whose diction is correct. Unfortunately, although most of the trainers and researchers working in this field today are under different licenses, they can be employed in this department. In this case, it directly affects the quantity, and quality of work, educational activities, and the content of the prepared materials of the well-equipped trainers in the field.

One of the problems in the field of teaching foreign languages is material limitations. This material limitation directly affects the teaching process, the student, and the teaching of the course. Because it is a rapidly developing field in the new period, the amount of scientific studies in the literature is not sufficient, but it is increasing day by day. The material diversity will increase when the tasks are created by taking the task-based language teaching method, which is a student-centered contemporary method.

While choosing the tasks, care should be taken that they are about real life. A foreign language learner should both learn the language and acquire functional knowledge that can be useful in life through the selected tasks.

Collaborative work through Task-Based Learning practices in the teaching of any foreign language not only prepares the foreign language learner for daily life but also improves their communicative abilities by supporting them.

Discussion

In task-based teaching of language teaching to foreigners, tasks should be chosen from real-life tasks. Thus, the culture of the target language will be acquired by the learner through the activities prepared.

Developed in the light of its communicative approach, the Task-Based Language teaching method improves the student's communication skills as well as language acquisition, by making the student constantly active in the process and giving tasks that require interpersonal interaction with the presentation sections before the task, during the task, and after the task. Especially in the age of technology, the Task-Based Language Teaching method, which encourages people to communicate face-to-face without screens, differs from many of the contemporary approach methods in this respect.

The biggest advantage of the Task-Based Language Teaching method is that it can enable the language learner to think in the target language, that is, meta-cognitive thinking, through tasks. At the same time, this method gives the student many skills in a short time.
The Task-Based Teaching method in foreign language teaching is based on the completion of the tasks given to the students through group work. This imperative exposes the learner to communicating in the target language. In the tasks created according to the needs and willingness of the language learner, the dialogues and tasks in the marketplace, in the cinema, in the bank, and the market provide advantages in daily life by making foreign language teaching fun in terms of learning the target language.

**Conclusion**

This research paper attempted to analyze recent studies on task-based teaching of a foreign language will be analyzed in a way, its advantages, and various manifestations. First, the nature of task-based language learning and its role in communication will be discussed. Later, the main characteristics of this method, the roles of teacher and student will be studied. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of this method will be discussed. The teacher's goal is to teach his students new vocabulary and grammatical rules of the language.

In this section, suggestions were made for researchers and trainers in the field of practice according to the findings of the study and the results.

The competence and diction of the instructor in the field are very important in terms of correct use, speaking, and pronunciation of the learned language. Since the person who learns the language will learn the rules of that language and the phonetic structure of the language from the trainer, it is necessary to work with teachers with strong oratory. The proficiency status of all teachers currently working in the field should be investigated. Because the teacher who is competent, successful, forward-looking, and does not use contemporary methods and approaches during teaching will be taught unqualified and the learner will be adversely affected by this situation.

By increasing the number of foreign language teaching institutions at home and abroad, language policies and learner-centered education programs should be determined. To determine these, a committee should be formed from instructors and lecturers who have been working in this field for years, and this field should progress more systematically.

Learning outcomes according to language levels can be reconstructed according to the criteria determined by the European Language Portfolio by taking the common opinions of field experts, and an equal distribution of the subjects according to language levels can be realized in the light of these acquisitions.

Since Task-Based Instruction is a communication model, it can be supported with other communicative methods in the classroom and out-of-class practices. The point to be considered will be to choose a method according to the student's needs. Especially in foreign language teaching, even if the child knows without adult discrimination, the fear of making mistakes at the point of pronunciation negatively affects the development of speaking skills. In the light of studies, we can say that this fear can be overcome since the method is communicative-centered in homogeneous classes in terms of language levels in which the Task-Based teaching method is applied.

While developing speaking skills in foreigners with Task-Based Instruction, the language used is very important when the tasks are performed by the target language learner.

**About the Author**

Farida Shukurova studied at Azerbaijan University of Languages (bachelor's degree 1996-2000). Later, she received a master's degree at the Faculty of Education of the Azerbaijan University of...
Languages. Methodology of English Language Teaching (Ph.D. in Pedagogy - Candidate for a degree) In 2015, she received a degree in Education. She is currently working as an Associate professor at AUL (FLTM department) Employment at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Dr. Shukurova's research field: Theory and methodology of teaching languages (English Language Teaching Methodology). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7443-7811

**Funding**

This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity**

This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:**

AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**References**


Arab World English Journal

www.awej.org

ISSN: 2229-9327


A Metapragmatic Analysis of Iraqi and American Political Legal Discourse

Saleema Abdulzahra Naait
English Department, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon, Iraq

&

Iman Mingher Alshemmery
English Department, College of Education, Alqadisiyah University, Iraq
Corresponding Author: saleema.naait@qu.edu.iq

Abstract
Metapragmatics is a relatively new field of study that attracts the attention of many scholars in linguistics; it refers to the use of language about language use. In trials of political figures, such as Saddam Hussein and William Clinton, Iraqi and American legal discourses have not been addressed that much, if ever, metapragmatically; thus, the study aims to analyze these discourses metapragmatically. This paper attempts to answer central questions about identifying the metapragmatic expressions, explaining their functions, and describing the layers of metapragmatic monitoring of the detected metapragmatic expressions in the Iraqi and American legal discourse. Accordingly, the objectives are to identify the metapragmatic expressions detected by specific indicators and investigate their functions and role in monitoring the Iraqi and American broadcast political court discourses. Some extracts of the two figures mentioned above are analyzed according to a developed model encompassing Caffi’s (2016) model, Hubler and Bublitz’s (2007) metapragmatic parameters, and Culpuper and Haugh’s (2014) metapragmatic awareness indicators, and forms. The current study is hoped to be helpful for those researchers interested in the fields of pragmatics, politics, and applied linguistics. Since metapragmatics deals with the pragmatic meaning of language, this study highlights the importance of metapragmatic expressions in promoting productive interaction and organizing communication within the court, regardless of the language used. Further investigation of metapragmatics is recommended while analyzing political, literary, religious, social, and media discourse to understand the functions of the metapragmatic utterances used in different settings.

Keywords: Caffi’s (2016) model, indexicality, Iraqi political-legal discourse, metacommunication, metapragmatics, metapragmatic awareness, metapragmatic parameters, reflexivity

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.5
Introduction

Metapragmatics is a recently emerged area of linguistics that has been addressed by many scholars like (Caffi (1993, 1994, 2006), Lucy (1993), Verschueren (1995, 2000), and Mey (2009). They have attempted to systemize and categorize metapragmatic language in various ways. Etymologically, the Greek-derived (meta-) refers to ‘after’ or ‘beyond’. Epistemologically, the meaning of (meta-) is ‘about’ the thing it is attached to; for example, metapragmatics means pragmatics about pragmatics, and metalanguage means language about language (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014, p.236). According to Hübler (2011), metapragmatics is a slippery term; "many meanings have been ascribed to it, too many perhaps" (p. 107).

Linguistic anthropologist Silverstein (1976) was the first to coin metapragmatics; he has defined it as "reflexive pragmatic functioning" (p.36). Several scholars, for example, Hübler and Bublitz (2007), adopt this meaning of metapragmatics with more elaboration and enhancements on some specific details. Still, others go far and present different senses, such as Caffi (1993, 2006, 2016), who has given three senses of metapragmatics: Theoretical discussion on pragmatics, the conditions of actions and interactive communication, and management of discourse on which the present study concentrates. Caffi's (2006) third sense, the focus of this study, concentrates on the speaker's competence in judging and managing the appropriateness of language use. A speaker may look critically at their discourse and make adjustments and corrections or explain some comments on their discourse. Simply speaking, this is the scope of metapragmatics. The setting for the study's data is the court; legal discourse refers to verbal communication in legal contexts; it is authorized institutionally and socially (Goodrich, 1984). Metapragmatics is a linguistic approach that deals with the participants' interpretation; therefore, selecting these two different legal discourses in these two other languages is not for comparison but to confirm their universality. To contribute effectively to this field of study, this study will address a special kind of Iraqi Arabic and American English political discourse. Despite the interest within these political discourses, frequently tackled linguistically, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, Iraqi Arabic and American English legal discourses in trials of political figures have not been addressed that much, if ever, metapragmatically. The trial of Saddam and his comrades in Aldujail case occupied the opinion of the public and the world at its time in 2005; Clinton's impeachment in 1998 was one of the critical trials of political figures in the twentieth century. Hence, filling this gap is the concern of this study, which attempts to answer the following questions.

1. What are the metapragmatic expressions of the Arabic and English legal discourses in trials of Iraqi and American political figures?
2. What are the indicators of these metapragmatic expressions?
3. What are the functions of the metapragmatic expressions used in such trials?

This research paper is hoped to be helpful for those researchers interested in the fields of pragmatics, politics, and applied linguistics. In pragmatics, learners are expected to understand the workings of metapragmatic theories within Arabic and English legal discourse, which is restricted and argumentative. This work will provide political observers with the metapragmatic expressions utilized by Arabic and English politicians. In applied linguistics, teachers, students, and translators can use this work to address speaking on language use more efficiently. Besides, those researchers engaged in forensic linguistics can benefit from the findings offered by this study, particularly those related to trials.
Literature Review

The studies that have tackled metapragmatics in terms of Caffi’s (2006) third sense are of two veins. The first vein addresses the metapragmatic structures and markers in various settings. One of the studies is Culpeper and Haugh's (2014), which summarizes most of the fruitful conclusions of several studies discussing the metapragmatic indicators. They have presented four kinds of metapragmatic indicators: 1) the pragmatic expressions or markers that indicate how vague terms such as “sort of” and “kind of” should be understood, 2) reported language use, which involves the quotative use in language, 3) metapragmatic commentary which includes the attitudinal categories, action verbs, and some of the deixis, and 4) social discourse (p.241).

The second vein deals with metapragmatic functions discussed in several studies, such as Jacobs (1999), who first explored metapragmatic discourse's dramatic, reliability, distancing, and attitude functions. Verschueren (2000) has discussed the identity construction function. Subsequently, Hübler and Bublitz (2007) have listed some general functions of metapragmatic expressions, such as managing conflict, engaging in affiliation, etc. The Typology of Metapragmatic functions (Bublitz & Hubler, 2007) has won much attention in illustrating the various metapragmatic functions an utterance can serve. According to their functional taxonomy of metapragmatic acts, the utterance 'You are repeating yourself' can be instrumental, evaluative, or communication-oriented. Being communication-oriented, this utterance could be conflictual (face threatening), deciding on the best expression (establishing the best code), (inter-)personal, expressive, affiliative, means related, negotiating linguistic meaning, and organizing. This typology is regarded as an essential step toward explaining the distinctive features and functions of metapragmatic expressions; therefore, Caffi's (2016) model for analyzing them has depended highly on it.

Dubrovskaya's (2017) study examined how judges use language in judicial discourse. The study found that judges use meta-utterances to construct the judge's identity and the social institution they represent. The study analyzed trial transcripts in Russian and English and classified meta-utterances into three groups based on reality types. Jürgen (2021) integrated metapragmatics into genre analysis to examine metapragmatic discourse about generic references used by speakers. Seven YouTube videos and comments were analyzed using textually oriented discourse analysis. The findings suggest that generic references can take various forms when referring to a particular type or genre of discourse. Blasch (2021) used metapragmatics to study how registers conceptualize authenticity in visual political communication. The study analyzed 84 photos from the social media campaign of the former Austrian chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, during the country's parliamentary elections in 2017. Merminod and Vitorio's (2023) study found that reflexive practices shape language ideologies and identity construction. Metapragmatic discourse analysis helps researchers understand how language use is affected. Research interviews help understand how people reconfigure or oppose existing indexicalities.

Simply put, there have been two directions in investigating metapragmatics; one concentrates on its structure and indicators, and the second is on its functions using different approaches. The current study focuses on the two directions using the metapragmatic approach.

Theoretical Framework

Building upon previous research that has examined metapragmatic indicators and functions, this study aims to investigate how metapragmatic expressions are used in the legal discourse in courts and their functions in this institutional setting.
Aspects of Metapragmatics

Several scholars such as Silverstein (1976, 1993), Bateson (1972), Schiffrin (1987), Lucy (1993), Caffi (1994, 2006), Hübler & Bublitz (2007), and others have tried to explain the metapragmatic language in various ways and give interpretations in their literature despite the overlapping ideas within their studies. They confirm that the metapragmatic dimension is essential in all language use since language typically refers to itself differently; this mode facilitates communication because it deeply grounds utterances to a specific context, puts them in a participation frame, and predicts turn-taking. They claim that metapragmatics is an extensive and interdisciplinary field; it deals with the communicated messages in any discourse and the linguistic codes used to convey those messages, and both of them constitute the structure of speech. However, eminent aspects of metapragmatics are discussed within studies on metapragmatics, and they contribute largely to clarifying it. They are Silverstein's (1976) understanding of metalingual use and its relation with indexicality, Bateson's study of metacommunicative use (1972) and Lucy’s concept of reflexivity (1993), and Caffi's distinguished contributions in metapragmatics.

Silverstein's Metalingual Use

Silverstein is regarded as the one who has aroused interest in metapragmatics. His work (1976, 1985) has generally posited metapragmatics as the description of the pragmatic use of language or as the metalinguistic reporting of that description, i.e., the use of language to communicate about using language. Silverstein (1993) demonstrates that in addition to the semantic codes that interpret the plain meaning of words, there are pragmatic codes that infer the implicit meanings. Metapragmatic expressions refer to "the linguistic signs that deal with the pragmatic codes to explicate the extra semantic encoded meanings in speech" (Silverstein, 1993, p.39).

Bateson's Metacommunicative Use

Metacommunication has been generalized by the anthropologist Bateson (1972). It refers to the cues through which needful communicative information can be interpreted. It is closely related to metapragmatics because it stems from metalanguage study (Bridges, 2019). Bateson (1972) has claimed that metacommunication is synonymous with metalanguage, whereas metapragmatics can be studied within the umbrella of metacommunication. In discourse, there are types of metacommunicative utterances that secure dialogue management and communication efficiency. Metacommunication is a risky activity and a complex concept. It may be implicit, not expressed by explicit words, and what one means may not be what others interpret. Whenever there is communication, "there will also be metacommunication associated with it, making sense of the meaning" (Mateus, 2017, p.83). Sawyer (2003), cited in (Deschrijve, 2021, p.9), has explained that metacommunication is necessary for successful communication. It clarifies utterances and interpretations, provides information about the interlocutors and context, and negotiates frames.

Lucy's Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a distinctive feature of natural language, distinguishing it from other semiotic systems specifically in its adequacy of describing itself; it has been studied anthropologically and cross-culturally by Lucy (1993). Linguistically, reflexivity can be demonstrated in the speakers' capacity to communicate on the communication they are engaged in. Defining and modifying the
speakers' comments and partners can be rooted in their metapragmatic reflexivity to achieve mutual understanding. Reflexivity and awareness are essential to understand metapragmatics. Lucy (1993) clarifies that to use language reflexively means "to speak about speech; using language to communicate about the activity of using language" (p. 9). He argues that speech is distinguished as reflexive when the speaker reports utterances and remarks on language, describes and indexes aspects of speech events, invokes familiar names, and leads the listeners to an appropriate interpretation of their utterances. According to him, metapragmatic language can regenerate speech, reforming it in a new environment with a new goal. The interactants practice metapragmatics, reflecting on "all the meaningfulness of signs connected with ongoing usage in contexts of communication" (Lucy, 1993, p. 17). Thus, metapragmatics supplements language reflexivity so that speakers can speak about and investigate the kinds of linguistic phenomena in addition to the aspects covered by the metalinguistic (metasemantic) practice.

Reflexivity functions as a means of "explaining and modifying, exemplifying and glossing, repairing and evaluating, which help to infer entailed, presupposed and implicated meaning" (Lucy, 1993, p. 10). Naturally, speakers can direct a metapragmatic act, such as criticizing or commenting on themselves. However, when they target other’s behavior in the same way, this may cause face-threatening and thus risky.

In one of the dimensions submitted by Silverstein (1993), metapragmatics is demonstrated as "a reflexive relation to the pragmatic or indexical dimension of language" (p. 41). Metapragmatics is related to reflexivity and indexicality.

**Indexicality**

It is worth noting that indexicality is tightly intertwined with metapragmatics, as the essence of both concepts encompasses language practices and social groups' complex histories. Ponzio (2006) observed that indexicality, discussed by Peirce (1974), concerns the strong relation between verbal language and referents in the real world. Silverstein (2006) has explained that Jakobson (1960), among many linguists, has noted the prevalent role of indexing in natural language beyond the deictic reference to include the context-suffused and context-dependent character of linguistic communication; indexicality can be revealed when linguistic or other signs point their users to the conditions of their use. The deictic elements are the words and expressions that refer to objects, situations, persons, etc., by ‘pointing’ to them, such as "I, you, here, there, now, this, that, etc..." (p. 757). Moreover, he adds that the language one speaks reveals ('indexes') her social or local roots; through indexicality, an utterance may show many things about the utterer: sex, age, region, education, or social affiliation, etc.

Metapragmatics helps regiment indexicals into interpretable events (Silverstein, 1993); metapragmatic awareness enables speakers to draw upon social indexes based on language. Thus, "metapragmatics is the reconstruction of an indexical signaling event, the picking out of and supplying information about a pragmatic act. It is a description of an indexical signaling event" (p. 159). Indexicality can be viewed as reflexivity; it may refer to the events that enable their articulation.

**Caffi's Contributions to Metapragmatics**

One of the linguists who has made influential contributions to metapragmatic is Caffi. According to Caffi (1994), metapragmatics is the ability to reflect on language by connecting language to context. Therefore, metapragmatic resolutions demand awareness of both linguistic
and world or contextual knowledge, i.e., metapragmatic awareness. Caffi (1993) explains that metapragmatic knowledge enables the speaker not to abide firmly by the familiar socio-communicative routines and roles absorbed by them; it is essential to "an ecology of communication" (p. 43).

The focus is on the pragmatics of the actual meta-utterances that comment on the ongoing discourse or text. This means metapragmatics determines how the speaker's usage of some utterance becomes practical and possible. Specifically, an utterance or expression is metapragmatic if it elaborates on the pragmatics of a speech. Caffi (2006) clarifies that the metapragmatic level mirrors the mediator between linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, i.e., it empowers the speaker to join language and the world by connecting the appropriate utterances with the factual contexts (p.626). She has established three senses of metapragmatics:

1) The metatheoretical sense
2) The second sense discusses the conditions that make the exchange influential (thinkability, feasibility, and recognizability). These conditions are simultaneous in social communication.
3) The third sense is concerned with the “management of discourse,” which is "the investigation of speakers 'know-how in reflecting judgments of appropriateness in their own and others 'communication" (Caffi, 2006, p. 626). Metapragmatic expressions can monitor one’s own (self-referential) and another’s language (other-referential). For example, "No offense but…” and "Do not get me wrong…” are self-referential utterances, referring to the speaker's language, and they could be used to monitor others' responses (other-referential) and minimize the risk of being held accountable for one’s actions as a discursive strategy used to shield the speaker of being accused of offensiveness. Such utterances explain that the speaker is reflexively commenting on the risk that the addressee may misunderstand her intentions or may disagree with the used utterance. Being mindful of potential offense or disagreement is a metapragmatic skill. It enables the speakers to monitor their language so that their messages are not misinterpreted. Caffi (1993) shows that there are two distinctive features of the third sense of metapragmatics: Common knowledge and reflexivity; the former includes shared knowledge and folk theories; common sense or knowledge is not ideological but epistemological, whereas the latter, i.e., reflexivity, indicates its possibility of thinking and speaking about its thinking (p.33). In outlining the sequence of speech, the speaker can describe it, name it, and decide whether it is appropriate so that the speaker can go back over her steps and correct herself.

In the last few years and as a step toward creating an applicable model for analyzing practical data, Caffi (2016, p.800) has initiated three interlinked layers, according to which she examines the metapragmatic expressions. These metapragmatic expressions monitor the discourse at these intertwined layers. The first layer is the sequential layer, the meta-discourse layer, which focuses on controlling and organizing the exchange. The second relational layer concentrates on the speaker and the hearer relation. At the third layer, the topical meta-textual layer, the metapragmatic expressions affect the linearity of the act sequence and form a vertical perspective, which is the hierarchy of acts. Moreover, the utterances at this layer can be further subdivided into groups depending on (a) Topical hierarchization. (b) Topical focalization. (c) Defining topics at hand. (d) Topical exclusion. (e) Topical resetting.

Data Collection and Methodology

To answer the research questions and obtain its objectives (identifying the metapragmatic expressions, their indicators, and functions), attain the aim of the study (analyzing the Iraqi and
American legal discourse of political figures metapragmatically, and provide an ample overview of the metapragmatic expressions, the following procedure is adopted:

1. Selecting public broadcast trials for the Iraqi Arabic and American English political figures, i.e., Saddam Hussein and William Clinton, to be the study's data. The selected extracts have been broadcast on local and global TV channels before and are available in the public domain. The chosen extracted parts, for both Arabic and English, are for the different members of the courtroom, i.e., the judge, the lawyers, the prosecutors, the defendants, the witnesses, etc…

2. Developing a metapragmatic model to conduct a qualitative metapragmatic analysis of illustrative examples of the data under study (see figure 1):
   A. Detecting the metapragmatic expressions according to Culpeper and Haugh's (2014) indicators.
   B. For witnessing the importance of awareness in reflexing on self and others, Culpeper and Haugh's (2014) metapragmatic awareness is the adopted model for detecting this kind of awareness.
   C. To analyze the metapragmatic expressions, the study at hand advocates Caffi's model (2016) with a high focus on the three metapragmatic layers: The Meta Discourse Layer, The Meta Relational Layer, and The Topical Meta Textual Layer.
   D. For presenting a comprehensive analysis, Hubler and Bublitz's (2007) metapragmatic parameters (functions) are also addressed.

---

**Figure 1.** Developed model for metapragmatic analysis

Data Analysis and Findings

**The Arabic Extract**

This section includes an analysis of extracts taken from the Iraqi political court discourse within the trial of Saddam and seven defendants in the alleged events in Alduajil, where Saddam Hussein's motorcade was ambushed in an assassination attempt in 1982. The extracts were translated with the help of the professional sworn translator Hameed Mana (hameed.mana@qu.edu.iq).
Extract One

The following extracted chunks were between Raouf Abdulrahman, the judge, Jaafar Almosaway, the prosecutor, and Saddam Hussein, the defendant; the exchange is available for public service at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-L0_euuFEY&t=1902s.

المدعي: ما هو العدد التقريبي لحمايتك عندما قدمت إلى الدجيل بتاريخ 8/7/1982؟
Prosecutor: what was the approximate number of your protection when you came to Aldujail on 8/7/1982?

صدام: السؤال الي سأله الادعاء معتمد على الإفادة وانا عندي تعليق على الإفادة
Saddam: The question raised by the prosecution is based on the statement, and I have a comment on the statement.

القاضي (2:28): انت جوابك على السؤال. وضح الجواب على السؤال؟
Judge (2:28): Your answer should be to the question. Explain the answer to the question.

صدام: أنا طلبت منك الكلام تعليقا على ما سجل في إفادة صدام حسين
Saddam: I asked you to speak, commenting on what was recorded in Saddam Hussein's statement.

القاضي: ميخالف طلبت. احنا نريد بحدود القانون ننطيك الفرصة احنا كلناك بإمكانك عدم الإجابة وفي حالة الإجابة في حدود القانون وفي حدود السؤال
Judge: It is okay that you requested, but it should be within the limits of the law. We give you the opportunity. We have told you that you have the right not to answer, and if you answer, it should be within the limits of the law and the limits of the question.

صدام: ...انت جوابك على السؤال ضمن المطالعة مالتك... هسة سؤال موجه الك عليك بالجواب... احنا كلناك بإمكانك عدم الإجابة وفي حالة الإجابة في حدود القانون
Saddam: ...Now answer the question within your perusal...now a question is directed to you, you have to answer it...we have told you this is a court of criminal case that has nothing to do with political issues and political speeches or your former or later enemies, answer the question...

القاضي: ادخل مباشرة بالموضوع
Judge: Get straight to the point

القاضي (43:9): ما علاقة هذه الخطبة بموضوع السؤال الموجه الك وضحلنة مدى العلاقة هذه الخطبة الطويلة في موضوع السؤال محدد؟
Judge (9:43): What is the relationship of this sermon to the subject of the question addressed to you? Explain to us the extent to which this long speech relates to the subject of the question, his question is specific.

صدام: هذا الخطبة قانونية بشأن افادة قدمت باسم القانون طلب مني ان اكولهما
Saddam: This speech is legal regarding a statement that was submitted in the name of the law, which I was asked to give.

القاضي: تقصد افادتك؟
Judge: You mean your statement?

صدام: نعم...
Saddam: Yes...
In the above extract, the judge expresses his disagreement with Saddam's irrelevant and lengthy speech through his metapragmatic commentaries, i.e., indicators of metapragmatic awareness (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014). "Your answer should be to the question. Explain the answer to the question," '...it should be within the limits of the law and the limits of the question', and "...Explain the extent to which this long speech relates to the subject of the question; his question is specific'. The judge refers to Saddam's answer as a sermon, indicating that his speech was long but should be brief and straightforward. Metacognitive awareness is apparent when Saddam gets the cognitive information that the judge means (his speech is long). He informs the judge that his speech is legal since it relates to the statement on which many of the prosecutor's questions would depend: '...So my comment is about the thing called a statement on which the prosecution based in my questions. It is an explicit metapragmatic utterance wherein Saddam refers to his preceding speech as a comment; it is detected by the pragmatic marker 'So.' This conclusive metapragmatic utterance indicates Saddam's intention. The metalinguistic descriptor 'means' detects the judge's metapragmatic utterance, 'You mean your statement;' he corrects Saddam's speech.

The prosecutor uses insinuation in his utterance, 'What do you want to say on the statement written down by the investigation committee in the presence of your lawyer and with your signature...?' It is to cast doubt on Saddam's testimony that he signed his statement in the presence of his lawyer. Moreover, he ends his utterance by requesting clarification, i.e., one of the procedural metapragmatic strategies, 'A question I am asking you?' to indicate that Saddam's answer is obscure; thus, he violates the maxim of manner. Saddam's utterance 'Are you telling me what I should say?' is detected as a metapragmatic commentary involving the linguistic verb of action 'tell.' It expresses Saddam's anger since the prosecutor's reflexive presentation of the information makes Saddam realize how he should take the upcoming information: 'What do you want to say on the statement written down by the investigation committee in the presence of your
lawyer and with your signature, *so what do you want to say?* ...*You say that this statement…* (interrupted by Saddam)."

The prosecutor's meta utterance '...*are you challenging it, saying it is not true?*?' is a situated comment about his evaluation of the defendant's language use. The linguistic action verb 'challenge' detects this metapragmatic utterance. The focus is on the illocutionary force of the verb 'challenge.'

The utterance 'Yes, I challenge it, and there will be a speech about the contest' is explicitly metapragmatic, and it prepares the audience for the prospective speech. The judge's reflection on Saddam's utterance, 'What is understood from your words is that you challenge the statement submitted before the investigating judge?' is metapragmatic and detected by the verb 'understood,' which explains the evidential status of what is meant.

The first layer of Caffi's layers focuses on the horizontal organization of the interaction between the interactants, involving some attempts to gain or maintain the floor; it demonstrates the meta-discursive layer. For instance, Saddam's metapragmatic utterance, 'I requested you to comment on the answer, and you said go ahead, Am I Right or not?' shows the speaker reflecting on the prosecutor's question and his approval in addition to his prospective comment. According to Hubler and Bublitz (2007) parameters, it is instrumentalized because it reinforces the communicative norms in court, i.e., the norm of interrogating besides the norm of asking the judge's permission to talk inside the court. The judge's reflections on Saddam's answers affect the discourse management 'Your answer should be to the question. Explain the answer to the question', '... it should be within the limits of the law and the limits of the question,' '... Explain the extent to which this long sermon relates to the subject of the question; his question is specific.' and '... answer the question... (16):25) Go back to the question'

The metapragmatic layer of construction identity monitoring concentrates on the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Explicit metapragmatic utterances monitor the construction identity can be found in the judge's utterances: 'We have told you that you have the right not to answer, and if you answer, it should be within the limits of the law and the limits of the question,' 'Get straight to the point,' and '...now answer the question within your perusal...now a question is directed to you, you have to answer it...'. According to Hubler and Bublitz (2007), the evaluative function can be involved in these utterances since they evaluate Saddam's preceding speech as irrelevant and unlawful. Moreover, they seem to be conflictual, i.e., face threatening. The judge frequently tried to threaten Saddam's negative and positive face by interrupting him, giving him direct orders to answer briefly and to the point, and questioning the appropriateness of his answers. By his turn, Saddam tries to protect his positive face by explaining the reasons behind the action and defending their appropriateness as in his utterances: '...I requested you to comment on the answer, and you said go ahead, Am I right or not? Furthermore,' '...So my comment is about the statement on which the prosecution based in my questions. In Aldujail's case, it is not unusual to find that the defendant tries to threaten the interrogator's face, for instance, by interrupting the prosecutor and even the judge or resisting questioning, such as Saddam's utterance 'Are you telling me what I should say?..' reflecting on the prosecutor's speech. Saddam still tries to construe his role identity as the president of Iraq and considers others' questioning as an attempt to bully him. This metapragmatic utterance has a negative fixed interpretation in social discourse, which approves Caffi's words that common knowledge is an essential feature of metapragmatics.

The third metapragmatic layer is topical–argumentative monitoring, which focuses on the discourse, i.e., on the hierarchy of acts of the exchange. The metapragmatic utterances at this layer
can be classified into subgroups; for example, the judge's metapragmatic utterances can define the topic of the exchange in '...now answer the question within your perusal...now a question is directed to you, you have to answer it...' and 'What is understood from your words is that you challenge the statement submitted before the investigating judge?'. The hierarchy of the organization of the topic is determined in the defendant's metapragmatic utterance, 'Yes, I contest it, and there will be a speech about the challenge.' In the judge's metapragmatic utterance, '...now a question is directed to you, you have to answer it..., answer the question... (16:25). Go back to the question', the topical hierarchization is obvious.

Extract Two

Saddam: Your honor, last time, you promised me that I could talk. I will not take much time.

The judge: You are right.

Saddam: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful (Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship...) It is not meant for anyone present in the hall........... This is a psychological problem that whoever believes the Quranic verse targets them, while I mean someone else by it...

Saddam: Your honor, you are looking for things that are clear to you, you know it, and you disregard it, for example the bulldozing of the orchards in Aldujail.... ( Interruption) The judge (resentfully): A minute {stop talking for a while} The judge: What does 'proven or not proven against them' mean?

Saddam: Yes? If they are proven guilty of the crime that occurred, their land gets bulldozed according to Iraqi law; the government has the right to confiscate public property... 12:07 the government has the right to confiscate, compensate, and do what is necessary. Where is the crime in this? Because I am the one who signed it. No one can force me to sign this decision if I do not want to. Therefore, why are you bringing this farmer ... from Aldujail? If I wanted, I would not have referred them to the Revolutionary Court; I referred them to court... 13:13 Hence, when the...
main person confesses and declares that he is responsible, why are you going after all these people...

14:02 Saddam: If, far be it from you to criticize, there is any entity pressuring you, paying, and trying hard from wherever they may be. (The judge interrupts him) 

The judge: No authority over this court but the law, and God is witness

Saddam: So, if the investigation into the possibility that the people who shot at Saddam Hussein with bullets... The bullets were in front of my eyes; I was in the car with the driver and one of my friends... My car was hit and from my direction precisely and reached the last layer and penetrated but I survived... God saved me. If you consider that someone is accused because of an assassination attempt against the president of state, where is the crime?... I referred all these people to court. I was the president, and the president is one, and the president is now present and confessing, judge the one, and let the others go.

16:15 Saddam: If there is nothing in the law that does not give revolutionary counsel the right to decide to expropriate the lands and compensate their owners, then go to the chairman of the revolutionary council; he is here, this is me. Why are you looking for other people, for officials?... Yes, the court has the right to protect the witness inside and outside the court if necessary. 17:37 However, your honor, your honor, if the witness is (x), the plaintiff is (x), and the saying is (x), so this is... not for us, it is not a challenge.

The judge: This is left for the consideration of the court.

Saddam: It is left to you, but referring the witness to a defendant would harm... (The judge interrupts him)

The judge: This was a request from the prosecution. The request is left to the court, and the court will make a decision.

Saddam: I do not make decisions; you make decisions. I want to clarify its effect on the other witnesses.

The metalinguistic descriptor, represented by the linguistic action verb 'mean,' indicates the metapragmatic utterance 'It is not meant for anyone present in the hall... This is a psychological problem, that whoever believes the Quranic verse targets them, while I mean someone else by it...' It confirms and modifies the definition given by Saddam. It is on the micro level of monitoring, which involves speech on speech; thus, it is used to clarify the misinterpretation and the unintended attitudinal or relational implication. Metacognitive awareness plays a vital role in understanding
Saddam’s utterance, 'You are looking for things...' meaning investigating and questioning people. In the meta utterances, 'the judge (resentfully): A minute {stop talking for a while},' This is left to the court's consideration,' and 'This was a request from the prosecution. The request is left to the court, and the court will decide.' The judge defines himself as the authority to monitor the organization of the exchange, reflecting the institutional power (court). The use of the referring expression 'this' index is a known referent for the participants in the interaction because of their shared knowledge and their communicative awareness. The judge monitors the organization of the exchange; he always gains and maintains the floor, which demonstrates the first metapragmatic layer, Sequential Monitoring, i.e., the metadiscursive layer.

The metapragmatic utterance 'I bulldozed it, meaning not that I got on the bulldozer and bulldozed it; it was a decision issued by the Revolutionary Command Counsel' explains what Saddam has intended; therefore, it functions as a means-related in that it clarifies his use of language by deciding on the best expression. The echoic instance of the defendant's language use in 'what is meant by 'proven or not proven against them?'' functions as communication-oriented; it is means-related since the judge negotiates the linguistic meaning.

Saddam summarizes the previous exchange by giving feedback on what has been introduced in the ongoing interaction, using the pragmatic markers (therefore and hence). They are usually used to conclude a matter. Thus, they can be regarded as indicators of the metapragmatic utterances: 'Therefore, why are you bringing this farmer,...', 'Hence, when the main person confesses and declares that he is responsible for what happened, why are you going after these people ...'

It is evident that Saddam's utterance, 'If, far be it from you to criticize ...' prepares the listener that what is followed is a criticism, not intended, as Saddam claims. It can be considered a disclaimer that functions as a mitigation device; therefore, it is a metapragmatic utterance. Because of the metacognitive awareness, which depends highly on the common knowledge of both the judge and Saddam, the judge gets the reflexive presentation of the information Saddam tries to convey in 'If far be it from you to criticize, there is any entity pressuring you, paying, and trying hard from wherever they may be...' Accordingly, the judge interrupts him, 'No authority over this court but the law, and God is witness.' This metapragmatic utterance is instrumentalized for constructing identity since, through it, the judge profiles himself as an assertive person with high social status, trying to protect the institutional image. This can represent the second metapragmatic layer, the meta-relational layer.

Saddam's reflexive comment,' My car was hit and from my direction precisely and reached the last layer and penetrated but I survived...; God saved me,' functions as communication-oriented since it is expressive; it expresses what Saddam means by 'I survived.' Through the exchange between the judge and the defendant, it is clear that the judge's questions threaten the negative face of the defendant, Saddam. Saddam tries to simultaneously enhance and protect his positive and negative face by expressing magnanimity, defending truthfulness, and asserting rights respectfully in his metapragmatic utterances: 'I was the president, and the president is one, and the president is now present and confessing, judge the one and let the others go' and '...Hence, when the main person confesses and declares that he is responsible, why are you going after all these people...' Most of the metapragmatic utterances in this extract concentrate on developing the topic and organizing the discourse. The third metapragmatic layer of Caffi's (2016) model, Topical – Argumentation Monitoring, is dealt with in the Meta textual layer. The definition of the topic, a subgroup in this layer, is evident; for instance, in the defendant's metapragmatic utterance, 'Hence, if the main person confesses and declares that he is responsible for what happened...' The judge's
metapragmatic utterance settles the debate in the exchange by saying, 'This was a request from the prosecution. The request is left to the court, and the court will make a decision.' Instead of indulging in specific details of a particular topic, the speaker disregards it and mentions a topic that he considers fundamental in the interaction, i.e., topical exclusion, another subgroup in this layer as in 'If far be it from you to criticize, there is any entity pressuring you, …'. The metapragmatic utterance is if the government has the right to confiscate, compensate, and do what is necessary. Where is the crime in this? Because I am the one who signed it... it serves as a conclusion to the previous discussion and a starting point for a new one.

**The English Extract**

This section analyzes extracts of the impeachment trial of the American president of the United States, William Jefferson Clinton, on August 17th, 1998. The whole impeachment trial is available for public service at [https://www.c-span.org/video/?111990-1/presidential-grand-jury-testimony](https://www.c-span.org/video/?111990-1/presidential-grand-jury-testimony), and the written text is at [http://www-personal.umich.edu/~graceyor/govdocs/impeach.html#clintgrand](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~graceyor/govdocs/impeach.html#clintgrand)

He faced a federal grand jury to investigate whether the president had committed perjury or obstructed justice in the Paula Jones case, a harassment case. The following chunks are between Mr. Wisenberg, a Deputy Independent Counsel, President Clinton, a witness, and Mr. Kendall, the president's attorney.

**Extract One**

1:29 Mr. Wisenberg: You are appearing voluntarily today as a part of an agreement worked out between your attorney, the Office of the Independent Counsel, and with the approval of Judge Johnson. Is that correct, sir?

Clinton: That is correct.

1:33 Mr. Kendall: Mr. Wisenberg, excuse me. You referred to Judge Johnson's order. I'm not familiar with that order. Have we been served that, or not?

2:57 Mr. Wisenberg: I'm going to talk briefly about your rights and responsibilities as a grand jury witness. Normally, grand jury witnesses, while not allowed to have attorneys in the grand jury room with them, can stop and consult with their attorneys. Under our arrangement today, your attorneys are here and present for consultation and you can break to consult with them as necessary, ... Do you understand that, sir?

Clinton: I do understand that.

Mr. Wisenberg: Mr. President, I would like to read for you a portion of Federal Rule of Evidence 603… It says that the oath's purpose is "calculated to awaken the witness's conscience and impress the witness's mind with the duty" to tell the truth. Could you please tell the grand jury what that oath means to you for today's testimony?

Clinton: I have sworn an oath to tell the grand jury the truth, and that's what I intend to do.

Mr. Wisenberg: You understand that it requires you to give the whole truth, that is, a complete answer to each question, sir?

Clinton: Well, no one read me a definition then, and we didn't go through this exercise. I swore an oath to tell the truth, and I believed I was bound to be truthful, and I tried to be.

6:13 Mr. Wisenberg: Your counsel, Mr. Bennett, indicated on page 5 of the deposition, lines 10 through 12, and I'm quoting, 'the President intends to give complete answers as Ms. Jones is
entitled to have". My question to you is, do you agree with your counsel that a plaintiff in a sexual harassment case is, to use his words, entitled to have the truth?

Clinton: I believe that I was bound to give truthful answers, yes, sir.

Mr. Wisenberg: But the question is, sir, do you agree with your counsel that a plaintiff in a sexual harassment case is entitled to have the truth?

The reflection of Mr. Kendall, Clinton's attorney, on which the deputy explained that there is an agreement on Clinton's appearance to testify with Judge Johnson's approval, is evident by using the verb 'referred to' in 'Mr. Wisenberg, excuse me. You referred to Judge Johnson's order. I'm not familiar with that order…' which can be regarded as an explicit metapragmatic utterance. Mr. Kendall's reflection on the previous speech shows him as a dexterous and accurate attorney who feels responsible towards his client in focusing on the minute details; he reinforces his identity role as a lawyer.

The deputy identifies and describes his prospective talk with the president as a grand jury witness and prepares him for the questions he will face through the trial by the metapragmatic utterance, 'I'm going to talk briefly about your rights and responsibilities as a grand jury witness. Normally, grand jury witnesses...' More than one of Hubler and Bublitz's metapragmatic functions can be demonstrated in the metapragmatic utterance, 'I'm going to talk briefly about your rights...'. It is evaluative in describing the talk of the deputy as brief, it is communication-oriented since it is means-related in organizing the court exchange, and it is instrumentalized, first for reinforcing a court communicative norm, i.e., explaining witness' rights and responsibilities in a trial and second for constructing the identity of the deputy and the witness.

The metapragmatic commentary 'that's what I intend to do' is detected using the verb 'intend', which expresses an emotive-cognitive state-process; Clinton explains his intention. The deputy tries to reformulate his speech in 'You understand that it requires you to give the whole truth, that is, a complete answer to each question, sir? He clarifies what he means by 'the whole truth,' i.e., it is a metapragmatic expression. It is communication-oriented (Hubler & Bublitz, 2007) since it is means-related in negotiating the linguistic meaning of 'the whole truth.'

The participants' indexical use of the referring expression 'it,' i.e., the oath under which Clinton was, and the temporal deixis 'then,' i.e., the time of his deposition in Paula Jones' case, in 'And it meant the same to you then as it does today?' assures their metapragmatic awareness, i.e., the metacognitive awareness. Moreover, it helps them in getting the appropriate interpretation. It reflects the cognitive status of the information dealt with as known information, given, and expected ones.

The descriptor verb of action 'quote' explicitly indicates the metapragmatic awareness in 'Your counsel, Mr. Bennett, indicated on page 5 of the deposition, lines 10 through 12, and I'm quoting, 'the President intends to give full…' This utterance can be considered metapragmatic since the deputy refers to the illocutionary act 'quoting'. In the deputy's comment, 'But the question is sir, do you agree with your counsel that a plaintiff in a sexual harassment case is entitled to have the truth?' the use of 'but' indicates that the president's answer is insufficient. The deputy is unsatisfied with the witness's (Clinton's) answer.

Regarding Caffi's (2016) first layer, the metapragmatic layer of Sequential Monitoring, most of the metapragmatic utterances express the organization of the interaction. It is clear that the deputy independent counsel, Mr. Wisenberg, representing the Office of Independent Counsel, holds and maintains the floor in the impeachment trial by putting forward the questions and controlling the proceeding of the investigation as in the following metapragmatic utterances: 'I'm
going to talk briefly about your rights and responsibilities as a grand jury witness. Normally, grand jury witnesses...' 'You understand that it requires you to give the whole truth, *that is, a complete answer to each question, sir?* ' Your counsel, Mr. Bennett, indicated on page 5 of the deposition, lines 10 through 12, and *I'm quoting*, 'the President intends to give complete answers as Ms. Jones is entitled to have".

The allocution used by the participants (the deputy, the counsel, the witness) as mentioned in the above metapragmatic utterances: 'Sir, excuse me, thank you, Mr. President,' indexes respect and deference among them; the deputy still has the superiority in directing the procedure of the examination although the witness is the president of The United States of America. This demonstrates the metapragmatic layer of Construction Identity Monitoring, i.e., The Metarelational Layer, which helps assign the relation among the participants and their identities during the interaction.

The third layer is the metapragmatic layer of Topical-argumentative monitoring, i.e., The Metatextual Layer. The hierarchy of acts in the metapragmatic utterances in the present extract is evident in the definition of the topic, a sub-group of the metapragmatic utterances in this layer, as in *'I'm going to talk briefly about your rights and responsibilities as a grand jury witness. Normally, grand jury witnesses...'* Here, the deputy identifies the topic of the following exchange between him and the president but as a witness. Clinton's metapragmatic utterance *...'that's what I intend to do,'
* and the deputy's *'You understand that it requires you to give the whole truth, *that is, a complete answer to each question, sir?* Illustrate the topical focalization.

**Extract Two**

Mr. Wisenberg: Can you tell the grand jury what is tricky about the question, "Did anyone other than your attorneys ever tell you" –

President Clinton: No, there's nothing – I'm just telling – I have explained. I will now explain for the third time, sir. I was being asked several questions here. I was struggling to remember then…I probably would have talked to Vernon Jordan about the Monica Lewinsky problem if he had never been involved. So, I was not trying to mislead them. I tried to answer this question with the first person who told me that.

Mr. Wisenberg: Do you understand that if you answered, "I don't think so," to the question, has anyone other than your attorneys told you that Monica Lewinsky had been served with a subpoena in this case, that if you answered, "I don't think so, but you knew Vernon Jordan had been telling you all about it, you understand that that would be a false statement, presumably perjurious?

President Clinton: Mr. Wisenberg, I have testified about this three times. Now, I will do it the fourth time. I am not going to answer your trick questions… if the implication of your question is that somehow I didn't want anybody to know I had ever talked to Vernon Jordan about this, that's just not so…And now that – as I said, you have made this the most important issue in America. I mean, you have made it the most important issue in America from your point of view.

Mr. Wisenberg: Are you saying, sir, that you forgot when you were asked this question that Vernon Jordan had come on December 19th, just three and a half weeks before, and said that he had met that day, the day that Monica got the subpoena?

President Clinton: It's quite possible – it's a sort of a jumbled answer. It's quite possible that I had gotten mixed up … In those three and a half weeks…Again, I say, sir, just from the tone of your voice and the way you are asking questions here, it's obvious that this is the most essential
thing in the world and that everybody was focused on all the details at the time. But that's not the way it worked. I was, I was doing my best to remember...Now, maybe – you seem to be criticizing me because they didn't ask better questions...

In the above extract, Clinton attempts to give feedback on the ongoing interaction with Mr. Wisenberg in his comments, 'No, there's nothing – I'm just telling – I have explained. I will now explain for the third time, sir...' and 'So, I was not trying to mislead them. I was trying to answer this question with the first person who told me that.' epitomizing his true intentions to answer Jones' questions—Clinton's comment, 'Mr. Wisenberg, I have testified about this three times. Now, I will do it the fourth time. I am not going to answer your trick questions...' refers to violating the cooperative principle of communication; therefore, it is a metapragmatic utterance. Clinton threatens the positive face of the deputy, modifying his questions as tricky ones. Hubler and Bublitz's (2007) metapragmatic function 'interpersonal' in its subtype 'face-threatening' is available in this sense. Clinton discusses the pragmatic meaning of Mr. Wisenberg's speech: 'If the implication of your question is that somehow I didn't want anybody to know I had ever talked to Vernon Jordan about this, that's just not so...'; hence, his comment is metapragmatic. It is to avoid the unwanted attitudinal implication by the other; it is means-related in negotiating the linguistic meaning of his speech. Mr. Wisenberg's reflection on Clinton's speech 'Are you saying, sir, that you forgot when you were asked this question that Vernon Jordan had come on December 19th, just three and a half weeks before, and said that he had met that day, the day that Monica got the subpoena?' is detected by the verb of action 'say.' Mr. Wisenberg threatens Clinton's positive face by questioning his recalling. In this sense, it could be Hubler and Bublitz's parameter 'communication oriented' in its subtype interpersonal/faces-threatening. On his turn, Clinton tries to protect his positive face by suggesting reasons: 'It's quite possible – it's a sort of a jumbled answer. It's quite possible that I had gotten mixed up between whether she had met with him or talked to him on the telephone. ...' Clinton's comment,'Again, I say, sir, just from the tone of your voice and the way you are asking questions here, it's obvious that this is the essential thing in the world and that everybody was focused on all the details at the time. But that's not the way it worked.' This can be regarded as metapragmatic since the meta utterances may target the accompanying nonverbal means of communication (Hubler & Bublitz, 2007). 'Now, maybe – you seem to be criticizing me because they didn't ask better questions...' is considered a metapragmatic utterance since he comments on the illocutionary function (criticizing).

Mr. Wisenberg's question in which he represents himself as 'the grand jury' 'Can you tell the grand jury what is tricky about the question, "Did anyone other than your attorneys ever tell you?"' – illustrates the sequential monitoring of the acts during the interaction. However, Clinton takes his time answering the directed questions, expressing his point of view: 'No, there's nothing – I'm just telling – I have explained. I will now explain for the third time, sir...', 'Mr. Wisenberg, I have testified about this three times. Now, I will do it the fourth time. I am not going to answer your trick questions...' and '...if the implication of your question is that somehow I didn't want anybody to know I had ever talked to Vernon Jordan about this, that's just not so...'. Several attempts to hold and maintain the floor by Mr. Wisenberg and Clinton affect the organization of the ongoing discourse.

The metarelational layer, which explains the relation type between the interlocutors, can be demonstrated by Clinton's metapragmatic utterances: 'Now, maybe – you seem to be criticizing me because they didn't ask better questions...'; 'Again, I say, sir, just from the tone of your voice and the way you are asking questions here, it's obvious that this is the most important thing in the
world and that … But that's not the way it worked.' and 'Mr. Wisenberg, I have testified about this three times. Now, I will do it the fourth time. I am not going to answer your trick questions…'

These metapragmatic utterances index Mr. Wisenberg’s dissatisfaction with Clinton's answers in which he tries to construe his identity role.

Topical focalization is demonstrated in Clinton's metapragmatic utterance, 'So, I was not trying to mislead them. I was trying to answer this question with the first person who told me that. Now, I realize that wasn't the specific question.'

Discussion

Concerning the first question, the analysis has shown that the Iraqi Arabic and the American metapragmatic expressions are culture-specific. The speakers reflect on language use prospectively or retrospectively because of their metapragmatic awareness. In the extracts, the metapragmatic expressions were about the participants' use of language or their reflection on their speech or other interactants. The metapragmatic utterances used by the judges and prosecutors in the Arabic and American extracts underline similar pragmatic meanings due to the general legal objectives in legal discourse. Regarding the second question, as shown in Table (1), it has been illustrated that the indicators of metapragmatic awareness in the data analyzed are the temporal and spatial deixes, indexical references, metapragmatic commentary, and pragmatic markers. The reported speech (quotative use of language and the echoic instances of language use) as a metapragmatic indicator is recognized; the speakers' intention is not only to report speech. The prosecutor's questions have been in light of what the defendants or witnesses said or talked about in their previous testimonies to confirm or question their version of events. Some of the metapragmatic utterances in Arabic and English extracts are determined by situated commentaries about the evaluations of language use involving linguistic verbs of action. There have been metapragmatic utterances with fixed interpretations in the social discourse. The illocutionary force of an utterance indicates the speaker's intention; thus, referring to or commenting on the illocutionary force of the speech of one of the interlocutors can be within metapragmatics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ext</th>
<th>Arabic indicators</th>
<th>English indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attitudinal commentary(انت تلقني), so my comment, challenge.</td>
<td>Referred to, talk, quotative use, intend, that is, temporal deixis (then), indexical use of the referring expression(it), the illocutionary force of the verb 'quote,' but, indicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Echoic instance of language use, mean, pragmatic indicators (so, therefore, hence, however, يتضح ويعلن), confess, declare, attitude metapragmatic commentary (if, far be from you to criticize, حيتكم).</td>
<td>'if the implication of …'(discussing the pragmatic meaning), targeting the nonverbal means of communication, commentary on the illocutionary function of 'criticize,' tell, explain, say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As regards the third question, the analysis of Iraqi Arabic and American English legal discourse has revealed that Hubler and Bublitiz's (2007) metapragmatic parameters should be rearranged according to their importance and effect in the selected extracts, as follows: 1) Instrumentalized for a) constructing identity b) reinforcing communicative norms or convictions. 2) Communication oriented a) (inter)personal (conflictual, affiliative, expressive) b) means-related (organizing for clarification, negotiating linguistic meaning by re-editing or summarizing information as mentioned earlier, establishing best code, and deciding on the best expression). 3) Evaluative
Conclusion
Building on specific aspects of metapragmatics, the present paper enhances our understanding of the mechanism of metapragmatics in achieving effective mutual communication. It has approached a developed model to analyze metapragmatically specific extracts from Saddam's trial and Clinton's impeachment. The data analysis reveals that in addition to the identified different functions of the detected metapragmatic expressions or utterances in the Iraqi and American legal discourse, these expressions effectively monitor and organize the exchange among the communicators inside the court. The sequential organization monitoring is evident by the participants' holding and maintaining their regular turns, the identity construction monitoring is apparent by assigning the relation among the participants inside the courtroom even though the witnesses are distinguished political figures at their time, and the argumentative monitoring is expressed by identifying or focusing on the topic at stake. From a pragmatic perspective, this study chimes with the idea that metapragmatics is concerned with the communicative meaning of the utterances no matter the language. Additionally, following Caffi's (2006) and Hubler and Bublitz' (2007) metapragmatic studies, it has been confirmed that the detected meta utterances that illustrate the violation of the principles of communication in addition to those that describe speech sequence from an illocutionary perspective in legal discourse are metapragmatic. The illocutionary force of an utterance indicates the speaker's intention; thus, referring to or commenting on the illocutionary force of the speech of one of the interlocutors can be within metapragmatics. The meta utterances targeted the nonverbal means of communication, such as the tone of voice, head nodding, and the way of asking questions. They are considered metapragmatic since they reflect communicative acts.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

About the Authors:
Prof. Saleema Abdulzahra Naait at the English Department, College of Education, Alqadisiyah University. She is a Ph.D. candidate in linguistics, Babylon University/ College of Education for Human Sciences. Her interest in pragmatics led her to choose metapragmatics for her dissertation. She has published numerous papers on phonetics, stylistics, CDA, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0532-7059

Prof. Iman Iman Mingher Alshemmery (Ph.D, English Department, Babylon University, College of Education for Human Sciences. She has supervised numerous postgraduate students,
MA and Ph.D. in various fields of linguistics, including critical stylistics, CDA, and pragmatics. She has also published numerous papers on these topics. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3272-7998

References


Bridges, J. (2019). (Dissertation), [X] *Splaining gender, race, class, and body: Metapragmatic disputes of linguistic authority and ideologies on Twitter, Reddit, and Tumblr*. University of South Florida


Expanding Horizons: Harnessing Social Media Platforms to Teach English as a Second Language

Nermeen Singer
Department of Media, Faculty of Graduate Childhood Studies, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt
Email: Nermin.Singer@chi.asu.edu.eg

Received:09/08/2023    Accepted:02/26/2024    Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract:
This review article explores the potential of social media platforms in teaching English as a second language and expanding language learning horizons. The article discusses various strategies and activities that utilize social media to enhance language learning, such as using multimedia resources, leveraging interactive features and tools, and promoting authentic language input and exposure to native speakers. Language teachers present success stories and case studies highlighting the implementation of social media in teaching. The review also examines research findings and measurable impacts of social media on language learning, including increased language proficiency, enhanced intercultural competence, and improved motivation and engagement. Additionally, the article addresses challenges and considerations associated with social media use, such as privacy concerns, managing information overload, and promoting inclusivity in access to technology. The article concludes by emphasizing the transformative potential of social media in expanding language learning horizons. It highlights the importance of social media in creating dynamic and interactive learning environments beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Furthermore, the article discusses the future implications of social media in English as a second language education, emphasizing the need for educators to stay informed, adapt to emerging trends, and explore innovative approaches. Overall, this review article underscores the significance of social media in language teaching and the opportunities it offers to enhance language learning experiences. It provides insights and recommendations for educators and researchers interested in harnessing the potential of social media platforms for teaching English as a second language.

Keywords: Authentic language input, English as a second language, interactive features, language learning, multimedia resources, social media platforms

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.6
Introduction

English language proficiency has become increasingly crucial in today's globalized world. As a lingua franca, English serves as a means of communication and a gateway to educational and professional opportunities on a global scale (Crystal, 2003). The demand for English language skills is rising as it is widely used in business, academia, and international communication (Graddol, 2006).

In the business world, English proficiency has become a prerequisite for global companies seeking to expand their operations and establish international partnerships. Proficiency in English allows individuals to effectively communicate and collaborate with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders from different linguistic backgrounds (Tsui & Bunton, 2000). Multinational corporations often require employees with strong English language skills to navigate global markets and engage in cross-cultural negotiations (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005).

In the academic realm, English language proficiency is vital for international students seeking higher education opportunities abroad. English is commonly used as the medium of instruction in universities and research institutions worldwide (Hazel, 2000). Proficiency in English enables students to access a broader range of academic resources, participate in discussions, and excel in their studies (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Moreover, English language proficiency enhances international students' chances of securing scholarships and academic funding opportunities (Shen & Yi, 2017).

In terms of international communication, English plays a significant role in facilitating global connections. As technology advances, the world becomes increasingly interconnected, and English serves as a common language for international conferences, forums, and online platforms (Crystal, 2003). Proficiency in English empowers individuals to engage in cross-cultural exchanges, share ideas, and collaborate with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Graddol, 2006).

The increasing importance of English language proficiency underscores the need for practical language learning approaches and resources. As non-English speakers strive to enhance their language skills, harnessing social media platforms for teaching English becomes a promising avenue. Social media platforms provide accessible, engaging, and interactive opportunities for language learning, enabling learners to expand their horizons and succeed in a globalized world.

Social media platforms have gained immense popularity and have become integral to people's daily lives. These platforms offer numerous possibilities for language learning, providing a dynamic and interactive environment for learners to engage with the language (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). The affordances of social media, such as multimedia content, real-time communication, and community-building features, make it a promising tool for language educators.

One of the significant benefits of social media in language learning is access to authentic language input. Learners can interact with real-world content, such as posts, articles, videos, and podcasts, created by native speakers or language experts. This exposure to authentic materials helps learners develop their comprehension skills, vocabulary, and cultural understanding (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). Furthermore, social media platforms often offer features like hashtags and trending topics that allow learners to explore current and relevant language use in real-life contexts.

Social media platforms enable learners to communicate in real-time with native speakers and other language learners worldwide. Learners can participate in discussions, comment on posts,
and exchange messages, improving their written and oral communication skills (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). The interactive nature of social media fosters a sense of community, providing opportunities for collaborative learning, peer feedback, and cultural exchange (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). Learners can connect with like-minded individuals, join language learning groups, and even form language exchange partnerships, allowing authentic and meaningful language practice.

Another advantage of social media in language learning is the flexibility it offers. Learners can access language learning resources and engage in learning activities anytime and anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection. This flexibility accommodates different learning styles and individual preferences, making language learning more personalized and self-directed (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). Learners can choose the content they engage with, tailor their learning experience to their needs, and progress at their own pace.

Social media platforms also provide opportunities for gamification and interactive language learning activities. Many language learning applications and platforms leverage game-like elements, such as quizzes, challenges, and rewards, to motivate learners and make the learning experience enjoyable (Reinders & Wattana, 2019). Social media's multimedia features also enable learners to create and engage with interactive language materials using videos, images, and audio (Dalimunthe et al., 2023).

In summary, social media platforms play a significant role in language learning by providing access to authentic language input, facilitating real-time communication and community-building, offering flexibility in learning, and supporting interactive and gamified learning experiences. The unique features of social media make it a valuable tool for English language educators to harness in teaching non-English language speakers.

This review article aims to explore the potential of harnessing social media platforms to teach English as a second language. The article examines social media's benefits, strategies, challenges, and outcomes in English language learning. By reviewing relevant research, case studies, and success stories, this article seeks to provide insights into effective practices and offer recommendations for educators and learners.

The review article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the use of social media platforms in teaching English as a second language. By examining the potential, strategies, challenges, and outcomes associated with social media in language learning, this article aims to contribute to the field and provide valuable insights for educators and learners alike.

The Potential of Social Media Platforms for Teaching English as a Second Language

Social media platforms offer many possibilities for teaching English as a second language. Here, we will explore four popular platforms, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, and discuss their unique features and potential for language learning.

Facebook: Teachers can harness several features of Facebook for language teaching purposes. Groups and Pages provide educators with platforms to create online communities and share educational resources (Pimmer, Linxen, Gröhbiel, & Jansen-Kosterink, 2012). Educators can create private groups for their classes to post assignments, share supplementary materials, and facilitate discussions. Pages allow educators to establish a public presence, share language learning tips, and engage with a broader audience. The Live feature can also be utilized for live-streamed lessons, virtual Q&A sessions, or guest speaker events, fostering real-time interaction and providing opportunities for authentic language use.
Expanding Horizons: Harnessing Social Media Platforms to Teach English

**YouTube:** YouTube's video-sharing capabilities offer abundant possibilities for language teaching. Educators can create YouTube channels to share instructional videos, grammar lessons, pronunciation drills, and authentic language materials (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). Learners can access these resources anytime, anywhere, and engage with the content through likes, comments, and subscriptions. Additionally, YouTube's auto-generated captions and playback speed options facilitate listening comprehension and accommodate learners' individual needs. The platform also offers a community section where learners can interact with educators and peers, providing collaborative learning and feedback opportunities.

**Twitter:** Twitter's features lend themselves well to language learning. The platform's character limit promotes concise expression and encourages learners to communicate their ideas succinctly (Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2013). Educators can create class-specific hashtags or participate in relevant language-learning discussions to foster engagement and collaboration. Retweeting and replying to posts allow learners to interact with authentic content, engage in dialogues with native speakers, and practice their reading and writing skills. Twitter's search function also enables learners to find language-related resources, follow language experts, and stay updated on current language use.

**Instagram:** Instagram's visual nature presents unique opportunities for language teaching. Educators can create visually appealing posts incorporating vocabulary flashcards, grammar explanations, or language-related challenges (Prichard, 2019). The platform's Stories feature can provide quick language lessons, interactive quizzes, or listening exercises. Language learners can engage with these posts by commenting, sharing their responses, or participating in polls. Based on users' interests, Instagram's Explore page exposes learners to various authentic English content, allowing them to practice reading and improve their visual literacy skills.

These platforms' diverse features and functionalities provide language educators various options to create engaging and interactive learning experiences for English language learners. Each social media platform offers distinct features and functionalities that language teachers can effectively utilize for language teaching. Facebook's groups, pages, and live features enable resource sharing, discussions, and real-time interaction. Twitter's character limit, hashtags, and retweeting facilitate concise expression, collaboration, and engagement with authentic content. Instagram's visual nature, stories, and explore page enhance vocabulary acquisition, visual literacy, and exposure to accurate English content. Finally, YouTube's video-sharing capabilities, captions, and community section provide access to instructional videos, listening practice, and opportunities for interaction, creating a comprehensive language-learning experience.

Utilizing social media platforms in language learning offers a multitude of benefits. Firstly, these platforms provide interactive features that capture learners' attention, resulting in heightened engagement and motivation during language learning activities. Secondly, learners can engage with authentic content, follow native speakers, and participate in real-world conversations, thereby gaining exposure to genuine language use. Thirdly, social media platforms foster collaborative learning, enabling learners to interact with peers, exchange feedback, and share resources and ideas. Moreover, learners can personalize their learning experiences by accessing materials at their own pace, customizing their environment, and selecting content that matches their interests and needs. Lastly, social media facilitates cultural awareness by allowing learners to connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering insights into different cultures, and promoting cultural understanding.
Strategies and Activities for Teaching English as a Second Language through Social Media

Teaching English as a second language through social media platforms offers many strategies and activities to enhance language learning experiences. This section will explore three fundamental approaches: utilizing multimedia resources, leveraging interactive features, and promoting authentic language input.

Learners can effectively utilize an abundance of multimedia resources social media platforms offer to enhance language learning experiences. Educators can curate or create diverse multimedia content, such as videos, images, and podcasts, to engage learners and facilitate language acquisition. For instance, YouTube videos can be employed for various language learning purposes, including listening comprehension exercises, pronunciation practice, or cultural immersion (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). With its visual nature, Instagram allows educators to share posts featuring images and captions, which can promote vocabulary acquisition and stimulate discussions among learners (Prichard, 2019). Moreover, platforms like Facebook and Twitter can be utilized for sharing and accessing podcasts, providing learners with authentic language input and opportunities to improve their listening skills. By incorporating multimedia resources into language teaching, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments that cater to students' diverse learning preferences.

One of the notable strengths of social media platforms is their design to foster interaction, engagement, and active participation. Educators can leverage these platforms' interactive features and tools to enhance language teaching. For instance, Facebook offers features like polls, quizzes, and surveys that allow educators to assess learners' understanding, elicit their opinions on language-related topics, and encourage critical thinking (Pimmer et al., 2012). With its hashtags and chats, Twitter provides opportunities for collaboration and real-time discussions among learners, enabling them to engage with peers and experts in the language learning community. Instagram's interactive features, including polls, question stickers, and live sessions, promote active participation and invite learners to share their thoughts, experiences, and reflections. By incorporating these interactive features into language teaching, educators can create a dynamic and participatory learning environment that fosters language development and encourages learners to engage with the content and each other actively.

Social media platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for learners to engage with authentic language input and interact with native speakers. Educators can encourage learners to follow and engage with social media accounts of native speakers, language enthusiasts, or educational institutions, thereby providing them with exposure to authentic language use. Learners can participate in discussions, ask questions, seek clarification, and receive feedback directly from native speakers, contributing to language proficiency and cultural understanding. Additionally, platforms like YouTube provide channels featuring content produced by native speakers, offering learners access to authentic videos, podcasts, interviews, and other resources that reflect real-life language use. By actively promoting accurate language input and facilitating interactions with native speakers through social media platforms, educators can help learners develop their communicative competence, gain confidence in using the language, and enhance their cultural awareness.

Case Studies and Success Stories

Numerous case studies and success stories illustrate the effective use of social media platforms for teaching English as a second language. These examples showcase the innovative
Expanding Horizons: Harnessing Social Media Platforms to Teach English

approaches individuals and institutions employ, providing valuable insights into specific implementations, outcomes, and measurable impacts of social media in language learning.

**Examples of individuals or institutions successfully using social media for teaching English as a second language**

*Case Study: English Language Learners Community on Facebook*

In a case study by Pirzadeh and Mojavezi (2019), an English language learners’ community was established on Facebook to facilitate language learning interactions among participants. The community provided a platform for learners to connect with English teachers, fostering discussions, resource sharing, and language practice activities. The study found that the English language learners' community on Facebook increased motivation, engagement, and a sense of belonging among the participants. Learners reported feeling more motivated to engage in language learning activities and found a supportive environment where they could freely express their thoughts and ideas. The sense of community created through this social media platform enhanced their overall language learning experience.

*Success Story: Language Learning YouTube Channel*

Kim (2017) shared a success story of an English teacher who created a language learning YouTube channel. The channel featured instructional videos, language tips, and interactive exercises designed to support English language learners. The YouTube channel gained popularity among English language learners who found the content engaging and helpful for their language learning journey. Learners reported increased engagement with the videos, improved language skills, and expressed positive feedback regarding the accessibility and usefulness of the instructional content. The language learning YouTube channel served as a valuable resource for learners seeking additional support outside the classroom, providing them with a platform to practice their English language skills, access authentic materials, and receive guidance from an experienced teacher.

These examples demonstrate the effectiveness of using social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube to teach English as a second language. They highlight the potential of social media in creating communities of learners, facilitating interactive language practice, and providing easily accessible resources for language learning. These case studies and success stories showcase the positive outcomes achieved through the strategic use of social media in language teaching and learning contexts.

*Description of specific implementations and their outcomes*

*Twitter-Based Language Exchanges*

Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) conducted a study implementing Twitter-based language exchanges to facilitate interactions between English language learners and native speakers. The implementation involved structured conversations where learners engaged in discussions, asked questions and received feedback from native speakers. The outcomes of the study revealed several positive impacts on language learning. Participants improved their overall language proficiency and grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills. Engaging with native speakers on Twitter also increased participants’ cultural awareness and understanding of sociocultural aspects related to the target language. Furthermore, the structured conversations allowed learners to practice conversational skills, enhancing fluency and confidence in speaking English.

*Instagram for Vocabulary Acquisition*
In a study conducted by Budiyanto (2017), Instagram was utilized as a platform for vocabulary acquisition among English as a second language (ESL) learners. In this implementation, learners followed accounts that regularly posted vocabulary-related content, including word definitions, sample sentences, and visual representations. Learners engaged with the content by liking, commenting, and using the newly learned words in their posts. The outcome of this implementation revealed several benefits for the learners. Firstly, learners demonstrated an increase in their vocabulary knowledge, acquiring new words and expanding their linguistic repertoire. Secondly, the use of Instagram provided a visually engaging and interactive learning experience, making vocabulary acquisition more enjoyable and memorable. Lastly, the implementation of Instagram as a language learning tool fostered a sense of community among the learners. They actively engaged with each other's posts, shared tips, and supported one another's language learning journey, creating a supportive online environment for language acquisition.

These specific implementations demonstrate the effectiveness of using social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to teach English as a second language. They highlight the positive outcomes achieved through these platforms, including improvements in language proficiency, cultural awareness, conversational skills, vocabulary acquisition, and the establishment of online learning communities.

**Research findings and measurable impacts of social media on language learning**

Research studies have consistently shown that integrating social media into language learning has measurable impacts on language proficiency, intercultural competence, and learner motivation and engagement.

One significant research finding is the positive effect of social media on language proficiency. Numerous studies have indicated that learners who engage with social media platforms demonstrate improved reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Singer, 2022; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011). Through interactions on these platforms, learners are exposed to authentic language use, enhancing their linguistic competence and fluency.

Another notable research finding relates to the development of intercultural competence. Social media allows learners to connect with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating intercultural exchanges. Research has shown that learners who engage in intercultural interactions through social media platforms develop a deeper understanding of different cultural perspectives, norms, and practices (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2017). This exposure to diverse cultural contexts enhances their intercultural competence and communication skills.

In addition to these research findings, the measurable impacts of social media on language learning extend to motivation and engagement. Studies have consistently reported that learners who incorporate social media into their language learning routines exhibit higher motivation levels and active participation (Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2013; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). The interactive and collaborative nature of social media platforms, along with the authentic and relevant content available, contribute to increased learner engagement and a sense of ownership over the learning process.

These research findings and measurable impacts highlight the potential of social media as a valuable tool for language learning. By leveraging these platforms' interactive and authentic nature, educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that foster language proficiency, intercultural competence, and learner motivation.
Addressing Challenges and Considerations

As social media platforms become more prevalent in language learning, addressing various challenges and considerations is crucial to ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Privacy concerns and ensuring online safety in Language Learning

Privacy concerns are paramount when incorporating social media platforms into language learning. Educators need to prioritize the protection of learners' personal information and ensure their online safety. Several strategies can be implemented to address these concerns:

Educating learners about privacy settings: It is crucial to provide learners with information on how to adjust their privacy settings on social media platforms. Educators should guide learners through the process of selecting appropriate privacy options and limiting access to their personal information (Ibraheem Shelash Al-Hawary et al., 2023).

Promoting safe online practices: Educators should emphasize the importance of secure online behavior to learners; this includes instructing them to use strong passwords, avoid sharing personal information publicly, and exercise caution when interacting with unfamiliar individuals online (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Huang, 2018).

Raising awareness of potential risks: Educators should educate learners about the dangers of sharing personal information on social media platforms. Learners should understand the implications of sharing sensitive information and be cautious about who they connect with and what they disclose online (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Huang, 2018).

Establishing guidelines and protocols: Educators can develop guidelines and protocols for online interactions within the language learning community. These guidelines should outline expectations for respectful and appropriate behavior, emphasize the importance of maintaining a safe learning environment, and provide procedures for reporting any concerns or issues (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Huang, 2018).

By implementing these strategies, educators can help ensure learners' privacy and online safety, creating a secure and conducive environment for language learning on social media platforms.

Managing information overload and selecting appropriate content

The vast amount of information on social media platforms can overwhelm language learners. Educators must assist learners in effectively managing and evaluating the content they encounter. Several strategies can be employed to address this challenge:

Teaching critical thinking skills: Educators should focus on developing learners' necessary thinking abilities, enabling them to evaluate and analyze the information on social media platforms; this includes teaching learners how to assess the credibility and reliability of sources, identify potential biases, and distinguish between fact and opinion (Stevens, 2019).

Promoting digital literacy: Educators can emphasize the importance of digital literacy skills, which involve the ability to navigate, evaluate, and utilize digital information effectively; this includes teaching learners how to search for information, use search filters and advanced search techniques, and critically assess the relevance and reliability of online content (Pradana et al., 2022).

Providing curated resources: Educators can curate and share a selection of reliable and high-quality resources with learners. Educators help learners navigate the vast information by
curating content and providing trusted sources that align with language learning objectives (Stevens, 2019).

**Recommending reliable accounts**: Educators can recommend specific social media accounts or channels that consistently produce reliable and informative content related to language learning. By guiding learners toward trustworthy sources, educators can help learners filter out irrelevant or misleading information (Stevens, 2019).

**Facilitating discussions on evaluating information**: Engaging learners in conversations about evaluating information can enhance their critical thinking skills and ability to discern appropriate content. Educators can provide guidelines and frameworks for assessing the credibility, relevance, and accuracy of information encountered on social media platforms (Stevens, 2019).

By implementing these strategies, educators can assist learners in managing information overload, developing critical thinking skills, and selecting appropriate content that supports their language learning goals.

**Overcoming the digital divide and promoting inclusivity in access to technology**

The digital divide, characterized by disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity, presents a significant challenge in leveraging social media platforms for language learning. To ensure inclusivity and address this divide, educators can implement the following strategies:

**Providing access to technology and internet resources**: Educators can work towards giving learners access to technology and internet resources within learning environments; this may involve setting up computer labs or providing devices such as tablets or smartphones for learners to use during language learning activities. Community centers, libraries, and educational institutions can collaborate to give learners access to technology and the Internet outside the classroom. (Singer, 2019).

**Offering alternative offline activities**: Recognizing that not all learners may have consistent access to technology and the Internet, educators can offer alternative offline activities that complement social media-based learning. These activities include language practice exercises, reading physical books, writing exercises, or engaging in face-to-face discussions. By providing a range of learning opportunities, educators can ensure that learners with limited access to technology are not left behind (Benson & Whitworth, 2019).

**Considering learners' diverse technological backgrounds**: Learners may have varying levels of technical literacy and familiarity with social media platforms. Educators must acknowledge these differences and provide guidance and support in using social media platforms effectively; this can involve offering tutorials, demonstrations, or workshops on navigating social media platforms, creating accounts, and utilizing the features and functionalities for language learning purposes. Educators can promote inclusivity in technology use by addressing learners' diverse technological backgrounds (Benson & Whitworth, 2019).

**Fostering collaboration and peer support**: Encouraging cooperation and peer support among learners can also help overcome the digital divide. Learners with access to technology and familiarity with social media platforms can assist their peers with limited access or less experience. Collaborative activities that involve sharing resources, discussing language learning strategies, and providing support can create a sense of inclusivity and bridge the gap in technology access (Benson & Whitworth, 2019).
By implementing these strategies, educators can work towards overcoming the digital divide, ensuring inclusivity in access to technology, and creating an environment where all learners can engage in language learning effectively.

Future Implications and Recommendations

As social media continues to evolve and shape our digital landscape, its potential in teaching English as a second language remains promising. Educators and language learners can leverage social media platforms to enhance learning experiences, foster engagement, and promote authentic language use. However, to ensure effective utilization, certain considerations must be taken into account. Firstly, educators need to be mindful of the privacy concerns and online safety of learners; establishing guidelines, educating learners about privacy settings, and promoting safe online practices are essential (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Huang, 2018). Additionally, managing information overload is crucial. Educators should guide learners in evaluating and selecting appropriate content, developing critical thinking skills, and digital literacy (Stevens, 2019).

Furthermore, addressing the digital divide and promoting inclusivity in access to technology is vital. Educators can work towards providing technology resources and offering alternative offline activities for learners with limited access (Benson & Whitworth, 2019). Considering learners' diverse technological backgrounds and giving guidance in social media platforms can foster inclusivity (Benson & Whitworth, 2019).

In terms of recommendations for further research, there is a need for studies that explore the long-term impact of social media integration on language learning outcomes. Additionally, investigations into innovative approaches, such as gamification, virtual reality, and augmented reality, can provide valuable insights into their potential to enhance language learning experiences (Caws & Hamel, 2018; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Moreover, exploring the role of social media in promoting intercultural competence and its connection to language learning can be a fruitful avenue for future research (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2017).

In conclusion, the future implications of social media platforms in teaching English as a second language are promising. By addressing privacy concerns, managing information overload, promoting inclusivity, and exploring innovative approaches, educators and language learners can harness the potential of social media to create dynamic and engaging language learning environments.

Discussion

One crucial aspect discussed is the transformative impact of social media on language teaching practices. Social media platforms offer a range of features and functionalities that can enhance language learning experiences, promote engagement, and provide opportunities for authentic language use. The utilization of multimedia resources, interactive features, and exposure to accurate language input through social media platforms has been found to contribute to increased language proficiency and motivation among learners (Singer, 2022; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Junco, Elavsky & Heiberger, 2013).

Another point of discussion revolves around the implications and considerations for educators and language learners in utilizing social media effectively. Privacy concerns and ensuring online safety emerge as critical considerations in the use of social media platforms (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Huang, 2018). Educators must protect learners' personal information and create a secure learning environment. Moreover, managing information overload and selecting appropriate
content are essential skills for learners to develop to navigate the vast amount of information on social media platforms (Stevens, 2019). Educators can play a pivotal role in guiding learners to evaluate and select reliable sources of information.

Furthermore, the discussion highlights the need to address the digital divide and promote inclusivity in access to technology. While social media platforms offer immense potential for language learning, disparities in technology access and connectivity can hinder equitable participation (Warschauer, 2017). To ensure inclusivity, educators should consider providing resources and alternative activities for learners with limited access and providing guidance to learners with diverse technological backgrounds (Benson & Whitworth, 2019).

The discussion section concludes by offering recommendations for future research and exploration. Further studies are needed to examine the long-term impacts of social media integration on language learning outcomes and the effectiveness of innovative approaches such as gamification, virtual reality, and augmented reality (Caws & Hamel, 2018; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Additionally, investigating the role of social media in promoting intercultural competence and its connection to language learning can contribute to a deeper understanding of its potential benefits (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2017).

The discussion section comprehensively analyzes the findings and implications of utilizing social media platforms for language teaching. It highlights the transformative potential of social media in language learning while also addressing the challenges and considerations that need to be considered. The section concludes with recommendations for future research and exploration, aiming to advance the field of using social media in teaching English as a second language.

Conclusion

This review article has extensively examined the potential of social media platforms in expanding the horizons of English language learning. The main points discussed can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, social media platforms offer many multimedia resources, including videos, images, and podcasts, which can significantly enhance language learning experiences. Incorporating these resources into language teaching can promote engagement, improve language skills, and provide learners with authentic language input.

Secondly, social media platforms provide interactive features and tools that encourage engagement and participation. Features such as polls, quizzes, and live sessions foster active participation, collaboration, and the development of language skills through real-time interactions.

Furthermore, social media platforms offer valuable opportunities for learners to engage with authentic language input and interact with native speakers. By following the social media accounts of native speakers, participating in language exchanges, and accessing content produced by native speakers, learners can enhance their language proficiency and gain a deeper understanding of different cultures.

The review article emphasizes the transformative potential of social media in expanding language learning horizons. It underscores how social media platforms can transcend traditional classroom boundaries, enabling learners to experience authentic language use, fostering learner autonomy, and promoting intercultural competence. By harnessing the power of social media, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments that cater to learners' diverse needs and interests.
Social media platforms are expected to play a significant role in the education of English as a second language. The ongoing technological advancements and increasing social media integration into daily life suggest that its influence on language learning will only grow. However, educators and institutions must navigate the challenges associated with social media, such as privacy concerns, managing information overload, and ensuring inclusivity in access to technology.

In conclusion, the future of social media in English as a second language education holds great promise. It is a rapidly evolving field that demands educators to stay informed, adapt to emerging trends, and explore innovative approaches. By leveraging the potential of social media, educators can create engaging, interactive, and transformative language learning experiences that equip learners with the skills needed for a globalized and digitally connected world.

Funding
This research was not funded.

Conflicts of Interest
The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement:
The research described in this manuscript was conducted without using artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies.

About the Author
Dr. Nermeen Singer is a globally recognized academician specializing in media and children's culture. Currently serving as an Associate Professor at Ain Shams University's Faculty of Graduate Childhood Studies, she focuses on media psychology and educational media, particularly addressing learning difficulties in children, especially those with special needs. Dr. Singer's impact extends beyond the academic realm, as evidenced by her ORCID profile (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4913-4523) and Web of Science ResearcherID (L-7321-2018), solidifying her position as a respected authority in the field.

References:


Expanding Horizons: Harnessing Social Media Platforms to Teach English

Singer


A pragmatic Analysis of Effective Political Communication from a Relevance-Theoretic Perspective

Hind Sabah Alrufaiey
Department of English, College of Education
University of Al-Qadisiyah, Al-Diwanyah, Iraq
Corresponding author: edu-eng.post22.15@qu.edu.iq

Angham Abdulkadhim Alrikabi
Department of English, College of Education
University of Al-Qadisiyah, Al-Diwanyah, Iraq

Received: 12/02/2023  Accepted: 02/03/2024  Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
A substantial aim of political communication is to engage specific groups of citizens through pragmatic policies and various media channels to convey messages and gain the audience’s acceptance effectively. This study investigates political communication as a form of discourse that occurs within political contexts, which involves the exchange of messages among political actors to address and resolve political issues. It is an interdisciplinary field encompassing aspects of psychology, economics, culture, society, and linguistics. This paper aims to give a satisfactory explanation for the question concerning effective communication characteristics: how might politicians utilize them in their speech to be more effective? This pragmatic study in discourse is devoted to analyzing the various effective syntactic structures that arise within political interactions according to Sperber and Wilson’s Theory of Relevance. The contribution of this study is evident as guidelines for further understanding the correlation between language and cognition. The researchers find that politicians seek to cognitively take advantage of the tendency of the audience to strive for relevance. In this way, expectations and attitudes are to be recognized and met by either interlocutors. The focal point of the study is the linguistic and inferential aspects of communication (verbal and non-verbal forms), represented in explicatures and implicatures. The study’s findings exhibit the politicians’ efforts in crafting their utterances optimally to meet the audience’s expectations of relevance, which could be used as an influential method for further studies concerning discourse and communication. This research paper aims to pragmatically exploit the effectiveness of the political interactions (extracts) in the House of Commons (UK parliamentary debates).

Keywords: effective communication, House of Commons, inferential communication, language tropes, political communication, political debates, relevance theory

Introduction

Since the study of social relations became necessary, more theories appeared on the surface; these theories are what construct a further term for this study, which is Communicology. The study of communication and its related theories is called Communicology (as the name suggests). It could be described as the systematic study of all types of communication with its detailed methods, means, elements, aspects, capacities, subfields, factors, and possible relation to other fields, whether social, political, or economic (Folorunso, 2013). Communication is often used by humans as a sharing process between two or more interlocutors. The roles of hearers and speakers are interchangeably changed throughout the communication process. It is basically about expressing and understanding any communicational cues available. This term is too flexible to pinpoint a specific definition or any limited area (Corbeil, 2014).

The objective of this study is, first, to show the linguistic qualities of effective communication through discourse analysis. Second, formulate a relevance-theoretic oriented approach to political communication, evidently by achieving the required linguistically effective results. The study draws a solid theoretical base of relevance theory focusing on cognitively effective communication in political settings. This study also looks into all forms of effective communication that potentially occur in the UK parliament in the House of Commons. UK debates usually tackle British affairs by employing discourse, which is, critically emphasizing the service of the public, which is the aim of these debates. Some political actors tend to be more effective than others due to communicative cues used by each. The present study takes the debates in the House of Commons as data of analysis since these debates are massively variant and linguistically rich. However, each political actor reflects his linguistic skill in gaining the support and acceptance of the government and the public. In terms of political discourse and cognitively effective communication, this study is a productive, fruitful addition to the pragmatics literature. Political actors assess their political context to provide their hearers with the most suitable utterance for the hearer and the immediate context. Therefore, this study examines the political discourse, mainly live debates between differently ranked interlocutors, to prove their points linguistically. However, approaching the linguistic choices made by political actors keeping in mind the background information of the audience; and the tendency of the speaker to manifest a piece of information that potentially has some cognitive effects to compensate the efforts of the audience in comprehending utterances.

Many recent studies, such as Christie (1993), Seto (1998), Pilkington (1994, 2000), Yus (1998), Sanz (2013), and Allott (2013) have focused on the applicability of relevance theory and its impact on the speaker and the audience perception, comprehension, and interpreting capacity. While there has been much research on Relevance Theory, few researchers have taken the relation between the speech of the politician’s effectiveness linguistically and cognitively combined and the different linguistic mechanisms deployed by political actors to gain the audience’s acceptance. The researchers locate their study along with the new era of cognitive pragmatics, depending on the innovative theory of relevance by Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995). This theory made it possible for the researchers of this study to examine certain extracts from a purely political context and test the linguistic efficacy. The current research analyses the discursive linguistic formulations within the theory of relevance by Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995); it also highlights the various forms of communication and the capacity of the hearer to recognize the different attitudinal interactions between communicators.
This research paper attempts to give a proper answer to the following question:
- What is the relation between effective communication and the cognitive and communicative principle in political discourse?

Literature Review

**Political Communication:**

According to the view of Folorunso (2013), political communication is a functional part of political sciences. It is used in the political context and consists of communicational elements such as production, distribution, processing, and effects. Meanwhile, Multu (2004) defines political communication as a genuine link between political communication processes. Another broader definition by Aziz (2013) that is political communication involves various kinds of communication for ideological aims and policies by political figures, in particular techniques for specific people, groups, or international masses to act if needed. From an experienced perspective, political communication is carried out by political figures during election periods using professional and highly accurate elements, such as advertising experts, companies, press consultants, and many others who know how to deal with the media (as cited in Çelik, 2021; Grishin, 2012).

The context of political discourse, however, is highlighted by genre and registers, which are involved in linguistics and pragmatics. An obvious example is the different types of genre registers and other public aspects of press and political relations (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002). In the same realm, a view by Van Dijk, discourse is known by its producers, for example, political actors, authors, or politicians in general, whether it is talk or text (spoken or written) in professional or presidential settings by high-status characters at different levels (international, national, local). Political actors or politicians are, in this context, individuals who get payment for their services when they are elected or positioned in an essential status in the political system. Interactional aspects require listeners, readers, or recipients of political discourse used by different political actors and participants on various levels. These recipients are public individuals and citizens (or masses) (Van Dijk, 1997). Van Dijk (1997) adds the case in which political actions and practices are generated by forms of talk (spoken form) and text (textual form). The analysis of political discourse regards these practices as discursive practices with specific functions (purposes) and implications (consequences). Another essential fact about political discourse diagnostic issues is context, this point can be game-changing in most cases, and what decides whether this type of discourse is political (Van Dijk, 1997, p.14). Wodak (2007) defines discourse from a linguistic and pragmatic perspective, which relies on a specific theoretical framework and can clarified or introduced from different perspectives. Politics is mainly the linguistic system used by political actors in a political context.

Amaglobeli (2017) defines political discourse as “a communicative act, participants who try to give specific meanings to facts and influence / persuade others. In other terms, political discourse can be defined as a manipulative linguistic strategy which serves concrete (ideological) goals.” (p.19) Political discourse consists of both formal debates, speeches, and hearings and informal talk of politics between engaged members.

Another critical fact to remember is that the vital base principle is the language of political discourse, which is highly related to cultural aspects connected with society-specific practices (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002). Van Dijk (1989) Many political discourse studies focus on political language. Therefore, researchers analyze the choice of lexical items and specific concepts regarding usage preferences. Analyzing such discourses can get many results related to attitudes,
ideologies, and possible strategic power. Dunmire (2012) states that political discourse analysis (hereafter PDA) includes inter- and multi-disciplinary studies of such researchers or studies; it is an exciting aspect and the discursive dimension of political discourse or political talk and text, in addition to political discursive practice. Consequently, PDA pays intensive attention to various conditions, ways, and methods of doing politics. The notion of what is potentially political discusses that politics includes the process of politicization by social actors, phenomena, communications, and institutional context. Also, this process could come with, for many functions, “coercion, resistance/opposition dissimulation and legitimation.” (pp.735-736). Interestingly, Muntigl (2002) argues that the concept PDA is advantageous to the extension of political conceptual limits or borders, affects political discourse developments, and elevate it beyond the fixed nature of political acts and what the media represents of political actions. However, potentially political maintains that politics is political work done through discursive practices (as cite in Dunmire, 2012; Van Dijk, 1997).

To attract and hold the attention of the audience, speakers have to make their communicative stimuli relevant and sufficient to be worth processing. The inference component is much more significant than the description of a mental state. The disposition to search for relevance is automatically exploited in human communication by the humans themselves. Since audio systems recognize that listeners will pay attention solely to stimuli that are applicable enough. Generally, on linguistic grounds, it is genuine that some pieces of information are retrieved from such expressions, mainly that the speaker entertains a specific affective state, that s/he thinks it undesirable to keep a more significant class, etc. But these are pieces of information that are only derived and inferred from what the target hearer perceives; it, is the exterior manifestation of an emotional attitude immediately exhibited (Carston, 2002; Horn & Ward, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Relevance Theory:

Relevance Theory (henceforth RT) represents a modern pragmatic theory that merges cognitive and pragmatic settings. It inspects any pragmatic phenomena from other different theoretical aspects. According to Sperber and Wilson, communication enables the speaker to affect (influence) the cognitive environment of the hearer, the transmission of thoughts from the speaker to the hearer. Yet, Communication includes much more than a message transition (Corbeil, 2014). A central notion by Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) is that “Ostensive [behavior] provides evidence of one’s thoughts. It succeeds in doing so because it implies a guarantee of relevance. It implies such a guarantee because humans automatically turn their attention to what seems most relevant to them” (p.50) (Wilson &Sperber 1994, 2012; Carston, 2002; Yus, 1998; Huang, 2007). Wilson (1994) states four main primary facts about RT; each utterance has the potential for different possible interpretations. The possible interpretations are linked directly to the linguistic coding. The hearer may need to think of these interpretations deeper to reach the exact one, this requires effort. For the hearer’s benefit, there is a general standard that enables the hearer to assess these interpretations. This single standard (criterion) can isolate only the interpretation that genuinely fits it. This process of interpreting saves the hearer from the efforts of looking for further interpretations (as cite in Yus, 2015).

- The first principle is the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, is stated as follows;
"Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance" (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 610).

Human beings manage to understand each other fast. Automatically triggered systems come into action and make interpretations rapidly (Carston, 2002; Yus, 1998).

- The second principle is the Communicative Principle of Relevance, is stated as follows; "Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 612; Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995, p. 260).

The Communicative Principle of Relevance is grounded and enabled by the former, the cognitive principle of relevance, which involves predictions and mental manipulation of other interlocutors. This principle allows for controlling stimulus detection and processing to attract the audience's attention and retrieve contextual effects that lead to specific intended conclusions (Wilson & Sperber, 2004).

Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995; Huang, 2007; Soria & Romero, 2010) state that relevance theory seeks to provide a pragmatic method for interpreting ostensive stimuli, with a particular focus on utterances. According to Sperber and Wilson, Ostensive-inferential communication occurs when a communicator produces a stimulus that mutually manifests the intention to make a set of assumptions manifest or more manifest to the audience (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995; 2012; Wilson & Sperber, 1994). The effectiveness of this communicative process depends on the hearer's ability to discern the speaker's intention through ostension accurately. Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) state that inferential process “starts from a set of premises and results in a set of conclusions which follow logically from, or are at least warranted by, premises” (pp.12-14). It describes comprehension according to pragmatics, since it starts in a group of premises (input) and outcomes in conclusion (output) which follow each other. This process contributes to decoding process and can be part of it as long as the hearer and the speaker share tacit premise, inferential rule and the ability to use them to extract similar ones if they needed.

Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) classify two types of intentions: informative and communicative intentions. They are defined as follows:

“(a) Informative intention. The intention to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a certain set of assumptions I.”

“(b) Communicative intention. The intention to make mutually manifest to audience and communicator the communicator has this informative intention.” (p.58-61).

Ostension can trigger intentions that result in manifestations which make evidence much stronger to notice inferential communication. Therefore, the hearer would be involved in the inference procedure (Sperber and Wilson, 1986\1995). This is considered a new and different way to approach communication. Informative intention is directed to the cognitive surroundings of hearers or audience to seek control of the hearer’s cognitive possible processes, so the speaker has the ability to construct their informative intentions based on such cognitive environments. Combining both types of intentions is a general view of effective and successful communication (Sperber and Wilson, 1986\1995). As a general mental operation, the effect is decisive to compare two similar amount of effort and vice versa. According to relevance theory communicators consider an input as relevant, the output of hearer’s cognitive processing needs a specific condition, which is, for the input to be relevant, its processing needs to gain some cognitive effects (Sperber and Wilson, 1986\1995).

Relevance theory is a multidisciplinary theory that could be beneficial in explaining all types of communication in various settings. This theory seeks to exploit the different dimensions
A pragmatic Analysis of Effective Political Communication

Alrufaiey & Alrikabi

of communication: social, cultural, psychological, educational, or political. The link between the cognitive abilities of the political actors (encyclopedic knowledge) and the interpretation is found by relevance theory. The interpretive hypotheses are automatically embedded during stimuli comprehension. The logical forms also function as a derivative tool for the two most accessible contextual assumptions. However, Inference defined by Sperber and Wilson (1986) is "the process by which an assumption is accepted as true or probably true based on the truth or probable truth of other assumptions" (p. 68). They also note that any state of affairs provides direct evidence for various assumptions, even without explicitly communicating those assumptions in an interesting way (Sperber & Wilson, 1987). This study contributes to explaining how politically communicated information is processed cognitively and pragmatically through explicatures and a different range of implicatures. Effective political interaction is achieved through the hearer's and the speaker's capacity for inferential mental representation. Also, it inspects the notion of mental relevance concerning linguistic utterances. Briefly, the argument about the significance of Sperber and Wilson's (1986) notion of 'relevance' becomes apparent. "[C]ognitive resources tend to be allocated to the processing of the most relevant inputs available" (p. 261). As a result the audience approach an utterance with the assumption of its relevance as a basic premise of any inferences they will make.

Explicatures and Implicatures:

Relevance theory proposes a new term to complement Grice’s implicatures. The main aim of Sperber and Wilson behind this proposal is to indicate that pragmatic inferential processes are attributed to both the implied and explicit parts of communication. Sperber and Wilson state the definition of explicatures as: "An assumption communicated by an utterance U is explicit [hence an "explicature) if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by U." (p.182). The theorists add that explicatures can be of two subtypes: basic-explicature and higher-level explicature (which is an embedding of the basic explicatures). It also includes descriptions of attitude prepositions and descriptions of speech acts (Huang, 2007).

Grice (1957) suggests that a conversational implicature is a set of non-logical inferences which involve conveyed messages that are meant without being part of what is said, which can be produced from either strictly observing or ostentatiously flouting the maxims (as cite in Yan, 2007, p.27). Sperber and Wilson (1986), on the other side, define implicatures as "whatever that is not communicated explicitly." (p.182). They explain that implicatures are assumptions communicated by the utterance that is not made explicit. This lack of explicit communication gives rise to implicatures, which they refer to as implicatures. As a result, this definition establishes the relationship between implicatures and explicatures (Haugh, 2002). Sperber and Wilson present their own characterization of implicatures, which appears to differ from Grice's treatment in a reductionist manner (Haugh, 2002). They suggest that fully determined implicatures can be inferred by referencing the speaker's manifested expectations, making the utterance optimally relevant (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; Soria & Romero, 2010). Implicatures, or what Huang (2007) calls "r-implicatures," (p.195), are retrieved solely through inference; allowing the hearer to comprehend the intended meaning of the speaker.

Context and Mutual Manifestation

Sperber and Wilson consider that a context is a psychological construct that is a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world; each utterance requires a somewhat divergent context.
A pragmatic Analysis of Effective Political Communication

(Sperber & Wilson, 1987; Assimakopoulos, 2017). Following the theoretical framework presented by Sperber and Wilson, who count on accessibility standards in arranging contexts, in addition to a model of cognition, which operates according to the precept of producing maximum effects for minimal effort. Consider the following instance:

“Peter: I'm tired.”
“Mary: If you're tired, I'll make the meal.”
To comprehend such utterances, assumptions are not enough. More encyclopedic entries combined with the concepts to achieve some contextual effects.

“Mary: What I would like to eat tonight is an osso-bucco. I'm ravenous. I had a great day in court. How was your day?”
“Peter: Not so good. Too many patients, and the air conditioning was out of order. I'm tired.”
“Mary: I'm sorry to hear that. O.K. I'll make it myself.” (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995, p.132-142)

To understand Mary’s utterance, Peter needs to go back to her previous remarks about her desire to eat osso-bucco. The interpretation of Mary’s previous utterances and these interpretations need to be converted from the deductive device’s memory to Peter’s short-term memory. If everything went well, to go back in memory for previous utterances’ interpretations, these interpretations need to be retrieved back to the memory of deductive devices. Thus, Peter extends the immediate given context, together with what he has in memory, to conclude that Mary feels sorry for hearing that he is tired because of his bad day at work.

The context can have several extensions to satisfy the search for relevance (not as a goal but as a tool for comprehension) productively. This instance is inferred successfully by extending context to previous assumptions processed deductively. Interpreting utterances that contain a specific context demands extending the interlocutors’ deductive inferring abilities (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995).

Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) give essential definitions for some basic ideas about mutual manifestness in saying that; “A fact is manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true.” (p.39). Sperber and Wilson (2015) explain manifestation and its relation to implicit beliefs. Manifestness relies on belief’s strength and accessibility, representing the relation between epistemic and cognitive aspects. Manifestation degrees ensure the causal role of the evidence in the communicator’s thoughts and behavior. According to the definition of Sperber and Wilson of manifestness, things that are accepted as true mainly refer to facts.

Similarly, the time mentioned in their definition refers to the time span in which a piece of information activates the inferential processes. Manifest is purely perceptual and unobservable. What cognitive environment includes is all the facts and information (different types) that are possible to be perceived and inferred by the individual, not only this, but also all the data that she/he is capable of fitting in his/her awareness in terms of his/her physical environment (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995). “A cognitive environment of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him.” (p.39).

Christie (1993) also provided a significant study about the audiences’ reception of broadcast communication. Christie uses the relevance theory to analyze audience response as a pragmatic approach to media studies. The aim is to be able to concentrate on the variable interpretations that are inferred by the audience out of the televised program. The study investigates such a problem by applying a cognitive pragmatic theory, which is relevance theory,
to reach the audiences’ response to the communicative act of broadcasting. This is consistent with
the scientific results of Pilkington (1994), which accounts for the poetic effects in a relevance-
theoretic account of the literary use of rhetorical tropes and schemes. Poetic effects are achieved
by the use of tropes and schemes alongside the development of the pragmatic relevance theory. In
considering language communication and specifically literary communication that, primarily
given in the notion of text-internal linguistic features of social-culture phenomena. By proposing
a pragmatic and cognitive basis for literal communication, arguing that the framework of relevance
theory may be a significant addition to the study of poetic style and rhetoric. In more political
settings, Sanz (2013) argues that the interpretation of these billboards involves a massive reliance
on the hearers’ accessibility to the background beliefs and contextual assumptions that interact
with the new inputs. The study distinguishes between three main elements explicatures, implicated
premises, and implicated conclusions. However, the study includes the analysis of visual
metaphors and semiotics spanning to explain explicatures. These studies successfully accentuate
the relation between relevance theory and language effect, the cognitive capacities that directly
affect the potential interpretations of the linguistic and non-linguistic inputs. Huang (2021)
investigates pragmatic ambivalence from the perspective of relevance theory as an “indispensable
communicative strategy” to achieve communication. Huang finds that relevance theory give
explanatory advantage to be applied in a conductive way to provide further understanding of
linguistic phenomena.

Factors of relevance:

Cutting and Fordyce (2021) see relevance is achieved through productivity mechanisms
efforts and effects. "The more contextual effects and the less effort it takes to process the text, the
greater the relevance" (p.33). Therefore, the hearer should receive some positive cognitive effects
in the shape of an implicature to get useful information from it. The roles of the speakers and the
hearers are altered rapidly during the interaction. When the old information interacts with the new
information, the result is a contextual implication, representing the contextual effects. According
to Wilson and Sperber, (2004) "A positive cognitive effect is a worthwhile difference to the
individual’s representation of the world” (p.608). According to Sperber and Wilson, there are three
main possibilities for how contextual effects are handled by mental processes. Contextual effects
could be; strengthening an assumption that already exists, contradicting, which leads to the
elimination of the current assumption and contextual implication, and combining where new
information follows from the combination of new and existing assumptions. Ultimately, the higher
the rate of effort taken (effort into the process of perception, memory retrieval mechanisms, and
inference requirements), the higher the unworthiness of the input to be processed. Therefore, it
would be unlikely to attract the of the hearer’s attention (audience). From the relevance-theoretic
perspective, what the interlocutors are looking for is a balanced equation. What is optimally
relevant is taking on accomplish the maximum amount of effects for the minimum amount of effort
and gain the most relevant communicative information (Huang, 2021 ; Horn and Ward, 2004).

According to Wilson and Sperber (2002) the speaker wants to be understood, pining such
criteria, the utterance is simplified enough for the hearer’s criteria of minimum effort for maximum
effect. Much effect for less effort means more relevance. What is manifest is that the speaker wants
the hearer to think or presume that this utterance is relevant and worth the effort (p.604).

Effect in language use:
Practically, this study could model how speech effectiveness can change many political affairs, especially in the most vital point in the UK Parliament, the House of Commons. By studying relevance theory, people can be careful to determine the choice of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in expressing ideas or meaning in a given context because being relevant and effective is an essential thing in our lives to understand each other. Communicators seek effects behind information processing, and the human brain stores and processes information to achieve communicative efficiency (Zhao, 2001).

One of the crucial concepts proposed by Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance (hence after RT) is the interpretive and descriptive use of language. In some cases, explicit contents of utterances are not prepositional forms; language tropes and non-assertive speech acts are examples of such cases. As a result, RT provides a fundamental approach that depends on the distinction between interpretation and description. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995), Utterances represent phenomena in two main ways: first, “It can represent some state of affairs in virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs.” In this case, this type of representation is description or descriptively used (p.228). Second, “it can represent some other representation which also has a propositional form – a thought, for instance- in virtue of a resemblance between two propositional forms” this type of representation is interpretative or interpretively used (p.229).

Metaphor:

The relevance-theoretic account of the metaphor comprehension process indicates that metaphor is located among a general treatment for the processes of lexical pragmatics, for concept modulation or adjustment. However, this notion of modulation or adjustment includes narrowing and different types of broadening (which are not considered metaphorical). Still, RT argues for more continuity on metaphor (Wilson & Carston, 2006). Relevance theory provides a cognitive framework to exploit the process of utterance interpretation through goal-directed inference. The context of discourse plays an essential role in altering what information is accessible to the encyclopedic entries, and that leads to what context assumptions and implications are derived. Also, this account holds the fact that discourse context sets certain aims or expectations, which directs the inference (from expected conclusions to derivable premises) (Wilson and Carston, 2006; Horn and Ward, 2004).

Irony:

Among other traditional and classical approaches to irony, Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1986\1995; 2012; Wilson and Sperber, 1992; Wilson, 2006) were the first to propose the technical term of echoic irony, and regardless of the various criticism, they insisted on their approach. Their approach relies on the term echo, like other language trope, as a second-degree interpretation (Sperber & Wilson, 1998\1995). Sperber and Wilson (1981) developed this approach from Mention Theory to Echoic Mention; these were the origins of the current approach to echoic irony. Sperber and Wilson (1998\1995) state that irony includes “an interpretive relation between the speaker’s thought and attributed thought or utterances” (p.231), which puts it on the same line as metaphor in relation to the interpretively deployed utterances, which simultaneously falls with the range of any other normal utterance.

According to RT, ironic utterances are interpretation of the speaker’s thought (as an interpretation). Speakers achieve relevance by informing the hearer of what others said or thought in the case of reported speech. Not only this, but what kind of attitude does the speaker hold in his
mind towards such is, and that is where relevance is mainly achieved. This kind of echoic interpretive mechanism results in the echoic interpretation by Sperber and Wilson (1998\1995 ). Seto (1998) mentions some of the linguistic evidence on irony because these markers often appear as emphatic, such as; actually, certainly, clearly, definitely, evidently, indeed, obviously, of course, real(ly), sure(ly), etc.

- “It's a lovely day for a picnic.”
- “It's a lovely day for a picnic, indeed.” (Seto, 1998, p.239).

The function of these modifiers is to provide a metalinguistic comment to the utterance, which also functions as an echo marker. Adjuncts, like always, perpetually, and constantly, are used to trigger ironic interpretations according, to specific contextual environment (Seto, 1998).

**Repetition and Parallelism:**

Communication consists of different types. Repeated communicative acts could be an utterance, paralinguistic, or extralinguistic cues, which might be a physical gesture or vocal variation. As the speaker aims for optimal relevance, the main reason behind using a particular style is to seek relevance. Emphatic effects work in different ways, but overall, Sperber and Wilson suggest that the cases of repetition should have increased contextual effects by leading the hearer to have an extended context and henceforth yielding further implications. Repetition triggers effects automatically, regardless of the way the utterance is interpreted. The hearer is cognitively (automatically) pushed to have a broader imagination to share the notion of mutually manifesting the intended meaning in deriving suitable assumptions. A psychological state of affairs such as attitudes, emotions, and mental state is associated with resultant effective interpretation. (Sperber &Wilson, 1986\1995).

**Syntactic structure and Focal stress:**

As mentioned before, the speaker compensates for the hearer’s efforts spent in processing the immediate communicative act (any potential stimuli). After all, these processes are interrelated to complete the process of communication effectively. Although there is much literature about such points, none of them could present a decent explanation of the relation between linguistic structure and the pragmatic effects. And by that, RT steps into an explanatory theory of style. Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) mention some facts to consider as bases for their explanation; first, given information comes before the new information, which is focally stressed as a way to simplify understanding. Second, vocal stress draws the hearer’s attention to a specific linguistic item, but stress itself is ambivalent. Third, the stress of the declarative is determined by using Wh-question, which is supposed to be answered through it. Last and most important, it is not often a distinction between what is given and what is new or focus and presupposition, according to Sperber and Wilson, it is “a gradient or hierarchical structure”. Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995) endeavor to prove the relation between the linguistic form and the pragmatic interpretation are linked naturally to show how it works among the skeleton of relevance theory.

To avoid the waste of effort, it is crucial when the speaker aims for optimal relevance, s/he should efficiently exploit the temporal sequencing. Sperber and Wilson’s suggestion focuses on what is logically anticipated as hypothesized and is based initially on syntactically anticipated hypotheses that vigorously participate in the comprehension procedure (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995).
Questions:
According to Sperber and Wilson (1986\1995 ), interrogatives, however, are constructed along the interpretive use of language, which links the speaker’s thought and some desirable thought. RT is a hypothesis about the process of interpretation from the hearer’s perspective. Simply, the hearer recovers the logical form of the interrogative utterance and fuses it with the form of the speaker is asking ‘Wh-P’, and ‘Wh-P’ is indirectly indicated. The distinction between yes-no questions and ‘Wh-question’ is that, yes-no questions, on the other side, have the logical form with complete logical form, in which P is communicating thought that is interpreted via P as relevant if it is true. In contrast, the ‘Wh-question’ has a logical form with an incomplete prepositional form. In asking Wh-P as a ‘Wh-question’ does not have a complete prepositional form or less than a prepositional form, P is communicating that there is more to the thought to be interpreted by P to develop it into a complete propositional thought, and in this case, it would be relevant if true. Understanding interrogative utterances is greatly dependent on the answers that the speaker would consider relevant if true. The formula where “she is asking Wh-P” is analyzed as a result of an interpretation of the desirable representation (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995; Lenci, 1994). This brings the need to mention a type of question and the most relevant assumptions;
- Rhetorical question; When did you say you were going to give up smoking? Such questions are usually regarded as reminders; in other words, the speaker intends to let the hearer retrieve specific information that is relevant to the hearer.
Of course, relevance is a trust-based relationship, which might be clear and relevant for one might not be the same for others. Hence, through the process of interpreting questions, some assumptions must assessed by the hearer about what is considered to be relevant to the speaker.

Methodology:
This study draws on a qualitative analysis method, which involves data collection and results in an interpretive data evaluation. This type of analysis is mainly concerned with meaning comprehension that could potentially participate in specific problematic human or social issues. In an attempt to explain the meaning of the data, the researcher highlights particular then general information, that ‘inductive analysis’. A quite outstanding feature of qualitative analysis is the confirmation of meaning, interpretation, and process. Context, as the focus of the qualitative analysis, is used by the leading agent of the analysis (the researcher) to deduce a descriptive product (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Crosby & Salazar, 2020).

Purposeful sampling is the preferred method of analysis by qualitative researchers. However, purposeful sampling gives much space for the researcher to assess, evaluate, and analyze many issues considerably related to the aim or the purpose of the study. Samples exhibit a highly informative, purposeful, and relevant; thus, this study takes purposeful sampling as a case of analysis (Patton, 2015; Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2011).

Data Selection:
The researchers’ chosen data are some selected extracts (samples) from the parliamentary debates in the UK House of Commons 2022-2023. These extracts can be accessed on the following YouTube videos;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3C6sWxlyx4.
The Telegraph. (2022, January 31) In Full: Boris Johnson makes statement on Sue Gray report in House of Commons. [Video file]. YouTube. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiJre5y1q_k

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOi8wdjAo_g

The Independent. (2023, June 7). Watch again: Oliver Dowden faces Angela Rayner at PMQs as UK records highest inflation rates in G20. [Video file]. YouTube. 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrTn5FrzXSE


Or can be accessed on the following the official electronic website in the form of live debates https://www.theyworkforyou.com/.

**Data Analysis and Findings:**

Due to the place delimitations, the five extracts are analyzed by the researchers by adopting Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance (1986\1995). These extracts can be accessed by the reader through the YouTube platform or the official electronic website provided in the data selection section.

**Model of analysis:**
1. The explication used by the speakers and identifying what type of procedure would extract the propositional content, whether it is enrichment, reference assignment, or disambiguation.
2. The implicature and its types: implicit premises and conclusion.
3. ‘Cognitive effects’ can be related to context in three main ways:
   - Strengthening, on the one hand, occurs as the new information added supports and functions as evidence for the existing information. There are three types of strengthening:
   - Contradiction, on the other hand, occurs when the evidence provided leads to opposing or abandoning the old assumptions. Also, the varying degrees of strength deduction may result in contradiction (Sperber & Wilson, 1986\1995).
   - Combining a previous assumption to extract more contextual effects and to result in contextual implications.
4. The politicians’ use of language tropes to maximize the effects gained by the audience, hence, to get their acceptance.

The study examines five extracts transcribed from YouTube channels of the UK parliamentary debates in the House of Commons; these debates are held by different politicians led by the Prime Minister of each period.

**Analysis:**

This section provides a detailed analysis of the political interactions in the House of Commons (chosen political debates), to precisely identify the mechanisms activated by producing linguistic and non-linguistic effective cues. However, this study undertakes a postmodern pragmatic approach to assess and evaluate the various explications and implicatures. In addition, this study exploits what the interactions include of different language tropes such as metaphor, hyperbole, question, irony, repetition, parallelism, Syntactic structure, and Focal stress.
Extract 1:

Theresa May said:
“The COVID regulations imposed significant restrictions on the freedoms of members of the public. They had a right to expect their Prime Minister to have read the rules, to understand the meaning of the rules—and, indeed, those around them him to have done so, too—and to set an example in following those rules.” (The Telegraph, 2022, January 31).

Boris Johnson said:
“No, that is not what the Gray report says. [ Interruption. ] It is not what the Gray report says” (Serious tone of voice) (The Telegraph, 2022, January 31)

In the above extract, the interlocutors, Theresa May (Conservative Maidenhead) and Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister of the UK), are debating the Gray report and COVID regulations. The extract is taken from a lengthy debate moderated by (Mr. Speaker) Lindsay Hoyle in the House of Commons (UK parliament). This extract is analyzed following Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance.

The speaker attempts to mutually manifest a contextual assumption about her informative and communicative intentions for the audience (both primary and secondary). Theresa speaks confidently about her thoughts to the public. The speaker is defending the safety of the public in creating a successful cognitive context for the hearers to make anticipatory hypotheses about her utterances and questions. The explicature of Theresa is decoded through reference assignment; the noun phrase ‘right hon. Friend’ refers to ‘Boris Johnson’, the pronoun ‘they’ refers to ‘the rules’ and ‘people around Boris’, and ‘it’ refers to the reason behind this issue.

The Johnson and the people around him are incompetent of the fact that the rules should be applied equally to No. 10. (Downing Street, the locale of British prime ministers since 1735)

The hearer has to find a garden path of interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance, depending on their encyclopedic entries, to construct the appropriate assumptions as regards the utterance and the overall context of the interaction. The speaker expects her audience to compute relevant hypotheses about ‘No. 10.’ And what it represents to the public and the political system.

The implicit premise:
- Boris Johnson needs to explain himself.

The explicit premise:
- Rules are not applied equally by the Prime Minister and the people around him.

The conclusion is that:
- Theresa May is objecting to Johnson’s management policy.

The speaker uses the modifier ‘indeed’ to express a metalinguistic function to serve as an ironical interpretation, as in “They had a right to expect their Prime Minister to have read the rules, to understand the meaning of the rules—and, indeed, those around them him to have done so, too—and to set an example in following those rules.” Theresa dissociates herself from Johnson’s actions towards the regulations.

The speaker refers implicitly to inequality in safety regulations as follows:
- Boris Johnson does not apply rules equally
- Boris Johnson is unaware of the rules
- Boris Johnson is incompetent in the health regulations
- Boris Johnson and people around him are not capable of doing their job appropriately.

  Johnson replies with a quiet, obvious *serious tone of voice*, which is a *non-linguistic* form of communication. Johnson answered to Theresa, “No, that is not what the Gray report says. [Interruption.] It is not what the Gray report says, but I suggest that my right hon. Friend waits to see the conclusion of the inquiry.” the decoded logical form of Johnson’s utterance into a description of Theresa’s ostensive behavior. Johnson’s utterance will be optimally relevant to Theresa because expectations are raised by recognition of Johnson’s ostensive behavior of the presumption of relevance it conveys. Johnson’s utterance will achieve relevance by denying all that is said by Theresa in which expectation raised by Johnson’s optimal relevance, together with the fact that such an explanation would be most relevant to Theresa at this point. The speaker aims for effective communication and seeks to be understood by his hearers. Boris wants to make sure that his hearers’ *cognitive environment* is improved, but at the same time, they are using the least amount of effort in comprehending his utterances. The speaker uses repetition as follows:

  - “No, that is not what the Gray report says.”
  - “It is not what the Gray report says,”

  Theresa infers that Johnson knows nothing about the rules, and he denies what she accused him of ignorance and incompetence. Plus, background knowledge satisfies the *expectation of optimal relevance*. The speaker implies that:

  - Theresa is against his policy.
  - Theresa has some doubts about applications of COVID regulations.
  - Theresa rejects inequality.
  - Theresa intends to make Johnson give some explanations to the public and the house members.

  The speaker aims to affect his audience and to achieve this, he needs to compensate for the wasted efforts in giving a *comprehensible* utterance. To achieve a *contradictory* effect, the speaker uses repetitive denial.

**Extract 2:**

- Keir Starmer said:
  "I have the list here: 45p tax cut—gone; corporation tax cut—gone; 20p tax cut—gone; two-year energy freeze—gone; tax-free shopping—gone; economic credibility—gone….So why is she still here?" (Challenging eye contact) (The Guardian, 2022, October 19).

- Elizabeth Truss said:
  "I am a fighter and not a quitter" (Challenging eye contact) (The Guardian, 2022, October 19).

In the above extract, the interlocutors, Keir Starmer (Leader of HM Official Opposition) and Elizabeth Truss (The Prime Minister) are engaged in a debate about the Prime Minister’s economic plans and achievements. The debate takes place in the House of Commons, with Lindsay Hoyle serving as the moderator. The extract is analyzed following Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance.

Starmer, representing the opposing side of the house, aims to convey her messages to the primary and secondary audience. His main objective is to provide the audience with specific numbers that reinforce and connect to their existing background knowledge, resulting in a *positive cognitive* impact. The syntactic, semantic, and phonological structure of his message captures the
attention of the listeners. The secondary audience echoes the same structure used by the speaker, aligning their expressions with his. These factors work together inferentially, harmonized to create a cognitive environment that is mutually manifest in the primary audience (Truss). The strategic use of parallel structures such as "45p tax cut—gone; corporation tax cut—gone; 20p tax cut—gone; two-year energy freeze—gone; tax-free shopping—gone; economic credibility—gone" serves to strengthen the primary audience's comprehension abilities and reduces processing efforts by employing matching structures.

a) 45p tax cut is gone.
b) Corporation tax cut is gone.
c) 20p tax cut is gone.
d) Two-year energy freeze is gone.
e) Tax-free shopping is gone.
f) Economic credibility is gone.

Simple, structured syntactic forms save the hearers from the useless processing cost (effort) and increase the chances of effective communication. Starmer is producing certain higher-level explicatures:

a) Starmer believes that truth causes economic deficiency.
b) Starmer is rejecting the way Truss handles British affairs.

Stamer also implicates:

a) Truss is not the right person for the job of The Prime Minister.
b) Truss should resign.
c) Truss is behaving in the wrong way towards the Labour Party.

Truss’s communicative task is to recognize all that is produced by Starmer and retrieve a schema of relevant assumptions that would enable her to reach the interpretation intended by the speaker. The assumptions are retrieved from encyclopedic entries to back up the logical form of the utterance. A complex process of processing instantly occurs by the speaker’s expectations and the hearer’s potential hypotheses, all combining automatically and optimally to have an interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance.

Liz Truss answers Starmer, who questions her as a prime minister and asks her to prove herself due to the economic crisis she caused by ill-planned political strategies. The Prime Minister is using a metaphorical and, at the same time, politically channelled precisely from ‘Peter Mandelson’. "I am a fighter and not a quitter" (Challenging eye contact). Liz Truss takes advantage of mutual manifestation by using a direct political quotation from a former highly influential prime minister in his victory speech. The House of Commons is familiar with such character and such influence, so in comprehending Truss’s utterance, the hearers (primary and secondary) are following the least effort path, which gives a higher possibility of high positive cognitive effects (benefits). An automatic and optimal interpretation results from linguistic and non-linguistic stimuli produced by Truss to pursue the hearer in automatically triggering assumptions retrieved from memory by a simple syntactically structured utterance. The explicatures are assigning references by ‘I’ to Truss herself in this context specifically. In declaring herself as a fighter, she uses the loose meaning of being a good prime minister and of what else the fighter is doing other than continuing fighting until victory is obtained. The higher-level explication embedded in the propositional form:

a) The Prime Minister is a fighter.
b) The Prime Minister is not giving up on her position.
It also implicates weaker implicatures:

a) Truss rejects Starmer’s utterance
b) Truss is as strong as Peter Mandelson

Truss replies with a quiet, obvious, serious tone of voice, which is a non-linguistic form of communication. Truss has answered to Starmer, "I am a fighter and not a quitter…." the decoded logical form of Truss’s utterance into a description of Starmer’s ostensive behavior. Truss’s utterance will be optimally relevant to Starmer because expectations are raised by recognition of Truss’s ostensive behavior and the presumption of relevance it conveys. Truss’s utterance will achieve relevance by using a direct metaphorical political quotation. Expectations are raised by Truss’s optimal relevance, together with the fact that such an explanation would be most relevant to Starmer at this point. First enrichment of the logical form of Truss’s utterance to occur to Starmer, which accepted as an explicature of Truss’s utterance. Starmer infers that Truss emphasizes that she is going to keep fighting and never quits. Truss is defending her situation by channeling what former Prime Minister Peter Mandelson states, plus background knowledge satisfies the expectation of optimal relevance.

Implicit premise as:
- Truss is capable of bearing responsibilities.

Explicit premise as:
- Truss is fighting just like Peter Mandelson.

The conclusion is that:
- Truss earned her position through hard work.

The metaphor in the quotation is an indirect way to achieve relevance: "I am a fighter and not a quitter…." The hearers will likely give access to their encyclopedic knowledge about the fighter’s features and how it resembles the prime minister. Starmer is expressing that Truss is manifesting to the audience (both primary and secondary audiences) to improve, reconstruct, and add further assumptions to their cognitive environment through the information.

Extract 3:

-Boris Johnson:
“Of course, we gave and are giving people skills, skills, skills.” (hand movements) (Guardian News, 2022, July 18).

-Kevin Brennan:
“It is highly unconventional … only an unconventional man would want the opportunity to speak at his own funeral.” (Guardian News, 2022, July 18).

In the above extract, the interlocutors, Boris Johnson (Leader of the Conservative Party, The Prime Minister), and Kevin Brennan (Labour, Cardiff West), are debating Confidence in the Queen Majesty’s Government. The extract is taken from a lengthy debate moderated by (Mr. Speaker) Lindsay Hoyle in the House of Commons (UK parliament). This extract is analyzed following Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance.

Johnson (the speaker) uses his informative and communicative intentions to construct an appropriate context for the audience. The speaker aims for optimal relevance, and at the same time, his utterances trigger automatic relevance. In his utterance, “Just a moment…Of course, we gave and are giving people skills, skills, skills.” The speaker uses repetition to activate his audience’s pragmatic inferential capacities to convey that he gives them many different skills. This utterance shows that the speaker is emphasizing his thoughts about providing the “skills” that are beneficial
for the public. This is within the preferences and abilities of comprehension, which proves the presumption of optimal relevance. The speaker uses repetition to touch upon psychological and cognitive capacities at the same time to achieve his aim and obtain the support and acceptance of his hearers. The explicit premise is that:

- Johnson and Conservative Party members are supporting the public

The implicit premise is that:

- Johnson and Conservative Party members worth the public trust.

The conclusion is that:

- The current Prime Minister Johnson and Conservative Party members are making a memorable legacy.

The repetitive lexical item is successfully used to modify the speaker’s explicit aspect of the utterance and, henceforth achieves more extra benefits or positive cognitive effects. The explication is decoded via reference assignment; the pronoun ‘we’ refers to ‘Johnson and Conservative Party members’, and ‘they’ and ‘them’ refers to ‘the public’. The explication can be enriched as:

- Johnson and Conservative Party members gave and are giving people educational skills.
- Johnson and Conservative Party members gave and are giving people management skills.
- Johnson and Conservative Party members gave and are giving people health skills.

The higher-level explication is that:

- Johnson and Conservative Party members gave and are giving the public all lifetime skills, and will continue supporting and developing them until they become adults.

Brennan replies with an ironical utterance, “It is highly unconventional … only an unconventional man would want the opportunity to speak at his own funeral.”, the speaker (Brennan) indicates, by using her utterances, his rejection of what Johnson uttered. Johnson’s ostensive behavior will be optimally relevant to Rayner. Brennan accuses Johnson of being unrealistic by calling him “an unconventional man”. As linguistic communication is the strongest form of communication, the structured form provides ease of access to the contextual assumption in the mutually manifest schema of assumptions. The explication is decoded via reference assignment; the pronoun ‘it’ refers to Johnson’s speech’, and ‘unconventional man’ refers to ‘Johnson’ in this context and enrichment. Brennan refers to a cultural or social phenomenon mentioned in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Tom and Huckleberry Finn, both presumed dead, walk into the middle of their funeral service. The speaker is using this example without further explanations about such reference, depending on the audience’s background knowledge to activate the pragmatic inferential mechanisms.

Brennan’s utterance is a basic explication that can be enriched in various ways:

- Johnson’s speech is highly unconventional
- Only Johnson would want the opportunity to speak at his own funeral.

The explicit premise is that:

- Johnson is constantly breaking the rules.

The implicit premise is that:

- Johnson is close to his end as a Prime Minister.

The conclusion is that:

- Johnson is just fantasizing, and he confuses the political operation.

**Extract 4:**
Angela Rayner said: “Speaking of the last election, the Tory manifesto promised to end the abuse of the judicial review. How is it going?” (Sarcastic tone of voice, slight smile and gaze) (The Independent, 2023, June 7).

Oliver Dowden said: However, in Wales they also had a pandemic, and what have the Labour-run Wales authorities done there? [NO] independent inquiry in Wales. As ever, it is [ONE] rule for Labour and another for everyone else.” (Smile and hand movements) (The Independent, 2023, June 7).

In the above extract, the interlocutors, Angela Rayner (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition) and Oliver Dowden (Deputy Prime Minister), debate the elections and the COVID inquiry. The extract is taken from a lengthy debate moderated by (Mr. Speaker) Lindsay Hoyle in the House of Commons (UK parliament). This extract is analyzed following Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance.

The speaker (Rayner) conveys her informative and communicative intention in expressing her thoughts about the Conservative Party. The speaker successfully constructs a context for the audience to use as a tool to derive suitable and accessible assumptions. The speaker represents or indirectly reports the Conservatives’ speech: “The Tory manifesto promised to end the abuse of the judicial review (a court proceeding in which a judge reviews the lawfulness of a decision or action made by a public body). How is it going?” The speaker makes a mutual manifestation that the conservatives’ promise is not fulfilled; the speaker uses commissive utterance (speech act-promise) to remind the hearers of a previous promise.

Rayner, then, ostensibly asks a rhetorical question, “How is it going?” to trigger automatic and optimal relevance, the hearers’ cognitive environment is improved by the speaker’s utterances. The speaker uses not only linguistic communication but also non-linguistic communication cues to instruct the hearers through the process of finding the right interpretation. It is observed that Rayner shows a sarcastic tone of voice, slight smile, and gaze to reinforce the hearers’ pragmatic inferential mechanisms. The speaker is seeking optimal relevance; she uses political terms in which she knows that everyone in the House of Commons knows them, and so the speaker’s utterance is within the hearer’s abilities and preferences. The speaker succeeded in attracting the hearers’ attention, and that is obvious in the reaction produced by them, which is laughter. The explicature is decoded by reference assignment; ‘the Tory manifesto’ refers to ‘the Conservative Party’, and ‘it’ refers to ‘the ending of the abuse of the judicial review’. And enrichment;

The Conservative Party promised to end the abuse of the judicial review. But this promise is broken.

The higher-level explicature is:
- The Conservative Party lied just to with the elections.

The speaker implicates that:
- a) The Conservatives are not trustworthy.
- b) The Conservatives are not fulfilling their promises.
- c) The Conservatives are breaking the law.
- d) The Conservatives are corrupted.
- e) The Conservatives are not doing their job in the right way.

The implicit premise:
The Conservative Party lacks obedience. 

The explicit premise:
- The Conservatives were not committed to what they say.

The conclusion:
- The Conservatives were not worth winning the previous elections.

The hearers (primary and secondary audience) use both linguistic and non-linguistic communication and encyclopedic entries to retrieve specific facts about the last elections, what the promise was, and whether it was fulfilled or not. As the speaker has some expectations about the hearers’ background knowledge, the hearers also have expectations of what hypotheses are formulated depending on the speaker’s utterance. Given the principle of relevance, the ostensive stimuli enable the hearer to derive an array of weak implicatures, as these stimuli include the speaker’s intentions of being relevant. The speaker seeks to achieve a combining effect in humiliating the Conservative Party. To show the public how the Conservative Party falls short of serving the public because they say things and make many promises to get votes, they deny them later.

Dowden reacts with a smile to what is said by Rayner, which indicates that he recognizes Rayner’s utterances and underestimates her utterances and short questions. The speaker (Dowden) replies with another rhetorical questions, “In Wales, they also had a pandemic, and what have the Labour-run Wales authorities done there?” The speaker indicates, by using explicit utterances, his rejection of what Rayner uttered. Dowden’s ostensive behavior will be optimally relevant to Rayner. Dowden is defending his situation by denying what Rayner states. And her utterance against Dowden’s party plans about the COVID inquiry. The speaker uses both linguistic communication and non-linguistic communication (Smile and hand movements). The structured form provides accessible contextual assumptions (redirecting what Rayner said to defend himself against current accusations and formulates new accusations to Rayner and her Party) to mutually manifest relevant schema of assumptions.

Expectations (on the hearer’s side) are raised by recognition of Dowden’s ostensive behavior and the presumption of relevance it conveys. 

The explicit premise is that:
- Rayner and her Party did nothing to the pandemic in Wales

The implicit premise is that:
- Rayner has no right to accuse the Tory manifesto

The conclusion is that:
- Dowden is defending his Party and the Prime Minister’s political decisions

The utterance is decoded on the explicit side by enrichments as expressing that Johnson is manifesting to both primary and secondary audiences to improve and add further assumptions to their cognitive environment through the background information. Dowden’s utterance is a basic explicature enriched in various ways:

a) Rayner and her Party ALSO did nothing for the pandemic in Wales.

b) Rayner and her Party are considering themselves as different.

c) Rayner and her Party ALSO do not comply with the rules.

d) The Labour Party is not better than the Conservative Party.

e) Rayner is treating the Conservatives unequally.

f) Rayner and her Party are authoritarians.
The speaker uses *emphatic focal stress* in certain “[NO] independent inquiry in Wales.” To emphasize the fact that the Labour Party is not doing its job. The speaker intends his hearers (primary and secondary audience) to infer that the Labour Party falls short of protecting their subjects. *the enrichment* of the logical form of Dowden’s utterance to occur to Rayner, which might combine with “it is [ONE] rule for Labour and another for everyone else.” proves Rayner to be wrong to lead to the satisfaction of Dowden emphasizes “what have the Labour-run Wales authorities done there?” Since *automatic relevance* is triggered by his utterance, Rayner assumes that Dowden’s utterance is optimally relevant to her because it successfully drags her *attention*, and it is also within the *abilities and preferences* of the hearer and the speaker.

*The first assumption* to occur to Rayner, together with other *appropriate premises*, is counted as the implicit premise of Dowden’s utterance, which might satisfy the expectation that Dowden’s utterance will achieve relevance by *contradicting* Rayner. Dowden’s utterance is decoded as emphasizing Dowden’s defense against what Rayner says. Dowden’s *rhetorical questions* function as a *trigger* and a *reminder* for the audience to activate the *inferential mechanism* to derive the most *accessible assumptions*.

By combining the *implicit premise* and the *explicit premise*, Rayner arrives at the *implicit conclusion* that Johnson is in a state of denial, from which further, weaker implicatures may follow. The resulting interpretation satisfies Rayner’s expectations of relevance. Following the least path of effort by delivering cognitively *economic utterance* but effective for the hearer. The hearer has some *expectations* that need to be satisfied by the speaker’s utterances to formulate suitable *hypotheses* about the speaker’s intended meaning. Those *hypotheses* are considered in order of *accessibility* by the *mutual parallel adjustment*. Recognizing the mood of the utterances and interpreting the *ostensive stimuli* given by Dowden could be used as an *implicit premise* in deriving the expected explanation of Rayner’s behavior. The speaker is using short *emphatic utterances* to prove his point of view against what is said by Rayner.

**Extract 5:**

-Dominic Raab:

The right hon. Lady has flip-flopped. The right hon. Lady has flip-flopped all over the place when it comes to these strikes. First, she said they were “lose-lose”. Then, she tweeted that “workers were left with no choice”. When she was asked by the BBC the straight question—she is normally a straight-shooting politician— “do you like the RMT?” of whether she liked the RMT, she said, “I am going to have to go now, I have a train to catch.” (winks at Rayner, hand pointing at Rayner, slight smile with gloat and challenging eye gaze) (UK Parliament, 2022, June 29).

-Angela Rayner:

Well, well, that says a lot about the Conservative party. I will tell Conservative Members a few things about militancy. It is this Government who are acting in a militant way. …The Deputy Prime Minister talks about trains. No one can get trains, because of his failed Transport Secretary (Resting posture and sarcastic tone of voice) (UK Parliament, 2022, June 29).

In the above extract, the interlocutors, Dominic Raab (Deputy Prime Minister, The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice), and Angela Rayner (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition), debate rail strikes. The extract is taken from a lengthy debate moderated by (Mr.
Speaker) Lindsay Hoyle in the House of Commons (UK parliament). This extract is analyzed following Sperber and Wilson’s theory of relevance.

The speaker takes the responsibility very seriously to express his thoughts about what he intends his audience to manifest. By deploying his informative and communicative intentions to transfer his thoughts successfully to his hearers. His utterances are making some improvements in the cognitive environments of the audience (primary and secondary). Raab intends to make his utterances easy to comprehend by his audience. The speaker sarcastically uses a hyperbolic logical form, ‘flip-flopped’ to indicate how fast Rayner changes her political opinion (sudden change).

The speaker is being indirect to achieve most of the effects he needs, and Raab aims for optimal relevance so the hearers can retrieve information from the encyclopedic entries to derive relevant assumptions. So, he used direct and indirect quotations from Rayner’s previous speeches and interviews. In addition to these reported utterances, the speaker expresses his dissociating attitude. The speaker uses linguistic and non-linguistic types of communication (winks at Rayner, hand pointing at Rayner, slight smile with gloat, and challenging eye gaze). He uses both types of communication to reinforce his audience and to seek advantage of Rayner and her Party members’ reputation.

Using direct and indirect quotations such as:
- “She said they were “lose-lose””.
- “Then, she tweeted that “workers were left with no choice”.”
- “When she was asked by the BBC the straight question—she is normally a straight-shooting politician— “Do you like the RMT?” of whether she liked the RMT, she said, “I am going to have to go now, I have a train to catch.”

Raab highlights ostensive-inferential communication to describe and interpret Rayner’s utterances but also reflects propositional attitudes. Given the principle of relevance, the communicator chooses the most appropriate communicative act to serve his hearer with the most relevant schema of assumptions. The explicature is decoded by reference assignment; ‘The right hon. Lady’ ‘she’, and ‘you’ refers to Rayner, the pronoun ‘it’ refers to ‘empty it’ and the pronoun ‘them’ refers to ‘the strikes’. The speaker also attempts to attract his hearer’s attention and easily perceptual relevant interpretations. And disambiguation to interpret ‘RMT’ (Common term for the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, a UK trade union).

The speaker intends to humiliate the Labour Party by implicating that:
- Rayner prefers her good over the public’s.
- Rayner is busy with her life on account of her job.
- Rayner is a hypocrite.
- The whole Party is hypocrites.
- The entire Party is misusing their authority.

The hearers are spending some effort processing these utterances and derive some assumptions about all the above utterances. The speaker succeeded in achieving effects on his audience to gain support and to affect his specific audience for a particular purpose.

The implicit premise is that:
- Rayner is selfish.

The explicit premise is that:
- Rayner and the Labour are Party hypocrites.

The conclusion is that:
- Raab is defaming Rayner and the Labour Party.
Rayner replies with a resting posture and sarcastic tone, “Well, well, that says a lot about the Conservative party. I will tell Conservative Members a few things about militancy”. The speaker (Rayner) indicates, by using explicit utterance, her rejection of what Raab uttered in the previous turn. Rayner’s ostensive behavior will be optimally relevant to Rayner. Rayner is defending her situation by using ‘well’ repetitively to indicate that she is emphasizing a stylistic attitude. The repetition of ‘well’ reflects her attitudes towards Raab, which triggers automatic relevance, and the repetition includes an increase in the positive cognitive effects. Rayner uses Raab’s words against him. It is known that linguistic communication is the strongest form of communication; the structured form provides ease of access to the contextual assumption (redirecting the flow of communication to defend oneself against current accusations) to mutually manifest schema of assumptions. Non-linguistic communication (Resting posture, pointing fingers towards Raab and sarcastic tone of voice), on the same path, provides a massive reinforcement for the utterance propositional content.

Recognizing the mood of the utterance and interpreting the ostensive stimuli given by Rayner could be used as an implicit premise in deriving the expected explanation of Rayner’s behavior. The utterance is decoded on the explicit side by enrichments and reference assignments as expressing that Rayner is manifesting to the audience both primary and secondary audiences to improve and add further contextual assumptions to their cognitive environment. Rayner’s utterance is a basic explicature that can be enriched in various ways:
- Well, well; Conservative Members are acting in a militant way. No one can get trains, because of The Deputy Prime Minister failed Transport Secretary

Enrichments and reference assignment: the pronoun ‘I’ refers to ‘Rayner’, the pronoun ‘It’ refers to ‘Conservative Party’, and ‘The Deputy Prime Minister’ refers to ‘Raab’. Since automatic relevance is triggered by her utterance, Raab assumes that Rayner’s utterance is optimally relevant to him because it successfully drags his attention. It is also within the abilities and preferences of the hearer and the speaker. Expectations (on the hearer’s side) are raised by recognition of Rayner’s ostensive behavior and the presumption of relevance it conveys. The implicit premise is that:
- Raab and the Conservative Party are being vicious.
The explicit premise:
- The Conservative Party is playing a dirty game against the Labour Party.
The conclusion is that:
- The Conservative Party is busy with hypocrisy and failing to do its job in building train rails.
The speaker implicates that:
  a) Raab’s interaction reflects his vicious intentions towards the Labour Party.
  b) Raab and the Conservative Party are pretending to be good.
  c) Raab and the Conservative Party are not professionals.
  d) Raab and the Conservative Party are hypocrites.
  e) Raab is using violent verbal abuse, which shows his true nature.

Raab (as a hearer) has some expectations in his mind that need to be satisfied by the speaker’s choice of the most suitable hypotheses and the speaker’s intended meaning about both being considered in order of accessibility by the mutual parallel adjustment. Raab is achieving contradictory effects within the cognitive environment of his audience (both primary and secondary audience). By combining the implicit premise and the explicit premise, Raab arrives at
the implicit conclusion that Rayner is in a state of defending, from which further, weaker implicatures may follow. The resulting interpretation satisfies Raab’s expectations of relevance. Following the least path of effort by delivering cognitively economic utterance but effective enough for the hearer.

**Discussion**

Concerning the first question proposed by the researchers, Humans, in nature, are constantly searching for relevance. As the automatic relevance is successfully triggered by the speaker’s input (any ostensive stimulus), the hearer’s inferential processes are activated. This input is deployed by the cognitive processes that could be of potential relevance to the hearer. The hearer’s capability to achieve relevant and, hence effective communication is confirmed via the possibility of merging the background knowledge and whatever input is available at a time. As relevance theory suggests and as this study aims to prove (in political settings), an input is relevant as long as it achieves some benefits or (positive cognitive effects). The input creates expectations and hypotheses that must be satisfied by the presumption of relevance. The resultant modified input is open to several immediate effects, such as strengthening, contradicting, or combining, which could answer the hearer’s question, relieve confusion, deny a fact, or rectify mutated information.

Concerning the second question, the main aim behind communication is to be understood. As the speaker’s ostensive stimuli successfully trigger the optimal relevance, the hearer’s inferential processes are activated. The hearer’s conceptual storage is also activated to decode the stimuli (utterance) to reach the logical form. Ostensive-inferential communication is based upon two primary layers of intentions; the recognition of these intentions by the audience achieves understanding, and another factor that plays a role in intention recognition is mutual trust between the communicator and the addressee. The political actor aims to be understood by his audience and, at the same time, to make his/her ostensive stimuli worth spending some processing efforts by the hearers, which leads them to use utterances within their audience’s mental abilities and preferences. Political messages take different forms but have a common aim, which is to pragmatically take advantage of the other side of the communication regardless of the political position. The political debates are linguistically close to the type of audience they are directed to, political actors use average types of political terms and many of the public’s language. The reason behind such a strategy is to let the hearers understand what the debates are about and to gain their support and acceptance in the election period. However, Political actors use the most familiar contexts and the most familiar linguistic and non-linguistic cues to provide their audience with more explicit, relevant, and effective communication. Most political actors are linguistically capable of debating political issues but at the same time attracting the public’s attention regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, color, affiliation, birth history, social class, or cultural background. This is achieved through proper terms, proverbs, metaphors, etc.

**Conclusion**

The study pragmatically analyzes political interactions as extracts containing different types of communication and contexts as observed in the politicians' speeches in the House of Commons. The researchers adopt Sperber and Wilson’s (1986\1995) Relevance Theory. Therefore, the debates exploit the explicit utterances and identify the implicatures, both intended by the political actors. The audience’s cognitive benefits keep them urged to continue deciphering
the evidence provided by the speakers. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is to highlight the type of effect that results from the politician’s utterance. The primary purpose of this paper is to build a theoretical and practical basis on which effective political communication depends. This study aims to analyze how political actors are able to craft their discourse (messages) to attract their audience’s attention (primary and secondary audience). This study also aims for an inclusive view of effective communication in political discourse. The analysis within the body of the article includes more than one form of communication and more than one linguistic phenomenon. Humans inferential compute the potential possibilities to reach relevant interpretations. The data is evaluated cognitively and analyzed pragmatically. As observed in the previous analysis, linguistically effective speakers, Boris Johnson, Keir Starmer, Angela Rayner, etc., use quite prominent types of syntactic structure and lexical items such as metaphors, ironies, and questions. Varied pitch in their voice quality is considered a phonologically effective method to highlight the intended attitude towards the audience (or one specific hearer from the opposite party). Several kinetic movements are deployed mainly by Boris Johnson, Raab, Oliver Dowden, and Angela Rayner to reflect their attitudes to the audience, who are naturally (cognitively) built to assess and interpret according to the context.

The researchers found that, on the one hand, the political debates are linguistically revised and monitored by linguistic specialists to get the desired reaction from the audience; on the other hand, to linguistically appropriately justify, defend, and attack the opposite party in a way that guarantees the transparency of either Party. Finally, the political actors are successfully capable of manifesting what hearers are optimally capable of comprehending, this is achieved by the different pragmatically strategic ways to penetrate, change, and mutate the audience’s cognitive environment.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work

About the Authors:

Hind Sabah is an MA candidate at the English Department /College of Education /Alqadissiyah University. She is interested in cognitive pragmatics and discourse analysis. Hind’s academic journey began with a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics, which provided a solid foundation in structural linguistics, phonetics, and syntax. However, this foundation merely served as a stepping stone towards a more profound understanding of the interplay between language and cognition. Her intellectual curiosity and relentless pursuit of knowledge would shape the field of linguistics and provides valuable insights into the intricacies of human communication. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9040-6615

Dr. Angham Alrikabi is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at the College of Education, Al-Qadissitah University. She received her Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
Salford Manchester/UK in 2018 and since then she has served as the Head of the Department. With a focus on political discourse, her research papers offer significant perspectives into the pragmatic analysis of language in politics. Dr. Alrikabi is dedicated to supervising a number of MA theses, and her expertise has acquired a recognition in the academic community. Email: Angham.alrikabi@qu.edu.iq ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3351-3844

References:

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327


A Contrastive Investigation into the Non-native Speakers of English Academicians’ Academic Writing Cognitions and Challenges in the First and Second Languages

Zeynep CANLI
Department of Foreign Languages
Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye
Corresponding Author: zeynepcanli@ksu.edu.tr

Oktay YAĞIZ
Department of English Language Teaching
Ataturk University, Erzurum, Türkiye

Received: 10/02/2023    Accepted: 02/14/2024    Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Academic writing has been a focal point for research inquiry in the first and second languages. The present study aims to investigate non-native speakers of English writers’ knowledge, opinions, and preferences regarding academic writing in the first and second languages for publications and to identify the possible challenges these writers meet in their research articles in the first and second languages. The results will help academicians be aware of difficulties in the article sections and challenges in language use to overcome these problems and alleviate their recent experiences since they may be influenced negatively during the writing and publishing of an article. Therefore, this study contributes to the field because the implications may guide academicians while they write. A convergent-parallel design of mixed method designs was adopted. Data were obtained from structured questionnaires filled out by 440 participants and semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 participants. SPSS 21.0 was used to analyze the quantitative data using descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The results showed that the academicians felt more confident when they wrote in their first language. The academicians had positive views about academic writing since they had self-confidence, self-motivation, and awareness of their academic status requirements. The abstract and results were the most manageable sections of the research articles, while the discussion section was slightly challenging. These academicians had more language use awareness in their first language. The study underlined the advantages and necessity of explicit AW instruction.

Keywords: academic publication, academic writing, academic writing challenges, cognition of academic writing, second language writing, research articles

Introduction
Considerable literature has grown up around the theme of Academic Writing (AW). According to Hyland (2005), the primary genre of academia is writing research articles. As a type of AW genre, the role of research articles in the academy has received increased attention across many disciplines in recent years. For academic writers, research articles are significant opportunities to publish and share their work (Çapar, 2014). This study is an effort to seek Turkish academic writers’ cognitions and challenges related to the AW process and difficulties in language use. Consequently, this study will contribute to AW and academicians’ current knowledge about AW. Despite the importance of AW and an increasing number of studies in AW (Zhu, 2004), AW challenges and cognitions of academic writers have still been neglected. The present study expects to fill the gap by conducting contrastive research investigating the cognitions and challenges in L1 and L2. Therefore, the following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the actual knowledge, opinions, and preferences of non-native speakers of English writers when they write their research articles in L1 and L2?
2. What are the non-native speakers of English writers’ challenges when they write their research articles in L1 and L2?

Academic writers are expected to possess AW cognitions, such as knowledge, opinions, preferences, and awareness of their challenges, while writing research articles in L1 and L2. Determining the awareness levels of the academicians in the process of writing articles can provide data for understanding their difficulties and for professional development practices to be adjusted accordingly.

Literature Review
Research has shown that studies have focused on sections of the articles; for instance, researchers generally select only abstracts, discussions, or conclusions. The researchers have not searched all sections and have investigated AW conventions in only one section of the RAs. Then, further studies into all sections rather than one selected part are required. Similarly, a few studies have related AW challenges among academicians, including interviews with few participants. To fill this field gap, quantitative and qualitative instruments were used in the study to obtain more detailed information related to possible challenges and language difficulties encountered by the academicians.

Academic Writing
Writing is a vital communication tool for human beings, and it is a complex and arduous process (Chamot, 2005; Lin & Morrison, 2021). AW is one of the significant types of writing that includes writing tasks performed at universities or institutes. It refers to norms and conventions exclusive to each discipline (Yağız, 2009). Likewise, Hyland (2009) plainly stated that AW was a way of “thinking and using language which exists in the academy” (p.1). AW has been accepted as formal text-based writing, and then it has gained a functional view that focuses on both the writer and the reader (Hyland, 2010). This change has guided the writers from writer-oriented writing, which aims to “think aloud” to reader-oriented writing.

Academic Writing for Publication
As a common belief, a research paper needs to be published to be considered a completed research article (Güney, 2015). The researchers need to “gain their significance not in the number of articles
they produce but in how they produce those articles, and why” (Mahon & Henry, 2022, p.12). Academic writing for publication (AWP) may cause academicians a stressful and challenging life in terms of limited time, lack of motivation, and existing circumstances (Murray & Moore, 2006). Many institutions and researchers think there is a strong relationship between AWP and becoming an academician. On the other hand, it may be challenging to deal with writing and publishing articles in situations such as intense class hours and administrative work (Aydin et al., 2023). Therefore, this thought makes the writers hesitate and feel exhausted, but this challenge may be manageable through their strenuous effort (Casanave & Vandrick, 2003). Notwithstanding, writers need to see the positive sides of their current situations to promote their writing and share their knowledge with their colleagues and readers.

As an advantage of writing for publication, writers may improve their quality of writing, and the readers may benefit from them and enhance their ideas related to the field. Consistent with this statement, Rathert and Okan (2015) support that writing for publication has the power to make the writers feel satisfied. However, AWP has some barriers. This issue has hitherto received scant attention in the literature (Murray, 2002), but following the approach above may be beneficial for writers to cope with these obstacles. Gea-Valor et al. (2014) found that Spanish academicians had challenges in AW because of insufficient knowledge of writing conventions. In another study, Moreno et al. (2012) made a contrastive investigation of Spanish researchers’ difficulties in writing and publishing research articles in English as L2 and Spanish as L1. Their study endorsed that Spanish researchers found it more challenging to write for publication in international journals in English than to write in Spanish.

**Writing Research Articles**

Research articles must contribute to the research area and fill the gap in the literature. Researchers have a range of purposes in publishing their articles, such as exchanging their ideas, gaining their colleagues’ appreciation, or globalizing their work owing to its value as it adds another brick to the wall. The generalizability of research on this issue is possible when presenting the steps of writing a research article such as AIM(RaD)C including abstract, introduction, materials and methods, repeated results and discussion, conclusions” offered by Cargill and O’Connor (2013, p.11, p.14). The article’s design is as important as the topic and the language of the study (Güney, 2015). The conventions of writing a research article give a chance to the writers to practice the steps accordingly and feel organized in arranging their work.

Bram (1995) mentioned the importance of some writing rules. These rules made a valuable contribution to our understanding of how academicians can organize their articles: “writing paragraphs, overcoming sentence problems, understanding sentence varieties, right word choice, regarding meaning and grammar, drafting, finalizing, using a dictionary, usage of correct punctuation, and writing title” (pp. 9-10).

**Writers’ Cognition of Writing Research Articles in L1 and L2**

Cognition refers to the understanding, belief, and knowledge shaped by the writers’ ideas, preferences, and previous experiences in writing RAs in L1 and L2. There is a strong relationship between the writers’ cognition and writing performance (Baaijen et al., 2014; White & Bruning, 2005). Hence, the writers’ beliefs about AW may influence and enhance their self-confidence and ability in writing. The cognition of an academician about writing for an international journal may highly influence his perception of self-confidence and self-esteem among his colleagues in the
same field, as stated in the article of Flowerdew (1999); the participants in his study feel more confident in writing for publications in English than in their mother tongue, Chinese. In contrast, research shows that some scholars may not feel relaxed, and they may hesitate to write in a foreign language because of inadequate knowledge and inexperience in that language (Başaran & Sofu, 2009; Buckingham, 2008).

**Research Articles Writing Challenges**

Academic writers ought to know the importance of AW as an essential step (Olkun, 2006) as Murray and Moore (2006) state that AW “is a process that lies at the very center of academic performance and success”; therefore, “surely its dynamics and challenges need to be subjected to more thorough analysis” (p. ix). Flowerdew (1999) investigated the difficulties that Chinese academicians encountered during the writing process for publishing in English and why they felt more troubled than English native speakers in AW. Nevertheless, “AW in general is a skill that even native English speakers find difficult” (Gupta et al., 2022, p.6). Non-native speakers of English might have problems, which might lead the researcher to offer suggestions to them, such as starting a writing course. As another solution to these problems, it is suggested that finding a face-to-face supervisor may help academic writers who want to write and publish in English. Accordingly, Cheng (2006) claimed that the problems might stem from various causes. One may be the lack of experience in writing for publication and required training or courses in AW. The researcher emphasized that the findings of his study might be beneficial for academicians and raise their awareness of the effect of their culture and criticism of their academic papers. Besides, in the Turkish context, not all academicians have the experience of studying or teaching abroad, particularly in English-speaking countries. However, academicians may find writing for publication a problematic issue despite having teaching experience in Europe or the USA (Başaran & Sofu, 2009). Likewise, Buckingham (2008) assumed that academicians might have some difficulties in writing because of the lack of writing experience in their field. Similarly, Giridharan and Robson (2011) emphasized that there were three causes of the problems handled by the participants, as listed: common grammatical errors, structural errors, and syntactic errors.

**Method**

The researchers applied a mixed methods research design. Using the convergent-parallel design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently and analyzed separately (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Then, the results of the data are interpreted together. Triangulation was applied.

**Participants**

The participants are selected among Turkish academicians who write research articles in L1 or L2. Purposive sampling is used. The sample of the participants is 440 Turkish academicians, including 220 Turkish writers of Turkish research articles and 220 Turkish writers of English research articles. They have been working at 54 different universities in the 2020/2021 academic year. Two hundred eighty-nine participants work in educational programs and 151 work in non-educational programs.
The Structured Questionnaires
The questionnaires included 26 items. The questionnaires mainly involved five-point Likert-type questions. The first part covered demographic questions consisting of five items. The second section consisted of five items related to “the opinions and preferences regarding AW”. and the third section consisted of seven items about “difficulties in writing the sections of the article”. Finally, the last section comprised nine items about “challenges in language usage”.

Interviews
The thirty participants in the interviews were selected among the volunteer academicians by providing purposive sampling; then, they signed a consent form. Semi-structured interviews include five questions. The interview participants were academicians working at universities in Türkiye who wrote RAs in English and Turkish. Their ages ranged from 25 to 56 with an average of 34.76 and their average working experience was 9.56 years.

The Research Procedures
Two questionnaires have been formed by adapting the questionnaires of Chou (1998), and the inventory of Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) used. Three ELT experts gave suggestions and feedback about the questionnaires for the study's validity (Bolarinwa, 2015). According to the experts' comments, some items were omitted, changed, or redesigned. Each questionnaire was piloted with 80 academicians -40 TAWTs and 40 TAWEs- to see the reliability of the study.

The researchers took the required permissions from the Graduate School of Social Sciences, Erciyes University in Türkiye, and other universities to conduct the questionnaires. Then, the questionnaires were applied in English to TAWEs. However, TAWTs replied to the questionnaires in Turkish as they could give more meaningful responses. Therefore, the questionnaires were translated into Turkish, and the responses were translated back into English. The researchers used a “back translation method” to confirm the congruency of translations. The reliability of the translated questionnaires was confirmed by two English lecturers working at the School of Foreign Languages.

Lastly, three experts analyzed the interview questions and commented on the practicality and availability of each question. A pilot interview was conducted with an academician, symbolic of the other academicians of the research, who had written and published several RAs in L1 and L2. Interviews were held at pre-organized time and place. They lasted approximately 30 minutes, and they were recorded.

Data Analysis
In quantitative data analysis, the researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 to analyze the quantitative data collected by questionnaires on Writing RAs in English and Turkish by using descriptive statistics and differential analyses. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, an eminent and commonly applied test in SPSS, was utilized to find the normality assumptions regarding the variables considered in the present study. The outcomes were evaluated
regarding p > 0.05 (Pallant, 2013). Since the distribution is normal, parametric tests were applied. T-test and ANOVA were utilized to compare the groups and their results. In qualitative data analysis, content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected by semi-structured interviews.

Results
Quantitative Results
The quantitative results were categorized under two groups, the results of the questionnaires on Writing RAs in English and the results of the questionnaires on Writing RAs in Turkish. Then, the results of each questionnaire were divided into themes constructed according to the research questions, and the distribution of the choices was presented according to the features of the participants.

The Results of the Questionnaires on Writing Research Articles in English
The results of the questionnaires on writing RA in English were analyzed by SPSS and presented in the tables in this section. First of all, a pilot study was conducted to provide the reliability of the study before the main study, for this purpose, 40 Turkish academicians joined the pilot study. The score of the reliability statistics was calculated as .946, and it might be considered reliable since Cronbach’s Alpha value needs to be above .70 to be measured as reliable. Cronbach’s Alpha is “an internal consistency or reliability coefficient for an instrument requiring only one test administration” (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001, p. 526).

The Results of the Questionnaires of TAWEs
In the theme of “the opinions and preferences regarding AW among TAWEs”, 82% of the participants underlined the necessity of taking an AW course to write a well-developed RA. In the theme of “difficulties in writing the sections of the article among TAWEs”, writing the abstract and method was found more manageable sections, and the discussion part was found to be more difficult. In the theme of “challenges in language usage among TAWEs”, 72% of them claimed that they were aware of redundancy, and 97.3% of them would be able to cite a source easily.

Independent Sample T-test Statistics of TAWEs according to Their Departments
According to the KS test, the distribution was found to be p=.87 and was accepted as normal (p>.05). As a result, it was decided to apply a t-test. According to the independent sample T-test statistics of TAWEs in terms of their departments, there were no significant differences between TAWEs working in educational programs (akhir=3.80) and TAWEs working in non-educational programs (akhir=3.80) in the section of “the opinions and preferences regarding AW” (p>.05). TAWEs working in educational programs (akhir=4.21) and TAWEs working in non-educational programs (akhir=4.21) had approximately given parallel responses to the statements in the section of “difficulties in writing the sections of the article” (p>.05). However, TAWEs working in educational programs (akhir=4.11) and TAWEs working in non-educational programs (akhir=3.88) did not have similar thoughts about “challenges in language usage”, and there was a significant difference between these two groups (p=.024).
Table 2. Independent sample t-test statistics of TAWEs according to their departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires’ Sections</th>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The Opinions and Preferences regarding AW</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>3.8000</td>
<td>.69126</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.8028</td>
<td>.60991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Difficulties in writing the sections of the article</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>4.2157</td>
<td>.64288</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4.2113</td>
<td>.53335</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Challenges in Language usage</td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.8858</td>
<td>.72423</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.05

Independent Sample T-test Statistics of TAWEs in terms of attending an AW Course

According to the KS normality test, it was found that the normality assumption was met in attendance of an AW course (p>.05), as the distribution was found to be p=.92. There were significant differences between all sections of the questionnaires and the situation of attending an AW course. The opinions and preferences regarding AW in terms of attending an AW course showed a significant difference (p<.05), also the mean score of TAWEs completing an AW course (x̅=3.97) was more than those not attending any AW course (x̅=3.68). The difficulties encountered by TAWEs who attended an AW course (x̅=4.35) and had never attended an AW course (x̅=4.11) were not similar in writing article sections (p<.05). TAWEs who participated in an AW course (x̅=4.23) were found that they felt more confident in writing RAs in English than those who had never participated in an AW course (x̅=3.90) as the significance level was calculated as .001 (p<.05).

Table 3. Independent sample t-test statistics of TAWEs in terms of attending an AW course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires’ Sections</th>
<th>Attended AW Course</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The Opinions and Preferences Regarding AW</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.6824</td>
<td>.68157</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.9753</td>
<td>.60138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Difficulties in writing the sections of the article</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>4.1189</td>
<td>.63200</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.3547</td>
<td>.54573</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Challenges in Language usage</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3.9075</td>
<td>.74639</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.2322</td>
<td>.57042</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.05

The results of the questionnaires on Writing Research Articles in Turkish

These questionnaires were conducted on Turkish academicians writing RAs in Turkish. SPSS 21.0 was utilized to analyze the results of the questionnaires. Firstly, a pilot study was led to gain the reliability of the study before conducting the main study, to that end, 40 Turkish academicians joined the pilot study. The reliability statistics of 21 items of the Questionnaire on Writing RAs in L1 was measured as .901, and it might be considered reliable since Cronbach’s Alpha value should be above .70 to be accepted as reliable (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). The score of the reliability statistics presented and supported the reason why this instrument tool was accepted as applicable in the main study.
The Results of the Questionnaires of TAWTs
In the theme of “the opinions and preferences regarding AW among TAWTs”, 91% of the participants were self-confident when they wrote academic texts in L1. In the theme of “difficulties in writing the sections of the article among TAWTs”, writing the abstract and results were found manageable, and the discussion part was found more difficult. In the theme of “challenges in language usage among TAWTs”, 80% of them claimed that they were aware of wordiness, and 96.3% of them would be able to cite a source easily.

Independent Sample T-test Statistics of TAWTs according to their Departments
The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used and the distribution was found .85, therefore, it was decided to apply the t-test. According to Table Four, there were no significant differences between TAWTs working in educational programs (\(\bar{x}_d=4.02; \bar{x}_c=4.26\)) and TAWTs working in non-educational programs (\(\bar{x}_d=3.96; \bar{x}_c=4.21\)) in the sections of “The Opinions and Preferences regarding AW” (p>.05) and “Challenges in Language usage” (p>.05). However, TAWTs working in educational programs (\(\bar{x}_d=4.39\)) and TAWTs working in non-educational programs (\(\bar{x}_d=4.12\)) did not have similar thoughts about “difficulties in writing the sections of the article”, and there was a significant difference between these two groups (p=.001) as its significance level was found under .05.

Table 4. Independent Sample T-test Statistics of TAWTs according to their Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires’ Sections</th>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The Opinions and Preferences regarding AW</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.0229</td>
<td>.60979</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.9650</td>
<td>.47068</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.3929</td>
<td>.54651</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Difficulties in writing the sections of the article</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.1286</td>
<td>.58333</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4.2643</td>
<td>.56270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Challenges in Language usage</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4.2153</td>
<td>.50481</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-educational programs</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.05

Analysis of Variance Results of TAWTs in terms of Their Ages
The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied and the normality assumption was met in terms of participants’ ages (p=.65), and it was decided to use ANOVA. When the researchers analyzed variance (ANOVA), it was found that TAWTs in all groups of ages did not show any significant differences between two sections of the questionnaires (difficulties in writing the sections of the article and challenges in language usage) and their ages.

Inferential Statistics of TAWTs and TAWEs’ Questionnaires Results
The study aimed to find out whether there were differences between the actual knowledge, opinions, and preferences of TAWs in Turkish and TAWs in English while writing their RAs. According to the KS test, the distribution was found p=.52 and it was accepted normal (p>.05). To this end, the results of the questionnaires were analyzed by using variance analysis (ANOVA). The P-value of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences between these two groups in two-thirds of the questionnaire sections.
Table 5. Inferential statistics of TAWTs and TAWEs’ questionnaire results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires’ Sections</th>
<th>Language of articles</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The Opinions and Preferences Regarding AW</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.0018</td>
<td>.56277</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>3.8009</td>
<td>.66470</td>
<td>426.399</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Difficulties in writing the sections of the article</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.2968</td>
<td>.53739</td>
<td>438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.2143</td>
<td>.60847</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Challenges in Language usage</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.2465</td>
<td>.54171</td>
<td>438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.0389</td>
<td>.69782</td>
<td>412.632</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<.05

It was seen that both TAWTs and TAWEs did not have severe problems while writing the sections either in Turkish or English. That is to say, the inferential statistics of the results claimed that both of the groups had sufficient ability to write parts of an article in compliance with conventions and norms in both Turkish and English. However, their opinions and preferences differed from each other as TAWTs (\( \bar{x}=4.00 \)) had more self-confidence than TAWEs (\( \bar{x}=3.80 \)) in terms of beginning to write an article, publishing an article, considering the audiences’ thoughts, and the necessity of attending an AW course. Furthermore, the analysis results showed a significant difference between TAWTs and TAWEs in the section “Challenges in Language usage”. It was highlighted that TAWs were much more aware of the language usage in Turkish (\( \bar{x}=4.24 \)) than English (\( \bar{x}=4.03 \)). TAWTs had more knowledge of how to use grammatical rules in Turkish, and the results supported the idea that they could use formal, clear, and understandable language. They could connect sentences logically and correctly paraphrase and restate sentences in their own words. It was understood that TAWs of Turkish were better at preserving unity in their writing and were aware of redundancy and wordiness. TAWTs were found to be more successful than TAWEs in citing correctly in the articles.

**Qualitative Results**

The qualitative results were categorized under five themes constructed as regards the research questions, and the samples from the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews were presented according to the features of the participants. These themes were AW experiences, writing RAs, language choice while writing RAs, difficulties in writing the sections of an article, and challenges in language usage (Appendix).

**Discussion**

1. What are the actual knowledge, opinions, and preferences of non-native speakers of English writers when they write their research articles in L1 and L2?

The study revealed that Turkish academicians stated that writing RAs in English is necessary for surviving in the academic world. They were aware of the importance of English usage in academia; this finding is consistent with the literature review as it is claimed that English has been the language of academia because of globalization, and it has also been broadly accepted as a language of publication in the international context. Some TAWs affirmed that English was a must since academicians at Turkish universities were required to publish articles in international journals. This finding is in accord with Olkun's (2006) study since he drew attention to the obligation of faculty members to publish in international scientific journals which was increasing daily. On the other hand, nearly all TAWTs stated that they felt self-confident when they wrote their RAs in Turkish. They did not have to search for new lexicons or grammatical structures as
they had already acquired them in their first language. Owing to the feeling of expressing their ideas without the need to use dictionaries, TAWTs demonstrated their enthusiasm for writing RAs in L1. They preferred to write RAs in L1, aiming to publish them. They agreed with Gşney (2015) as they thought they needed to publish their papers to complete research articles.

On the other hand, academicians need to create positive rapport and productive relationships with their colleagues to support the improvement in their field. Consistent with this finding, Rathert and Okan (2015) expressed that writing for publication satisfied them. It gives a chance for the writers to assess their knowledge and even their writing ability. Getting an article published made them feel they were more productive, beneficial, and active academicians in the community of scholars through their engagement with manuscripts, nationally or internationally. They found the publication of an article as a success indicator in writing articles. Surprisingly, although academics writing for publication have some barriers, they have received limited attention in the literature (Murray, 2002). Some participants encountered adverse conditions while publishing a study, such as choosing the appropriate journals and accepting one; they created strategies to decrease the challenging and frustrating effects of the publication process on their own. The ways they tended to follow are consistent with the steps of an approach that Driscoll and Aquilina (2011) proposed.

Additionally, participants were aware of the need for AW courses for academicians to acquire the required AW knowledge and improve their writing skills and intellectual capacity to produce valuable new work in their fields. It was found that there was a significant difference in the responses of Turkish academic writers of English (TAWEs) and Turkish academic writers of Turkish (TAWTs). TAWTs had more self-confidence than TAWEs in terms of beginning to write an article, and publish an article, considering the audiences’ thoughts, and the necessity of attending an AW course. This finding agrees with the Moreno et al. (2012) study results meaningfully. This finding may result from the authors’ language proficiency in L2 and the feeling of first language confidence.

To conclude, there is a belief of the writers regarding AW, and it may influence and enhance their self-confidence and ability in writing since there is a strong relationship between the writers’ cognition and writing performance (Baaijen et al., 2014; Moore, 2003; White & Bruning, 2005). According to the results of White and Bruning’s (2005) study, the writers' beliefs about writing influence the worth of their articles. Moreover, Moore (2003) suggested that the cognition of the writers might influence on their writing, and they have their reasons to write and publish their work as this process is a cycle. It has an iterative nature in their academic lives. Taking the audiences into account, both groups attach importance to their readers. They felt confident about their readers’ thoughts about their writing, which may result from the cultural characteristics of Turkish authors. As Hyland (2008) stated, writing “is always a social practice, influenced by cultural and institutional contexts.” (p.561).

The participants diagnosed the influence of supervisors’ support in assisting the apprehensions of the academic voyage, presenting parallelism with the results of Flowerdew’s (1999) study in which the participants desire one-on-one supervisors to help them be able to write and publish in English. Academicians might endure and develop in strength through the reinforcement of their supervisors and by acquiring the practices and influences of cognition in AW.

2. What are the non-native speakers of English writers’ challenges when they write their research articles in L1 and L2?
First, the study revealed that Turkish academicians were aware of the organizational pattern of writing RAs. They found “abstract and results” to be the most manageable sections. It is evident that for both TAWEs and TAWTs, writing discussion is more challenging and arduous than other sections in the articles. This finding is in line with the study of Moreno et al. (2012). The interview responses confirmed that TAWs tended to have some challenges while writing the discussion. English might be necessary for TAWEs and TAWTs while deciding and supporting the methods they want to apply.

Secondly, it may be anticipated that Turkish academicians write their articles following the AIM(RaD)C pattern offered by Cargill and O’Connor (2013). Similarly, Güney (2015) gave the article’s design importance since it was as important as the study’s topic and language. Correspondingly, the conventions of writing RAs allow the writers to practice the steps accordingly and feel organized to arrange their work. Thanks to these critical AW issues, academicians may stop feeling like novices related to general academic conventions.

Thirdly, it was emphasized that TAWs were much more aware of the language usage in Turkish than in English. The writers may feel more comfortable and flexible in using their L1. Nevertheless, TAWs might need to be supported by their supervising colleagues and by the attempts of their institutions to improve their English. These inferences corroborate the ideas of Gea-Valor et al. (2014), who suggested that writers need to train and learn more about how to write and publish their work internationally to overcome the difficulties stemming from insufficient knowledge of writing conventions and norms.

Regarding the inferential statistics, there was a significant difference between TAWEs working in educational programs and TAWEs working in non-educational programs in terms of having challenges in using English as the language of their articles. It can be argued that Turkish academicians working in educational programs might have spent more time learning and using English in their articles than in the latter group. They may have been exposed to studying English as a medium of instruction in their higher education. Lastly, participants tried to use and have knowledge of the organizational patterns in AW and linguistics issues as stated in Bram’s (1995) writing rules.

One unanticipated finding was that some participants initially wrote their articles in Turkish, and then they translated their writing into English. This result may be accepted as an alternative strategy for participants to find a way on their own in writing English RAs. Furthermore, some participants found paraphrasing other researchers’ sentences essential and challenging at the same time since they were afraid of changing their originality. This result is consistent with the study of White and Bruning (2005), who speculate that creating a successful paper is based on paraphrasing. They also support the inference that the writers’ beliefs about writing generally affect the worth of their documents.

Conclusion

This study investigated non-native speakers of English writers’ knowledge, opinions, and preferences regarding academic writing in L1 and L2 for academic publication and tried to identify the possible challenges these writers met in their RAs in L1 and L2. The present study finds that both TAWEs and TAWTs have self-confidence in writing RAs and do not have insuperable problems in the challenging parts of AW; however, some participants mentioned in the interviews that they encountered a few difficulties, particularly in writing the discussion parts of articles and writing RAs in English. In consequence, it may result from the fact directly or indirectly related to
attendance at any AW courses. Other possible reasons for this may stem from internal or external causes such as the lack of ‘job satisfaction, learning desire, self-confidence, and interest’ or the obligation of ‘tenure of office, improving curriculum vitae, and appreciation’ in the field of educational and non-educational programs in Türkiye. Therefore, academicians intensely underline the importance of explicit AW instruction and the need to do their best to write better articles. In sum, the RA writer in both languages must have self-confidence, be willing to write, follow trends and current issues, read books, read and write articles, collaborate with other academicians, aim to meet international AW criteria and contribute to the field.

Note: “This study was adopted from the first author’s Ph.D. dissertation in 2022.”

About the Authors
Zeynep Canlı is an instructor at Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Department of Foreign Languages in Türkiye. Her research interests are teaching writing and all aspects of L2 writing, especially academic writing. zeynepcanli@ksu.edu.tr
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1285-3364

Oktay Yağız is an Associate Professor at Atatürk University, Department of English Language Teaching in Türkiye. His research interests are English academic writing and educational research studies. He also teaches at undergraduate and graduate levels. yoktay@atauni.edu.tr
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7076-7774

Funding
None. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

Note: This study was adopted from the first author’s Ph.D. dissertation in 2022.

References
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-022-04528-x

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2014.04.001


**Appendix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AW Experiences</strong></td>
<td>Advantages of taking explicit instruction from AW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiencing AW by reading and writing articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Necessity of AW Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contribution of supervisors in AW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-developed strategies for AW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Research Articles</strong></td>
<td>Writing articles for publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obligation to article publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process of publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The difficulty in finding a proper journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Choice While Writing RAs</strong></td>
<td>Tendency to use L1 (Turkish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indispensable role of L2 in AW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding both languages important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling unconfident in both languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties in Writing the Sections of an Article</strong></td>
<td>Writing abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing results/findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges in Language Usage</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty in Paraphrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding appropriate lexicons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using grammatical rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing coherence and cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The effort to be Reader-friendly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enhancing Translation Competence: Investigating Summarization Impact on English/French to Arabic Translation.

Ismail Abdulwahhab Ismail
University of Ninevah, Mosul, Iraq
Al-Noor University College, Mosul, Iraq
Email: ismail.a.ismail@alnoor.edu.iq

Received: 11/22/2023    Accepted: 02/15/2024    Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract:
The training of oral and written summarization is embedded in Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (CAT). This study examines how this form of intervention can improve the long-term reading comprehension skills of students at the Intermediate level; under a program to train translators in English/French into Arabic. It assesses the effectiveness of individual learning and cooperative study methods. One group was given personalized learning, another collaborative; both were split further into spoken and written groups. The 120 students in this cohort all came from the translation studies department at Al-Noor University College (all under age 23). During the six sessions, a delayed post-test used summarization and cooperation scales. The results obtained from one-way ANOVA clarify the impact of summarization training, with verbal groups performing better than written and control learning. In the delayed post-test, groups engaged in collaborative learning notably improved. According to survey results, questions about teacher and student feedback offer mainly positive evaluations of summarization strategies and collaborative learning in translation studies. This study stresses the advanced reading skills in translation studies students gained through summarization training or collaborative learning. This study investigates if there are significant differences in the delayed improvement of reading skills among Translation Department students due to different patterns of summarization training, individually and collaboratively. It also investigates whether there is a significant difference in the delayed effects on reading skills between collaborative and individual approaches, as well as summarizing strategies perception among teachers and students working in Translation Departments.

Keywords: Arabic translation, cognitive apprenticeship, English translation, French translation, reading comprehension, sociocultural theory, training in summarization strategies, translation competence, translation studies

Introduction:

It takes a multidimensional approach to strengthen the translation competence that involves several strategies to promote language students’ reading comprehension. This study focuses on the efficacy of oral and written summarization within the CAT on long-term reading comprehension skills of English/French to Arabic translation students at the Intermediate level. Individual and cooperative learning processes are assessed to train translators through the program. In particular, individualized and collaborative learning methods were contrasted and further divided into spoken and written groups. Students of the translation department of Al-Noor University College, 120 altogether under the age of 23, were surveyed within the framework of the study. Having administered the six sessions, the effectiveness of the intervention was measured by delayed post-tests involving summarization and cooperation scales. Statistical analysis, in particular, one-way ANOVA, revealed the effect of summarization training, which demonstrated the superiority of verbal groups compared to written and control groups. It should also be mentioned that collaborative learning groups showed significant improvement in delayed post-test. The summarization strategies and collaborative learning in the translation studies were generally positively evaluated by survey responses from teachers and students. This study highlights the need for summarization training and collaborative learning for the development of advanced reading skills in translation department students.

Literature Review:

Perusing the literature of translation, we find that taking Activity Theory as a conceptual framework for interpreting collaborative learning among translators is formulated by some recent studies highlight the increasing awareness of summarization techniques as a means to improve translation skills, offering empirical data in favor of their incorporation into training programs.

Studies carried out in the last two years have still shown how summarization techniques affect translation competence especially on translations from English/French to Arabic.

Al-Khalil & AbuSeileek (2023) studied the introduction of summarization techniques into translation training curricula. The authors noted that the ‘summarization exercises’ were incorporated in the curricula and they found that “the students’ understanding of main idea of source text improved, resulting in better translation accuracy and coherence” (Al-Khalil & AbuSeileek, 2023, p.16).

In the study by Hassan & Al-Jarrah (2022), collaborative summarization tasks in translation classrooms were evaluated with regards to their effectiveness. The researchers noted that “collaborative summarization activities promoted discussions among students, developing their understanding of the subtleties in source text and improving translation quality” (Hassan & Al-Jarrah, 2022, p. 32).

In the study by El-Farahaty (2023), summarization training was explored to determine its effect on translation competence development among Arabic speakers. As it was revealed, the practice of systematic summarization significantly improved students’ summation skills that led to improvement in idiomatic and contextually appropriate translations.
Salem & Abou-Bakr (2022) synthesized findings from various studies on the efficacy of summarization strategies in translation education through a recent meta-analysis. The meta-analysis confirmed that “There is a positive relationship between summarization training and translation competence development, supporting its incorporation into the curriculum of translators” (Salem & Abou-Bakr, 2022, p. 6).

Wu and Wu (2017) and Tan and Lim (2014), who treat it simply as an interactive process involved in training language acquisition skills and boosting caliber to perform better at literary translation. Chen and Wang (2015) state that, according to Activity Theory, the dynamic interplay between learners and their environment is crucial since it is only through the use of cultural tools, in drafting classrooms as well as in art ones, that they can participate successfully. This study explores the dynamic application of collaborative learning strategies in a special field—English/French to Arabic translation. Both written and oral explanatory techniques have been employed.

As interest in language learning methods, especially summary reading techniques, grows and now that it is easier to assess comprehension of texts than ever before with the development of modern theories on testing and particularly improved test items for these tests, students' performance has quickly increased. Not only Zou (2011) but also Jones and Watson (2018) suggest that summarizing is about putting together reading with speaking or writing—it's a top-down structure. Prior research has proved that training in summarization is effective (see summary-assisted instructional methods for a discussion of the subject), but while much reduction can be achieved, it remains challenging for many translation students, especially those at the Iraqi Translation Department, as noted by Van Rijk et al. (2017). Despite barriers to its adoption, collaborative learning is regarded by many as an implementable strategy. Passive learning techniques still persist, reducing student participation to a minimum and interpersonal relations. As Huang (2014) and Fan (2010) suggest, time constraints on teachers mean having to address questions outside an adequate hour of writing in a great variety of ways. Most learners are reluctant about the act itself; they do not want to write too much or take longer than necessary about it. Among the suitability of collaborative learning, however, there are a few questions. But no matter whether it is here or abroad in non-Western countries such exploration needs to be furthered. Although there are a few studies about the usefulness of summarization and group discussion in reading courses as well (Zou, 2011; Chen & Wang, Riverside church or blue sky.pngsjpgbdttyy), no one has ever explored this orientation toward oral summary strategy training within an Iraqi Translation Department university context. But this is just the gap which has been in part filled by this research, because there are many areas of development and learning where Activity Theory finds its application.

In this context, Wu and Wu (2017) suggest that instruction should focus on teaching both written and spoken summarizing strategies. Therefore, the Activity Theory framework is adopted to concentrate not only on providing students in Iraq's Department of Translation with opportunities for interlingual transfer but also in such a way that spotlights peer-mediation throughout. Tan and Lim (2014) argue that, given the lack of attention thus far, this unique exploration is unprecedented in asking how best to identify the impact both pair conditions combined with individual effects upon lifelong reading capabilities for Translation Department students. This research aims to deepen the impact.
of collaboration through enhancing reading comprehension, making it unique in its own way. This review has examined the various summarizing strategies (verbal and written) employed in different conditions, as well as teachers' and students' views on it. Furthermore, its value lies not just in providing tips for learners or models/examples for colleagues to follow; perhaps more importantly, our study compares observation among observers rather than opposite sides, encouraging everyone to reflect upon their own experience.

For the current Iraqi situation, Jones and Watson (2012) note that there is a lack of research into whether learners have gained insights from their surroundings or teachers' opinions on why certain attitudes are more prevalent among readers in L2 literature. Gaining a better understanding is deemed necessary since surveys serve as crucial tools for closely investigating the expectations and ideas of Translation Department students regarding cooperation in language classes and summarizing. Examining these commonly-held assumptions about cooperation and summary tasks can provide useful suggestions on how to approach them, guided adequately by Lee & Zhao (2018). This is an area that has been largely overlooked in the existing literature.

Methodology:

Research Questions:

1. Do different summarizing strategy training patterns in individual conditions have a significant impact on the delayed improvement of reading skills for Translation Department students?

2. Do various summarizing strategy training patterns in collaborative conditions show a significant impact on the delayed improvement of reading skills for Translation Department students?

3. Is there a notable difference in delayed effects on reading skills between collaborative and individual approaches among Translation Department students?

4. What are the perceptions of summarizing strategies among teachers and students in Translation Departments?

5. How do teachers and students in Translation Departments perceive collaboration?

Hypotheses:

1. Learners in the Translation Department, under individual conditions, undergoing distinct summarization strategy training patterns (oral, written, and control group) for English/French to Arabic translation, may not exhibit significant differences in the delayed impact on reading comprehension.

2. Learners in the Translation Department, experiencing collaborative conditions, and exposed to varied summarization strategy training patterns (oral, written, and control group) for English/French to Arabic translation, might not demonstrate significant differences in the delayed impact on reading comprehension.

3. The delayed effects on reading comprehension for intermediate Translation Department learners in English/French to Arabic translation may not present significant differences between collaborative and individual conditions.
Design:
Employing a Pretest-Posttest Design, the study initiated with a pretest to ensure comparability between control and experimental groups. Experimental groups underwent treatment, while the control group adhered to standard instruction. The treatment's effectiveness was assessed through a post-test. Two questionnaires were utilized to evaluate teachers' and learners' attitudes toward summarization strategy and collaboration.

Participants:
Recruited via the Preliminary English Test (PET), 120 Translation Department students (aged 20-22) at Al-Noor University College's English Department in Mosul, Iraq, were evenly distributed into peer-mediated (N=60) and individual (N=60) categories. Each category featured subcategories with diverse summarization strategy training (verbal, written, and no summary). Ten teachers, each possessing a minimum of six years of experience, actively participated in the study.

Instruments:
1. Proficiency Test (PET):
Used a reliable proficiency test with 67 items to assess participants' English proficiency ($\alpha = 0.81$).

2. Pre-test and Delayed Post-test (FCE Reading Test):
The First Certificate in English (FCE) reading test, comprising 34 items, assessed reading ability with good reliability ($\alpha = 0.79$). The same test was used in the delayed post-test.

Questionnaires:
Two questionnaires measured attitudes on summarization strategy ($\alpha = 0.81$ for learners, $\alpha = 0.83$ for teachers) and collaboration ($\alpha = 0.83$ for learners, $\alpha = 0.80$ for teachers) on a five-point Likert scale.

Reading Passages:
Translation practice involved reading and summarizing passages from selected online published political articles.

Procedure:
After the pretest, experimental groups underwent summarization strategy training, while the control group continued with standard instruction. Post-tests, questionnaires, and collaborative/individual reading activities were implemented to assess interventions. The 120 students were randomly assigned to peer-mediated and individual conditions, with additional random assignment to verbal and written experimental groups, along with a control group. The treatment, based on Brown and Day's (1983) framework, involved various summarization strategies. The duration was consistent across all groups, with a delayed post-test after a month. Questionnaires were completed by participants, excluding the control groups.
Data Analysis:
Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, version 20, with a significance level set at 0.05. One-way ANOVA tests established homogeneity in pre-tests. Post hoc Tukey HSD tests identified differences in the delayed post-test. An independent-samples t-test compared collaborative and individual approaches in the delayed post-test. Questionnaire responses were analyzed for teachers' and learners' perspectives on summarization strategy and collaboration. The results were expressed in terms of percentage.

Results:
Conducting data analyses aligned with the research questions ensured a normal distribution in pre-tests for both individual and collaborative conditions.

The First Research Question:
Within the individual condition, the pre-test outcomes indicated that the verbal summarizing group averaged a score of 73.50 (SD = 3.316), the written summarizing group averaged 72.25 (SD = 3.126), and the control group averaged 73.60 (SD = 3.393). Descriptive statistics revealed no significant differences among these groups (F = 1.05, p = 0.35 > 0.05), implying similarity in performance before the intervention.

Transitioning to the delayed post-test in the individual condition, notable variations emerged among the groups (F = 23.36, p = 0.00 < 0.05). The verbal summarizing group outperformed both the written summarizing and control groups, exhibiting a larger effect size (η² = .42 > .09, η² = .40 > .09). Subsequent Tukey post-hoc tests elucidated the enhanced comprehension of the verbal summary group, particularly in comparison to the other two groups.

The Second Research Question:
Turning to the results for the second research question within the collaborative condition, akin to the individual condition, the pre-test data showcased the verbal summarizing group averaging a score of 71.55 (SD = 3.425), the written summarizing group averaging 71.45 (SD = 3.590), and the control group averaging 72.75 (SD = 2.935). Descriptive statistics indicated no significant differences among these groups (F = .94, p = 0.39 > 0.05), indicating comparability before the intervention.

In the delayed post-test of the collaborative condition, significant differences surfaced among the groups (F = 65.99, p = 0.00 < 0.05). The oral summary group demonstrated significantly superior performance compared to the written summary and control groups, accompanied by a more significant effect size (η² = .67 > .13, η² = .66 > .13). Tukey post-hoc analysis unveiled enhanced comprehension in the oral summary group compared to the written summary and control groups.

In summary, these findings suggest that in both individual and collaborative conditions, the utilization of verbal summarization techniques led to enhanced reading comprehension compared to written summarization and control groups. The outcomes underscore the efficacy of verbal summarization in bolstering comprehension skills, advocating for its potential application in educational settings.
Table 1. Individual Category (Pre-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Deviations</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among Groups</td>
<td>18.106</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.053</td>
<td>1.051</td>
<td>0.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>491.497</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8.627</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>509.603</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. (Delayed Post-test) Individual Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Deviations</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Deviation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Among Groups</td>
<td>5561.077</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2780.539</td>
<td>19.465</td>
<td>0.00 &lt; 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>8932.408</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>141.712</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14493.485</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. (Delayed Post-test) Individual Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Approach</th>
<th>(J) Approach</th>
<th>Deviation Mean (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Method</td>
<td>Written Method</td>
<td>-20.64182</td>
<td>3.67742</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-29.4688</td>
<td>-11.8148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Method</td>
<td>No Summary</td>
<td>-22.74636</td>
<td>3.67742</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-31.5734</td>
<td>-13.9193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Method</td>
<td>No Summary</td>
<td>-2.10455</td>
<td>3.67742</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td>-10.9316</td>
<td>6.7225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results for the Third Research Question:

Comparing the delayed post-test scores between the individual and collaborative conditions, there were notable differences in the descriptive statistics. The collaborative condition had a mean score of $M = 77.13$ (SD = 15.84), while the individual condition had a mean score of $M = 61.73$ (SD = 20.88). This indicates a significant distinction in performance. Conducting an independent-samples t-test, it was found that there were significant variations in learners' scores between the collaborative and individual conditions [$t (78) = 4.77, p = 0.00 < 0.05$], with a substantial effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.22 > 0.13$). In simpler terms, the collaborative group performed better than the individual condition.

Table 4. (Pre-test) Collaborative Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>9525</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.01 &lt; 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11409</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 5, a significant difference ($F = 4.82$, $p = 0.01 < 0.10$) was observed among the three groups at the pre-test in the collaborative category.

Table 5. *(Delayed Post-test) Collaborative Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>9375.805</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>148.822</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>19643.986</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9821.993</td>
<td>65.998</td>
<td>0.00 &lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29019.792</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. *(Delayed Post-test) Collaborative Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Type</th>
<th>(J) Type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spoken Summary</td>
<td>Written Summary</td>
<td>-12.70773</td>
<td>3.67822</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-21.5367</td>
<td>-3.8788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>-41.25727</td>
<td>3.67822</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-50.0862</td>
<td>-32.4283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Summary</td>
<td>Spoken Summary</td>
<td>12.70773</td>
<td>3.67822</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3.8788</td>
<td>21.5367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Summary</td>
<td>Spoken Summary</td>
<td>41.25727</td>
<td>3.67822</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>32.4283</td>
<td>50.0862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.54955</td>
<td>3.67822</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>19.7206</td>
<td>37.3785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 7. *(Delayed Post-test) Independent-Samples T-test for Collaborative versus Individual Approaches Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t$-test for Equality of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>15.409</td>
<td>3.2267</td>
<td>9.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levene's test indicated disparate variances ($F = 7.92$, $p = 0.00$). Conducting an independent-samples $t$-test to assess the contrast between collaborative and individual approaches in the delayed post-test revealed a noteworthy discrepancy ($t = 4.77$, df = 78, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$). The mean difference was 15.409, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from 9.025 to 21.79.

Results for the Fourth Research Question:
Concerning summarizing strategies, 60% of translation students acknowledged challenges, yet 85% expressed fondness for summarizing. Despite the perceived difficulty (85%), students strongly disagreed that summarizing is a waste of time (92%) and emphasized its importance (95%). A consensus (95%) existed among students that explicit instruction in summary writing or telling is preferable. They favored concise summaries over longer ones (95%) and disapproved of excessive detail (85%). Generating ideas was perceived as the most challenging step (85%), and the majority (100%) believed in practicing summary writing or telling in class. Overall, translation students exhibited a positive attitude toward summarizing strategies. Teachers expressed skepticism (80%) regarding students' proficiency in summarizing but acknowledged students' fondness for the task (75%). They unanimously believed that
summarizing is not a productive use of students' time (100%). While recognizing the importance of teaching summary strategies (100%), they emphasized the need for explicit instruction (100%). Teachers did not endorse longer summaries over shorter ones (95%) or detailed summaries (90%). Generating ideas was identified as the most challenging step (95%), and practice in class was strongly encouraged (100%). In summary, translation teachers positively viewed summarizing strategies and their instructional role.

Results for the Fifth Research Question:
Translation students favored collaborative work (80%) for its role in mutual learning (90%) and fostering interaction and progress (93%). Collaboration was seen as beneficial for error correction (95%), increased learning (75%), and the freedom to express ideas (95%), reducing stress (98%) and encouraging idea sharing (85%). In summary, students had a positive perception of collaboration.

Teaching acknowledged students' preference for collaboration for mutual learning (95%) and recognized its benefits in aiding each other (97%) and enhancing interaction and progress (95%). They appreciated the benefits of error correction (90%) and increased learning (80%) through collaboration. Teachers supported students' enjoyment and expression of ideas in collaborative efforts (98%). Overall, the majority of translation teachers showed a positive attitude toward collaboration.

Discussion:
Built on Vygotskian social constructivist principles in *Semiotics and Literacy* (2010), this study delved into the lasting effects of spoken and written summarizing strategy training on reading skills among translation students in both individual and collaborative settings. Rejecting null hypotheses, the study underscored the effectiveness of verbal and written summarizing strategies in improving reading comprehension, with the spoken summarizing group exhibiting superior performance. Collaborative groups consistently outperformed individual ones, emphasizing the enduring benefits of collaborative learning in translation studies. Both translation educators and students advocated for integrating collaboration and summarizing strategies into their classes.

Implications for Translation Education
1) Generally speaking, the study suggests that translation teachers focus on activities promoting interaction to help students understand what they are reading better. It's a much more comfortable environment when you work in groups. There are many chances to talk and the students become very active through writing, reading and speaking texts.

2) The conclusions of this study are an invaluable guide for those teaching translation, who can adapt the rules governing collaborative and summarization techniques to fit different groups. Teachers should give a lot of explanations on how to summarize, and must provide time for group work. With regard to the study of translation, educators can exploit knowledge concerning cooperation and summary so that their practice match up with students' own perceptions. The result will be smoother learning.
3) These results provide instructors in translation programs with suggestions, especially those who may lack the time or knowledge to have students collaborate. Knowledge, skills and strategies In fact if we encourage them to exchange these in the right way we can encourage independence in learning. These results emphasize the importance of learner autonomy; and demonstrates that cooperation leads to interdependence.

4) Collaboration means peer support The study explains to translation students how important autonomy and independence are in learning, but that is why we can collaborate. Peer tutoring teaches self-reliance and accountability. Those policymakers and curriculum designers who wish to promote translation comprehension can make something of summarization methods and collaboration. Designers of pedagogical materials can design many different kinds of various media inciting cooperation from students in translation and reading skill.

Conclusion:
This study aimed to examine the long-term benefits of oral and written summary training in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of English/French to Arabic translation students, individually and in groups. The obtained results offered empirical support for the study's hypotheses:

1- Among individual conditions, learners in the Translation Department who received training under different patterns of summarizing strategy for English/French to Arabic translation (oral, written, or control group) showed no significant differences concerning the delayed impact on reading comprehension. Despite this, both oral and written forms of summarization brought about improved comprehension, with the verbal summary group achieving somewhat greater results.

2- Under collaborative conditions, Translation Department learners assigned to different types of training patterns (oral, written, and control group) in summarizing strategy among English/French to Arabic translation did not show significant differences in their impaired reading comprehension. On average, collaborative groups outperformed their individual counterparts, strengthening the case for team-based learning.

3- The delayed effects on reading comprehension were essentially the same in English/French to Arabic translation for intermediate Translation Department learners, regardless of whether they worked collaboratively or alone. But the groups actually performed better than the individual situations.

These results not only support the study's hypotheses but also show that both oral and written recapitulation techniques have strong effects on reading comprehension. Centered on translation, the superiority of collaborative learning further emphasizes its effectiveness. Yet obstacles are also recognized, such as differences in proficiency and gender issues. Nevertheless, feedback from teaching instructors as well as translation students lend credibility to incorporating summarization techniques and emphasizing group learning in translation courses. In future research, people should overcome these limitations and make use of a variety of data collection methods to enrich the
Enhancing Translation Competence: Investigating Summarization Impact

Ismail

English/French to Arabic translation studies field. Only then will it be possible to create an even more complete picture for effective instructional practices.

About the Author
Asst. Prof. Dr. Ismail Abdulwahhab Ismail works at the University of Ninevah. He is specialist in Translation and Linguistics. Dr. Ismail holds a Ph.D. from Mosul University. He authored numerous academic papers and several books. With extensive experience in teaching and journalism, he participated in many international. Dr. Ismail speaks fluently Arabic, English, and French. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6592-5846

Funding
This research is not funded.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement:
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

References


Investigating Saudi EFL Female University Students’ Command of Journalistic Writing: An SFL-based Study on Textual Organization

Abdulmohsin A. Alshehri
Department of Languages and Translation
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Taibah University, Medina, Saudi Arabia
Email: aashehri@taibahu.edu.sa

Received: 12/02/2023  Accepted: 03/05/2024  Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
This study examines written literacy outcomes among Saudi female university students undertaking an EFL journalistic course over fourteen weeks. It specifically aims to explore their competence in the English hard news genre. It, thus, seeks to address the following question: after completing the course, to what degree did students create texts structurally matching the conventional English news report? The significance of this study lies in its integration of media and education, employment of linguistic analysis based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, and use of English expert news reports for comparison with students’ journalistic texts. It deployed the genre-based pedagogy devised within the Sydney School to design the news writing course. Twenty-five students undertook such a course during the 2022 academic year. This study gathered those students’ writing to subject it to linguistic scrutiny, assessing each student over one news report after completing the course. It reports that, after the course, half of the class developed their ability to produce the genre of the standard English language hard news report. Those students created texts that matched the professional news articles in the corpus, thus effectively following the textual features of such a genre.

Keywords: Saudi EFL female university students, journalistic writing, SFL-based study, conventional English news report, textual organization

Introduction

Knowledge of news media has become essential for students at all educational stages. According to Christ and Potter (1998), understanding the media and its implications seems vital for students nowadays. Equally, Signes (2001) notes that teaching students how to examine news media would assist them in improving their practical, intellectual, social, and cultural skills. Accordingly, the news media and its texts have been employed in various disciplines, playing a pivotal role in education and enriching teaching and learning. Iedema et al. (1994) observe that journalistic texts are not only utilized in media classrooms but also all areas of curricula within schools.

The current study drew on the insights offered by the literature advocating the significance of media literacy in education. For example, Hinchey (2003) points out that media products have to be incorporated into students’ education. Similarly, Buckingham (2003) suggests that we should study media because they “are embedded in the textures and routines of everyday life, and they provide many of the symbolic resources we use to conduct and interpret our relationships” (p. 5).

Adams and Hamm (2001) also contend that students involved in media literacy instruction should be critical thinkers to grasp the mass media surrounding them and participate in its production. Iedema et al. (1994), in their Media Literacy monograph, explained news media texts and provided teachers with techniques for explicit teaching of the language of such a genre.

Accordingly, the present study aimed to discover news media literacy outcomes in an EFL university context. It was a combination of the two interrelated areas of media and education. Several studies were conducted focusing on news media and the deployment of its texts in curricula of various educational levels (Buckingham, 2003; Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2003). Nevertheless, no literacy development study in an EFL context has closely explored students’ capacity to write typical news reports from a generic perspective.

The current study investigated Saudi female university students’ competence associated with the generic features of the news story. It precisely examined students’ power to compose typical hard news reports from a structural/textual perspective. It designed a news writing course over one semester based on the genre-based pedagogy approach by Sydney School (Feez, 1998, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose, 2007, 2008; Rothery, 1994). It was then delivered at a Saudi university to develop students’ skills in creating texts structurally conforming to the typical English news report. With this objective in view, the study addressed the following question:

- After completing the course, to what degree did students create texts structurally matching the conventional English news report?

As indicated above, this study offered a course that aimed to develop Saudi female students’ ability to create texts in a professional journalistic format. Such students were in their final year of study, and had an advanced level of English. They majored in English language, and took several courses in the four English skills, linguistics, translation and literature. So, they were not involved in any vocationally oriented journalism programs.

The students had no familiarity with journalistic writing, so motivating them to acquire this new type of genre was crucial to this study. The rationale for undertaking a course on producing news media texts was explained to students as follows. Firstly, since the course sought to increase students’ ability to compose texts in a journalistic style, it would potentially supply them with a more intimate sense of the communicative workings of these texts, thereby better understanding the potential of such texts to influence and persuade their readership. Secondly, such journalistic texts promote students’ engagement and enthusiasm by giving them access to an authentic living
language concerned with personal, social and political issues related to their daily lives. Thirdly, focusing on this particular discourse domain would potentially assist students in raising their awareness of how context, purpose and audience play a key role in the choice of language used – i.e., how language varies according to these aspects.

The current study deployed linguistic analysis based on the account of language developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) to assess students’ written literacy outcomes. Several researchers employed this SFL-based methodology across various educational contexts to examine developments in students’ writing (Kongpetch, 2006; Nagao, 2019; Woodward-Kron, 2002). However, all these SFL-based studies investigated trajectories of literacy development associated with academic writing. To my knowledge, no study of this type has been conducted to scrutinize students’ news media literacy outcomes, with a focus on hard news reporting.

This study also gathered a corpus of published news reporting texts for comparison with students’ news reports. That is, both the reference corpus journalistic texts and the students’ news reports were subjected to the same linguistic examination. This technique was helpful in exploring students’ capability to write news reports by comparing them with the reference corpus texts to determine their generic conformity or unconformity. Some studies of academic disciplines have adopted this notion of comparing students’ texts with ‘expert’ texts (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Crosthwaite et al., 2017). Nevertheless, to my knowledge, no previous studies have utilized such a notion in the context of journalistic literacy development.

**Literature Review**

**Approaches to Examine the Generic Structure of the News Report**

The three main approaches to the structure of the news report are: inverted pyramid structure, van Dijk’s cognitive approach, and the model developed within SFL-based journalism discourse analysis. The current study heavily drew on the insights offered by the systemic functional linguistic approach. So, it will discuss such an approach below.

This study believed that the textual/structural aspects of the standard news story would need to be made explicit to students to help them develop their capacity to create texts of such a genre. It also sought to reach insightful conclusions about the extent to which the students’ written texts conformed to the structural conventions of the target genre. Accordingly, the present study drew on the same account of the generic structure of the news story in classroom activities and analysis of students’ written texts. For these purposes, the current study, as outlined above, drew on the SFL-based scholarly tradition of the genre of the news story (Iedema, 1997; Iedema et al., 1994; White, 1998).

**SFL Approach to News Story Structure**

The SFL-based journalism discourse analysis has proposed a systemic linguistic approach that considers the ideational and interpersonal meanings of news texts. As White (1998) states, “news reporting is as much about opinions (interpersonal values) as it is about facts (experiential values)” (p. 69).

A typical modern English news story starts with a nucleus that is comprised of a headline and a lead, followed by a series of satellites that specify the meanings of the nucleus and perform different functions – i.e., the body. This structure is illustrated in Figure One.
White (1998) argues that the lead has multiple linguistic functions as follows: (1) to highlight points of ‘socio-cultural salience’ in which the typical activity sequences are interrupted; (2) to concentrate on moments of disruption in the expected sequence of events; (3) to include additional material, that renders the event at issue newsworthy, selected ‘by reference to a theory of social impact’; and (4) to enhance the sense of social significance by using linguistic values that intensify meanings (White, 1998).

According to White (1998), the body of the news story refers back to the nucleus by a set of satellites with the following types: elaboration, cause-and-effect, contextualization and appraisal. They are arranged orbitally instead of sequentially.

White (1998) notes that some news reports include a closing satellite termed a ‘wrap-up’. This final satellite functions to set out the textual closure of the news report by, for example, the field-based event where the end of the text co-occurs with the final point of the activity sequence ‘naturally’; or by a sudden linguistic movement from documenting the event to evaluating it or putting it in a broader socio-cultural context. Thus, the news story’s textual organization is summarized in Figure Two.

A vital insight of SFL’s orbital model is that it does not operate with a simplistic notion of informational ‘importance’, i.e., the idea that underlies the frequently referenced metaphor of the ‘inverted pyramid’ and which holds that news reports always begin with the most ‘important’ aspects of an event or issue and then continue through progressively less ‘important’ material. This
model operates with a significantly more sophisticated understanding of the role of informational ‘importance’ in conditioning the structure of news items (White, 1998).

Another essential feature of this approach is that it foregrounds the role of interpersonal meanings in the overall communicative functionality and rhetorical potential of news items. Hence, it directs analysts to deal with how journalists might rhetorically adopt what Martin and White (2005) term “a regime of strategic impersonalization” (p. 183). This concept can be defined as an ‘objective’ verbal style where journalists background their subjective role by, for example, attributing material to external sources (for example, experts or witnesses) or indirectly activating attitudinal assessments in their texts (tokens of attitude).

Approaches to Assess Written Literacy Development

The three main approaches to writing assessment in the literature are portfolio-based assessment, rubric-based assessment, and SFL-based assessment – i.e., functional language analysis. Since the examination of both professional corpus texts and students’ texts carried out in this study was based on the SFL tradition, it followed naturally that the study also drew on literacy development scholarship grounded in the same theory. Accordingly, the portfolio-based assessment and rubric-based assessment were not employed in this study, and they will not be discussed below. In the following sections, the SFL-based genre theory will be outlined, along with an investigation of how such a theory was adopted to measure written literacy development.

SFL-based Genre Theory

As indicated, the writing course devised for the present study deployed the genre-based pedagogy developed by Sydney School scholars. This approach was implemented to deliver the media discourse analysis course to the Saudi EFL students to investigate their command of the textual properties of hard news reporting.

There are, of course, other influential approaches to genre in the literature: the ESP genre approach (Swales, 1990) and the Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) (Miller, 1984). However, these traditions will not be dealt with in any more detail below since the treatment of the concept of ‘genre’ in the SFL-based literature was only foundational to the present study in that the structural arrangement of the typical news story modeled and deconstructed in the course content had emerged from this theory.

The notion of genre within SFL-based scholarship has been developed since the 1980s (Martin & Rose, 2008). According to this school, genres are ‘staged, goal-oriented social processes’:

- staged: because it usually takes us more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre,
- goal-oriented: because unfolding phases are designed to accomplish something, and we feel a sense of frustration or incompleteness if we are stopped,
- social: because we undertake genres interactively with others (Martin, 2009, p. 13).

Sydney School classifies storytelling genres, including the news story, as displayed in Figure Three below.
Pedagogical Approaches Developed in the Sydney Genre School

The Sydney Genre School has formed a robust framework for language teaching and learning and literacy education: what is so-called ‘genre-based pedagogy’ or ‘text-based pedagogy’. Derewianka (2003) notes that such pedagogy has become salient in English language teaching.

This pedagogy promotes the ‘explicitness’ of the stages of various genres by which they are realized (Rose & Martin, 2012). It also enables curricula designers to (1) pay close attention to a specific genre by collecting texts with a similar function, arrangement and audience (Paltridge, 2001), and (2) offer students systematic guiding principles on how to produce passages meaningfully (Kim, 2007).

The Sydney Genre School has suggested some teaching-learning models – e.g., Rothery’s seven-stage model (as outlined in Rose & Martin, 2012); Feez’s five-stage model (1998); and Rose’s Reading to Learn model (2007, 2008). The present study adopted the teaching-learning model put forward by Feez (1998) since it was most suited to the objectives of the study. This model is shown in Figure Four, and will be discussed further in the methodology section below.
Some SFL-based Studies of Literacy Development

Woodward-Kron (2002) conducted a study of three years duration to measure progress made by Australian undergraduate students towards their academic writing. Data were gathered from sixteen students and four tutors using interviews, questionnaires, and written assignment samples. The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative approaches to track signs of development in students’ texts, and assess what was implied by improvement in some textual features from a communicative perspective. For example, Woodward-Kron (2002) tracked students’ writing to determine literacy development outcomes associated with generic structure, reasoning and explaining technicality and abstraction, and grammatical metaphor. This notion of ‘tracking’ involved comparing students’ early written texts with their final attempts. A rise in students’ use of such resources was a sign of literacy development in their writing. The researcher found that students made progress with their writing since their texts incorporated technical and abstract terms, more reasoning, and instances of grammatical metaphor to organize arguments.

Kongpetch (2006) also undertook a study over a semester length (15 weeks) to examine the effect of genre-based pedagogy on developing the facility of Thai students for composing the Exposition genre in an EFL tertiary context. The study’s data comprised written texts created by 42 students across the course. However, their post-course texts were merely subjected to scrutiny to investigate their power over the textual organization of Exposition, as well as other linguistic aspects such as their deployment of participants, processes, passives and conjunctions.

Kongpetch (2006) employed a qualitative approach and found that students’ ability to show control over the target genre concerning both the structural arrangement and language had been enhanced due to the genre-based pedagogy. That is, students’ final texts conformed to the typical generic properties of Exposition, and included linguistic features appropriate to the given genre.

Srinon (2011) also carried out a study over twelve weeks to explore signs of development observed in the English academic writing of six Thai undergraduate students. Such a study was concerned with improving students’ skills in the genres of Exposition and Discussion. It employed quantitative and qualitative approaches to trace students’ written literacy development pertaining to both how their essays were structured, and their use of resources for indicating inter-clausal relations.

Srinon (2011) compared students’ written texts composed at the commencement of the course with those produced across the course. He found that students in their final texts had increased their use of parataxis and hypotaxis, construing inter-clausal relations, cause-and-effect and counter-expectations, construing relations of consequentiality and referencing other sources and voices.

Nagao (2019) conducted a study over a 15-week semester that was directed at examining signs of literacy development in the academic writing of Japanese EFL students. Such a study was concerned with exploring students’ capability to gain control over the Discussion genre in terms of its textual organization and lexico-grammatical aspects. It deployed the genre-based pedagogy, particularly the teaching/learning cycle model developed by Feez (1998, 2002). Data were collected from twenty-seven students who had an intermediate English level through discussion-type essays and self-reflection written texts composed at different stages in the course.

Nagao (2019) implemented quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore students’ written literacy development in the Discussion genre concerning the generic structure and the use of some linguistic properties such as reporting verbs, modality, and modal auxiliaries. She found
that students had developed their competence in the structural arrangement and the deployment of modal verbs of the target genre.

Another study over a 15-week course was also carried out by Nagao (2022) to investigate the impact of employing genre-based pedagogy to instruct descriptive report writing in an EFL Japanese tertiary context. It was directed at examining students’ competence in the target genre in terms of structural arrangement, and ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. It adopted the teaching-learning cycle by Feez and Joyce (1998) to teach the descriptive report genre. Data were gathered from twenty-three students at a Japanese university who majored in international studies. Three reports from each student were collected before, during and after delivering the course.

This study deployed a mixed analytical framework of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. It found that students had exhibited an enhanced understanding of the generic structure, the ideational meaning concerning content and background information, the interpersonal meaning in terms of the social relationships between readers and writers, and the textual meaning concerning coherence.

**Method**

**The Study’s Data**

*Dataset 1: Corpus of Professional Journalistic Texts*

The study gathered a corpus of English journalistic texts published by some Middle Eastern news organizations. This collection was to offer a reference point with which the students’ journalistic texts could be compared. This corpus, combined with the account provided by SFL literature on the news story as a genre, allowed comparisons to be made in terms of the degree to which the generic structure observed in students’ post-intervention texts matched that of professional hard news reports. It was also introduced to students within in-class text modeling and deconstructing to give them a detailed account of what these professional texts typically entail concerning their structural arrangement.

The reference corpus comprised some instances of ‘event stories’ (White, 1998) – i.e., crimes, civil unrest, accidents, warfare, and natural disasters; and some cases of ‘issues reports’ (White, 1998) – i.e., political issues. These model texts were used for analysis purposes and as a guide to conventional journalistic writing with respect to genre. They were drawn from some freely accessible news platforms that are widely popular in the Middle East, such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya. Their journalistic domains and content are presented in Figure Five below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil unrest</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warfare</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and murder</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. The content of the texts in the corpus*

Twenty accident news stories out of these reference corpus texts were subjected to a thorough linguistic examination in terms of genre-related features. The rationale behind this was that an accident news report had been assigned to the post-instructional writing task. Therefore, it was straightforward to draw a comparison between students’ texts and the reference corpus texts.
Dataset 2: Students’ Written Texts

The study’s primary data consisted of news reports produced by twenty-five female students over a 14-week semester. As with the methodology employed by Kongpetch (2006), as outlined previously, the students’ texts in this study were only assembled after completing the course. That is, one news report was collected from each student – i.e., 25 texts in total.

It would seem to be a well-considered methodological option if students were asked to create news reports before the start of the course in order to report on their literacy development. To clarify, their pre-intervention texts would have been collected, analyzed, and compared with their post-intervention texts. As discussed above, this choice was typically the case with some linguistic-based studies conducted in EAP contexts. However, it was not possible in the current study for the following practical reasons.

The researcher himself conducted unstructured interviews with students at the beginning of the course to inspect their control over hard news reporting. Those informal discussions disclosed that none of the students were interested in reading complete news reports, neither in Arabic nor in English. More specifically, a few students reported that they only skimmed Arabic online newspapers to receive local news. The vast majority, in contrast, stated that they just browsed breaking news headlines through social media platforms. The discussions also revealed that the students had not got any experience in creating – English or Arabic – news reports in a journalistic style, nor had they undertaken any prior courses in news writing of any type.

Accordingly, students had minimal, or perhaps no, competence in such a genre. Hence, at the start stage of the course, they were not invited to produce news reports of any type. It was anticipated that they would have composed very minimal texts with elementary meaning-making potential, and thus might not be appropriate for effective comparisons with their final written texts.

Students’ names were ordered alphabetically and then numbered as follows: S1 (student 1), S2 (student 2), S3 (student 3), etc. to individually refer to a student and, or her writing throughout the investigation.

The final writing task occurred when the genre-related features of hard news reporting had been thoroughly modeled and deconstructed. That is, the students had performed several tasks of joint construction of news reports, and they were ready to undertake independent construction of such texts. In the classroom, the students responded to a writing task inviting them to produce a hard news report using information introduced by a series of interviews from observers of a news event composed by me in a casual spoken style, not a journalistic one. The provided task is given below in Figure Six.
A reporter is interviewing some observers of a road traffic accident. Imagine that you are the reporter and write a news report based on the information collected from the following series of interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with eyewitnesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: hi, can you tell us what happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyewitness 1</strong>: well, yesterday, me and a couple of my friends were going out for a walk and saw a group of youngsters in a pickup car hitting a power pole on king Salman road in Taif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: can you give us more detail about what you saw?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyewitness 1</strong>: you know, it was showering and all of a sudden the car skidded on some water and crashed into the power pole. It was a massive crash cause the power pole went down and we lost the power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Ok, thank you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyewitness 1</strong>: anytime.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Reporter**: hi, can you tell us what you saw? |
| **Eyewitness 2**: I was driving my car - off to work - and saw a ute passing me and carrying a group of teenagers, five in the bed. I also saw the driver using his mobile phone, trying to snapshot I guess. He was driving fast on a wet road and then his car went into a skid, went up a pavement and ploughed into a stobie pole. What a distressing scene! |
| **Reporter**: Ok, thanks for this information. |
| **Eyewitness 2**: glad to help. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with a spokesperson for the police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police spokesperson, Naif Alarthi</strong>: well, in the morning, 10 boys from years 16 and 17 left Hawawzin high school running into an unregistered ute to go to Alhada park, but a few kilometers later the car slammed into a power pole on king Salman road. Oh, what total chaos! I haven’t seen an accident like that before and, actually, it was the worst one this year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: what was the main reason for the accident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police spokesperson, Naif Alarthi</strong>: well, the driver was obviously careless. You know our record showed that he was fined for speeding and using a mobile phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: was this the only crash happening yesterday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police spokesperson, Naif Alarthi</strong>: unfortunately, no. There was another crash between two vehicles on Taif-Riyadi highway. It killed 4 people, including two children, and injured 3 others. Sorry to say that road accidents are frequent in our society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Ok, thanks for being with us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police spokesperson, Naif Alarthi</strong>: it’s my pleasure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with an ambulance crew member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambulance crew member, Faris Alotaibi</strong>: a citizen called us at 7 a.m. to report it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: what did you see when you got there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambulance crew member, Faris Alotaibi</strong>: oh, a horrendous incident. The car was ripped in half and the engine part flipped over and burst into flames! Imagine that!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: how many people were killed and injured in this accident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambulance crew member, Faris Alotaibi</strong>: well, sadly, the accident killed 6 boys - including the driver - and injured 4 others. The injured were taken to King Faisal hospital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Ok, thanks for giving us this information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambulance crew member, Faris Alotaibi</strong>: you’re welcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with a nurse from the hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurse</strong>: Remarkably, 2 escaped with non-life-threatening injuries, only cuts and bruises, and I couldn’t believe that they survived this horrifying accident - it’s a miracle. The other 2 are still in a serious condition and, unfortunately, one of them will need to have both his legs amputated below the knee. Honestly, I couldn’t stand how severely he was injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Ok, thanks for that and good luck with your work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurse</strong>: thank you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with an official from the General Directorate of Traffic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Directorate of Traffic official, Khalid Alqurashi</strong>: let me tell you, Saudi Arabia has the world’s highest number of deaths from road accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: oh, really?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Directorate of Traffic official, Khalid Alqurashi</strong>: yes. This was reported by the World Health Organisation, and believe or not, road accidents in Saudi Arabia kill hundreds of people yearly. They also cause damages worth more than SR 87 billion! Imagine that!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporter</strong>: Ok, thanks for that and wish you all the best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Directorate of Traffic official, Khalid Alqurashi</strong>: same to you!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Figure 6. The post-intervention writing task*
Participants

As outlined above, this study was conducted over fourteen weeks in an EFL context. The participants were twenty-five fourth-year female undergraduate students. They were studying English, rather than Journalism, at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia. They had studied English for more than ten years at different stages in the Saudi education system. They were recruited from a core advanced course in their program comprising three credit units on discourse analysis and delivered during the 2022 academic year.

This study was also conducted formally, receiving approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Taibah University. Students were advised of the nature of the study and its prime objective. They were also notified that their identities would be anonymous, and all participating students submitted their written consent.

Course Design

As already outlined, the course was designed to improve students’ power over the genre properties of hard news reports. The pedagogy employed in such a course drew on the model devised by Feez (1998, 2002). In introducing students to the discourse of news reporting, the teaching-learning cycle was conducted as follows.

Field-building

The initial lessons in the course primarily focused on ‘building the field’ and provided an overview of journalism and its social practices. They gave a general introduction to the key types of news genres and the social purposes they served, including hard news and soft news. They also included a detailed discussion of various event stories, issues reports, and human-interest stories. However, particular attention had been paid to hard news stories since students were required to produce such texts at the end of the course.

A typical example of a field-building activity is provided in Figure Seven below. This was a reading comprehension task designed to build students’ knowledge of news media by reading some texts and then answering questions about them. The texts were concerned with the significance of the media and the major role it plays in education. They also shed light on the different types of news media and related features. Due to space constraints, only preliminary notes are given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students were first instructed to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read the texts and then answer the questions below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were then asked to answer the following questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer TRUE (T) or FALSE (F) to these statements about the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Forms of communications, including newspapers, TV, radio and the internet have connected individuals as never before in civilisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Through the media any section of the public can be closely targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Media outlets are only used as a means of information exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The growth of the internet has led to a decline in the use of traditional media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The internet tends to be very expensive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select either (a) or (b) according to the texts, which do you think is right?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The traditional media has been totally replaced by the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The traditional media has withstood the challenge of the internet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| a. The internet provides individuals with the ability to surf through different news sites at any moment. |
| b. News on the internet can be made live, but only accessed once. |

| a. News can be obtained faster via the traditional media. |
| b. The electronic media fulfills audiences’ desires in terms of the immediate accessibility. |

Figure 7. A typical example of a task for field-building
Text Modeling and Deconstruction

Lessons in this stage explicitly deconstructed the structure of the news story with the help of model texts taken from Middle Eastern news services. They paid particular attention to nucleus-satellite structure devised in SFL-based journalism discourse analysis. They looked at the opening structural element of nucleus. They specifically introduced the definition, purposes, and structure of the headline and lead, along with their functions and grammatical and linguistic features.

A typical example of an activity for modeling the generic structure of a news story is offered in Figure Eight below. The activity was designed to build students’ knowledge of how a typical news story begins, not by providing answers but by allowing them to brainstorm and find answers themselves. Students were provided with an authentic model text, and were then asked to identify the information included in the lead.

In the following English news report of accident, the lead has been indicated in bold.

Read through the report carefully and consider the following questions:

1. Does the lead describe the first step in a sequence of events which resulted in a violent death? Yes/No
2. Does the lead provide information on what caused or led up to the event with which the report is concerned? Yes/No
3. Does the lead provide background information on where and when the event took place and who was involved? Yes/No

If so, is that all the information it provides, or does it provide additional information?

(4) Does the lead provide a summary of the events with which the report is concerned? Yes/No
(5) Does the lead focus on those aspects of the event under consideration which are likely to be seen as most significant, most disturbing or as having the most impact on the reader?

(6) Sometimes it’s said that the lead presents information of the “Five Whos” of the event – that is to say WHO (was involved), WHAT (happened), WHEN (did it happen), WHERE (did it happen) and WHY (it happened). Is this true of the lead of the following report? Can you identify a WHO, a WHAT, a WHEN, a WHERE and a WHY in this opening sentence?

Figure 8. A typical example of a task for text modeling and deconstruction

Joint Construction

Lessons in this stage were concerned with modeling and deconstructing the second phase of the news story structure. They introduced students to the body of the news report according to the orbital model. They then demonstrated the process of writing a news story, and allowed students to work collaboratively with their teacher to produce their texts.

Figure Nine below shows a typical example of a joint construction activity whereby teacher and students together wrote a news report of an accident based on information offered in a format of multiple interviews.
Investigating Saudi EFL Female University Students’ Command of Journalistic Writing

Alshehri

Together we will be writing a news report using the information provided in the following series of interviews.

**Interview with an eyewitness**

**Reporter:** can you tell us what happened?

**Eyewitness:** you know, I was going shopping and suddenly saw a bus carrying too many passengers came off this Medina-Mecca highway and crashed into a truck.

**Reporter:** can you give us more detail about what you saw?

**Eyewitness:** well, I saw the bus going too fast and then it swerved across the road and imagine it went up that side fence and collided with the truck which was coming from the other side of the road. I also saw the truck carrying heavy equipment such as sand and rocks which made the matter worse.

Oh, what a tragic accident! I saw some of the bus passengers flying out of the windows. It was a very shocking scene.

**Interview with a police spokesperson**

**Reporter:** how many people were involved in this accident?

**police spokesperson, Mohammed Alenazi:** unfortunately, 52 people were involved in this horrible accident: 12 citizens and 40 Indian residents.

**Reporter:** in your opinion, what was the main reason for the accident?

**police spokesperson, Mohammed Alenazi:** we believe that the bus driver lost control because he was driving too fast. Imagine that he exceeded the speed limit by 40 km an hour.

**Reporter:** is this the only accident happening today?

**police spokesperson, Mohammed Alenazi:** sadly, no. I have just been told that 6 people, including 4 Saudis, have died in another collision between two vehicles on Medina-Tabuk Road.

**Interview with a member of Medina Red Crescent**

**Reporter:** how did you know about the accident?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** someone called the organisation to inform us about it.

**Reporter:** when did you receive the call?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** we received it today (on Monday) at 8 p.m.

**Reporter:** what actions did you take, or how did you respond to that?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** we immediately sent out 15 medical emergency teams to the site.

**Reporter:** what did you see when you got there?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** oh, once we got there, we knew the accident was horrific - it’s something unbelievable! Too many people were sprawling out on the road and some of them were dead and some were severely injured, screaming in pain.

**Reporter:** how many people were killed and injured in this accident?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** well, the accident killed 30 people, including the bus and truck drivers and 5 Saudis, and injured 22 others.

**Reporter:** did you treat all the injured at the scene of the accident?

**Medina Red Crescent member, Ali Albalawi:** actually no, we only treated 10 of the injured at the scene of the accident and we took 12 others to a nearby hospital.

**Interview with an official from the Ministry of Health**

**Reporter:** are traffic accidents common in Saudi Arabia?

**Ministry of Health official, Abdullah Alharbi:** unfortunately, yes. They are very common.

**Reporter:** can you give us more detail about that?

**Ministry of Health official, Abdullah Alharbi:** well, imagine that each day traffic accidents kill an average of 20 people on Saudi roads.

*Figure 9. A typical example of a task for joint construction*

**Independent Construction**

Lessons in this stage concentrated on the independent construction of students’ news reports. They allowed students to revise the orbital structure of the news story, including the headline-lead nucleus and the body. They then guided them to produce their texts by researching the context and using processes such as drafting, conferencing, editing, and publishing.

The writing task set for this stage of independent construction was very similar to that designed for the stage of joint construction, in which students were asked to write a news report of an accident based on some information given through a series of interviews. However, in this stage, students constructed their own texts individually and without any scaffolding from the teacher. This activity was offered in Figure Six above.

**Linking to Related Texts**

In this stage, students were asked to read, comment on, and critique each other’s work. They were also given feedback from their teacher, who held discussions with them about their overall genre competence.
Research Procedures

The researcher first selected the twenty accident news reports from the corpus to subject them to close linguistic scrutiny concerning generic properties. He then delivered the journalistic course to students, and referred to the generic features of the twenty expert accident news stories. He then collected students’ journalistic texts after completing the course, and subjected them to the same linguistic analysis applied to the twenty professional accident news reports. He finally compared the journalistic texts produced by students with the twenty accident reference corpus texts to examine their competence associated with the textual patterns of the English news story.

The Analysis in Detail

As indicated above, the analysis conducted in this study primarily focused on the students’ texts in connection with the extent to which they were generically similar to or different from the expert reference corpus journalistic texts and, at the same time, to the customary news story as described in the relevant SFL-based literature.

According to the SFL-based journalism literature, as already outlined, the typical English language hard news report is structurally arranged around ‘an orbital structure’ (Iedema et al., 1994; White, 1998). Under this organization, the news report features three stages with multiple functions in terms of overall communicative objectives. It begins with a headline and a lead constituting a nucleus, followed by a discontinuous series of satellites. This textual nucleus comprehensively summarizes the event at issue and foregrounds some of its newsworthy aspects. Therefore, in several instances, it involves intensified linguistic values, which are termed ‘upscaled’ FORCE in the system of GRADUATION of the APPRAISAL theory (Martin & White, 2005).

The subsequent set of satellites then discontinuously specifies the newsworthy point of impact presented in this nucleus by elaborating on it, offering its causes and consequences, appraising it, and contextualizing it. Such satellites typically refer back to the nucleus, and enter into closer linguistic links with it than they do with adjacent satellites. Hence, they are ‘orbitally’ organized rather than ‘chronologically’. Also, the satellites immediately following the lead tend to focus on the crisis point introduced in the opening by entering into a linguistic relationship of ‘elaboration’ with it. These satellites in the body are then followed by a ‘wrap-up’ satellite, signifying the text’s end through different semantic resources.

The conducted linguistic analysis revealed that the 20 reference corpus texts structurally conformed to the conventional news story as described above. They operated with the same orbital model. This textual organization will be illustrated in the following section.

To come to insightful conclusions about the degree of similarity in terms of the structural arrangement between students’ texts and conventional hard news reports, reference was made to the account outlined in the SFL-based journalistic literature, as well as to the results of the analysis of the professional reference corpus.

Findings

The students’ post-course texts could be divided into three groups according to how they were close or far from the standard English language news report regarding textual organization. These groups were as follows:

1. Texts that involve all the textual properties of the conventional news story, thus generically matching professional news reports.
2. Texts that include some of the structural elements of the usual news story, thus partially resembling the professional texts of this genre.

3. Texts that do not conform to the structural organization of the standard news report story.

**Texts Matching the Generic Conventions of the Typical News Story**

Twelve students out of twenty-five – S3, S4, S6, S9, S12, S16, S17, S19, S21, S22, S23, S25 – composed texts very similar in textual organization to professional hard news reports. They closely matched the generic aspects of the typical English language news story as delineated by both the SFL-based news media literature and the analysis carried out on the journalistic texts in the reference corpus. They were arranged according to the lead-dominated orbital structure, having three stages: an opening nucleus, a subsequent discontinuous set of satellites and a wrap-up satellite. They also involved all the genre-related properties of such an arrangement. To illustrate, the genre-structural analysis of S17’s news report is provided in Figure Ten below.

(It must be noted that the analysis and its associated discussion below do not attend to the grammatical correctness of this text and other students’ texts. For instance, there were some improper choices regarding using presuming and presenting references. However, the student’s capacity to create a text generically in line with the typical English language news story is still apparent.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nucleus – headline + lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 people killed and 4 others injured in terrible collision in Taif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 people were killed and 4 others were injured in a terrible accident when a speeding pickup car hit a power pole yesterday on King Salman Road in Taif.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 1: Elaboration – details of collision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faris Al-Otaibi, the ambulance crew in Taif, said that “at 7 am we received a call from a citizen informing us of a car collision with a power pole on King Salman Road.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 2: Appraisal + Elaboration – the accident appraised by an emergency member + further details of collision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Otaibi said that it was a terrible accident as the car was torn in the middle, the engine part turned over and caught fire, adding that 6 boys, including the driver, were killed and 4 others were injured who were taken to King Faisal Hospital.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 3: Elaboration – more details of accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police spokesman Nayef Al-Harithi said that 10 boys from 16-17 years old left Hawazan High School to go to Al-Hada Park, colliding with an electrical pole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 4: Elaboration + Appraisal – further details of crash + the crash appraised by an eyewitness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An eyewitness stated that the driver was driving his car on a wet road, then the car skidded and climbed onto the sidewalk and hit an electric pole. He described the scene as a massive crash.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 5: Cause-and-effect – consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The nurse said that only two survivors sustained cuts and bruises, but two others were still in serious condition, and one of them need to amputate his legs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 6: Contextualisation – introduces a similar event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was reported that 4 people were killed, including: 2 children, and 3 others were injured in another collision of two motorcades on the Taif-Riyadh highway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 7: Contextualisation – places the accident in a wider context and treats it as a social issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road accidents are very common in Saudi Arabia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 8: Wrap-up – puts the incident within a broader context of trends in fatal vehicle collisions in the region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The official of the General Directorate of Traffic, Khaled Al-Qurashi, said that car crashes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia kill hundreds of people annually causing more than 87 billion riyals in damages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10.** Genre-structural analysis of S17’s news report

It is observed that S17 began her text with an opening nucleus comprising a headline and a lead. Her headline reiterated some of the material provided in her lead – e.g., *terrible collision, killed, injured, Taif*. Thus, it signposted what meanings to be presented further in her lead. It was also very similar to typical headlines in hard news reporting with respect to grammatical construction.
For example, it did not include articles and finite verbs and hence did not specify when the accident occurred (Mardh, 1980). These features were attended to in classroom tasks when deconstructing model texts for students.

S17 produced a ‘maximal’ lead since it (1) comprehensively summarized the event containing its key newsworthy aspects; (2) encompassed material intensifying the event’s point of impact, i.e., the use of the emotive word terrible; and (3) enhanced the event’s newsworthiness by indirectly giving prominence to alleged human wrongdoing, i.e., negligence of traffic rules by the driver – a speeding pickup car. In the set of interviews supplied as a prompt for the writing task, this material was attributed to a police spokesperson: our record showed that he was fined for speeding..., but S17 chose to present it in the lead to intensify the sense of the incident’s seriousness, thereby enhancing its newsworthiness. This notion of how news value is heightened when ‘blame’ is assigned was discussed in detail in White (1997).

S17 then turned to produce a body where she focused on the heightened crisis point set out in the textual nucleus via subsequent discontinuous satellites. That is, she began by offering details about the collision’s time and location from an ambulance crew member’s point of view. She then presented details of casualties and damages involved, and how the crash occurred based on an eyewitness account. This use is compatible with what was observed in the journalistic articles in the reference corpus, in which their opening satellites tended to establish an ‘elaboration’ relationship with the headline/lead. – i.e., to elaborate on the newsworthy point of impact introduced in the nucleus. S17 then continued by providing further details of the incident, reporting an appraisal of it, contextualizing it by introducing a similar event and placing it in a broader context.

Finally, S17 supplied a ‘wrap-up’ satellite to offer a sense of conclusion to her text by outlining the wider social context of the given incident and casting it as a serious ‘issue’. This feature was found in several published English news reports as outlined by White (1998).

To demonstrate this typicality further, by way of comparison, Figure Eleven below shows a generic analysis of a professional news report from the reference corpus that involves a similar incident. (Aljazeera, 11/11/2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nucleus – headline + lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadly accident at illegal Chinese mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of rescuers have descended into an illegally operated coal mine to search for 22 Chinese miners trapped by a gas leak that killed 21 others, in the country’s second deadliest mining accident in less than a week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 1: Elaboration – details of accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal dust forced out of the mine by the powerful leak blanketed the ground 10 metres around the pit, the official Xinhua news agency said on Thursday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 2: Elaboration – details of accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It said the private Sizhuang Coal Mine in Qujing city in Yunnan, southwest China, was operating illegally because its license was revoked a year ago.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 3: Elaboration + Cause-and-effect – more details + consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ventilation machines were pumping methane gas out of the shaft to enable rescuers and firefighters to enter. About 300 medical workers were at the scene, Xinhua said.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 4: Elaboration + Cause-and-effect – further details + consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dust-covered firefighters coming out of the shaft described descending underground and finding only the 20 bodies, the agency said.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 5: Elaboration – further details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An initial investigation found that the gas leak occurred Thursday morning at one platform inside the shaft, and the gas spread to another platform, trapping 43 miners working in the two areas, Xinhua reported.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 6: Contextualisation – introduces a similar event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rescuers came less than a week after eight miners died and 52 were rescued from a mine in Henan province after a cave-in. The rescue was the biggest in the country since April 2010, when 115 miners were pulled out alive after being trapped for eight days in a mine in northern China.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 7: Appraisal – the accident appraised by the journalist author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China’s coal mines are the deadliest in the world, although their safety record has improved in recent years as smaller, illegal mines have been closed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 8: Wrap-up – puts the incident in a wider context of trends in fatal accidents of coal mines in the country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual fatalities are now about one-third of the high of nearly 7,000 in 2002.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure Eleven above displays that this typical news report contains a ‘maximal’ lead, which is very similar to that of S17’s news report with respect to offering (1) a complete summary of the activity sequence, (2) an intensification of values to heighten its significance – i.e., the country’s second deadliest mining accident..., and (3) an enhancement of its newsworthiness via foregrounding human wrongdoing on the part of the mine operators – i.e., an illegally operated coal mine....

The body of this professional journalistic text also closely resembles that of S17’s news report with respect to featuring satellite/s which (1) elaborated on the event’s impact at an early stage to maintain the focus on its newsworthiness; (2) described the incident’s causes and consequences; (3) supplied some commentary on the activity sequence or its participants by utilizing quoted/reported sources; (4) placed the event in a wider social context; (5) and served to indicate a completion to the text: wrap-up.

**Texts Partially Resembling the Organizational Patterns of the Typical News Report**

Eight out of twenty-five students, S1, S2, S7, S8, S10, S13, S14, S20, wrote texts that were in some resemblance to the customary English language news story in relation to the generic features. Such texts, for instance, involved leads that summarized the event as a whole but did not heighten its salience and, or foreground its points of high impact. They also failed to include satellites assessing the event through quoted/reported material, and placing it in a temporal, spatial or social setting. By way of illustration, the news report produced by one of those eight students – i.e., S1, is offered in Figure Twelve below, along with an analysis of its textual organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nucleus – headline + lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 boys involved in a power pole accident collision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 boys were killed and 4 others were injured today in a pickup car colliding with an electric pole on King Salman Road in Taif.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 1: Elaboration – details of collision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Police spokesman Nayef Al-Harithi said that 10 boys between the ages of 16 and 17 were involved in this accident when they left high school and were crammed into an unregistered Ute going to Al-Hada Park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 2: Cause-and-effect – causes of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to an eyewitness at the site of the accident, the driver of the car using his mobile phone and driving at high speed on the wet road, then the car skidded and hit the power pole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 3: Elaboration – more details of accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faris Al-Otaibi, a member of the ambulance crew, added that at seven in the morning they received a call from a citizen reporting the accident which led to the killing 6 boys and wounding 4 others, who were transferred to King Faisal Hospital.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 4: Cause-and-effect – consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The nurse said two of the injured were in serious condition, while the other two survived with light injuries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 5: Cause-and-effect – consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ambulance member Faris Al-Otaibi described the car as being torn in the middle and then set on fire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 6: Wrap-up – puts the crash in a wider social context and casts it as a main cause to death in the country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many deaths in Saudi Arabia are due to traffic accidents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12. Genre-structural analysis of S1’s news report**

As noted, S1 composed a headline which failed to both fully summarize the lead – i.e., not mentioning the accident’s location and omit articles (Mardh, 1980; van Dijk, 1988). She also produced a ‘partial lead’ which performed a summarizing role for the whole event, but it did not involve meanings to heighten its severity. In this respect, the material presented in the first satellite
could have enhanced the lead’s significance if S1 had used it there: *crammed into an unregistered Ute* – i.e., implying negligent behavior involving some social impact. Accordingly, S1 developed some competence in the functionality of the textual nucleus in completely summarizing the event, but not intensifying its newsworthy aspects.

S1 also created a body that specified the nucleus through a set of discontinuous paragraphs. That is, she included satellites which offered details about the accident’s time, location and victims. She also involved satellites that described causes and consequences of the accident according to some observers. However, she failed to incorporate satellites that reported an appraisal of the activity sequence and contextualized it. Finally, she provided a wrap-up satellite where the given event was located in a broader context – i.e., it was considered a social issue that led to a large number of deaths.

**Texts Generically Different from the Standard Hard News Report**

Five out of twenty-five students – S5, S11, S15, S18, S24 – created texts demonstrating no command of the hard news genre properties. More precisely, these news reports failed to supply leads, sufficient elaboration of the event’s crisis point, evaluation of the event by an external quoted source and a concluding wrap-up satellite. To show this generic atypicality, the writing of S11 is examined in Figure Thirteen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nucleus – headline + lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No headline and lead were produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 1: Elaboration – details of accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers road accident in Taif city today At 4:00 PM the weather was raining and the car skidded out of the road and crashed into the power pole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 2: Elaboration + Cause-and-effect – details of casualties + consequence of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Ambulance crew member Fahad alali said “we arrived in the good to help the boys, were their 5 boys 2 of them were in a Critical condition”. “we take them to the hospital and the others thanks god were in a good condition.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 3: Elaboration + Cause-and-effect – specifies accident’s location + causes of the accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The police spokesman Ahmed Alanzi said a group of youngsters in a pickup car hitting a power pole on king Salman road because of the water in the road and the driver was on his phone and in fast speed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 4: Contextualisation – locates the collision in a broader context and considers it a problem in the society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>road accidents are frequent in our society. I hope all the drivers observe of the Driving instructions for save themselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite 5: Cause-and-effect – reiterates the causes of the crash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ambulance arrived quickly and helped them, all the accidents today were because of the bad weather and of course the phone was a reason here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 13. Genre-structural analysis of S11’s news report*

What stands out in Figure Thirteen above is that S11 produced a news report which was generically atypical in many ways. That is to say, she did not offer a headline-lead nucleus to be specified in the following body and hence did not establish an orbital dependency relationship. She began her news report immediately with material which provided details about the activity sequence in question, serving as an orbital satellite of elaboration. Such material did not concisely summarize...
the whole event, nor did it maximally give prominence to its crisis point. Therefore, it could not be regarded as an opening lead.

S11 composed a body which was also not developed optimally. To exemplify, she offered satellites which neither elaborated on the incident by emphasizing its significance nor assessed it by using quoted/reported sources. She also failed to include a final wrap-up satellite functioning to construe the whole event or to place it in a broader socio-cultural context.

Discussion

Analysis of students’ post-teaching journalistic texts demonstrated that half of the class had shown evidence of their competence in the genre norms of the news story. They produced texts that generically matched the typical English-language news report. This finding was in line with those reached by Kongpetch (2006) and Nagao (2019, 2022), who reported that their students’ final written texts structurally conformed to the standard textual features of Exposition, Discussion and descriptive report respectively. By contrast, the other half of the class either wrote texts that were structurally dissimilar to hard news reporting, or texts that could be classified as being in partial resemblance to the textual conventions of this genre.

The SPL-based linguistic analysis employed in this study effectively provided valuable insights into the students’ genre competence throughout the course. Such an analytical framework provided a complete understanding and concrete evidence of students’ ability, or inability, to produce conventional hard news reports. A vital aspect of this methodology was the deployment of the reference corpus, which was subjected to the same detailed textual analysis as the students’ texts to have a point of comparison. This examination offered an accurate account concerning degrees of similarity or difference between students’ texts and what is customary in published news reports in terms of genre.

These findings are significant for researchers interested in journalistic literacy since they present evidence that only half of the participating students demonstrated a facility for composing generically conventional news stories. They suggest that further research is needed into how the key textual properties of the news story might be modeled and deconstructed in activities associated with stages of joint and independent constructions. A more micro analysis would be required to explain why not all the students showed a command of these generic features. A closer examination of classroom modeling tasks and students’ engagement in such tasks would be helpful in this regard.

They also indicate that some adjustments to course design or content might need to be made and, or a revised approach to scaffolding might be required to allow a higher proportion of the class to develop their genre competence. For instance, it might be useful to integrate a bilingual approach into genre-based pedagogy to increase students’ engagement and deepen their understanding. That is, a course might entail bilingual aspects to develop students’ first language skills to ensure that their linguistic performance in the second/foreign language is maximized. As a result, including students’ L1 and L2 (Arabic and English in the case of this study) in a journalistic course might encourage them to take advantage of their preceding skills with written language to develop their foreign language, and promote their progress in media literacy.

These findings are also important for researchers concerned with written literacy development. They offer insights into how a close textual analysis can (1) enhance teaching and learning around a particular genre and assess the associated outcomes in a principled way; and (2) specifically observe how students are able, or unable, to meet the given genre expectations.
also imply that such an analysis substantially assists in identifying generic properties that need further support in students’ writing. To exemplify, some students struggled to create a headline and a lead in the case of this study. This detailed understanding allows us to make careful planning, sound decisions and proper instructional strategies, that would supply students with rectification of their written literacy issues.

Conclusion

This study sought to contribute to research on literacy development, particularly in the context of media education, by teaching an EFL genre-based pedagogy course in journalistic writing to Saudi tertiary students. It aimed to discover students’ competence in the news story genre. That is, it attended to signs of development in students’ ability to compose news reports, that textually matched the typical English language news story. Typicality in this study was determined by the insights offered by the journalistic discourse analysis literature of SFL, and the analyses conducted on the reference corpus of journalistic articles collected for this study.

The key finding of this study was that half of the class had developed their competence to create journalistic texts that closely resembled the expert news reports in the reference corpus, thereby complying with the conventions of such a genre.

Despite the strengths discussed in the previous section, this study has some certain limitations. The first relates to its narrow focus on students’ ability to display a command of journalistic writing from a generic perspective. Scrutinizing students’ control over the register properties of hard news – i.e., resources of lexico-grammar – would have been a worthwhile line of inquiry. Nevertheless, it did not receive close attention in this study.

The second is associated with the assessment of students’ news writing. The study’s methodology did not consider texts from students at the beginning of the course. It only assessed each student’s writing over one news story at the end of the course. Accordingly, it was impossible to draw definitive conclusions about students’ written literacy growth because no comparison had been drawn between their initial texts and outcomes – i.e., no tracking of their writing progress over the course was undertaken. However, by comparison with the expert texts in the reference corpus, it was possible to make strong claims about their ability to write typical news stories from a textual perspective.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgement
Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest
The author declares no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

Artificial Intelligence Statement
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the author
Dr. Abdulmohsin A. Alshehri is an assistant professor of Linguistics. He was awarded a doctorate degree from the University of New South Wales, Australia, after being awarded a master degree
from the University of Adelaide, Australia. His research interests lie within the areas of applied linguistics, discourse analysis, educational linguistics, literacy development and ESL/EFL, genre-based pedagogy and Systemic Functional Linguistics. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5459-4295

References


Using Infographics as An Educational Technology Tool in EFL Writing: University of Baghdad Case Study

Farah Muayad Issa
Department of English, Faculty of Languages
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq
Farah@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Abstract
Infographics have the capability to organize and display information in a way that is easy for viewers to retrieve and make observations. While infographics have been successful in various fields, their potential benefits in composition writing have not been explored. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics as an educational technology tool in composition writing, and to identify how gender influences students' performance when using infographics in EFL writing classes. The significance of this study lies in its integration of infographics as an educational technology tool for teaching writing, aligning with the current trend of technology integration in education and meeting the demands of the 21st century. A pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires have been used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of 28 close-ended items structured on a Likert rating scale, with responses ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The responses were analyzed using Google Sheets and SPSS software for quantitative analysis. The conclusions indicate that a significant proportion of students consider using infographics to promote cooperative learning and teamwork. Furthermore, these results showed significant gender differences, with female students using infographics more frequently than male students. This demonstrates the substantial interest among women in utilizing technology in learning, highlighting the potential for investment in English language skills development and educational technology. Finally, it is recommended to incorporate infographics into teaching practices across disciplines to enhance students' learning experiences and foster essential skills required in the 21st century.

Keywords: 21st century skills, composition writing, educational technology, EFL writing, gender differences, Google form, infographics, Iraqi university students

Using Infographics as An Educational Technology Tool in EFL Writing

Issa

Introduction
It is fair to say that we live in the era of infographics, and it continues to skyrocket. It could be impossible today to spend a day without seeing colorful pictures of information passing in front of our eyes, whether at work, on the road, in a restaurant, or while browsing your phone. “It is inevitable that visual media are going to become more important in conveying ideas and not just about raging fires” Just (2010, p.1). The image has recently been the dominant element in communication between humans, especially with the current technological progress and the desire to speed up information in our brains. The overused phrase “A picture is worth a thousand words” symbolizes the reality of the constant need to combine words, texts, and numbers with images and graphics through creative means. A graphic can visualize the one-dimensional information introduced by classical learning in a logical sequence form of materials. Krum (2014) thinks that infographics supply the information to fit within a certain flow of scope, whereas Dick (2020) sees that most rudimentary definitions of the word “infographic” take a formalist approach; predicated on the compounding of “information” and “graphic.” infographics aim to present explicit information in a story that is created by communicators (Rodriguez & et al, 2015).

Infographics can be a valuable tool for supporting teaching and learning, conducting research, and representing an enhanced version of presentation tasks (Basco, 2020). Dunlap & Lowenthal (2016) believe that infographics can provide an accurate visual presentation of large amounts of content in a small space to tell a story, show relationships, and reveal structure quickly. Harris (1999) asserts that infographics enable the viewer to retrieve information graphically and facilitate making specific and comprehensive observations. Additionally, Beegle (2014), assumes that powerful infographics can capture attention at first sight with a strong title and visual image and reel them into digesting the entire message.

Infographics have proven significant success when used in previous research in different fields like media, educational technology, and teaching. Infographics have gained admissibility among researchers, students, and instructors, producing promising results. However, their potential benefits in composition writing remain unexplored. Therefore, this study intends to fill that gap by achieving these aims:

• Use infographics as an educational technology tool inside EFL writing classes.
• Investigate the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics in composition writing.
• Identify how gender influences students' performance using infographics in EFL writing classes.

Literature Review
Amid the competition between text and picture, the picture always trumps text. Matthews and Brueggemann (2015), confirm that to understand text, the human brain must decode the tiny alphabetic and numeric pictures before it understands the messages therefore, pictures, infographics and illustrations are more powerful than text. It would be no surprise to know interesting statistics concerning how the human brain adores graphics:

• The human brain is 60,000 times quicker at processing images than it is at text (Alexis, 2022).
• Seventy percent of all your sensory receptors are in your eyes (Merieb, & Hoehn, 2007).
• While people can recognize 80 percent of what they see and do, only 20 percent of what they read is recognized (Lester, 2006).
• Infographic design improves learning by up to 400 percent (Gangwer, 2009).
According to Conner (2017), people progressively have shorter attention spans, thanks to smartphones, and viewers tend to be triggered emotionally by images.

Molecular biologist John Medina states rules about how the brain processes information; one of these interesting rules is Brain Rule #10: Vision trumps all other senses. Medina (2011) explains that when a person hears information they will remember only ten percent of that information after three days, but this percentage will rise to 65 when pictures are added. Infographics are popular and widely shared on social media platforms. Walter and Gioglio (2014), are convinced that infographics can be designed for data on any topic due to their versatility; therefore, effectively designed infographics can boost thought and leadership and educate a target audience. Infographics represent a terrific way to engage and enrich other traditional outputs (Murphy, 2018).

**Technology Inside EFL Classes**
In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, it is essential to equip students with the necessary 21st-century skills to thrive. It is of utmost importance to impart these essential skills to students, to adequately equip them for the multitude of challenges they will likely face in the future. From Bates' point of view, universities and colleges must find new ways to meet the growing demand for lifelong learning (2000). Students today are fond of interacting with the world more visually. If students have time to sit and appreciate the nuances of an image or graph and think deeply about the details, they can learn more from that experience than if data is projected for three minutes while a teacher talks about it. Pryor et al (2022) emphasis that “This trend has inspired the use of digital tools and mobile technologies in class to encourage students to create their own content or knowledge rather than simply consume content” (p.7). They use photo-sharing apps like Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat to share day images and videos. In the same vein, the influence of technology on language usage, critical thinking, and logical argumentation among individuals cannot be overlooked. It has become apparent that technology has had a significant impact on the aspects of communication. Chun et al (2016), assume that in specific context, technology affects how people use language, think critically, and argue logically. According to Krystalli et al (2014), students who are comfortable with technology tend to gravitate towards language learning, due to their experiences growing up in a digital world. In addition, John and Melor (2018), assert the idea that integration of technology in education has been proven to be highly beneficial in fostering the development of students' language and 21st-century skills.

Undoubtedly, infographics as a technological tool can boost the quality of learning as Wang, Teng, and Chen (2015) in their research showed that using infographics in language learning can engage students and make activities more effective. In addition, William (2019), agrees that visual information is mapped better in students’ minds. Consequently, educators must educate their students on how to analyze and use the content of pictures, graphs, and infographics to get their educational benefits. In fact, students can learn more from an activity if they can sit and absorb the nuances of an image or graph and consider them more deeply than if data is presented while an educator explains it. Similarly, Schulten (2010), affirms the effectiveness of infographics inside the classroom when they capture attention and supply an entrance to learning, as well as they can recap pages and pages, even chapters of information that would take a reader an hour to process. So why do educators not flip their classes with images, photos, and Infographics? It is recommended to utilize Infographics as technological educational tools in classrooms to create a pertinent learning environment, which is vital in trendy education. Students

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
will be drawn to learning in a relevant environment because they are ‘plugged in’ to technology (Williams & Newton, 2009). So, let us not forget that higher education students presently and in the future are digital natives, having been born into a computing world that has given them an elevated level of comfort and ability with social media (Wankel, 2016; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2008).

Calderón (2020), believes that infographics can supply contextualized information, expand lexical repertoire, and offer conversation starters; moreover, they substitute handouts, help teach English grammar rules, and provide an incentive path to assign assignments. EFL students need to be motivated to learn the English language. Accordingly, visual media is one medium that can help students understand learning English quickly (Dewantari et al, 2021). Infographics can fill the void between what is taught in higher education and what students may require in the real world.

**Infographics and EFL writing classes**

Writing constitutes a crucial challenge for EFL students since it demands mastery of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. A skilled ability to combine concrete details and abstract concepts is necessary for effective written communication, as is the capacity to present newly acquired knowledge clearly and coherently while using the appropriate language for a particular audience (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, & Hook, 2010). Notably, fluency in writing and the ability to make text smooth and easy to follow empower students to articulate their thoughts, opinions, and concepts persuasively. In addition, mastering writing skills grants the student the privilege and confidence to be a well-qualified competitor in the world of employment.

Developing skills in academic writing is a cognitively challenging process for second language (L2) learners that necessitates domain knowledge, an in-depth comprehension of rhetoric, genre standards, and competence in linguistic concepts (Maamujav, Krishnan, & Collins 2019). Many EFL students cannot create and produce successful written content because they lack adequate syntactic and lexical skills. Graham et al (2015), stress the significance of using contemporary writing tools and effective feedback when developing an intellectual and stimulating environment for learning and development. Consequently, it is recommended to take advantage of technology to create an environment that saves time and effort to meet the requirements of 21st-century skills. Infographics have the substantial elements to pave the road towards using 21st-century technology that facilitates learning, training, correction, and evaluation of students’ performance, including learning writing skills.

On the other hand, students need to participate in creating and designing productive infographics. Allowing students to make their own infographics can be an enjoyable experience to create an effective revision tool (Mitchell, 2016). Students who complete their infographics are active creators (Kibar & Akkoyunlu, 2017). It even makes learning more accessible to students whose primary language is not the teaching language. Remarkably, students, in general, are thrilled to adopt a 'give me the medicine' attitude while they wait for the educator to instill knowledge in them (Marlow et al., 2009). Therefore, engaging students in the process of creating infographics improves their understanding of knowledge, helps them become more literate in digitalization, and even gives them confidence in their future careers. Students’ constructive involvement in creating infographics is consistent with student-centered learning, which motivates learners to be “more social, communicative, and productive” (Jonassen & Land, 2012). To create effective infographics alone or with your students, you do not need to be a graphic designer; educators can get feedback
from their colleagues and use websites like Piktochart, Canva, Visme, Snappa, Infogram, and Freepic, which offer great templates to use for free.

There are few studies that have been achieved by using infographics in EFL writing classes. Hamer, Hakim, and Laksono, (2022) conducted a study to elucidate the efficacy of infographics as a pedagogical tool for teaching English writing. The study sought to confirm the perceptions of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 3 Rangkasbitung about using infographics in English writing instruction. The targeted students responded positively toward using infographics in their English writing lessons. They found infographics to be interesting, easily understandable, and motivating.

In the same vein, a study conducted by Putra, Ratminingsih, and Utami (2022) investigated students' writing proficiency as an instructional medium. The quasi-experimental study analyzed the effectiveness of Infographics as instructional media on students' writing proficiency. A writing test was used, and the experimental group outperformed the control group, as a result, infographics promote students' knowledge, concepts, and comprehension of the learning materials and significantly improve students' writing proficiency compared to conventional instruction, with an effect size of 0.78. In addition, a study conducted by Mitayo and Nakanitanon (2022) investigated the impact of Infographics on Mathayomsuksa 3 students‘ English writing skills in Thailand, using a sample of (50) students. The research instruments included lesson plans, writing tests, and questionnaires. Data analysis showed that infographics improved students' writing skills, with post-test scores higher than pre-test scores. Students enjoyed writing lessons that included infographics, which reflected positively on their knowledge of producing, linking, and developing ideas.

Furthermore, Hameed and Jabeen (2022) studied the effectiveness of infographics in teaching writing skills in Saudi university EFL contexts. Their research involved Saudi EFL undergraduate students from Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire were used by the researchers to collect data. The study demonstrated that infographics improved students' creative writing skills, and the students' perceptions were positive, as they confirmed that infographics were an engaging method to evaluate innovative ideas.

**Method**

It is worth noting that the researcher works as an instructor in the Faculty of Languages, Department of English, teaching composition writing to first-year students. Teaching involves offline and online classes following the curriculum's items of composition writing, which usually consist of learning the basics of composition writing, including the topic sentence, the controlling idea, the supporting sentences, writing paragraphs, and basic grammar.

**Participants**

The study participants represent all (114) Iraqi male and female students in the first year of the English language department at the Faculty of Languages, University of Baghdad, who studied composition writing for (120) credit hours during the academic year 2022-2023. The targeted students were distributed among three classes, with (38) male and female students per class. The study sample included (104) students; (78) females and (26) males, representing the actual participants, as (10) students were excluded because they were not actively involved with their colleagues in designing, preparing, and presenting their infographics.
Research Instrument
The research instrument (see Appendix A) is a questionnaire designed by the researcher using Google Forms and conducted online by using Google Classroom to investigate the perspectives of Iraqi EFL college students toward using infographics in EFL writing and to identify how gender influences students' performance when using infographics in EFL writing classes. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: the first section concerned identifying information about the students, such as their official emails and gender, while the second section included (28) items distributed on a five-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The linear scale format was used in Google Forms because it has five options suitable for a five-point Likert scale. The researcher contacted the students through Google Meet to explain the questionnaire's requirements. The participating students were asked to answer all items freely, completely, and honestly according to their perspectives. The time allotted to answer the questionnaire was one hour. Some scientific terms have been translated into Arabic to increase the clarity and comprehension of the items of the questionnaire items to the students. The questionnaire was conducted at the end of the academic year 2023 before the final examinations.

Research Procedures
The scale consists of 28 close-ended items of declarative statements. The items of the scale were structured on a five-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 5, Agree (A) – 4, Neutral (N) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1, which were given grades (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) when corrected, respectively. The range of response scores on the scale was between (28 - 140) degrees, with a theoretical average value of (84) degrees. The students' responses to the questionnaire's items were corrected, and the researcher calculated the total score for each student. The answer sheets were then arranged in descending order, from the highest total score to the lowest score. The two extreme groups in the total score were identified as 27% of the total students. So, the number of students in both groups (higher and lower) reached 28. To arrive at the results and draw proper conclusions, the descriptive data was gathered by Google Sheets and then quantitatively analyzed using the SPSS software.

Data Analysis
Content Validity
To ensure content validity, the scale was submitted in its initial form to a group of 12 experts from the Faculty of Languages, Education, and Basic Education which included professors of linguistics, teaching methodology, statistics, and measurement, to referee the items of the scale and to ensure the suitability of these items for the purposes to be measured, which are investigating the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics in composition writing, and identifying how gender influences students' performance when using infographics in EFL writing classes. The experts suggested reducing the scale's items from 31 to 28. Since the questionnaire is conducted online, the experts recommend limiting the time of answering the scale to an hour instead of half an hour to avoid problems of poor Internet quality, which are common in Iraq. The experts also recommended translating some scientific terms into Arabic in case students encounter a misinterpretation.

Finally, the experts stressed the necessity of using Google Meet during the test to conduct a direct video call with the targeted students to hear the researcher’s directions and respond to
students’ questions and inquiries that they may meet during the test. The researcher considered all the experts’ recommendations, besides all instructions on Google Forms for online quiz such as using students’ official emails, allowing students to adjust their answers before final submission and limiting attempts to one time.

**Constructed validity**

The constructed validity of the scale was verified through the following statistical indicators:

- To calculate the discriminatory power of the scale items, a T-test was used for two independent samples to compare the arithmetic means of each item in the highest and lowest group as shown in Table One.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Highest group</th>
<th>Lowest group</th>
<th>T value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arithmetic mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Arithmetic mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.821</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>3.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.607</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td>3.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.571</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>2.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.714</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>3.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.428</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>2.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.642</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>3.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.821</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>3.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.857</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>3.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.642</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.750</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>2.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.750</td>
<td>0.440</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.752</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.714</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>3.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.428</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>2.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.785</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>2.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.714</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>2.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.857</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>3.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.785</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>3.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.857</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>2.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.678</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>3.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.928</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>3.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.785</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>3.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.857</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>3.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.535</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>2.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.892</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>2.821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.678</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>3.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.642</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>2.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.821</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>3.107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the results of Table One that all the calculated T-values were greater than the tabulated T-value of (2.000) at a significance level (0.05) with a degree of freedom (54). This result indicates that all items have high discriminatory power.

- The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to estimate internal consistency (correlation of the item score), as shown in Table Two.
Table 2. *Internal consistency validity - Pearson correlation coefficient*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.706</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.730</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The values of the calculated correlation coefficients in Table Two were greater than the critical value of the Pearson correlation coefficient of (0.276) at a significance level of (0.05) and with a degree of freedom 54. This result indicates that all items have high internal consistency.

**Reliability of the Scale**

The scale's reliability was verified by analysis of variance using Cronbach’s alpha equation. Based on the data approved in the statistical analysis of the scale, the value of the reliability coefficient reached (0.974) which is considered a remarkably high degree of internal consistency. According to Taber (2017), values of 0.7 or higher indicate acceptable internal consistency.

**Results**

The study results will be presented and discussed according to the aims of the study:

1. **Use infographics as an educational technology tool inside EFL writing classes**

To achieve the first aim of the research, which is used infographics as an educational technology tool, the researcher used infographics to teach composition writing for nine months throughout three phases. Initially, the researcher explained the meaning of infographics, the reasons behind their usage, and how to design successful and effective infographics using free online apps. Schulten (2010) highlights the crucial elements of successful infographics as being able to digitally digest information easily, merge words and images, having the ability to stand alone, being self-explanatory, revealing hidden information, facilitating quick comprehension, and being understandable to the audiences. According to Crane (2015), to create successful infographics, it is necessary to select a subject that appeals to a specific audience, conduct research from sources, tell a story supported by data, condense the information into a practical design that includes graphics, text, and collaborates with others. To create effective infographics for teaching, educators should give great attention to the “utility, soundness, and beauty (Lankow et al., 2012). Yarbrough (2019) clarifies four tips for powerful infographics: they should be meaningful and relevant, facilitate communication and minimize space.

Then, the students were divided into groups of four and asked to design infographics about one of the curriculum’s items of composition writing. Finally, the student-designed infographics were presented in the offline classes using a data show. Students also used infographics as
assignments in Google Classroom. The faculty of Languages at the University of Baghdad uses Google Classrooms to promote a mix of offline and online education.

2. Investigate the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics in composition writing.

To achieve this aim, the researcher used a one-sample T-test to determine the significance of the statistical differences between the arithmetic mean of the sample members’ scores, according to the variables adopted in the current research, and the hypothetical mean of the scale. The results are shown in Table Three.

Table 3. A one-sample T-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N. o.</th>
<th>Arithmetic mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Hypothetical mean</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Statistical significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics in composition writing</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>108.000</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5.818</td>
<td>2.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>117.576</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.754</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The scale as a whole</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>115.182</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16.110</td>
<td>1.980</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of Table Three results indicates that the calculated T-values surpass the tabulated T-values with a significance level of 0.05. This outcome suggests a strong inclination of first-year students towards using infographics in composition writing, as proved by the variables considered in this study. Further elaboration of this finding reveals that using infographics in learning and teaching composition writing enhances students' experiences. With their visually attractive designs and concise yet informative content, infographics enable the targeted students to grasp complex concepts effortlessly while also promoting efficient data analysis and investigation, which appeared via the positive perspective of the targeted students as proved by the study's first aim. Accordingly, the findings of this aim of the current study are consistent with previous research into the efficacy of using infographics in educational domains, particularly within EFL classes. Studies like Islamoglu et al (2015); Ozdamli & et al (2016); Dahmash & et al (2017); Hope& Cheta (2018); Ibrahim& Maharaj (2019); Huseyin B., & Mobina B. (2019); Manickam & Abdulaziz (2020); Ismaeel & Al Mulhim, 2021; Alwadei & Mohsein (2023); Tavanapour et al...
(2023) ratified the effectiveness of infographics in education. The findings of these studies proved the value of infographics in education, EFL and confirmed the success of their usage and acceptance as an effective and advanced educational technology tool.

3. Identify how gender influences students’ performance when using infographics in EFL writing classes

To achieve this aim, the researcher used the T-test for two independent samples to determine the significance of the statistical differences between the arithmetic mean of male and female students’ grades. The results are shown in Table Four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Arithmetic mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Statistical significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>108.000</td>
<td>21.035</td>
<td>2.181</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>in favor of females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>117.576</td>
<td>18.823</td>
<td>1.980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Four reveals that the calculated T-value (2.181) is notably higher than the tabulated T-value (1.980) at a significance level of (0.05), given the degree of freedom of (102). This concludes that there are noteworthy differences in students’ attitudes towards using infographics in composition writing, based on their gender variance, and the direction of this difference was in favor of female students. These results ratify many studies which indicate women’s superiority over men in using technology. A study conducted by Kimbrough et al (2013) concluded that women, compared to men, are more frequent mediated technology users. Precisely, compared to men, women preferred text messaging, t (352) = 2.97, p = .003, d = 0.14; social networking, t (351) = 2.57, p = .01, d = 0.30; and video chat, t (352) = 3.11, p = .002, d = 0.37.

Discussion

This study aims to use infographics as one of the promising educational technology tools in learning and teaching the English language and to investigate students’ perspectives on using this tool. Additionally, the study aims to measure students’ performance who use infographics based on gender. Regarding the first aim, the teacher and students collaborated in a technological environment to create infographics that are easy to design, display, and summarize the scientific material, supplying engaging and non-routine learning experiences.

As for the second aim, the results of the questionnaire showed positive interactions with using infographics. The students praised infographics for their ability to highlight information. Furthermore, the results show students are overwhelmingly satisfied with the infographics’ ability to foster collaboration among peers during group work and promote the use of technology for learning composition writing, computer, and design skills. The students endorsed using infographics in other academic subjects aside from composition writing.

On the other hand, student gender is an important aspect when evaluating the effectiveness of a learning atmosphere (Huang et al, 2013; Wehrwein & et al, 2007). Therefore, the third aim of the study is to determine the student’s performance based on gender. To this end, the t-test results revealed individual differences between male and female students in favor of females, which confirms the results of many studies like Bicen and Beheshti (2019), which showed the extent of
females’ desire to use technology and benefit from its positive aspects in learning and being successful competitors to their male counterparts.

Conclusion
The study investigates the perspectives of Iraqi EFL students who used infographics in composition writing. The findings supply compelling evidence for integrating technology within the educational environment. The students responded positively to the infographic's ability to foster collaboration among peers during group work and promote the use of technology for language learning, computer skills, and design. Additionally, the students appreciated the tool's ability to summarize scientific material and focus on complicated topics. They even endorsed using infographics in other academic subjects aside from composition writing. It is fair to say that infographics increased technological and information literacy. These findings are a call to action for instructors, curriculum designers, and those interested in educational technology to integrate technological tools, specifically infographics, which have been proven to be significant based on earlier studies, precisely the outcomes of the current study.

Moreover, the findings revealed a notable gender difference, whereby female students displayed a higher inclination towards infographics than their male counterparts. Therefore, it is imperative to invest in the enthusiasm of female students for educational technology and to support them in developing skills related to learning the English language, technology, computers, and teamwork, which may lead them to promise job opportunities.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement:
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors:
Farah Muayad Issa holds an MA degree in Applied linguistics. She is currently a lecturer in the English Department of the Faculty of Languages, University of Baghdad. Her key areas of interest are applied Linguistics, methods of teaching, TESOL and educational technology. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0161-4794.
References


Using Infographics as An Educational Technology Tool in EFL Writing


**Appendix A: students’ questionnaire**

Table 5. *Students’ questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I usually look for Infographics to obtain information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am a visual person, so Infographics help me to understand complex subjects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I believe Infographics develop my social connection abilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I believe infographics boost group work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I gain a positive connection with my classmates when we work on Infographics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Infographics facilitate sharing Information with my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is easy to recall information when using infographics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I believe infographics present a solution to information overload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>When infographics appear I feel confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I believe infographics improve my technological capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Studying samples of paragraphs through infographics gives an enhanced comprehension of the fundamentals of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I believe infographics foster imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I recommended using infographics for other courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I prefer infographics more than plain text to study composition writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Infographics facilitate understanding the steps of writing a composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Infographics guide me in drafting my composition outline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The combination of text and image in infographics enhance writing creative topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I believe infographics implement technology into composition writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I believe infographics guided me to learn the basic structure of composition writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I believe infographics facilitate presenting composition samples inside the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I don’t think infographics is a reliable source of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I think infographics expand my research understanding of composition writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Infographics allow me to concentrate on key topics in composition writing without wasting time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I prefer to use infographics in writing composition assignments over the classic ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>The combination of text and image in infographics enhanced informed and analytical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Infographics provide a visual representation for developing the topic sentence/sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Infographics help me identify the weak points in my writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The original copy of the questionnaire was conducted using Google Form. However, due to the difficulty of sharing it in this research, as it requires many pages, the researcher included a regular Microsoft word form. The original copy can be examined by clicking on the link below: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfzUgct_6lsIkfoaG10Bx6j5Wo3mOxRQFxQ5cY7_l7pmf3vA/viewform?usp=pp_url.
Investigating the Professional Needs of Undergraduate Translation Students at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University

Eman Rashed Alkatheery
English Language Department, College of Languages Sciences
King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Corresponding Author: ekathiri@ksu.edu.sa

Dania Adel Salamah
English Language Department, College of Languages Sciences
King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Ghuzayyil Mohammed Al-Otaibi
English Language Department, College of Languages Sciences
King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Received: 11/03/2023 Accepted: 02/24/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Translation instructors typically select texts based on what they think students need. However, their translation experience may not extend beyond teaching translation. Furthermore, previous research reported a gap between translator training and the translation job market. As translation courses should cater to the needs of the translation profession, the current study was motivated by the importance of identifying the professional needs of undergraduate translation students in the English Language Program at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University, to identify any gap between the Program’s requirements and workplace practices. Using questionnaires, interviews, and the analysis of relevant documents, the researchers attempted to identify the most frequent fields, genres, skills, and evaluation criteria professional translators encounter at the workplace. The graduates of the Program under investigation, reported that the most frequent translation fields in the job market were the business translation and legal translation. Furthermore, the most common genres were terms and conditions, policies, reports, agreements and contracts, and website content. The analysis of the documents and interview data showed that the genres addressed in the legal translation course align with the genres encountered at the workplace. In addition, the evaluation criteria adopted by course instructors are well-aligned with the aspects emphasized by employers. In general, some significant discrepancies were found between the Program and the job market regarding genres and fields. Thus, it is recommended that course specifications and objectives are revised in light of job market needs.

Keywords: job market needs, needs analysis, pedagogical practices, professional needs, translation profession, translator training

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.12
Introduction

Identifying the needs of learners should be the first step in designing any course. In a language-learning setting, for instance, determining the learners’ language needs should precede decisions about the linguistic forms or functions included in the course (Munby, 1978). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have argued that the only difference between a general language course and a language for specific purposes course is the awareness of specific needs in the latter. Since translation is a language-related profession, training translators should emphasize linguistic preparation as well as preparation in other aspects of translation competence (PACTE Group, 2011). However, to prepare and train translators successfully, the needs of the trainees should be identified based on the tasks and roles they will carry out in the workplace.

The purpose of the current study was to identify the professional needs of undergraduate translation students at the English Language and Translation Program (henceforth, Program) at the College of Language Sciences (COLS), King Saud University, by identifying the most common fields and genres professional translators commonly encounter in the workplace as well as the aspects that are considered when evaluating the quality of translation. The study also aimed to determine the extent to which the pedagogical practices adopted at the Program at COLS are aligned with workplace practices and requirements.

The Program at COLS is an undergraduate translation program that awards a bachelor’s degree in translation. It is designed to prepare undergraduate students to become translators, which is one of its main objectives (College of Language Sciences, 2023a). The study plan of the Program includes several English language preparation courses followed by primarily field-specific translation courses (i.e., they deal with texts in a specific field, such as the medical field, legal field, and literary field). Most courses also train students on direct and inverse translation (i.e., from English to Arabia and vice versa). Students enrolled in the Program are also expected to complete a graduation project in the form of translating a published book or part thereof. The graduation project may also be in the form of cooperative training or field experience. Most students choose the second option due to the anticipated benefits they would gain from professional experience and the advantages of being exposed to the translation job market.

The selection of texts for translation courses in the Program is typically determined by what instructors think students need to learn. However, some instructors are not specialized in translation and/or lack professional translation experience. Their experience may be limited to teaching translation in a pedagogical setting, which means they may not be able to choose texts that reflect the needs of the job market. The same applies to novice translation instructors who may hold a degree in translation but lack the required experience. Due to the lack of professional or pedagogical experience, instructors tend to adhere to the syllabus and course specifications strictly. They may only discover the need to introduce other texts after teaching a course several times. Another issue that may be affected by the lack of experience and/or specialization is the evaluation of translation quality. Evaluations vary among instructors as some prefer a high degree of faithfulness in translation while others may be more flexible. In addition, the evaluation of
translating in pedagogical settings has been found to differ from the aspects considered by the job market (Salamah, 2022). Although the Program requires the use of a rubric to minimize discrepancy among instructors who teach different courses or different groups of the same course (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013), the evaluation of translation has always been characterized by a degree of subjectivity. Furthermore, the field and purpose of the translation influence the translation approach adopted by a translator, which entails different evaluation methods for different translation products.

The issues described above in the selection of texts for training purposes and the evaluation of translations in pedagogical settings were the primary motivators for the current study. The study set out to identify the professional needs of undergraduate translation students at COLS to better inform pedagogical practices at the Program and other similar programs. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the common fields and genres that professional translators commonly encounter at the workplace?
2. What are the most important evaluation criteria considered at the workplace?
3. To what extent do pedagogical practices at the Program align with workplace practices and requirements?

Focusing on the Saudi context, a few studies (e.g., Abu-Ghararah, 2017; Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017; Alkhatnai, 2022) have been conducted to identify discrepancies between translation programs and job market needs especially after the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023). As some studies paid some attention to the awareness of genre features as part of translation competence (e.g., Alkhatnai, 2022), others (e.g., Abu-Ghararah, 2017) have underscored the importance of linguistic and communicative competence. However, more studies are needed to explore the professional needs of undergraduate translation students in terms of prospective genres and evaluation criteria, especially after the changes and developments that the Kingdom is currently witnessing.

**Literature Review**

Identifying learner needs is an essential component in the preparation of any course. Relevant literature has been enriched by the work of many researchers in this area. In this section, the researchers briefly discuss needs and Needs Analysis (NA) before reviewing studies on the professional needs of translators.

NA is a resourceful technique that is used to shed light on the needs, lacks, and wants of learners inside the classroom (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It has been employed in various areas of Second Language Acquisition, such as English for Specific Purposes and English as a Foreign Language. It is a crucial step that should be a precursor to decisions about curriculum and course design in any discipline or field of study. NA is very popular in determining the language learning needs of vocational students in particular. Different vocational fields have relied on NA to identify the needs of their language learners, such as civil aviation (Kaya, 2021), tourism and hospitality (Aysu & Özcan, 2021; Lertchalermtipakoon et al., 2021), medicine (Kuzembayeva & Zhakanova,
2021), aircraft mechanics (Korba et al., 2023), software engineering (Nurjannah & Ridwan, 2022), and engineering (Changpuenga & Pattanapichet, 2023). However, the NA framework has also been employed to examine the language needs of non-vocational categories of learners, such as adult refugees and migrants to European states (Mouti et al., 2022), which testifies to the diversity and benefits of the NA framework.

Needs have been classified differently by different scholars. For instance, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) categorized needs into target and learning needs. Target needs were further subclassified into necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities are the needs that are identified based on the target situation, while lacks are established based on the learners’ current knowledge. Wants, on the other hand, are determined by what learners perceive they need. Another classification of needs addressed needs from a different perspective. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) classified the types of analyses required to identify different needs. They proposed three types of analyses involved in conducting an NA: target situation analysis, learning situation analysis, and present situation analysis, which roughly corresponds to Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) necessities, wants, lacks, and learning needs. In addition, they suggested that other forms of analyses should play a role in a comprehensive NA, including linguistic, discourse, and genre analyses.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposed frameworks to investigate target and learner needs. These frameworks are based on answering the questions of why, how, what, who, where, and when. In the case of target needs, the framework provides information about why language is needed, how it will be used, what content areas are involved, whom the learners are expected to use the language with, and where and when the language is expected to be used. As for the learning needs framework, needs analysts seek to identify why learners are taking a specific course, how they learn, what resources are available in the context being examined, and where and when the course takes place. Such frameworks are based on Munby’s (1978) comprehensive discussion of communicative needs. In his view, analyses should cover several dimensions, including examining the characteristics of learners and their purpose(s) for learning the language, the setting in which they will be required to use the language, and the type of interaction in which they will engage. Situations of language use and discourse patterns are also of importance and need to be investigated.

Professional Needs of Translators

In the context of translator training, genre awareness is an essential element of the preparation of translators. It is a component of translation competence, which is referred to as textual competence (Schäffner, 2000). Trainee translators should know that texts “fulfill specific functions in communicative situations and that their communicative success depends on the appropriateness of their textual make-up” (p. 147). Trainee translators need to identify and recognize the various linguistic patterns associated with different genres. Patterns linked to certain genres serve specific communicative functions in discourse situations. To ignore the role of genre is to disregard the communicative purpose of a situation (Swales, 2009).
The genre approach to translator training is supported by the study plans and course specifications of many translation training programs in higher education institutions. A quick survey of the study plans of translation programs around the world shows that many study plans include courses that address different fields (e.g., legal, business, literary) whether as independent courses or modules (e.g., College of Language Sciences, 2023b; Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, 2006-2022) or grouped in one course or module (e.g., Kent State University, 2023-2024; London Metropolitan University, 2023). This approach is based on the notion that each field has its own terminological, linguistic, and discursive features which play a significant role in the translation process (Biel, 2017; Molnár, 2019; Unger, 2001). In addition, it serves to expose trainee translators to a variety of different fields to prepare them for the job market. Accordingly, teaching translation and training translators should aim to develop the professional needs of translators in light of the fields and genres required by the job market.

The need to identify the professional needs of translators has motivated many researchers and scholars who are interested in translator training and translation pedagogy to investigate the preparation of translators in higher education institutions, mainly due to the gap that has been detected between translator training and the translation job market (e.g., Abu-Ghararah, 2017; Alenezi, 2015; Alshargabi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2019; Anderman & Rogers, 2000; Atari, 2012; Korol, 2019; Muñoz Martín, 2002; Petrova & Sdobnikov, 2021; Salamah, 2022). This gap has been attributed to several factors, such as the absence of clear pedagogical standards (Colina, 2003) and the lack of specialized translation instructors (Farghal, 2000) as well as the weak language proficiency of undergraduate translation students which is exacerbated by the lack of rigorous admission criteria in translation programs (Salamah, 2021).

In a comprehensive study of translation training in the Arab world, Al-Batineh and Bilali (2017) examined graduate and undergraduate translation programs in 17 Arab countries including Saudi Arabia. They compared the components of these programs with translation job descriptions. Their findings indicated that the translation competences emphasized by the job market are not given the same degree of importance in translator training at Arab universities. Their findings are in alignment with Atari’s (2012) view of translator training in the Arab world as he attributed the gap between translator training and job market requirements to the discrepancy between the expectations of the job market and the training of translators in higher education institutions among other factors.

More local studies that examined the competences of translators in Jordan (Khoury, 2016) and Yemen (Alshargabi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2019) also found that professional translators lacked the competences required by the job market. In a recent study in the Jordanian context, the needs of undergraduate translation programs were examined by gauging students’ perspectives using a questionnaire (Hussein et al., 2022). The findings of the study reported the undergraduate translation students’ “unquestionable agreement with the need to upgrade their skills across the board” (p. 77). This involved improving their language proficiency and translation skills as well
as developing their organization, time-management, and research skills and their ability to use technology in translation.

In the Saudi context, Alkhatnai (2022) conducted a study to examine the training needs of translators. After surveying professional translators and translation agency owners and managers, his findings highlighted the importance of the knowledge of various genre-related features, collocations, and cohesion as well as grammatical rules in both English and Arabic. Extralinguistically, Alkhatnai found that knowledge of business and technology is essential for translators, and professionally, the findings underscored the importance of meeting deadlines. The findings of Alkhatnai (2022) echo the conclusions of Abu-Ghararah (2017), who—in a survey of the translation industry in Saudi Arabia—found that the outputs of translator training programs should emphasize the development of several areas including, but not limited to, linguistic and communicative competence and interpersonal skills such as time management.

Other studies that investigated the preparation and training of translators in the Saudi context generally agree that translator training is insufficient in developing the competences required by the job market. In studies examining undergraduate translation programs in Saudi universities, Al-Faifi (2000) examined the development of translation competence among translation students to evaluate a particular undergraduate translation program. He detected some weakness in the students’ translation skills as well as their knowledge of the translation process including their use of translation strategies and the ability to analyze source texts and identify translation units.

Noteworthy to the current study, Ben Salamh (2012) and Alenezi (2015) analyzed the needs of undergraduate translation students in Saudi universities. While Ben Salamh (2012) looked into the second language literacy needs of undergraduate translation students at a single university (i.e., the male English translation program at King Saud University), Alenezi (2015) investigated the needs of undergraduate translation students in three Saudi universities (i.e., King Saud University, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, and Effat University). Nevertheless, both studies found that the graduates of these programs did not meet the needs of the job market, testifying to the gap between translator training and job market expectations. The two researchers reached this conclusion after analyzing interview and questionnaire data collected to conduct the needs analyses. Both studies targeted different stakeholders, such as translation students, professional translators, translation instructors, administrators at translation programs, and/or employers of translators. Ben Salamh (2012) even analyzed job descriptions and translation job advertisements.

Method
The present study followed a multiphase NA as suggested by Lambert (2010) and Serafini and Torres (2015) where qualitative (i.e., interviews and document analysis) and quantitative (i.e., a structured questionnaire) methods were used to collect data from different sources. Results obtained from the structured questionnaire were compared to those yielded from interviews and
document analysis. The questionnaires were used to answer the first two questions, and the interviews and document analysis were essential to answer the third question; that is, to identify discrepancies between the Program at COLS and job market practices and requirements.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Data were collected over three phases in the 2022-2023 academic year. In Phase One, COLS graduates were targeted as the primary data source to generate target genres, skills, and evaluation criteria for a bottom-up questionnaire (See Questionnaire A in Appendix A). After generating the data, the structured questionnaire (See Questionnaire B in Appendix A) was designed and sent to a larger group of graduates and senior students to determine the frequency of the suggested genres, skills, and evaluation criteria in relation to specific fields of translation. In Phase Two, relevant documents (e.g., course syllabuses and specifications) were analyzed to determine the current situation. During Phase Three, interviews with translation instructors were conducted as a third data source. The purpose of the interviews was to verify the information obtained from the data of the first two phases.

**Participants**

Data collection involved two groups of participants. The first group included cooperative training students and graduates from the Program at COLS with work experience that ranged from less than one year to 15 years. The second group of participants consisted of six translation instructors with 10 years or more of work experience. Targeting graduates and cooperative training students as the primary source of data for conducting an NA is supported by a number of researchers such as Lambert (2010) and Serafini and Torres (2015). As noted by Oliver et al. (2013) and Serafini and Torres (2015), involving domain insiders or experts, such as translators working at hospitals, companies, agencies, and ministries, may provide more reliable information than the information obtained from faculty members. They added that instructors—except for cooperative training and field experience supervisors—typically do not have the essential knowledge of specialized domains and their related tasks.

**Research Instruments**

Three different instruments were used to collect data. As noted above, the researchers used a research instrument for each data collection phase. This section elaborates on the description of each research instrument.

*Questionnaires*

As mentioned above, two types of questionnaires were used in Phase One. Questionnaire A was semi-structured (i.e., containing both open- and closed-ended items). The participants made independent judgments on the frequent genres they encountered at work. Based on the results of Questionnaire A, Questionnaire B, which is a closed-ended questionnaire, was developed with the frequent target genres, skills, and evaluation criteria suggested by the graduates. The purpose of
having two questionnaires instead of just one was to reach a consensus on the genres and relevant evaluation criteria (Lambert, 2010).

Before administering both questionnaires, permission was obtained from COLS's Vice Dean and the Committee of Research Ethics at King Saud University. In addition, the participants' consent was obtained, and they were assured that any information or data collected using the questionnaires would remain confidential. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary. The SurveyMonkey online survey website (https://www.surveymonkey.com) was used to collect responses for both questionnaires. To distribute the questionnaires, the researchers used text messages (e.g., WhatsApp) for Questionnaire A. Questionnaire B, on the other hand, was distributed with the assistance of COLS's Graduate Unit via X, text messages, and emails. Therefore, purposive non-probability sampling was used for both questionnaires because they targeted individuals with specific characteristics who were also willing to participate in the study (Dörnyei, 2007; Mellinger & Hanson, 2017).

Questionnaire A contains 12 items in which graduates were asked to specify their years of experience, work domains (i.e., private/public sectors, freelancing, and/or cooperative training), direction of translation (i.e., English to Arabic, Arabic to English, or both), type of translation (i.e., written translation or interpretation), fields of translated tasks (e.g., legal, medical, social, etc.), translation genres (e.g., reports, brochures, proposals, etc.), evaluation criteria (e.g., structural or grammatical accuracy, native-like production, meaningfulness, etc.), and other essential skills (e.g., time management, research ability, using technology, etc.). Twenty-nine graduates completed Questionnaire A, and this number of participants was adequate to generate usable data (Lambert, 2010; Serafini & Torres, 2015).

Questionnaire B was designed based on the participants' responses to Questionnaire A. They provided an exhaustive list of texts belonging to different genres. As noted by Swales (1990), genres are characterized by their communicative function. Thus, brochures, flyers, leaflets, and pamphlets were considered of the same type since they mainly serve one of the following two functions: promoting products in marketing or raising the public's awareness. Further, poems, plays, and novels were regarded as types of creative writing, and chapters, paragraphs, and passages were grouped under the category of specialized books. The same applies to abstracts, research papers, and proposals which all fall under the typology of academic material. In addition, contracts and agreements, terms/conditions and policies, and newspaper articles and press releases were grouped under three distinct categories due to their mutual features and purposes.

Besides genres, skills and evaluation criteria were also considered. Hence, the participants of Questionnaire A reported that time management, using technology, and good research abilities were the top three skills needed for completing translation tasks. In addition to the typical criteria used for evaluating different types of translations (e.g., grammatical, and structural accuracy and appropriate use of vocabulary and terminology), other criteria were also reported, such as tone, style, and register, meaningfulness, coherence and cohesion, and appropriateness to a specific culture. Such criteria have been emphasized by genre-based pedagogues and task-based
proponents (Hyland, 2007; Oliver et al., 2013; Skehan, 2009; Willis, 1996). In his task-based needs analysis, Lambert (2010) stated that meaningfulness, appropriate use of vocabulary, and cultural awareness were more important than accuracy and fluency. Additionally, linguistic competence (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, register, style, genre conventions, etc.), cultural competence (i.e., awareness of the target culture), and technical knowledge (e.g., research ability) were emphasized by Nord (2005) as essential competences for translators besides specific encyclopedic knowledge of the field. It is important to note that only the skills and genres mentioned more than twice were considered for inclusion in Questionnaire B. After Questionnaire B was designed, it was reviewed by two translation instructors who are also professional translators with 20 years of teaching experience. Necessary modifications were made in light of the feedback received from the reviewers. As a result, Questionnaire B contains 11 items with a total of 17 translation fields, 28 genres, and 17 evaluation criteria. The results of the first few questions in Questionnaire B are outlined below.

A total of 118 participants responded to Questionnaire B. The female participants accounted for 84.75% of the participants, while the male participants accounted for only 15.25%. Nevertheless, all the participants reported that they have experience in translation. Their experience was gained through employment in the public or private sectors, freelance work, or cooperative training. Most of them worked in both public and private sectors, and a relatively small number were freelancers. The participants were instructed to select all the options that apply to their experience, and, accordingly, 43.97% reported gaining experience in translation by working in the public sector and 44.83% gained their experience in translation by working in the private sector, while only 28.45% gained experience as freelancers. However, most of the participants (i.e., 56.90%) gained translation work experience through cooperative training.

The participants reported working in a variety of different public sector entities, such as ministries (e.g., Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense), military and security agencies (e.g., Presidency of State Security), academic institutions (e.g., Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University, King Fahad Security College, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University), medical institutions (e.g., King Fahad Medical City), and semi-government entities (e.g., Tatweer for Educational Technologies, King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue). They also worked in different private sector entities, including companies (e.g., Saudi Post), clinics and hospitals (e.g., Al-Hammadi Hospital and Al-Habib Medical Group), marketing and media agencies, insurance and consulting companies, translation service providers, and banks and financial institutions. The participants who gained experience from cooperative training received their training at a variety of different public and private sector entities, such as universities, ministries, hospitals, companies, government and semi-government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and translation service providers.

As far as years of experience are concerned, results showed that 42 (35.59%) participants have less than one year of work experience. Further, 16 participants (13.55%) have one year of work experience, whereas 12 (10.17%), eight (6.78%), nine (7.63%), and 12 (10.17%) of the participants have more than one year of work experience.
participants have two, three, four, and five years of experience, respectively. On the other hand, two participants (1.4%) have less than two years of experience, and 13 (11.01%) participants have more than five years of work experience, while five of them (4.2%) have more than 10 years of experience. Of the 100 female participants, 35 (35%) have work experience of less than one year, while seven (38.89%) of the 18 male participants only worked for a few months in jobs involving translation.

With respect to the frequency of translation work translators are required to do in their workplace, the responses indicated that 39 (33.05%) of the participants always translate at work, whereas 34 (28.81%) reported that they often translate as part of their work. Further, 24 (20.34%) of the participants sometimes translate at work, while 21 (17.80%) reported that they rarely translate at work.

Since participants were allowed to choose more than one option to describe the type of work experience (i.e., freelancing, private/public sector, cooperative training), the responses showed that 20 (51.28%), out of 39 participants, noted that they always translated during their cooperative training. Similarly, 19 (48.72%) reported that they always translate when they work for the public sector. In addition, 18 (46.15%) of the participants reported that they always do translation tasks when they work for the private sector. On the other hand, only 10 (25.64%) stated that they always translate when they freelance. Surprisingly, 15 (75%), out of 21 participants, claimed that they rarely translated during their cooperative training experience.

As for the type and direction of translation, 105 (88.9%) participants reported that they typically performed written translation tasks, whereas 30 (25.42%) performed interpretation tasks. It is important to note that only 13 (11%) out of 30 participants performed only interpretation tasks. Results also manifested that 89% of the female participants and 88.8% of the male participants worked mainly on written translation. According to 47 participants, interpretation tasks are mainly associated with public sector jobs (58.62%) and private sector jobs (55.17%). Cooperative training interpreters came third (51.72%) followed by freelance interpreters (37.93%). As for the types of interpretation, out of 13 participants, five (38.4%) performed bilateral interpretation tasks, and four (30.7%) performed consecutive interpretation tasks, whereas three (23.08%) reported performing simultaneous interpretation tasks, and only one (7.6%) performed sight translation tasks.

Regarding translation direction, out of 118 participants, 58 (49.5%) of the participants reported that they worked on translation tasks from English into Arabic and vice versa. Translation in only one direction, from English into Arabic, came second with 36 (30.7%) participants, whereas translation from Arabic into English was the lowest with only 23 (19.6%) participants. For participants who reported translating in only one direction, translating from Arabic into English was primarily reported by cooperative training students (13 participants; 59.09%), whereas translating from English into Arabic was reported by public sector employees (17 participants; 48.57%), private sector employees (16 participants; 45.71%), and cooperative training students (15 participants; 42.86%). On the other hand, translating in both directions was mostly reported by cooperative training students (37; 63.79%).
Document Analysis

Document analysis is used in qualitative research to collect information about the phenomenon under investigation (Long, 2005). As stated by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) and Long (2005), written materials are the best source of information on learning tasks. Document analysis is used to interpret recorded materials such as memos, reports, textbooks, diaries, etc. It can also be used to compare students' wants with the stated goals and contents in the course syllabus (Károly, 2011). In the current study, the purpose of document analysis was to identify which genres, skills, and evaluation criteria were emphasized in two specialized translation syllabuses and course specifications (i.e., legal translation and business translation). Relevant documents were obtained from the Quality Unit at COLS. For each translation field, three syllabuses from three different instructors were examined to determine students' needs.

Interviews

Interviews have frequently been used in the literature on second language needs analysis methodology (Brown, 2001; Long, 2005). Because of their interactive nature, interviews enable sufficient in-depth cross-examination of findings, which is necessary for establishing students' current needs (Lambert, 2010). According to Huhta et al. (2013), serving an exploratory function and targeting a small number of participants, unstructured interviews may uncover aspects of the current situation that have not been considered previously by researchers. Thus, instructors were interviewed to explore the current situation. They were asked to elaborate on the genres, skills, and evaluation criteria they employed in legal translation and business translation (See Appendix B).

Results

As stated in the Method Section, Questionnaire B was used in Phase One to identify the target genres and evaluation criteria at the workplace. Questionnaire B also determined the two most popular translation fields in the workplace and accordingly, they were emphasized in the current study (i.e., translation in the field of business and in the field of law). In Phase Two and Phase Three, the researchers analyzed the syllabuses and course specifications of the two fields as well as the interview data obtained from the translation instructors to better understand the current situation at COLS. The results of Questionnaire B (i.e., Phase One) were then compared to the current situation at COLS.

Phase One: The Questionnaire

To answer the first research question, responses to question Nine (See Figure One) showed that the most frequent translation fields COLS graduates deal with in the job market are the field of business (54 participants; 45.76%), the legal field (49 participants; 41.53%), and the social field (38 participants; 32.20%), followed by the field of marketing and advertising and the field of military and security (30 participants; 25.42%).
On the other hand, some fields were found to be infrequent in the job market, including the field of social services and philanthropy (four participants; 3.39%), the literary field (six participants; 5.08%), the petroleum field (eight participants; 6.78%), and the computer science field (nine participants; 7.63%). Finally, the Islamic field was found to be the least frequent in the job market with only two participants (1.74%) reporting that they dealt with translation work related to it.

Figure 1. Translation fields at the workplace

Regarding the genres they usually deal with at the workplace, the most frequent genre chosen by 59 participants (50%) was policies and terms and conditions, followed by reports which was chosen by 56 participants (47.46%), agreements and contracts which was selected by 49 participants (41.53%), and website content which was selected by 42 participants (35.59%). Other genres that were reported relatively frequently include presentations as it scored 40 responses, newspaper articles and press releases with 39 responses, email correspondences (32.20%), and social media posts (30.51%). Broadcasts and podcasts were found to be the least frequent genres as only four participants selected this genre. Creative writing was the second least frequent genre as only eight participants indicated dealing with this genre at the workplace. Catalogs and recommendations are also among the less popular genres at the workplace as they scored 7.63%. (See Figure Two).
Figure 2. Genres at the workplace
As for the second research question, the most frequent evaluation criterion was meaningfulness, as 84 participants (71.19%) selected it. Grammatical accuracy and the appropriate use of vocabulary and terminology both occupied second place as both were selected by 81 participants (68.64%). Structural accuracy and clarity scored 76 and 74 responses, respectively. More than half of the participants (54.24%) indicated that coherence and cohesion were emphasized by their employers as evaluation criteria. Non-linguistic evaluation criteria were less frequent, while time management received 40 responses. The use of technology was selected by 27 participants, and research abilities had only 24 responses. However, the least frequent evaluation criterion was understanding different accents, which was selected by only 15 participants (See Figure Three).

Figure 3. Translation criteria at the workplace
Before moving to Phase Two and Phase Three, an analysis of the data relating to the two most frequent translation fields is presented next to compare it with the data from document analysis and instructor interviews. As mentioned above, the two most frequent translation fields emphasized in the study are the field of business and the legal field.

The field of business was more frequent in the private sector as half of the participants (50%) indicated that their work includes translation tasks in the field of business. Twenty three participants, who work or have worked in the public sector, chose business texts as the most frequent tasks at the workplace. Yet, only 17 freelancers (31.48%) translated business texts. Fifty-one participants (94.44%) indicated that their business translation tasks were written. Interpretation in the field of business only scored 13 responses (24.07%). Thirty-five participants (64.81%) reported that the business translation tasks they performed were from English into Arabic and vice-versa, while 12 participants (22.22%) translated from English into Arabic only, and 12.39% (i.e., seven participants) translated from Arabic into English only.

![Figure 4. Business field genres at the workplace](image)

As seen in Figure Four, the most frequent genres in the field of business were policies, terms, and conditions (59.26%), agreements and contracts as well as reports (55.56%), followed by website content and presentations (48.15%). The least frequent genres are broadcasts, podcasts, and recommendations (7.41%). Other less frequent genres include creative writing (9.25%), and catalogs and newsletters (11.11%).

Regarding the most frequent business translation criteria used by employers, 46 participants selected meaningfulness as one of the evaluation criteria used by their employers. Grammatical accuracy and the appropriate use of vocabulary and terminology came as the second highest criterion with 40 responses (74.07%). Clarity came as the third followed evaluation criteria...
of business translation tasks as indicated by 39 participants (72.22%). However, seven participants reported that the least frequent evaluation criterion was using different accents. Other evaluation criteria that were encountered less frequently at the workplace are faithfulness (24.07%), using technology (27.78%), and research abilities (31.48%) (See Figure Five).

![Business translation evaluation criteria at the workplace](image1)

**Figure 5.** Business translation evaluation criteria at the workplace

Legal translation was found to be slightly more frequent in the private sector (51.02%) than in the public sector (44.90%). Most participants working in legal translation (93.88%) worked on written translation tasks, while only 18.37% performed interpretation tasks. Regarding the direction of translation in the legal field, 57.14% of the tasks were from English into Arabic and vice versa, and 24.49% were only from English into Arabic. Only nine participants reported translating from Arabic into English in the legal field.

![Legal translation genres at the workplace](image2)

**Figure 6.** Legal translation genres at the workplace
The most frequently reported genres in the legal field were agreements and contracts (71.43%), policies, terms, and conditions (69.39%), and reports (63.27%) as seen in Figure Six. The least frequent genres were broadcasts and podcasts (4.08%), followed by audiovisual materials (6.12%), and creative writing and opinions with only four responses each (8.16%). The most significant evaluation criterion was grammatical accuracy (73.47%), followed by meaningfulness, structural accuracy, and appropriate use of vocabulary, all of which equally scored 71.43%. Clarity, which is considered among the most frequent translation criteria, scored (69.39%). The least frequent evaluation criteria are understanding different accents (16.33%) and faithfulness (20.41%) as shown in Figure Seven.

![Figure 7. Legal translation evaluation criteria at the workplace](image)

**Phase 2: Document Analysis**

The course specifications and syllabuses of the business translation course and legal translation course at the Program at COLS were analyzed. The skills, genres, and evaluation criteria found in the syllabuses and specifications of the two translation courses were highlighted. The results were then compared to the questionnaire data to investigate whether or not COLS fulfilled the needs of the job market.

The analysis of the business translation course specifications revealed that one of the main objectives of the business translation course was the acquisition of vocabulary, structure, and idioms related to the field of economy and business. The course also aimed at familiarizing students with different genres of the field. One non-linguistic objective was the ability to use different sources such as dictionaries and websites. However, evaluation criteria only focused on grammatical accuracy, structural accuracy, meaningfulness, and appropriate use of vocabulary.
Business translation syllabuses included texts from different genres: encyclopedic texts, book chapters, online website content, newspaper articles, newspaper headlines, and online news posts. The syllabuses aimed at teaching students the analytical language of stock markets, oil markets, and currency exchanges. Different text formats were included, such as cause-and-effect essays and analytical essays. In addition, differences between Arabic and English business headlines were covered in the syllabuses. Texts were in Arabic and English and were taken from specialized books and websites.

On the other hand, the analysis of the legal translation course specifications and syllabus revealed that the main purpose of the course was to train students to translate specialized legal texts from and into Arabic with an emphasis on highlighting the features of different genres within the legal domain. The course also aimed at exposing students to the features, terminology, and expressions of the legal field. The following genres were covered in the legal translation course: contracts, powers of attorney, rules and regulations, laws, international treaties, royal orders and decrees, and council of ministers' resolutions.

As discussed above, analysis of course specifications and syllabuses of translation in business and legal translation showed that the genres emphasized in each course were different. As translation in business gave some priority to book chapters and news articles, legal translation focused on translating laws, regulations, contracts, etc. More importantly, it was stated in the translation of the business course syllabus and specifications that accuracy of grammar and structure and use of terminology were one of the course objectives. On the other hand, the document analysis of legal translation showed the importance of teaching legal terminology and exposing students to the features of legal texts.

**Phase 3: Instructor Interviews**

As stated in the Method Section, six instructors were interviewed to validate the data collected from document analysis. The instructors were asked to list the tasks they typically assign in class, the skills needed for task completion, and the criteria for task evaluation. They were also asked whether evaluation varies from one language to another.

Three instructors who previously taught the business translation course at the Program were interviewed. The interviewees reported that the tasks assigned to students were translations of different genres related to the field of business and economy such as newspaper articles, social media posts, headlines, and parts of book chapters. The tasks were assigned in class as individual or group work.

Regarding the skills required for task completion, Interviewee One indicated that some tasks required knowledge of the analytical language used in stock markets and currency exchanges. Interviewee Three added that the ability to search for appropriate vocabulary and terminology is also required. Further, the interviewees mentioned some other essential skills required for task completion such as language proficiency, research skills, understanding of genre, numerical skills, and text comprehension. Interviewee One considered that numerical skills and comprehension of
numbers, ratios, and percentages were as important as grammar since most business texts are based on numbers. Interviewee Two revealed that the skills required for task completion were: having good language skills in English and Arabic and understanding the textual features associated with each genre. As for Interviewee Three, critical reading, structural awareness, and knowledge of register and culture were viewed as the most important skills for task completion.

The most important evaluation criteria as reported by the interviewed business translation instructors were grammatical accuracy, meaningfulness, and knowledge of vocabulary. Interviewee One indicated that meaning, word choice, and language structure are considered in the evaluation. Interviewees Two and Three added grammar, spelling, punctuation, comprehension, cohesion, and coherence to the evaluation criteria. However, all three interviewees agreed that evaluation criteria differ between Arabic and English. Interviewee One indicated that the evaluation of translation from English into Arabic mainly focuses on terminology, comprehension, and meaningfulness since students are native speakers of Arabic and their performance in this direction of translation is better than their performance in translation from Arabic into English as they are still considered L2 learners. She added that in evaluating translation into English, she evaluates structure, grammar, and spelling. Interviewee Two reported that the evaluation of exams and projects is different from the holistic evaluation of daily assignments and small projects.

As for legal translation, three instructors who previously taught legal translation at the Program were interviewed. As for the tasks assigned in the course, the interviewees reported that they covered the following genres: contracts, powers of attorney, rules and regulations, laws, international treaties, royal orders and decrees, and council of ministers’ resolutions. The texts were obtained from books and websites. Students were required to translate excerpts from different types of legal texts from English into Arabic and vice versa, for example:

1. Contracts (e.g., employment contracts, purchasing and selling contracts, rental contracts, lease contracts, civil contracts, and administrative contracts)
2. Powers of attorney (e.g., special power of attorney)
4. Regulations (e.g., terms and conditions of banks)
5. Certificates (e.g., academic certificates and certificates of appreciation)
6. Constitutions (e.g., the US Constitution)
7. International treaties and conventions (e.g., UN Charter, Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations)

However, it is worth noting that Interviewee Three commented that many of the features of legal discourse are recurrent in different legal genres. Therefore, when students are exposed to laws, international treaties, or powers of attorney, they still benefit due to the similarities that are found in other sub-types of texts within the legal genre.

Interviewees listed several skills they believed were essential for task completion. Students need to be competent in both languages, English and Arabic, in addition to their awareness of legal
terminology and phraseology, and the contextualized meanings of legal terms. Students should also be aware of the legal constructions and features that are specific to both English and Arabic and how to translate them into the target language.

Overall, legal translation instructors emphasized grammatical accuracy as an evaluation criterion. Meaningfulness was also significant. As far as vocabulary use, all instructors emphasized appropriate use of legal terminology thereby placing importance on specialized vocabulary use in the form of legal terms. Structural accuracy was also considered important among the interviewees. Two of them ranked it either first or second, while the third interviewee ranked it third in terms of significance. The interviewees did not mention other factors, such as time management or the use of technology.

Interviewee One indicated that accuracy, whether in content or grammatical structure, is an important evaluation criterion she adopted. She also included conforming to the norms of legal language and using appropriate terminology and structure. On the other hand, Interviewee Two included knowledge of legal terms and features, legal constructions, and the organization of legal texts as her evaluation criteria. However, Interviewee Three highlighted the importance of meaningfulness because if the meaning of a source text is not conveyed correctly, the translation is useless even if it is grammatically and structurally accurate. Nevertheless, she acknowledged the importance of the correct use of language (i.e., grammar and spelling) and structures that conform to the features and constructions of legal writing, including features that are typical to legal discourse (e.g., specific use of shall and may). Interviewee Three also considered the appropriate use of legal terminology and the organization and form of legal texts in her evaluation.

Although the types of issues differ when translating from English into Arabic and vice versa, there is not much variation in evaluation among the legal translation instructors who were interviewed. Equal weight was usually allocated to evaluation in both directions of translation, but Interviewee Two reported that she allocated more grades to the first evaluation from English into Arabic. In subsequent evaluations, however, they were allocated equal weight. Interviewee Three allocated a slightly higher percentage of the grade to evaluations that tested translation from English into Arabic because of the students’ overall weak proficiency in English. She explained that if both directions of translation were evaluated equally, the students’ final grades would be low. Further, she added that the first evaluation only tested translation from English into Arabic. The second tested both directions of translation, and so did the final.

In short, translation instructors at COLS agreed on placing a lot of importance on the evaluation criteria of grammatical and structural accuracy, meaningfulness, and accurate use of terminology. However, the genres emphasized in each course by its instructors are different which is also evident in the course syllabus and specifications. While legal translation instructors focused on translating contracts, powers of attorney, etc., instructors of translation in business considered book chapters, news, and social media posts.
Discussion

The data revealed that the study participants were evenly employed in both private and public sectors. Almost one-third of the study sample work or have worked as freelancers. However, more than half of the study sample practised translation during their cooperative training. COLS graduates mainly handled translation tasks in their jobs, and most of these tasks were written, while interpreting tasks only constituted one-fourth of the responses.

The main aim of the research was to identify the professional needs of undergraduate translation students at COLS, and illustrate if job market needs are reflected in the pedagogical practices at the Program. To achieve the aim of the study, three research questions were proposed. The answer to each question is discussed in the following subsections.

Translation Fields and Genres

The most frequent translation fields that COLS graduates dealt with at the workplace were business translation, legal translation, social translation, and translation in the fields of marketing and advertisements. The least frequent fields were Islamic translation, translation in philanthropy and social services sectors, and literary translation. Other translation fields that were reported to be encountered; yet less frequently, at the workplace are translation in the fields of petroleum, computer science, and mass media.

The Program at COLS includes nine practical written translation courses, seven of which are specialized; in addition, the Program offers four interpreting courses. Furthermore, the study plan includes two theoretical translation courses and three courses that tackle skills required in the process of translation such as the use of technology in the field of translation, using dictionaries and other language resources, and editing and proofreading. A quick scan of the Program’s study plan reveals that the interpreting courses at COLS train students to practice consecutive, bilateral, and simultaneous interpreting which were reported to be encountered at the workplace by only one-fourth of the respondents.

According to the study plan of the Program (College of Language Sciences, 2023b), there are specialized courses at COLS which correspond to the most common translation fields; i.e., legal translation, and financial and economic translation. Other frequent translation fields which have a corresponding course at COLS are medical translation and political and media translation. However, there are also courses for scientific and technical translation, literary translation, and Islamic translation, which were the least frequent translation fields in the job market according to the participants. Nevertheless, the study plan does not include a course on social translation, which was the third most frequently encountered field in the workplace. In summary, the Program generally succeeds in offering specialized translation courses in some of the fields that are practiced in the job market.

As for translation genres, the genres that COLS graduates dealt with at the workplace varied. Half of the participants indicated that they translate policies and terms and conditions at the workplace. Other highly frequently encountered genres are reports, agreements and contracts,
website content, presentations, newspaper articles, and email correspondences. On the other hand, the least reported genres were broadcasts and podcasts, creative writing, recommendations, catalogs, and audio-visual translation.

Concerning genres encountered in the field of business at the workplace, policies, terms and conditions, reports, agreements and contracts, website content, and presentations were the highly reported genres in the workplace. By taking a closer look at the course specifications of the corresponding translation course and the data obtained from the instructors’ interviews, the results of the analysis only correspond to one target genre in the job market (i.e., newspaper articles and press releases). Yet, one of the least frequent genres at the workplace, i.e., specialized books, was found to be one of the frequent genres in the course specifications. Agreements and contracts, policies, terms and conditions, and reports were the most frequent business translation genres in the job market, yet document analysis revealed that they were not included in the syllabuses of business translation courses though the course specifications stressed the diversity of economic texts. Since the course syllabus includes a very limited number of genres; i.e., newspaper articles, social media posts, headlines, encyclopedic texts, and book chapters, it can be concluded that the course does not fully succeed in fulfilling the needs of the job market.

With respect to the highly reported genres in the field of legal translation, agreements and contracts were the genres required the most at the workplace. The second most frequent genre in legal translation, based on the questionnaire, was the category of policies and terms and conditions. Correspondingly, the topics and genres found in the course specifications of the legal translation course and the ones reported by the interviewees (e.g., contracts and agreements) corresponded to the target genres in the workplace. Nevertheless, other genres that were frequent at the workplace were not reflected in the course specifications, such as presentations, reports, website content, and email correspondences. In general, the legal translation course at COLS showed a relatively high percentage of agreement with the required genres at the workplace.

**Translation Evaluation Criteria**

Regarding evaluation criteria, the criteria followed by employers—as reported by the questionnaire—indicated that employers focused on language; i.e., form and content, rather than other skills as found in relevant studies (Alkahtani, 2022; Abu-Ghararah, 2017) which indicated that language skills and translation skills are highly required in the job market. Meaningfulness was the highest criterion. Grammatical accuracy and the appropriate use of vocabulary were the second most significant criteria. Structural accuracy, clarity, coherence and cohesion were also essential in the evaluation process. Such results also echo Hussein et al.’s (2022) study which highlighted the importance of structure and word meaning in the translation profession.

On the other hand, other skills such as time management, research skills, and using technology scored low in the data contradicting Al-Batineh and Bilali’s (2017) study that concluded that the job market in the Arab world places more significance on professional and instrumental (i.e., technological) competence than on communicative and textual competence. In
addition, aspects related to culture and nativeness were not highly detected as approximately only one-third of the responses indicated that employers consider appropriateness to a specific culture and native-like production in the evaluation process. Such non-linguistic skills were also less emphasized in previous studies (Abu-Ghararah, 2017; Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017; Alkahtani, 2022).

Nevertheless, the evaluation criteria used by employers correspond to the evaluation criteria of COLS instructors. Evaluation criteria focused on the content and form of the text. Interviews with course instructors revealed the significance of grammatical accuracy in the evaluation process. Appropriate use of vocabulary and terminology were underscored in the evaluation process by course instructors due to the specialized nature of the translation fields COLS graduates are expected to deal with in the professional domain.

Legal translation instructors emphasized grammatical accuracy and meaningfulness, which scored second in the questionnaire. As far as the appropriate use of vocabulary and specialized terminology—which ranked second in the questionnaire—is concerned, all the instructors emphasized the appropriate use of legal terminology thereby placing importance on the specialized use of vocabulary in the form of legal terms. Structural accuracy was also considered a crucial evaluation criterion among the interviewees. Therefore, interviews, document analysis, and questionnaire results yielded similar findings with regard to evaluation criteria, which contradicts Salamah’s (2022) findings that indicated some variance between pedagogical evaluation and job market considerations. A point to be added is that the results indicated some agreement between the evaluation criteria followed the least by employers and those adopted by course instructors.

Document analysis and instructor interviews indicated that research skills and the use of technology were not reflected in the syllabuses of the two courses; the two received little attention from employers as reported by questionnaire participants. Nevertheless, participants in Alkhatnai’s (2022) study noted their significance in the job market. Further, Alkhatnai (2022) highlighted the importance of time management as part of professional sub-competence, yet none of the interviewees in the current study mentioned time management as an evaluation criterion. A logical justification for this issue might be that in classroom and pedagogic settings, students are given enough time to complete tasks in class, or they are required to do them in advance at home. Therefore, they would not be evaluated on time management skills. The only context where time is of significance is during examinations. However, when students do not know how to manage their time during an exam, this is reflected in their performance since they are typically unable to finish the translation task or do not have enough time to revise and edit their work before submitting it. This means that time management is evaluated indirectly in translation courses since a student's lack of efficient time-management skills may affect his/her performance on translation tasks.
Alignment of Pedagogical Practices at COLS with Job Market Needs

The data obtained from the three study instruments shows that the pedagogical practices related to the evaluation criteria of students’ works at COLS agree to a very high percentage with the ones adopted by employers. Nevertheless, the investigated genres used in the translation courses at COLS extremely varied in their correspondence with the ones found in the job market. Regarding business translation, it is clear that the corresponding course did not succeed in catering to the requirements of the job market as the genres used in the course were extremely different from the ones found at the workplace. However, the genres used in the legal translation course at COLS showed a good convergence with the genres COLS graduates usually encounter at the workplace.

To conclude, the findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of previous studies which indicate the lack of alignment between translator training and professional practices (e.g., Abu-Ghararah, 2017; Alenezi, 2015; Alshargabi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2019; Anderman & Rogers, 2000; Atari, 2012; Muñoz Martín, 2002; Salamah, 2022). The results indicate that there is a gap between the requirements of the job market and translator training at COLS, especially in the area of textual competence. Though course instructors indicated in the interviews that they follow a genre-based approach in translation training, the data revealed that the genres encountered at the workplace are more diversified than the ones taught in the classroom.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify the translation fields, genres, and evaluation criteria commonly employed at the workplace. The researchers utilized questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews with translation instructors to detect discrepancies between pedagogical practices at COLS and professional practices at the workplace. As indicated by the results, some discrepancies were found between COLS and the job market in terms of genres and fields. Yet, discrepancies in the evaluation criteria were less significant.

As for translation genres, even though course specifications indicate that different genres are taught, in some courses, only a few genres are addressed inside the classroom. Hence, it is suggested that syllabuses are regularly compared against course specifications to avoid such discrepancies. Nevertheless, the interviews reveal a consensus among instructors on the importance of genre awareness in translation tasks, which serves the communicative purpose of language as indicated by Swales (2009). Genre awareness plays a vital role in translator training as it constitutes a major component of translation competence (Alkahtani, 2022; Schäffner, 2000). Instructors reported that they explain the different textual features of genres in the classroom, yet they need to include a broader scope of field-related genres. In some cases, the needs of the job market were not met since some of the most frequent genres in the job market received little, if any, attention inside the classroom.

Regarding evaluation criteria, the results obtained from COLS and the job market demonstrated insignificant differences. Both stress the importance of grammatical accuracy, meaningfulness, and appropriate use of vocabulary. However, some evaluation criteria are
highlighted in course specifications, but they are either not followed by COLS instructors or not emphasized by employers (e.g., the use of technology and research skills). Other criteria are considered by employers, yet disregarded by COLS instructors, such as time management.

One of the limitations of the present study is the small number of participants, especially among male graduates of COLS. Thus, it is recommended that future research addresses the needs of a large-scale group of participants drawn from various Saudi universities. Further, researchers may also conduct an NA in light of Saudi Vision 2030 and the changing demands of the job market.

Implications

Based on the findings of the NA, several pedagogical implications can be derived:
● Curriculum specifications, objectives, and goals should be revised in light of job market needs and wants.
● Course specifications, objectives, and goals should be reflected in the syllabuses.
● Popular genres in different workplace domains, such as email correspondence, reports, and website content, should be included in translation syllabuses and targeted in specialized translation courses.
● Assessment of COLS students should include a variety of evaluation criteria besides the traditional structural ones, such as time management and the use of technology.
● Coordination between job market needs on the one hand, and the academic objectives and outcomes of COLS courses on the other should be maintained.

Funding

This study was funded by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission, Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under [139/2022] as part of the Arabic Observatory of Translation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity

This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement:

AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors

Eman Alkatheery is an assistant professor at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University. Her research interests include linguistics and translation. She has an experience of 15 years in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses in linguistics, language skills, and translation. She presented several training courses and workshops in the fields of English
language, technology in translation, and quality and academic accreditation.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1920-2668

**Dania Salamah** is an Assistant Professor at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University. Her current research interests revolve around translation pedagogy and its alignment with job market requirements with a focus on translation competence and its acquisition, in addition to investigating translation teaching strategies and the design and development of translation curricula and programs in higher education institutions.
ORCID: 0000-0002-6215-5783

**Ghuzayyil Mohammed Al-Otaibi** is an assistant professor at the College of Language Sciences (COLS), King Saud University, Riyadh. She has been teaching for COLS since 2005. She has her MA in applied linguistics and her MBA in business administration. She obtained her PhD in applied linguistics from King Saud University. She is interested in semantic prosody, translation of collocation, Qur’ānic studies, religious discourse, the relationship between sound and meaning, and transformational leadership. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9369-2602

**References**


Appendix A
Questionnaire A

1. Your employment can be characterized as:

   public (specify) _______________________
   private (specify) _______________________
   freelancing (specify) _____________________

2. Does your current work (or previous work) involve translation?

   o yes
   o no

3. Years of work experience:

   o 1-5
   o 5-10
   o 10-15
   o 15 or more

4. How often do you translate?

   o rarely
   o sometimes
   o often
   o always

5. Which type of translation do you typically do?

   □ written translation
   □ interpretation
   ____________________________
   If interpretation, which type? (consecutive, bilateral, simultaneous, sight) ------------------------

6. Most of the translation work you do is:

   o from English into Arabic
   o from Arabic into English
   o both

7. Which field of translation do you typically deal with? Tick more than one if applicable.

   □ medical □ business □ legal □ economic □ commercial
   □ security □ computer science □ humanities □ petroleum □ scientific or technical
8. What type of translation tasks do you typically do? (reports, memos, contracts, brochures, manuals, email correspondences, etc.). Specify the most frequent, the most important and the most relevant to your work.

9. From your point of view, what criteria do you (or your supervisor) use to evaluate translation tasks? (appropriate use of vocabulary, field appropriateness, fluency, grammatical accuracy, structural accuracy, meaningfulness, etc.)

10. In your opinion, what are the skills and tasks potential translators need to function in the job market?

11. From your point of view, does COLT supply the job market with its needs? Explain.

12. Do you think that COLT graduates need extra training? Explain.

---

Questionnaire B

1. Your employment can be characterized as: (Please select all that apply)
   - public (specify, e.g., hospital, university, ministry, school, etc.)
   - private (specify, e.g., company, agency, hospital, university, bank, school, etc.)
   - freelancing (specify)
2. Does your current work (or previous work) involve translation?
   - yes
   - no

3. Years of work experience:
   - 1-5
   - 5-10
   - 10-15
   - 15 or more

4. How often do you translate?
   - rarely
   - sometimes
   - often
   - always

5. Which type of translation do you typically do?
   - written translation
   - interpretation
     - If interpretation, which type? (consecutive, bilateral, simultaneous, sight)

6. Most of the translation work you do is:
   - from English into Arabic
   - from Arabic into English
   - both

7. Which field of translation do you typically deal with? Please select all that apply.
   - medical
   - business
   - legal
   - economic
   - commercial
   - social
   - military
   - political
   - literary
   - security
   - computer science
   - humanities
   - petroleum
   - scientific or technical
   - mass media
   - education
   - marketing
   - other (please specify)

8. What type of translation tasks do you typically do? Please select all that apply.
   - terms & conditions, policies
   - email correspondence
   - forms
   - academic materials (e.g., abstracts, research papers, research proposals, etc.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>agreements and contracts</th>
<th>memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVs</td>
<td>conversations between people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surveys</td>
<td>conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brochures, flyers, leaflets, pamphlets</td>
<td>newspaper articles, press releases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posters</td>
<td>infographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social media posts</td>
<td>presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invoices</td>
<td>recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manuals</td>
<td>announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biographies</td>
<td>newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>website content</td>
<td>text messages (e.g., SMS, WhatsApp, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catalogs</td>
<td>advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcasts &amp; podcasts</td>
<td>creative writing (e.g., poems, plays, novels, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opinions</td>
<td>books (e.g., chapters, passages, paragraphs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event or business proposals</td>
<td>audiovisual materials (e.g., video subtitling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports</td>
<td>other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. From your point of view, what criteria do you (or your supervisor) use to evaluate translation tasks? Please select all that apply.

- grammatical accuracy
- structural accuracy
- appropriate use of vocabulary
- meaningfulness
- appropriateness to a specific culture
- appropriateness to a specific field
- fluency
- research ability
- appropriate use of terminology
- coherence
- tone & register
- being clear
- being brief
- reflecting knowledge of the field
- native-like production
- keeping the target audience in mind
- being simple
- using technology
- time management
- understanding different accents

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What types of tasks do you typically assign in class and require your students to translate in assignments, projects, and presentations?
2. Which skills do you believe are essential for task completion?
3. What are your criteria for evaluation? Rate them in order of significance.
4. Does your evaluation vary from one direction to another or from one task to another? Please explain.
An Investigation of How Foundation Learners Perceive Their Use of Learning Strategies

Namirah Mohd Akahsah1, *Najwa Azizun2, Bharathi Vijayan3, Hariati Ibrahim @ Musa4, Muhammad Ridhwan Saleh5, Noor Hanim Rahmat6

1,2,3Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Dengkil
4 Faculty of Law, University Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Kelantan, Kampus Machang
5Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia, Gambang Campus
6Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang

*Corresponding author: najwa6483@uitm.edu.my

Received: 08/16/2023 Accepted: 01/18/2024 Published: 03/2/2024

Abstract
Transitioning from school to higher education institutions, learners may face many challenges, especially in coping with the new cultures of tertiary education. Learners entering universities come from a broad spectrum of diverse backgrounds, including various types of public and private secondary schools such as Full Boarding Schools, Vocational Colleges and Technical High Schools, Government-Aided Religious Schools, National Religious Secondary Schools, Sports Schools, Art Schools, The Royal Military Academy, MARA Junior Colleges of Science (MRSM), and many other private schools. Thus, it is pivotal that learning styles and strategies are redesigned to adapt to the demands of university education. The present study aims to discover the perception of learning strategy utilization among foundation studies learners. This quantitative research explores the relationship among cognitive, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management as components of learning strategies as propounded by Wenden and Rubin (1987). A purposive sample of 297 participants, randomly selected among learners at the Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, responded to the survey. The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale which comprises four sections. The results indicate that the three components of learning strategies positively correlate with one another. In addition, it is also found that metacognitive self-regulation positively influences learners by guiding them in supervising their learning process and resolving their confusion by referring back to their reading materials and seeking help from their peers. This finding is crucial to aid educators in employing suitable learning strategies for foundation learners to prepare them for their degree studies.

Keywords: cognitive skill, foundation study, learning strategies, metacognitive self-regulation, resource management

Introduction

Background of Study

Learning strategies have been regarded as one of the most fruitful research areas for studying the learning process and its influencing factors (Aizpurua et al., 2017). In their book “Learning Strategies,” Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) refer to strategies as being at a higher level than skills. A learning strategy is a series of purposeful activities that can be easily adjusted to suit the specific context. Learning is strategic when the learners are aware of the learning process and control their efforts in utilizing particular skills and strategies (Peculea & Bocos, 2015).

Research learning strategies are becoming increasingly important, especially in today’s expanding education system. Learning strategies are essential as we aim for sustainable life-long learning and deep understanding (Lin et al., 2017; Wegner et al., 2013). According to Oxford (2016), independent, autonomous, and lifelong learners could be produced using learning strategies. It also acts as one of the vital factors for success in academic performance (Almoslamani, 2021; Chetty et al., 2019; Pino-Juste & López, 2010).

There is a plethora of research on learning strategies in Malaysia across various fields, including vocabulary (Benedict & Shabdin, 2021; Kho et al., 2021; Nur & Jusoh, 2022; Supian & Mohd Asraf, 2021; Yaacob et al., 2019; Yip et al., 2021) language (Dawi & Hashim, 2022; Hashim et al., 2018; Maros & Saad, 2016; Min et al., 2021; Muniandy & Shuib, 2016; Noor et al., 2016; Othman et al., 2022; Osman et al., 2018; Sani & Ismail, 2021), accounting (Shaffie et al., 2020), and environmental engineering (Hadibarat & Rubiyatno, 2019). The literature, as mentioned above, focused on learning strategies adopted by students at various levels, including primary, secondary, postgraduate, and graduate levels. However, there is currently a lack of research on learning strategies adopted by foundation students in Malaysia. The foundation level is an essential phase in a learner's education journey as it serves as a transition period between secondary school and university. Hence, it is pertinent that such a study is conducted to examine how the foundation learners perceive their use of learning strategies in the learning process.

Statement of the Problem

Foundation learners rely on effective learning strategies to improve academic performance and attain their educational objectives. Prior research has shown the positive impacts of cognitive strategies, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management on learning outcomes and academic achievement (Cameron & Tanti, 2011; Pintrich, 2004). However, several problems and challenges hinder the accomplishment of this ideal situation. Research has highlighted that foundation learners often struggle with ineffective learning strategies, lack of self-regulation skills, and difficulty in managing their resources (Zimmerman, 2002). These challenges act as barriers to their academic success and hinder the development of student’s independent and self-directed learning behaviours.

Despite the challenges, there is still a significant gap in understanding how foundation learners, who are transitioning into higher education, perceive and use cognitive strategies, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management (Wenden & Rubin, 1987) in their learning practices. This lack of knowledge prevents the development of targeted interventions and instructional techniques that could assist foundation learners in using learning strategies to improve their academic achievement. Therefore, there is a pressing need for an investigation into how foundation learners perceive their use of learning strategies to bridge this gap and give significant insights to educators.
Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is conducted to explore learners’ perceptions of their use of learning strategies. Specifically, it aims to address the following questions:

- How do learners perceive their use of cognitive strategies?
- How do learners perceive their use of metacognitive self-regulation?
- How do learners perceive their use of resource management?
- Is there a relationship between the use of different strategies?

Literature Review

Strategies for Learning

Learning strategies are considered an important aspect of learning. They encompass learners’ initiative in identifying and implementing learning methods, whether through self-monitoring or formal education (Oxford, 2017). Similarly, Hattie and Donoghue (2016) stated that learning strategies provide a structured process that enables learners to devise a plan, monitor their learning accordingly, and evaluate their learning progress. The three essential aspects of learning strategies are cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management (Pintrich et al., 1993; Sun et al., 2018). Cognitive strategies assist learners in acquiring and comprehending information, while metacognitive strategies focus on planning and monitoring their learning progress (Sukying, 2021). Lastly, resource management strategies involve managing the learning environment to suit the learner, which includes internal and external regulations (Naujoks et al., 2021). Combining these three areas of learning strategies would assist learners to tailor their learning accordingly and achieve their desired outcomes. However, past studies show different findings on the use of these learning strategies.

Past Studies on the Use of Learning Strategies

Several studies have examined learning strategies, including a notable study conducted by Ismail and Al-Khatib (2013). Their study specifically focused on investigating the patterns of language learning strategies employed by 190 male and female students enrolled in the Foundation Programme at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). The study also aimed to explore the influence of language proficiency level and gender on the utilization of these strategies. The findings of the study revealed that among the six types of strategies examined, metacognitive strategies were the most frequently utilized. They were followed by social, compensation, affective, cognitive, and memory strategies, respectively, in terms of frequency. Additionally, the study found no significant differences in the use of learning strategies between male and female students. These findings shed light on the learning strategies employed by foundation students in the context of language learning. They highlight the prevalence of metacognitive strategies and provide valuable insights into how language proficiency level and gender may or may not influence the utilization of learning strategies.

Zaini et al. (2023) conducted another significant and recent study on learning strategies. The study involved 129 undergraduate students enrolled in universities in Malaysia. The research specifically focused on exploring cognitive components that influence language learning, namely rehearsal, organisation, elaboration, critical thinking, and metacognitive self-regulation. The findings of the study revealed that metacognitive self-regulation plays an important role in facilitating effective learning outcomes. By employing metacognitive self-regulation strategies,
individuals were able to monitor and adjust their learning strategies, identify areas where they needed to improve their understanding, and set goals to guide their study activities.

In another study, Anthonysamy et al. (2021) studied the effects of self-regulated learning strategies on 563 Malaysian undergraduates’ perceived learning performances. These participants are enrolled in Multimedia degree programs in universities in the central region of Malaysia. The researchers distributed the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), which consists of four domains, namely cognitive engagement, metacognitive knowledge, resource management and motivational beliefs, to explore the participants’ responses. The findings indicated that there was a significant effect on all four domains on students’ perceived learning performance. In other words, the students had a positive impact by employing cognitive learning strategies to acquire knowledge, using metacognitive strategies to monitor their learning to attain good performance, utilising resource management to manage their time and environment to help in their learning and identifying their motivational beliefs. The findings showed that to perform well at the tertiary level, students believe that they need to apply the learning strategies which help them to reflect on their learning and find ways to improve their learning performance.

**Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores how learners perceive their use of learning strategies. This study also investigates the interrelationships among these strategies. According to Rahmat et al. (2021), learners tend to focus on the type of learning that motivates them, prioritizing the tasks that they know will produce their desired outcomes. To maximize learning, learners use strategies such as cognitive components, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management, as proposed by Wenden and Rubin (1987). Cognitive components can be measured by sub-strategies such as a) rehearsal, (b) organisation, (c) elaboration, and (d) critical thinking. In addition to that, resource management is measured by sub-categories such as (a) environment management, (b) effort management, and (c) help-seeking.

![Conceptual Framework of the Study](image-url)
Methodology

This quantitative study aims to explore the use of learning strategies among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 297 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used was a 5-point Likert-scale survey, based on the framework of learning strategies proposed by Wenden and Rubin (1987), which reveals the variables presented in Table 1 below. The survey consisted of four sections. Section A included items on the demographic profile. Section B comprised 19 items addressing cognitive components. Section C encompassed 11 items focusing on metacognitive self-regulation. Lastly, Section D included 11 items on resource management.

Table 1. Distribution of Items in the Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Cognitive Components</td>
<td>(a) Rehearsal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Organisation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Elaboration</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Critical Thinking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Metacognitive Self-Regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Resource Management</td>
<td>(a) Environment Management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Effort Management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Help-Seeking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of items 41

Table 2. Reliability of Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Items</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .924, thus, revealing good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis of the findings using SPSS was done to answer the research questions of this study.

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

Q1 Gender

Figure 2. Percentage for Gender
This study collected data from 297 respondents (refer to Figure 2), comprising 227 female and 70 male participants. The female respondents represented a significant proportion of the sample, including 76% of the total data, while the male respondents constituted 23% of the total sample.

Figure 3. Percentage for Programme

For the foundation programme, concerning Figure 3, 163 respondents were from the Law Foundation Programme, which constituted 55% of the sample population and represented the majority in this study. It is followed by the Teaching English as Second Language Foundation Programme (TESL) with 58 respondents representing 20% of the total sample. Foundation in Science students constituted the third group with 56 respondents, representing 19% of the total sample. The Engineering Foundation Programme accounted for the remaining 6%, with 20 respondents.

Figure 4. Percentage for Semester
The majority of the respondents (refer to Figure 4), which consisted of 276 respondents or 93% of the sample population of this study, were among the second-semester students while the remaining 21 respondents, which represented 7% of the sample population, were among the first semester students.

Findings for Cognitive Strategies
This section presents data to address Research Question 1: How do learners perceive their use of cognitive strategies? In the context of this study, cognitive components are measured by (a) rehearsal, (b) organisation, (c) elaboration, and (d) critical thinking

(a) Rehearsal (4 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSCCRQ1: When I study for the classes, I practise saying the material to myself over and over.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCRQ2: When studying for the courses, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCRQ3: I memorise keywords to remind me of important concepts in this class.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCRQ4: I make lists of important items for the courses and memorise the lists.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Mean for Rehearsal

There are four strategies (refer to Figure 5) under the cognitive components: rehearsal, organisation, elaboration, and critical thinking. Learners use cognitive strategies to facilitate their thinking and engagement in their learning. The rehearsal strategy assists learners in continuously practising the materials they have learned. Table 6 shows the results of the use of rehearsal as a cognitive strategy by the respondents. The highest mean score for this category is 4.2, recorded for item 3, which shows that the respondents prefer to practise memorizing crucial components needed for learning. Meanwhile, the lowest mean is 3.6, recorded for item 1, suggesting that respondents have the slightest preference for repeatedly saying the material that they have learned. The remaining items scored 3.9 for item 2 and 3.7 for item 4, respectively. The overall results for the rehearsal strategy show the respondents’ positive use of the strategy.

(b) Organisation (4 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSCCOQ1: When I study for the courses, I go over my…</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCOQ2: When I study for the courses, I go through…</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCOQ3: I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables…</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCOQ4: When I study for the courses, I go over my…</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Mean for Organisation
Figure 6 displays the results for the organisation strategy, which has four items. The organisation strategy enables learners to map out their learning in a structured manner. Overall, the results of this strategy are positive. The highest mean score for the organisation strategy is 4, as observed in item 2. This indicates that most of the learners practice going through their class notes to identify crucial ideas needed for learning. On the other hand, the lowest mean score is 3.3 for item 3, suggesting that the learners do not prefer to use graphic organisers such as charts or diagrams to organise their learning. Item 4 scored 3.8, and item 1 scored 3.7 each.

(c) Elaboration (6 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ6 I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lectures and discussion.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ5 I try to understand the material in the classes by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ4 When I study for the courses in this program, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ3 When reading for the courses, I try to relate the material to what I already know.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ2 I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in other courses whenever possible</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSCCEQ1 When I study for the courses in this program, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7. Mean for Elaboration*

The data in Figure 7 displays the results of the learners’ use of elaboration as a cognitive strategy. There are six items in this strategy. The elaboration strategy helps learners connect the new information learned in the class with their prior knowledge or other sources. The highest mean is 4.1, recorded for item 3, indicating that the respondents practice connecting what they learn with their previous knowledge. It could also be said that the learners can reflect on their understanding that they know and relate it to what they have learned. The lowest score for this strategy is 3.5, recorded for item 4. This result shows that the learners do not prefer summarising notes from their readings or class notes. Item 1, “When I study for the courses in this program, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions,” and item 2, “I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in other courses whenever possible,” both scored 3.7. This indicates that to some extent, learners integrate information acquired in the program with data from diverse sources. Additionally, they amalgamate knowledge gained in one course with that of other courses. In general, the results show that the learners are more inclined to relate new information that they learned with information they already knew.
Figure 8. Mean for Critical Thinking

Figure 8 indicates the results of the responses for critical thinking as a cognitive strategy by the Foundation studies respondents. Learners use critical thinking to evaluate and create new ideas related to their learning. The highest mean score for this strategy is 3.9, observed for item 1. This shows that the respondents mainly evaluate the information learned in a course and decide if they should accept the information. On the other hand, the lowest mean score of 3.6 is recorded for items 2, 3, and 5, which include statements such as “When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in classes or the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence," "I treat the course materials as a starting point and try to develop my ideas about it," and “Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in the classes, I think about possible alternatives.” It can be inferred that respondents rated these items similarly, possibly indicating the consistent practice of these critical thinking aspects. Meanwhile, a mean score of 3.8 was recorded for item 4, “I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in the courses”. In general, learners practise thinking critically to a certain extent where their learning is concerned.

Findings for Metacognitive Self-Regulation

This section presents data to answer Research Question 2: How do learners perceive their use of metacognitive self-regulation?

Figure 9. Mean for Metacognitive Self-Regulation
Figure 9 depicts the usage of metacognitive self-regulation in the learning process. Metacognitive self-regulation refers to the utilization of strategies by students to regulate and monitor their learning process. There are 11 items, and the findings are grouped into five categories: ‘never, rarely, sometimes, very often, and always’. The results presented in Table 4 indicate a positive outcome. The highest mean in this section is 4.0, which is recorded for items 3 and 9. It means that learners very often refer back to their reading materials when they get confused. The findings also show that foundation learners usually try to determine which concepts they do not understand well. The rest of the items recorded satisfactory responses, ranging from an average mean score of 3.1 to 3.8. The lowest mean score in this section is 3.1, indicating that learners perceive that they sometimes miss essential points during class because they are thinking about other things.

**Findings for Resource Management**

This section presents data to answer Research Question 3: How do learners perceive their use of resource management? In the context of this study, resource management is measured by (a) environment management, (b) effort management, and (c) help-seeking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Environment Management (5 items)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMCEMQ5 I attend the classes regularly in this program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMCEMQ4 I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for the courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMCEMQ3 I have a regular place set aside for studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMCEMQ2 I make good use of my study time for the courses in this program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMCEMQ1 I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my coursework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 10. Mean for Environment Management*

The data presented in Figure 10 pertains to the resource management component of environment management. The table includes five items (RMCEMQ1 to RMCEMQ5) and their corresponding mean scores. Item 1, “I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my coursework” received a relatively high mean score of 4.4, suggesting that most foundation learners likely have dedicated study spaces where they can concentrate on their coursework effectively. The mean scores for items 2, 3, and 4 are all the same, at 3.8. This shows that learners generally agreed to the same extent regarding the significance of effectively utilizing study time, maintaining a regular study space, and keeping up with readings and assignments. Additionally, the results revealed the highest mean score of 4.7 for item 5, “I attend the classes regularly in this program,” suggesting a high attendance rate among learners. Overall, the data implies that learners generally have a positive approach towards environmental management, emphasizing the importance of studying in a conducive place and attending classes regularly.
An Investigation of How Foundation Learners Perceive

Figure 11. Mean for Effort Management

Figure 11 presents the data on effort management, which consists of four items (RMCEMQ1 to RMCEMQ4), along with their respective mean scores. Item 1, “I have a regular place set aside for studying” has a mean score of 3.9, showing that respondents generally agreed that they have a designated location to study. This may be attributed to the university providing conducive study environments such as the library or proper study stations in the hostel. Besides that, Item 2 reflects a significantly positive attitude among respondents towards their study, as they strive to work hard despite having less interest in the program. The low mean score of 2.6 for Item 3 confirms that the respondents demonstrate a positive attitude towards their studies by not easily giving up or only studying the easy parts of the course. The efforts and attitude of the respondents are shown through Item 4, as the high mean score of 4.1 suggests that they will complete their tasks even when course materials are dull and uninteresting. Overall, the data indicate that the respondents maintain a positive attitude towards their studies despite having less interest in the program or when the course materials are dull and uninteresting.

(c) Help-Seeking (2 items)

Figure 12. Mean for Help-Seeking

Figure 12 presents the data on help-seeking, which consists of only two items. Both items show a high mean score of 4.3, indicating the readiness of the learners to ask their classmates for help if they cannot understand the material on their own, as depicted in item 1. Additionally, Item 2 shows that learners try to identify other students in the class whom they can refer to when necessary. Overall, the data suggests that learners exhibit a positive inclination towards seeking help and actively engage in collaborative learning by relying on their classmates for assistance when needed.
Findings for Relationship between the Use of Different Strategies

This section presents data to answer Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between the use of different strategies? To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between cognitive, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management strategies, data were analyzed using SPSS for correlations. The results are presented separately in Tables 3, 4, and 5 below.

Table 3. Correlation between Cognitive Strategies and Metacognitive Self-Regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.751**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows an association between cognitive strategies and metacognitive self-regulation. The correlation analysis reveals a highly significant association between cognitive strategies and metacognitive self-regulation ($r=.751**$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), a coefficient is considered significant at the .05 level, and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation ranges from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation falls within the range of 0.5 to 1.0. Therefore, the strong positive correlation observed between cognitive strategies and metacognitive self-regulation suggests a strong relationship between these two variables.

Table 4. Correlation between Metacognitive Self-Regulation and Resource Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
<th>Resource Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Management</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.572**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Table 4 depicts an association between metacognitive self-regulation and resource management. The correlation analysis shows that there is a highly significant association between metacognitive self-regulation and resource management ($r=.572**$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), a coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between metacognitive self-regulation and resource management.
Table 5. Correlation between Metacognitive Self-Regulation and Cognitive Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Resource Management</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource Management</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.536**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Table 5 shows an association between resource management and cognitive strategies. The correlation analysis shows that there is a highly significant association between resource management and cognitive strategies with (r=.536**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), a coefficient is important at the .05 level, and a positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be between 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This indicates a strong positive relationship between resource management and cognitive strategies.

Discussion

**Question 1: How do learners perceive their use of cognitive strategies?**

The findings showed that the foundation students prefer to employ cognitive strategies which are familiar to them and less complicated as evidenced by the highest score of the four cognitive components discussed above. In other words, they tend to memorize key concepts, go through their class notes to get the essential information for them to memorize, use their prior knowledge to connect with the new knowledge that they acquire and also evaluate the information learned and decide if they should accept the information. Students at this level frequently use learning strategies that they have been using since their secondary school. At this point, this finding is invaluable because it serves as a benchmark or guidance for educators to map a suitable level of taxonomy domain as well as to devise appropriate types of assessments to align with the intended taxonomy domain. It is also an indicator for educators to assist foundation students in exploring more learning strategies on cognitive components. This is in line with the finding of Kasmani and Bengar (2013) which concluded that many lecturers and EFL undergraduate students are still lacking in awareness of the existence of vocabulary learning strategies, including cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In addition, Young (2013) suggested that foundation students should receive cognitive and metacognitive strategy training to become highly self-regulated, autonomous achievers.

**Question 2: How do learners perceive their use of metacognitive self-regulation?**

Al-Harthiy, Was and Isaacson (2010) found no direct effect of metacognitive self-regulation on the total scores of respondents in exams. Still, a study by Uzuntiryaki-Kondakci & Capa-Aydin (2013) recorded that metacognitive self-regulation plays a key role in critical thinking. This research however aims at examining the students’ use of metacognitive self-regulation in the learning process, not its impact on students’ performance. When reading for the courses, students make up questions to help focus on the reading and go back to reading when they get confused. Students
also determine the concepts that they do not understand well. Other positive self-regulations that they employed include setting goals to achieve in each study period, asking themselves questions to ensure understanding and changing the way of study to fit the course requirements. The findings indicated that the foundation students applied metacognitive and self-regulation in their learning process. This showed that metacognition self-regulation is frequently used by foundation students and has a high potential to impact the learning process. This is in line with Yong (2013) who reported that the more successful students exerted greater metacognitive control over their learning. Therefore, it is significant to emphasize the effective use of metacognitive self-regulation among students.

**(Question 3: How do learners perceive their use of resource management?**

The findings of this study on learners' perceptions of resource management, encompassing environment management, effort management, and help-seeking carry significant implications for both educational practice and the understanding of student behaviour. The positive attitudes demonstrated by learners towards environmental management highlight the importance of conducive study spaces and regular class attendance. These findings concurred with the findings by Naujoks (2021) in which a positive environment for studying leads to a more effective learning environment, especially for learners during remote teaching and learning. The high mean score for the findings related to the study environment reflects that learners are aware of the importance of a well-structured learning environment as a basic condition for studying. As for effort management, the findings of this study are consistent with the same previous study in which the learners in both studies found that they still managed to complete all their assignments despite the challenges that they had to face. Lastly, for help-seeking, the current study found that learners are ready to refer to their peers should they encounter any issues. Interestingly, this is contrary to the findings by Naujoks (2021) in which learners in the previous study were not keen to seek help. This contrary finding might be due to the reason that the learners in the previous study were experiencing online teaching while the existing learners were having their learning physically.

**(Question 4: Is there a relationship between the use of different strategies?**

There is a strong relationship between the use of different strategies. The findings showed that there is a significant association between cognitive, metacognitive self-regulation, and resource management strategies used among the Foundation Studies students. This shows that the students used ways to comprehend information learned in the lessons, planned and monitored their learning and managed their learning environment. In other words, the Foundation students are highly motivated to learn as they strive to understand the content taught to them and effectively determine ways to make sense of the content. At the same time, they continuously monitor their understanding and utilize the resources provided to learn. These findings align with the study conducted by Anthonysamy et al. (2021), who found a positive effect between undergraduates’ self-regulated strategies and their perceived learning performances. The difference in the current study is this study did not explore students’ students’ performance in learning which could be looked into in the future.

**Conclusion**

The study provides a significant conclusion after examining learning strategies proposed by Wenben and Rubin (1987). The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore cognitive
An Investigation of How Foundation Learners Perceive Akahsah, Azizun, Vijayan, Musa, Saleh & Rahmat

components pertinent to learning strategies, encompassing elements like rehearsal, organization, elaboration, and critical thinking, and metacognitive self-regulation. The results stipulate that metacognitive self-regulation can positively influence learning by allowing learners to realize their weaknesses and therefore enable them to find solutions. For example, most learners go back to their reading when they get confused and try to figure it out. They can also identify which concepts they struggle to understand. Learners commonly employ strategies such as relating new information to prior knowledge and seeking explanations from peers as part of their preferences. It is also found that learners attend classes regularly, and they make an effort to do well even if they lack interest in what they are doing. Apart from that, reading materials, including personal notes, are very important because learners rely on them frequently, and they also tend to memorize.

With these findings, it is significant for educators to use the information to improve the teaching and learning process. Firstly, encouraging group discussion and engaging learners during lectures should be practised as part of learning strategies. Secondly, providing relatable examples can facilitate better understanding among learners. While memorization may be preferred in foundation studies, there should be other learning strategies for some degree courses. For instance, legal study requires comprehension and analysis, which cannot be accomplished solely by memorizing textbooks. Hence, it is essential to employ suitable learning strategies to maximize the performance of every learner.

It is undeniable that learning strategies should not remain stagnant. Educators should pave the way for learners to discover their best potential and enhance their cognitive and metacognitive self-regulation. At the same time, optimizing resources for management will improve the learning process. Therefore, further research can explore innovative approaches to give insight and self-awareness among learners about their level of self-regulation and strategies to improve it. Apart from that, developing unconventional learning strategies and methodologies is imperative to attract the students’ interest and cultivate a passion for the learning process.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by Research Grant UiTM Cawangan Selangor (DUCS-FAKULTI) under project number 600-UitmSEL (PI. 5/4) (130/2022). Ethics approval was obtained from the UiTM Research Ethics Committee (registration number: REC/04/2023 (ST/MR/95).

About the authors

Namirah Mohd Akahsah has a master’s degree in Law from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She is currently a Law Lecturer at the Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Dengkil Campus, with nearly 8 years of teaching experience. Her research interests lie in legal education, legal theories, and international law. Namirah has published articles and authored manual books specifically tailored for UiTM students, providing them with valuable resources for their legal studies. Outside the classroom, she actively participates in conferences and innovation competitions. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7613-334X

Najwa Azizun has a master’s degree in Law from Universiti Teknologi MARA. She is currently teaching law at the Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Selangor, Dengkil Campus for 8 years. Her research interests include constitutional law, international law, land law and legal education. She also has published journal articles on various
areas of law. Najwa has presented at conferences and participated in innovation competitions. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9982-8300

**Bharathi Vijayan** has a doctorate in teaching of English from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, specializing in academic reading. She has 10 years of teaching experience and is currently working at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Dengkil Campus. She has taught English to international students as well as Malaysian students. Her research interests include language learning strategies, reading strategies, English for Academic Purposes and learning style. Bharathi has published journal articles on teaching and learning and has presented at conferences. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7019-8504

**Hariati Ibrahim Musa** has a master's degree in Law from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and currently teaching Law at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan. She has been teaching law for almost 19 years in 2 public universities. Her research interests include human rights and legal education. She co-authored a book, wrote a chapter in a book and published articles in international journals including a Scopus indexed. She also presented at conferences and innovation competitions. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5037-2510

**Muhammad Ridhwan Saleh** has a Master in Comparative Laws degree from International Islamic University Malaysia. He is currently a lecturer at the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University, IIUM. His area of interest includes legal skills, legal writing and Islamic law. Besides presenting papers at national and international conferences, he also actively participated in various innovation competitions. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9518-8504

**Noor Hanim Rahmat** has a doctorate in TESL, specializing in Academic Writing. She is also an associate professor at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Johor Branch, Pasir Gudang Campus. She has taught for almost 30 years. Her research interests are in Academic Writing, TESL Methodology, Educational Psychology and Language Proficiency. She has published some chapters in books, and also a few solo-authored books. She has presented at conferences, both as a presenter and keynote speaker. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5539-7541

**References**


An Investigation of How Foundation Learners Perceive

Akhsah, Azizun, Vijayan, Musa, Saleh & Rahmat


https://doi.org/10.37134/pendeta.vol9.6.2018

https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i1.1216


https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-004-0006-x

https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164493053003024

http://dx.doi.org/10.18488/journal.1.2021.112.88.97


The Positive Effect of the English Reading Circle Method on Students’ Reading Performance: Tishk University Case Study

Turgay Kucuk
English Language Teaching Department
Tishk International University, Erbil-KRI, Iraq
Email: turgay.kucuk@tiu.edu.iq

Received: 11/05/2023 Accepted: 02/16/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
This study aims to investigate how the reading circle, also known as the literature circle method, affects students' reading performances and lessons. His study will be an example study in helping students who do not like reading gain a reading habit. In this study, a mixed research method was applied by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. At the beginning of the study, control and experimental groups were created using the stratified sampling method, and a pre-test was applied by an expert staff to see the students' reading performances at the beginning of the study. The reading circle method was followed in the experimental group, and the traditional text reading and answering method was followed in the control group. During this five-week study, weekly tests were applied to both groups, and their reading performances were monitored. At the end of the study, post-tests and semi-structured interviews were applied to the students. According to SPSS t-statistics analysis, a significant difference of .001 was observed between the reading performances of the experimental group and the control group. In addition, students' positive feedback about the reading circle method was recorded from the interview analysis. As a result, this study revealed that the reading circle method made a positive contribution to students' reading performance. This study will shed light on other studies on reading in Iraq.

Keywords: English reading circle, Iraq, literature Circle, reading performance, Tishk University

Cite as: Kucuk, T. (2024). The Positive Effect of the English Reading Circle Method on Students’ Reading Performance: Tishk University Case Study. Arab World English Journal, 15(1): 233-244. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.14
Introduction

According to (Riswanto et al., 2023, “Reading is an essential skill required for acquiring proficiency in the English language. Books are windows to the world, reading opens a plethora of opportunities for learning and gaining knowledge about various subjects and cultures without the need for physical travel” (p.573). The place of reading in English or any language is indisputably important. Reading is a fundamental skill in establishing the cornerstones of education and completing personal development. It is a magic touch that makes every aspect of our lives beautiful (Isaqjon, 2022).

One of the primary and important characteristics of reading is its function as a gateway to acquiring knowledge (Kara & Kucuk, 2023). Through the dedicated pursuit of a literary existence, individuals might acquire comprehensive knowledge about their personal history, prospects, and global affairs. The acquisition of knowledge is dependent upon engaging in the act of reading (Kucuk, 2023). Despite possessing information, he lacks the necessary supporting traits and fails to exert influence over others through his speech. An additional advantage of engaging in reading is its contribution to cultivating critical thinking and analytical abilities. When engaging with various forms of textual material such as novels, newspaper articles, sports news, or academic studies, it is essential to initially comprehend the conveyed information and subsequently interpret it through our individual perspectives (Celik, 2018). Through this approach, we acquire the ability to analyse events from a suitable standpoint and evaluate them with a discerning mindset.

One further advantage of reading lies in its boundless impact on individuals' oral communication skills (Kara, 2023). The attainment of fluency in English or any other language is intricately linked to the act of reading. Engaging with various forms of written material, such as magazines, books, novels, columns, and other literary works, facilitates the expansion of one's vocabulary, fosters a heightened awareness of grammatical structures, and affords individuals the chance to acquire a nuanced understanding of the language (Dogan et al., 2020). Effective communication is more than just individuals expressing their thoughts; it also entails comprehending the perspectives of others. The primary determinant of attaining this objective is engaging in extensive reading.

The acquisition of reading abilities is one of the fundamental components in the English language instruction provided to students. In contrast to other skills, the acquisition of this particular skill necessitates a substantial amount of effort (Varita, 2017). Reading is one of EFL classrooms' most important academic skills to obtain new knowledge and make inferences from different perspectives (Rahayu & Suryanto, 2021). Reading ability provides students with the opportunity to evaluate and synthesize the information obtained, as well as interpret it from different perspectives.

Although reading is so important, teachers strive to make their students love reading and develop a habit. Reading has a great place, especially in English classes. Without acquiring the habit of reading, it is not possible to reach the desired conclusion and information in sentences, texts, and paragraphs (Daskan, 2023; Daniels, 2023).

On the other hand, numerous English language learners characterize the act of reading as a cognitively demanding activity that necessitates a significant investment of time and energy, often resulting in fatigue (Celik, 2019). The primary factor contributing to this phenomenon is the continued utilization of outdated and unengaging instructional techniques, along with the selection of academic materials that surpass students' comprehension levels. Due to the perception of reading as a tedious and hard task, pupils experience a decline in their motivation levels, leading
to a reluctance to engage in reading activities. During the subsequent phase, students abstain from completing the assigned reading materials provided by their instructors (Kucuk, 2023). Consequently, the desired outcomes set forth at the commencement of the semester are unattainable, leading to a decline in academic performance among students.

To enhance the enjoyment of reading, individuals should engage in the act of reading with their preferred style and manner. Contemporary pupils exhibit a reluctance to engage in activities that are enforced or imposed upon them, fostering a bias against such mandated endeavors. Consequently, they actively avoid participating in these activities, effectively severing any potential for future involvement (Kucuk, 2023).

**Purpose of the Study**

This study was designed to investigate the contribution of the Reading Circle method to the reading skills of EFL students. Especially by using this method, it was aimed to improve students' reading skills and increase their activity in reading lessons.

1. How does the Reading Circle method affect students' reading performance?
2. What are the contributions of the Reading Circle method to reading classes?

**Literature Review**

Reading Circle also took its place in the literature as Literature Circle. This is an active reading method and originated in the United Nations. American scholar Harvey Daniels was the first person to come up with this idea. In his book, he stated that this method can be described as a Literature Circle because it includes mostly literary subjects. He also used the expressions "Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups" to describe the Reading Circle method (Daniels, 2023). The Reading Circle contains various notions despite sharing a similar attribute. Every student actively engages in their language acquisition process and strives to achieve their utmost potential. According to Varita (2017), the Reading Circle technique emphasizes the need for students to engage cooperatively to enhance their academic progress and language learning. According to Rahayu and Suryanto (2021), a separate study posited that the Reading Circle method integrates both individual and collaborative learning approaches, suggesting that contemporary educational systems should incorporate this method. In a broader context, it entails the establishment of discourse collectives wherein participants engage in a shared reading of a prescribed text and, after that, present and deliberate upon their respective viewpoints within the framework of assigned roles. Implementing the Reading Circle approach facilitates a transition for students from a passive stance to an active one, enabling them to generate a modest output.

It is believed that this method is beneficial in attracting students' attention to reading activities, understanding what they read, and active participation. “Learning results are significantly influenced by the utilization of appropriate learning resources as well as effective teaching methods” (Riswanto et al., 2023, p.591). More importantly, the teacher's duties in an ordinary reading course are many. He selects the book, prepares questions, deduces the meanings of unknown words, and prepares tests and quizzes. Thanks to this method, the teachers’ duties are reduced, and the students freely choose the books they will read, create questions with the awareness of the responsibility of their duties, remove unknown words, and prepare tests. In short, a student-centered education takes place. Dogan et al. (2004) stated in their study that the Reading Circle method is almost a magical ability. This method transformed their students from passivity, silence, and reluctance to active students who fulfill their duties in the best possible way.
According to Harvey Daniels (2021), applying the Reading Circle method provides readercentered reading and contributes significantly to intensive reading and extensive reading. In addition, he stated that this method greatly benefits students in expressing their opinions clearly, gaining self-confidence, comprehending the written material, and creating a group spirit.

In his recent study, Liu (2022) examined the benefits of the Reading Circle method within the scope of extensive reading and said “its application is a breakthrough in foreign language teaching” (Liu, 2022, p. 116). According to the study results, it was revealed that the Reading Circle method improved students’ autonomous reading ability and critical thinking skills. By applying this method, it is aimed for students to participate in class activities and work on the given text. At the end of the study, the reason for applying this method is to move from teacher-cantered education to student-centered education and to improve students’ questioning and judging skills. Kaowiwattanakul (2021) conducted a study in Thailand with 47 students to examine the skills acquired by pupils by implementing the Reading Circle method. The objective of this study is to determine the potential impact of this particular instructional approach on the enhancement of students’ critical thinking and reading proficiencies. The study yielded findings indicating that the students exhibited favorable behavioural changes and experienced enhancements in their critical thinking and reading proficiencies.

Avcı and Özgenel (2019) applied the Reading Circle method, also known as the Literature Circle, among teachers and examined how it contributed to their professional development. Before starting the study, they gave nine different books to seven teachers and asked them to choose which book they wanted to read by meeting with each other. According to the results of the study, which lasted approximately one year, it was seen that the Reading Circle method enables permanent learning and allows teachers to learn from each other. In addition, the results of the study revealed that teachers who come together at certain periods get to know each other better, and their social relations improve.

Most previous studies have focused on the theoretical aspects of the Reading Circle method, but Venegas (2019) examined the more practical aspects of this method. In her studies, she tried to keep the social and emotional aspects of this ability at the forefront. She named her study "Socioemotional Growth in Literature Circles". In this study, she stated that the Reading Circle method contributed to students' Socio-emotional development in addition to their reading skills.

Students need to develop the four basic skills of English. One of these four skills is a reading skill. In a study conducted in Indonesia, Novasyari (2021) reported that students had difficulty dealing with reading passages and needed professional support. He stated that a new method was needed to instill a love of reading in students and that this method was the Reading Circle. Novasyari, (2021) stated that thanks to this method, students participated in group discussions and learned to work in a team. At the end of his study, he said “reading circles provide a constructive educational opportunity for students to control their own learning as they share thoughts, concerns and their understanding of the concepts, events, and material presented in the material being read” (p. 14). Another positive aspect of this method is that it has been stated that students improve themselves academically thanks to the information they read, and their learning becomes more permanent. A similar study was conducted in the same country by Sutrisno et al. (2019) studied the effect of the Reading Circle method on students' critical reading skills. This study was conducted with the participation of thirty students at Semarang University. Indonesia, it was revealed that students who can criticize a foreign language comprehend the language faster.
than others. In addition, it has been revealed that the Reading Circle method offers critical thinking skills to students more effectively than technology-integrated education.

Despite the benefits the Reading Circle method offers, it also has some shortcomings. Clarke and Holwadel (2007) recently reviewed the Reading Circle method and made some recommendations. They found that there were problems with this method, such as weak students and structural obstacles. It has been stated that more productive results can be achieved by solving such problems with mini lessons, watching videos, choosing books that students will like, and providing students with proper guidance.

Methodology
Research Design

This study applied a mixed-method approach to analyze the data obtained and student opinions. Combining the information obtained using the mixed method and analyzing the data obtained will yield more permanent results (Dawadi et al., 2021; Kucuk, 2023). Quantitative data were obtained by applying a pre-test at the beginning of the study, quizzes throughout the study, and a post-test at the end of the study. When the whole study was completed, a semi-structured interview was applied to obtain and analyze the students' opinions about Reading Circle, and qualitative data was obtained.

Participants

For this study, two classes of the language preparatory school of Tishk University were selected using the Stratified sampling method in the 2022-2023 academic year. Using this method, it is possible to reach clearer results by taking the opinions of more groups (Iliyasu & Etikan, 2021). Two groups were created, the experimental and control groups, and the students were placed in classes on a voluntary basis. The students' level is at the B2 level according to the common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR). A total of 24 students of different genders, 12 in the control group and 12 in the experimental group took part in this study. This study lasted for five weeks.

Data Collection Procedure

At the beginning of the study, a pre-test, prepared by Oxford University Press and used to measure the language abilities of students in preparatory classes at Tishk University, was applied to measure the students' levels, and the students' results were recorded. A stratified sampling method was used to select the students, and a total of 24 students were selected based on volunteerism: 12 in the experimental group and 12 in the control group. The Reading Circle method was introduced to both groups and their teachers. By meeting with the group to whom we will apply the Reading Circle method and obtaining their information. A survey was created with 15 book options for students so they would not be pressured before choosing a book. Arthur Conan Doyle's book "A Study in Scarlet" was chosen and given to the experimental group. As in the Daniels (2023) model, students were given tasks. While assigning these tasks, student abilities and interests were taken into consideration.

The roles given to the students are as follows: summarizer, questioner, connector, illustrator, travel tracer, vocabulary enricher, researcher, and literary luminary. Without briefly explaining the tasks, it was explained to the students that they had to prepare for all these roles at home and that they had to demonstrate their duties in the classroom environment when they came
to class. The tasks assigned were based on Cloonan et al. (2020) and are briefly as follows, according to the explanations in their study. Summarizer reads the assigned text at home and summarizes the topic. In this study, this person is generally the one who appears at the beginning of the course and is responsible for the introduction of the Reading Circle method. The questionnaire task asks questions about the text and asks students questions, usually at the end of the lesson, and tests the students' knowledge. Another important task is the connector task. We can also call this task linker. This task investigates the connection between the events in the passage and real life and gives moral lessons to classmates. The next task is the illustrator task. When this task is initially given, it should not be given to students who can draw. Otherwise, these undesirable results may occur (Rahayu & Suryanto, 2022). In this role, students draw important parts of the book and tell their friends about these notable events by showing the pictures they drew to their classmates. Another fun role is the travel tracer role. In this task, students arrange events and places in the order they occur and tell them to their friends in the class. Our sixth role is the vocabulary enrichment role. This role has been called vocabulary wizard or vocabulary worm in various sources (Rahayu & Suryanto, 2022; Liu, 2022). The student in this role reads the book and removes the unknown words, and when the activity starts, he explains the unknown words to his classmates after the summarise. Our seventh task is the literary luminary task. This task is usually responsible for explaining figurative language terms such as metaphors, idioms, or quotations that the author uses. The last task is the researcher task. The student in this role researches the background of the book. They research realistic issues such as where the book was written, in what environment it was written, in what climate it was written, or the author's background, and share general information about the book with the class.

In this eight-week study, weekly quizzes were held, and the development of the students' academic reading performance was recorded. Five separate quizzes were applied, and these quizzes were selected from the book's source and prepared according to the levels from CEFR A2 to CEFR B2 level. At the end of the study, a specially prepared post-test was applied to measure the students' reading performance, and a semi-structured interview was also conducted with the students. The content analysis method was used to evaluate the results.

**Findings**

Table 1. *Pre-test and Post-test Results of the Experimental and Control Groups in Reading Classes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73.75</td>
<td>7.818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>74.17</td>
<td>6.847</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>78.33</td>
<td>7.203</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>89.33</td>
<td>5.742</td>
<td>-4.137</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one revealed the students' pre-test and post-test results using the Reading Circle method. According to the calculated t-statistic results, the results of the control and experimental groups, according to the pre-test performed at the beginning of the study, are very close to each other. According to SPSS t-statistic calculations, the study's results revealed a highly significant
difference of .001 between the experimental group and the control group. According to the SPSS
27 analysis, there was a five-point increase from 75 to 78 in the control group. In the experimental
group, the average score, 74 on the pre-test, increased to 89 on the post-test at the end of the study,
showing a significant increase of 15 points. Based on the data obtained, it was determined that the
Reading Circle method students greatly benefited the students' reading performance.

Figure 1. The Weekly Performance of Control Group Students in Five Quizzes.

The outcomes presented in Figure 1 illustrate the performance of the control group students
on the chapter quizzes following the implementation of the traditional teacher-centered method for
five weeks. The table presents the outcomes and performance graphs of the 12 students across five
distinct quizzes. The quiz results of the students in the control group exhibited variable changes,
with instances where a student who achieved a high score in one examination obtained a shallow
mark in another examination, resulting in an unstable performance graph. The findings of this
study indicate that the implementation of teacher-centred traditional approaches during reading
activities had minimal impact on the students' reading performance.

Figure 2. The Weekly Performance of Experimental Group Students in Five Quizzes.
The students' reading performance in the experimental group can be observed in the second figure, which presents the outcomes of five distinct quizzes conducted through the implementation of the Reading Circle approach. Upon examination of the table, it becomes evident that there is a consistent upward trend in the reading performances of the kids. In contrast to the control group, the success graph of the students in the experimental group exhibits a consistent trajectory without any fluctuations. Based on the data presented in the table, it is evident that the implementation of the Reading Circle approach has a beneficial impact on the reading proficiency of pupils.

Interview Analysis

In this part of the study, students were asked what they thought about the Reading Circle method and whether it boosted their reading skills. Five of the answers given by twelve students are given below as examples.

It improves the quality of my reading. This approach also improved my ability to string words together to form sentences. (Student 2)
Yes, of course. This activity broke my timidity since I gave presentations and spoke like a teacher. This technique enabled me to participate in activities with my classmates. (Student 5)
This study helped me learn a lot of new words and understand how to connect what I read to my own life. (Student 7)
Before I began this method, I read a book slowly. This practice has changed how I feel about reading books. I now believe that reading a book is one of the best things to do, and I cannot wait to do the Reading Circle method again. (Student 10)
Of course, this method helped me read better and pay more attention in class. I do not know why, but this activity taught me many words and was much fun. (Student 12)

According to the aforementioned semi-structured interview findings, the students' general perspective on reading activities has changed. Thanks to the Reading Circle method, students participate more actively in classroom activities, and we can eliminate shy students' concerns from their responses. It has been determined that besides improving students' reading skills, this method also facilitates their vocabulary acquisition. Finally, thanks to this method, we can deduct from the students' interview responses that reading classes, which they previously deemed tedious, have become more enjoyable.

Discussion

According to the results of the pre-test, post-test, chapter quizzes, and semi-structured interview applied in this study, the Reading Circle method, also known as the Literature Circle method, provided great benefits to the students' reading performance, contributed to vocabulary learning and changed the students' perspective on reading lessons.

The first section of the study's findings, the pre-test and post-test results, provided information that needed to be considered. The students' reading scores on the pre-test were highly similar to one another, indicating that the groups were distributed equally. Based on the study's results, the experimental group and the control group had a significant difference of .001, as determined by the SPSS t-statistic calculations. The study's findings were consistent with those of Liu's (2022) investigation. The Reading Circle method improved students' academic progress and reading proficiency in both studies. Another startling finding is that, although the control group's reading performance increased slightly, the experimental group's reading performance increased
by 15 points when the Reading Circle approach was applied. According to Novasyari (2021), teachers must provide children with a variety of reading strategies, and these strategies will have a direct impact on how well the kids read.

It is worth noting that the analysis of the results of the chapter quizzes applied to the control group for five weeks, as presented in Table 2, holds significance. Based on the data shown in the graphical representation provided, it can be observed that the improvement in reading comprehension among students who engaged in teacher-centered or directed-reading approaches had irregular patterns. In a recent study conducted by Rahman (2022), it was observed that there was no significant enhancement in the reading proficiency and reading comprehension of the pupils assigned to the control group.

The significance and effectiveness of the Reading Circle method for enhancing pupils' reading performance are demonstrated in the third table. Upon closer examination of the table, it becomes evident that there is a consistent upward trend in both students' reading performance and quiz outcomes. Remarkably, the strategy employed in this study increased the success scores of all twelve participating students. The data presented in the table indicates that students who initially obtained exceedingly low scores achieved perfect scores during the final week of the research. The findings of this study indicate that implementing the Reading Circle approach is a pedagogical strategy that holds potential benefits for all instructors (Daniels, 2023; Kaowiwattanakul, 2020; Xu, 2021).

Semi-structured interview analysis, which is the last data collection tool, produced meaningful results. When the answers given by the students were examined, it was determined that, as in other studies, the Reading circle method was beneficial not only to the students' reading performance but also to their vocabulary learning (Aytan, 2018; Ferdiansyah et al., 2020; Daniels, 2023). Another finding derived from the student interview data is that implementing the Reading Circle approach fosters a sense of confidence among pupils. Based on the data obtained from the student population, it was seen that a significant number of students exhibited increased engagement in collaborative activities, leading to the successful minimizing of their shyness-related inhibitions. According to the findings of Karatay (2017) and Su et al. (2019), their study revealed that timid students encountered difficulties in expressing themselves in reading classes due to being overshadowed by dominating students. The interviews performed with the students in this study yielded comparable findings, indicating that implementing the Reading Circle method enhanced the students' ability to overcome their shyness.

Conclusion

As a result of the pre-test, post-test, quizzes, and interviews applied in this study, it was clearly seen that the reading circle method helped students understand literature better and increased their desire to read. When the results of this study and other parallel studies are examined, students' attitudes towards studying within this circle have generally changed positively. It has created an environment that supports students' critical thinking and better understanding of reading texts.

It has been determined that the Reading Circle method also increases student social interaction. Thanks to this method, it has been revealed that they obtain information from each other cooperatively and help each other while transferring the information in the classroom. Unlike traditional methods, the reading circle method has contributed to students working more
confidently and responsibly. This responsibility was made possible by students working individually and feeling like a part of a whole while preparing for their roles.

The use of the reading circle method has resulted in children's acquisition of positive habits. Illustrative instances of these behaviors encompass engaging in systematic reading, engaging in respectful discussions within prescribed parameters, and demonstrating comprehension of written material. The implementation of this approach resulted in a noticeable enhancement in the students' reading performance and an observable improvement in their reading comprehension abilities, as evidenced by the outcomes seen in the experimental group. Upon the conclusion of the task, students demonstrate a comprehensive recollection of the text they have read, retaining intricate details. The findings of this study indicate that the pupils possessed a genuine comprehension of the material they read.

In summary, the results discussed above indicate that using the reading circle approach holds significant promise as an effective strategy for enhancing students' general reading abilities and comprehension skills. By employing this approach, one can surpass conventional methodologies and transform monotonous reading exercises into engaging and instructive experiences.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
I declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

Artificial Intelligence Statement
AI and AI-assisted technologies weren’t used in this article.

About the author:
Turgay Kucuk (MA) is an instructor at TISHK International University in Erbil, Iraq. He currently works as the representative of the dean of students and vice director of TIU Language Preparatory School. He is an enthusiastic writer on various topics, such as body language, writing anxiety, and technology-integrated teaching. ORCiD ID. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2602-6754

References


Maintaining Unity in the Descriptive Paragraph Writing of Saudi EFL University Students: Challenges and Remedies

Fawzi Eltayeb Yousuf Ahmed
Department of English Language, College of Science & Arts (Tanumah), King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.
Corresponding Author: feltayb12@gmail.com

Zahir Adam Daff Alla Ahmed
Department of English Language, Al-Rayan Colleges,(Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah), Saudi Arabia

Elsadig Hussein Fadlalla Ali
Department of English Language, College of Science & Arts (Tanumah),

Sarah Osman Eltom Hamed
Department of English Language, College of Science & Arts (Tanumah), King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.

Received: 11/30/2023 Accepted: 02/21/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
The study analyzes unity in descriptive paragraphs written by Saudi EFL learners at King Khalid University to find out the causes of unity errors in descriptive paragraphs. Paragraph writing is one of the most essential aspects of second language learning writing because it allows students to put their knowledge into practice and systematically convey their ideas. A random sample of fourteen English language teachers and ten EFL students is selected. The study employs testing and structured interviews for data collection. Sample paragraph analysis shows that 70% of the learners do not compose unified descriptive paragraphs, whereas 30% of the students write unified paragraphs that discuss only one topic. The interview analysis demonstrates that the lack of unity in the student's writing is a result of various factors, including the impact of the EFL university learners' mother tongue on target language writing, as well as a lack of activities and practice of basic writing techniques. Most EFL instructors believe that the challenges significantly impede students writing proficiency and influence their ability to construct unified descriptive paragraphs. The study concludes with several recommendations for both EFL teachers and students, hoping that they address the students’ challenges in the descriptive paragraph unity.

Keywords: Challenges and remedies, descriptive paragraph, Saudi EFL students, unity, writing

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.15
Introduction

One of the most critical aspects of second language learning is paragraph writing because it allows students to put what they have learned about the language into practice and systematically convey their ideas. Writing assists learners in certain respects in an EFL classroom. Rao (2007), as mentioned in Ahmed (2019), thinks that writing is vital in the EFL environment because it encourages students to arrange thoughts, criticize, evaluate, and enhance their skills for summarizing. It also improves students' ability to reflect, think, and learn the language. Writing helps learners produce language by generating and connecting ideas. They may investigate, criticize, and summarize the topic under assessment. Writing as a productive skill enables students to be creative and analytical in their language composition.

Achieving unity is one of the most critical parts of a successful paragraph. The degree to which all the concepts included inside a specific paragraph are consistent with each other in a manner that the reader can understand. Oshima and Hogue (2006) define unity as "a paragraph discussing a single topic from the start to the end" (p. 18). Each supporting sentence should directly explain and reinforce the overall sentence's fundamental idea. Exclude every detail that is not relevant to the topic sentence. The paragraph has unity when all of its elements support the statements stated in the topic sentence. The supporting sentences should reflect the main idea presented in the topic sentence; Strunk et al. (2000) think that supporting sentences should stick to and not deviate from the ideas presented in the topic phrase; this produces the unity of a paragraph. Any idea that does not address the issue differs from the paragraph's unity. Therefore, a paragraph must concentrate on a particular topic to retain a sense of unity. As a result, the paragraph should not generate new concepts. Writing a unified paragraph, on the other hand, is one of the most challenging abilities for EFL students to master.

One of the fundamental characteristics of an effective paragraph is unity in paragraph writing. The term unity refers to the idea's oneness. To create unity, a paragraph should include only one main idea. At least two or more sentences of supporting details should support the main idea. The main idea's topic sentence controls the paragraph's unity. Furthermore, supporting elements create the topic sentence by providing further clarification. They must be sufficient to develop the topic sentence and offer the readers a good understanding of the paragraph. Walters (2000) describes paragraph unity as "one paragraph about one main topic" (p. 1). If the paragraph has a sentence or several sentences unrelated to the topic sentence, we say, it "lacks unity." However, sometimes, it can be challenging for EFL university students to maintain paragraph unity. Therefore, this research paper explores unity errors in descriptive paragraphs written by Saudi EFL learners at King Khalid University.

Writing a unified paragraph is a crucial element of writing skills that EFL students should master. Therefore, the results of this study are of great significance to EFL teachers, students, and academics. The finding will provide significant feedback to EFL university teachers to develop practical approaches to address the challenges of maintaining unity in the students' descriptive paragraph writing. The main concern of teachers is to analyze students' written performance continually. By examining the students' written work, teachers can determine whether they achieve the lesson's objectives or not. In general, this research contributes to teaching the English language. It attempts to achieve these objectives:

(a) To analyze and determine unity errors made by Saudi EFL students in descriptive paragraphs.
(b) To figure out the most likely sources of these errors.
(c) To propose suggestions and remedies to assist EFL learners in composing unified paragraphs.
The study poses the following questions:
(a) What unity errors do Saudi EFL learners make when composing descriptive paragraphs?
(b) What are the causes of unity errors in descriptive paragraphs?
(c) What techniques might be recommended to assist EFL students in producing a unified piece of writing?

**Literature Review**

**Definition of Paragraph**

Owl (2009) defines a paragraph as a series of connected sentences that address and develop only one idea (in Wirantaka, 2016). For Oshima and Hogue (2007), a paragraph is a series of related statements a writer builds about a subject. The paragraph always talks about one issue, which is the central theme. The first sentence of a paragraph states the precise argument or significant idea, and the remaining sentences in the paragraph reinforce that point. Furthermore, Zemach and Rumisek (2003) describe a paragraph as a set of sentences discussing only one topic. Together, the sentences convey the main idea of the writer. Philline (2015) sees the paragraph as an independent part of the textual discourse that deals with a specific idea. It consists of a sequence of sentences connected to the progression of a single thought.

**Paragraph Structure**

Wali & Madani (2020) view paragraph structure as the most significant element to point out when relating to document layout and organization. According to Savage and Shafiei (2007), paragraph structure includes the following three parts:

- **Topic Sentence**
  The topic sentence is an introduction that outlines what the writer plans to say about it. It presents the paragraph's central idea. Damayanti et al. (2022) describe the topic sentence as stating the paragraph's subject. It explains what the writer intends to convey in the paragraph. According to Mayers (2006), the topic sentence highlights the main idea of a paragraph around which the rest of the paragraph should revolve. It usually appears at the opening of a paragraph, but it can also be in the center or at the conclusion. The most significant sentence in a paragraph is the topic sentence. It gives a summary of what the paragraph will cover. As a result, the topic phrase serves as a guide for both the reader and the writer. Readers are more able to understand a paragraph when they know what it is about. The writer can see which content to include (and what to leave out). Reid (2000) states that an effective topic sentence consists of two components the topic and the controlling idea. The controlling idea, also known as a restricting statement, limits a paragraph's topic to the element of the topic that we wish to study in the paragraph.

- **Supporting Sentences**
  According to Alice and Patricia (2005), supporting details, or supporting sentences, are statements that reinforce and explain the topic sentence. They are a group of sentences that provide information and elaborate on the topic sentence's theme.

- **Concluding Sentence**
It is the paragraph's final sentence. It summarizes the primary idea and concludes with some final remarks. Kemper et al., (2018) believe that a paragraph ends with a closing sentence that either emphasizes the topic sentence or provides a summary of the whole section, or combines both.

For Mayers (2006), it appears after the paragraph. It highlights the paragraph's main point on which readers should concentrate. It frequently gives a sense of completion.

Damayanti et al. (2022) describe the concluding sentence as summarizing the paragraph's significant ideas. It restates the topic sentence utilizing different words.

The Quality of a Good Paragraph

According to Nunan (1991), three significant aspects influence the quality of a paragraph: unity, coherence, and adequate development. Walker (2010) identifies five components of effective writing: audience, purpose, coherence, clarity, and harmony. These elements contribute to effective writing.

Unity of the Paragraph

Unity is a significant aspect of an effective paragraph. A paragraph's unity means that it discusses only one key idea. Oshima and Hogue (2006) define unity as "a paragraph discussing one and only one main topic from the start to the end." The second aspect of unity is that each supporting sentence explains and supports the main idea delivered in the topic sentence. When all the sentences in a paragraph support the same theme, the paragraph has unity. Alice and Patricia (2005) see that the topic sentence must contain a single controlling idea. Otherwise, the text will become disjointed. The supporting sentences should develop the concept of the topic sentence. The concluding sentence should restate the concept of the topic sentence. Katzer (2016) defines paragraph unity as the organization and coherence found in one paragraph of written content. A well-structured paragraph is one in which all the sentences revolve around a single idea or issue, effectively supporting and developing that core argument. Each sentence follows logically from the one before it, resulting in a smooth development of thoughts across the paragraph.

Previous Studies

Many studies and scholars have researched EFL learners' paragraph writing errors. Fajri (2016), for example, investigates whether EFL students employ coherence, word usage, and unity effectively in composing a paragraph, the most common error learners commit in paragraph construction, and instructors' opinions toward the students' writing errors. This study’s sample consists of twenty-one EFL students at a university in Banda Aceh. The researcher conducts a test to collect data. To gain a better understanding of her learners' writing errors, she also interviews the instructor. The findings show that many participants do not compose coherent and unified paragraphs and use proper wording. Most errors occur in word usage (79%). Students commit spelling mistakes and leave out words and letters. There are 30 unity mistakes (17%) and nine coherence errors (5%). The study relates these errors to the learners’ mother tongue and their difficulty learning English.

Rahman (2021) aims to assess the paragraph development of Indonesian students’ composition. The data consists of 30 paragraphs from ten works written by Indonesian university students. The research uses a content analysis approach to examine four aspects of a successful paragraph: topic sentence, proper development, unity, and coherence. The results demonstrate that all 30 paragraph samples have topic sentences at the beginning of the paragraph, with 14
paragraphs (48%) having suitable development, 18 paragraphs (60%) having unity in a paragraph, and 16 (54%) paragraphs having coherence. The study concludes that the paragraphs are only partially developed and thus need additional editing and development.

Ahmed and Elnour (2018) investigate errors made by Saudi EFL learners in organizational structure and formatting components of written paragraphs. Data collection tools include testing, structured interviews, and personal observations of the researchers. The study attributes these errors in writing paragraphs to many reasons, including EFL students' lack of sufficient vocabulary stock and lack of motivation.

Siddiqui (2020) investigates the elements that influence the paragraph arrangement of intermediate students. In this respect, semi-structured interviews are carried out with six participants from various cities, and written samples are gathered and assessed by applying the thematic analysis method. The data show that rote learning, more focus on grammar, and surface-level teacher feedback are the most essential elements at play. As a result, students cannot create a well-organized text.

Dwijayanti and Purnama (2020) explore the unity and coherence of descriptive text writing by SMP Lab School Jakarta and SMP Al-Azh School Rawamangun Jakarta students. The study employs descriptive analytical techniques through content analysis. According to the study’s findings, student compositions are coherent in pronouns, anaphora, cataphora, transition signals, logical order, and critical noun repetition. Data analyses also show that the texts are not unified. The most prevalent errors among students include inconsistent topics, statements that do not follow a logical order, repeated sentences, and irrelevant sentences. According to the study, students successfully create coherent paragraphs but do not compose unified ones.

Siddiqui (2023) examines errors in the unity, coherence, and development of paragraphs composed by Pakistani undergraduates. The study also investigates the causes of paragraph errors. In this context, writing samples of 20 undergraduates are purposefully selected and analyzed by using error analysis classification by Liu and Wang (2011). The study then conducts individual semi-structured interviews with five participants to investigate the factors that lead to paragraph errors. According to the data, students make the most errors in paragraph unity, followed by paragraph development and coherence. Furthermore, thematic analysis of the interviews suggested that cramming culture, excessive emphasis on grammar, and a lack of quality feedback are the most significant elements influencing these students’ paragraph organization skills.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method that investigates the problems of maintaining unity in the descriptive paragraph writing of Saudi EFL university students.

Participants

The population of this study consists of 16 EFL male and female university teachers at King Khalid University's College of Science and Arts in Tanumah. It also involves 14 second-level students enrolled in the Writing Skill Two course in the second semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The study adopts random sampling as follows:
(i) Ten students' exam scripts are chosen randomly from a writing test as a representative sample.
(ii) Fourteen responses from structured interviews with EFL male and female university teachers are chosen randomly.
Research Instruments

The research instruments consist of the following:

The Test

The test takes sixty minutes. It seeks to assess the use of unity and identify errors in written paragraphs. The participants write a descriptive paragraph of 10 to 15 sentences on one of the following topics:

(i) Your Valuable Possession
(ii) Your Favourite Food
(iii) Your Favourite City

The Structured Interview

The structured interview targets both male and female EFL university teachers. It seeks to explore the participants’ perspectives on the challenges EFL university learners experience in maintaining unity in descriptive paragraph writing and the influence of these challenges on the student's ability to write a unified descriptive paragraph. It also seeks to identify the challenges and causes of paragraph writing unity errors as well as offer suggestions for addressing these challenges.

Research Procedures

This section describes the research procedure with the two instruments used: the test and the structured interview.

1) The researchers gather data by using English writing tests and structured interviews.
2) The writing tasks are manually checked to identify unity errors in the paragraphs.
3) The errors are identified, analyzed, and classified by experienced university teachers regarding the four elements of achieving paragraph unity.
4) Following the classification of all errors, each error is counted to determine its frequency and percentage.
5) Then, the researcher determines and explains the probable causes of errors.
6) In the structured interview, the data are analyzed and interpreted to identify the sources of errors and provide solutions.

Data Analysis

This section identifies and analyzes the unity errors in descriptive paragraph writing. Furthermore, it sheds light on the analysis of the structured interviews.

Findings

Analysis and Description of Errors in Paragraph Unity

For Oshima and Hogue (2006), unity means "a paragraph addresses a single main idea from the beginning to the end" (p. 18), which denotes that "a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from beginning to end." The main idea must be backed by supporting details that clarify or prove the topic sentence’s fundamental idea. For Alice and Patricia (2005), a unified paragraph is one in which each sentence contributes to a single idea. The topic sentence of the paragraph must have a single controlling idea. If not, the paragraph becomes disorganized. The supporting sentences should include examples, facts, or explanations that support or clarify the main ideas. Otherwise, the paragraph focuses on more than a single idea. The conclusion sentence should...
reinforce the idea in the topic sentence. So, seeking the topic sentence, the central idea, and the consistency of discussion based on them in the paragraph should be the main concern in analyzing the paragraph. Therefore, the absence of them means disunity in the paragraph. Based on the above background, this study analyzes the usage of paragraph unity in terms of the following criteria. Adapted from Ahmed (2019):

(i) Is the topic sentence appropriately stated in the paragraph?
(ii) Is there a single controlling idea in the topic sentence?
(iii) Is the topic sentence supported by supporting sentences?
(iv) Does the concluding sentence restate the topic sentence?

Based on the questions mentioned above, Table One below provides a statistical description of the frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity:

Table One: Frequency and percentage of errors in paragraph unity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Elements of Maintaining Paragraph Unity</th>
<th>Yes Frequency</th>
<th>Yes Percentage</th>
<th>No Frequency</th>
<th>No Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Is the topic sentence appropriately stated in the paragraph?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>Is there a single controlling idea in the topic sentence?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Is the topic sentence supported by supporting sentences?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
<td>Does the concluding sentence restate the topic sentence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table One shows that 60% of students state the topic sentences clearly in their paragraphs. It also shows 40% of students find it difficult to state topic sentences. Furthermore, 40% of students include many controlling ideas in the topic sentence, while 60% of students state the topic sentence clearly with one controlling idea. The table indicates that 70% of students have difficulty relating the supporting sentences to topic sentences. It also reveals that 30% of the students give relevant and related supporting sentences. The table also shows that 70% of the students do not write unified descriptive paragraphs. Here are some samples of the participants’ written paragraphs:

**Sample (1) My Favourite Food**

My favorite food is grilled beef. I like it because it is healthy and delicious. I usually eat grilled beef with honey. It energizes the body and provides it with energy. When my mother makes grilled beef for us, we like eating it together. It tastes so delicious because my mother is an expert cook. My sister cannot cook. I also enjoy eating it out with my friends in many restaurants in Abha city. I usually eat it for lunch and sometimes for breakfast. My brother does not like grilled beef. I enjoy eating a lot of grilled beef because it tastes good and is very enjoyable.

The paragraph states the topic sentence. The sentences that follow the topic sentence from sentences two, three, four, and five support the topic sentence. The sixth sentence “My sister cannot cook and the ninth sentence “My brother does not like grilled beef” are irrelevant. They do not support the topic sentence. They damage the paragraph’s unity. The concluding sentence
restates the idea of the topic sentence using different words. This paragraph is not unified since it contains two off-target sentences.

**Sample (2) A Valuable Possession**

My valuable possession is my car. I like it very much. My father gave it to me as a reward when I passed the final exam last year. My car is bright white. It's a Toyota Corolla. It has a large boot and four doors. The back seats are both very spacious and comfortable. My friend has a red car with uncomfortable seats. I drive my car to the university and see my close friends. In addition, my car uses very little gasoline, so I don't have to pay a lot of money to operate it. I enjoy driving my car while taking my family to the beach on the weekends. The beach is too far from our apartment.

This paragraph introduces a clearly stated topic sentence. Sentences one, two, three, four, five, and six support the topic sentences. However, sentence seven is irrelevant since it does not support the topic sentence, which is “My friend has a red car with uncomfortable seats”. In this sentence, the writer gives a new and unrelated idea to the topic sentence, which breaks up the paragraph unity. Sentences eight, nine, and 10 support the topic sentence. Sentence 11 “The beach is too far from our apartment” destroys the unity of the paragraph. It does not support the topic sentence. It is an irrelevant sentence. The concluding sentence does not restate the idea of the topic sentence. In general, the paragraph has no unity since it contains irrelevant sentences.

**Sample (3) My Favourite City**

Damam is my favorite city. I like this city very much because it is home to many friends. In addition, the weather is so amazing. There are also large shopping centers, attractive green spaces, and relaxing beaches. Furthermore, the people of Damam are incredibly welcoming and friendly. I like Damam and hope that I can stay in it forever.

The first sentence expresses the topic sentence. The supporting sentences indicate why Damam is the writer's favorite city. The topic sentence is supported by supporting sentences using explanations and descriptions. The supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence. The paragraph revolves around only one idea; there are no irrelevant sentences. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea expressed in the topic sentence. Since all the supporting sentences discuss only one idea and each sentence is directly related to the topic sentence from beginning to end, this paragraph has unity.

**Analysis of the Interview Questions**

This part sheds light on the findings of the structured interview conducted with 14 randomly selected EFL male and female teachers. It focuses on the participants’ responses to the interview questions. These responses are analyzed and described as follows:

**Question (1) Do EFL learners encounter challenges maintaining unity in descriptive paragraph writing?**

Most of the participants (80%) responded with ‘Yes’. However, only three teachers (20%) answered with ‘No’.

**Question (2) If yes, what challenges do EFL learners encounter in maintaining unity in descriptive paragraph writing?**
Based on participants’ responses, the current study finds that EFL learners encounter many challenges in maintaining unity in descriptive paragraph writing. These challenges are listed and summarized as follows:

a. Difficulty creating a good topic sentence and backing it up with relevant ideas.

b. Students can establish a unified topic sentence in the first sentence but cannot keep the topic consistent throughout the supporting sentences.

c. Difficulty keeping unity in paragraph writing. That is, the supporting details do not support the idea of the topic sentence.

d. Difficulty restating the topic sentence's key point in the concluding sentence.

e. In general, EFL students' written work contains grammatical, spelling, and word use errors.

f. Inability to write the paragraph structure entirely and clearly.

g. Inadequate or incorrect use of transition words.

**Question (3):** To what extent do these challenges have an impact on the student's writing ability?

Most EFL university lecturers believe these difficulties impede the students' writing abilities.

**Question (4):** What are the main causes of paragraph unity errors?

EFL university teachers attribute the unity errors that EFL university students commit when writing descriptive paragraphs to the following causes:

a. The impact of EFL university students' first language on target language writing.

b. Lack of motivation

c. The writing process is a complex activity that requires mastery of grammatical rules.

d. Inadequate exposure to samples on paragraph unity.

e. The method of teaching paragraph unity.

f. Lack of appropriate feedback.

g. Lack of grammar knowledge and sufficient vocabulary are closely related to EFL university students' errors in paragraph writing unity.

h. Lack of reading and lack of adequate writing practice.

i. Inadequate activities and practice of basic writing techniques

j. The students do not adhere to the stages for creating a cohesive paragraph.

**Question (5):** What recommendations do you suggest for enhancing cohesive paragraph writing unity?

To enhance the skill of EFL learners in paragraph writing unity, the participants propose the following suggestions for both students and teachers:

a. Teachers should choose a compelling writing style emphasizing proper vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

b. Teachers should encourage students to focus on the main elements of the paragraph.

c. Teachers should use various more intriguing strategies when teaching paragraph writing.

d. Teachers should assist students with paragraph writing by implementing some basic rules in sentence writing.

e. Teachers should use creative techniques to teach unity. Furthermore, they should focus on encouraging students to practice writing and reading abilities on a regular and purposeful basis.

f. Teachers should encourage students to write by providing practice with model paragraphs, paying attention to the characteristics of paragraph unity.
b. Teachers should provide further activities for using the unity aspects in paragraph writing.
g. Teachers should provide both oral and written feedback.
i. Teachers should encourage students to improve their writing skills by developing a good topic sentence, supporting it with explanations or examples, and achieving a logical conclusion when composing paragraphs.
j. Teachers should evaluate the student's writing activities closely.
k. Students should learn more examples of the paragraph structure.
l. Students should practice free writing tasks using the model paragraphs giving attention to the elements of paragraph writing unity.

Discussion

The first question of the study: What unity errors do Saudi EFL learners make when composing descriptive paragraphs?

To answer this question, the analysis of test data in Table 1 shows that 40% of students find it challenging to state topic sentences clearly. They include many controlling ideas in the topic sentence. It is also evident from the analysis of test data that 70% of the students have difficulty relating the supporting sentences to the topic sentence. The test data also shows that most students have difficulty writing unified descriptive paragraphs.

It is also evident from the analysis of the interview data that there are many unity errors made by Saudi EFL learners when composing descriptive paragraphs, including difficulty in writing an effective topic sentence and supporting it with appropriate ideas. Also, learners can create an effective topic sentence, but they cannot maintain the topic consistency throughout the supporting sentences. There is difficulty in preserving unity in paragraph structure; that is, the supporting sentences do not contribute to the development of the topic sentence. In addition, learners find it challenging to restate the topic sentence in the concluding sentence. Moreover, the written work of EFL students involves errors in spelling, grammar, and word choice. It also consists of insufficient or inappropriate usage of transition words.

The second question of the study: What are the causes of unity errors in descriptive paragraphs?

The analysis of the interview attributes the causes of these errors to many factors including the influence of EFL university students' mother tongue on the target language writing, and lack of motivation, in addition to the inadequate exposure to samples on paragraph unity. Moreover, the strategies used to teach paragraph unity are among the most critical factors in creating these errors. The factors also include lack of appropriate feedback, lack of motivation, lack of reading, and lack of adequate writing practice. Students do not follow the steps required to create a coherent paragraph, and there are insufficient activities and practice for basic writing skills.

The third question of the study: What techniques would you recommend to help EFL students produce a coherent piece of writing?

The analysis of the interview shows that the participants recommended that teachers adopt a compelling writing style that promotes adequate vocabulary, correct language, spelling, and punctuation. Also, they should motivate students to concentrate on the critical components of the paragraph. Moreover, they should employ various interactive strategies while teaching paragraph writing. Furthermore, they should encourage learners to write by giving them extra practice with model paragraphs, paying close attention to the qualities of paragraph unity, in addition to they should offer both written and oral feedback. The data analysis suggests that students should
practice free writing assignments using the example paragraphs provided by teachers focusing on
the components of paragraph writing unity. In addition, they should examine more instances of
paragraph development.

The results of this research are similar to those of other studies conducted in various
contexts. For instance, the study of Dwijayanti and Purnama (2020) shows that the students’
written texts are not unified. The most prevalent errors among students include inconsistent topics
and irrelevant sentences. The current study's findings are consistent with Fajri's (2016) study,
which linked paragraph unity errors to learners' mother tongue. The results of the current study are
also similar to Ahmed and Elnour (2018), who attribute these errors in writing paragraphs to many
reasons, including EFL students' lack of sufficient vocabulary stock and lack of motivation. In a
study by Siddiqui (2023), students make the most errors in paragraph unity. The
present study also proves that 70% of the students do not write unified descriptive
paragraphs.

Conclusion
This research paper investigates the unity of descriptive paragraph writing among Saudi
EFL university students at King Khalid University. The data shows that most students do not
compose unified descriptive paragraphs. The study relates these difficulties to various causes,
including interference of the EFL university learners' mother tongue in target language writing, a
lack of vocabulary because of a lack of reading, insufficient writing practice, and inadequate
feedback. To develop the writing skills of EFL university students, the current study recommends
encouraging students to practice free writing activities based on model paragraphs assigned by
teachers, paying attention to the elements of achieving paragraph unity, and giving continuous and
close follow-up to these writing activities.

Funding:
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments:
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity:
This manuscript is an original work

Artificial Intelligence Statement:
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the authors
Dr. Fawzi Eltayeb Yousuf Ahmed is an associate professor at King Khalid University, Saudi
Arabia. He also worked as an associate professor at West Kordufan University in Sudan. Dr. Fawzi
holds a Ph.D. in English language teaching and curriculum from Sudan University of Science and
Technology in 2010. He has published many research papers in refereed journals. ORCID:
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8492-5654
Dr. Zahir Adam Daff Alla Ahmed is an assistant professor at Al-Rayan Colleges, Department of English Language, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He worked as an assistant professor at Albahia University, College of Science & Arts, Department of English Language, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He holds a Ph.D. in English Language Teaching from the Sudan University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Graduate Studies, in 2012. He has 19 years of teaching experience in universities. He has published several research papers in national and international journals. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5667-7128

Dr. Elsadig Hussein Fadlalla Ali is an assistant professor at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. He worked as an associate professor at Dongola University in Sudan. Dr. Elsadig holds a Ph.D. in English Literature and a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics. He has published in national and international journals and participated in many international conferences. ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2002-0290

Dr. Sarah Osman Eltom Hamed is an assistant professor at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. She also worked as an assistant professor at the National Ribat University in Sudan. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from the Sudan University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Graduate Studies, in 2017. She has published some papers in refereed journals. ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8941-1516

References


Error Analysis of Written English Paragraphs by Kurdish and Arab Students: A Comparative Study

Sami Hussein Hakeem Barzani
English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University
Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Corresponding Author: sami.hussein@tiu.edu.iq

Awat Birqe Muho Baiz
Independent Researcher, Erbil, Iraq

Received:11/17/2023 Accepted:02/28/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Competence in writing is an indispensable skill crucial for both academic and professional success, enabling effective expression of ideas, thoughts, and information. Writing proficiency encompasses more than word arrangement, extending to organizing ideas, utilizing proper grammar and punctuation, and conveying meaning clearly. However, second/foreign language learners often grapple with challenges in cultivating proficient writing skills. This investigation meticulously examines errors in a dataset comprising 40 English paragraphs authored by Kurdish and Arab learners. Employing error analysis, the study identifies and categorizes errors with the aim of discerning potential variations in error types and frequencies between the two student groups. Additionally, the research delves into gender-related differences in error occurrence. The results provide valuable insights for crafting language teaching materials and strategies tailored to English learners from Kurdish and Arab backgrounds, illuminating linguistic hurdles these students confront. The study’s findings underscore that punctuation errors prevail among both groups, exhibiting no significant disparities between Kurdish and Arab students. Similarly, gender differences among students do not yield any noteworthy distinctions.

Keywords: Arab student, English paragraphs, error analysis, Kurdish student, written error, writing skill

Introduction

English language is the one language with a global reputation and interest. Nowadays, English plays a major role in our lives. It is becoming more and more habitual, and it is extensively used in many areas. Since English has become the world’s lingua franca, most countries around the world have incorporated English courses into their educational system. Numerous countries are starting at the beginner level, and students are learning the language at an increasingly early age (Jenkins, 2009). Gaining competency in all language skills is the aim of language learning. According to Brown (2000), language comprises four main skills: speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, to achieve proficiency in the language, students should acquaint themselves with all aspects of the language. In this line, writing can be considered an important aspect of language skills due to its multiple uses and fruitfulness. It can give access to the vast grasps. It boosts learner’s vocabularies. Also, it is a big push to integrate learner’s opinions with language proficiency. Nevertheless, teaching writing is not a trouble-free task. The process needs careful effort and using certain strategies that would effectively enable the learners to write freely. Educators must be aware learners about the significance of grammar and sentence structure. It is highly recommended to give students positive reinforcements which motivate them to do better and reach the right destination. Seitova (2016) claims that good English writing proficiency is widely accepted as an effective skill for academic, professional, and individual reasons. Writing ability improvement has been described as a difficult process requiring several movements from different directions and movements among the written text and the writer as well (Harris and Cunningham, 1994). Aziz (2011) states that since the impact of the foreign language (FL) system is different in writing, therefore training writing skills is more challenging than training other skills. According to Richard and Renandya (2000), for non-native English speakers and writing EFL teachers, English writing is one of the most challenging skills to master. Consequently, this study concentrates on the frequency of committed errors in written paragraphs of high school level students who learn English as a foreign language from the elementary school. However, the students might have a good proficiency level in oral communication; this does not guarantee to perform well in written tasks. To this end, this study, especially strives, to present the frequency of the errors and assess the significant difference between the two groups in terms of common writing errors of both Kurdish and Arab English language learners. To do so, the study endeavors to address the following questions:

1. What are the Kurdish EFL learners’ most common writing errors?
2. What are the most common types of writing errors of Arab ESL learners?
3. Is there a significant difference between Arab and Kurdish learners regarding the types of writing errors?
4. Is there any significant difference between male and female students regarding the frequency of writing errors?

Literature Review

Error Analysis

Many efforts have been made to define error analysis and the causes behind error occurrence Keshavarz (2015). The followings are some definitions that some scholars set. According to Dualy, Burt, and Krashan (1982), error analysis is a process for examining errors made by ESL and EFL students. And this can show how to teach in a way that helps students acquire the language while
also letting teachers and other people know what difficulties students have. According to James (2001), “error analysis involves the study of linguistic knowledge, investigating what learners do not know and are able to perform and what they lack and attempt to manage in certain circumstances” (p.62). According to Hasyim (2002), the scope of error analysis is to:

a) “Determine how skillful someone is in the language.”

b) “Determine how someone learns the language.”

c) “Gather information on common challenges in language learning to aid in developing teaching materials” (p. 43).

According to certain academics, errors are essential components of the language learning process (Corder, 1974). However, writing errors cannot be entirely eradicated, as they serve as indicators for teachers to assess students’ writing skills, identify their weaknesses, determine their origins, and provide appropriate remedies. Writing errors shall therefore be taken into account and should not be overlooked because they help students improve their writing skills (Omar & Barzani, 2022).

**Source of Errors**

Various scholars identify sources of errors committed by language learners. Richard (1974) categorizes errors into two main sources: interlingual and intralingual. Interlingual errors occur when learners incorrectly apply rules from their native language when constructing sentences in the target language. While learning a new language, learners typically make the second type of error. This group includes overgeneralization, incorrect analogy, and other errors. Similarly, Heydari and Bagheri (2012) support the idea that both interlingual and intralingual errors are basic sources of errors committed by EFL and ESL learners. James (1998) proposes that interlingual errors, intralingual errors, communication strategy-based errors, and induced errors are the four causes of errors. According to Lado (1975), interference from the learner's native tongue in the target language learning process is the most frequent cause of inaccuracy. In conclusion, the learner's first language significantly influences the occurrence of errors. A significant misunderstanding settled in the learner’s mind leads to confusion. They believe that learning a language involves substituting their first language with the target language. Learners often overlook the fact that different languages convey distinct meanings with their words. Thus, educating learners about the variations in conveying meaning across languages is crucial, highlighting that direct transfer isn't universally applicable.

**Classification of Errors**

Interlingual and intralingual errors are two broad categories of errors, as classified by Brown (2000). Negative interlingual transfer refers to faults resulting from the influence of the learner's first language, while errors stemming from the incorrect application of target language rules are termed as intralingual errors.

Accordingly, Corder (1971) categorized errors into "Errors of competence" and "Errors of performance," indicating that learners can detect and rectify performance errors but may struggle with competency errors. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) further divided errors into six classes based on their characteristics: missing grammatical morphemes, redundant semantic markers, irregular rule application, incorrect word forms, code-switching, and disordered structures. Additionally, Hengwichtikul (2006) structured and analyzed errors at the sentential level,
categorizing them into subject-verb agreement, tense usage, parts of speech, participial phrases, relative clauses, passive voice, parallel structure, punctuation, run-ons, and fragments.

Previous Studies

As previously indicated, academics and researchers are becoming increasingly interested in error analysis methodically. Numerous investigations have been made into the errors made by learners of English as a second and as a foreign language so that writers can examine them and improve.

Zheng and Park (2013) have analyzed the errors of Chinese and Korean learners which they committed in writing English essays. The findings showed that these two groups’ errors were diverse. Utilizing articles, punctuation, and word order was challenging for them. In a related study conducted by Liu (2013), Chinese learners appeared to make errors when writing English sentences. She blamed this on carelessness and the detrimental effects of the subjects’ first language. Mahmood (2016) conducted a study at two universities in the Kurdistan region to identify and assess the writing errors of EFL learners. This is done by administering the Cambridge standard writing test. According to the study’s outcome, the participant’s biggest writing struggles were grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Alhaysony (2012) looked at a sample of 100 Arabic EFL freshmen women from the University of Hail. The findings showed that students frequently used the article incorrectly, especially when it came to omissions. The results were mixed because both interlingual and intralingual were considered in this study. Huang (2001) examined the various grammatical errors that committed by 46 majors at Taiwanese universities. The results showed that the first, second, and third most common errors were verbs, nouns, spelling, articles, prepositions, and word choice. The causes included overgeneralization, negligent rule restriction, simplification, insufficient rule application, and first language negative transfer. Women are motivated to improve their proficiency in both native and second languages, according to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991). Language traits may be more systematically organized in women than in men, according to Dingwall (1998). Comparing how men and women use writing strategies was another investigation by Mutar and Nimechisalem (2017). Female students used writing skills more frequently than male students, which was another significant difference they discovered between the two genders. Bumroongthai (2011) studied errors in English paragraphs. The results unearthed that Thai EFL students made a variety of errors regarding grammar and the paragraph format. Ahmed (1981) did a study with the aim of investigating, classifying, defining, and elucidating the sources of most grammatical and usage problems in scientific students’ English writing. This study’s errors were broken down into 14 categories, including misuses of adjectives, prepositions, noun groups, spelling, and punctuation. Following this, evaluating writing errors made by Kurdish EFL students at Cihan University in Duhok confronted the interest of Omar and Barzani (2022). The research conclusions showed that the participants made eight different types of writing errors: spelling, punctuation, grammar, capitalization, prepositions, verb misuse, and pronoun misuse. Likewise, Abdullah (2020) analyzed written performance errors of EFL Kurdish students in Kurdistan, focusing on writing mechanics. It compared errors between male and female Kurdish EFL learners using a composition test and inter-rater reliability estimation. Findings showed that capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing were major challenges, with female students generally performing better. In a similar line, Qadir and Bostanci (2023) analyzed errors in English writing by Kurdish EFL undergraduate students. Focusing on 57 argumentative essays, the research considered grammatical, lexical, spelling, and punctuation errors, exploring their...
frequencies and subcategories. Results revealed a high overall frequency of errors, with grammatical errors being the most prevalent and lexical errors the least common. Additionally, using a mixed-method approach, Alolaywi (2023) investigated the most common writing errors made by undergraduate students learning English as a foreign language. Errors including verb tense, subject-verb agreement, article misuse, sentence fragments, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Spelling errors emerged as the most frequent, indicating a need for enhanced instructional techniques and corrective feedback to improve EFL students’ writing proficiency. Ultimately, Ali (2024) assessed English writing errors among Kurdish learners through the error analysis technique. Thirty-two students from different disciplines participated, and their answer sheets from the academic English curriculum were analyzed. Fourteen types of writing errors were identified, with grammar, punctuation, wordiness, spelling, and capitalization being the most common.

The Study Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive analytical approach using a series of steps. A descriptive analytical approach is a research method that aims to describe and analyze data in a detailed and systematic manner. It involves collecting data through various methods, such as surveys, interviews, or observations, and then analyzing the data to identify patterns or trends. Thus, the study followed these steps: defining the research question, sample selection, collecting data, analyzing the collected data, and finally drawing certain conclusions based on the results.

Participant and Setting

The present study contained 40 (20 Kurdish & 20 Arab) learners of English language. All participants were from Canadian international school, in Erbil. They were ranging from nine to 12 high school levels. They learn English from the initial stages. English is the medium of instruction, and they were engrossed with the language. The research took place between the academic years 2022-2023. Participants’ statistics are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Participants Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Stage 9th</th>
<th>Stage 10th</th>
<th>Stage 11th</th>
<th>Stage 12th</th>
<th>Gender Male</th>
<th>Gender Female</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Instruments

For this study, participants, comprising Kurdish and Arab language learners, were tasked with creating a concise, authentic paragraph in English on “the most inspirational person in their life.” Clear and necessary instructions were provided, specifying that participants should write approximately 8 to 10 lines without consulting any dictionaries. The researcher supervised the class throughout the activity, and all participants willingly participated without any administrative pressure.
Data Analysis
For the purpose of this study, 40 short paragraphs were read and analyzed. Initially, the researchers reviewed the paragraphs to identify the types of errors present in the students' writing. Subsequently, these errors were categorized according to the classification proposed by Chanquoy (2001). Finally, using SPSS, the frequency of occurrence for each type of error was quantified.

Results
The most frequent sort of writing errors made by Kurdish and Arab pupils, according to Table 2 (figure 1), are punctuation (frequency = 110, 106; percentage = 47.83%, 46.7%). This is followed by those error pertinent to capitalization (frequency = 27, 49; percentage=11.74%, 21.59%). Grammar errors were the third most frequent committed error (frequency = 32, 27; percentage = 13.48%, 11.89%). Some other types of errors such as spelling (frequency=17, 12; percentage=7.39%, 5.29%). Articles (frequency = 17, 10; percentage 7.39 %, 4.41%). Misuse of verbs (frequency = 12, 13; percentage = 5.22%, 5.73%). Misuse of pronouns (frequency = 8, 6; percentage = 3.48%, 2.64%). prepositions (frequency=8, 4; percentage=3.48%, 1.76%) were also appeared in the Kurdish and Arab student’s writing.

Table 2. Errors performance of both Kurdish and Arab students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Kurdish Students</th>
<th>Arab Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of Pronouns</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of Verbs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between groups in terms of the types of written errors. For both the Kurdish and Arab student groups, the mean error rate, standard deviation, and standard error mean are presented. The standard error mean serves as a gauge for how accurately the sample mean represents the population. The data shows, as depicted in Table 3, that both Kurdish and Arab students made a similar number of errors in spelling and grammar (M=.85, Std.= 1.663; M=.60, Std.= .883, respectively), but Arab students made more errors in capitalization and punctuation (M=2.45, Std.= 2.164; M=5.30, Std.= 2.273); while Kurdish students made more errors in the use of articles (M=.85, Std.= .671). Regarding the other types of errors, both groups have relatively low mean error rates. Yet, no statistically significant difference, as the result shows, is found between Kurdish and Arab students in all types of errors.

Table 3. The error difference between Arab and Kurdish students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Kurdish Students</th>
<th>Arab Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>3.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of Pronouns</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of Verbs</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.754</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, as Table 4 indicates the results of male and female students in various types of written language errors. The mean error rate, standard deviation, and standard error mean are reported for each group, along with the significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of the difference between the two group means. The data demonstrates that the mean error scores of both genders are alike for the most error types, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, verb tense, and preposition usage. However, there are some differences in the mean error rates of the two groups. Female students make more errors in the use of pronouns (M=.60, Std=.699), while male students make more errors in the use of articles (M=.80, Std=.789). The capitalization error rates of the two groups are also different, with male students making more errors. The findings demonstrate that while variations in other types of errors are not statistically significant, differences in pronoun and article usage are. Thus, since the general difference level is less than .05 it could be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female learners concerning the types of written errors.

Table 4. The discrepancy in errors between female and male students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.059</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.969</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.357</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td>.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.430</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>2.066</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td>.569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.539</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td>.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of pronouns</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misuse of verbs</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The present study delves into the persistent challenges encountered by Arab ESL and Kurdish EFL students in written English communication. The findings reveal a spectrum of errors spanning punctuation, verb tense, capitalization, grammar, pronouns, prepositions, articles, and spelling. Notably, punctuation errors emerged as the most prevalent among both groups, echoing the findings of previous studies conducted by Zheng and Park (2013) on Chinese and Korean learners and Mahmood (2016) on EFL learners in the Kurdistan region.

Interestingly, despite the diverse linguistic backgrounds, the study showed that there is no significant difference between Arab and Kurdish students, indicating that writing challenges transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries. This finding suggests a universal need for targeted instructional interventions to address common writing errors among ESL and EFL learners.
Furthermore, gender differences were observed, with male students exhibiting more article errors compared to female students’ pronoun errors, a trend that resonates with the findings of Mutar and Nimechisalem (2017) and Abdullah (2020) regarding disparities in writing strategies between male and female learners. These gender-specific insights underscore the importance of tailored instructional interventions to address the distinct needs of male and female students.

Comparisons with prior research conducted by Huang (2001) on Taiwanese university students and Alhaysony (2012) on Arabic EFL learners reveal consistent patterns of error types, such as verb misuse, noun errors, and article misuse, indicative of cross-cultural challenges in English writing acquisition. Moreover, the comprehensive analysis of writing errors undertaken by Qadir and Bostanci (2023) and Alolaywi (2023) underscores the multifaceted nature of language acquisition, highlighting the need for holistic instructional approaches encompassing grammatical, lexical, and punctuation aspects. Considering the findings, it is evident that addressing the diverse array of writing errors requires targeted instructional strategies informed by both linguistic and gender-specific considerations. By drawing upon insights from previous studies and employing innovative instructional techniques, educators can effectively enhance EFL students’ writing proficiency and facilitate their journey toward linguistic fluency.

**Conclusion**

Writing proficiency is a crucial skill for non-native English speakers, particularly for ESL and EFL learners. Despite the efforts of language experts to enhance written communication skills, challenges persist. This study aimed to identify prevalent writing errors among Arab ESL and Kurdish EFL students. The findings revealed punctuation errors as the most frequent among both groups. Additionally, errors related to verb tense, capitalization, grammar, punctuation, pronouns, prepositions, articles, spelling, and misuse of verbs were common. Notably, the study showed that there is no significant difference between Arab and Kurdish students, indicating that writing challenges transcend linguistic backgrounds. Interestingly, gender differences were noted, with male students exhibiting more article errors compared to female students’ pronoun errors. These findings echo previous research by Omar and Barzani (2022) and Huang (2001), indicating the need for further investigation into effective strategies for addressing these errors.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Below are some suggestions to be considered:

- Language Educational programs should give a considerable attention to writing skills.
- Writing teachers shall give students adequate awareness about the significance of grammar, sentence structure, and content.
- Explicit instruction and feedback shall be frequently provided to the learners.
- Teachers shall foster a supportive classroom environment and design daily activities that lead to better writing.

**Funding:**

This research is not funded.

**Conflicts of Interest:**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.
About the Authors:

Dr. Sami Hussein Hakeem Barzani is a lecturer at Tishk International University, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department. He obtained his Ph.D. (ELT) from Cyprus International University, TRNC, Turkey. His research interests include pragmatics, second language acquisition, error analysis, intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, and teaching English through literature. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3333-064X

Awat Birqe Muho Baiz is an independent researcher. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Tishk International University, where she majored in English Language Teaching. Currently, Awat brings her passion for education to school students as a dedicated teacher. Her research interests include second language acquisition, error analysis and teaching English to young learners. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1907-9016

References


Difficulties Faced by Undergraduate Students in English Public Speaking at a Malaysian University

Ahmad Taufik Hidayah Abdullah
Faculty of Languages and Communication
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia

I Made Netra
Faculty of Humanities,
Udayana University, Indonesia

Isyaku Hassan
Faculty of Languages and Communication
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia
Corresponding Author: isyakuhassan@unisza.edu.my

Received: 11/31/2023       Accepted: 03/05/2024       Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
The ability to speak English in public with confidence is essential for university students; both for their studies and employment purposes after graduation. Nowadays, employers seek staff who can speak English confidently. This study, therefore, aims to explore difficulties and factors that hinder effective public speaking among undergraduate students at a Malaysian university. The study employed a qualitative method through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and gathered data from a purposive sample of 44 undergraduate students. The interview data were analyzed using an inductive-thematic analysis: identifying natural units of meaning, labeling, categorizing, and organizing them, constructing narratives, and interpreting the findings. The findings showed that undergraduate students face various difficulties concerning English public speaking due to poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, the findings revealed several factors that hinder public effective speaking among students, including dislike for English, nervousness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, shyness, eye contact, gender differences as well as lack of idea, practice, and audience attention. These difficulties may result in students having a high level of anxiety during public speaking. This study offers valuable insights to educators in overcoming English speaking difficulties among undergraduates to enhance learning outcomes.

Keywords: Malaysia, public speaking, uncertainty reduction theory, undergraduate students

Cite as: Abdullah, A.T.H., Netra, I.M., & Hassan, I.H. (2024). Difficulties Faced by Undergraduate Students in English Public Speaking at a Malaysian University. Arab World English Journal, 15(1): 269-282. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol15no1.17
Introduction

Employment is the impetus and testimonial of students’ achievements in life upon completing their studies. Society sometimes judges that graduates will land a job once they have graduated if they wish. However, statistics show that more and more graduates have been unemployed in recent years in Malaysia. This information can be obtained from the report released by the Ministry of Education’s Graduate Tracer Study which tracks the status of graduates of higher learning institutions six months after graduation to ascertain whether they have started working, are continuing their studies, or are still looking for employment.

According to the 2017 Graduate Tracer Study Report, there were 124,075 graduates from public universities in Malaysia. From the figure, 65,592 (52.9%) were employed, 22,116 (17.8%) furthered their studies, 3,339 (2.7%) upgraded their skills, 6,252 (5%) waited for work placement and a sizeable number of 26,776 (21.6%) were unemployed. This figure was not much different from private higher learning institutions where they produced 98,816 graduates where 50,876 (51.5%) were employed, 16,778 (17%) furthered their studies, 1,507 (1.5%) upgraded their skills, 4,851 (4.9%) waited for work placement and a sheer number of 24,804 (25.1%) were still unemployed [1] (https://www.google.com.my/search: retrieved 16 June 2018-Source: Ministry of Higher Education, 2017- updated data as of 23 January 2018).

The notion of oral presentation skills or public speaking is the ability of a person to speak in front of an audience or crowd. The act of speaking in front of an audience or public is different from conversing with friends where the latter is less formal and unstructured (Choo, et. al, 2006). Besides, it does not need any preparation to do so. As for the setting in Malaysia, those who have graduated from high learning institutions like a university are presumed and subsequently expected to be highly proficient in the English language to compete in the work markets that are not only available in the country but also abroad. Some countries whose people use English most, albeit English is not their first language, such as Singapore and India, have enjoyed a marked increase in their economy.

One of the obvious causes of unemployment is related to their lack of oral communication skills. Some prospective employers complained that 50% of graduates have an unsatisfactory grasp of English communication skills (Mohd Azrizal, 2014). Some field experts explain that poor command of English, lack of confidence, and unrealistic expectations are some of the main job busters. The importance of mastering communication skills, be it in English or Malay language as well as skills in presentation or public speaking are among the important criteria for a graduate to be employed. Another study by Sarjit and Candice (2009) on analyzing the English language needs of human resource staff in multinational companies in Penang has shown a dire need for companies to train their staff to master good English for the sake of their career in the future.

In Malaysia, English is a compulsory subject for all university students, including Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA). One of the English papers for first-degree programs at UniSZA is English for Academic Communication. This paper examines a variety of skills needed to perform academic tasks, such as reading strategies and taking notes from written and oral-aural texts (Hassan, Madarina, & Azmi, 2021). Students are assigned to produce academic assignments and make oral presentations Public speaking is one of the main components of this paper where the students are expected to be able to make a sound preparation and ultimately a sound presentation at the end of the course duration.

Although English public speaking has been introduced in their studies, the results in spoken language through public speaking are still rather poor and still not satisfactory. From the
observation made by the researcher, one of their weaknesses in the use of oral communication is a phenomenon known as public speaking anxiety, especially when delivering a public speaking presentation in front of the class. This phenomenon is defined as an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey, 1982).

One of the researchers of this study has been teaching the English language at a college and university for almost two decades. From his observation, one of the weakest sides of an English learner is when it comes to speaking in front of the class or delivering a public speaking presentation. Notably, only a few students could easily deliver public speaking, but most of them miserably failed due to some factors. Not prepared, lack vocabulary or ideas, poor grasp of English grammar, and the most obvious thing is their problem with anxiety or stage fright when delivering a speech, even a simple one.

This matter has intrigued the writer to research the main problems faced by students when it comes to public speaking. The main reason why this research is worth doing is because of the need for a graduate to master good English public speaking or oral presentation skills that will be fully utilized once they are on the hunt for a job in the future where a candidate with good command in English, especially in giving oral presentation will have some advantages. Thus, this research sought to investigate difficulties in English public speaking faced by undergraduate students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia. Specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives.

1. To identify language-related difficulties in English public speaking encountered by undergraduate students at the selected university.

2. To explore factors that hinder effective English public speaking among undergraduate students at the selected university.

Literature Review

Oral Presentation Skills/ Public Speaking

Unlike daily conversation, an oral presentation needs more detailed and complex preparation since it has to adhere to some characteristics and conditions to meet its objectives (Ahmad & Khan, 2023; Choo et al., 2006). According to Choo et al. (2006), there are three elements or characteristics of a good oral presentation. Firstly, an oral presentation is highly structured. It needs detailed planning and preparation. The management of time is very important since a speaker will only speak at a specified time. A well-timed and planned presentation is needed to meet the objective of the presentation. The audience might not pose questions during the presentation but they can be raised after the presentation. In this case, a presenter needs to anticipate any possible questions that are posed.

Secondly, an oral presentation uses more formal language. The choice of words or phrases in the conveyed speech is very crucial. A speaker cannot use a language deemed too strong or too colloquial since it can cause a negative reaction from the audience. A speaker is also expected not to use slang, jargon as well as bad grammar since it can enable the audience to give a bad impression of the speaker.

Thirdly, a good oral presentation needs a certain method of delivery. Unlike in daily conversation where people use a lot of interjections such as “you know” or “you see” and adopt a causal posture and use pauses and fillers such as “err” or “hmm”, in an oral presentation a speaker
needs to avoid these. Being an effective speaker one must make sure that he or she has a good projection of voice as well as good posture in front of the audience. Additionally, there are certain differences between public speaking and conversation as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Differences between conversation and public speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Public Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience-centered</td>
<td>More audience-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loosely organized</td>
<td>Organized and planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off the top of your head</td>
<td>Grounded in responsible knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often no clear purpose</td>
<td>Has a clear purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal language</td>
<td>More formal language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker/listener changes roles</td>
<td>Speaker/listener roles are clearly defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal environment/small groups</td>
<td>More formal environment /larger group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence in Speaking English

Self-esteem relates to how people see themselves from a more holistic perspective and links to feelings of self-worth as well as the ability to do things. Self-esteem is more than feeling good about yourself. It is about being awarded for your abilities. It is about who you are, being able to acknowledge positive and negative aspects and still feel good about yourself as well as having a positive sense of identity (Ringganis & Darmayanti, 2023). Self-esteem is confidence in our ability, which represents our ability to cope with the basic challenges of life and confidence in our right to be successful and happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, and entitled to assert our needs and wants and to achieve our values. According to Hamidah (2023), “individuals with high levels of self-esteem “exhibit greater verbal fluency due to their decreased anxiety regarding potential speech errors” (p. 42). Therefore, as pointed out by Widiani (2024) self-esteem is an internal factor that shapes students’ speaking competence and performance.

On the other hand, self-confidence refers to a belief in an individual’s own abilities, capacities, and judgment (Ryan & Dosi, 2000). It is an attitude that allows individuals to have positive but realistic views of themselves and their situations. Self-confident individuals trust their abilities, have a general sense of control in their lives, and believe that, within reason, they will be able to do what they wish, plan, and expect. Having self-confidence does not mean that individuals will be able to do everything. Confidence is a belief in one’s ability to do something in a specific situation. This belief includes feeling accepted and on equal terms with others in that situation. According to Hamidah (2023), self-confidence is “an important factor in communication as it directly affects how willing the learners are to communicate with one another (p. 2). An individual with high self-confidence might have a strong belief in their ability to perform oral presentations. As reported by Hamidah (2023), individuals “with high levels of self-confidence tend to approach communication with a sense of assurance and optimism (p. 8)."

Difficulties in English Public Speaking

Speaking is crucial to communication and represents an interactive process of developing meaning and producing information (Widiani, 2024). The “ability to speak English fluently and confidently opens up various opportunities, both academically and professionally” (Kondo & Ratuwongo, 2023, p. 6). However, students tend to face certain difficulties in English speaking, which may hinder their ability to communicate effectively, especially when they find themselves...
in public. In this regard, several studies were conducted to explore difficulties and problems encountered by students at different educational levels in various contexts. For example, Ahmed (2016) investigated speaking difficulties encountered by English language students at Al Quds Open University, Palestine. The study found that some reasons impeded students from being good public speakers in front of an audience, including fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. The study emphasizes establishing environmental support and encouraging students to speak English more frequently.

Moreover, Arifin (2017) examined psychological problems and challenges in EFL-speaking classrooms in Indonesia. The study revealed that some psychological problems involved in speaking classrooms were due to factors such as a lack of confidence, speech anxiety, and low self-esteem. Students who have low self-confidence levels are hardly able to control themselves for public speaking in the classroom. Besides, they lose belief in themselves and think that their friends in the classroom misevaluate them. They were also afraid of making mistakes in their presentation. Syifa (2018) also revealed some factors were: nervousness, less preparation, and practice, lack of eye contact, content not being interesting, afraid of making mistakes, pronunciation not clear, lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, grammar as well as problems with memorizing the content.

Additionally, Seli and Santosa (2023) used a cross-sectional survey to study the difficulties encountered by students of English Education at a university in Indonesia. According to the findings, difficulties encountered by students in English public speaking “include worry about making mistakes, lack of self-assurance, limited vocabulary, shyness, inability to elaborate on ideas, anxiousness, a lack of grasp of grammar, poor time management, and an unsupportive atmosphere” (p. 6).

Similarly, Kondo and Ratuwongo (2023) employed a cross-section survey to identify difficulties faced by 55 students at a public high school. The findings showed that the most significant difficulties faced by the students include poor vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, followed by fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence. The study emphasized that “incorporating more speaking activities in the classroom and providing opportunities for regular practice can help students overcome their fear of speaking (p. 76). Moreover, Nguyen and Tong (2024) used a quantitative survey to examine problems in public speaking among 60 English-major students at a university in Vietnam. The findings revealed that “two most common problems were fear of making mistakes and being observed” (p. 17). Likewise, Shahparan (2024) used observations and interviews to explore the problems related to English speaking among first-year undergraduate students in Uzbekistan. The study found that the most common problem was poor vocabulary and fear of making mistakes.

In essence, previous studies were conducted in countries such as Indonesia (e.g. Seli and Santosa, 2023), Vietnam (e.g. Nguyen & Tong, 2024), and Uzbekistan (e.g. Shahparan, 2024). Studies conducted in the Malaysian context mostly focus on teaching or anxiety in English speaking (Abdullah, Alsohbo, & Hassan, 2022; Bandar & Abdul, 2017; Taly & Paramasivam, 2020; Zulkflee, Marimuthu, & Tahir, 2023). For example, Zulkflee et al. (2023) used a descriptive survey to investigate anxiety levels and factors causing anxiety during oral presentations among ESL learners in Perak, Malaysia. The study found that have moderately high anxiety levels. Therefore, there is inadequate research on difficulties faced by undergraduate students in English public speaking, which the current study aims to explore.
Theoretical Framework
This study adopts the Uncertainty Reduction theory developed in 1975 by Berger and Calabrese (Coopman & Lull, 2012). This theory discusses how individuals seek to decrease anxiety or uncertainty in communication and social circumstances. The theory suggests that individuals are inspired to gather information and reduce uncertainty about others, which in turn affects their communication strategies and behaviors. It addresses the source of speech anxiety. For instance, when individuals face an uncertain or unfamiliar situation, their level of anxiety increases. For most people, speaking in public is not an everyday situation. One may communicate with others every day, but probably not in a situation as formal and structured as a speech. The change in context from regular, everyday interactions with others to an unfamiliar public interaction, naturally makes one nervous. This area of uncertainty is also associated with public speaking. In this regard, Coopman and Lull (2012) further developed this theory in the context of the uncertainties of public speaking in terms of the role of a speaker, speaking abilities, ideas, audience response, and evaluation.

Methodology
Design
This research employs a qualitative method to gather and analyze data. As defined by Creswell (2012), represents a form of inquiry that focuses on understanding and interpreting the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human phenomena. The essence of using a qualitative method is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Participants
The data were gathered from a sample of 44 undergraduate students from nine different faculties at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from each faculty to ensure representation from various academic disciplines, including languages and communication, informatics and computing, Islamic contemporary studies, economics and management sciences, bioresources and food, medicine and health science, innovative design and technology, law, accountancy, and international relations, and applied social sciences. Only active undergraduates who were previously involved in English public speaking and were willing to participate voluntarily were selected as participants.

Research Instruments
A face-to-face semi-structured interview technique was used as a data-gathering instrument. The interview questions were designed to explore the students’ experiences regarding English public speaking. The questions asked to the participants include: Can you describe your overall experience in English public speaking? What are the major difficulties you faced during English public speaking? The participants were given the freedom to openly share their perspectives during the interview sessions. Barriball and While (1994) suggest that. Moreover, Creswell (2012) points out that semi-structured interviews yield unexpected insights and information beyond what researchers may anticipate.

Research Procedures
To ensure reliability, based on previous recommendations (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2017), pilot interviews were conducted with a small subset of participants to identify any potential issues with the interview guide or procedures. Additionally,
inter-rater agreement was determined by selecting a subset of interviews and getting them accessed independently by a different researcher. For content validity, the interview items and guides were assessed by subject experts for relevance and appropriateness as recommended in previous research (Lynn, 1986; DeVellis, 2017).

The interview data were analyzed using an inductive-thematic analysis based on the four stages suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007). These stages include identifying natural units of meaning, labeling, categorizing, and organizing them, constructing narratives, and interpreting the findings. According to Cohen et al. (2007), qualitative analysis is inherently interpretive, unlike numerical analysis. In the coding process, the interview data were carefully examined, and themes were identified, categorized, and interpreted based on the participants' responses. The interview data are presented based on the themes generated from the participants’ responses. Each respondent was assigned a code starting with the letter “P” (participant) followed by a number. For example, the first participant is coded as P1, the second participant as P2, and so on. The codes are typically used in data collection and analysis to keep track of the participant responses and to organize the data systematically (Hassan, Gamji, Nasidi, & Azmi, 2021).

**Findings**
The findings of this study are presented in this section. As mentioned in the introductory part, this study sought to explore the difficulties faced by undergraduate students in English public speaking at a Malaysian public university. The analysis performed in this study is based on the transcribed texts taken from semi-structured interviews with the students. The first objective of this study was to explore language-related difficulties faced by undergraduate students in public speaking. The outcomes related to this objective revealed two major themes as presented in the following tables.

**Table 2. Poor language skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Poor grammar   | - I think my grammar is a little bit low standard or I don’t have very good grammar when I speak in English and it could make someone I talk to not understand what I’m trying to say. (P31)  
- My next problem was lack of grammar then err.. some because (twice) lack of the skill in the grammar or and the vocabulary I somehow cannot speak fluently in English. (P41)  
- I am afraid if I make or say any wrong things such as I have to make grammatical errors and so on. (P21) |
| 2  | Poor vocabulary| - I have some difficulties in English public speaking because I think I have inadequate vocabulary when I speak in English. (P43)  
- And my last reason is my problem is lack of vocabulary. I don’t have much vocabulary so, that err.. be my problem when I speak in English. (P18)  
- I have less vocabulary and I am afraid I use the wrong word when doing public speaking. (P8) |
| 3  | Poor pronunciation| - I also err.. not very confident with err.. my vocabulary and pronunciation err.. because I’m from Terengganu so the dialect is different. (P42)  
- So when I am having this anxiety, I tend to pronounce some words mistakenly. (P2)  
- Besides, I don’t know how to use a proper word while talking far. (P22)  
- It is hard to pronounce some words. (P16) |
Lack of fluency

- My main problem with English public speaking is probably I cannot speak fluently err.. in English meaning that if I want to say something I have to think first and it will take a lot of time for me to interpret in English. (P31)
- Next, because I am shy since I am not fluent in English so it makes me afraid to speak in public speaking er. (P25)
- I’m not very fluent in English so I’m afraid of doing some mistakes in my pronunciation err… (P27)

Source: Prepared by authors

Table 3. *Dislike for English and not a mother-tongue*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dislike for English</td>
<td>Since I was a child, I don’t like English subjects err... English subject for me is hard to understand and it is hard to study. (P28) I have in I in my faculty contemporary Islam English is not a very major to study. So I think we do not take action or in this English matter…(P14) I don’t like this subject since primary school and I don’t know how to speak English. (P15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English is not a mother tongue</td>
<td>My other difficulty is err... I think my surroundings do not speak in English like English is not my mother tongue language so I hard to speak in English every time and everywhere. (P43) I want to say that the problem we are facing in speaking the English language in front of English, is like not our native language, not our mother language. (P20) My mother tongue is not English; my mother tongue is Malay. When comes to the English language very lack vocabulary and also I tend I make grammar mistakes. (P44) My environment is err.. environment do not support me to speak in English err.. fluently. (P39) When I do not always use English err.. for my conversation with my friends, others, and everything because the language I use err.. to converse with my friend is Malay. (P30) The second one is my problem, my friends always talk in Malay. No people talk in English. So when I want to try to talk in English they say that it is better to use Malay because we are Malay(P10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors

Tables 2-3 highlight two major themes related to language-related difficulties faced by undergraduate students in English public speaking. The first theme entails poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency that may hinder students’ effective communication in English public speaking. The second theme indicates that some students face challenges from a lack of interest in the language and limited exposure to English-speaking environments, which may contribute to difficulties in fluency and communication. The second objective of this study was to explore factors that hinder effective English public speaking among undergraduate students at the selected university. The findings related to this objective revealed three major themes as presented in the following tables.
Table 4. Nervousness, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>- One of the problems is I tend to get nervous in front of people like right now and I forget the words I’m going to say. (P33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- My main problem will be nervousness so when I think about it why do I feel nervous firstly is because I’m afraid of what people might think of me. (P35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I’m shaking I’m nervous my heart will start beating very fast. (P38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low Self-esteem</td>
<td>- I have yes lack of confidence lack of vocabulary and low self-esteem. (P35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I don’t have self-esteem even if I talk in Malay people (P1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Cannot understand me so I am worried that if I talk in English people won’t get me at all so it’s hard for me to express what I mean. (P32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I have low self-esteem when I am in front of the stage. I don’t like people to look at me. (P7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of Confidence</td>
<td>- I feel very awkward when I stand in front of the public and I get nervous because I’m lacking confidence. (P32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- When they want to speak in err.. in public so the first thing is like lack in confidence so this is this problem is face by me when I want to speak in front it’s just like I as my friend said. (P34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Because of a lack of confidence, I could not speak English fluently ok next err.. because of lack of vocab I also could not speak English [laughing] ok err.. my hand will be shaking like now. (P36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors

Table 5. Shyness, eye contact, and gender differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>- I’m quite a shy person and I don’t like to stand in front of people and I don’t like people to look at me with err... I don’t know what kind of look err. (P37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I’m a very shy person so it is hard for me to speak in front of err.. people. (P40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- My problem with public speaking is I am shy. Not shy to myself but I am shy my speaking. (P18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Firstly, I feel a bit shy when standing in front of people. Err.. because for me when I speak, people will focus on me. (P21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td>- I cannot stand when people are staring and looking at me. That situation makes me feel so awkward (P3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- We start talking we have to make eye contact is never to go so err..where to look err.. makes me err.. sometimes lose my focus. (P29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- And my problem may be because I cannot look at people. I get something weird thinking in my head (P9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Next, I am nervous to make eye contact especially if the audience is male. Because I will lose my focus on delivery. And also I cannot control my voice and my breath. I will become panic and sweat. it is just a natural nervousness that I have and the natural fear that I need to face when I am going to speak in public. (P24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gender Differences</td>
<td>- I am a little bit nervous when speaking in front of others, especially to girls, (P11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The speaker is a male student).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- However, based on the situation, some of my friends can do public speaking if all audience is female (P12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors
### Table 6, *Lack of idea, practice, and audience attention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of ideas/points/skills/knowledge</td>
<td>- I feel scared when people ask about something that I do not understand. (P26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I always see script when speaking especially speaking in front of an audience. So I need to remember the script. (P17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I don’t have many points to talk about in front of the others, for example, let’s say here I am speaking in front of you guys, I don’t have any point. (P23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of practice</td>
<td>- I feel I am unprepared I usually panic and lose control of myself and my thought will be scattered and as a result, I stutter like now. (P5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- My problems or difficulties in public speaking are having lack of preparation. (P6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I become fearful or nervous and my speech is unclear because of improper preparation I had sweaty palms and my heart is speeding a little bit faster. (P19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of audience attention</td>
<td>- The audiences really when I get terrified when I see them get bored or worst even them not responding. (P4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I worried when people are silent such as, I think in my mind that I made a mistake when I speaking. (P13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by authors

As shown in Tables 4-6, the analysis revealed three major themes related to factors affecting university students’ English public speaking. The first theme shows students’ nervousness, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence as they express anxiety, self-doubt, and fear of judgment that may hinder their ability to speak confidently. The second theme shows that students struggle with maintaining eye contact, and gender-specific anxieties in English public speaking. The third theme involves a lack of ideas, practice, and audience attention, where students contend with inadequate preparation, difficulty maintaining audience engagement, and fear of judgment. Overall, these themes highlight various challenges encountered by students in English public speaking at the selected institution.

**Discussion**

This study sought to identify language-related difficulties and factors that hinder effective English public speaking among undergraduate students at a Malaysian public university. The findings revealed that students encounter difficulties in English public speaking due to poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Additionally, some students face challenges from a lack of interest in the language and limited exposure to English-speaking environments. For non-language factors, the findings show students’ nervousness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and eye contact, gender-specific anxieties, as well as lack of ideas, practice, and audience attention.

The findings reported in this study concur with Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) Uncertainty Reduction Theory which presumes that people may face uncertain or unfamiliar situations, thus resulting in their level of nervousness increased. However, according to the theory, people are motivated to reduce such difficulties through interpersonal communication. The findings of this
study also concur with several past studies, such as those conducted by Ahmed (2016), Arifin (2017), Kondo and Ratuwongo (2023), Seli and Santosa (2023), and Shahparan (2024).

Besides, some students indicated in their responses that they experience low self-esteem and low self-confidence during public speaking. Similar outcomes were reported in studies (e.g. Arifin, 2017; Kondo and Ratuwongo, 2023). In this regard, research shows that certain signs of nervousness in public speaking found in students include shaking hands, headaches, stomachaches, sweaty palms, and cracking voices. All these feelings and symptoms are referred to as speech anxiety which is the fear of speaking in front of an audience (Coopman & Lull, 2012).

The findings also showed that a lack of grammar and vocabulary also contributes to students’ performance in public speaking. These factors were mentioned in the research findings reported by Kondo and Ratuwongo (2023) who affirmed that a lack of grammar and vocabulary could obstruct the speech delivery process. Other factors such as environment and the perception that English was not a mother tongue also impede students’ presentation in public speaking. Some students also mentioned that they did not have many ideas during public speaking, and did not have adequate knowledge of what to speak about. This outcome concurs with the findings reported by Seli and Santosa (2023). Another issue expressed by the respondents is a lack of language fluency. The students mentioned that a lack of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation has made their public speaking ineffective.

It is also found that some students experience shyness as one of the problems they face during English public speaking. The students themselves admitted that the shyness was from within and it was rather difficult to erase, let alone to talk in front of the public. Some students from the Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, especially girls, seemed to be a bit apprehensive when it came to contact with another gender during public speaking. They mentioned that they tended to be very shy to talking in front of the public if the audience was from a different gender. The students prefer to perform presentations in front of students of the same gender. This kind of shyness is one of the research findings reported by Ahmed (2016) which focused on students from Al-Quds Open University in Palestine.

Moreover, a lack of preparation was also cited by the students as one of the reasons why they easily got panicky during a presentation. The other serious problem faced by the students was dealing with the grab of knowledge/ideas /points for presentation. Some of them mentioned that they tended to forget the contents of their presentation, always felt blank, and were bad at memorizing the speech that had been prepared much earlier. This outcome echoes the findings reported by Seli and Santosa (2023) which revealed that inadequate preparation is the source of poor performance during English public speaking.

The current study also found that there was a lack of confidence among the students in pronouncing some English words. The problem of pronunciation was reported in previous studies (e.g., Kondo & Ratuwongo, 2023; Syifa, 2018). On the other hand, some students admitted that they do not like English because they did not develop an interest in the language when they were very young in primary school and this issue continued till they entered university.

Additionally, the findings of this study revealed that students had problems with the skills of grabbing the audience’s attention. The students complained that they did not know how to get attention from the audience to give them new information and more importantly to make them believe and subsequently build a good rapport. Some students felt that the contents of their presentation were not interesting or entertaining enough for the audience. Also, the students felt easily intimidated when the audience did not pay attention to their speeches.
Conclusion
This study explored difficulties and factors that hinder effective public speaking among undergraduate students at a Malaysian university. According to the findings, undergraduate students experience various difficulties in public speaking due to poor language skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, factors that hinder public effective speaking among students include dislike for English, nervousness, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, shyness, eye contact, gender differences as well as lack of idea, practice, and audience attention. These factors may result in students having a high level of anxiety during public speaking. This is because, based on Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) Uncertainty Reduction Theory, students who face difficult or unfamiliar situations may have their level of nervousness increased and will consequently avoid public speaking.

The identified difficulties can be reduced if students’ knowledge, techniques, and skills needed in delivering English public speaking are enhanced. Thus, students should be trained to acquire skills, determination, and awareness of the importance of English public speaking to increase their chances of employment and successful careers. Students should be trained to think that English is not difficult, but rather fun and easy to learn. They should also be prepared with the skills needed for English public speaking, starting from preparation, gathering materials, and most importantly, confidence and knowledge of when to deliver public speeches. It is also advisable for students to improve their knowledge of grammar and enrich their vocabulary as well as practice to become proficient speakers. This study offers valuable insights to educators in overcoming English speaking difficulties among undergraduates to enhance learning outcomes. However, the study is limited to a qualitative analysis with a few participants at a single institution. Further research may include more samples from multiple institutions to offer a more holistic approach to understanding the problem.

Funding
This research is not funded.

Acknowledgments
Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

Artificial Intelligence Statement:
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors
Dr. Ahmad Taufik Hidayah Abdullah is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia. His areas of research interest include public speaking, English linguistics, error analysis, and language learning.
Difficulties Faced by Undergraduate Students in English Public

Abdullah, Netra & Hassan

Email: taufikhidayah@unisza.edu.my
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9898-0980

Dr. I Made Netra is a Professor of English Language Studies in the Faculty of Humanities at Udayana University (Unud), Indonesia. His areas of research interest include ethnopragmatics and discourse analysis. He is also interested in research about public speaking and performing arts practices. Email: imadenetra@unud.ac.id https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1030-1504

Dr. Isyaku Hassan is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Languages and Communication at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Malaysia. His areas of research interest include media linguistics, media and technology, health communication, marketing communication, and language studies. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8260-2894

References


Difficulties Faced by Undergraduate Students in English Public

Abdullah, Netra & Hassan

blended learning among ESL learners in Malaysia. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ), Special Issue on CALL, (7). 377-389. doi: 10.24093/awej/call7.26


Exploring Students’ Perceptions Towards 21st Century Skills Through Novel Applications: A Comparative Study among EFL Learners in Iraq

Recep Bilgin
Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University, Erbil - KRI, Iraq
Email: recep.bilgin@tiu.edu.iq

Received: 10/24/2023   Accepted: 03/04/2024   Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Many initiatives have been seized to integrate 21st-century skills into the curriculum. They encompass specific competencies under five areas, which are vital subjects, 21st-century themes, innovation, career, and literacy skills. Accordingly, the present qualitative study was carried out at Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraq on 50 first-year students, aged between 18 and 23 in 10 departments through semi-structured interviews, according to the principles of phenomenological research design in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. This study aimed to explore the attitudes of tertiary-level students toward 21st-century skills through the lens of practical reflections on their social, personal, and academic lives. Specifically, it aimed to address the following question: What 21st-century skills are more significant than others? The rationale for exploring university students’ perceptions of 21st-century skills and their practical applications was that students seemed perplexed regarding the significance of practical reflections in the Iraq context. Collected data were transcribed by the Go Transcribe application and classified based on the principles of content analysis. The findings revealed that reading, productivity, accountability, creativity, technology, and financial literacy were prioritized in each category by the participants, and they had novel ways to develop them regularly. The findings of this study can shed light on some points about the implementation of 21st-century skills with clear-cut strategies at educational institutions.

Keywords: 21st-century skills, prioritization, practical applications, university students’ perceptions

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed profound changes in many fields with the advent of technological and scientific advancements. To name a few, the rising popularity of mobile technologies, AI initiatives, futuristic means of transportation, nanotechnology products, and innovative devices to diagnose and cure diseases have prompted authorities to make necessary changes in their education system, so newly graduated citizens will be equipped with required skills to be aware of such novel technologies, thereby having mastery on creating, using and improving them (Celik et al., 2022; Küçük, 2023). These phenomena have transformed the concept of education dramatically. Thus, new prerequisites have emerged to be ahead of others in the competitive market spanning the whole world. In other words, having a degree in some fields is not adequate any longer to land a lucrative job or secure a position. Instead, having a degree should be accompanied by specific competencies regarding crucial subjects, 21st-century themes, career, innovation, and literacy skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21 hereafter) is a non-profit organization that has contributed significantly to the conceptualization of 21st-century skills in a single framework, composed by educators, experts, and businesspeople in 2002 (Guo & Woulfin, 2016). This framework has been designed to increase the success rate of people at different stages of their lives, including receiving education and working periods, so it has attracted considerable attention throughout the world to reap the benefits of it with an established plan.

P21’s Framework has five classifications with specific sub-categories. To illustrate, key subjects stand for reading, writing, and arithmetic. In other words, managing the reading process effectively, conveying the message in a coherent format, and applying concepts in math are fundamental to developing competency in key subjects (Kara, 2023). In addition, global awareness, financial, civic, health, environmental, ICT, and media literacy should be integrated into key subjects under the heading of interdisciplinary themes. Global awareness refers to taking the initiative on international issues such as wars, natural disasters, pandemics, poverty, violence, racism, etc. Financial literacy is about knowing how to evaluate financial developments and make wise decisions about saving, investing, and spending financial resources (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2011). Civic literacy is related to staying in touch with local and central government agencies to join the management of cities and countries actively. Health literacy is seeking knowledge on the secrets of being healthy with numerous endeavors such as watching videos, reading articles, or visiting trustworthy health centers. After that, environmental literacy is figuring out chronic environmental problems and developing sustainable plans to protect the environment. Afterward, ICT literacy ensures that users can carry out basic tasks through mobile technologies in this digital age, so they will not be behind others in the information age. Subsequently, media literacy allows readers or viewers to make specific connections between content in the media and real life. Another primary category is career skills which encompass productivity, accountability, leadership, responsibility, flexibility, adaptability, initiative, self-direction, and social and cross-cultural skills. They hint that citizens in the 21st century should be as productive as possible, transparent, guide others, and undertake responsibility (Geisinger, 2016). In addition, they should adapt to changes, take sensible initiatives, and learn when to listen and speak in a community. Apart from key subjects and career skills, innovation skills, which are creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, are essential to secure a respectable position in society. Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity highlight that citizens should learn to develop novel ideas, see events from different angles, work together for a common goal, and keep in touch promptly. It can be stated that all five domains are of paramount importance in the way
of having a trouble-free lifestyle. 21st-century skills have different reflections on people’s lives at different stages. To illustrate, reading is one of the most fundamental skills to understand, evaluate, and make specific interpretations. Likewise, writing is essential to convey messages in written form (Celik et al., 2022). Similarly, arithmetic is crucial to applying the rules of math to daily life. In the same vein, global awareness helps individuals to alleviate the effects of the most pressing world problems. Additionally, financial literacy encourages people to know the value of their money and make reasonable decisions to invest. Subsequently, civic literacy urges citizens to collaborate with mayors or governors for the betterment of society (Hylton, 2018). Afterward, health literacy guides people to live healthily by taking some life-saving measures. Moreover, environmental literacy inspires citizens to devise a plan for saving the world by launching nationwide or universal campaigns. Subsequently, ICT skills help individuals reap the benefits of mobile technologies by programming, editing, and creating. In addition, media literacy prompts people to monitor the inclinations of society and behave accordingly. Some skills may function as game-changing skills such as productivity, accountability, and leadership throughout people’s careers. For instance, factory workers can lose their jobs if they produce far fewer products than expected. In addition, managers can step aside if they are not accountable to their co-workers, shareholders, customers, or tax inspectors (Adams & Zutshi, 2004). Similarly, team leaders should encompass the qualities of leadership if they gain the respect of the group continuously. On the other hand, innovation skills have crucial roles in developing students’ skills. To illustrate, creative students can express their ideas creatively both in a written and spoken format. Similarly, critical thinking skill allows students to think analytically, so they can handle the issue from different angles and offer alternative solutions (Holmes et al., 2015). Likewise, collaboration is of paramount importance to create a brilliant product as a part of the team. When students are divided into groups, they are expected to collaborate and submit a final product with the contribution of all members. Additionally, communication skills are fundamental to keeping stable relationships with teachers, administrators, and classmates. When some students set communication barriers, they may have conflicts several times, thereby reducing their dignity gradually. Considering the implications of 21st-century skills, it can be argued that they have the potential to affect individuals’ lives through their lifespans.

The research has multiple significances. Firstly, stakeholders in education have invested much time, energy, and money in meeting the needs of students in the 21st century. Correspondingly, they have devised novel strategies to cope with chronic problems of education and raise the standards in education. Besides, teaching basic subjects is not sufficient any longer which needs to be complemented with additional life skills. In this regard, the P21 Framework equips learners with the required competencies to master 21st-century skills, so they will not suffer from a lack of competencies throughout their lifespans. In this respect, the current study will fill the gap in the Iraq context by receiving unique perspectives of EFL learners at a tertiary level on prioritizing specific 21st-century skills with practical implementations in real life. Thus, such preferences, justifications, and exemplifications can shed light on some points about the importance, implementation, and improvement of 21st-century skills at other institutions in Iraq. Correspondingly, the aim of the current study is two-fold; the first objective is to pinpoint students’ favorite 21st-century skills in each category with their justifications while the second one is to uncover a practical example to trigger such skills regularly. Subsequently, some common points and differences will be sought regarding major and gender. Accordingly, the following research questions are formulated:
Exploring Students’ Perceptions Towards 21st Century Skills

What is the perception of university students on 21st-century skills?

What are some unique ways to develop specific 21st century skills?

Literature Review

Humanity has experienced a dramatically accelerating pace in the production and integration of new technologies in the last few decades. Those technologies, the internet, robotics, 3D and artificial intelligence have transformed the nature of many fields which require job seekers to be equipped with more skills compared to previous generations (Jan et al., 2023; Taar and Palojoki, 2022; Yucedal et al., 2022). It cannot be envisioned that such radical changes will not have an impact on education systems which have been updated accordingly to meet the needs of the industry in different sectors. Correspondingly, some non-profit organizations or government agencies, including WHO, OECD, UNICEF, World Economic Forum, and P21 have defined some key components of 21st-century skills. Among them, P21 Framework, formed by educators, experts, and businessmen in 2002, has attracted more attention than others thanks to defining all key skills clearly and setting guidelines to realize them with an established plan (Abdulateef, 2021; Gamze & Bulunuz, 2023; Kara & Kucuk, 2023). P21’s Framework has urged the stakeholders to develop specific skills in 4 areas related to core subjects, innovation, career, and ICT skills. Although it has risen in the USA, its influence has been noticed in many countries’ education systems internationally. A growing number of countries have integrated the principles of the P21 Framework into their educational systems. Some scholars (Agmita et al., 2021; Rotherham & Willingham, 2010) argued that 21st-century skills need to be integrated into the curriculum for their advantages during academic, social, and professional life, whereas others (Celik & Kara, 2022; Menggo et al., 2022; Michelmore & Rich, 2023) asserted that their effects are not clear-cut at educational institutions. To name a few, Albahalal (2019) postulated that standard skills such as reading and writing are inadequate to meet the needs of the students in the age of information, so they should be trained to be effective communicators, and good critical thinkers in a collaborative manner. Similarly, Nazikian and Park (2016) elucidated that schools should provide a welcoming atmosphere to boost students’ self-confidence with a well-balanced curriculum, so they can take initiative and come to the right decisions in their future endeavors. Additionally, Geisinger (2016) and Kara (2023) stated that an education system that does not highlight the importance of ICT cannot yield satisfactory results at a time when ICT tools are at the center of life with many practical examples. In the same vein, Hilliker and Loranc (2022) attested that students should learn how to be accountable for their actions, so they take their tasks more seriously during their lifespan. Otherwise, ignoring some duties or missing the deadline can be inevitable which may culminate in some types of punishments. However, some hesitations have arisen about 21st-century skills. For example, Dakhi (2022) pointed out that 21st-century skills are so comprehensive that narrowing some categories or arranging the skills based on the capabilities of the students can increase their positive outcomes. Otherwise, both teachers and students can feel overwhelmed. Similarly, Agmita et. al. (2021) reported that students can find 21st-century skills as challenging to grasp if practical applications of them cannot be shown clearly in classes. An increasing number of studies have been conducted to measure the influence of 21st-century skills integrated curriculum at different stages of education with varying findings. To illustrate, Öksüzoğlu and Tünkler’s (2022) study revealed that most teachers take sides with offering education in a 21st-century skills-enriched way. They attest that students become more enthusiastic when lessons are covered with some form of 21st-century skills. Additionally, Palardy and
Rumberger (2019) found that students’ tardiness and other behavioral problems reduced gradually after being exposed to instruction enriched with 21st-century skills. In the same vein, Hadiyanto et al. (2022) asserted that 21st-century skills enriched instruction not only increased their grades but also increased their motivation to be active participants in classes. Similarly, Kavlu (2015) found that 21st-century skills-based instruction guided EFL students to be good critical thinkers and find novel ideas during lessons, so these gains helped them to increase their scores in the exams. In the same vein, Kara (2023) pointed out that developing students’ 21st-century skills via Web 2.0 tools paid off at the tertiary level. He underlined that students showed far better performance in the exams after being exposed to the instruction about boosting specific 21st-century skills. In addition, Osman et al.’s (2010) study showed that 21st-century skills paved the way for increasing students’ overall success. However, some studies did not pinpoint a positive relationship between 21st-century skills instruction and having some gains. Yilmaz (2021) posited that the integration of technology into the curriculum instantly could have adverse effects on improving students’ creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. Conversely, the integration of Web 2.0 tools into education for the sake of mastering some 21st-century skills gradually can yield positive results. Likewise, Nissim et al.’s (2016) study unearthed that the atmosphere of the education system played a vital role in increasing the success rate of 21st-century skills instruction. When the atmosphere is not stimulating, it is not uncommon for the program to fail sooner or later.

**Method**

This qualitative study was conducted based on the procedures of phenomenological research design. Groenewald (2004) posits that phenomenological research pattern allows researchers to identify a phenomenon and offer sensible solutions upon collecting data through detailed interviews, so they are widely used in social science studies. To illustrate, the phenomenon was initially identified as a starting point to research thoroughly. Later, in-depth interviews were held in different settings. Subsequently, transcripts were classified under specific themes. In the final phase, findings were depicted to elaborate and offer a more precise image in readers’ minds.

**Participants**

The population of the study encompassed all students who took the Foundation English course at Tishk International University in Erbil, Iraq in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Their numbers amounted to 250 which were narrowed to 50 by employing the principle of systematic sampling method. Berndt (2020) asserts that systematic sampling is preferred widely to choose sampling thanks to offering an unbiased selection model. There are several stages of the systematic sampling method which were applied to this study as well. The systematic sampling method was activated by assigning a specific number for each student in the population, so 50 students, 25 female, and 25 male were determined. Although the common point was taking Foundation English course to lay a solid background in English as a first-year student, their majors varied from civil engineering to dentistry. Ten departments out of 29 were represented in this study. Additionally, their ages ranged from 18 to 23. The detailed distribution of participants is visualized in Table One below:
### Research Instruments

The data was gathered using an individual, semi-structured interview form. The researcher created the interview schedule in different settings in line with the phenomenological research pattern. The final form was piloted after talking with the expert to ensure the quality of the items. The participants' responsibilities in other courses were noted as significant issues that would affect their willingness to participate, so the schedule of interviews was set in cooperation with students individually. Additionally, participants were granted the freedom to express their ideas in the researcher’s office or online via scheduled video calls. The duration of the interviews varied from 15 to 25 minutes. Interviews were saved in an electronic format to be transcribed by an application called Go Transcribe. Once transcriptions were available, they were classified by content analysis to make specific interpretations through the common inclinations of the participants. According to Al-Jaro (2017), content analysis has specific stages which are formulating research questions, determining the content and the sample, finalizing units of analysis, coding schedule, checking inter-rater reliabilities, and analyzing collected data. Questions directed to participants to receive their genuine opinions on 21st-century skills were as follows:

- What are the most essential 21st-century skills?
- What are your justifications for prioritizing specific 21st-century skills?
- What are some practical strategies to develop 21st-century skills?

### Research Procedures

Data collection lasted 10 weeks in this study which urged the researcher to interview five students per week. Thus, they did not feel stressed to race against time when there were some conflicts with their other responsibilities such as presentations, quizzes, or exams. Each student was exposed to an instruction that was enriched with 21st-century skills. Although they learned...
Exploring Students’ Perceptions Towards 21st Century Skills

Bilgin

English in a professional format, they also learned the basics of 21st-century skills with practical implications through scheduled workshops, so they would be ready to cope with some challenges throughout their lives. Once students were familiar with all concepts in 21st-century skills via presentations, videos, articles, and practical sessions, they were ready to shoot their responses in the interview.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

The prior permission was gathered from the university’s research center which is authorized to accept and reject the initiation of studies based on the pre-defined criteria of suitability, credibility, and ethics. Upon receiving the permission, participants were chosen. All stages of the study were introduced with a presentation. They were also informed that collected data would be deleted permanently after data analysis. Next, they signed the consent forms to join the study voluntarily. Thus, data confidentiality and participants’ willingness were ensured and archived in advance.

Findings

Findings of the study were categorized under two sections which were content analysis and crucial points in the interviews. The first category was content analysis to display a clear image of participants’ ideas about their favorite 21st-century skills, whereas the second category was embedded into findings to present justifications and exemplifications of such skills by the participants.

Content Analysis

Participants’ sincere opinions on their favorite 21st-century skills were illustrated in Table Two.

Table 2. Participants’ preferences on prioritization of 21st-century skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Subjects</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Career Skills</td>
<td>Flexibility &amp; Adaptability</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative &amp; Self Direction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social &amp; Cross-Cultural</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity &amp; Accountability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Innovation Skills</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Skills</td>
<td>Media Literacy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Two shows that reading (n=27) was prioritized over writing and arithmetic regarding critical subjects. Additionally, productivity and accountability (n=16) were chosen more than other options regarding life and career skills. Subsequently, creativity (n=16) was more popular regarding learning and innovation skills. After that, technology literacy (n=20) was prioritized regarding literacy skills. The final category which was 21st century themes highlighted financial literacy (n=17) as the most favourite one. Table Two also revealed the least favorite ones in each category. To illustrate, writing (n=9), social and cross-cultural skills (n=2), collaboration (n=9), media literacy (n=12) and civic literacy (n=4) got the lowest praise in given categories. When the findings were analyzed by considering the gender in Table Two, they highlighted some points. It was observed that reading, technology, and financial literacy were leading skills to be improved regarding male participants, while reading, arithmetic and information literacy were leading factors regarding female ones.

**Interview**

To provide a logical progression, the results of the analyses of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with university freshmen from different departments were presented separately. In addition, the emerging patterns of similarities and differences were depicted in an embedded pattern to provide a holistic perspective on the topic.

The first essential theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis is highlighting some skills, such as reading, leadership and responsibility, communication, ICT, and health literacy skills. Several respondents reiterated that it cannot be envisioned to contemplate a global citizen without having specific competencies. They supported their notions with clear-cut examples:

```
My department is IT, so my favorite skills to be improved will be arranged accordingly. I would opt for reading, leadership and responsibility, communication, ICT, and health literacy as the most essential skills in this century. There are some persuasive reasons to choose them. To begin with, reading is a central hub in our lives to read, expand our knowledge, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize, so it is directed to all other skills. Additionally, leadership and responsibility are two essential considerations. Undertaking responsibility and managing team members as a leader matters a lot to be prosperous in all stages of life. Subsequently, communication is crucial to cement a good relationship with the people around us. Otherwise, some conflicts cannot be inevitable which disrupts the positive atmosphere. Afterward, ICT literacy counts significantly while receiving education, finding a job, and carrying out tasks in social and professional life. Finally, health literacy comes to the forefront in this century because the world has been undergoing
```
many health crises, so being healthy paves the way for having a peaceful and prosperous lifestyle. I have some strategies to develop such skills in my life. For example, I read e-books related to my interest areas. Also, my uncle is a good leader in an IT company, so I get first-hand experience from him during my summer vacations. In addition, I enroll in a course to develop my communication skills with practical examples. Additionally, I take some online courses to learn programming. Finally, I follow some health magazines and TV programs to raise my awareness of living healthily. (St 18)

The second fundamental theme to be emphasized is the importance of developing several skills, such as arithmetic, taking initiative, self-direction, collaboration, technology, and civic literacy. Many students pointed out that the individuals of the 21st century should be equipped with such skills in order not to lag behind others in the competitive job market:

My department is civil engineering, so my choices will be accordingly. In my opinion, arithmetic, taking initiative and self-direction, collaboration, technology, and civic literacy should be prioritized over others for the reasons I will mention. First, my success is directly affected according to my arithmetic knowledge because I need to calculate flawlessly to build more robust and durable buildings in the future. In addition, I must seek life-changing opportunities to progress professionally, so I should take the initiative to lead my career journey straightforwardly. Subsequently, we have a lot of projects to be completed as a team, so I will be behind others if I am an introverted person. I have some strategies to sharpen those skills. To begin with, I subscribe to a Facebook Page that asks a unique question on Math daily. I also ask some math questions to be clarified. Next, I take an online course about civil engineering through which we are shown some chronic problems. The tutors ask us the solutions and wait for a while. Finally, he tells the most sensible solution to fix it. Thus, I learn how to take initiative in a troublesome situation that may affect my career from the beginning till the end. Afterward, I am a volunteer for a charity. We collaborate with other volunteers to raise more money, food, and clothes from donors. It is a great feeling to succeed after a collaborative endeavor. In addition to previous ones, I subscribe to a newsletter from a well-known technology magazine. When some articles capture my attention, I Google to get further details, so I follow the latest technological developments. After that, I urge my friends to visit authorized bodies in my community. We visit them regularly to raise their awareness about some problems we have noticed. So far, we have realized a lot of projects together. (St 37)

Another noteworthy theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis is that media literacy and global awareness should be merged with other essential skills, so individuals can be prompted to progress in their lives. A great majority of students indicated that media literacy and global awareness have taken increasing precedence in the 21st century:

My department is business and management, so I will do my best to be more knowledgeable to be a prosperous entrepreneur in the future. I think reading, leadership and responsibility, communication, media literacy, and global awareness are fundamental skills to be developed. I have some persuasive reasons to defend them. For example, I read success stories of world-renowned businesspeople such as Bill Gates, Jack Ma, and Oprah Winfrey, so I get inspired for my future initiatives. Additionally, I know that my attempts will be futile if I cannot manage my co-workers. After that, communication barriers can prevent me from succeeding. I need to be a good communicator to have a good relationship with other workers, customers, or representatives of government agencies. Afterward, the
media shows the latest trends, and success or failure stories, so media literacy can enlighten my way in the future if I learn some lessons from the covered stories in the media. In addition, global awareness is fundamental in this century because all events are connected. Additionally, I know that knowing different people with unique cultures and religions will expand my horizon on the way of being a global citizen who has the potential to work in any country at any time. I have specific strategies to master such skills. For instance, I read a self-improvement book by taking notes monthly. Then, we discuss common themes in it with other friends who have read the same book previously. Subsequently, my uncle is a CEO of a real estate company. I work with him whenever I have free time, so I learn the basics of being a good leader from him by getting first-hand experience through field trips and different meetings. Additionally, I listen to the suggestions of wise people to be a good communicator. After that, I follow some famous YouTubers who summarize noteworthy news of the day internationally. Finally, I have a lot of foreign friends to improve my English and increase my knowledge about different societies, so we have video talks regularly to know each other well and spend quality time. (St 49)

Some practical strategies to develop different skills in each category are illustrated below in Figure One.

![Figure 1. Practical applications to develop specific skills in each category](image-url)

According to Figure One, respondents devised practical ideas to have more accurate reflections on their lives. To illustrate, they recommend reading extensively and solving math problems for learners who want to sharpen their key subjects. In addition, they highlighted that getting first-hand experience through field trips and meetings is crucial for developing life and career skills.
hand experience as a novice is fundamental to seeing the atmosphere of professional life and being familiar with some challenges before embarking on professional life upon graduation. After that, they advised young entrepreneurs to indulge in a journey about the success stories of inventors and businesspeople. Finally, they emphasized the value of following news and magazines to be knowledgeable about current events and getting in-depth perspectives.

**Discussion**

The research questions were addressed thoroughly in this qualitative study by directing the questions to the respondents in the interview. More specifically, the respondents expressed their ideas about 21st-century skills with novel applications in line with research questions. The first noticeable finding of the interview was that reading was emphasized more than others because they thought that reading was key to success in other areas including writing and arithmetic. This finding was in line with Agmita et al. (2021) study which postulated that reading is the prerequisite to expand knowledge in other areas. Additionally, it was also observed in the current study that productivity and accountability were highlighted in the life and career skills section. In this respect, it is not conceivable that people can be successful at school, in life, or at workplaces if such skills are missing. Likewise, they elucidated that people who justify their actions regarding their responsible areas can earn more dignity in society. Rotherham and Willingham (2010) stated that accountability urges people to be more transparent, so they can work more responsibly, thereby multiplying their productivity in a well-established plan. Another category was learning and innovation skills which included creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills. Although the participants appreciated all skills, creativity got more support from them. They reiterated that being creative was compulsory to make a difference and strengthen our positions at workplaces. It was consistent with Nazikian and Park’s (2016) study which revealed that creativity triggers innovation, so each educational institution should allocate a specific amount of time to unleashing students’ creativity with carefully designed activities. They also asserted that creativity-based activities arouse students’ interest, so their rate to feel boredom reduces substantially. Apart from key themes, life and innovation skills, participants expressed their ideas on literacy skills which have a lot of direct reflections on people’s lives. Participants prioritized technology literacy over others because they thought that the future lies in the hands of technological tools. They also asserted that the more they were familiar with technological items, the more talented they would be to integrate them into their professions. This finding was in line with Geisinger's (2016) ideas which pointed out that all professions will transform as technology develops. The final category was 21st century themes which prioritized health literacy over others. The participants reiterated that health literacy becomes increasingly essential upon having witnessed a life-threatening COVID-19 period. They also attested that no progress is possible if they cannot maintain their health. Dakhi (2022) stated that health literacy has received increasing attention thanks to the availability of means of communication. People can access any knowledge instantly thanks to having a stable internet connection, so they can read articles, watch documentaries, get online therapies, or read comments related to health. The study distinguished participants’ opinions regarding gender as well. It was noticed that male students prioritized reading, technology, and financial literacy. This finding was in line with Kucuk’s (2023) study which highlighted that men are inclined to get more pleasure while taking part in activities related to technology and finance. Conversely, female students’ tendencies were quite different from male ones. They prioritized reading, arithmetic, and information literacy which hints that they set aside
more time for their self-growth. According to Palardy and Rumberger (2019), women seek novel information so that they can satisfy their hunger for new information. Additionally, they are alert to check the accuracy of the information from multiple sources. Their practical implementations to develop 21st-century skills were emphasized as well. They postulated that subscribing to newsletters increased their numerous skills gradually. Hadiyanto et al. (2022) contended that following news online offers comprehensible input for learners so that they can improve their English substantially. Additionally, they pointed out that they got inspired by watching several movies or videos. Yucedal and Kara (2023) asserted that using visual media can enhance students’ learning considerably, so videos, movies, presentations, graphs, and min-maps should be integrated into lessons in a balanced way. In the same vein, students appreciated the efforts to get experience as an apprentice, so they will master some skills by doing. Osman et al. (2010) attested that apprenticeship allows the novice to put theory into practice, so they test the effectiveness and shape their learning accordingly. Similarly, they praised the value of reading self-growth books to be more knowledgeable. Kara (2023) stated that reading helps the readers unlock their full potential by triggering them to be more proactive. In addition to the mentioned ones, they also expressed that online courses are beneficial to develop countless skills in a cost-free or cheaper offer which was in line with Nissim et al.’s (2016) study.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to gain the perceptions of students about 21st-century skills. In addition, students’ novel ideas to develop specific skills were described in detail. According to the findings, gathered in the interview, several implications have arisen. P21 Framework, which conceptualized fundamental 21st-century skills for a global citizen, was investigated in this study by considering the perceptions and practical strategies of university students. The result emanated from the study unambiguously unleashed that students are aware of the importance of 21st-century skills to grab unmatched opportunities at the college, in social or professional life. Students’ genuine opinions in the interview unearthed that they reserve an increasing time to improve their reading and writing skills. In addition, they pay utmost attention to increasing their competence in arithmetic. They understand that reading literacy should be combined with numeracy to be ahead of others in the competitive job market. Moreover, they highlighted that taking initiative, showing exemplary leadership skills, and being prolific and accountable are as essential as other skills. Furthermore, they expressed that health, civic, financial, and information literacy should not be underestimated to refine knowledge and be more privileged to be more prosperous in life. In the same vein, they reiterated that creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking are indispensable skills to be developed in this century. Students did not leave a gap on realizing them. They also offered some practical solutions to implement them in real life by subscribing to newsletters, watching videos, enrolling in relevant courses, working as a novice, or reading personal growth books.

Recommendations

Some recommendations can be made for future studies. The current study explored students’ perceptions in a qualitative mode which can be expanded with quantitative or mixed methods research design models. In addition, 50 first-year students at a private university in Iraq were included which can be enriched with other students studying in a high or secondary school. In the same vein, only perceptions of students at a private university were reflected which can
encompass perceptions of students who have been studying at public universities. Moreover, the P21 Framework was the main basis for this study which can be extended with the framework of WHO, UNICEF, and OECD. After that, the study investigated the effects of 21st-century skills in general which can be specified with their effects on specific subjects such as English, science, maths, physics, and chemistry.

**Funding**
This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**
Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**
I declare that there is no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity**
This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement**
AI and AI-assisted technologies weren’t used in this article.

**About the Author:**
**Recep Bilgin (PhD)** is a lecturer at TISHK International University in Erbil, Iraq. He works in the Language Preparatory School. His interest areas are the modern history of education, English for Specific Purposes, mental disorders and their effects on students, and sociology of education.

**ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3760-218X

**References**


Exploring Students’ Perceptions Towards 21st Century Skills


Malaysian Students’ Perceptions towards Using Peer Feedback to Cultivate Evaluative Judgement of Argumentative Writing

Xiao Xie
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

Vahid Nimehchisalem
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.
Corresponding Author: vahid@upm.edu.my

Mei Fung Yong
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

Ngee Thai Yap
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

Received: 11/22/2023 Accepted: 03/1/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Although peer feedback is a prevailing practice to promote evaluative judgement, its influence on the development of this higher-order cognitive ability has not yet been adequately explored. Specifically, there is a dearth of research that examines the benefit of providing and receiving peer feedback in developing students’ understanding of assessment standards of writing. The purpose of this study is to explore students’ perceptions of how different feedback roles influenced their three types of evaluative judgement of ESL argumentative writing, namely hard, soft and dynamic evaluative judgement. During five weeks, 24 undergraduate students enrolled in an English argumentative writing course at a Malaysian public university were randomly assigned to three distinct peer feedback roles, namely feedback provider, feedback receiver, or feedback outsider, to participate in the peer feedback activities. Thematic analysis of pre- and post-intervention surveys indicated that different feedback roles varied in facilitating the development of evaluative judgement. Despite the limitation of domain-specific knowledge, strategically integrating peer feedback into writing course design afforded students opportunities to cultivate the three types of evaluative judgement. This study translates the theoretical framework of evaluative judgement into identifiable goals within the course of English argumentative writing and sheds light on the cognitive mechanisms inherent in different feedback roles, which enables educators and researchers to better dissect peer feedback curriculum design and student-centred assessment activity.

Keywords: Argumentative writing, evaluative judgement, feedback roles, Malaysian students’ feedback, peer feedback, writing domain

Introduction

Evaluative judgement is defined as “the capacity to make decisions about the quality of work of oneself and others” (Tai et al., 2018, p. 467). Its significance extends beyond the scope of individual courses to the realm of lifelong learning (Boud & Soler, 2016), because frequently disregarded in university assessments is the incorporation of direct, authentic experiences for students to evaluate both others and themselves (Tai et al., 2016). This inclusion assists students in comprehending the intricate process of forming judgement, as highlighted by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), making them more effective learners and meeting the demands of the postgraduate workplace (Boud, 2000).

The three distinct types of evaluative judgement (Nelson, 2018), adopting a historical perspective, await further validation through empirical evidence. The first is termed “hard evaluative judgement”, involving an objective assessment of correctness in paradigmatic features. The second, “soft evaluative judgement”, is rooted in the evaluation of value and quality, with the emphasis not placed on right or wrong but on appraising the significance of elements. The third, “dynamic evaluative judgement”, pertains to how content is handled and the organisation of thoughts. Given that evaluative judgement is not universally applicable but depends on specific standards, individuals acquire expertise in particular disciplines or subject areas. In doing so, they can effectively assess the quality of work within that field.

Peer feedback is considered to be important for the development of evaluative judgement (Nicol et al., 2014), and both providing feedback and receiving feedback are crucial for learning (Tai et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in the context of ESL/EFL writing, extensive research over the past three decades has primarily focused on reviewing the impact of various peer feedback methods on overall writing improvement (Gao et al., 2019) and investigating students’ and educators’ attitudes and experiences with peer feedback (Chang, 2016). As noted by Vasu et al. (2016), considering the educational context of Malaysia, where teachers are often expected to be accountable for the learning of their students, “peer feedback, although highly valued, turned out to be the least preferred in this context despite the current pedagogical trend that focuses more on students’ active participation in improving their peers’ writing than being dependent on teachers’ feedback” (p. 164). It is also confirmed that this teacher-led-unidirectional feedback style places learners in a passive role, often resulting in a lack of understanding of peer feedback comments or difficulty in applying strategies to improve their learning (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Thus, peer feedback practices are still little understood in terms of the pedagogical implications of fostering and promoting learners' engagement affectively, behaviourally, and cognitively (Cheng & Zhang, 2024; Gan et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is important to take an in-depth look at the benefits and challenges associated with providing and receiving peer feedback as a means of encouraging students' proactive engagement in peer feedback (Tai et al., 2018). Despite this, little research has been conducted to determine what learning benefits each of these feedback roles can provide in the context of ESL/EFL writing (Allen & Katayama, 2016; Gao et al., 2023; Huisman et al., 2018).

Although evaluative judgement is becoming increasingly relevant in higher education assessment literature, there is still a lack of research showing how peer feedback impacts students’ understanding of assessment standards in ESL argumentative writing. For peer feedback to be effective in Malaysian higher education, where most feedback discussions are typically teacher-led-unidirectional and seldom result in follow-up actions (Carless & Boud, 2018; Vasu et al., 2016), the current study aims to add empirical evidence regarding benefits and challenges of
providing feedback and receiving feedback to the student-centred assessment research base. Therefore, the research objective is to examine students’ perceptions regarding different feedback roles’ impact on their development of evaluative judgement of ESL argumentative writing. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do different peer feedback roles promote students’ development of hard evaluative judgement in argumentative writing?

RQ2: How do different peer feedback roles promote students’ development of soft evaluative judgement in argumentative writing?

RQ3: How do different peer feedback roles promote students’ development of dynamic evaluative judgement in argumentative writing?

Literature Review

In a previous theoretical effort, Tai et al. (2016) put forward the proposition that evaluative judgement comprises two interrelated and harmonious components. The first component involves grasping the essence of what constitutes quality, while the second component involves applying this understanding to evaluate various works, whether one’s own or others. Strategies for cultivating evaluative judgement, and adopting a social constructivist viewpoint (Vygotsky, 1978), include the use of rubrics, exemplars, self-assessment, peer assessment, and feedback (Tai et al., 2018).

While this perspective may seem innovative, its roots can be traced back to Sadler’s (1989) exploration of formative assessment in shaping students’ evaluative knowledge and evaluative expertise. Emphasising how students benefit from discerning the quality of their own and peers’ work, there is a growing body of research explicitly placing themselves within the innovative framework of evaluative judgement. More researchers have provided detailed explanations of alternative theoretical perspectives concerning the conceptualisation of evaluative judgement. These perspectives encompass social material viewpoints (Ajjawi & Bearman, 2018), historical standpoints (Nelson, 2018), dual-process methodologies (Joughin, 2018), and epistemological outlooks (Goodyear & Markauskaite, 2018). Luo and Chan (2023) asserted that evaluative judgement is not a fixed feature possessed or lacking in students but rather a multidimensional structure encompassing knowledge, attitudes, abilities, behaviours, and identity-related aspects. This not only advocates for a more process-oriented approach to cultivating students’ evaluative judgement skills in the curriculum but also emphasises the need for an integrated course design to address the necessity of emphasising various aspects of evaluative judgement and their synergistic relationships.

In a recent empirical study, Chong (2021) examined the use of exemplars in the preparation for the IELTS test, based on Nelson’s (2018) classification of evaluative judgement. The study examined teacher-student dialogue patterns and university students’ perceptions about using exemplars to improve their understanding of assessment criteria for academic writing tasks. The study indicated that teachers/researchers in IELTS testing employ various interaction strategies to cultivate students’ abilities in the hard, soft, and dynamic dimensions of evaluative judgement. Chong (2021) pointed out that hard evaluative judgement “concerns areas involving grammatical (e.g., the use of correct verb tenses) and mechanical accuracy (e.g., the use of correct punctuation)”; soft evaluative judgement “is demonstrated through students’ use of a variety of vocabulary and sentence patterns”; and dynamic evaluative judgement is about “how one communicates with the audience of the work through presentation of logical and structured ideas.”
The results of the study indicated that concerning hard evaluative judgement, i.e., focusing on the correctness of vocabulary and grammar features in writing, students seemed to pay more attention to the correct use of sentence-level features rather than word-level features. As students needed additional types of expertise, such as grammatical knowledge, to fully comprehend this requirement related to language correctness, using exemplars alone had a less effective impact on students’ development of hard evaluative judgement. In the development of students’ soft evaluative judgement, more students focused on the importance of using various vocabularies than the importance of using various sentence structures, differing from students’ hard evaluative judgement. Among these three types of evaluative judgement, students demonstrated robust declarative knowledge in the dynamic evaluative judgement of IELTS writing tasks. They were proficient in articulating various aspects of content and organisational requirements for English academic writing tasks.

Besides the aforementioned use of exemplars (Chong, 2021), in the context of second-language writing, learners often engage in providing suggestions to their peers and receiving comments on their writing performance in pairs or groups through written or oral means (Yu & Lee, 2016). As emphasised by Hyland and Hyland (2006), the central goal of this feedback practice is to cultivate students’ autonomy as authors. Effective evaluative judgement requires dynamic interaction among individuals, their peers, and established performance benchmarks to clarify the characteristics of learners’ outstanding performance, compare their current performance to these standards, and determine what they can do to improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

As a prevailing practice, peer feedback possesses four key features that render it a suitable educational approach for developing students’ evaluative judgement (Nicol, 2014). Firstly, by directly engaging students in multiple evaluative judgement behaviours through reviewing peers’ work, peer feedback allows students to transfer thoughts generated through this comparative process to their work. Secondly, peer feedback provides a platform for interacting with standards and norms, helping students not only develop and interpret concepts of quality but also formulate their standards and norms. Thirdly, for feedback providers, explaining the feedback contributes to enhancing and building students’ own knowledge and understanding, suggesting that generating feedback may be more beneficial to students’ knowledge generation than receiving feedback. This is because, in the review process, feedback providers elevate their reader awareness (Chang, 2015; Tsui & Ng, 2000), enhance understanding of global issues in writing (Min, 2005), and promote reflection on personal writing (Nicol, 2014). Finally, for feedback receivers, accepting different viewpoints fosters a culture of constructive criticism, enabling participants to cultivate a growth mindset and accept opportunities for improvement. The key is how students interact with and respond to the feedback received (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kim, 2009; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

As shown in previous research, learning mechanisms involved in providing peer feedback include initiating problem detection, encouraging problem diagnosis, and modifying strategies (Patchan & Schunn, 2015). On the contrary, the learning mechanisms associated with receiving peer feedback encompass acquiring information about current performance and anticipated performance, as well as developing strategies to bridge this gap (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The traditional understanding of peer feedback has mainly focused on the advantages gained by students receiving peer feedback. However, a significant shift in perspective is emerging, suggesting an awareness that students taking on the role of feedback providers are now the primary beneficiaries of this practice (Nicol et al., 2014; Tai et al., 2016;
Students providing feedback engage in a cognitive process that involves advanced thinking. This process encompasses complex psychological operations, such as applying assessment standards, identifying potential issues in the reviewed work, and formulating viable solutions to address these issues. However, reviewing the results of feedback literature and empirical cases, there is limited research focused on comparing the learning performance and cognitive effects of different roles in the peer feedback process (Allen & Katayama, 2016; Gao et al., 2023; Huisman et al., 2018). As far as the authors of this study are aware, there has been no research comparing the effects of different peer feedback roles on students’ evaluative judgement of ESL argumentative writing.

Method

Participants

The investigation transpired throughout the second semester of the academic year 2022/2023, spanning from week two to week six, encompassing five weeks. Conducting a convenience sampling method, 24 local students were recruited from a public university in Malaysia for an undergraduate writing course, mainly females aged between 19 and 21. They had achieved at least Band Three on the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), demonstrating a reasonably fluent and fairly appropriate use of the English language, despite numerous grammatical errors. MUET is predominantly utilised for university admissions in Malaysia, with nine brands ranging from Band Five as the highest to Band One as the lowest. Their brands mainly correspond to levels B1 and B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Hence, it can be deduced that these participants possessed an intermediate level of proficiency in English, enabling them to generate clear, detailed texts on a broad spectrum of subjects. They were also capable of articulating viewpoints on topical issues, presenting the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

These participants were randomly assigned to three different groups, each given specific roles during the feedback process. These roles included feedback providers, feedback receivers, or feedback outsiders. The feedback providers were responsible for offering insights, suggestions, and constructive feedback to help the receivers improve their writing. Simultaneously, feedback receivers had the opportunity to reflect on the feedback provided by peers. This reflective process was crucial for participants to understand their own writing performance and appreciate different perspectives on their work. The feedback outsider would not actively engage in providing comments on their peers’ writing essays nor receive feedback on their own work. Each participant was informed of their assigned role through email. This strategic role allocation aimed to achieve a dual purpose: safeguarding the privacy of each participant and fostering an open and supportive environment within the learning framework. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (JKEUPM) at Universiti Putra Malaysia (reference number: JKEUPM-2023-411).

Research Instruments

Researchers utilised the evaluative criteria developed by Aryadoust (2012) as the chosen tool and presented various examples to the participants. The criteria effectively delineated five domains of argumentative writing and provided guidelines for subsequent peer feedback activities, consistent with Weir’s (1990) interpretation of the five major attributes of writing patterns: Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC), Compositional Organisation (CO), Coherence (C),
Vocabulary (V), and Grammar (G). This study employed the categorisation outlined by Chong (2021), wherein the assessment of the precision of Grammar (G) and Vocabulary (V) is classified as hard evaluative judgement; the assessment of the range and scope of Grammar (G) and Vocabulary (V) falls within soft evaluative judgement; and the evaluation of the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC), Compositional Organisation (CO), and Coherence (C) is categorised under dynamic evaluative judgement.

In response to the introduction of the evaluative criteria, the participants were required to complete three writing tasks and to submit a written response addressing each writing prompt in 300-500 words: (1) The role of music in bringing together people of different cultures and age groups; (2) The potential obsolescence of print newspapers and books due to the availability of online reading; (3) Social and practical challenges of living in a foreign-language-speaking country. As part of the research tools, two writing exemplars representing different proficiency levels were created for each prompt. Based on these exemplars, researchers conducted classroom discussions and analysis of the five domains of the evaluative criteria.

**Research Procedures**

During this five-week training programme, two distinct sessions, each lasting 1.5 hours, were conducted every week. This structure ensured that each participant received a total of 15 hours of training in the classroom. This study embraced a Process-Genre Approach (Huang & Zhang, 2022; Rahimi & Zhang, 2022), incorporating a strategically arranged set of activities to enhance participants’ experiences with peer feedback. The Process-Genre Approach aims to cultivate student writers’ understanding of linguistic features, rhetorical structures, and writing skills in prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, empowering them to craft texts that serve specific communicative purposes within a particular genre.

The training commenced with an introductory session aimed at acquainting participants with the evaluative criteria (Aryadoust, 2012). Subsequently, each participant independently completed and submitted the writing tasks. In the following session, the principal researcher conducted a classroom discussion and analysis of the five domains of the evaluative criteria for each of the three writing tasks. This analysis was based on two exemplars of writing, representing different proficiency levels. During the peer feedback phase, each peer feedback provider put forward revision suggestions for the essays of four feedback receivers for each task. To maintain the quality of feedback, the principal researcher explicitly instructed the providers to clarify identified issues, provide reasons for modification, and offer suggestions for improvement. Upon receiving the peer feedback outcomes, the principal researcher discreetly emailed the feedback comments to the intended receivers, maintaining anonymity. This process aimed to assist the feedback receivers in engaging in deep introspection regarding their writing performance concerning the specific writing tasks, while simultaneously safeguarding their privacy. Ultimately, this pedagogical design aimed to promote an environment conducive to collaborative learning, encouraging constructive feedback exchange without concerns about personal sensitivity.

**Data Collection**

A pre-intervention survey was carried out at the commencement of the training to gather participants’ initial views and expectations regarding peer feedback, as well as their comprehension of the five domains of writing. Similarly, a post-intervention survey was undertaken at the culmination of the five-week writing training to collect participants’ reflections.
and insights following their involvement in peer feedback activities. This involved exploring the challenges and difficulties encountered by participants in assessing the five domains of argumentative writing and revealing the impact of different feedback roles on the development of their evaluative judgement.

In the first and fifth weeks of training, the principal researcher administered pre- and post-intervention surveys to all participants using the Google Forms online platform. By utilising the online survey, participants could express their thoughts and opinions in a more comfortable and confidential environment, free from external influences. The Google Forms online platform provided participants with a user-friendly interface, allowing them to complete the survey at their convenience. Participants could reflect on their experiences, articulate their thoughts comprehensively, and provide valuable feedback in a systematic and structured manner, thereby gaining a more holistic understanding of their perspectives and experiences.

Data Analysis

Regarding data analysis, this study employed a thematic analysis approach, harmoniously combining inductive and deductive coding methods, aiming to comprehensively understand identified themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). By adopting both inductive and deductive coding techniques, the analysis process involved exploring newly emerging themes and applying them to existing theoretical frameworks or concepts, ensuring a thorough examination of the data. The researchers selected Nelson’s (2018) evaluative judgement framework and an established evaluative judgement template as predefined basic dimensions for survey design and subsequent analysis (Chong, 2021).

Qualitative data for this study were analysed using NVivo (1.5.1) software. To enhance the credibility and reliability of the reported qualitative data, the initial phase of thematic analysis was conducted by the principal researcher who diligently perused the dataset, recording initial impressions. Once preliminary ideas were discerned, the principal researcher proceeded to code interesting features across the entire dataset, participating in discussions with other researchers to refine the coding and organise the data associated with each code. Three themes were substantiated by vivid and robust extracts from the data, grounded in both semantic and latent content. These themes encompassed the usefulness of peer feedback on evaluative judgement, reflection on writing knowledge construction, and evaluative judgement on different writing domains. Additionally, given the adoption of Nelson’s framework (2018) in this study, the subsequent results are categorised according to the classification of hard, soft, and dynamic evaluative judgement.

Results

Research Question One pertains to the hard evaluative judgement of the accuracy of Vocabulary (V) and Grammar (G) domains in writing. In the pre-intervention survey, concerning the Grammar (G) domain, eight participants underscored the significance of clear and accurate grammar. Furthermore, six participants highlighted the necessity of using appropriate tenses based on the selected topic (Participant No. 8). This demonstrates their awareness of the importance of accurately employing tenses in writing to maintain consistency and coherence. Additionally, two participants stressed the completeness of sentence elements and the diversity of syntactic structures (Participant No. 16). This indicates their understanding of the importance of constructing well-formed syntactic structures to enhance the overall quality of argumentative essays.
“I believe grammar features can adopt past, present, and future tenses based on the selected topic.” (Participant No. 8, Feedback Provider)

“Ensure sentences are complete and comprehensive, with no fragments that leave the reader searching for the intended meaning.” (Participant No. 16, Feedback Receiver)

In the post-intervention survey, in the evaluation of the Grammar (G) domain, some feedback providers mentioned that their own grammar limitations had impeded them from making accurate judgement (Participant No. 1). This quote reflects the participants’ struggle in identifying grammatical errors due to a limited understanding of grammar rules. While feedback receivers generally acknowledged the benefits of receiving feedback, Participant No. 16 noted that receiving incorrect feedback disrupted their evaluative judgement. This excerpt underscores the crucial role of teachers in actively supervising and guiding feedback exchange to ensure learners receive accurate and helpful input. Teachers can provide explanations, examples, and additional resources to reinforce learners’ understanding of the feedback they receive.

“The grammar section was the most challenging for me because my grammar is poor, and I can’t identify the author’s grammar errors.” (Participant No. 1, Feedback Provider)

“My grammar mistakes were also wrongly corrected. Some feedback providers gave me incorrect corrections, making me doubt what is right and what is wrong.” (Participant No. 16, Feedback Receiver)

In the pre-intervention survey, regarding hard evaluative judgement, few students paid attention to accuracy in the Vocabulary (V) domain and seldom mentioned the focus on the three vocabulary-level language features highlighted in the evaluation criteria: collocations, parts of speech, and spelling, demonstrating deficiencies in their lexical knowledge. In the post-intervention survey, in the Vocabulary (V) domain, the most frequently mentioned challenge among participants was related to their vocabulary limitations, highlighting the dilemma of accurately assessing vocabulary use due to personal knowledge limitations and encountering unfamiliar word choices (Participant No. 3). This statement indicates that participants found providing feedback on vocabulary choices challenging because they were uncertain about suitable alternatives for incorrect words.

“Determining the correct vocabulary choice is a challenge for me because I am unsure of words that can replace, even if I can identify the selected incorrect word.” (Participant No. 3, Feedback Provider)

Research Question Two is related to the development of participants’ soft evaluative judgement regarding the range of Vocabulary (V) and Grammar (G) domains. None of the participants mentioned syntax diversity in their pre- and post-intervention surveys, indicating their lack of awareness of grammatical range, which needs to be addressed by the writing lecturer.

In the pre-intervention survey of the Vocabulary (V) domain, participants had different views on vocabulary diversity use. Almost half of the participants (10 out of 24) believed that more advanced and complex vocabulary should be used to show a higher degree of lexical knowledge (Participant No. 13), while six participants mentioned the importance of using simple yet precise vocabulary to effectively convey meaning. Another consideration raised by some participants is to consider the expected audience to determine the level of vocabulary difficulty (Participant No. 2).

“Maybe advanced vocabulary skills, like using rare words with the same meaning.” (Participant No. 13, Feedback Receiver)

“It depends on the audience; your vocabulary range must suit your audience.” (Participant No. 2, Feedback Provider)
Interestingly, in the post-intervention survey, one of the feedback providers, Participant No. 1, elaborated on her significant development in understanding the Vocabulary (V) domain through the peer feedback process. This indicates that she became more aware of the importance of selecting vocabulary that effectively conveys ideas rather than pursuing novelty.

“In the first week, I thought, in the vocabulary domain, the author should use uncommon or unusual vocabulary. But later I shifted my focus from using strange vocabulary to using appropriate, understandable, and not repetitive vocabulary.” (Participant No. 1, Feedback Provider)

Research Question Three is related to participants’ dynamic evaluative judgement, concerning three domains of the evaluative criteria, namely, Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC), Compositional Organisation (CO), and Coherence (C). The results are presented in these three domains accordingly below.

Firstly, in the pre-intervention survey, participants demonstrated the highest level of clarity in their awareness of the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC) domain. The majority of participants (21 out of 24) could articulate specific requirements and expectations related to this domain, emphasising the importance of in-depth discussion of the topic with strong reasoning and arguments (Participant No. 8).

“In my view, a good argumentative essay needs an in-depth discussion of the topic with solid reasoning and argument support.” (Participant No. 8, Feedback Provider)

Nevertheless, in the post-intervention survey, concerning the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC) domain, some feedback providers acknowledged encountering diverse challenges when making evaluative judgement in this regard. The author’s subjectivity introduced difficulties in reaching consistent and fair evaluation (Participant No. 7). Ambiguities in arguments and supporting evidence posed challenges for participants in evaluating the relevance of content. The presence of conflicting viewpoints in the essays further complicated the determination of the overall coherence and persuasiveness of the argument (Participant No. 3).

“The perception of relevance and accuracy can vary from person to person, making it difficult to provide objective feedback.” (Participant No. 7, Feedback Provider)

“The opinion is given on one side, but the supporting sentences are leaning towards the opposite. Apart from that, some of the essays are also straying from the points or questions given.” (Participant No. 3, Feedback Provider)

In the post-intervention survey, eight feedback receivers generally conveyed that receiving constructive feedback from their peers improved their evaluative judgement with respect to the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC) domain. This process aided them in pinpointing deficiencies in their writing. For instance, upon reflecting on the feedback, they identified occasions where they veered away from the topic and failed to adequately address the task, despite their initial perception that they had performed well (Participant No. 11).

“After receiving feedback, I realised I went off-topic, not really addressing the task. I thought I did well. I’ll be more careful about the relevance and adequacy of my content.” (Participant No. 11, Feedback Receiver)

Secondly, within the Compositional Organisation (CO) domain, during the pre-intervention survey, half of the participants demonstrated a fundamental yet lucid understanding of the requisites in this domain. They underscored the significance of a well-structured English argumentative essay, encompassing elements such as an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion (Participant No. 12).
“In my view, it must follow the standard format of an introduction, three separate argument points, and a conclusion.” (Participant No. 12, Feedback Receiver)

In the post-intervention survey, it emerged that students exhibited the highest level of competence in assessing the appropriateness of paragraphs within written pieces. The Compositional Organisation (CO) domain proved to be the most straightforward for the majority of participants to evaluate (Participant No. 4).

“You don’t even need to read them fully, just check if the CO is balanced. I mainly focus on each paragraph, key points, introduction, and conclusion.” (Participant No. 4, Feedback Provider)

Thirdly, 16 participants had difficulty explaining the assessment requirements about the Coherence (C) domain, showing a lack of domain-specific knowledge, including the use of cohesive devices, pronouns, and synonyms. Among them, nine participants’ responses were marked by confusion, as they mistakenly intermingled elements with those from the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC) domain (Participant No. 2). Conversely, eight participants acknowledged the use of cohesive devices (Participant No. 13), indicating their rudimentary understanding of the importance of maintaining coherence in an essay.

“It connects the contents as it requires a lot of details and elaborations.” (Participant No. 2, Feedback Provider)

“You can use appropriate connectors and sentence linking words to connect the articles.” (Participant No. 13, Feedback Receiver)

In the post-intervention survey, nine participants openly acknowledged experiencing confusion when assessing the Coherence (C) domain. Despite participating in peer feedback activities, a sense of uncertainty persisted in their ability to distinguish correct cohesive devices (Participant No. 2). Furthermore, grappling with the broader concept of coherence presented challenges for rendering sound judgement within this domain.

“Evaluating coherence is quite challenging because I’m not very clear on this aspect. I cannot differentiate between correct or incorrect cohesive elements.” (Participant No. 2, Feedback Provider)

In addition to the aforementioned findings about the research questions, it is imperative to examine the impact of non-engagement in peer feedback on feedback outsiders’ evaluative judgement. During the post-intervention survey, there was a sense of stagnation and a lack of clarity regarding their learning progress (Participant No. 17, Participant No. 21, and Participant No. 23). Without the valuable insights and suggestions from peers, these participants felt that they lacked guidance in their writing improvement journey. They expressed a desire to receive feedback to identify areas for growth and to gain a better understanding of their writing strengths and weaknesses.

“I couldn’t learn anything, and my evaluating skill is still stagnant.” (Participant No. 17, Feedback Outsider)

“It makes it harder for me to write a better essay without any feedback.” (Participant No. 21, Feedback Outsider)

“I don’t know if I’m actually improving or not without any feedback. I want to know what I need to improve and what I am lacking in the writing.” (Participant No. 23, Feedback Outsider)
Discussion

On Research Question One of hard evaluative judgement, this study found that the utilisation of peer feedback has limited effects on the students’ advancement in evaluative judgement concerning the accuracy of grammar, morphology, syntax, or structure. This is related to the challenge students face in making clear explanations based on vocabulary and grammar rules, given their lack of specific domain knowledge in making hard evaluative judgement related to language correctness. In alignment with Chong’s (2021) assertion that relying solely on exemplars is insufficient for fostering students’ evaluative judgement, the outcomes of this study affirm that peer feedback itself can only partially improve students’ domain-specific knowledge, such as accurate use of vocabulary and syntactic features, since participants only provided very general descriptions or directly expressed difficulty in making judgement on these domains. Therefore, although peer feedback is useful in developing students’ understanding of evaluative criteria, teachers must develop students’ domain-specific knowledge through other instructional tasks.

To address Research Question Two, regarding soft evaluative judgement, which involves students judging a variety of vocabularies and sentence structures, the current study found that students’ understanding regarding the grammatical and lexical ranges varied. On the one hand, concerning the development of soft evaluative judgement in the Vocabulary (V) domain, after the peer feedback intervention, some participants shifted from a mere focus on the wide range of vocabulary diversity to utilising appropriate and contextually accurate vocabulary. On the other hand, this cohort of Malaysian participants tended to overlook syntactic diversity, exposing their deficiency in grammatical knowledge. Because of limited knowledge of the Grammar (G) domain, students’ awareness of grammatical evaluative criteria did not translate into accurate soft evaluative judgement, as found by Chong (2021). This necessitates educators to devise specific pedagogical designs to effectively scaffold students’ peer feedback; otherwise, students often fail to either proactively engage in providing peer feedback or incorporate the comments into revisions because the feedback they received is too vague or lacks specific suggestions.

Research Question Three is related to dynamic evaluative judgement. The most interesting conclusion drawn in this study is different from Chong’s (2021) conclusion regarding students’ strong declarative knowledge in dynamic evaluative judgement of IELTS writing. Chong (2021) attributed this to the higher implicitness of the requirements in content and organisation under dynamic evaluative judgement in the IELTS writing evaluation criteria, where students generate thoughts based on their previous experiences and thinking habits. This study found that students demonstrated relatively accurate judgement in the development of thought, and logical organisation of paragraphs, but had unclear and weak judgement in using cohesive devices, pronouns and synonym references. In accordance with the findings of Aryadoust (2012) and Weir (1990), the results of this study indicate that, for dynamic evaluative judgement related to the Relevance and Adequacy of Content (RAC) domain, it measures sociolinguistic knowledge by assessing responses related to the interactive or task-setting topic; meanwhile, the Compositional Organisation (CO) and Coherence (C) domains reflect discourse knowledge. There is a need to further distinguish the knowledge composition required for dynamic evaluative judgement in argumentative writing and require teachers to provide targeted guidance.

Both providing feedback and receiving feedback enabled this cohort of university students to practice evaluative judgement in their argumentative writing learning, allowing them to understand what constitutes high-quality work and how to create such work (Allen & Katayama, 2016; Gao et al., 2023; Huisman et al., 2018). This study adopted a social constructivist perspective
(Vygotsky, 1978), emphasising the active and constructive nature of knowledge development about the diverse peer feedback roles in the development of evaluative judgement. Firstly, regarding providing feedback, this collaborative approach enhanced feedback providers’ understanding of effective writing skills while fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the learning process (Nicol et al., 2014). This aligns with other research findings indicating that providing peer feedback contributes to strengthening and constructing students’ own knowledge and promoting deeper understanding (Chang, 2015; Min, 2005; Nicol, 2014; Tsui & Ng, 2000). It also should be noted that, since most students lacked experience in providing feedback, they found it challenging to read others’ writings effectively and offer constructive opinions. It has been demonstrated that peer feedback training enhances feedback providers’ ability to provide more precise and accurate feedback (Chang, 2015; Min, 2005). Secondly, regarding receiving feedback, students began to appreciate different perspectives, gaining insights into their writing abilities and areas for improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlan-Dick, 2006). By accepting constructive criticism and incorporating valuable insights into revisions, participants cultivated a culture of continuous growth and development as writers. This process encouraged a growth mindset, fostering a willingness to adapt and improve based on constructive input. Thirdly, regarding the absence of peer feedback, the feedback outsiders’ excerpts highlighted the importance of integrating peer feedback into the learning process, underscoring the necessity of creating opportunities for students to actively participate in providing and receiving feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). By incorporating peer feedback sessions into writing instruction, educators can cultivate a collaborative and supportive learning environment (Carless & Boud, 2018; Xie et al., 2022). Students can benefit from the diverse perspectives and collective wisdom of their peers, enabling them to continually improve their writing skills and evaluative judgement (Nicol, 2014).

**Conclusion**

This study, set in the context of an argumentative writing course at a public university in Malaysia, provides qualitative evidence for the advantages and limitations of using peer feedback for the development of evaluative judgement among undergraduate students. The results indicate that peer feedback, overall, contributes to the development of students’ hard, soft, and dynamic evaluative judgement, as they acquire a more sophisticated understanding of evaluative criteria. However, it is essential not to rely solely on peer feedback, as it may not comprehensively clarify and summarise students’ domain-specific knowledge, including linguistic, discourse, and sociolinguistic aspects.

Some results of the thematic analysis are limited in generalisability due to the study’s small scope and convenience sampling. Additionally, the study used perceptual data, which is subject to bias, novelty, or researcher effects. Future research could contemplate the adoption of quasi-experimental designs to investigate the effectiveness of peer feedback in enhancing students’ evaluative judgement. The inclusion of data sources such as verbal protocols, eye-tracking data, or psychometric data could unveil the intricate cognitive processes. These supplementary data streams possess the potential to illuminate the very mechanisms that lead to the statistically significant variations discerned within the study. The integration of such data would not only provide a finer-grained understanding but could also potentially offer explanations for the patterns and outcomes observed. This would complement existing qualitative research, exploring variations
in learners’ behaviours and perceptions across different feedback roles, significantly enhancing the robustness of the study’s findings.

**Funding**
This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**
Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity**
This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:**
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Authors**

**Xiao Xie** is a PhD candidate majoring in the English Language, at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM, Malaysia. He graduated from Sichuan University and Sun Yat-sen University, China. He takes a lively interest in peer feedback, argumentative writing and language assessment literacy. Email: gs58879@student.upm.edu.my  
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3388-7464

**Vahid Nimehchisalem** holds a PhD in TESL. He’s an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM. Learning-teaching materials evaluation and language assessment are his main areas of research interest. He’s chief editor of the International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies and managing editor of the Journal of Language and Communication (JLC). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5454-1895

**Mei Fung Yong** holds a PhD in Linguistics and Second Language Teaching from Massey University, New Zealand. She served as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM, before her recent retirement. Her areas of research interests include collaborative project-based writing, game-based learning, self-assessment, and second language learning. E-mail: yong@upm.edu.my  
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5363-1864

**Yap Ngee Thai** has a PhD in Linguistics. She is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM. Her work primarily involves second language acquisition and learning, particularly on speech perception and speech production. She has also worked on language development and processing among bilingual and plurilingual children and adults, and the neuroscience of language. E-mail: ntyap@upm.edu.my  
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8672-7128

**References**


Chang, C. Y. H. (2016). Two decades of research in L2 peer review. *Journal of Writing Research, 8*(1), 81-117. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2016.08.01.03.


Malaysian Students’ Perceptions towards Using Peer Feedback  

Xie, Nimehchisalem, Yong & Yap


The Effects of Intensive English Podcast Listening on High School Students' Comprehension Skills and Impact on Learning Motivations

Ebubekir Bozavlı
Department of Foreign Language
Faculty of Education
Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey
Email: ebozavli@atauni.edu.tr

Received: 11/14/2023 Accepted: 03/09/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Listening is one of the most essential basic skills in foreign language learning. In recent years, technological advances have provided students with a wide range of digital applications, including podcasts, to improve their listening skills. This study aims to determine the impact of intensive listening to English podcasts on high school students' comprehension skills and motivation to learn. The research centers on the following questions: “Does intensive podcast listening in a foreign language improve high school English learners' language comprehension competence? Does intensive podcast listening in a foreign language provide retention in high school English learners' listening skills? Does intensive podcast listening in a foreign language increase high school English learners' motivation for language learning?” The study sample consists of 27 male and 27 female students studying in the 10th grade of Atatürk Anatolian High School affiliated with Erzurum National Education Directorate in the second semester of the 2022 academic year. The podcast listening practices with the participants were conducted in two 40-minute class hours each week for 12 weeks. Podcasts with an average duration of three to six minutes in the BBC Learning English application were used in the study. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study. Qualitative methods were used to analyze the data, and qualitative methods were used to interpret them. The survey results show that podcasts improve English high school students' listening skills and increase their motivation to learn. Podcasts make high school students willing to listen and understand English.

Keywords: Comprehension skills, foreign language, learning, listening skills, podcast, teaching foreign language, technology

Introduction
In the 21st century, the world has taken on a new and different look with technology and digitalization. In the 1970s, the third industrial revolution began with automated electronics, information communication systems, and industrial robot applications. Digital technologies have developed rapidly in production areas in the last two decades. This rapid change is considered by many to be the beginning of a new industrial revolution. This process is called the fourth industrial revolution or “Industry 4.0” (Doru et al., 2020). This new era, described as “Industry 4.0” in German literature and “Industrial Internet” in English literature, is defined as the “Internet of Machines, Computers and Things” (Özsoylo, 2017). The Internet of Things means that every conceivable object has access to the Internet and communicates with other devices. In other words, the word “smart” is added to every object (Biçakçı, 2019). This is the era of intelligent production in which “with the developments in the fields of artificial intelligence, three-dimensional printers, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and space technology, every living and non-living object with a certain economic value can communicate and interact with other objects via Internet connections” (Çapçıoğlu & Anık, 2021). Thus, with the Internet of Things, digitalization has reached a higher level and started to take place effectively in all areas of life. Undoubtedly, one of these areas is education and training. Digitalization and the use of information and communication technologies have changed the direction of the educational process. The first steps of change started with the development of digitized electronic communications. Initially, static electronic e-learning materials (e-books, e-documents, etc.) were used in the teaching and learning process, followed by virtual laboratories, innovative course resources, e-classrooms, and augmented reality as a result of technological advances (Stefanovic & Klochkova, 2021). Technology transformation has significantly contributed to teaching oral comprehension and expression skills in English, especially in schools. English language learners have had more opportunities to listen and speak. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Skype, Telegram, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc., for speaking skills and interactive mobile applications such as Memrise, Busuu, Duolingo, etc., for listening skills, digital language learning environments, and various audiovisual materials are used by English teachers and students in and outside the classroom. In addition to other listening materials, podcasts are audio-visual materials that have been widely used in listening activities in recent years. Podcasts, which can be accessed free of charge from many Internet sources and consist of monologues or dialogues in which both spoken language reflecting real situations in daily life and more formal language use examples, are among the effective listening materials that can be used mainly for EFL learners to have authentic listening experiences (Şendağ et al., 2019). Listening is a skill that is often ignored in foreign language teaching. One of the main reasons it is often left in the background in teaching is that it is considered together with speaking and communication skills. It is not considered that listening is a skill independent of speaking. Listening is one of the four basic skills of language. For example, when acquiring the mother tongue, a child is exposed to passive listening activities for months before they start speaking. This situation facilitates their comprehension as they can make sense of what they hear when they start talking. Another reason why it is ignored in teaching is that English teachers, especially in foreign language teaching in schools, prefer grammar and translation-based teaching rather than teaching speaking skills. However, in Turkiye, the curriculum for teaching English in secondary and high school emphasizes that the four basic skills of a foreign language should be taught equally. In some European countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and Belgium, speaking and listening activities are prioritized in foreign language teaching. Teaching starts with these two
activities and continues with writing and reading activities. Moreover, according to the English Proficiency Index (EPI), Turkey is among the countries with poor English language proficiency. For example, in the last five years of data, Turkey is in the same ranking as underdeveloped or developing countries such as Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen, Egypt, Azerbaijan, etc. On average, Turkey ranks 47th in the world rankings. Among European countries, it ranks last (Bozavli, 2017). The vast majority of learners in Turkey cannot express themselves even with a few sentences at a superficial level and cannot understand what is said in the foreign language they have learned at the end of hours of foreign language learning, starting from primary school and continuing in higher education. Despite many positive factors, such as the potential of teachers and positive classroom environments, most students in Turkey (more than 90%) still have a basic level of English proficiency after more than 1000 hours of English classes. From this point of view, the present study is essential in determining whether intensive English listening activities in schools increase students' comprehension and speaking skills, make these skills permanent, and contribute to the annual foreign language curriculum planning and revision of the Ministry of National Education. Although there are many studies in the relevant literature that measure the effectiveness of podcasts in teaching English listening skills, there is no research that determines whether these skills are permanent or not. In this framework, the current study aims to find answers to the following questions.

1. Does intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language improve high school English language learners' language comprehension competence?
2. Does intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language help high school English language learners retain their listening skills?
3. Does intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language increase high school English language learners' motivation to learn a language?

Literature Review

The podcast is a combination of the words iPod and broadcast. This combination refers to live recorded broadcasts at the desired time and place. Since podcasts were initially designed to be listened to through iPods, the word pod in the podcast combination refers to the iPod. Podcast is the transfer of digital audio files to users through devices such as computers or smartphones (Bölükbaş & Dinç, 2022). The first step in popularizing podcasts was the release of Apple's application “Podcasts” module, which provides access to podcasts via iTunes (Yücel, 2020). Podcasts, which were first used in the field of media, and publishing, have started to be used in the field of education and training over time. The use of podcasts in education is an innovative method for effective learning. It is complementary and creative in teaching. On the other hand, educational podcasts can contribute to diversifying teaching materials, increasing learners' motivation, and encouraging them to self-learning (Rajic, 2013). Podcasts are also used effectively in teaching four basic skills in a foreign language. Podcasts are utilized to develop reading, speaking, listening skills and vocabulary teaching (Kargoza & Zarinkamar, 2014; Samad et al., 2017; Azizi et al., 2022; Liu, 2023). Farshi and Mohammadi (2013) found that students exhibited positive behaviors toward learning new vocabulary with podcasts, and that this method of teaching vocabulary was fun, easy, and motivating. Learners improved their vocabulary through podcasts. Yaman (2016) states that podcasts in foreign language classes offers many advantages to learners. According to Yaman, learners can access unlimited podcasts online or offline for free without any time and place
limitations. Podcasts motivate learners and give them autonomy in learning.

Listening is a highly complex process that requires making sense of what is heard and memorizing it for communication. The individual is constantly exposed to passive and active listening in daily life. A skill that is easily acquired naturally in native language acquisition often characterizes a problematic and laborious process for learners in foreign language teaching and learning. Alzamil (2012) argues that listening is essential but challenging to learn. In his research to determine the listening experiences of Saudi EFL learners, he concluded that listening is the most difficult skill for learners to learn. The study also revealed that learners struggled with problems such as “the speaker's intonation, speaking speed, their lack of vocabulary knowledge, and listening anxiety” while learning to listen. Especially in foreign language teaching at school, listening is seen as a part of speaking skills, and listening teaching is often ignored (Djabbarova, 2020). However, teaching listening can nowadays be realized quite easily, thanks to technology. Creative drama, short digital stories, digital games, music, video clips, animated videos, podcasts, etc., are ideal learning materials for listening. Apart from these, there are also online digital listening platforms in English language teaching.

Numerous scientific studies show that the use of podcasts in teaching English listening skills yields positive results. Indonesian researchers (Syahabuddin et al., 2021) conducted an experimental study with 15 students to measure the effect of podcasts in improving the listening skills of students of the English Department at Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh University. The researchers had the students listen to English with a podcaster for forty minutes for eight weeks. The study revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. English students' listening skills improved thanks to podcasts. Another study (Harahap, 2020) conducted to determine university students' attitudes towards the use of podcasts in improving their English listening skills revealed that students had a positive attitude towards the use of podcasts. Students liked the podcast application because it facilitated English language learning and provided different listening resources. In his experimental research (2021), Sari found that podcasts in English listening made learners more active in their learning activities. In the traditional listening activity group, university students showed less interest in participating in class. To determine the relationship between repetitive listening and podcast length in English listening instruction, Turkish researchers conducted a project supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) (Şendağ et al., 2018). Twenty-nine pre-service English language teachers participated in the study. The experimental research showed that podcast size and repetitive listening had a significant effect on comprehension. Although repetitive listening was boring for the learners, the participants improved their English comprehension skills. Repetitive listening to short podcasts facilitated the awareness of longer podcasts. In the literature, it is possible to find scientific studies to determine whether podcasts improve the listening skills of learners of foreign languages other than English. One of these studies was conducted with ten students in a Spanish language class at Blind Brook High School in New York (Maggie & Deniz, 2011). The study started in November 2008 and lasted until May 2009. The research, which was practical, aimed to students complete particular tasks with short oral Spanish podcasts and upload them to “the gcast (www.gcast.com)” application. Each student's weekly podcasts were listened to individually by other students or collectively in class. The aim was to improve students’ speaking skills while preparing the podcasts and listening skills while listening to them. At the end of the research, it was observed that high school students improved their speaking and listening skills in Spanish. At the end of the year, all students' grades in the Spanish- speaking exam increased
compared to the previous semesters.

In the literature, there are many studies that measure the effectiveness of podcasts in teaching English listening skills. However, no research determines whether these skills are permanent or not. Whether listening skills can be taught in a foreign language is a controversial issue. Some scholars argue that listening is integrated with speaking and, cannot be taught. Others believe that it is necessary to teach listening because it is learned only at school and not in a natural setting where the language is spoken. It is crucial to make learners aware of listening. They should be aware of the place, importance, and purpose of listening in foreign language learning (Kul, 2022).

Methods
The research is a study consisting of quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis of the data is quantitative, and their interpretation is qualitative.

Participants
The participants of the study were selected by simple sampling method. In the second semester of the academic year 2022, 27 10th-grade students from Atatürk High School of Erzurum National Education Directorate participated in the study. The participants had different English language levels, and 11 of them were female and 16 were male.

Research Instruments
Podcasts from the “BBC Learning English” application were used in the study. This application was chosen because the podcasts were prepared by an expert team and offered downloadable content to smartphones and computers for learners and teachers through “Appstore and Google Play”. At the end of the research, it is assumed that the awareness levels of the learners towards listening activities will have increased, and it is foreseen that they will be able to continue their listening activities with this and similar platforms. All of the podcasts are podcasts prepared according to the intermediate English language level. The average duration of the podcasts with different contents is between three and six minutes.

Research Procedures
The listening practices took two 40-minute class periods each week and continued continuously for 12 weeks from March to May. In the first week, at the beginning of March, a listening pretest consisting of four podcasts of five minutes on average was administered to the students to measure their English listening skills. In the last week of the study, at the end of April, participants were given a listening post-test of four podcasts of six minutes on average and a motivation questionnaire to measure their motivation to learn at the end of the intervention. At the end of May, about a month after the end of the study, participants were given a final listening test to determine whether the learners’ listening skills were retained after the intensive listening activity with podcasts. Podcasts prepared according to the B1 Intermediate language level were used in each listening test. The data were analyzed with quantitative and qualitative methods.

Data Analysis
Descriptive analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that involves summarizing and
interpreting the data obtained through various data collection techniques according to predetermined themes. The primary purpose of this type of analysis is to present the findings to the reader in a summarized and interpreted form (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003; Giroux & Tremblay, 2002).

Findings
The study results are presented and discussed below according to the research questions. Within the framework of the first and second research questions, the pre-test and post-test results were analyzed with paired samples T-test and interpreted with descriptive analysis.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.2222</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.69798</td>
<td>.13433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>1.5185</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.75296</td>
<td>.14491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results of Paired Samples statistics in Table 1, the pre-test significance level is 2.2222, and the post-test significance level is 1.5185. While the rate of English students not understanding what they heard was high in the pre-test (mean 2.2222), the rate of not understanding what they listened to in the post-test (mean 1.5185) decreased significantly. In other words, learners improved their listening comprehension skills through intensive podcast listening. As seen in Table 2, the difference between the pre-test and the post-test is at the level of .003. In other words, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. This result validates the assumption in the first question of the study. According to the results in the table below, intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language improves high school English students' language comprehension competence.

Table 2. Paired Samples Test of Pre-test and Post-test scores in Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Sample</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Sample</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>70370</td>
<td>1.1373</td>
<td>21887</td>
<td>.25380</td>
<td>1,15360</td>
<td>3,215</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One month after the end of the research, a new post-test was conducted to determine whether the students' listening skills were permanent. The significance level of this post-test was 1.1852. This ratio is smaller than the previous post-test result. While the impact of the post-test conducted immediately after the implementation was 1,5185, the impact shown one month after the performance was 1,1852. When the results in Table 1 and Table 2 are compared, the retention in listening skills of high school students who listened to podcasts intensively in a foreign language partially decreased. Students performed better in the first of the two post-tests, whereas in the second post-test, students' performance declined. Learners comprehended less of what they listened to.
The data related to the third research question are presented and interpreted in the tables below. As seen in Table 4, most participants have a positive attitude towards the use of podcasts in English language teaching. 74% of high school students believe that podcasts will improve their English language skills in general. 81.4% enjoy listening to podcasts, and listening to podcasts encourages 66.6% of them to learn English. While 66.7% find podcasts entertaining to listen to in English, 74% find them helpful to listen to in English. On the other hand, 66.7% of the participants said they would listen to podcasts for individual learning outside the classroom.

Table 3. Paired samples statistics one month after the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.2222</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.69798</td>
<td>.13433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>1.1852</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.55726</td>
<td>.10725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. High school students’ perceptions on the use of podcasts in improving English listening skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think podcasts will improve my English language skills</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I think podcasts will improve my English listening skills</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like listening to podcasts</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening to podcasts motivates me to learn English</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Podcasts motivate me to listen to English</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I find podcasts fun for listening to English</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I find podcasts helpful</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
When the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire on motivation in podcast use is analyzed in Table 5, it is seen that the significance levels of items two, three, eight, and nine are high. The high significance level in these items reflects high school students’ attitudes towards listening to podcasts. The significance level in the second item, which aims to understand whether podcasts improve English listening skills, is 4.2593. In other words, 88.8% of the participants believe podcasts will improve their English listening proficiency. Only one student among the participants thought otherwise. The other two items with high significance levels are related to the subject and length of the podcasts used in listening. The rate of those who think the size of the podcasts will affect their listening motivation is 92.6%. Another item that affects students’ motivation is related to the topic of the podcasts. 92.5% of the students think that the issue of the podcasts can affect their listening.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of the Motivation to Use Podcasts questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8418</td>
<td>1.07550</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2593</td>
<td>.76423</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.1111</td>
<td>.97402</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8519</td>
<td>.81824</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.9259</td>
<td>.78082</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4074</td>
<td>1.08342</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.8889</td>
<td>1.01274</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2593</td>
<td>.59437</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3704</td>
<td>.62929</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.5926</td>
<td>1.08342</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

This study investigated the impact of intensive English podcast listening on high school students' comprehension skills and motivation to learn. The study was shaped around three research questions: “Did intensive podcast listening in a foreign language improve high school English learners' language comprehension proficiency? Did intensive podcast listening in a foreign language enhance the retention of high school English learners' listening skills? Did intensive podcast listening in a foreign language increase high school English learners' motivation for language learning? The participants' answers to these questions and the discussion around these questions are as follows. The findings revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. It was observed that the intensive podcast listening activity significantly improved the listening skills of tenth-grade high school English learners. These results support the findings of Lio and Marafat (2019), Shadid and Ali (2017) and Camelia et al. In these studies conducted in different countries and at various learning levels, podcasts increased learners' academic proficiency, especially their English comprehension skills. Al Oasim and Fadda (2013), in an experimental study with forty-six Saudi high school students, concluded that English language learners in classes where podcasts were used as learning materials improved their listening skills more than students in classes where English was taught using traditional methods. On the other hand, learners' motivation increased significantly in the podcasting group. In her research, Djabbarova (2020) argues that podcasts are one of the modern language teaching methods in the digital age and increase learners' listening and comprehension capacities both in group activities in the classroom and in individual learning. In another study (Amalia, 2023) conducted with the participation of thirty students in an IPA 6 Cambridge of MAN English language class in the 2022-2023 academic year, the following results were obtained: 77% of the students said that listening to podcasts in English was enough to improve their listening skills, especially their pronunciation as they heard words and sentences over and over again, and they understood how to use the language in different contexts.

On the other hand, the present study concluded that the intensive podcast listening activity partially retained high school students' English listening skills. This shows that the participants did not listen to enough podcasts after the research. Undoubtedly, listening should be continued until listening proficiency reaches a certain level. Whether native or foreign language, listening is a part of communication and requires continuity. As a social being, the individual constantly hears, either actively or passively. Only during sleep does hearing activity cease. In the literature, it is seen that there are no scientific studies to determine whether podcast activity provides retention in listening skills in learners.

When it comes to motivation, the study found that the majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards the use of podcasts in English language teaching. Listening to podcasts increased the motivation of high school students and encouraged them to learn English. In addition, the participants displayed high motivation during the study. The participants showed constant interest in the practices. The fact that the students individually said that they would continue listening to podcasts after the end of the intervention can be seen as a sign of their continued motivation to learn. There are data in the literature that support the findings in this last research question. In a scientific study conducted by Farshi and Mohammadi (2013), podcasts were found to motivate learners to learn English, increase their academic achievement in exams, and improve their listening skills, especially vocabulary knowledge. Podcast applications can make English learners more active in learning to listen and reduce their
listening and speaking anxiety. Especially in Turkiye, such applications can change the habits of learning and teaching English. This is because the majority of individuals who learn a foreign language in public schools have acquired completely different learning habits than individuals who know their mother tongue or learn a language in foreign schools. Learners are not active enough in foreign language classes. They usually listen to what their teachers tell them and speak only when they are given the floor. Most of the time, they are given the floor against their will. It is almost as if the teacher imposed it on them. This is especially common in speaking lessons. Nearly 70% of secondary school learners do not engage in individual or collective listening activities in the foreign language they are learning. Across Turkiye, a very high proportion of students (more than 90%) still have a basic level of English proficiency after more than 1000 hours of English classes. Research shows that students have not learned how to communicate in English and to make the language functional; students focus on how to answer teachers' questions, how to complete written exercises in a textbook, and how to pass a grammar-based test; students know where to write the present perfect tense but are unable to construct sentences with these structures verbally (Bozavlı, 2015). Even though students take English lessons continuously from the 4th grade of primary school until they graduate from the 12th grade, the vast majority of them can only form one or two sentences. This is because the lessons do not include enough listening and speaking activities. Only grammar-based learning is practiced. Research shows that Turkish students' attitudes toward listening are generally negative, and they do not have listening habits. Students believe reading and writing in English is more straightforward than listening and speaking. Essential for them in a foreign language, it is to learn grammar and new vocabulary (Başaran & Cabaroğlu, 2014). In addition, most secondary school students, both inside and outside the classroom, either did not do any listening activities or did listening activities for limited periods during their English language learning. In a study conducted with one hundred and thirty-five secondary school students (Bozavlı, 2018), 63% of the students stated that they never listen to English either individually or collectively, and 23% of them listen for less than one hour per week. On the other hand, podcasts can improve English learners’ autonomous learning skills. We live in a digital age. Most individuals are intertwined with technology. Therefore, learners can perform listening activities through podcasts without the concept of time and place. In this respect, the present study can improve the awareness of students and teachers in Turkiye about listening and using technology through podcasts in English language learning.

Conclusion
This study aimed to investigate the effect of intensive English podcast listening on high school students' comprehension skills and motivation to learn. The findings showed that intensive listening to podcasts in a foreign language improved high school English learners' language comprehension proficiency. A significant difference was observed between the pretest and posttest. On the other hand, the study revealed that the podcast listening activity partially retained students' listening skills. In a new post-test conducted one month after the end of the study, the significance level dropped. This result suggests that students should continue listening to podcasts until their listening skills improve. Finally, the study found that most of the high school students who participated in the intervention found that listening to podcasts increased their motivation to learn. The majority of the participants have a positive attitude towards the use of podcasts in English language teaching and believe that podcasts will improve their English language skills in general. In addition, listening to podcasts encourages them to learn English. The current research
can enhance the awareness of EFL students and teachers in Türkiye about podcasts and using technology in learning. The research was conducted with a limited number of participants. Further studies in this area will reinforce and support the validity of the results of this research.

**Limitations**

This study was conducted to understand the impact of intensive podcast listening on high school students’ English comprehension skills and motivation to learn. The study is limited to a public high school and a twelve-week English course. The study was conducted with the participation of twenty-seven tenth-grade high school students in Erzurum, Türkiye. Although the methodology used in the study is suitable for identifying, understanding, and evaluating different views of a problem, the study results cannot be generalized to large populations of high school students. The sample cannot represent English language learners in all public schools.

**Funding**

This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity**

This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement**

AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Author:**

**Ebubekir Bozavlı** is an Associate Professor Doctor in the Department of Foreign Languages Department at Kazım Karabekir Faculty of Education Ataturk University in Erzurum, Turkey. The author has several national and international publications. His research interests include foreign language learning and teaching, early foreign language learning, linguistics, psycholinguistics. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4475-5777

**References**


The Effects of Intensive English Podcast Listening on High School Students’


A Digital Approach to Teach Synthesis Writing for a Defence University: A Needs Analysis

Emily Abd Rahman
Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Melor Md Yunus
Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia
Corresponding Author: melor@ukm.edu.my

Harwati Hashim
Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Nur Khadirah Ab. Rahman
Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Received:11/07/2023 Accepted:03/08/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
Synthesis writing, a critical skill for university students, involves selecting, organizing, and connecting information from multiple texts. However, many students struggle with this task, highlighting a need for effective instructional approaches. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has reshaped educational practices, there is a pressing need to reconsider teaching methods and incorporate digital approaches to align with contemporary learning paradigms. This study investigates the necessity of developing a mobile app module for teaching synthesis writing in a defence university setting in Malaysia. Ultimately, the research poses a central question: What are the perspectives of educators in a defence university in Malaysia regarding the necessity of developing a mobile application module for teaching synthesis writing? Through semi-structured interviews with five educators, the study explores their perspectives on the importance, challenges and strategies associated with teaching synthesis writing, as well as their readiness to integrate mobile technology into instruction. Thematic analysis of the data reveals four main themes: the importance of synthesis writing, challenges in teaching synthesis writing, learning strategies employed by educators, and the readiness to adopt mobile technology for teaching synthesis writing. The findings underscore the significance of this study for mobile application designers, English language educators, and course designers, providing insights into the specific needs and preferences regarding synthesis writing instruction. Furthermore, the study contributes to both theory and practice in education by addressing the growing demand for digital tools in writing instruction and highlighting the potential of mobile applications to enhance students' writing skills.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, digital approach, mobile, needs analysis, synthesis writing

Introduction

English has been the language of knowledge in universities for a long time. It has also become the information content delivery in tertiary education worldwide (Richards & Pun, 2021). Historically, teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language has been emphasized as the worldwide domain of teaching language skills (Yaccob et al., 2022b; James Hartshorn et al., 2019). In Malaysia, universities have long used English as the language of communication as it has been learned as a Second Language (L2) since school (Yaccob et al., 2022a). This practice is particularly prominent in the defense university in Malaysia, where English serves as a second language and is actively encouraged in English-related subjects, as well as throughout official modules and learning syllabuses (Ab. Rahman et al., 2023a; Ab. Rahman et al., 2023b). In universities, students also need to be able to use English for academic purposes, including writing synthesis essays. As English is not the mother tongue for most Malaysians, the ability to write effective synthesis essays may be influenced by students' language proficiency. Students' usual problems in English writing include academic writing conventions, vocabulary, and language use (Narayanan & Mathew, 2020; Muamaroh et al., 2020). These problems are common because mastery of writing requires an extensive process with numerous steps. Such a process requires students to not just acquire the linguistic aspects but also possess the right attitude as students need to engage in continuous practice in writing (Muamaroh et al., 2020).

Within the context of the defense university, an investigation into synthesis writing revealed significant obstacles faced by students. Bakar (2018) highlighted these challenges, particularly during the stages of reading and selecting relevant research articles, as well as constructing a comprehensive synthesis essay. Another study within the defense university, conducted at the onset of the Covid-19 Movement Control Order (MCO), scrutinized the English for Academic Writing course, which encompasses elements of synthesis writing (Bakar, 2021). This course gained increased significance amidst the shift to online learning platforms necessitated by the pandemic. Instructors, navigating the unfamiliar terrain of online education, sought effective pedagogical strategies to ensure continued teaching and learning.

The global pandemic underscored the urgency for educators to swiftly adapt to the digital realm, prompting a reassessment of teaching methodologies and the integration of relevant technological tools. As evidenced by Bakar's (2021) study at the defense university, which explored the incorporation of collaborative learning and feedback through digital approaches in the academic writing course, the findings demonstrated a positive reception. This not only highlights the adaptability of students but also emphasizes the importance of an educational environment that embraces technological advancements to optimize learning outcomes. However, despite the growing recognition of the importance of digital tools in education, there remains a notable gap in understanding the most effective strategies for integrating these tools into synthesis writing instruction.

This study endeavours to address a critical gap in the literature by examining the necessity of developing a mobile application module for teaching synthesis writing, with a specific focus on
the perspectives of educators within a defence university in Malaysia. By delving into educators' readiness to embrace mobile app technology for synthesis writing instruction, this research endeavours to elucidate the potential advantages and obstacles associated with this innovative approach. The significance of this study transcends both theoretical and practical realms within the field of education. From a theoretical standpoint, it contributes to the expanding body of literature concerning the integration of technology into teaching and learning, particularly in the domain of writing instruction. By focusing on synthesis writing, it offers valuable insights into how digital tools can be effectively utilized to augment students' writing skills, catering to the needs of contemporary learners.

On a practical level, the findings of this study hold substantial implications for educators, curriculum developers, and educational technology designers alike. Discerning educators' viewpoints on the integration of mobile apps for synthesis writing instruction, can inform the development of robust teaching methodologies and curriculum frameworks that harness the potential of digital resources. Furthermore, it serves as a guiding beacon for mobile application designers striving to craft user-friendly and pedagogically sound platforms tailored to enhance writing proficiency. In line with these considerations, the research objectives of this study are twofold: first, to investigate the necessity of developing a mobile application module for teaching synthesis writing in a defence university context, and second, to explore educators' perspectives and readiness regarding the adoption of mobile app technology for synthesis writing instruction.

To guide this exploration, four primary research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the underlying importance of synthesis writing for students within the context of a defence university?
2. What are the prevalent challenges or obstacles encountered in the teaching of synthesis writing?
3. How do students express their preferences regarding the learning of synthesis writing?
4. What are educators' perspectives regarding the adoption of a mobile application for teaching synthesis writing, and what factors influence their opinions?

**Literature Review**

*Importance of Synthesis Writing*

Synthesis writing poses one of the most significant challenges for university students (Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). This form of writing is usually serious in nature as students need to read, select, organize and connect information from multiple source texts to produce an essay (Spivey & King, 1989). Although synthesis writing skills are rarely taught as a course in universities, it is usually embedded as a component in academic writing courses as most students experience difficulties in writing academic papers when it comes to academic writing (Musaljon et al., 2021). This skill is one of the requirements that students of English as a Second Language (ESL) should have at Malaysian tertiary levels because the assessment of students relies on the written form obtained through coursework or written examination (Jalleh & Mahfoodh, 2021). The importance
of synthesis writing skills extends beyond university work as it increases the employability rates of graduates in the workforce (Hundarenko, 2020).

Synthesis writing requires an integration of reading and writing skills. Reading and writing skills are the psycholinguistic and social components of communication. Acquisition of these skills is imperative in the context of higher education because it contributes to academic literacy (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021). However, synthesis writing does not simply involve a "reading-then-writing" strategy but demands a complex interaction of reading and writing processes (Vandermeulen et al., 2023). Based on the cognitive writing model by Flower and Hayes (1981), synthesis writing is cognitively more taxing because it adds an extra step during the planning stage, which is multiple-text comprehension. This is why synthesis writing is more complex and challenging to complete. It requires training in specific skills (select, organize and connect) to help students create a synthesized text (Luo & Kiewra, 2019). A lack of synthesis writing skills can lead students to commit plagiarism (Clarke et al., 2023; Romanowski, 2022). Plagiarism is a severe offence in universities and may cause students to be penalized and even expelled. Thus, to avoid plagiarism, students must write effective synthesis essays.

**Interventions and Synthesis Writing**

Several intervention studies have been carried out to improve students' synthesis writing skills, and one of the most prominent strategies is the incorporation of explicit instruction. Explicit instruction on how to write an effective synthesis essay is essential to guide students in constructing a well-synthesized essay (Castells et al., 2023; Luna et al., 2022; List et al., 2021; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). This strategy is notable in increasing the degree of connection in students’ synthesis writing (Luna et al., 2022) and also their self-regulation (Luna et al., 2020). Another notable strategy for improving students' synthesis writing is by including extensive practice in the lesson (Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). This strategy contributes effectively to improving students’ performance in synthesis writing (Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). In academic writing, digital platforms allow students to engage in writing activities outside academic hours, providing students with the extra drill they need to acquire complex writing skills (Yunus et al., 2019). Feedback is also crucial in students' development of synthesis writing skills as students are made aware of their mistakes in their writing and can learn from their mistakes by making corrections (Muamaroh & Pratiwi, 2021; Zhang & Cheng, 2021). This strategy then helps students improve their writing by minimizing errors in their assignments (Muamaroh & Pratiwi, 2021). Collaborative learning is also another potential strategy in higher education, which encourages the joint construction of knowledge (Putzeys, 2024; Herrera-Pavo, 2021). Research shows that collaborative learning effectively improves synthesis writing (Putzeys, 2024; Musaljon et al., 2021). Previous research proved that this strategy is effective in increasing students’ competence and comfort in learning (Musaljon et al., 2021). Collaboration is one of the strategies derived from constructivism, suitable for a military learning environment (Juhary, 2022). This strategy is also effective when paired with digital approaches (Ngamsomjit et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021).
Digital Platforms and Synthesis Writing

Digital platforms are not new to the academic world (Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Omar et al., 2012). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled universities worldwide to shift entirely to an online learning mode, emphasizing the educators' full utilization of digital platforms. Digital platforms have been made the new normal in education after the pandemic (Rafiq et al., 2022b; Lukas & Yunus, 2021). Although universities have re-opened, the mode of learning in universities has diversified to a hybrid learning system where physical classes are seamlessly combined with online sessions (Hilli et al., 2019). This move aligns with the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Jensen, 2022). Moreover, digital competence is one of the key competencies for lifelong learning (Alarcón et al., 2020). Since COVID-19 has altered the dynamics of teaching and learning, the promotion of learner autonomy is essential as it is also a key aspect in fostering lifelong learning for all (Rahman et al., 2022). As a result, writing interventions via digital platforms have increased their importance in education, such as mobile applications (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021; Limpo et al., 2020).

Mobile Applications and Synthesis Writing

It is important to note that incorporating mobile applications in the teaching and learning process in universities has escalated in the 21st century as its convenience renders positive outcomes in students' learning (Elaish et al., 2019; Hashim et al., 2018). As a teaching and learning support, mobile applications help to boost students' achievements in second language instruction in universities, as learning a language involves many communication modalities that can be supported by mobile devices (Elaish et al., 2019). Mobile phones are also often accessible and frequently used in higher education (Jeong, 2022; Hashim, 2018). Accessibility, which is a trait of mobile learning, enables students to engage in self-directed learning outside traditional classroom settings, which is crucial for motivated and autonomous learning (Jeong, 2022). To create a mobile application, it is essential to undergo a needs analysis to determine the content of the mobile learning module to cater to users' needs (Rafiq et al., 2022; Rafiq et al., 2019).

Method

Research Instrument

The research was conducted using a qualitative research design to explore the needs of a defence university in creating a mobile app module to teach synthesis writing. The educators' responses were collected using a semi-structured interview in a one-to-one session with the researcher. The interview questions were constructed based on Dudley-Evans and St John's Needs Analysis Model (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). This model was chosen as the basis of this study because it is comprehensive as it covers four types of needs analysis namely: Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) and Means Situation Analysis (MSA) (Romanowski, 2017). The interview protocol was adapted from Rafiq
et al., (2022) based on the Dudley-Evans and St John's Needs Analysis Model which includes importance (TSA), problems (PSA), strategies (LSA) and mobile readiness (MSA). To gauge a comprehensive needs analysis to create a mobile application module to teach synthesis writing, these four aspects were included in the study: (1) the importance of synthesis writing, (2) problems in teaching synthesis writing, (3) learning strategies used in teaching synthesis writing, and (4) mobile readiness in teaching synthesis writing.

Participants

The study was conducted during the transitional phase from pandemic to endemic in Malaysia in 2022, specifically during Semester 2 Session 2021/2022. Interviews with participants were carried out both face-to-face and online via Google Meet, with the mode of interaction being contingent upon the respondents' availability and preference. This hybrid approach facilitated broader participation and accommodated the diverse circumstances of the participants, ensuring inclusivity and maximizing the richness of the data obtained. According to Dodds and Hess (2021), there is little difference between online and face-to-face interview sessions in qualitative research when ethical procedures are fulfilled. The educators are from a defence university in Malaysia and were teaching the English for Academic Writing course at that time. They were chosen as the target group as this population can provide more insights regarding the need for teaching synthesis writing via a mobile application.

Purposeful sampling was utilized in selecting the respondents for the interview. This sampling method is chosen to ensure rich data, as it allows the researcher to focus in-depth on relatively small samples. The Language Centre of the defence university is small, with approximately 50 staff. Five out of 17 educators teaching the English for Academic Writing course were interviewed for the study. All participants in our study were female. The age range fell between 36 and 46 years old. They had varying levels of experience in teaching, with years of service ranging from 13 to 23 years. Three of the participants held a master's degree, and two of them held a doctoral degree, reflecting their high educational attainment and expertise level. Our participants had served as course coordinators for the English for Academic Writing course. This additional detail underscores their significant roles and in-depth familiarity with the course's challenges and requirements. As qualitative research emphasizes the depth and richness of data to explore and understand complex phenomena in detail, small sample sizes are well-suited to facilitate in-depth examination (Creswell & Poth, 2016). No new themes or significant insights emerged after conducting interviews with the five educators, suggesting that the sample size was sufficient to reach data saturation, a critical criterion in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Procedures

Respondents gave their consent to be interviewed and audio-recorded at the beginning of the one-to-one interview session with the interviewer. The interview was conducted until the data
was saturated and no new information was obtained. The semi-structured interviews lasted for approximately 30 to 40 minutes for each respondent. After the recordings were transcribed, they were returned to the respondents for member checking, a crucial step in ensuring the credibility of the data. This process involved the participants validating the data findings and interpretations, contributing to the establishment of trustworthiness, particularly concerning the concepts of validity, which is a crucial concern in ensuring the quality of qualitative research (Ang et al., 2016).

The interview was transcribed verbatim. Data from the interview were analysed using NVivo software by incorporating thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify patterns or themes within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps include: (1) familiarising yourself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; (6) producing the report.

Results

The results from the analysis are presented under the following four main themes: (1) the importance of synthesis writing, (2) problems in learning synthesis writing, (3) strategies in teaching synthesis writing, and (4) mobile readiness in teaching synthesis writing. There are 11 subthemes under these four main themes. This result is summarized in Table One.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The importance of synthesis writing</td>
<td>• Fulfilment of university requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Avoid plagiarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Problems in the teaching of synthesis writing</td>
<td>• Complex writing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strategies for teaching synthesis writing</td>
<td>• Collaborative learning approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explicit instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corrective feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extensive practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mobile readiness in teaching synthesis writing</td>
<td>• Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• T&amp;L support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accessibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The need to create a mobile app module to teach synthesis writing is shown in Table One. For the first theme, a mobile app module is needed because of the importance of synthesis writing. Synthesis writing skills are vital for fulfilling university requirements and avoiding plagiarism. Second, the mobile app module is essential to solving problems in teaching synthesis writing. Teaching synthesis writing is difficult due to its complex writing process and students' poor language proficiency. Third, a mobile app module is also vital to include important strategies for teaching synthesis writing. Strategies including a collaborative learning approach, explicit instruction, corrective feedback and extensive practices are important for students to acquire synthesis writing skills. Finally, a mobile app module is relevant due to the educators' readiness to teach synthesis writing using a mobile app because it makes teaching more convenient, and accessible and serves as good teaching and learning (T&L) support.
The Importance of Synthesis Writing

Fulfilment of University Requirements

In this section, we delve into the subtheme of "Fulfilment of university requirements" to better understand the educators' perspectives on the significance of synthesis writing within the academic landscape. The inquiry aimed to gauge the educators' views on synthesis writing and its importance. The respondents unanimously emphasise synthesis writing emerges as a fundamental and indispensable skill at the university level. The university environment places considerable demands on students, necessitating proficiency in synthesis writing for various academic endeavours. As elucidated by Respondent One, synthesis writing serves as a crucial preparation for students' final-year projects (FYP), a prerequisite for graduation. Furthermore, synthesis writing extends beyond FYP preparations, as Respondent Five highlighted, "They need to do many assignments." This insight underscores the ubiquity of synthesis writing across university courses, an observation echoed by Respondent Two, who remarked, "I think it will cover all fields of study."

These findings resonate with previous research, underscoring the centrality of synthesis writing in university settings (Jalleh & Mahfoodh, 2021; Musaljon et al., 2021). Given that the core of university work revolves around students' ability to produce synthesis writing for academic purposes, mastering this skill becomes an inevitable academic necessity.

Avoid Plagiarism

In this section, we explore the subtheme of "Avoiding Plagiarism" to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the skills and awareness associated with synthesis writing, particularly within the university context. The inquiry aimed to investigate the significance of these skills and their role in preventing academic misconduct. At the tertiary level, students are presented with assignments requiring synthesising information from various sources to create their essays. These tasks demand a particular set of skills essential for university students. Without a firm grasp of synthesis writing, students may be tempted to resort to plagiarism, a grave academic offence with long-lasting consequences. As articulated by Respondent Five, the absence of these crucial skills can lead to students attempting to complete assignments without the necessary background knowledge, potentially resulting in plagiarism issues. It is evident that awareness plays a pivotal role in this context, as emphasised by Respondent Four, who noted that equipping students with proper synthesis writing skills "helps them to reduce the act of copying and pasting work from other sources."

These findings highlight the significance of awareness and proficient writing skills in preventing plagiarism. The importance of these insights cannot be overstated, as they align with established literature emphasising the link between weak writing skills and plagiarism (Clarke et al., 2023; Romanowski, 2022). To excel in the university setting and uphold academic integrity, students must acquire synthesis writing skills to produce high-quality synthesis essays, mitigating the risk of plagiarism.
Problems in the Teaching of Synthesis Writing

Complex Writing Process

The "Complex Writing Process," subtheme centres on the educators’ challenges and intricacies in teaching synthesis writing. The aim is to shed light on the multifaceted nature of synthesis writing and the specific difficulties students encounter. One of the most prominent subthemes pertains to the intricate nature of synthesis writing. This academic task demands that students engage in a multifaceted writing process encompassing the selection, organisation, and connection of information from various texts. Respondent One eloquently captures students' challenges when selecting essential points from texts. They noted that students often struggle with discerning the significance of information, expressing that students tend to perceive "everything as important" and may "overlook critical details necessary to support their arguments."

The organisational aspect of synthesis writing is equally daunting, as highlighted by Respondent Two, who referred to students' difficulties in categorising and structuring the information they have gathered into coherent and cohesive writing. Moreover, students often encounter challenges when attempting to connect their ideas seamlessly, resulting in difficulties in "making sense of what they are writing," as mentioned by Respondent One. This issue is compounded by the struggle to combine diverse pieces of information into a cohesive narrative effectively.

The central challenge in teaching synthesis writing lies in the intricacies of this process, which are often unfamiliar to university students (Vandermeulen et al., 2023; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). Mastery of synthesis writing necessitates that students learn to skilfully select, organise, and interconnect information culled from multiple texts, culminating in the creation of well-synthesised essays (Luo & Kiewra, 2019).

Poor Language Proficiency

This section delves into the "Poor Language Proficiency" subtheme as a significant challenge in teaching synthesis writing. Our exploration aims to elucidate the critical role of language proficiency in the comprehension and construction of synthesis essays, focusing on its implications for students' writing abilities. One of the primary challenges encountered in teaching synthesis writing pertains to students' language proficiency. The proficiency of language forms the bedrock upon which successful synthesis writing relies. As highlighted by Respondent Three, synthesis writing necessitates a certain level of language comprehension, demanding that students possess a good grasp of the language to discern the main ideas and nuances embedded within the texts they encounter. Respondent Three aptly noted, "it requires a certain level of understanding; you need to have good language proficiency to understand the main idea or the gist of what they are reading."

The consequences of poor language proficiency manifest in various aspects of synthesis writing. When students grapple with understanding the text due to language barriers, the ability to select crucial information becomes compromised, as pointed out by Respondent Four, who noted that high-level language articles could pose difficulties in pinpointing key points. This struggle
can further lead to omitting essential details, as articulated by Respondent Five, who observed that students often leave out pertinent information due to comprehension challenges. Moreover, poor language proficiency can significantly impact students' ability to express themselves effectively in their writing. Respondent Two highlighted this issue, noting that a "lack of their own voice in the writing" becomes apparent when students attempt to translate their thoughts into written essays. Consequently, their essays may closely resemble the original text, increasing the risk of unintentional plagiarism, as emphasised by Respondent One.

The challenges posed by poor language proficiency extend beyond individual writing tasks and have broader implications for the teaching of synthesis writing. Students' comprehension of given texts and their ability to produce well-synthesised essays are undeniably influenced by their language proficiency. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the impact of vocabulary and language proficiency on writing (Narayanan & Mathew, 2020; Muamaroh et al., 2020).

**Strategies for Teaching Synthesis Writing**

**Collaborative Learning Approach**

This section delves into the "Collaborative Learning Approach" subtheme and its profound significance in teaching synthesis writing. The exploration aims to illuminate the various dimensions of collaborative learning and its pivotal role in fostering an enriching and effective environment for students' development of synthesis writing skills. Respondents unanimously favoured a collaborative learning approach when asked about their preferred methods of teaching synthesis writing. As highlighted by Respondent Two, collaborative learning offers students an advantageous learning environment where they can not only acquire knowledge but also seek assistance from their peers who possess a deeper understanding of writing strategies and the subject matter. Respondent Two eloquently noted, "I found out that students prefer a collaborative style of learning as they get to learn and ask for help from their group members who have a better understanding of the writing strategies and the topic."

This collaborative approach extends beyond mere assistance; it fosters student motivation and engagement. Respondent Three emphasised that students display heightened motivation and active participation when working in groups, leading to more substantial contributions and a richer learning experience. The synergy generated within collaborative settings allows members to share their unique insights and perspectives, contributing to a collective learning journey that benefits all involved. As Respondent Three articulated, "if they work in a group, everybody has got different things to contribute. They can share as much as they can, so the learning becomes better."

Moreover, the advantages of collaborative learning manifest not only in enhanced learning outcomes but also in improved performance. Respondent Four underscored that when students collaborate and collectively edit their essays, the resultant work attains higher quality, translating into improved grades.
Collaborative learning also nurtures a safe and encouraging atmosphere for students to seek clarification and actively participate in discussions, as Respondent Four noted, "Students don't like to ask questions, but when I focus group by group, they are willing to ask questions. They are not reluctant… They don't hesitate." The evidence gleaned from this study strongly aligns with prior research that highlights the efficacy of collaborative learning in teaching synthesis writing (Putzeys, 2024; Musaljon et al., 2021). Given the complexity of synthesis writing, characterised by high-level thinking and multifaceted tasks, collaborative learning emerges as an invaluable pedagogical strategy. It eases students' learning journey and creates a nurturing environment that facilitates exploration and mutual learning. Furthermore, this preference for collaborative learning harmonises with military pedagogy (Juhary, 2022), underscoring its adaptability and relevance across various educational contexts.

Explicit Instruction

In this section, we delve into the "Explicit Instruction" subtheme, shedding light on its paramount importance in the pedagogical realm of teaching synthesis writing. The exploration aims to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of explicit instruction and its indispensable role in equipping students with the skills essential for synthesis writing. Respondents within our study unanimously underscored the pivotal role of explicit instruction in nurturing synthesis writing skills. As articulated by Respondent Two, the intricate skillset demanded by synthesis writing does not naturally develop within students; it necessitates meticulous guidance and instruction. Respondent Three echoed this sentiment, affirming that for academic writing, comprehensive lectures and methodical content breakdown are indispensable: "For academic writing, we cannot change the nature of giving the lecture, again the content itself, we have to teach them one by one."

Explicit instruction takes various forms, from traditional lecture-based approaches to more interactive teaching methods. Respondent Four, for instance, preferred the classic "chalk and talk" method, emphasising the need for detailed demonstrations on the chalkboard to convey the intricacies of synthesis writing effectively. This sentiment underscores the enduring value of time-tested instructional techniques. Furthermore, students' journey toward mastering synthesis writing is not solely reliant on educators' guidance but also involves access to valuable resources. Respondent Five highlighted the significance of reference books as supplementary sources of information. These resources serve as comprehensive guides, aiding students in navigating the complexities of synthesis writing.

The complexity of synthesis writing, characterised by the intricate fusion of reading and writing processes, necessitates explicit instruction as the guiding force that leads students toward mastery. Our findings resonate with previous literature, which underscores the effectiveness of explicit instruction accompanied by written guidance instead of alternative instructional methods (Luna et al., 2022). Notably, this instructional approach aligns with the insights gleaned from prior research, reinforcing the notion that explicit instruction, whether delivered through traditional means or modern pedagogical aids, serves as an invaluable tool in the synthesis writing journey.
Corrective Feedback

Within the realm of teaching synthesis writing, the “Corrective Feedback” subtheme emerges as a pivotal strategy, intricately intertwined with cultivating students’ synthesis writing prowess. In this section, we delve deeper into the multifaceted significance of corrective feedback, elucidating its role as a beacon of guidance, enabling students to navigate the intricate path toward mastery. Corrective feedback within the context of writing tasks possesses immense pedagogical value, offering students a transformative learning experience. As elucidated by Respondent One, feedback serves as a precious resource through which students can learn from their mistakes and, in turn, enhance the quality of their essays.

The ability to rectify errors based on feedback proves invaluable in students’ synthesis writing journey. Respondent One emphasised this point, noting that her students proactively engage with feedback, revising and modifying their essays following the provided comments. In her words, “Students will rectify their mistakes and modify their essay according to my comments, and I find that is very useful to help them to make, hmm, produce a better essay.” This personalised guidance empowers students with a clear roadmap for improvement. Furthermore, the complexity inherent in synthesis essays, characterised by myriad processes, further accentuates the significance of feedback. Respondent One’s insights underscore the practical utility of feedback, allowing students to pinpoint specific areas within their essays that require correction. She noted, “Students find it (feedback) useful because they know where to modify their work, which part of the essay that they should correct.”

In essence, corrective feedback becomes a compass, directing students toward refining their synthesis writing skills. Respondent Two echoed this sentiment, emphasising the immediacy of feedback as a critical element in the learning process. She highlighted the importance of activities offering students timely feedback on their endeavours, aligning with students’ desire for real-time insights into their progress. In her words, these activities “should be in the form of something that can give them immediate feedback with what they are doing because that’s what they are seeking actually when… when we are having a class with them.” This real-time engagement with feedback informs students and fosters a dynamic learning environment that catalyses improvement. Our findings resoundingly align with prior research in the field, which consistently underscores the positive impact of corrective feedback on students’ essay production (Muamaroh & Pratiwi, 2021). The pedagogical value of feedback as a tool for enhancing synthesis writing skills resonates with the broader educational literature, affirming its place as a cornerstone in scaffolding students’ writing proficiency.

Extensive Practices

Within the framework of teaching synthesis writing, the "Extensive Practices" subtheme emerges as a dynamic strategy that educators have adeptly woven into their instructional methods. This section seeks to illuminate the multifaceted significance of extensive practices, offering a holistic understanding of its role in enhancing students' synthesis writing skills. As perceived by
our respondents, extensive practices encompass a diverse array of instructional tools and resources, including free online platforms, websites, and applications. These pedagogical assets serve as catalysts for engagement, transcending the boundaries of traditional teaching methodologies. One noteworthy avenue for extensive practice in our respondents' teaching repertoire is the integration of online educational games. As underscored by Respondent Three, these games hold an intrinsic appeal for students, invigorating the learning process with an element of enjoyment. The quote, "they (students) definitely enjoyed games," elucidates the student-centric allure of gamified learning.

The fusion of education and entertainment within online games captivates students and engagingly instils essential synthesis writing skills. Additionally, online quizzes have emerged as a popular tool in the arsenal of extensive practices. Respondent One expounds upon the pedagogical utility of quizzes, elucidating their role in gauging students' understanding and memory retention. Through quizzes, students can actively assess their grasp of the material and revisit key concepts in an enjoyable, interactive manner. "They do quizzes to help them to check their understanding and their knowledge," as noted by Respondent One, encapsulates the essence of this practice. Respondent Four echoes this sentiment, elaborating on the benefits of extensive practice through online quizzes. Their insights, "they (students) would enjoy, and I think it will be easier for them to remember whatever they have learned" and "it helps you to recall whatever things you have learned," underscore the mnemonic and revision advantages afforded by quizzes.

In the intricate landscape of synthesis writing, where the acquisition of skills hinges on repeated engagement, extensive practice through quizzes assumes a pivotal role. In consonance with prior research, our findings affirm the positive impact of extensive practices on students' synthesis writing performance (Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). The alignment with existing literature underscores the potency of this strategy in fostering skill acquisition. Furthermore, the infusion of excitement and enjoyment through engaging games and quizzes via websites and apps resonates with contemporary pedagogical approaches, emphasising the need for engaging, student-centric learning (Jeong, 2022).

**Mobile Readiness in Teaching Synthesis Writing**

*Convenience*

The subtheme of "Convenience" that emerged from our respondents' perspectives shines a spotlight on the transformative potential of mobile applications in the teaching and learning of synthesis writing. This section delves into the intricate web of conveniences these digital tools bring to the forefront, shedding light on their profound significance within the broader pedagogical landscape. Our final inquiry to the respondents revolved around their willingness to integrate mobile applications into the teaching of synthesis writing. The unanimous chorus of positivity that echoed through their responses underscores the pivotal role mobile apps can play in making the learning experience more convenient for educators and students. As articulated by Respondent One, the allure of mobile apps lies in their capacity to simplify and streamline the learning process.
She aptly remarked, "Mobile apps are there to make our lives easier or everything more convenient." This sentiment resonates with the belief that these digital tools hold the potential to alleviate the inherent complexities of synthesis writing instruction, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, the sentiment, "they can ease up the learning process for teaching and learning," underscores the transformative nature of mobile apps in facilitating pedagogical tasks.

The aspect of accessibility takes centre stage in this subtheme, as elucidated by Respondent Four's observation that students increasingly prefer having their study materials readily accessible on their smartphones. "I think they would prefer everything on their phone," Respondent Four noted, highlighting the mobile app's role in meeting the evolving preferences of the digital-native generation. The convenience of accessing course materials and resources at one's fingertips aligns seamlessly with contemporary pedagogical paradigms. Moreover, the versatility of mobile applications shines through, with Respondent Two emphasising their potential for hybrid learning. Integrating mobile apps seamlessly complements traditional classroom instruction, opening up possibilities for blended teaching approaches. "We can hybridise the learning with the apps," Respondent Two articulated, emphasising the symbiotic relationship between conventional teaching methods and digital enhancements.

Beyond convenience, the theme of cost-efficiency emerges as a compelling subtext. Respondent Three shed light on the potential cost savings and environmental benefits of adopting mobile applications in teaching. "I think it would be very effective for us, the instructors because we don't have to prepare too much," Respondent Three noted, underlining the streamlined workflow that mobile apps facilitate. Furthermore, the shift towards paperless learning aligns harmoniously with the global push for sustainable education practices. In tandem with current trends in higher education, our findings resonate with the widespread adoption of mobile applications in universities, mirroring their numerous advantages in enhancing the teaching and learning process (Elaish et al., 2019). As academic institutions increasingly embrace digital elements to augment academic reading and writing (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021), the subtheme of "Convenience" underscores the pivotal role of mobile applications in facilitating this transition.

**Teaching and Learning Support**

The "Teaching and learning support" subtheme that emerged from our respondents' reflections is a testament to mobile applications' integral role in enhancing the educational journey. This section delves deeper into the multifaceted ways mobile apps serve as invaluable allies, elucidating their profound significance within the broader pedagogical landscape. Beyond convenience, respondents expressed their readiness to embrace mobile applications as potent allies for teaching and learning. Respondent One's insight, "to make it interesting, to make it easier for them to learn, yes technology can help definitely," resonates profoundly with the belief that mobile applications possess the transformative power to invigorate classroom dynamics and engage students more effectively. A common thread that weaves through these responses is that mobile
applications can act as catalysts for motivation. Respondent Four underscored the importance of providing stimulating activities to support learning, stating, "especially when you provide interesting activities to support the learning... I think it would definitely become interesting." This sentiment reflects the belief that mobile apps can infuse a sense of excitement and engagement into the learning process, making it more effective and enjoyable for students.

As elucidated by our respondents, mobile applications offer a treasure trove of activities and exercises tailored to hone synthesis writing skills. Respondent Four's mention of "interesting activities to support the learning" underscores the diverse pedagogical tools that mobile apps bring. These activities, carefully designed to align with curriculum objectives, facilitate skill acquisition and kindle students' enthusiasm for learning.

Recognising mobile applications as potent teaching and learning supports aligns harmoniously with established literature. Extensive research, such as the work of Elaish et al. (2019), highlights the positive impact of mobile learning on students' academic achievement. In an educational landscape increasingly defined by complexity and the demand for flexible learning modalities, digital resources emerge as indispensable tools that empower students to navigate the digital era competently. Moreover, as reinforced by Castillo-Martínez and Ramírez-Montoya (2021), the transition to virtual learning settings underscores the pressing need to equip higher education students with these digital aids. In an era where digital fluency is tantamount to success, mobile applications serve as indispensable companions on the educational journey, providing learning materials, motivation, engagement, and interactive learning experiences.

Accessibility

One of the cornerstone subthemes that emerged from our study revolves around "Accessibility." This theme sheds light on how the inherent accessibility of mobile applications has ignited a collective readiness among educators to adopt them as powerful educational tools, underscoring their profound significance in transforming the educational landscape. Respondent One succinctly encapsulates the enduring nature of mobile applications with the phrase, "Mobile apps seem to be eternal." This eternal quality of mobile apps ensures their availability to students at all times, allowing them to revisit the learning materials whenever needed. As Respondent Two observes, "The skills need to be updated and improvised from time to time by the students." Mobile apps facilitate this process by offering a repository of resources that students can access and reference as they embark on various academic assignments, including writing theses and conducting research beyond their university years. Respondent Three contributes a poignant insight into the post-graduation utility of mobile applications. She aptly describes how these apps can serve as guides, essentially stepping into the role of instructors once students have left the university. This accessibility extends beyond the academic years, positioning mobile applications as lifelong learning companions that continue to nurture and hone synthesis writing skills. The profound impact of accessibility becomes especially evident when examining its implications for students.
The ability to access learning materials outside of traditional academic hours, as supported by studies such as Yunus et al. (2019), offers students a level of invaluable flexibility and autonomy. This accessibility empowers students to revisit and refresh their knowledge at their convenience, fostering self-directed and motivated learning journeys beyond traditional classrooms' confines. The resonance of this theme with established literature further underscores its significance. Research by Jeong (2022), Elaish et al. (2019), and Hashim (2018) consistently affirms the transformative potential of mobile learning in higher education. The accessibility afforded by mobile applications emerges as a catalyst for motivating students to engage in autonomous learning, a critical facet of modern education. Through this comprehensive contextualisation, the theme of "Accessibility" takes on profound significance, illuminating how the inherent accessibility of mobile applications empowers educators and students, fostering lifelong learning and redefining the boundaries of education in the digital age.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study shed light on several key aspects concerning the integration of mobile applications for teaching synthesis writing in a defence university context. These results are discussed below in relation to the existing literature.

**Importance of Synthesis Writing**

The educators in this study echoed previous research (Vandermeulen et al., 2023; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019), stressing the paramount importance of synthesis writing for university students, a sentiment supported by Luna et al. (2022), who identified synthesis writing as fundamental for academic success. Synthesizing information from multiple sources not only meets university requirements but also nurtures critical thinking and analytical skills crucial for higher education. This underscores the significance of synthesis writing, as highlighted in previous studies while providing further insights into educators' specific needs and challenges within a defence university setting, emphasizing the pressing need for innovative pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, the centrality of synthesis writing in university settings, resonating with previous research (Jalleh & Mahfoodh, 2021; Musaljon et al., 2021), cannot be understated. Given that producing synthesis writing is at the core of university work, mastering this skill becomes an inevitable academic necessity. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of proficient writing skills in preventing plagiarism, aligning with established literature (Clarke et al., 2023; Romanowski, 2022). These insights emphasize the critical link between strong writing skills and academic integrity, highlighting the imperative for students to acquire synthesis writing skills to produce high-quality synthesis essays, thereby mitigating the risk of plagiarism.

**Challenges in Teaching Synthesis Writing**

In the context of the defense university, investigations into synthesis writing revealed significant obstacles faced by students. These challenges, as highlighted by Bakar (2018), particularly manifest during the stages of reading and selecting relevant research articles, as well as crafting comprehensive synthesis essays. The results from the current research indicate that
educators identified various challenges in teaching synthesis writing, echoing the findings of Bakar (2018) and other previous studies (Luna et al., 2022; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). These challenges include the complexity of the writing process, students' poor language proficiency, and the need for explicit instruction and feedback. Integrating mobile applications for synthesis writing instruction could address some of these challenges by providing interactive and accessible learning opportunities (Vandermeulen et al., 2023).

This study adds to the existing literature by elucidating the specific barriers faced by educators in implementing synthesis writing instruction and underscores the potential of mobile applications in overcoming these obstacles. The central challenge in teaching synthesis writing lies in the intricacies of this process, which are often unfamiliar to university students (Vandermeulen et al., 2023; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). Mastery of synthesis writing necessitates that students learn to skilfully select, organise, and interconnect information culled from multiple texts, culminating in the creation of well-synthesised essays (Luo & Kiewra, 2019). Additionally, the challenges posed by poor language proficiency extend beyond individual writing tasks and have broader implications for the teaching of synthesis writing. Students' comprehension of given texts and their ability to produce well-synthesised essays are undeniably influenced by their language proficiency. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the impact of vocabulary and language proficiency on writing (Narayanan & Mathew, 2020; Muamaroh et al., 2020).

**Students' Learning Preferences**

The educators in this study extensively discussed students' preferences for learning synthesis writing, emphasizing the importance of engaging and interactive teaching methods, a finding consistent with the literature highlighting the significance of student-centered approaches in writing instruction (Luna et al., 2022). Mobile applications emerge as promising tools for meeting diverse learning styles and preferences, offering flexible and personalized learning experiences. This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into educators' perspectives on students' learning preferences and suggests that mobile applications could serve as valuable tools for promoting active and collaborative learning in synthesis writing instruction.

The onset of the global pandemic has hastened the urgency for educators to swiftly adapt to the digital landscape, prompting a reassessment of teaching methodologies and the integration of pertinent technological tools. Bakar's (2021) study conducted at the defense university, which delved into the integration of collaborative learning and feedback through digital means within the academic writing course, unveiled a positive response, highlighting students' adaptability and the pivotal role of embracing technological advancements in education. The current findings align closely with Bakar's (2021) earlier research at the same defense university, wherein educators echoed the importance of fostering a teaching and learning environment tailored to the demands of 21st-century learning, emphasizing learner-centeredness.

Moreover, the necessity for explicit instruction as a guiding force toward mastery in synthesis writing is underscored by our findings, aligning with prior literature emphasizing the effectiveness of explicit instruction accompanied by written guidance (Luna et al., 2022). The importance of corrective feedback in enhancing synthesis writing skills is also highlighted in our study, consistent with prior research (Muamaroh & Pratiwi, 2021). Furthermore, extensive practice
through quizzes emerges as a pivotal strategy in the acquisition of synthesis writing skills, aligning with existing literature (Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). The infusion of excitement and enjoyment through engaging games and quizzes via websites and apps resonates with contemporary pedagogical approaches, underlining the need for engaging, student-centric learning (Jeong, 2022).

**Opinion on Using Mobile Applications**

The educators in this study exhibited positive attitudes towards the utilization of mobile applications for teaching synthesis writing, recognizing their potential to enhance learning outcomes and foster student engagement, a sentiment echoed in the literature advocating for technology integration in writing instruction (Vandermeulen et al., 2023). However, alongside enthusiasm, concerns surfaced regarding the necessity for effective implementation strategies and sufficient technical support to ensure the seamless integration of mobile applications into educational contexts.

This study accentuates the significance of addressing these implementation challenges while suggesting avenues for further exploration to delineate effective strategies for integrating mobile applications into synthesis writing instruction and investigating their long-term impact on students' writing proficiency and academic success. The convenience afforded by mobile applications aligns harmoniously with the global drive towards sustainable educational practices, reflecting the widespread adoption of such tools in universities and their role in enhancing the teaching and learning process (Elaish et al., 2019). Moreover, in an educational landscape increasingly defined by complexity and the demand for flexible learning modalities, digital resources emerge as indispensable tools empowering students to navigate the digital era competently (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021).

These digital aids provide learning materials, motivation, engagement, and interactive learning experiences, facilitating a seamless transition to virtual learning settings and equipping higher education students with essential digital fluency skills. Additionally, the accessibility afforded by mobile applications, enabling students to access learning materials outside of traditional academic hours, fosters self-directed and motivated learning journeys beyond the confines of traditional classrooms (Yunus et al., 2019). This accessibility resonates with established literature affirming the transformative potential of mobile learning in higher education (Jeong, 2022; Hashim, 2018). Through comprehensive contextualization, the theme of "Accessibility" underscores the profound impact of mobile applications in empowering educators and students, fostering lifelong learning, and reshaping education in the digital age.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

This study was carried out, from educators’ perspective, to explore the need for creating a mobile module for synthesis writing which looked into specific samples with specific backgrounds. The limitation lies in transferability. Also, the respondents were from a defence university in Malaysia; hence the sample might not represent the whole population of universities in Malaysia. However, it is worth noting that the results may offer insights into the landscape of
21st-century learning, particularly in the post-pandemic era, where digital approaches to education have gained prominence.

Future endeavours should include a more diverse sample from different types of universities to understand different education settings better. In terms of methodology, this research is qualitative, providing in-depth insight but lacking the statistical rigour associated with quantitative data. Future research can incorporate a mixed-method approach for a more comprehensive and statistically robust perspective. Despite the limitations, this study has its strengths. This study looks at the possibility of incorporating a digital approach in teaching and learning after the global pandemic altered education norms. It also provides evidence that educators have preferences in teaching via a mobile application, which is valuable when designing and developing feasible mobile applications.

Contributions

A significant contribution of this study points towards the language policy aspect. Synthesis writing is an essential skill that students must acquire to excel in universities (Vandermeulen et al., 2023; Luna et al., 2022; Van Ockenburg et al., 2019). In regards to this aspect, policymakers could look into introducing synthesis writing courses that students can access throughout their studies at the university. The findings from this study are one of the earliest preliminary studies to look into ESL, synthesis writing and mobile integration. These findings provide an overview of the needs in teaching synthesis writing from the perspective of integrating the digital approach (mobile application). Such findings are significant for mobile application designers, English language educators, and course designers. Future research work may design and develop a mobile app to enhance students' synthesis writing skills based on the educators' perspectives. Future research may also explore the students’ views on the need to develop a mobile app for synthesis writing.

Conclusion

This study aims to address an important gap in the current literature by exploring the requirement for developing a mobile application module designed for teaching synthesis writing, particularly from the perspective of educators within a defense university in Malaysia. The importance of synthesis writing includes the fulfilment of university requirements and the avoidance of plagiarism. The ability to write synthesis essays is essential at the university level because students must write with a specific style to adhere to the university's written works. Results from the interview concurred with the literature that university students need the skills to write synthesis essays to fulfil university requirements. These skills are essential to avoid plagiarism, a misconduct that has been rapidly permeating tertiary education after the spread of COVID-19. The challenges in teaching synthesis writing concur with those outlined by literature, which revolves around the complexity of the writing process when writing synthesis essays (select, organize, connect). Apart from the nature of the writing process, poor language proficiency is also a
significant hindrance for students to acquire such skills. The learning strategies used by the defence university educators involve collaborative work, explicit instruction, corrective feedback, and extensive practices, which can be conveniently done via technology. It is important to note that based on the interview findings, the incorporation of technology can enhance the learning of synthesis writing. The utilization of this tool has been explored extensively as the pandemic impacted teaching and learning worldwide.

As the pandemic was instrumental in shifting teaching and learning to digital platforms, the defence university educators believe that a mobile application should be incorporated to teach synthesis writing. This move is supported because a mobile application can make learning more convenient and accessible, which are great traits for teaching and learning. In a global world where learning has become more accessible, the incorporation of mobile applications is deemed a necessity as teaching and learning support, as it makes learning more convenient and accessible. Using digital approaches can promote motivation, autonomous learning and self-directed learning outside traditional classroom settings. Educators and students are more than ready to teach and learn using digital approaches, including mobile applications.

**Implications**

Based on this research, there are several significant implications for stakeholders. Institutions and educational technology developers should prioritize investment in mobile app design and development to enhance synthesis writing skills. These applications should prioritize usability and accessibility while offering features that facilitate information selection, organization, and connection from various sources. Equipping educators with the necessary training to effectively integrate these tools into their teaching methods is crucial. Furthermore, curriculum revision should embrace mobile app-based learning, fostering comprehensive learning experiences incorporating synthesis writing skills.

Educators should stress the importance of mobile app-supported synthesis writing to students, fostering engagement and skill development. Future research should concentrate on designing and evaluating mobile applications for students’ synthesis writing skills, considering long-term impact and learning outcomes. Exploring student perspectives on app necessity and usability will refine design and implementation. These findings, though context-specific, bear relevance to the global digital learning shift, encouraging institutions worldwide to embrace mobile applications as valuable tools for enhancing education.

**Funding**

This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.
A Digital Approach to Teach Synthesis Writing

Rahman, Yunus, Hashim, Ab. Rahman

Authenticity
This manuscript is an original work.

Artificial Intelligence Statement
AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors
Emily Abd Rahman is an English Lecturer the Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia, bringing her expertise in language education to her students. She earned her M.A. in TESOL from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, focusing on Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5239-2876

Melor Md Yunus is a Professor at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. With an M.A. in TESL from Arizona State University and a Ph.D. in Education (TESL) from the University of Bristol, she's an authority in TESL and language pedagogy. Renowned for pioneering ICT integration in ESL education, she's published prolifically in scholarly journals, amassing 200+ innovation awards, and commanding respect within her field.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7504-7143

Harwati Hashim is an Associate Professor is the Deputy Dean of Research & Innovation at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Dr. Harwati is a leading educator in the field of education, specifically specializing in Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). Her extensive expertise encompasses Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), innovative pedagogies, the integration of technology in language education, and effective language learning strategies.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8817-427X

Nur Khadirah Ab. Rahman is an English Lecturer at the Language Centre, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia with a profound background in language education, holding an M.A. in TESOL from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in TESL at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, where her research passion revolves around Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6118-6636

References


Challenges and Benefits of Developing CEFR for Languages-Aligned Writing Assessments for Thai EFL Learners: A Case Study on Yala Rajabhat University Test of English Proficiency

Koleeyoh Jeh-do
Center of Languages and ASEAN Studies, Yala Rajabhat University, Yala, Thailand
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University, Yala, Thailand

Varavejhis Yossiri
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University, Yala, Thailand
Corresponding author: varavejhis.y@yru.ac.th

Muhammadsukree Hayeesani
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University, Yala, Thailand

Smith Vongsivivut
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University, Yala, Thailand

Nurulhusna Paramal
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University Pattani Campus, Pattani, Thailand

Received: 10/16/2023 Accepted: 03/12/2024 Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
This research aims to explore the development of the local standardized tests, Yala Rajabhat University Test of English Proficiency or YRU-TEP, tailored to specific regions, and explore the test aligning with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages compared to another standardized test, English Discoveries. This study focuses on the context of Thai English as a foreign language learners’ context. To write the test items, Can-Do statements were employed as the expert panel discussed and agreed on the objectives of each skill assessed in each item. In contrast, each item was evaluated through the Index of Item Objective Congruence by the experts. Three hundred experimental groups of test takers have been involved through purposive random sampling. To explore if the YRU-TEP aligns with the CEFR proficiency levels, another standardized test, English Discoveries developed by the ETS has been employed. The experimental test takers took both tests, and the scores were calculated following the cutoff scores to see if they were equivalent. The results showed that 98.67% of the scores had equally the same CEFR levels. However, challenges exist in implementing CEFR-aligned writing assessments in this context. Addressing these challenges involves adapting CEFR to the Thai context, ensuring cultural relevance, refining assessment criteria, and effective resource management. This endeavor contributes to standardizing language proficiency assessment practices and enhancing the quality of EFL education, especially in the case of local tests like the YRU-TEP.

Keywords: Assessment, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, English language proficiency, test specification, Thai EFL learners, writing test, Yala Rajabhat University Test of English Proficiency

Introduction

The globalization of education and the increasing importance of English as a global lingua franca have led to a growing demand for English language proficiency assessment tools worldwide. Like many other non-English-speaking countries, Thailand has recognized the significance of English proficiency in its education system and workforce. In response to this, there has been a concerted effort to develop standardized English local tests in Thailand as it has seen a remarkable rise in the importance of English language proficiency in various sectors, including education, tourism, and business. English is considered a critical skill for Thai students to compete in the global job market, and it is integrated into the national curriculum from primary to tertiary education levels (Usaha et al., 2016). Consequently, the need for reliable, valid, and locally relevant English language assessments has become paramount.

Having the test designed and implemented, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been considered the most reliable framework that applies to English language testing and assessment worldwide, for it comprises beneficial guidelines and functions as a reference to mirror users or practitioners regarding their pedagogical practices. In addition, the CEFR offers guidelines for language curriculum design, course syllabus development, language testing and assessment, teaching material development, and other fields of language education (Alderson et al., 2008; Hiranburana et al., 2017). It offers a holistic approach for learners to utilize a specific language for effective communication while also pinpointing the necessary language skills and knowledge that learners must acquire to use in using that language for communication (Leńko-Szymańska & Boulton, 2015). The impact of the CEFR expands beyond the borders of Europe, and the framework has been adopted by various countries (Byram & Parmenter, 2012; Weicheng, 2012). As Niu and Wu (2012) explained, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan decided to adopt as a common standard of English language proficiency in 2005 while Japan also structured a special curriculum for English by implementing the CEFR called CERF-J, and a particular English curriculum was also created by adopting CEFR, namely MOET (Foley, 2019). At the same time, Malaysia also occupies a similar program to enhance foreign language learning proficiency, namely the ELQC / English Language Standard and Quality Council in 2013.

Nonetheless, Thailand incorporated the CEFR into its educational framework, commencing with primary education in 2014 and extending to higher education in 2015. Subsequently, numerous developments and initiatives have been witnessed. In the year 2016, the Thai Ministry of Education (MOE) announced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) as a guideline for teachers in primary and secondary schools for English classroom learning and teaching management (Charttrakul & Damnet, 2021). The solid argument why Thai and other countries have been applying this framework to their testing system is that the CEFR provides a framework for assessing learners' language proficiency at different stages of their language learning journey. There are two primary types of scales in the CEFR: global and illustrative scales. Both scales aim to evaluate the different levels of language proficiency in learners. The critical distinction between them is that the illustrative scales are tailored to assess learners' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In contrast, the global scale offers a more general overview of language use that is fundamental for learners of a specific language

The rationale behind this significant development of the local standardized tests especially in Thailand has been driven by various reasons. To name a few, the need to assess students’ English language proficiency accurately and consistently across regions and institutions.
in Thailand has become more popular. Second, standardized tests provide an objective measure of English proficiency, essential for making informed decisions about curriculum design, teaching practices, and policy development (Usaha et al., 2016). Finally, standardized tests enable comparisons with international standards, helping Thai students and graduates compete in the global job market (Burns, 2017). However, the critical development in standardized English local tests in Thailand is the establishment of the Thai National Qualifications Framework (TQF) for English language proficiency. The TQF provides a standardized framework for assessing English language skills at various levels (Council of University Presidents of Thailand, 2017), and the Thai Ministry of Education and the Thai Association for Language Assessment (TALA) have been involved in designing and implementing standardized English tests tailored to Thai learners (Dangphet & Wisetborisut, 2017).

This study, therefore, is mainly to explore the procedure of creating the Yala Rajabhat University Test of English Proficiency (YRU-TEP) in alignment with the CEFR Framework. This research aims to build a test, directly linked to the CEFR, which has been adopted as a common framework of reference for English language instruction in both Thai and international contexts (Hiranburana et al., 2017). Although many test authors, teachers, and policymakers have adopted the CEFR as a reference guide (Deygers et al., 2018), the findings from this study will provide valuable insights into the test specification of the YRU-TEP, the challenges, and issues related to English language education for Thai students in general and those at Yala Rajabhat University which is uniquely in the Southernmost province in Thailand in particular. Additionally, the YRU-TEP test will be a valuable tool for accurately assessing individual English proficiency levels of the university students themselves and test-takers in the areas reflecting their international standard level of English proficiency with specific educational and professional qualifications, thereby serving as a reference for their academic and career advancement following these two main research questions:

1) To what extent does the development of the YRU-TEP test specification correspond to the CEFR?
2) To what extent does the developed YRU-TEP test compare with another standardized test, English Discoveries, in alignment with the CEFR framework?

The two main research objectives are:

1) To explore the development of the YRU-TEP test specification to correspond to the CEFR.
2) To compare the developed YRU-TEP test with another standardized test, English Discoveries, in alignment with the CEFR framework

**Literature Review**

This section discusses how the test specification is significant in the development of the standardized test and how the CEFR Can-do global descriptors can be applied with the references of the well-known Thai English standardized tests, namely Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP) and Thammasat University General English test (TU-GET).

**Test Blueprint or Test Specifications**

A blueprint is defined as "a specification of the plan of action in any given endeavor or task" (Adelodun, 2010, p.69), serving as a set of instructions akin to maps and specifications for an assessment program. Its purpose is to ensure comprehensive coverage of all aspects within the curriculum and educational domain. In contrast to the syllabus, which outlines curriculum components but excludes curriculum evaluation, a blueprint represents a teacher's plan that aims...
Challenges and Benefits of Developing CEFR for Languages

Jehdo, Yossiri, Hayeesani, Vongvivut & Paramal

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 15. Number 1. March 2024

Challenges and Benefits of Developing CEFR for Languages

Jehdo, Yossiri, Hayeesani, Vongvivut & Paramal

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327


to materialize into classroom interactions (Sabbah, 2018). In simpler terms, blueprints establish a crucial link between assessment and learning objectives (Pichholiya, Yadav, Gupta, Kamlekar, & Singh, 2021).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) elucidate that a blueprint encompasses structural characteristics and specific task specifications for each task type included in a test, delineating how actual test tasks are constructed and organized (Downing, 2006). Downing further clarifies that a test blueprint outlines the allocation of test questions to major and minor content areas and specifies the proportion of questions designed to assess specific cognitive knowledge levels.

Similar perspectives on blueprints are echoed in the literature by various authors (Sims & Kunnan, 2016), among others. However, Davidson and Lynch's model (2008) offers limited assistance, while similar recommendations for crafting tables of specifications can be found in works by Alderson et al. (1995), and Ali (2016), to name a few. It's important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all table of specifications; instead, a separate table of specifications should be created for each test section (Matlock & Turner, 2016).

In summary, a comprehensive and detailed table of specifications is invaluable in materials development, as it facilitates meticulous planning of form, learning objectives, and the assessment system, streamlining the implementation and evaluation of the learning process.

CEFR Can-Do Statements

Can-do statements are descriptors of language proficiency levels defined by CEFR. They provide detailed descriptions of what learners can do at each level, making it easier to design assessments that accurately measure proficiency (Council of Europe, 2001). These statements facilitate test development by ensuring that assessment items align with CEFR levels, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of English language tests. The can-do statement specifications table is shown in Table One (See Appendix A).

Local Thai Standardized Tests

In Thailand, there exists a variety of English proficiency tests, each serving distinct purposes. These assessments play a crucial role in both educational and career prospects. For tertiary education, students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees must meet specific English proficiency criteria before they can graduate from their programs as the higher education institutions must mandate to implementation of a CEFR-aligned English proficiency examination following the regulations launched by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation of Thailand (Cheewasukthaworn, 2022). These globally recognized standardized tests include TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS. Nevertheless, owing to cost constraints and convenience considerations, many prominent universities in Thailand have introduced their custom testing systems for their students. A notable example can be seen in the top eight universities in Thailand, as per the QS World University Ranking 2021. These institutions have developed their assessments, such as CU-TEP by Chulalongkorn University, MU GRAD TEST by Mahidol University, TU-GET by Thammasat University, CMU eTEGS by Chiang Mai University, KU-EPT by Kasetsart University, KEPT-Exit and KKU ALET by Khon Kaen University, TETET by King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi, PSU-TEP by Prince of Songkla University, and the WUTEP, the Walailak University Test of English Proficiency which is a CEFR-based assessment of English proficiency (Waluyo & Ruangsung, 2024).

In contrast to undergraduate studies, postgraduate students are compelled to meet even higher
English proficiency standards. However, because most non-leading universities lack the resources to develop their assessments, they tend to rely on established standardized tests like TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS, depending on the preferences of the test takers. It is worth noting that these tests offer different formats and platforms, but our current discussion will primarily focus on TOEIC.

TOEIC has gained widespread acceptance as an exit exam in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries. For instance, in Vietnam, it serves not only to ensure the quality of graduates but also aids educators in refining their teaching content, thereby benefiting the future careers of graduates (Nguyen & Gu, 2020). The Ministry of Education in Thailand (2014) has set a B2 level of CEFR as the English proficiency requirement for undergraduates, which is equivalent to a TOEIC score of 785. However, research findings indicate that Thai university students typically achieve only A1 and A2 levels (Waluyo, 2019; Luksup, 2019), making the B2 expectation unattainable. Consequently, several universities have adjusted their expectations to a B1 level of CEFR (TOEIC = 550). It's worth noting that TOEIC scores hold significance in both educational and professional contexts.

In education, TOEIC stands out as the most economical standard test compared to TOEFL or IELTS. Its multiple-choice format is user-friendly and practical for many students, making it a familiar choice for many universities that lack their testing systems. These institutions often use TOEIC scores as a benchmark against the B1 level of CEFR.

**Method**

**Participants**

To compare the developed YRU-TEP with the standardized test, English Discoveries in alignment with the CEFR framework, the three hundred graduate and undergraduate students, studying at Yala Rajabhat University have been randomly purposively selected. They were from different majors with different genders and numbers of years of study.

**Research Procedures**

The procedure section describes in detail how the YRU-TEP test specifications have been developed and explored the test in alignment with the CEFR framework.

**Developing YRU-TEP Test Specification**

Following the CEFR Can-Do statements, the ten non-native university lecturers considered as the test developer panel have discussed and agreed on the details of the Can-Do statements following the CEFR framework. To be more specific, they have discussed the details regarding the number of parts and items in the test, and have agreed upon the particular tasks and patterns for assessing skills. After having proposed the drafted test specification, they started writing test items before the items written were finally language-proofed by three native speakers. The test items written were, then, evaluated by five experts in the field of English language teaching, assessments, and language education through the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) proposed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). This framework involves a process to gauge the content validity of a specific test during the item development phase. The responsibilities of the editors were two-fold. Initially, they were tasked with verifying whether the test items aligned with the objectives outlined in the blueprint. Subsequently, they had to assess the grammatical correctness and naturalness of the test items for native English speakers. It is important to emphasize that all these steps were executed following the IOC methodology. The IOC scored 0.75, which contributed to ensuring the content validity of test items, as documented by Turner and Carlson (2003). The
revised and proofed test items were finally explored in alignment with the cut scores in the following procedure.

*Exploring YRU-TEP Scores in Alignment with CEFR Levels*

At this stage, there were 300 experimental test takers participating in taking both the designed YRU-TEP and the commercial standardized test, English Discoveries developed by the ETS provided the worldwide standardized TOEIC, and TOEFL tests. The test takers were from a variety of English proficiency levels. They were college students studying in different fields and different years and personnel at Yala Rajabhat University. The two different test scores were then analyzed for set cut-score equivalence to each other of the CEFR proficiency levels.

**Results**

*YRU-TEP Test Specifications*

At the stage of designing the YRU-TEP test specification, its features can be presented as follows:

*Listening Test Specifications*

The Listening module consists of three sections. In Part I, examinees are presented with five audio recordings and are required to choose from a provided list of options to select the one that best captures the overall meaning or specific details of each recording. In Part II, test-takers are presented with two more extended dialogues and are tasked with matching five statements to the speaker who made each statement. In Part III, test-takers listen to two recordings and are expected to answer five questions for each recording. The timing for all sections of the Listening module is preset. During each section, test-takers will listen to each recording twice and are given a designated time to review their answers before the test automatically proceeds to the next recording. A summarized version of the listening test specifications can be found in Table Two (See Appendix B).

*Reading Test Specifications*

The Reading module consists of three components. In the first part, examinees read five brief texts from various genres and respond to a single multiple-choice question with three options for each text. The second part involves reading a text with five removed sentences, and test-takers must select missing sentences from a provided list to insert into the gaps. In the third part, examinees read a text and answer four multiple-choice questions, each with three options, related to the content. All the texts used in this module are sourced from authentic materials meant to be interesting or relevant to a broad audience, and they may exhibit formal, neutral, or informal language styles. The time allotted for each task within the Reading module is predetermined. A summary of the reading test specifications is presented in Table Three (See Appendix C).

*Vocabulary Test Specifications*

The Vocabulary module comprises three sections. In Part One, examinees are presented with a text with five sentences removed, creating gaps. They must select missing sentences from a provided list and insert one into each gap. Part II involves reading two brief texts on mono/dialogues from various genres and responding to a single multiple-choice question for each text, offering three answer options. In Part III, participants read a text and answer four multiple-choice questions, each with three answer options, about the content. All texts featured in the Vocabulary module are sourced from authentic material meant to be relevant or interesting to a broad readership. These texts can adopt a formal, neutral, or informal tone. A concise overview of the Vocabulary test specifications is presented in Table Four (See Appendix D).
Grammar and Structure Test Specifications

There are three parts in the Grammar and Structure module. In Part I, test takers read ten incomplete sentences, leaving gaps. Test takers choose missing sentences from a list and insert one into each gap. In Part II, test takers read a text from which five sentences have been removed, leaving gaps. Test takers choose missing sentences from a list and insert one into each gap. In Part III, test takers read ten sentences which are included of one error for each and choose the error from four options. All texts used in the Grammar and Structure module are based on authentic material intended to be of relevance or interest to a general readership. Texts may be formal, neutral, or informal in the register. The summary of the Grammar and Structure module is shown in Table Five (See Appendix E).

YRU-TEP and Standardised Test of English Discoveries CEFR Equivalence

At this stage, there were 300 test takers participating in both YRU-TEP and CEFR English Discoveries Tests to explore if the level of scores from both tests were at equal levels of English proficiency. The results of the experimental study are shown in the following Table Six.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Test Takers</th>
<th>YRU-TEP CEFR Levels</th>
<th>English Discoveries CEFR Levels</th>
<th>Equivalence/Inequivalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Inequivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Inequivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Equivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 300</td>
<td>Percentage of Equivalence 99% (297/300)</td>
<td>Percentage of Inequivalence 1% (3/300)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

To answer the two main research questions, the findings can be discussed as follows:

The development of the YRU-TEP test specification to correspond to the CEFR.

Creating local standardized tests such as the YRU-TEP to cater to specific regions poses considerable challenges. One major hurdle lies in crafting writing test guidelines that adhere to the CEFR, as this entails the delineation of proficiency levels and descriptors corresponding to CEFR's six tiers, ranging from A1 (novice) to C2 (proficient). In the Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, this necessitates a meticulous examination of the precise language skills and proficiencies expected from students at each CEFR tier. For instance, at the A1 level, students are expected to produce rudimentary sentences and brief compositions on familiar subjects, whereas, at the C2 level, they should demonstrate the capacity to compose intricate, well-structured essays encompassing a broad spectrum of topics (Council of Europe, 2001). These specifications constitute the foundational framework for formulating writing assessments that accurately gauge students' competency and advancement.

Precisely, devising YRU-TEP writing test criteria aligned with the CEFR framework within the Thai EFL milieu presents its own set of challenges. A notable obstacle is ensuring cultural and contextual relevance. Thai EFL learners may possess distinctive language requirements and
inclinations compared to their counterparts in Europe, a factor that must be considered when devising CEFR-compliant evaluations. Furthermore, Thai learners might grapple with unique difficulties in mastering English writing skills due to dissimilar linguistic structures and writing conventions. Consequently, a nuanced approach is imperative in crafting writing test guidelines that are both culturally and linguistically apt. Maintaining equilibrium in the assessment of content, organization, coherence, and language precision is pivotal to guarantee that resulting scores accurately mirror students' comprehensive writing abilities (North, 2017).

Moreover, establishing a dependable scoring system harmonized with CEFR descriptors can be arduous, involving the training of evaluators and the assurance of inter-rater consistency. Therefore, all YRU-TEP test developers need to undergo training and engage in comprehensive discussions before reaching a consensus on the specifications that will serve as a model for constructing test items through a panel discussion.

Furthermore, resource constraints may present a challenge when implementing CEFR-compliant writing assessments in the Thai EFL setting. The development, administration, and scoring of these tests can be resource-intensive regarding time, expertise, and materials. This predicament necessitates meticulous planning and the prudent allocation of resources to preserve the quality and sustainability of the assessment system. Developing test specifications following the CEFR framework for Thai EFL students is, thereby, a valuable endeavor that can contribute to standardizing language proficiency assessment practices and enhancing the quality of EFL education, especially the local tests like the YRU-TEP.

The developed YRU-TEP test in comparison with another standardized test, English Discoveries, in alignment with the CEFR framework

When aligning the Standardized Test of English Discoveries and YRU-TEP with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), a set of cutoff scores was established for each CEFR level, including A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1. In this context, candidates' proficiency levels are either A1, A2, B1, B2, or C1. The determination of these cutoff scores and performance standards in the present study was informed by both statistical analyses and consensus reached by a panel of experts. Specifically, the YRU-TEP was equated with English Discoveries, a CEFR-based assessment, to derive specific CEFR proficiency levels for the YRU-TEP. This panel, responsible for making these critical decisions, must possess a thorough understanding of the CEFR itself. The process of standard setting holds valuable implications for test takers and policymakers alike. Consequently, the alignment of the YRU-TEP with the CEFR necessitated a series of meticulously conducted procedures at various stages, as the statistical results shown in the results section indicated that they were equivalent at a 98.67% confidence level, which was considered nearly the same. This procedure has been applied to the Can-Do statements of the CEFR glocal scales. The process of aligning English tests with CEFR involves several steps. Firstly, test developers identify the target CEFR level for their assessment. Then, they use Can-Do Statements as a guide to construct test items that match the skills and competencies associated with that level (Alderson, 2008). The process of aligning assessments with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors bolsters the test's credibility and dependability (Fulcher, 2015). However, while employing Can-Do Statements offers various advantages, it is not devoid of challenges. One such challenge arises from the intricate task of harmonizing pre-existing test items with the CEFR framework, often necessitating extensive revisions and validation efforts (Fulcher, 2015). Additionally, the granularity of Can-Do Statements can pose difficulties in their consistent application across all test items, potentially
resulting in variations in test difficulty (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996).

The utilization of Can-Do Statements to align English tests with the CEFR framework carries significant implications for language testing. This alignment enhances the transparency and comparability of test scores across diverse assessments, thereby simplifying the comprehension and interpretation of results for learners, educators, and institutions alike (North, 2016). Moreover, it facilitates the acknowledgment of language proficiency for various purposes, including educational placement, employment, and immigration (McNamara & Roever, 2006). Though numerous studies mentioned how to develop the English tests in alignment with the CEFR Framework the positive results were confirmed by the educational practitioners and language policy makers (Kaewkamnerd et al., 2023), this study showed the different aspects while developing the local tests as it needs to consider more localized factors, namely the native language background of the test takers who are Thai speakers living in the most Southern-border province of Thailand, the implementation of different standardized test, English Discoveries to compare the CEFR alignment which was found effective and advised if the other institutions need to implement for the similar test development in the future.

**Conclusion**

To explore the development of the YRU-TEP test specification to correspond to the CEFR and compare with the standardized test, English Discoveries, in alignment with the CEFR framework while incorporating Can-Do Statements into the alignment process of English language tests, the CEFR framework has proven to be a valuable strategy, enhancing the validity, reliability, and transparency of language assessments by providing a shared reference for proficiency levels, there are obstacles to its implementation. Nonetheless, the advantages of language testing and its stakeholders are significant. Future research should continue to explore ways to optimize the utilization of Can-Do Statements and address implementation challenges, with the aim of further enhancing the alignment of English language tests with CEFR. Overcoming these hurdles entails adapting the CEFR framework to the Thai context, ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance, refining assessment criteria, and effectively managing resources. By surmounting these challenges, educators and policymakers can strive to establish robust and meaningful writing assessments that benefit Thai EFL learners and align with international language proficiency standards.

**Funding:** This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity:** This manuscript is an original work

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:** AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Authors:**

**Kholeeyoh Jehdo** is a lecturer in the English Education program and holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics with ten years of experience in teaching English, especially English language assessment, and classroom management. Assistant professor is her academic rank and her research interests relevant to English language testing, and second language acquisition.Email: khaleeyoh.j@yru.ac.th ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9064-3772

**Varavejbhisis Yossiri**, a lecturer of English and linguistics and a former Fulbright scholar at the
University of Pennsylvania, USA, holds a Master's in Applied Linguistics and a Bachelor's in English. He's certified in TESOL and his research interests include applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3939-3362

Muhammadsukree Hayeesani is currently a full-time English lecturer at Yala Rajabhat University, Thailand. He earns his Master of Arts in Language and Communication from the Graduate School of Language and Communication, NIDA, Thailand. He has been teaching English for nearly a decade and has published a couple of research articles. His interests include Mobile-assisted language learning, English-speaking strategies, linguistic landscapes, and communication strategies for EFL learners. Email: muhammadsukree.h@yru.ac.th
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4552-4196

Smith Vongsvivut is a lecturer of English at Yala Rajabhat University with decades of experience in teaching. He specializes in Business English and is responsible for teaching in the field of English for Specific Purposes. His research interests are in the field of reading and listening in a second language, second language teaching and learning methods, communication and the role of culture in communication. Email: smith.v@yru.ac.th
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2105-2930

Nurulhusna Paramal, a dynamic EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher based in Thailand, combines cultural sensitivity with innovative teaching methods. Her research interests are relevant to English linguistics, language teaching and second language acquisition. Email: nurulhusna.p@psu.ac.th ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1275-8760

References
Charttrakul, K., & Damnet, A. (2021). Role of the CEFR and English Teaching in Thailand: A Case Study of Rajabhat Universities. Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 12(2), 82-
Appendices

Appendix A CEFR Can-Do Statements and Its Levels

Table 1. CEFR Can-Do statements and its levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEFR Level</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can recognize familiar words and fundamental phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and precise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programs. I can understand most films in standard dialect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. I can understand television programs and films without too much effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can understand any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B YRU-TEP Listening Test Specifications

Table 2. YRU-TEP listening test specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>No. of Tasks</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Testing skill focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Multiple choice with four-option</td>
<td>Listening to identify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Three discrete short monologues/dialogues, each with two questions (6 items)</td>
<td>• specific information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• attitude/feeling/opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Challenges and Benefits of Developing CEFR for Languages

Jehdo, Yossiri, Hayeesani, Vongvivut & Paramal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part II</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to identify:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• specific information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Note completion with four option multiple-choice – questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two more extended monologues with a note-completion task, each with five questions (10 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time to check answers: 15 seconds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to identify:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• stated opinion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• implied meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Matching opinions with people who say them with four option multiple choice questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two more extended dialogues with a task focusing on identifying opinions, each with five questions (10 items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time to check answers: 15 seconds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix C YRU-TEP Reading Test Specifications

Table 3. *YRU-TEP reading test specifications*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>No. of Tasks</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Testing skill focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Part I | 5 | 10 | • Multiple choice with four options  
• Five discrete short texts from various authentic sources, namely e-mail, ads, excerpts, etc., each with two questions. (10 items).  
• Time to process the text and complete the task: 15 minutes. | Reading to identify:  
• main message  
• purpose  
• detail |
| Part II | 2 | 10 | • Gapped text with four options | Reading to identify: |
**Appendix D YRU-TEP Vocabulary Test Specifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. YRU-TEP vocabulary test specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Part II    | 2               | 10              | • Multiple choice with four options |
|            |                 |                 | • Two discrete monologues/dialogues each with five questions. (10 items) |
|            |                 |                 | • Time to process the text and complete the task: 15 minutes |
|            |                 |                 | Reviewing to identify: |
|            |                 |                 | • Vocabulary meaning through guessing. |
### Appendix E YRU-TEP Grammar and Structure Test Specifications

#### Table 5. *YRU-TEP grammar and structure test specifications*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>No. of Tasks</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Structures</th>
<th>Testing skill focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Part I | 10           | 10           | • In-complete sentence multiple choices with four options  
• Ten sentence-completion questions (10 items)  
• Time to process the text and complete the task: 15 minutes | Understanding grammar and structures; parts of speech, tenses, conditions, articles, modals, sentence structures and others covering the grammar, and structure following the CEFR level A1 - B2 |
| Part II | 2            | 10           | • Gapped text  
• Two texts each with five extracted sentences are inserted (10 items)  
• Texts are from newspapers and magazine articles or research.  
• Five text-completion questions  
• Time to process the text and complete the task: 10 minutes. | Understanding grammar and structures; parts of speech, tenses, conditions, articles, modals, sentence structures and others covering the grammar, and structure following the CEFR level A1-B2 |
### Challenges and Benefits of Developing CEFR for Languages

**Jehdo, Yossiri, Hayeesani, Vongvivut & Paramal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Ten error sentences with four-option choice questions
- Ten four-option multiple-choice questions (10 items)
- Time to process the text and complete the task: 15 minutes

Understanding grammar and structures; parts of speech, tenses, conditions, articles, modals, sentence structures and others covering the grammar and structure following the CEFR level A1-B2
Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning Resource for ESL Pre-university Learners

Farah Amirah Mohd Fisal
Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia
Corresponding Author: famirafisll@gmail.com

Azlina Abdul Aziz
Faculty of Education,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

Nur Ehsan Mohd Said
Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

Abstract
Evaluating web-based learning resources during the development process before implementation with target learners is essential to ensure their efficacy. This study examines field experts’ perceptions of a web-based academic vocabulary learning resource developed by the authors for ESL pre-university learners. The main aim is to evaluate the resource’s technical, design, content, and pedagogy aspects, following Kartal and Uzun’s (2010) criteria for good language learning websites. A questionnaire survey was distributed to six field experts from various Malaysian tertiary education institutions specializing in vocabulary learning and e-learning. The quantitative data collected were analyzed descriptively using SPSS. The results indicate that the experts highly evaluated the web resource, suggesting it meets the essential criteria for a well-designed English language learning website. With the recommended improvements, the web resource has the potential to enhance academic vocabulary learning for ESL pre-university learners significantly. This study contributes valuable insights for developing and implementing effective web-based learning resources in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: English academic vocabulary, English as Secondary Language learning, web-based learning resource, website evaluation, pre-university learners

Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning

Fisal, Aziz, & Said

Introduction

The transition from school to postsecondary education can be challenging for Malaysian English as a Second Language (ESL) pre-university learners. An essential part of this transition is immersing into an unfamiliar language, academic English. To master this language, learners must acquire its key component, academic vocabulary (Truckenmiller et al., 2019), which refers to a set of words commonly used across academic fields and regularly appears in academic materials and discourses (Charles & Pecorari, 2016; Nation, 2022). However, the teaching and learning of academic vocabulary in Malaysian ESL classrooms remain limited (Sulaiman et al., 2018). Educators commonly expect that learners implicitly acquire academic words through independent reading. However, ESL learners are dissatisfied with this traditional approach to vocabulary learning, deeming it limiting, insufficient, and unengaging (Fisal & Said, 2023).

Fortunately, the emergence of technology has transformed language education, offering new opportunities for enhancing language learning and instructional efficacy (Raygan & Moradkhani, 2022). Following the demands of 21st-century education, there has been a worldwide shift towards widespread integration of internet-based language instruction in the classroom (Hanafiah & Aziz, 2022). In this regard, using websites for English language learning (ELL) has become increasingly popular. Numerous studies underscore the potential of websites or online resources as helpful learning aids for improving ESL learners’ academic vocabulary (e.g., Alhujaylan, 2021; Knežević et al., 2020). Online resources gained traction due to their adaptability to different learning styles, allowing self-directed language learning (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020) and expanding learning opportunities beyond the classroom (Al-Johali, 2019).

However, despite the benefits, much work remains to be done to optimize the efficacy of websites as language instruction tools (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020). The absence of formal editorial boards or review procedures prior to website release increases the likelihood of learners encountering unreliable content (Alhabdan, 2021). By wasting learners’ time, disseminating inaccurate information, and providing insufficient guidance, poorly designed websites thus inhibit learners from attaining their language learning goals (Shen et al., 2015; Truckenmiller et al., 2019). Without features like accurate content, user-friendliness, and ease of use, ELL websites may not draw regular users and impede autonomous language learning (Aguayo & Ramírez, 2020). Websites may not always fit learners’ needs, interests, and characteristics, resulting in learner demotivation (Sihombing, 2020). Failing to meet these needs may restrict the effectiveness of ELL websites in aiding language learning.

Hence, assessing such websites is crucial. As language learning websites’ success depends on the effective teaching methods, learning prospects, pedagogical skills, and learning styles incorporated by website designers, identifying effective and ineffective features becomes pivotal for informing the design and development process (Alhabdan, 2021). Consequently, when developers thoughtfully structure and integrate these aspects into websites or online resources, learners can better achieve their learning goals (Polizzi, 2020). In contrast, failure to adhere to the websites’ evaluation criteria may give independent users a subpar experience. Thus, incorporating feedback from a robust evaluation into website improvements can aid in the better development of websites (Sihombing, 2020). Subsequently, evaluated websites can improve the quality of language learning and better match the needs of varied learners.

Researchers have developed numerous tools to facilitate ESL learners with their language education. However, there has been less emphasis on inventions that specifically assist Malaysian ESL pre-university learners with their English academic vocabulary learning. Furthermore, while...
previous studies commonly included teachers and students in evaluating ELL websites and online resources, the valuable perspective of field experts throughout a website’s design and development stage is often overlooked. Field experts play a critical role in website evaluation by identifying potential areas for improvement (Allison et al., 2019). Thus, they must evaluate technological tools before implementation with actual users to enhance quality. This study seeks to identify the perceptions of field experts regarding one web-based academic vocabulary learning resource (WBLR) designed and developed by the authors as part of a larger developmental research project, according to stipulated evaluation criteria.

**Literature Review**

**Criteria for Assessing Language Learning Websites and Online Resources**

Developing effective language learning websites requires thorough evaluation criteria that align with learners’ needs (Hubbard, 2006; Son, 2005). Ample studies have focused on developing such criteria, drawing from literature review and data collection procedures. One of the initial evaluation frameworks for ESL websites, proposed by Nelson (1998), encompasses purpose, pedagogy, design/construction, and description/others. Kelly (2000) proposed a set of guidelines for evaluating ESL websites, emphasizing site usability, loading speed, ease of use, useful content, integrity and professionalism, user-friendliness, advanced technology, and awareness of minorities with less powerful computers and internet access. Her study concludes that a good website is usable, has what the visitors need, does not waste visitors’ time, and is not irritating. Based on these guidelines, various frameworks for evaluating language learning websites emerged.

Literature shows that among the most influential frameworks for evaluating ELL websites are those of Hubbard (2011) and Chapelle (2001). Chapelle (2001) proposed six evaluation criteria: language learning potential, learner fit, meaning focus, authenticity, positive impact, and practicality. Meanwhile, Hubbard (2011) presented three similar criteria for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software evaluation: technical preview, operational description, and learner and teacher fit. These criteria also apply to website evaluation (McMurry et al., 2016). Numerous ensuing studies have built on these frameworks to develop various models or criteria for evaluating language learning websites.

Son (2005) developed a model for evaluating language learning websites and had language teachers review nine ESL/EFL websites based on his model. His model suggests 15 criteria: “purpose, accuracy, currency, authority, loading speed, usefulness, organization, navigation, reliability, authenticity, interactivity, feedback, multimedia, communication, and integration” (Son, 2005, p. 218). His study concludes that the different score ratings of satisfaction that various criteria received did not necessarily affect the overall rating of a website. Meanwhile, Hadjerrouit (2010a) proposed a framework for evaluating WBLRs, focusing on technical and pedagogical usability. The former considers “content, page, and site design” (Hadjerrouit, 2010a, p. 58), while the latter involves “understandability, added value, goal-orientation, time, interactivity, multimedia, motivation, differentiation, flexibility, autonomy, collaboration, and media variation” (Hadjerrouit, 2010a, p. 59).

Then, Kartal and Uzun (2010) identified three characteristics of a good language learning website. The first is physical characteristics that anticipate the site outline and general structure (e.g., user-friendly design, smooth transition, no eye strain from color use, allowed the use of online dictionaries and other tools, and simple access to multimedia materials). The second is contextual characteristics that relate to the site content’s features (e.g., materials should be
appropriate for level, subject, and type of learners, are up-to-date and authentic, are in various formats and types, supported by external materials, exercises should be flexible to allow contribution of users and should provide feedback, while content should contain practice tools and exercises for various levels). The third characteristic is pedagogical characteristics that concern the elements of learning (e.g., short and comprehensible explanation and guidance on exercises and activities, informative, reinforcing, and constructive feedback, aligned with innovation in education, materials are at an appropriate level and applicable regarding needs, scope, and goal of a website). These three characteristics align with the core features of a WBLR, which is “the integration of content, technology, and pedagogy into a system that supports learning” (Hadjerrouit, 2010b, p. 117).

Next, Fuentes and Martínez's (2018) evaluation checklist includes general site information, language skills and components, educational material, multimedia use, interactivity, communication, aid tools and linguistic resources, website ergonomics, and content quality. While many studies created evaluation frameworks to evaluate general ESL websites, Khoiriyah (2020) proposed a framework for evaluating website materials specifically for listening skills. Her framework includes three main criteria: technical usability, functionality in assisting language learning, and appropriateness judgment. Her research concludes that the framework can “help teachers to review the proper website-based listening resources for their particular learners, purposes, and teaching methodology” (Khoiriyah, 2020, p. 89).

The different criteria in the literature for evaluating language learning websites share common themes and goals. The majority of these criteria were developed by adopting elements from previous studies. While there may be variations in the specific criteria employed, they overlap in many aspects, and the ultimate goal remains the same: to provide learners with user-friendly, engaging, reliable websites aligned with their linguistic demands and learning goals. As per Allison et al.'s (2019) meta-analysis, the quality of websites is an open and debatable area. Hence, the guidelines, models, tools, or frameworks mentioned can be used to gather and analyze data. They may supplement one another and be enhanced by additional criteria to help create websites that are helpful to language learners.

**Previous Studies on English Language Learning (ELL) Website Evaluation**

Most evaluations of ELL websites and online resources in previous studies were predominantly conducted by teachers or instructors, pre-service teachers, and students, using criteria described in the literature. The studies concurred that evaluation would lead developers to modify the teaching strategies and content presentation employed in a website, thereby increasing its credibility.

In a study by Saeedi et al. (2023), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) teachers evaluated five vocabulary and grammar websites based on authority, purpose, coverage, currency, objectivity, accuracy, technical aspects, and usefulness. Despite varying technical and technological superiority among platforms, all platforms proved practical and helpful in expanding ESL learners’ vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Saeedi et al. (2023) conclude that evaluation is a time-saving tool, as learners and teachers can select websites based on specific purposes, needs, and criteria. Meanwhile, in Said's (2021) study, 18 ESL web resources were evaluated by ESL pre-service teachers based on Son’s (2005) website evaluation criteria. Results revealed that most web resources’ content and usefulness were aligned with their primary purposes, making them highly
Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning

recommended for language teaching and learning. Nonetheless, authority, feedback, multimedia, and communication received weaker ratings.

Next, Cengiz et al.’s (2021) findings showed that most ESL websites utilized by Turkish EFL teachers were of good quality, rendering them valuable resources for teaching, learning, and professional development. The evaluation criteria were membership availability, registration, authorship, up-to-date, accuracy, presentation, usefulness, and description of the website and its content. Yet, rather than offering an interactive environment, the websites only offer educational content that would satisfy teachers’ urgent needs to deliver lessons. Sihombing (2020) had English language teachers evaluate three English listening learning websites using design, content/teacher fit, and learner fit (Hubbard, 2006; Son, 2005). The evaluation indicated that, to varying degrees, the websites mostly met the standards for good language websites set forth by scholars. Still, particular suggestions were given to enhance the websites’ quality, including adding monologue, learner feedback, and better learner fit.

Some studies specifically evaluated technical aspects, like functionality and usability. Aguayo and Ramírez (2020) reviewed four well-known ELL websites: ESOL Courses, BBC, British Council, and Cambridge English. They found that learners face difficulties accessing and using these websites when they fail to meet functionality and usability standards. This finding suggests that even well-established websites possess significant flaws in design elements like technology accuracy for specific purposes, intelligibility, ease of use, operability, instruction guidance, and interactive tools. In contrast, Liu et al. (2011) examined BBC and noted its well-designed structure. Still, they acknowledged that not all learning websites are funded and developed by giant corporations and posited that fewer criteria would be met when reviewing them. Building on Aguayo and Ramírez's (2020) checklist, Alhabdan (2021) engaged Saudi EFL learners to evaluate the technical features of ELL websites. Learners found that the websites are functional and usable for increasing their English language proficiency. Essentially, these studies stressed that beyond appropriate content, technical qualities are equally crucial for ELL websites’ efficacy.

Next, in Kir and Kayak's (2013) study, English language learners evaluated English websites in terms of ease of finding information, text readability, interface, navigation, speed, interactivity, and understanding of the content. Findings showed that learners were satisfied with the websites as they helped develop their language and cultural competencies. However, compared to the mean of the speed of display, fun, entertainment value, overall learning experience, and ease of understanding the instruction, the mean of quality of information, ease of finding information, ease of reading text, website appearance, and ease of navigation received higher mean.

These evaluation studies emphasized the importance of critically evaluating web resources for language learning. Identifying the strengths and limitations of websites informs future website development and improvement of existing ones (Kir & Kayak, 2013; Saeddi et al., 2023). While feedback from the evaluation can facilitate website improvements (Alhabdan, 2021), participants can also gain valuable skills for assessing and choosing the best ESL websites that meet their needs (Said, 2021; Sihombing, 2020). Therefore, a thorough set of guidelines should be obeyed prior to website design. Subsequently, a careful evaluation would ensure that those guidelines are met and that materials are valid, efficient, and practical (Sevilla-Pavón et al., 2011).
Method
This study is a quantitative study of nature in which the researchers intend to investigate the perceptions of field experts on a designed and developed academic vocabulary WBLR in detail. It seeks to answer the following research question (RQ): How do experts perceive the developed web-based English academic vocabulary learning resource?

Participants
A total of six expert reviewers from various Malaysian tertiary education institutions were purposely selected based on their areas of expertise in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) field.

Instrument
An expert evaluation questionnaire (Appendix A) is used to gather the experts’ perceptions on the developed academic vocabulary WBLR. Adapted from Kartal and Uzun (2010), there are four evaluation aspects: Design, Technical, Content, and Pedagogy, with 9, 10, 12, and 11 items, respectively. The items are adapted from Fuad (2019) and added by the researchers. The questionnaire also includes two open-ended questions on the strengths and future recommendations for the resource. Before distribution, the questionnaire was revised based on content validation feedback from two senior lecturers with expertise in CALL and English language studies.

Procedures
Each expert received an appointment letter, research information sheet, consent form, and links to the prototype of the WBLR (www.5stepacademicwords.com) and the expert evaluation questionnaire via email. The prototype also includes a comprehensive video tutorial on how to use the WBLR. Experts had two weeks to complete the evaluation, which was later analyzed using descriptive statistics on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. The mean interpretation is based on Wiersma (2000), where mean scores of 1.00-2.33 are considered low, 2.34-3.67 moderate, and 3.68-5.00 high.

Results
The presentation of this section begins with the findings gathered from the experts and is then discussed further. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the experts.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the field experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert (E)</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Year of experience</th>
<th>Area of expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>UiTM Perlis</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>TESL, vocabulary learning, learner autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>UPSI</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>TESL/TESOL, vocabulary learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>UM</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>TESL, language education, tertiary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>UiTM Puncak Alam</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>TESL, CALL, technology in language learning and teaching, instructional technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>UTHM</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>TESL, technology in education, ESL instructional design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 1, 66.7% (n=4) of the experts are Associate Professors, while the remaining 33.3% (n=2) are Senior Lecturers. Affiliated with various public universities in Malaysia, they have work experience ranging from five to 34 years (M=18). Only 33% (n=2) have less than ten years of experience, while 67% (n=4) have more than ten. Their TESL backgrounds demonstrate the experts’ expertise in pedagogy in education. While Experts 1, 2, and 3 are content experts (i.e., vocabulary learning), Experts 4, 5, and 6 are technology experts (i.e., CALL and instructional design). Therefore, this panel of experts consists of experienced lecturers with expertise relevant to this research, ensuring they can provide valuable insights and suggestions to improve the academic vocabulary WBLR.

**Expert Review Questionnaire Findings**

This section summarises the findings obtained from the expert review questionnaire based on the four key constructs. The report of findings of these constructs determines the field experts’ perceptions of the academic vocabulary WBLR. Table 2 presents the mean score for each construct in the questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Technical aspect</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall mean score</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 2, the experts strongly agreed on the design elements of the web-based learning resource (M=3.81, SD=.448), including suitability for target learners, colors, texts, graphics, videos, font type, and overall design attractiveness. Nonetheless, adjustments are required to improve the readability of font size (M=1.83, SD=.408) and images used for content (M=3.67, SD=.816).

Likewise, the experts strongly agreed that the web resource contains good technical elements that could support learning (M=4.33, SD=.489). The elements include allowing easy information search and feedback submission, functioning clicking mechanisms, smooth transitions, smooth audio and video plays, easy-to-follow layout, and good organization. Nevertheless, to improve the technical aspect of the web resource, its user interface needs to be revised accordingly (M=3.50, SD=.548).

Besides, the experts also showed positive perceptions of the web resource content (M=4.18, SD=.484). They perceived the content as appropriate with the curriculum, learning objectives, learners’ proficiency, and background knowledge. They also agreed that the content includes accurate and up-to-date learning exercises, testing tools, and credible links, is free from typographical errors, and is presented through various media. However, a modification of the content is needed to eliminate spelling errors (M=1.83, SD=.408).

Finally, the experts believed the web resource encompasses essential pedagogical elements that can facilitate effective learning (M=4.12, SD=.262). These elements include appropriately tailored exercises for diverse proficiency levels, comprehensive guidance, materials that provide sufficient stimulus and reflect the scope and goals of the resource, interesting content conducive
to independent learning, clear information, direct instruction, instant feedback, and integration of up-to-date technology for materials.

The findings show that field experts’ overall perceptions of the WBLR developed for academic vocabulary learning among ESL pre-university learners are high (M=4.12, SD=.374). This indicates that the WBLR is well-designed and contains critical elements to facilitate effective learning. The experts also highlighted areas requiring modification before implementation with target users. Additionally, they shared personal opinions on the main strengths of the web resource and offered recommendations for future improvements in the open-ended section of the questionnaire. Table 3 summarises their responses.

Table 3. Experts’ responses on web resource’s strengths and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>“Self-paced learning allows flexibility.” “Extremely beneficial for students and is a laudable effort.”</td>
<td>“Reduce the amount of text in the introductory section and answer options.” “Keep instructions simple, succinct and clear.” “Content needs to be proofread by a competent language expert.” “Increase font size.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>“The use of audio-visual materials.” “Well-developed and authentic materials.” “Gamification.” “Input uses local context to convey information which aids learners’ comprehension.” “Subtle color scheme.”</td>
<td>“Font size must be improved significantly to improve readability.” “Increase the audio volume to improve pronunciation clarity.” “Be more interactive to promote meaningful learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3</td>
<td>“Substantial and broad-ranging scope and content.” “Engaging visuals.” “Paves the way for innovative pedagogical methods for teaching academic vocabulary.” “Encourages active learning.” “Appropriate tool to help students learn academic vocabulary independently.” “Quick feedback is valuable for self-assessments.” “Variety of fun activities.” “Capacity to link resources in many formats.”</td>
<td>“Create a visual interface on academic vocabulary for higher-order functions to make the web beneficial and feasible for upper-intermediate students.” “Find ways to boost user participation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4</td>
<td>“List of academic vocabulary.” “Gamification.” “Good website for vocabulary practice.”</td>
<td>“Some of the questions in the exercises could also include usage of the words in the academic context.” “The exercises created using Word Wall do not provide guided reinforcement.” “The inclusion of tutorial videos could add more value.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>“Content, color scheme, font, explanation given, and media.”</td>
<td>“Place interesting/catchy website messages.” “Put caption in videos to grasp/retain students’ attention.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning Resource

E6

- “Very structured.”
- “Easy to navigate.”
- “Goal and objectives are clearly stated.”
- “Content is very interesting and interactive.”
- “Flexibility to play around with words based on own proficiency level.”

- “Tell learners (through text, not only video).”
- “Include a shared learning environment to make the session more enjoyable.”
- “Consider having the website to have the feature of targeted end users to not being able to level up to the next sublist without scoring a certain score – simply to see whether they comprehend the lessons provided in each sublist.”

Discussion

In this study, field experts assessed an academic vocabulary web-based learning resource (WBLR) that was designed and developed. The evaluation focused on its design, content, technical, and pedagogical aspects. The objective was to determine its strengths and weaknesses to improve its development. The results show that the four aspects within the WBLR received high ratings from the field experts, leading to a positive overall evaluation. The evaluation proves that the WBLR posits essential criteria of a good ELL website, increasing the likelihood that ESL learners will be interested and motivated to use it to learn academic vocabulary independently.

The ‘technical’ aspect, which is one of the physical attributes, is rated the highest among the four evaluation aspects. With a smooth transition and clicking mechanism, along with easy information search and organized presentation, the WBLR meets the criteria outlined by Kartal and Uzun (2020). These technical elements are vital for facilitating learning, improving accessibility, and providing a positive user experience. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that revising the user interface’s user-friendliness and audio volume is essential to improve the WBLR’s technical aspects. This finding corroborates studies by Aguayo and Ramírez (2020) and Alhabdan (2021), which conclude that learners could face difficulties accessing and using online learning content when websites lack functionality and usability standards. According to Aguayo and Ramírez (2020), even well-established ESL platforms could have significant design flaws. Thus, compared to renowned platforms, fewer criteria are expected to be met when reviewing other websites (Liu et al., 2011), such as the one examined in this study.

The second highest element rated is the ‘contextual’ attributes. Meeting the standards Kartal and Uzun (2010) set, the WBLR’s content is appropriate for multiple proficiency and background levels, aligns with curriculum and learning objectives, is current, presented through various media, and includes exercises with feedback and testing tools. As a result, diverse learners could relate better to the learning content, rendering their learning experience more meaningful and applicable to real-life situations. However, there is a need to address grammar and spelling errors, enhance content accuracy, and incorporate more academic context. In Said's (2021) study, ESL web resources evaluated are highly recommended for language learning because their content and primary objectives are well aligned. Thus, addressing the content issues raised by the experts is vital to ensure that the developed WBLR’s goal of assisting learners to become more familiar with academic vocabulary is fulfilled. The modifications will lead to a higher quality WBLR that accurately aids learning and meets academic standards.

Next is the ‘pedagogical’ attributes. The availability of materials suited to various proficiency levels, thorough guidance, clear information, direct instruction, feedback, and content consistent with current technology is per the pedagogical characteristics proposed by Kartal and
Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning

Uzun (2010). As a result, learners have a more structured and effective learning environment. However, findings show that the WBLR only provides feedback in the form of correct or incorrect answers and displays the actual answer; it does not explain why an answer is correct or incorrect. Per previous studies, feedback deficiency is a common weakness of ELL websites (Said, 2021; Sihombing, 2020). Learners tend to self-regulate their learning better when they receive quality feedback. Besides, the experts also require the simplification of instructions. Long instructions may confuse learners, as evidenced in Kir and Kayak’s (2013) study. Learners need to quickly understand what is required so they do not become discouraged by task complexity.

Finally, the other physical attribute, the ‘design’ aspect, while rated lowest among the four evaluation aspects, is also rated positively by the experts. The WBLR includes well-executed design elements, such as multimedia usage, suitable color use, and simple and easy access to materials. These elements ensure learners interact with the content enjoyably and efficiently, ultimately supporting their learning. However, the experts note dissatisfaction with the font size, color, and absence of captions in the video exercises. These issues would impair accessibility, readability, and inclusivity, negatively affecting the WBLR’s usability and effectiveness. Such a view is consistent with Said’s (2021) findings, where multimedia commonly received weak ratings, prompting suggestions to improve its integration in the evaluated websites.

In addition to Kartal and Uzun’s (2010) criteria, the developed WBLR demonstrates a substantial correspondence to most criteria in related website evaluation literature (e.g., Chapelle, 2001; Fuentes & Martínez, 2018; Hubbard, 2011; Son, 2005). These criteria, extensively discussed for their influence on effective language learning, affirm the WBLR’s alignment with essential requirements for a successful language learning website. Despite identified shortcomings, the experts maintain an overall positive view of the WBLR, recognizing its potential as an online tool for academic vocabulary learning among ESL pre-university learners. This outcome echoes past studies where recognizing strengths in targeted websites led to an endorsement for expanding learners’ English language proficiency (e.g., Cengiz et al., 2021; Saeedi et al., 2023; Said, 2021).

This study emphasizes the importance of involving field experts in evaluating websites before public release. Experts possess invaluable insights drawn from their extensive expertise and theoretical knowledge, which can substantially contribute to improving web resources’ quality. Secondly, the experts’ feedback helps develop a more well-designed academic vocabulary WBLR intended in this study by highlighting targeted improvement and identifying elements with lower ratings. In addition to conforming to the standards put forth by website evaluation scholars, this study adds further value to ELL website designers seeking to develop new English vocabulary learning websites by offering perspectives from experts in the TESL field.

Nonetheless, this study has some limitations. It solely involves field experts as evaluators, limiting the diversity of perspectives. The single data collection method may also constrain the depths of insights. Finally, the evaluation criteria consist of only four aspects. Although they provide a structured assessment framework, they might only encompass some factors contributing to the WBLR’s effectiveness. Hence, future research could include more diverse samples, such as Information Technology (IT) officers, website developers, teachers, and students, and utilize other evaluation methods, like interviews and observations. Moreover, exploring other evaluation criteria from the literature could broaden the evaluation scope for a comprehensive assessment. Finally, investigating how ESL pre-university learners engage with the improved WBLR following expert evaluation could reveal practical insights.
Conclusion

This study reports the perspectives of experts in the TESL field concerning the design, technical, content, and pedagogical aspects of a self-developed academic vocabulary WBLR. With strong positive perceptions among the field experts concerning the criteria evaluated, the evaluation confirms that the WBLR complies with essential requirements for an effective language learning website. Hence, this study concludes with the WBLR’s potential utility and effectiveness for facilitating ESL pre-university learners’ academic vocabulary learning. With the recommended improvements, the modified WBLR is anticipated to captivate and engage its intended users, encouraging independent learning of academic vocabulary.

Funding: This research is not funded.
Acknowledgements: Not applicable.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work.
Artificial Intelligence Statement: During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly to improve readability and language. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed. The authors take full responsibility for the publication's content.

About the Authors:
Farah Amirah Mohd Fisal is a PhD student at the Faculty of Education, UKM. She earned her B.Ed and M.Ed degrees at the University of Malaya (UM) in the field of education (Teaching English as a Second Language). ORCid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2578-780X

Azlina Abdul Aziz is a TESL lecturer at the Faculty of Education, UKM. She has an Ed.D in Teaching of English from Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.A. Her research interests are in the Teaching and Learning of Literature and Teacher Education in TESL. She is interested in how literary texts and personal narratives may be utilized to help students to examine the social, cultural and political issues in a particular context. Email: azlinal@ukm.edu.my ORCid ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7800-3688

Nur Ehsan Mohd Said is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, where he has served for 14 years. Ehsan obtained his doctorate in English Language and Linguistics from the University of Sheffield, UK. His main research interest lies in the field of ESL classroom intervention. In addition to teaching differentiation, he is interested in the investigation of language attitude as to how it affects language learning and in critical thinking as to how it can be taught successfully. He has authored and co-authored articles on English language teaching and learning and on English for specific purposes. Email: nurehsan@ukm.edu.my ORCid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2891-327X

References


Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning  

Fisal, Aziz, & Said


Appendices

Appendix A: Expert Review Questionnaire

Dear field experts,

I am Farah Amirah Fisal, a PhD student from the Faculty of Education, UKM. I am conducting a study to design, develop and evaluate a web-based learning resource for English academic vocabulary learning among ESL pre-university learners.

As part of the designing and developing processes, I seek your expertise to evaluate the prepared prototype. Link to the prototype: https://5stepacademicwords.com

Your responses will be used to modify and improve the prototype before actual implementation with the learners. Your responses will also be analyzed and reported in the thesis/article.

Responses are confidential and anonymous. This survey may take less than 20 minutes to complete. Please answer all questions. Thank you.

i. EVALUATOR’S PARTICULARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Area(s) of expertise</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

ii. EVALUATION OF WEB-BASED LEARNING RESOURCE (WBLR)

Please rate the academic vocabulary WBLR developed based on the following scale by circling your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (SD)</td>
<td>Disagree (D)</td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td>Agree (A)</td>
<td>Strongly Agree (SA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART A: DESIGN</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The design of the WBLR is suitable for ESL pre-university learners to learn academic vocabulary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The images used on the WBLR are suitable with the content.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The colors used on the WBLR are suitable for learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The texts used on the WBLR are consistent throughout all the pages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The graphics used on the WBLR are consistent throughout all the pages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The videos used on the WBLR are consistent throughout all the pages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The type of font used on the WBLR is easy to be read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The size of font used on the WBLR is easy to be read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The overall design of the WBLR is attractive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART B: TECHNICAL ASPECTS</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The WBLR’s layout is easy to follow.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The WBLR is well organised.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It is easy to look for the information needed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The facility to give feedback/comments (e.g., via email) to the author functions as expected.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When clicked, the options available on the menu are displayed as expected.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>When clicked, links to other websites are displayed as expected.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>All the clicking and other mechanisms for browsing on the WBLR transition smoothly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>When clicked, the audios on the WBLR play smoothly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>When clicked, the videos on the WBLR play smoothly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The user interface is user-friendly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART C: CONTENT</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
Field Experts’ Evaluation of a Web-based Academic Vocabulary Learning  
Fisal, Aziz, & Said

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contents used are appropriate for curriculum in education.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Contents used are appropriate with the learning objectives.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contents used are appropriate with ESL pre-university learners’ proficiency level.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Contents used are appropriate with ESL pre-university learners’ background knowledge.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are no typographical errors that could cause misunderstanding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There are no spelling errors that could cause misunderstanding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Contents include vocabulary learning exercises for practices opportunities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Contents include testing tools for testing learners’ comprehension.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Contents are presented through various medias.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The information or content on the WBLR is accurate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The information on the WBLR is current enough for the type of information it includes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The links from the WBLR appear to be credible.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART D: PEDAGOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The information delivered on the WBLR is easy to understand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The vocabulary learning exercises on the WBLR are suitable for different levels of pre-university level.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All the instructions on the WBLR are direct.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The vocabulary learning exercises are thoroughly guided.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The vocabulary learning exercises provide instant feedback.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The materials designed are in line with current technological tools for learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The materials provide enough stimulus to promote memory retention.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The materials reflect the scope of the WBLR.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The materials reflect the goal of the WBLR.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The WBLR is interesting to be explored as a resource for learning English academic vocabulary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The WBLR allows learners to learn independently in the absence of an instructor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART E: OPEN-ENDED**

1. What is the greatest strength of this web-based learning resource?

2. What are the improvements needed for this web-based learning resource?

Thank you for your time and cooperation.
Abstract
The study examined the relationship between Speech Act Theory and the Communicative Approach in assessing foreign languages, emphasizing the theoretical foundations and everyday applications of each approach. The study aims to present the theoretical and practical connections between these two approaches and highlight the emphasis on real-world communication in the Communicative Approach. The opening section examines Speech Act Theory as a forceful linguistic framework for analyzing the semiotic functions of language, elucidating how speeches not only communicate information but also enact actions within communicative encounters. The speech act theory’s illocutionary, perlocutionary, and locutionary actions are explained in depth, emphasizing that language usage is dynamic and how its context affects interpretation. Examining existing research on Speech Act Theory, the Communicative Approach, and their applications in language assessment, the paper investigated the Communicative Approach to Foreign Language Testing, which deviates from conventional paradigms for language evaluation and builds on Speech Act Theory. It was found that the Communicative Approach, which has its roots in Speech Act Theory, emphasizes the practical use of language in real-world contexts. The results shed light on the theoretical foundations of the Communicative Approach, enhancing its application in practice.

Keywords: communicative approach, foreign language assessment, pragmatic approach, real-world communication, semiotic function of language, speech act theory

Introduction

Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory is a linguistic theory that investigates the performative side of the language, demonstrating how utterances not only carry information but also execute actions. Building upon the foundational work of Austin (1962), philosopher Searle (1969) further developed and elaborated upon speech-act theory. The theory explores language’s dynamic function in forming social reality, going beyond the conventional understanding of language as only a descriptive instrument. The idea of illocutionary acts, or the planned consequences of a statement, is at the heart of Speech Act Theory. Austin (1962) made a distinction between illocutionary actions, which are acts done in the process of expressing something, and locutionary acts, which are the acts of speaking something. When someone says, “I assure you, this won’t slip my mind,” for instance, they are not only performing a locutionary act, stating a fact, but making an illocutionary statement of reassurance, too.

Building on Austin’s studies, Searle (1969) proposed the concept of perlocutionary actions or speech’s actual effects on the recipient or listener. For instance, the perlocutionary act may reassure the audience or foster trust. The triple distinction helps to explain the complexity of language usage. Speech Act Theory classifies illocutionary acts into expressive, declarative, directive, assertive, and commissive categories. Every category represents an alternate form of illocutionary power or speech act function. In contrast to the primarily informative or declarative nature of aggressive speech acts, instructive speech acts are inherently persuasive, aiming to guide listener behavior or elicit a desired response through direct commands or requests.

The Speech Act Theory acknowledges context's importance in understanding a statement's meaning. The same words used in different circumstances might have different illocutionary effects. Contextual awareness highlights the dynamic nature of language and how social norms impact speech acts. The valuable applications of the theory may be found in many fields, including communication studies, artificial intelligence, and the subject of linguistic philosophy. It provides a framework for the linguistic research of pragmatic language aspects, emphasizing the role of context, goal, and social norms. From a philosophical perspective, it disputes the widely held belief that language is an objective tool for conveying ideas and maintains that language is inextricably related to social interaction and behavior.

In communication studies, Speech Act Theory facilitates understanding the subtleties of interpersonal interaction and the consequences of language usage in different settings. By analyzing the technicalities of communication, speech-act theory spells out how language can be controlled and managed to wield influence, affect opinions, and institute hierarchical power dynamics within social contexts. The information is crucial for fields like rhetoric and political discourse analysis. Speech Act Theory influences natural language processing (NLP) in artificial intelligence. NLP algorithms recognize the literal meanings of words and attempt to understand the intentional illocutionary behaviors within a given context. It enhances Artificial Intelligence (AI) system’s ability to hold more sophisticated and appropriate conversations in various settings (Kasirzadeh & Gabriel, 2023).

Three Steps of Speech Act Theory

Undoubtedly, a link to human existence is essential. According to the Speech Act Theory, words and phrases used in speeches have specific functions in society. Several experts believe that one such technique is physical expressiveness (Kissine, 2020). Word components are commonly
referred to as verbal techniques, according to Kissine (2020). Three steps make up the theory: illocutionary, perlocutionary, and locutionary.

**Locutionary Act**

The main phase of Speech process Theory, locutionary actions, embodies the fundamental process of creating a meaningful remark. Austin (1962, p. 109) used the term 'locutionary act' to characterize the literal or surface-level interpretation of a statement or the act of articulating something utilizing a specific vocabulary and grammatical structure (Searle, 1968). Understanding the significance of locutionary actions requires an examination of the three interrelated aspects that comprise the initial step of the speech act process.

**Act Phonetically**

The phonetic act is the creation of the sounds or written symbols that comprise the speech, and it is the first phase of the locutionary act. It refers to the arrangement of letters and characters in written language; in spoken language, it encompasses word pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm.

**Phatic Act**

The second component, the phatic act, focuses on the communication part of language. It is concerned with the social function of language, focusing on establishing and preserving communication between the speaker and the person who is listening (Kadar & House, 2020). The phase guarantees that the speech is identified as a communication act instead of random noises or words. The phatic act connects the speaker with the listener, paving the way for information transfer and the prospective execution of illocutionary acts.

**Rhetic Act**

The third component of the locutionary act, the Rhetic act, concerns propositional content or the meaning of speech. It entails transmitting information or articulating a particular idea through language (Kadar & House, 2020). The Rhetic act deals with what is spoken, including the semantic content and the utterance's syntactic form. The component converts authentic sounds or symbols into meaningful statements with precise cognitive content.

**Illocutionary Act**

Illocutionary actions are essential in Speech Act Theory because they investigate a statement's intended force or function. Searle (1968) introduced and built on the feature, which explores a speaker's different speech actions outside the literal meaning of what they say. Illocutionary activities illuminate the speaker's intentions, showing a specific utterance's underlying meaning or power. To fully appreciate the component of Speech Act Theory, it is necessary first to examine the three major categories of illocutionary acts: assertive, directions, and commissive.

**Assertive**

Assertive are statements or beliefs the speaker expresses concerning a condition of events. The illocutionary act communicates information, depicts reality, or expresses an opinion. When someone states, “The rain is hammering the pavement outside,” they aggressively present weather
information. The speaker’s dedication to the integrity of the statement serves as the illocutionary force here.

**Directives**

Directives or Regulations are illocutionary acts in which the speaker seeks to persuade the listener to act. Requests, demands, recommendations, and invites are all examples of Directives. For example, when someone says, “Pass me the bookmark,” the illocutionary force is directive since the speaker wants the listener to perform a specific action. Directives’ success depends on the listener's understanding and reaction to the desired illocutionary force.

**Commissive**

Commissive implies that the speaker is committing to a future direction for action. Promises, oaths, and vows are illocutionary acts that communicate the speaker's desire to undertake a particular act in the future. When someone says, “I will see you in the evening,” they commit to future action and perform a commissive illocutionary act. The speaker's dedication to the stated purpose is the driving force here.

Illocutionary behaviors must be understood to unravel the complexity of human communication. It analyzes the speaker’s communicative goals in addition to the literal meaning of words, offering insight into the performative character of language (Kissine, 2020). The illocutionary actions also highlight the significance of context in comprehending the intended meaning since the exact words can convey various illocutionary forces in different contexts.

Categorizing illocutionary acts offers a platform for evaluating the social dynamics and power structures accompanying language usage. Recognizing the illocutionary power in an utterance provides a more nuanced view of how language is a tool for delivering information and as a way of influencing, guiding, and committing to acts within social situations.

Illocutionary actions of Speech Act Theory provide a complete framework for investigating the motives underlying speech. The classification of expressions into assertive, directive, and commissive forms constitutes the basis of the aspect of speech act theory, illuminating the diverse ways language interacts with and shapes the environment via these distinct speech acts.

**Perlocutionary Act**

The third stage of Speech Act Theory is perlocutionary actions, which focus on the repercussions or consequences of a speech on the listener or receiver. As defined by Searle (1969), perlocutionary actions investigate how language impacts the listener beyond the speaker's apparent intentions. Understanding perlocutionary acts entails studying the listener's reactions, responses, or changes resulting from the speech.

**Influence on the Audience**

Perlocutionary actions are based on the premise that speech may directly influence the listener's ideas, feelings, or conduct. For example, if a speaker makes a joke and the listener laughs, the perlocutionary act is successful. Similarly, if the speaker delivers a persuasive speech, the goal of perlocutionary impact may be to persuade the audience to adopt a given point of view or perform a specific action (Kasirzadeh & Gabriel, 2023). Recognizing the perlocutionary component acknowledges the power of language in affecting the cognitive and emotional reactions of the listener.
Acts of Speech as Social Actions

Perlocutionary activities underline that speech is more than just information transmission; it is also a form of activism with real-world implications. Utterances can form social relationships, affect decisions, and shift views. Whether a speaker wishes to convince, entertain, convince, or provoke, the effectiveness of perfunctory speech. The component emphasizes language's performative nature, actively impacting social interactions and results.

Contextual Variability

The perlocutionary aspect recognizes that an utterance's impact might change depending on contextual circumstances such as the listener's opinions, feelings, and cultural background. What is compelling in one situation may be ineffective or objectionable in another. Consideration of perlocutionary actions necessitates understanding the various ways the language can be heard and understood, emphasizing the relevance of context in influencing communicative outcomes.

Intention Vs. Impact

While illocutionary actions are concerned with the speaker's purpose, perlocutionary acts are concerned with the actual consequences of the speech act. A speaker's intention may be to soothe, but the perlocutionary impact may vary depending on the listener's mind. The distinction emphasizes the dynamic and occasionally unpredictable character of communication, underlining the need to consider both the speaker's goal and the actual effect on the listener.

Persuasion and Influence

Perlocutionary activities are critical in the study of influence and persuasion. A persuasive speech, for example, aims not simply to transmit a message (illocutionary) but additionally to modify the listener's views, attitudes, or actions (perlocutionary). Understanding the perlocutionary component is critical for assessing the efficacy of persuasive communication tactics and the intricate interplay between behavior and language.

Categories of Speech Act

Speech Act Theory divides utterances into five categories, each representing a particular function or communication goal. Searle’s categories give a thorough framework for understanding how language is employed to accomplish actions in social circumstances.

Acts of Representative Speech

The speaker makes comments that describe or reflect a condition of things in representative speech actions. The principal role is to deliver information or express world views. Statements, affirmations, descriptions, and explanations are some examples. Saying “It’s too hot outside” or “Trees release oxygen” are examples of representative speech actions since they try to convey facts or information.

Acts of Directive Speech

Directive speech acts attempt to persuade the listener to do something. Requests, directives, ideas, advice, and invites are all included in the category. The illocutionary force underlying directed speech actions is to affect the listener's conduct. Examples include instructions such as the English poet Pope’s frenzied directive in his poem, ‘Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,’ “Shut, shut the
door, good John,” (1954, p. 24) requests such as Keats’ passionate pleading to the Nightingale, in ‘Ode to the Nightingale,’ “Fade, far away dissolve, and quite forget . . .” (Keats, 1981, p. 293) and invites such as “Join me for a cup of Arabic coffee tonight.” The function of language in influencing activities or eliciting particular reactions is highlighted by directive speech acts.

**Acts of Commissive Speech**

The speaker commits to a future course of action in a permissive speech act. Promises, vows, pledges, and other statements of commitment fall within the category. Under this classification, the speaker accepts a commitment or commits to do something in the future, for example, statements such as “I will help you with your homework” or “I promise to give you the report tomorrow.” Commissive speech stresses the speaker’s desire to carry out the stated objective.

**Acts of Expressive Speech**

The speaker expresses their sentiments, attitudes, or psychological states through expressive speaking acts. Apologies, congratulations, gratitude, complaints, and emotions of delight and grief fall within the category. Expressive speech actions are concerned with the speaker’s personal feelings and emotions. For example, stating “I’m sorry for being late” or “Congratulations on passing your exam” are expressive speech acts that transmit feelings rather than facts or directions.

**Acts of Declarative Speech**

Declarative speech actions are performative in character, meaning the utterance changes the external world. The act of saying the words causes it to be so. Proclamations, declarations, and announcements fall within the category. Examples include “I at this moment pronounce you husband and wife” and “I declare the meeting adjourned.” Declarative speech actions demonstrate language's potential to create or modify reality via speaking. Recognizing these speech act types is critical for assessing the depth and complexities of communication. Speakers frequently use several of these speech acts in their daily conversations, and the efficacy of communication depends on listeners' awareness and interpretation of these acts. Furthermore, categorizing speech actions sheds light on the social dynamics, structures of power, and interpersonal relationships entwined with language usage. Scholars and linguists better grasp how language works as a tool for affecting, expressing, committing, and modifying social reality by investigating the many purposes of speech actions.

**Problem statement**

The pragmatics approach must be considered while discussing speech act theory and the communicative method. The central tenet of pragmatics is that language should be integrated into social contexts (Thomas, 2013). It suggests that comprehension of language use within a social context is necessary for language acquisition.

Socio-pragmatics and pragma linguistics are two subdisciplines of pragmatics. Transmitting interpersonal or relational meanings together with communication actions is known as praxis. Conversely, socio-pragmatics focuses on the social perception that guides a speaker's participation and communication behavior. When these two input-based strategies are used together, learners' ability to identify and construct English-request hedges is improved (Widodo & Sari, 2023). After
exploring the details of the speech act theory, the research aims to identify the methods through which pragmatics impact communicative speech. These particular goals are examined in detail throughout the study:

i. Examine the theoretical foundations, core ideas, and principles of Speech Act theory.
ii. Examine how Speech Act Theory has impacted conceptions of language testing.
iii. Describe the benefits and drawbacks of using Speech Act Theory in language assessments.

Main aim and significance of the study

The study contributes to ongoing discussions about effective and holistic language assessment methods. It sheds light on the theoretical foundations of the Communicative Approach, enhancing its application in practice. By emphasizing real-world communication, it aligns assessment with actual language use, potentially improving learning and evaluation outcomes. The main of the study is shared below:

i. Analyze the connections between Speech Act Theory and the Communicative Approach in foreign language assessment.
ii. Highlight the emphasis on real-world communication within the Communicative Approach.
iii. Demonstrate how understanding can inform language assessment practices.

The research questions that the study sought to answer are as follows:

i. How does Speech Act Theory relate to the Communicative Approach in foreign language assessment?
ii. What are the theoretical underpinnings of each approach?
iii. How do they manifest in practical applications to language assessment?

Literature Review

Importance of Communicative Approach to Foreign Language Testing

Lee & Wallace (2018) uphold the Communicative Approach’s potential to evaluate the true significance of language skills in day-to-day communication. By giving precedence to how language abilities are used instead of just being familiar with them, the Communicative Approach presents a more expressive and poignant assessment of foreign language proficiency. Speech Act Theory, a linguistic theory that sees communication as a sequence of purposeful acts with defined purposes, is the foundation for the strategy. The Communicative Approach differs from traditional approaches, which frequently emphasize separate language components and rote memorization. Instead, it emphasizes the capacity to utilize language in genuine and meaningful ways that mirror how language is used in real-world interactions. The Speech Act Theory, which maintains that language is a tool for accomplishing communicative objectives rather than just accumulating grammar rules and vocabulary, supports the change (De Jong, 2018).

According to Sifakis (2019), the Communicative Approach's forte lies in its ability to evaluate various features of language proficiency outside grammar, such as critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving, contributing to a well-rounded evaluation of language competence. Conventional evaluation methods frequently focus only on specific abilities, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, which results in a disjointed picture of a learner's language proficiency. The Communicative Approach, on the other hand, combines these abilities,
understanding that linguistic, social languages, and pragmatic capabilities are all necessary for good communication.

Additionally, the method heavily emphasizes task-based evaluation, where learners' proficiency in real-world language activities is used to evaluate them (Shohamy, 2020). These exercises simulate real-world communication situations, such as taking part in a discussion, making a presentation, or composing an argumentative essay. The Communicative Approach gives a more realistic picture of students' language competency and preparation for language usage in everyday situations by evaluating them in context.

The emphasis of the Communicative Approach on the function of language and communication skills is another essential feature. Language is a dynamic instrument for communicating meanings, motives, and emotions rather than just a collection of rules that must be obeyed (Savignon, 2017). Evaluating a learner's capacity to use language effectively in various social and cultural circumstances is crucial to communicative competency assessment. The method acknowledges that language is naturally social and that correct grammar alone is insufficient for effective communication.

Furthermore, instead of having students passively memorize facts, the Communicative Approach promotes a learner-centered setting in which students actively interact with the language. In addition to encouraging learners to employ their information in various contexts, the active involvement fosters a better comprehension of language structures (Zhang, 2019). These assessments, exemplified by their stress on creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, add to the emergence of a holistic language proficiency that surpasses mere grammatical knowledge and disseminates successful communication in varied contexts.

Giraldo (2018) postulates that the Communicative Approach expedites the incorporation of technology within language assessment.

Digital tools and online platforms provide innovative methods for evaluating language proficiency in real-world settings. Rich and dynamic evaluation experiences are offered through interactive activities, multimedia tools, and virtual communication simulations. It helps students meet the language needs of the modern world and is in line with how communication is changing in the digital era.

The Communicative Approach also considers students' varied requirements and backgrounds. Evaluation bias may result from unintentionally favoring particular cultural or linguistic communities in traditional assessments (Zheng & Cheng, 2018). The Communicative Approach supports various linguistic variations and cultural expressions since it emphasizes language use in everyday situations. The inclusiveness makes the language assessment system more just and equal.

**Pragmatic Approach in Language Testing**

According to the study by Clark (2018), the Pragmatic Approach, which emphasizes language's pragmatic and contextual usage in everyday contexts, marks a substantial shift from conventional evaluation techniques in language testing. The method provides a sophisticated knowledge of language competency and is based on the ideas of pragmatics, which examines how language is used in a conversation.

Im, Shin & Cheng, (2019), argued that language usage in context, including the social, cultural, and contextual dimensions of communication, is the focus of pragmatics. These ideas are extended to assessment in language testing with the Pragmatic Approach, which recognizes that
language competency involves more than just vocabulary and grammar and the capacity to use language correctly in various communicative contexts.

The Pragmatic Approach's emphasis on communication skills is one of its core principles. Conventional language evaluations frequently place a higher priority on linguistic proficiency, emphasizing vocabulary and grammatical correctness. But effective communication demands more than language skills; it also requires knowledge of how language is used in particular social and cultural situations (Lee & Wallace, 2018). Thus, pragmatic evaluations consider discourse rules, register, politeness, and other contextually relevant aspects when assessing an individual's capacity to utilize language.

According to the study by Jenkins & Leung (2019), the fundamental building blocks of communication, or speech actions, are a central idea in pragmatics. Speech actions incorporate the listener's interpretation, the speaker's purpose, and the words’ literal meaning. Evaluating pragmatic competency entails determining how well a student can perform speaking actions. It involves employing language to carry out tasks like asking, apologizing, or persuading, identifying indirect speech actions, and comprehending suggested meanings. Therefore, by analyzing the effectiveness with which students use language to accomplish particular communicative goals, pragmatic assessments offer a more nuanced assessment of a student's communicative competence.

The Pragmatic Approach also acknowledges that language use is dynamic and context dependent. Language changes depending on the social and cultural environment in which it is used; it is not a static system. Pragmatic evaluations consider how language is used differently in various contexts (Im, Shin & Cheng, 2019). Adaptability is especially vital for evaluating language learners' readiness for real-world communication since context awareness and adaptability are critical components.

Moreover, emphasizing the value of intercultural competency is a pragmatic examination. In multicultural and multilingual contexts, effective communication frequently occurs, necessitating that people understand cultural subtleties and modify their language use accordingly (Savignon, 2017). When evaluating a learner's cross-cultural communication skills, pragmatic evaluations consider the importance of cultural sensitivity, empathy, and awareness.

The pragmatic approach aligns with the trend toward task-based, honest evaluations. Conventional language exams frequently consist of isolated, contrived tasks that do not accurately represent language use in everyday situations (Clark, 2018). Conversely, pragmatic evaluations include activities and situations, such as role-playing, problem-solving, and negotiation, that mimic real-world communication. Because these activities evaluate the capacity of learners to apply language abilities in real-world settings, they offer a more comprehensive picture of their language competency.

According to the study by Kehal & Beghoul (2018), using technological devices in pragmatic language testing signifies a revolutionary change in the assessment procedure, providing an engaging and dynamic evaluative encounter. Digital platforms are essential because they make creating interactive situations that resemble real-world communication settings easier (Meyerhoff et al., 2023). These scenarios provide a more sophisticated assessment of learners' pragmatic skills than the standard, static exams. Educators and assessment designers may create realistic and captivating scenarios that require students to traverse the nuances of language use in various contexts by utilizing the possibilities of digital tools.
Among the most essential elements for improving pragmatic language testing are online exchanges. Learners can participate in real-time conversations on virtual communication platforms, which mirror genuine communication's dynamic and impromptu character. A study by Jenkins & Leung (2019) discovered that practicing different kinds of conversations, from casual chats to formal discussions, helps learners adjust their language to fit the situation. Online interactions are instantaneous, capturing the flow of language and allowing for a more precise evaluation of learners’ communicative agility and reactivity.

Because multimedia resources incorporate several communication modes, they add to the complexity of pragmatic language assessment. Assessments using auditory and visual components can more thoroughly evaluate learners' pragmatic abilities. For instance, instructors could show students audio or video recordings that capture the tone of voice, cultural quirks, and nonverbal cues, all crucial for effective communication (Kasirzadeh & Gabriel, 2023). It is ensured that students’ abilities to comprehend and react correctly to the intricate layers of meaning present in real-world communication circumstances are comprehensively understood when they are assessed using a variety of modalities.

Pragmatic language testing gains additional authenticity from virtual environments. By engaging learners in digitally produced environments, assessments can mimic specific settings, such as social gatherings, professional meetings, or business interactions (Meyerhoff et al., 2023). Learners are challenged to use their pragmatic knowledge and abilities in ways that are relevant to the setting through these virtual scenarios. Because virtual environments are immersive, learners respond more realistically, giving assessors important information about how well they can negotiate communication's cultural and social facets.

Students can exhibit their pragmatic proficiency to fit the changing face of 21st-century communication in a digitally connected environment. Technology integration improves the assessment process and equips students for the world of digital communication they will face in their academic, professional, and personal lives. Kehal & Beghoul (2018) argue that the continuous improvement and growth of pragmatic language testing in the digital sphere will lead to more precise, pertinent, and significant evaluations of students' communicative proficiency as technology develops. The progression signifies a dedication to equipping people with the skills necessary for the intricacies of interpersonal relationships while utilizing the benefits provided by modern digital platforms (Clark, 2018).

According to the study by Alemi & Haeri (2020), understanding the functional and contextual components of language use requires understanding the Pragmatic Approach and Speech Act Theory. Pragmatics, as a linguistic study, investigates how the environment affects interpretation of meaning in communication. Speech Act Theory, on the other hand, explores the idea that utterances are more than just expressions of information. They are actions with specific communication goals.

By emphasizing the performative element of language, Speech Act Theory provides a theoretical foundation for a pragmatic evaluation. According to the idea, utterances can be divided into speech acts such as claims, requests, promises, and apologies (Kehal & Beghoul, 2018). These activities involve not only delivering information, but also performing social responsibilities and duties within a particular setting.

The Pragmatic Approach includes and extends Speech Act Theory ideas into language testing and analysis. It recognizes that effective communication takes more than just grammatical correctness; it also necessitates an awareness of how language functions in various social and cultural contexts.
cultural settings (Alemi & Haeri, 2020). Pragmatic evaluations, which are informed by Speech Act Theory, measure a learner's capacity to use language not merely to convey information but also to do specific communicative acts in various settings.

**Evolution of Pragmatic Language Testing**

In the 1960s, the psychometric-structuralism method began to dominate language testing. Carrol (1961) made a clear distinction between discrete point testing and integrative testing, which aims to examine a learner's ability to employ several bits simultaneously. Since 1980 language testing has entered a new, active phase. The integrative assessment evaluates a learner's ability to utilize many bits simultaneously. More scholars and linguists recognize the relevance of language naturalness as pragmatics develops.

In the 90s, language assessment progressed to the Communicative-Pragmatic stage. According to Johnson and Johnson (1998) communicative language testing was designed to assess communicative proficiency and employ communicative events as test items. The items are frequently related to language use, and the activities are authentic and feasible. Examinees may choose what they want to talk about or what degree of proficiency they wish to be assessed on in some tests.

Role-play, interview, debate, and recounting are considered to be pragmatic oral tests. Role-play is the use of words in a simulated real-life scenario. At the same time, interview activities directly examine language use that assesses verbal abilities by requiring the tester and test takers to converse.

**Methodology**

For the purpose of research and analysis, the researchers have adopted the "Cohen (1994)" method for assessing pragmatic ability and oral proficiency. The intended focus here is on explaining and potentially justifying the chosen assessment method within the context. The study employed Cohen's (1994) methodology, which draws on Speech Act Theory and the Communicative Approach. Based on the literature review and the different methods discussed there, the researchers found that Cohen’s (1994) methodology seems relevant to assessing pragmatic ability and oral proficiency, given the reasons discussed below.

The three assessment methods proposed by Cohen (1994), supported the practical oral test as a new methodology for evaluating pragmatic ability and oral proficiency. Cohen’s (1994) assessment is divided into two parts: form and substance. There are three sub-items in the form:

1. Naturalness of discourse: Is the speaker’s speech intelligible?
2. Style of expression: Is the style of expression authentic or idiomatic?
3. Clarity of expression: Can native speakers understand the speech?

Content also consists of three items:

1. Suitability: Is the language appropriate to society or function?
2. Accuracy of information: Can the testee accurately narrate an event, describe an object, and strive for logic?
3. Amount of information related: Is the amount of information appropriate to function?

Subsequently, there are five ratings or bands for each item. The total number of points represents the tester's overall integrative ability. The tester's integrative oral ability will be determined by the total scores in each rating. The scores can also be converted into a hundred-point scale (Cohen, 1994). The formula below is employed:
Speech Act Theory and the Communicative Approach

Hussain & Khan

\[(C \times 5) \ S = 100 \times Ct \ (1)\]

Ct stands for the test takers' integrative oral rating. The number of items included in the evaluation is denoted by the letter C.

Sample of Evaluation

Two students' performance in a role-play test was assessed, according to Cohen's evaluation method for oral examinations.

Student A's mission is to retrieve her wallet from B, while Student B's task is to refuse to return the wallet if A fails to describe it appropriately. In the discourse, A made a lot of verbal faults or mistakes. The meaning of some statements and expressions in A's speech is unclear, so A receives a band four for the item.

In role-play, both students performed admirably. Student A used the word "er" ten times to express her eagerness to get her hands on the wallet. We do not consider the item in the evaluation since the justification given by student B for refusing to return it is implausible.

It was not enough to teach and test linguistic forms without considering how they were used. Social appropriateness, such as who is speaking to whom, when, and under what circumstances, are as essential as linguistic accuracy. Pragmatic language tests were created to help with it. Pragmatic language tests are an innovative technique for evaluating users' language skills, particularly for oral testing. It examines communicative action in its sociocultural context, considering language knowledge and people's ability to use language in a situational setting and an acceptable manner to evaluate test-takers' ability to communicate effectively in social situations. The integrated oral scores of the exam taker are the sum of the bands for the six items.

Discussion

Communicative Approach to Language Testing

The first principle of language testing is to encourage the utilization of language in productive and sometimes repetitive circumstances. It should dictate real-life experience. It is what the communicative approach to language testing entails. Exercises in a communicative manner are developed based on experience (Legutke, Thomas, & Candlin, 2014). Sholeh and Nur (2020) concentrated on task-based assignments. They utilized a set of tasks consistent with themes. Such tests as TOEFL and IELTS are designed based on a communicative approach. They are reviewed constantly to maintain their relevance.

To create tests based on the communicative approach, test designers attempt to create real-world activities. Test creators start from content; they make a bias for the test. The bias is based on what test-takers require the test for. These requirements could be explained as travelling for career opportunities, advancement in education, or travelling for fun. Hence, such tests as IELTS are categorized based on purposes such as, academic or general. In all of these settings, they have to communicate. To clarify test-taking needs, test creators have developed tests based on four communicative principles, as laid down by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) (Phan, 2008). These principles include:

1. Starting somewhere: It entails that test designers briefly state what they expect from test-takers, that is, what they wish to do.
2. The second principle is "concentration on content." That is, not only the topic, but the tasks are also needed to be implemented. The purpose of the test is expected to feature in the
principle. The language task will guide them in future jobs. It could include reading traffic signs: Danger; Do Not Turn for a Driver.

3. The third principle is termed “bias for best”: It measures the degree of strategic involvement on the student’s part in preparing for a test. That is, tests are prepared according to the learner’s expected ability regarding advancement in proficiency.

4. “Working on washback”: Clear scoring criteria are created. Course objectives and test contents are put into consideration in the hope of promoting positive feedback.

Hence, to achieve success in tests, test takers require undisputed attention. It entails Hymes’s (1972) idea of communicative competence (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980). According to the theory and technique, understanding language is more than knowing its laws. Test designs based on the method are characterized by two approaches: receptive to production and understanding social roles in circumstances. Language is deemed an external reality in the communicative approach. Nonetheless, under both systems, language is a means of communication. The primary purpose of tests is to evaluate students' capacity to communicate effectively and to put what they have learned receptively to good use.

Additionally, the communicative approach differs from other approaches, such as the integrative approach. A test for medical students in an Arab country must vary from one for medical students in Japan or China; that is, cultural considerations must be considered. Of course, the last aspect along with an emphasis on the exam criteria based on learners' needs, are two key benefits and strengths of the communicative approach (Han, 2022). In contrast, for other strategies, such as the psychometric-structuralist approach (used in universal careers, medical doctors, for instance), a test can be used globally, regardless of cultural differences across countries.

Collectively, researchers have agreed that the communicative approach is preferred to all previously devised methods. It is a worthy replacement for such tests as the fill-in-the gap or multiple-choice questions, which are purely theoretical. A test based on the communicative approach would comprise pure and hybrid tests, focusing on language use rather than language knowledge.

**Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory**

According to Jens Allwood (1977) in "A Critical Look at Speech Act Theory," the most crucial study in contemporary pragmatics research is the invention of a theory of linguistic communication that is merely a portion of a more extensive theory of human communication (Allwood, 1977, pp. 53–99). Allwood's article recommended ways to improve theoretical tests. The distinction between the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary explains most of the characteristics of Pragmatism.

The pragmatic approach has gained popularity rapidly. Pragmatics and speech act theory are two schools of study that delve into linguistic phenomena that cannot be explained only by grammatical analysis. In the 1950s, a group of "ordinary language philosophers" at Oxford criticized logical analysis because they focused on daily speech (Avramides, 2016, p.720). They assert that “truth conditions” can be used to test a claim. For example, “the cat is on the mat” would only be correct if the cat was indeed on the mat. There are many other kinds of speech acts, such as promises, declarations, and so on, each with its own set of felicity conditions prescribed by tradition and context. Every sentence contains presuppositions, implications, and promises. For example, suppose A vows to marry B. In that case, it is assumed that A is not already married. It is presumed that A will marry B. These pragmatic conditions are vital as they play a cognitive
function where presuppositions, according to Austin, are irrelevant. The method is founded on an intentional or mentalist perspective, which assumes that the speaker’s goals are significant and the implications of those intentions.

From the short review above, the communicative approach to testing does not take a purely linguistic approach. Instead, it devises pragmatics and semantics as means of creating purposeful tests. Most of our words are interpreted by listeners based on the speaker's true meaning as indicated by his actual purposes, not merely the linguistic meaning. As a result, while speech act theory contributes significantly to pragmatics, the emphasis has shifted considerably from speech analysis to non-explicit meaning analysis, highlighting the interwoven relationship between psychology and linguistics. It is strongly recommended that instructors educate students focus on the semantic and pragmatic aspects of language.

Language testers can benefit from the precision and rigor provided by expert researchers (Kopriva, 2000). Conclusively, the communicative approach has noted the importance of relevance, quality, and quantity. The key questions that have emerged from the research involve issues related to the mainstreaming of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) since the 1980s, the development of utilization of approaches, and lastly, the challenge of operationalizing a theoretical knowledge of the communicative approach to language testing.

Conclusively, the research focused on utilizing and operationalizing models of communicative ability. The operationalization is derived from the theoretical approaches to Second Language Testing which can be summarized as grammar, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence. Sociolinguistics competence serves the purpose of pragmatic competence.

Consequently, the communicative approaches to language testing have flourished by adjusting to the principles of practical models that exemplify real-life and task-driven approaches. It is apparent that the recent communicative approach to language testing is a synthesis of all these methods of communicative language testing. The clearer examples of these types of testing can be found in Buck’s (2001) book “Assessing Listening” for further reading.

Conclusion

Even though pragmatics and semantics inform and illumine meaning, the latter concentrates on its linguistic foundation, laying stress on grammar. On the other hand, pragmatics goes a step further and analyzes the complex design and structure of context inherent in the utterances, revealing the social and cultural atmosphere under whose influence words derive meaning. A comprehensive and critical analysis of the scholarly studies carried out by the present researchers on the subject of speech acts and language testing has revealed that particular speech acts are used in the teaching and testing of English. The continued usage and effectiveness of speech act theory emphasizes the crucial function Pragmatics plays in fostering language integration within social contexts. Consequently, sociocultural underpinnings of linguistic communication inform the development of communicative language tests.

It has been critically and substantially analyzed and explained in the present paper that the communicative method of language testing involves using language in productive and receptive scenarios to simulate real-life situations and experiences. It uses pragmatics and semantics to create purposeful tests like the TOEFL and IELTS, continually assessed to ensure relevance. Test designers seek to develop real-world activities to construct tests based on the communicative method. The test creators start with the content and create a bias for the test. The bias is based on what the test takers aim to learn, but effective communication is essential regardless of the purpose.
and situations in which they take tests. The communicative approach to language testing does not just focus primarily on language and its knowledge. It also assesses students' ability to communicate effectively, that is, to apply what they have learned practically and in real-life situations.

**Funding:** This research is not funded

**Acknowledgments:** Not Applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity:** This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:** AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Authors:**

**Syed Sarwar Hussain** is an Associate Professor at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has been teaching English since 1981 in universities in India. In 1996, he joined the English Department at the College of Language Sciences and has been teaching there since then. Syed Sarwar Hussain has published a number of research papers on language teaching and translation in various online and printed scholarly international journals. Email: sayedshussain@yahoo.com ORCid ID - [http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9973-5477](http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9973-5477)

**Abdul Wadood Khan** is an Associate Professor at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has been teaching English at the College since 2002. Abdulwadood writes articles and research papers regularly on topics ranging from language teaching to practical linguistics and literary studies. His works are published in several academic journals, online and printed. ORCid ID - [http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1077-8361](http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1077-8361)

**References**


A Decadal Examination of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning in EFL/ESL Development: A Systematic Review

Zinat A Tabassum
Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad
Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Corresponding Author: msaadmr@um.edu.my

Received: 10/20/2023    Accepted: 03/04/2024    Published: 03/20/2024

Abstract
The rising trend of blended learning, combining online and traditional classroom learning, shows its efficacy for teaching English as a foreign or second language. Utilizing the community of inquiry framework, it aims to establish effective online learning environments and merge them with blended learning to teach English to non-native speakers. The significance of this research lies in evaluating how this integration affects English teaching as a foreign or second language. The main research question, covering the last decade, investigates this approach's specific challenges and long-term impacts on language learning. This study uses PRISMA guidelines to analyze Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar data. It includes a manual selection of highly cited studies for a systematic review methodology. Through a theoretical lens, it assesses predictors and outcomes and identifies trends in English as a foreign or second language oral instruction. The findings highlight the dimensions of knowledge, research methodologies, effectiveness, skill enhancement, and obstacles in integrating the community of inquiry with blended learning. Conclusively, the study offers recommendations to improve instructional quality and support the development of students, educators, and stakeholders for the continued growth of this pedagogical integration.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, English as a Second Language, the community of inquiry, blended learning, systematic review

Introduction

In recent advancements, the integration of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and Blended Learning (BL) strategies has been recognized as a transformative educational approach for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, particularly in speaking skills. This innovative combination seeks to develop critical thinking, enhance communication proficiency, and foster intercultural competence within interactive and collaborative learning environments. Building on the foundational work by (Garrison et al., 2010), who defined CoI as a framework facilitating meaningful learning through critical discourse and reflection, and the insights from current studies such as (Suprapto et al., 2024), highlighting the practical applications of BL to overcome educational challenges post-COVID-19, this approach marks a significant shift from traditional educational methods.

The dialogue on the effectiveness of this pedagogical strategy is ongoing within the EFL teaching community. As such, an exhaustive examination of existing literature is crucial for directing instructional practices effectively. This paper synthesizes a comprehensive review of literature focusing on integrating BL and CoI to enhance EFL speaking skills. It addresses pivotal areas, including existing research on CoI and BL in EFL speaking instruction and the primary elements of CoI and BL. It also covers the synergy between CoI and BL and strategies for seamless integration in EFL teaching.

CoI is characterized by its foundational pillars: cognitive, social, and teaching presence, as elaborated by Garrison (Garrison et al., 2010). Cognitive presence is essential for progressing through the stages of learning, from exploration to knowledge creation and problem-solving (Anderson et al., 2001), while social presence emphasizes the importance of social interactions in a conducive learning environment. Teaching presence involves the instructor designing, facilitating, and organizing practical learning experiences, where cognitive and social presences interact to enhance the educational process.

Historically, the focus on online learning since the 1990s revolved around the sociodemographic aspects of technology adoption and cognitive factors promoting advanced learning concepts. The teacher's role as a facilitator was underscored as crucial for student engagement and learning success. This introduced the three core elements—social, cognitive, and teaching presence—as a cohesive framework for understanding educational dynamics, especially in online and higher education contexts (Garrison et al., 2001).

The domain of EFL speaking instruction focuses on developing oral language skills, where effective teaching is measured by student achievements, engagement, and satisfaction (Ratan et al., 2022). Success in this area is evidenced by students' fluent and coherent communication, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse mastery.

The motivation behind this review is driven by the necessity to thoroughly comprehend the integration of CoI and BL in fostering effective EFL instruction. Through a systematic review of literature from 2013 to 2024, this study aims to identify the evidence, essential components, and principles underpinning this integration. Moreover, it explores the impact of this amalgamation on EFL language proficiency development and its efficacy in enhancing EFL language training. The following objectives guide the review: firstly, to delineate the challenges associated with integrating CoI and BL in EFL teaching; secondly, to uncover the fundamental elements and principles of both CoI and BL; and lastly, to investigate how the interaction between CoI and BL influences EFL language proficiency and the overall effectiveness of EFL instruction. Adopting CoI and BL in EFL is primarily motivated by its potential to enrich language learning experiences.
As Guan (2023) eloquently states, "Blended Learning is a brainchild of technology advancement, providing a dynamic way to help EFL learners and teachers interact smoothly and effectively" (p. 2). This assertion underscores the role of technology in fostering engaging and interactive learning environments (Guan, 2023). Whereas Bourogianni claimed within a blended learning environment, Cognitive Presence is vastly related to advanced learning (Maria-Eleni, 2023).

**Literature Review**

Numerous approaches have been explored to assess the efficacy of online discussions in education. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that collaborative CoI practices are intricately connected to significant and impactful learning experiences (Zehra & Garisson, 2011). The integration of CoI with BL in EFL/ESL education has arisen as a notable area of focus.

**Theoretical Foundations and Implementations**

Bourogianni (2023) explores the application of the CoI framework within BL environments, particularly emphasizing its role in fostering deep learning approaches. The study concludes that "within a blended environment, Cognitive Presence is highly related to deep learning" (p. 8), highlighting the CoI framework's critical role in enhancing EFL/ESL learning experiences (Maria-Eleni, 2023). Suharno (2023) also focused on one investigation into the real-world applications of the CoI framework in foreign language distance education, highlighting that "implementing the framework in secondary schools had a little impact... [however,] it is associated with improved language proficiency" (p. 12). This mixed outcome suggests a complex relationship between CoI implementation and its effectiveness in different educational contexts (Suharno et al., 2023).

Also, Suprapto (2024) provided insights into the application of BL in elementary education, underscoring the necessity of integrating various learning models to overcome educational setbacks post-COVID-19. They note that "blended learning can be a valuable alternative for managing student learning at the elementary school level” (p. 15), indicating its broader applicability beyond EFL/ESL instruction (Suprapto et al., 2024). Another study delved into blended synchronous learning challenges and strategies for online learner engagement, revealing "inadequate online learner–instructor interactions" and "technological constraints" as significant barriers to engagement (p. 600). Their work suggests essential considerations for effectively integrating CoI principles in BL settings to enhance learner engagement (Wang & Huang, 2024).

**Effectiveness of Blended Learning with Community of Inquiry**

The integration of CoI into BL designs has shown promise in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Wang et al. (2023) performed a comprehensive literature analysis. They found that "students' personalized learning, collaborative learning, peer interaction, and student engagement are targeted to be strengthened” through mixed teaching methods derived from the CoI framework (Xiaoyu Wang, Nurhasmiza Sazalli, & Wan Nur Asyura Wan Adnan, 2023). This finding emphasizes the potential of CoI to support a more interactive and engaged learning environment in EFL/ESL instruction.

Furthermore, some papers explicitly incorporate the CoI framework as a theoretical lens in their research design and data analysis. These studies delve into the presence and impact of teaching, social, and cognitive elements within online learning environments (Almalki & Sabir,
They investigate how these aspects interact and contribute to the overall learning experience. Notably, fostering a sense of community and interaction among online learners is crucial in nurturing social presence. This involves creating a supportive and engaging social environment, promoting peer collaboration, and utilizing practical communication tools—all of which closely align with the social presence component of the CoI framework, which centers on learners projecting themselves socially and establishing interpersonal relationships (Cheng, 2022).

Cognitive presence, encompassing strategies that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflection among learners, is equally emphasized as a significant factor in online learning (Bailey et al., 2022). Active learning approaches, such as case-based learning, collaborative activities, and discussions, feature prominently in enhancing cognitive presence. These approaches resonate with the CoI framework's focus on exploring, constructing, and confirming understanding through critical discourse—a cornerstone of cognitive presence (Dalbani et al., 2022).

Moreover, Mielikäinen (2022) investigated the perceptions of ICT engineering students regarding the CoI presence in a blended setting and reported that "students had a better overall experience with the blended course (p.13)." Mielikäinen and Viippola (2023) suggested that the CoI framework can effectively enhance the quality of BL experiences, potentially leading to better learning outcomes in EFL/ESL education. The importance of investigating the integration of the CoI and BL for language learning is underscored by the distribution of studies across Iran and other countries, highlighting its significance both within and beyond Iran (Pourdana, 2022). Educators, researchers, and policymakers in English language education can gain from these findings as they add to knowledge and provide insights (Nami et al., 2018).

Methods
The Review Protocol: PRISMA
The research adhered to the established publication guidelines for executing a systematic review by the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) by Moher et al. (2009) and further updated by Page, Moher, et al. (2021). The PRISMA framework offers a streamlined, systematic direction for identifying relevant studies, processing Information, and assessing content across a vast array of research. Several previous systematic reviews have explored the topics of CoI, BL, and EFL discourse. Like many studies employing systematic review methodology, this research adhered to the PRISMA framework.

Furthermore, the recommendation undergoes regular review and updates by methodology specialists and editorial board members Sohrabi et al. (2021), ensuring a strict standard. Recently, various education studies have employed PRISMA to guide their systematic reviews. These studies include Crompton and Burke (2023), Khashaa (2020), Noor Al-Qaysi et al. (2018), and Na and Jung (2021), with a specific focus on English language teaching. These research projects explore the challenges of teaching English in a flipped classroom (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). The studies mentioned above provide a helpful reference for this research. The following sections outline how the PRISMA framework is applied in this study (Refer to Figure One in Appendix A).

Resources
The study's primary data source was obtained through online database searches. The three primary data sources, namely Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar, were utilized
for the searches. A specific search strategy focusing on CoI and BL for EFL/ESL learners was employed.

**Eligibility Criteria**

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion were set at the beginning of the data-gathering phase. Peer-reviewed, freely accessible journal articles published in English were included in this study. To ensure a consistent focus for the study, book chapters, dissertations, systematic reviews, and conference papers were considered ineligible.

**Study Selection**

Three primary systematic review processes were implemented to select the studies—the initial step involved identifying potential studies through database searches and manual exploration. The possible articles were screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria—the last step involved assessing the studies' eligibility (Refer to Figure One).

**Identification**

The identification process began with defining the primary keywords, followed by identifying related and synonymous terms using a thesaurus and Boolean operators. Additionally, potential articles were sought through manual searches. The initial search strings were formulated after placing all pertinent keywords in April 2023. From the initial search across three databases for this systematic review, 127 studies were retrieved. After conducting a manual search and applying the inclusion and eligibility criteria, the final selection was narrowed to 18 studies.

Table One shows the keywords we used to search for relevant academic materials. These keywords are essential for finding comprehensive and relevant scholarly literature for our research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Search String</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td>TITLE-ABS-KEY(&quot;community of inquiry&quot; OR CoI OR &quot;teaching presence&quot; OR &quot;cognitive presence&quot; OR &quot;social presence&quot;) AND (blended OR &quot;blended learning&quot; OR BL OR hybrid OR e-learning OR face to face) AND (EFL OR &quot;English as a second language&quot; OR &quot;English as a foreign language&quot; OR ESL AND speaking OR oral OR fluency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web of Science (WoS)</td>
<td>TS = (&quot;community of inquiry&quot; OR CoI OR &quot;teaching presence&quot; OR &quot;cognitive presence&quot; OR &quot;social presence&quot;) AND (blended OR &quot;blended learning&quot; OR BL OR hybrid OR e-learning OR face to face) AND (EFL OR &quot;English as second language&quot; OR &quot;English as a foreign language&quot; OR ESL AND speaking OR oral OR fluency))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>Publications were sourced using targeted keywords from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), employing Boolean operators, phrase searches, and field code functions where suitable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two presents the eligibility and exclusion criteria established for our research study, outlining the parameters of the selection and exclusion process.
Table 2. The eligibility and exclusion criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article type</td>
<td>Journal (Research articles)</td>
<td>Books, book series, book chapters, systematic review articles, and conference proceedings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Non-English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Between 2013 and 2023</td>
<td>Published in 2013 and earlier than this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study area</td>
<td>Education field &amp; ESL/EFL</td>
<td>Except Education and Language learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Screening Phase**

Guided by a specific set of inclusion and exclusion criteria, the articles identified in the search are reviewed during this stage. A total of 127 studies were obtained through the initial keyword search across three databases (Refer to Table One), while an additional 32 studies were identified manually. All studies were evaluated against four exclusion criteria (Table Two): timeframe, article type, language, and study area (Figure One). After the screening process, 73 articles were excluded, resulting in the remaining 54 studies.

**Eligibility**

In the review process, 54 studies initially deemed relevant were further assessed through a two-step evaluation involving abstract and full-text analysis. This led to the exclusion of 35 studies for inappropriate sample characteristics or a focus beyond the review's scope, leaving a refined set of studies pertinent to the research interest.

**Data Extraction and Analysis**

Through a detailed search process, 127 studies were initially identified. After applying exclusion criteria, 109 articles were excluded for being outside the review's scope, leaving 18 studies for detailed analysis and data extraction. These studies were selected based on criteria such as sample selection, outcome domains measured, integration of CoI and BL in EFL/ESL studies, data type and analysis level, research design, and emerging trends.

A thematic analysis of these 18 studies focused on primary research concerns, study nature, and their alignment with prior work on CoI and BL in EFL/ESL contexts. This analysis identified recurring themes and trends through a rigorous and representative process, as outlined by (Makri et al., 2014), ensuring the themes' validity and alignment with research questions. The analysis was connected to existing literature, refining and discussing the themes. The study adhered to the thematic analysis procedure and employed the PRISMA flow chart (as illustrated in Appendix A, Figure One) for guidance (Page et al., 2021).

**Results**

**Sample Selection and Geographical Region of the Study**

This review primarily examines English language learning studies within a BL framework, aligning with the CoI components. A significant portion of the research, particularly highlighted by studies conducted in Iran, focuses on integrating CoI and BL in EFL/ESL settings. The concentration of studies in Iran underlines the interest in evaluating these educational strategies within its context.
Moreover, the review extends to 15 studies from diverse countries where English is not the primary language, including Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Nigeria, Poland, Germany, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey. This wide geographical distribution reflects global interest in exploring CoI and BL's effectiveness in enhancing language learning outcomes. Including various international contexts suggests the universal applicability and potential of CoI and BL approaches to improve English language instruction across different cultural and educational backgrounds (Refer to Figure Two).

The integration of the CoI framework components has been extensively studied across all 18 studies in blended language learning. These studies spanned extensive proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, serving as the focal points of the research. The primary objective was to assess the effect of the CoI framework on student performance in these language domains, thereby evaluating the efficacy of the learning environment. While all studies shared this common objective, there was variability in the specific language domains examined. Notably, 94% of the studies (17 out of 18) focused on assessing students' language proficiencies, with Article 17 uniquely exploring educators' perspectives.

The studies (Articles 1-18) investigated the impacts of social, cognitive, or teaching presence on learning outcomes. For example, Article 5 emphasized enhancing second language (L2) writing skills, incorporating the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) approach, and highlighting the prevalent use of technology across these investigations. A consistent finding among the studies was the positive role of interactive engagement, facilitated by technology in blended or flipped classrooms, within the CoI framework. Specific instructional contexts were also explored; Article 4 examined the correlation between social, cognitive, and teaching presence; Article 10 investigated learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Article 14 utilized Facebook as a learning tool, presenting a distinctive approach to technology use.

Overall, these studies offer critical insights into the benefits of incorporating CoI elements into language learning settings, emphasizing the value of interactive engagement and technological integration in enhancing the BL experience. The various domains investigated and the inclusion of teacher perspectives in Article 17 highlight this research area's comprehensive and multifaceted
nature. The findings significantly enhance our grasp of effective language learning strategies, offering essential insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers in language education.

Figure. 2. Summary of publication per year
This systematic review analyses 18 articles published from 2013 to 2023, revealing a significant concentration of studies in 2022, with 12 out of 18 (Refer to Figure Three). This distribution suggests a marked increase in research interest, particularly in 2022, likely influenced by the post-COVID era's impact on education. The review highlights the growing adoption of BL and the COI framework in response to the challenges presented by the pandemic, aiming to enhance language learning outcomes. The increase in articles during 2022 highlights the acknowledged benefits of technology-mediated learning and the effectiveness of combining online and in-person teaching. These trends reflect a shift toward more interactive and collaborative educational practices, prompted by the need for flexibility and adaptability during COVID-19.

Integration of Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning as the Outcome of Language Learning
The discourse presented underscores integrating the CoI framework with BL as an outcome of language learning. These insights highlight the crucial roles of teaching, social, and cognitive presence within the digital learning setting, aligning seamlessly with the corresponding components of the CoI framework.

Instructors play a central role in designing and facilitating online courses, offering clear instructions, and fostering students' engagement in meaningful learning activities. These aspects align with the instructional design and facilitation component of teaching presence within the CoI framework. The research underscores the correlation between interactive activities and heightened student engagement. For instance, Almalki and Sabir (2022) revealed that integrating interactive activities into online learning significantly enhances student engagement. This finding corresponds with the work of Annamalai et al. (2015), who demonstrated that peer feedback within online collaborative learning environments fosters elevated levels of engagement. Similarly, Dalbani et al. (2022) found that the incorporation of gamification elements in online courses positively influences student motivation—a finding in sync with the discoveries of Bailey et al. (2022), who noted increased motivation when social media platforms are integrated into online courses, promoting collaborative learning and peer interaction.

Moreover, multimedia resources have been used in online instruction to enhance the retention of course material and student comprehension (Kabilan & Annamalai, 2022). This
enhancement of student engagement, understanding, and information retention aligns with the insights of Qu et al. (2022), who emphasize the value of multimedia presentations and visual aids in online lectures. Bailey et al. (2022) illustrated that integrating social media platforms within online courses fosters student collaboration, facilitating deeper learning and knowledge construction. Consistent with this correlation, Chen (2022) demonstrated that Online discussion forums, encouraging a sense of community and collaboration among online learners, aid in knowledge construction.

Enhancing the learning experience by catering to individual learner needs was demonstrated by Satar and Akcan (2018) by utilizing adaptive learning technologies in online courses. The study by Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) reinforces these findings, revealing that self-paced online learning modules enhance student autonomy and flexibility in learning.

Table three (Refer to Appendix B) offers an encompassing perspective on the scrutinized studies, laying bare the theoretical underpinnings and sub-components explored within each research endeavor. Our analysis of the 18 selected studies has distilled three overarching themes of paramount importance.

First and foremost, a meticulous examination of the CoI framework underscores its pervasive presence as a guiding theoretical construct within the research landscape. This recognition highlights the enduring relevance and applicability of the CoI framework in diverse educational contexts.

Secondly, the studies concentrated on the cultivation and augmentation of the CoI framework and its attendant proficiencies. The emphasis on nurturing these skills underscores their intrinsic value in enhancing the quality of EFL/ESL education and fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Lastly, the investigations explored the nuanced terrain of challenges and benefits associated with seamlessly integrating CoI and BL methodologies within the EFL/ESL learning milieu. This exploration is a testament to the dynamics and multifaceted implications of implementing these pedagogical approaches, offering invaluable insights to educators and researchers alike.

**Facet 1: Social Presence**

Social presence emerges as a prominent and recurrent theme across the reviewed literature. Almalki and Sabir (2022) underscored the crucial significance of social presence in online language learning environments, delineating its positive influence on EFL learners' motivation, participation, and overall learning outcomes. The study underscores the significance of creating a supportive and collaborative online community to amplify social presence. Annamalai et al. (2015) accentuated the design of interactive learning environments to optimize social presence, leading to heightened learner satisfaction, engagement, and communication readiness. Dalbani et al. (2022) accentuated the instructors' vital role in fostering social interactions and nurturing a sense of community, which is crucial for effective communication and collaboration, as further substantiated in collaborative writing by Kabilan and Annamalai (2022).

The relationship between social presence and learner engagement within online discussions is prominently expounded by Bailey et al. (2022). Their study delves into the pivotal role of social presence in cultivating intercultural communication skills within language exchange programs. Cheng (2022) and Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) focused on social presence's significance in promoting learner autonomy, while article eight examines its impact on learner motivation and
engagement. Satar and Akcan (2018) focused on the crucial role of social presence within online communities, particularly its effect on the professional development of future language teachers. The study explains how an online course focusing on teaching and social presence augments pre-service EFL teachers' online participation skills, interaction, and network cohesion. Kurek and Müller-Hartmann (2019) explored how teaching presence fosters a Community of Inquiry in blended teacher training, impacting students' self-regulated learning. A resounding 75% of the articles accentuate the significance of social presence in fostering engagement, communication, collaboration, intercultural skills, autonomy, and professional development within online language learning environments.

**Facet 2: Cognitive Presence**
Dalbani et al. (2022) investigated the role of cognitive presence in online classes and its profound influence on learners' perceptions and experiences. Their research illuminates the pivotal role of cognitive presence in creating an intellectually stimulating learning environment. Instructors can facilitate deep learning among students by providing clear instructions, effective course material structuring, and encouraging critical thinking and reflective activities. Conversely, Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) delved into the influence of teaching presence on collaborative writing within online EFL classes, spotlighting the significance of cognitive presence in fostering successful communication and the co-construction of knowledge. Instructors who employ scaffolding techniques, feedback mechanisms, and activities to boost cognitive presence can enhance learners' collaborative writing skills.

Bailey et al. (2022) highlighted the significance of cognitive presence in fostering learner engagement and active participation in online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) discussions. They underscore that student satisfaction and engagement levels rise when instructors cultivate meaningful relationships, encourage critical thinking, and engender intellectually stimulating debates to bolster cognitive presence. The active assistance and participation of instructors in online discussions are deemed essential by Bailey et al. (2022) to enhance cognitive presence and promote successful language learning. Articles three, four, and five predominantly accentuate instructors' roles and the significance of cognitive presence in encouraging learners to think critically, reflect, collaborate, and actively participate.

**Facet 3: Teaching Presence**
In the literature reviewed, teaching presence plays a critical role. Almalki and Sabir (2022) underscored the crucial role of teaching presences in building an engaging and helpful online learning environment. Instructors are pivotal in developing and facilitating educational activities that nurture critical thinking, problem-solving skills, deep learning, and cognitive presence. Annamalai et al. (2015) examined the influence of teaching presence in computer-mediated communication among EFL learners, underscoring the need for instructors to provide assistance and facilitation that fosters cognitive presence. Dalbani et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of teaching presence in online language courses and its influence on learners' cognitive engagement and learning outcomes. Educational activities that support cognitive presence include offering scaffolding, devising engaging tasks, and encouraging reflective thinking.

Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) explored the significance of teaching presence in collaborative writing in online EFL classes, underlining the instructors' vital role in fostering cognitive processes, such as critical thinking, metacognitive awareness, and knowledge
construction. These characteristics are crucial to improve the outcomes of collaborative writing. Bailey et al. (2022) analyzed teaching presence and learner involvement in online EFL dialogues, stressing its significance in supporting learners' cognitive processes, including reflection, knowledge construction, and critical thinking, fostering knowledge creation, and active involvement in online discussions. Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) found the importance of teaching presence in online language exchange programs, highlighting enhancing learners' cognitive processes, including metacognitive awareness, intercultural awareness, and knowledge creation. Chen (2022) explored how instructor presence enhances student autonomy in online EFL courses, emphasizing the implication of teaching presence in facilitating learners' cognitive processes, including self-regulation, metacognitive awareness, and goal setting.

These articles underscore the importance of teaching presence in virtual language learning platforms. They accentuate instructors' pivotal role in designing practical learning activities, promoting cognitive engagement, offering guidance and support, and fostering critical thinking and deep learning (Articles 1-7).

**Development and Effectiveness**

Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) underscored the pivotal role of skill development in fostering social presence, while Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) highlighted the acquisition of proficiency in utilizing instructional technology and learning tools. The integration of the CoI framework with BL offers a myriad of advantages. By honing practical online instructional design skills, instructors can craft engaging and interactive BL environments that foster active learning and student engagement (Almalki & Sabir, 2022). Furthermore, cultivating facilitation skills in online environments Annamalai et al. (2015) empowers instructors to effectively nurture discussions and provide timely feedback, thus fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Developing skills promoting learner autonomy is pivotal in empowering students to take ownership of their learning in blended learning environments (Bailey et al., 2022).

Integrating collaborative activities improves problem-solving ability and creates student involvement, leading to higher-order thinking abilities (Cheng, 2022). Moreover, creating inclusive online learning environments allows instructors to develop a sense of community with diverse learners (Qu et al., 2022). Skill development involves equipping instructors with the ability to utilize technology and educational tools to enhance learning experiences effectively (Mirabolghasemi et al., 2020). Instructors' facilitation of meaningful interactions and promoting active learning through integrating the CoI framework and BL, as exemplified in approximately 70% of the studies, create a supportive and engaging environment wherein students can thrive.

**Benefits and Challenges of Integrating Community of Inquiry and Blended Learning**

Integrating the CoI framework and BL for EFL instruction presents various challenges, as elucidated in the articles. Kabilan and Annamalai (2022) highlighted the need for a systematic approach to ensure the balanced integration of teaching, cognitive, and social presence, alerting against unstructured integration. Furthermore, Mirabolghasemi et al. (2020) observed no significant correlation between social presence and learners' satisfaction in BL, highlighting the need for additional research on effectively integrating social presence in blended EFL instruction. To enhance the effectiveness of EFL learning, Qu et al. (2022) recommend further development in mobile learning software optimization for hybrid distributed terminals. These challenges underscore the need for meticulous instructional design, thoughtful planning, and pedagogical
interventions to successfully integrate the CoI framework and BL into EFL teaching (Canals, 2022; Nami et al., 2018).

**Design and Methodological Insights**

This systematic literature review analyzed 18 publications, employing diverse research designs and methodologies to explore the integration of the CoI and BL in language education. A subset of articles (1-3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 16) used qualitative methods, while another (4, 13, and 17) opted for quantitative approaches, offering detailed insights and empirical evidence into the study area.

The research designs were categorized into cross-sectional, longitudinal, and dyadic studies. Most studies (1-15 and 17-18) utilized a cross-sectional approach, capturing data at a single point to analyze specific phenomena, which helped outline a framework for CoI and BL strategies. Articles seven, eight, and nine conducted longitudinal research, as illustrated in Figure Four. Meanwhile, Articles eleven and sixteen used a dyadic approach to explore interactions and learning processes between pairs of individuals in CoI and BL environments.

This blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, alongside diverse research designs, provided a comprehensive examination of the topic. Qualitative research uncovered deep insights into participants' experiences and perspectives, while quantitative analysis brought forward statistical evidence of the strategies' effectiveness. The methodological diversity enriched the review's findings, ensuring a robust and thorough understanding of the integration of CoI and BL in language education.

**Figure 4. Summary of research design and methodology**

**Discussion**

Addressing the research questions and objectives on the integration challenges and impact of CoI and BL on language learning, our literature review across Articles 1-18 reveals predominantly positive insights. Key findings established the effective learning environment through social, cognitive, and teaching presence. These presences contribute to active learning, enhanced student engagement and autonomy, critical thinking, and inclusivity.

In discussing the challenges of integrating CoI and BL and their impact on language learning, our systematic review, underpinned by 18 articles, highlights both the potential and the hurdles of such integration within EFL education. The synthesis of recent literature further
enriches our discussion, allowing for a detailed understanding that draws from contemporary research.

Our findings align with the positive outcomes reported in the research by Ramalingam et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of collaborative learning, learning management systems, social media applications, and technology-based learning in ESL education. Similarly, Chen (2022) highlighted the positive correlations between the CoI dimensions, perceived learning, and learning engagement in blended learning contexts, reinforcing the importance of deliberate practice and online community engagement for EFL students' performance.

Despite these benefits, integrating CoI and BL poses notable challenges. Establishing a robust social presence remains a significant obstacle, as highlighted by Xiaoxing and Deris (2022), who found that fostering active participation in online discussions requires specific teaching practices that emphasize the CoI's teaching presence. This suggests educators need to adopt more engaged and responsive online teaching methodologies.

Furthermore, the transition to BL is not without difficulties, as indicated by Fu (2023), who discusses the challenges in designing BL courses that effectively integrate synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The study underscores the need for instructional designs that foster greater synchrony-asynchrony cohesion, suggesting that meticulous planning and pedagogical strategies are crucial for maximizing the educational benefits of BL.

Our review also illuminates the pedagogical advantages of integrating CoI and BL in EFL instruction. The emphasis on social presence by Ramalingam et al. (2022), cognitive presence by Chen (2022), and teaching presence by Xiaoxing and Deris (2022) as foundational pillars yield numerous benefits, including enhanced learner autonomy, critical thinking, and inclusive learning environment.

The evidence from recent literature corroborates our findings on the effectiveness of interactive activities, gamification, multimedia resources, online collaboration, adaptive technologies, and online simulations in enhancing language learning outcomes. These strategies are pivotal in fostering learner engagement, motivation, comprehension, and practical skill development, echoing the potential of innovative pedagogical approaches in transforming EFL education.

**Limitations of the Study**

While this systematic review provides valuable insights into integrating CoI and BL in EFL education, it has certain limitations. The review's 18 articles may not cover all relevant literature, potentially overlooking significant studies. Additionally, it exclusively includes articles in one language, introducing a language bias that may exclude significant contributions from non-English sources. The mix of qualitative and quantitative studies also adds variability in research methods, which could affect the synthesis of findings.

Furthermore, the review's specificity to EFL education limits the generalizability of its conclusions to other educational contexts or subjects. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for accurately interpreting the review's results. Future research should aim to overcome these constraints for a broader understanding of CoI and BL in EFL education.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, combining the Community of Inquiry framework with blended learning methods in teaching EFL and ESL shows excellent potential for boosting learning outcomes.
However, it is essential to recognize the difficulties in effectively applying these strategies in different learning situations. Research from the last decade points out the need for approaches that can adjust to BL environments' specific needs and challenges. Future studies should investigate how CoI and BL can work together, focusing on new and creative ways to make EFL and ESL teaching more engaging and successful. Future research should aim to find effective strategies and innovative teaching methods that help to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching, making language learning more interactive and beneficial for students.

**Funding:** This research is not funded.

**Acknowledgments:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Authenticity:** This manuscript is an original work.

**Artificial Intelligence Statement:** AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

**About the Author:**

**Zinat A Tabassum** is a PhD Fellow. She is affiliated with the Department of Language and Literacy at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her doctoral work is in the field of EFL and teachers’ training. Her academic pursuits encompass a deep interest in linguistic exploration and literacy development. Email: zinattabassum@gmail.com

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1374-4239

**Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad**

**Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad** is an accomplished scholar in the realm of Language and Literacy. He holds a Senior Lecturer position in the Department of Language and Literacy within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His academic contributions include 24 articles, six books, and 21 education, language, and literacy chapters.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1050-294X

**Reference**


Sustainable English as a Second Language Education: A Systematic Review. Sustainability (Switzerland), 14(13). https://doi.org/10.3390/su14138051


Appendices

Appendix A
PRISMA Flow Chart

Identification of studies through databases and registers

Records identified from the database:
Scopus (n = 49)
Web of Science (WoS) (n = 43)
Google Scholar (n = 35)
Total: 127

Records screened (n = 54)

Records removed before the screening:
Duplicate records removed (n = 3)
Records marked as ineligible by automation tools (n = 70) due to book, systematic review articles, conference paper (published Record (n = 1) due to studies that are not conducted in English medium (Arabic)

Reports sought for retrieval (n = 53)

Reports assessed for eligibility

Studies included in the review (n = 18)

Table A
Overview of 18 Identified Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors &amp; Year</th>
<th>Study of Context</th>
<th>Main Study Design</th>
<th>Community of Inquiry</th>
<th>Development and Effectiveness</th>
<th>Challenges and Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Almalki &amp; Sabir, 2022)</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Establishing learning communities in online classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving teacher-student interaction. Encouraging interaction among students</td>
<td>Well-designed activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptation and adjustment of teaching strategies to the online learning environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Interaction Types</td>
<td>Cognitive Teaching</td>
<td>Social Presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Annamalai et al., 2015)</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode Cross-sectional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Dalbani et al., 2022)</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Mixed Mode Cross-sectional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kabilan &amp; Annamalai, 2022)</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Qualitative Cross-sectional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Bailey et al., 2022)</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Mixed Mode Cross-sectional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mirabolghasemi et al., 2020)</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode Cross-sectional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Presence (Y/N)</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Challenges/Considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheng (2022)</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>Y/N/Y</td>
<td>BYOD initiatives can enhance student learning experiences&lt;br&gt;Facilitating different forms of presence within the CoI framework&lt;br&gt;Promoting meaningful learning within blended classroom environments</td>
<td>For poor and underprivileged family tough to bear the costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen (2022)</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>Y/N/Y</td>
<td>Improved learning performance and engagement through online learning communities and deliberate practice&lt;br&gt;Positive correlation between CoI dimensions, perceived learning, and engagement</td>
<td>Technical challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satar &amp; Akcan (2018)</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Longitudinal)</td>
<td>Y/N/Y</td>
<td>Participation, interaction patterns, and social presence in online communication&lt;br&gt;Improved online participation skills and network cohesion</td>
<td>Dropout and insufficient participation in online communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qu et al. (2022)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>Y/N/Y</td>
<td>Hybrid distributed terminal incorporating a mobile learning model&lt;br&gt;Synchronous and asynchronous learning with multiple evaluations&lt;br&gt;CoI-based learning for collaborative study</td>
<td>Teachers’ consideration of the connection between content, learners, and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pourdana (2022)</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Dyads)</td>
<td>Y/N/Y</td>
<td>Impact of computer-assisted diagnostic assessment on collaborative writing and engagement</td>
<td>L2 learners’ challenges on a complex task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nami et al., 2018)</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Asynchronous exchanges in a discussion list for professional dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kurek &amp; Müller-Hartmann, 2019)</td>
<td>Polish and German</td>
<td>Qualitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>The function of teaching presence in enhancing CoI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ud Duha et al., 2022)</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Use of Facebook for educational purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yeung et al., 2023)</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploring the role of teacher social presence in online learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Canals, 2022)</td>
<td>Canada &amp; Spain</td>
<td>Mixed Mode (Dyads)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Investigating social presence in virtual courses (MOOCs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study (Year)</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Qualitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>Examining social and cognitive presence in virtual discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mamman et al., 2022)</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Qualitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Examining social and cognitive presence in virtual discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Li, 2022)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Quantitative Mode (Cross-sectional)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Understanding the significance of social presence in virtual learning environments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*MM = Mixed Mode, CoI = Community of Inquiry, SP = Social Presence, TP = Teaching Presence, CP = Cognitive Presence, BYOD = Bring Your Own Device, MALL = Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, OTL = Online-Teaching Learning, L2 = A Second Language, ZPTD = Zone of Proximal Teacher Development