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Academic Vocabulary Learning in EMI Classrooms: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

This study investigates English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' challenges in understanding academic science vocabulary in Malaysian secondary schools' English-medium instruction (EMI) classrooms. Based on cognitive load theory, the research explores ESL learners' strategies to acquire scientific terminology and manage the associated cognitive difficulties. Previous research on EMI across different subjects has often overlooked the specific hurdles presented by technical terms in the scientific vocabulary, creating a knowledge gap that impedes the development of effective teaching methods for science educators in EMI settings. In response, the study adopts a two-stage qualitative design, commencing with an online survey involving 103 participants, followed by group interviews with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The findings indicate that ESL learners in EMI science classrooms encounter significant obstacles due to unfamiliar scientific terminology, abstract concepts, and limited prior exposure to the subject matter. This results in a high cognitive load that inhibits comprehension. Nevertheless, the research identifies various vocabulary learning strategies students employ, including contextual clues and active engagement with scientific vocabulary within relevant contexts. These findings underscore the need for more inclusive learning environments supporting vocabulary development for ESL learners in EMI settings. Recommendations encompass creating instructional materials featuring clear and concise language and integrating scaffolding strategies to simplify complex scientific terms. This comprehensive approach has the potential to facilitate successful vocabulary development and enhance the overall learning experience for ESL learners in EMI science classrooms.

Keywords: academic vocabulary, cognitive load theory, EMI Science classroom, ESL learners' challenges, vocabulary learning strategies

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Introduction

English Medium Instruction (EMI) is increasingly used in science classrooms, creating a unique educational landscape for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Although EMI offers exposure to global scientific discourse, the non-native language of instruction presents challenges in comprehending complex scientific vocabulary and concepts (Macaro et al., 2018). This study explores the specific challenges these students face and the vocabulary learning strategies they employ to navigate the complexities of EMI science classrooms.

While studies investigating challenges in EMI classrooms often highlight difficulties with academic vocabulary across disciplines **(**Echevarria et al., 2017; Graham et al., 2018), science presents unique difficulties due to its specialized terminology and the intricate relationship between language and scientific concepts (He & Li, 2019). First, science vocabulary is often characterized by technical terms with nuanced meanings and multiple layers of abstraction (Gibbons, 2012). Students from diverse linguistic backgrounds may lack exposure to these terms in their native language, hindering their understanding of scientific ideas (Seah & Silver, 2020). Next, scientific discourse relies on specific sentence structures, logical reasoning patterns, and a formal register that may differ significantly from everyday English (Lemke, 1998). This can present difficulties for students accustomed to different communication styles in their first language.

In addition, EMI environments demand simultaneous processing of complex scientific concepts and unfamiliar language. This cognitive overload can hinder students' ability to fully grasp scientific content and linguistic nuances (de Jong & van der Meij, 2012). Furthermore, existing research suggests that the nature of these challenges may vary depending on students' specific linguistic backgrounds (Gallagher et al., 2019; Sun & Fang, 2021). For instance, students with languages closer to English grammatically may face less difficulty with sentence structure, while those with significant structural differences may struggle more. Therefore, teachers need to consider the linguistic needs of all students in EMI science classrooms and provide practical strategies to overcome these challenges.

While a significant body of research explores the challenges and strategies of students in EMI classrooms, a gap exists in understanding the nuanced experiences of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, specifically in science classrooms. Much research focuses on EMI across various disciplines, often overlooking the unique demands of science vocabulary, rife with technical terms and specific conceptual nuance. This gap in knowledge hinders practical pedagogical approaches for science teachers in EMI classrooms. This study can address this by identifying the specific challenges faced by students with diverse linguistic backgrounds in comprehending science vocabulary. This knowledge informs targeted support strategies in the classroom. The research questions for this study were, therefore, as follows:

1. What are the specific challenges faced by students from diverse linguistic backgrounds in EMI science classrooms?
2. What vocabulary learning strategies do students employ to comprehend academic vocabulary in an EMI science classroom?

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Future research can address these questions and contribute valuable insights for enhancing EMI science programs and fostering vocabulary development among multilingual learners.

Literature Review

A strong vocabulary foundation is crucial for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners to achieve fluency and comprehension across various contexts (Grabe & Stoller, 2018). Vocabulary knowledge empowers learners to understand spoken and written language and express themselves effectively (Nation, 2013). Folse (2004) aptly states that language is built upon the twin pillars of vocabulary and grammar. Understanding a word necessitates familiarity with its meaning, spelling, pronunciation, and the intricate web of relationships it holds with other words (Schmitt, 2010). However, the complexity inherent in vocabulary acquisition presents a significant hurdle for learners (Castellano-Risco et al., 2021).

This challenge becomes particularly pronounced in the context of English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs for science education. While EMI offers opportunities to enhance content knowledge and overall English proficiency, acquiring the specialized vocabulary essential for scientific literacy remains a significant challenge for ESL learners (Kamasak et al., 2021). Scientific discourse is characterized by a dense lexicon of technical terms, abstract concepts, and domain-specific meanings that diverge significantly from everyday English (He & Lin, 2019). Studies reveal that these nuances pose comprehension difficulties for ESL learners in science EMI classes, hindering their grasp of scientific explanations, laboratory procedures, and participation in science-related discussions (Seah & Silver, 2020). Familiar terms can take on specialized meanings that ESL learners might struggle to grasp.

Research suggests that effective EMI programs prioritize the explicit instruction of academic vocabulary alongside content delivery (Short, 2019). This targeted approach equips ESL learners with the essential terminology to actively engage with scientific concepts and discussions. Strategies that promote active engagement with scientific vocabularies, such as laboratory simulations, science debates, and concept mapping exercises, have been shown to enhance comprehension and retention for ESL learners (Echevarria et al., 2017). Pun and Tai (2021) further advocate translanguaging practices in science EMI classrooms. This allows students to leverage their native languages alongside English to facilitate understanding of complex scientific concepts.

Equipping ESL learners with Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) empowers them to take a more active and strategic approach to vocabulary development (Al Zahrani & Chaudhary, 2022). Educators can cultivate student autonomy in their learning and bolster their confidence by explicitly instructing students in VLS and raising their awareness of their significance (Oxford, 2011). By acknowledging the challenges posed by specialized scientific vocabulary and implementing effective strategies like explicit instruction, active engagement activities, and VLS instruction, educators can create a more supportive learning environment that empowers ESL learners to thrive in science EMI settings.

The Malaysian Context

Research on Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) in the Malaysian context has primarily focused on university students, with a significant gap in understanding the strategies employed by secondary school ESL learners (Ji & Aziz, 2021). Addressing this gap is crucial for two main reasons. Firstly, fostering learner autonomy in vocabulary acquisition requires knowledge of the strategies students naturally gravitate toward (Schmitt, 2010). Secondly, understanding these

strategies can inform the development of effective teaching methods personalized to the specific challenges ESL learners face in science courses, particularly those related to specialized vocabulary (Nation & Coxhead, 2001). VLS research provides valuable insights to empower learners and enhance their success in science EMI settings.

Two studies exemplify the current research landscape on VLS in Malaysian universities. Asgari and Mustapha (2012) employed a qualitative approach, interviewing eight TESL students to explore their VLS usage. Their findings revealed a reliance on direct strategies like monolingual dictionaries and contextual guessing alongside a mix of cognitive, social, and metacognitive strategies such as exposure to English media. Notably, the study suggests a preference for strategies requiring lower mental effort.

Mokhtar et al. (2017) adopted a quantitative approach, surveying 360 diploma students using an adapted version of Gu and Johnson's (1996) VLS questionnaire. Their results echoed the findings of Asgari and Mustapha (2012), indicating a preference for guessing and dictionary strategies. Interestingly, metacognitive strategies like note-taking and rehearsal received lower ratings. A noteworthy limitation of this study is the omission of the questionnaire's "beliefs about vocabulary learning" section, which could provide valuable insights into student perceptions of VLS effectiveness.

These studies suggest that Malaysian university students primarily utilize direct VLS and favor guessing and dictionary use. However, the generalizability of these findings to secondary school students remains to be determined. Further research is needed to explore how VLS preferences and effectiveness differ across these age groups, particularly in the context of EMI science classrooms.

While the challenges posed by specialized scientific vocabulary are undeniable, research highlights the diverse strategies students from various backgrounds develop to cope with the demands of EMI science classrooms (Oxford, 2011). These strategies can be broadly categorized as Metacognitive, Cognitive, and Social-Affective. Metacognitive strategies involve students actively monitoring their comprehension, identifying knowledge gaps, and planning learning approaches (e.g., self-questioning, summarizing key points, seeking clarification).

Cognitive strategies focus on actively processing and manipulating information to enhance learning (e.g., using context clues, connecting new and existing knowledge, and visualizing scientific concepts). Finally, Social-Affective Strategies (SAS) involve seeking support from others and managing emotional responses to academic challenges (e.g., collaborating with peers, seeking help from teachers, and utilizing social learning platforms).

However, Gallagher et al. (2019) suggest that students from diverse backgrounds may adopt these strategies or develop unique ones based on their specific linguistic needs. Further exploration is needed to understand how these adaptations or new strategies emerge and how effectively they promote science vocabulary acquisition.

In conclusion, the complex nature of scientific vocabulary and the cognitive demands of EMI science classrooms create unique challenges for ESL learners. However, research also points to their diverse and adaptable strategies to overcome these challenges. A deeper understanding of the specific vocabulary challenges students face based on their linguistic background and the strategies they utilize is crucial for developing targeted pedagogical approaches. This understanding can empower educators to create learning environments that support the successful acquisition of scientific vocabulary for ESL learners in secondary school EMI science programs.

Theoretical Framework

This framework examines the challenges and strategies employed by English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in their efforts to develop academic vocabulary within English-medium instruction (EMI) science classrooms. Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2011) posits that learners have a limited working memory capacity for processing new information. In EMI science classrooms, complex scientific vocabulary can overload working memory, hindering comprehension and learning. The framework proposed how specific strategies can alleviate this cognitive load and facilitate language acquisition.

ESL learners encounter various challenges in EMI science classrooms. First, scientific terminology is often characterized by intricate morphology, unfamiliar prefixes and suffixes, and abstract concepts (Davis et al., 2019). This complexity can create a significant barrier to understanding and retention. Moreover, ESL learners often need help to bridge the gap between everyday English and the specialized language used in science contexts (Gibbons, 2012). This can make it challenging to grasp the meaning and function of scientific vocabulary. Additionally, limited opportunities for active engagement with new vocabulary can hinder its acquisition.

Various strategies (e.g., metacognitive, cognitive, and social-interactive) can help ESL learners overcome these challenges and develop their academic vocabulary. The framework proposes that by understanding the challenges faced by ESL learners and the available vocabulary learning strategies, teachers can design effective instructional practices that promote successful vocabulary acquisition and comprehension within EMI science classrooms.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to understand students' experiences and perceptions regarding academic vocabulary challenges and coping strategies within English-medium instruction (EMI) classrooms. A two-stage sequential design was adopted, utilizing a qualitative online survey (Stage One) and subsequent semi-structured group interviews (Stage Two). This approach facilitated a more comprehensive understanding compared to a single-method design. Stage Two enabled further investigation and elaboration on data generated in Stage One, addressing a limitation often encountered in single-method qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This two-stage design aligns well with the exploratory nature of this research.

Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was employed, inviting 122 students in three different suburban secondary schools in Selangor, Malaysia, to participate. Of these, 103 completed the online survey. Eight survey participants (four males and four females) were subsequently invited for follow-up interviews, chosen to represent different linguistic backgrounds, as detailed in Table One. Informed consent was obtained through a checkbox on the survey, and consent forms were signed for the interviews. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

The convenience sampling approach facilitates a rich contextual understanding of the study

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, it is acknowledged that this may limit the generalizability of the findings to other EMI settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Table 1. *Participants background information*

Pseudonyms	Gender	Native language	Level of proficiency
Aisyah	Female	Malay	Intermediate
Lee	Male	Cantonese	Intermediate
Priya	Female	Hindi	Intermediate
Muhammad	Male	Malay	Intermediate
Lisa	Female	Hokkien	Intermediate
Navin	Male	Tamil	Intermediate
Nora	Female	Malay	Intermediate
Lim	Male	Cantonese	Intermediate

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining ethical approval from the Education Planning and Research Division (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the State Education Department (SED), the data collection process began. Upon receiving the official permission letter from SED, the researchers obtained informed consent from school principals to conduct the field studies within their respective schools.

The survey on English language learners' vocabulary learning strategy was conducted within two weeks and administered in three different suburban secondary schools in Selangor. The survey was conducted during a regular school day in the schools' computer labs to minimize external factors and create a familiar learning environment. Before administering the survey, researchers provided a bilingual (English and Malay) explanation of the study's objectives, emphasizing the importance of participant privacy, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any point. Subsequently, the VLS survey was administered. An instrument briefing was then conducted to ensure clarity on the task involved. The survey took an average completion time of approximately 30 minutes.

In the second data collection phase, eight respondents were randomly selected to be interviewed in two groups. Convenience sampling was employed to select participants based on their availability. Four weeks later, the respondents participated in a focus group interview via Google Meet to enrich the data further and validate the findings. The interview focused on verifying and corroborating the data collected from the participants. Finally, to conclude the data collection process, the interview was transcribed verbatim for further analysis.

Research Instruments

A two-stage qualitative sequential design was employed, as previously mentioned. Data collection instruments included:

Stage One: Survey

A qualitative online survey was meticulously developed to address the research questions and capture a holistic overview of student experiences within the EMI environment. The survey

instrument was constructed following a review of relevant literature (Echevarria et al., 2017; Schmitt, 1997) and comprised demographic information alongside open-ended questions focused on student challenges and vocabulary learning strategies. A pilot study was conducted with three Form Two students whose backgrounds mirrored the target population currently enrolled in an EMI science class. This pilot ensured that the survey achieved the research objectives and possessed adequate face validity. Based on the pilot study, refinements were made to the survey content, clarity, and comprehensiveness to enhance face validity. The revised survey was electronically distributed to participants in April 2022 and designed to be completed within approximately 30 minutes. Participants could respond in English or Malay based on their preference.

Stage Two: Group Interviews

Semi-structured group interviews were conducted as follow-up sessions to investigate participants' survey responses. Two group interviews were held, each with four students (N=8). This format allowed participants to build upon and elaborate on the contributions of others, potentially offering alternative perspectives. A purposefully designed interview guide (see Appendix A) provided the initial interview structure, with questions and prompts drawn from the themes identified in Stage One. For instance, a list of challenges identified in the survey data was incorporated as prompts for discussion during the interviews. The interview guide facilitated a structured approach while allowing flexibility to incorporate follow-up questions based on participant contributions. Each group interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and was transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted primarily in English, allowing participants to respond in Malay if preferred.

Results

These findings are based on online survey and interview data, examining the challenges and strategies ESL learners employ to acquire academic vocabulary in EMI science classrooms.

R.Q 1. What are the specific challenges faced by students from diverse linguistic backgrounds in EMI science classrooms?

Online Survey Results

Table 1. *Challenges in understanding academic vocabulary*

Items	Mean scores	Std Deviation
Grammatical structures in science texts (e.g., complex sentences)	2.1	1.4
Technical terms (e.g., chromosomes)	2.4	1.3
Word structure (e.g., compressional)	2.7	1.2
General terms with specific meanings (e.g., fault)	3.0	1.1
Classification terms (e.g., consist of)	3.2	1.1

**Scale of 1 (very difficult) to 4 (not difficult)*

The survey results indicated that students found understanding academic vocabulary challenging, with particular difficulty in understanding grammatical structures in science texts (mean score= 2.1 on a scale of 1 (very difficult) to 4 (not difficult)) and technical terms (mean score= 2.4) and word structure (mean score= 2.7). These findings suggest that interventions are needed to support students' understanding of academic vocabulary, particularly in grammatical structures, technical terms, and word structure.

Interview Data

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed a multifaceted picture of students' experiences with academic vocabulary development in the EMI classroom. This section examines each theme with illustrative interview excerpts.

Challenges Faced by ESL Learners

Complexity of Scientific Terminology

Analysis of interview data revealed a recurring theme – the difficulty ESL learners experience due to the inherent complexity of scientific vocabulary. Students highlighted unfamiliar prefixes, suffixes, and abstract concepts as significant barriers to comprehension. Terms like "*chromosomes*" and "*mitochondria*" were frequently cited as challenging. Students reported hesitating to participate in discussions involving these complex terms, suggesting a lack of understanding or confidence in using them. Aisyah shares her experience as follows:

> Learning new science words can be tricky, especially the ones that sound entirely different from anything I know. Words like "chromosomes" or "mitochondria" - don't seem to have any connection to Malay words I'm familiar with.

Muhammad also shares this view.

> The most challenging part for me is that sometimes, the concepts can be abstract. Even if I understand the words they use, it's hard to imagine what's happening, like how the process of digestion works with words like "absorbed" (diserap) and "undigestible" (tidak dapat dicerna).

Limited Exposure and Repetition

Interviews indicated a need for sufficient exposure to new vocabulary in science classes. Students expressed a desire for more opportunities to encounter and engage with new terms. Traditional lecture-based instruction appeared to dominate, with limited opportunities for active practice or repetition of newly introduced vocabulary. This limited exposure can hinder long-term retention and impede overall scientific understanding. Lee and Priya remark as follows:

> "It would be helpful to have more time to practice using the new vocabulary in class activities." (Lee)
>
> I don't mind memorizing new words, but it helps if they're connected to something I already know. For example, "fault" (kesalahan) usually means a mistake, but in science, it can mean a crack in the Earth. That can be confusing at first. (Priya)

Pronunciation Issues

Interview data revealed that pronunciation difficulties significantly challenged many ESL learners. Students expressed fear of making mistakes, which in turn hampered their

comprehension and participation in classroom discussions. Students claimed they remained silent during discussions involving complex scientific terms, suggesting a reluctance to engage due to pronunciation anxieties. The following quotes from the participants illustrate the challenges they face with pronunciation:

> Science words are hard sometimes because they sound long and confusing. "Mitochondria" sounds weird! (Lisa)
> Some words don't seem to make sense at first, like "protozoa." My friends and I just giggle at them sometimes. (Nora)
> Sometimes, it's hard to differentiate between similar-sounding words with different meanings, like "evaporation" and "evolution." (Navin)

R.Q 2. What vocabulary learning strategies do students employ to comprehend academic vocabulary in an EMI science classroom?

The survey results (see Table 2 in the Appendix) on Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) used by intermediate learners reveal interesting trends regarding their preferred approaches. Learners frequently utilize the social strategy of "*asking classmates for the meaning of a new word*" (mean score: 3.71). These findings suggest that intermediate-level learners rely heavily on seeking clarification and confirmation from external sources (dictionaries and classmates) to understand new vocabulary. This highlights the importance of creating a classroom environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and seeking peer help.

In addition, students reported using *reading online materials* (mean score: 3.04) and *multimedia apps* (mean score: 3.46) as somewhat frequent strategies for learning new vocabulary. This suggests that learners are open to incorporating technology-aided resources into their vocabulary learning repertoire. The data also highlights a preference for active learning methods. Learners frequently report using "*looking up words in a bilingual dictionary*" (mean score: 3.44) to learn new vocabulary. This indicates a possible desire to engage with bilingual resources to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

The findings reveal that learners employ a mix of VLS categories. This includes memory strategies like "*repeating pronunciation*" (mean score: 3.31) and determination strategies like "*guessing meaning from context*" (mean score: 3.06). This suggests that learners may adapt their approach based on the specific learning situation and the complexity of the vocabulary encountered. While "*memorizing exam-related vocabulary*" is a common strategy (mean score: 3.03), it might limit long-term vocabulary growth. This finding highlights the potential tension between immediate exam needs and broader vocabulary development.

It is essential to acknowledge that these are average scores, and individual learners may have distinct preferences based on their learning styles and proficiency levels. Further research could investigate how these factors influence VLS choices and effectiveness. The survey results suggest that intermediate learners are open to multiple VLS. They value social interaction, actively engaging with learning materials, and adapting their strategies based on the context. These findings can inform teachers in developing instructional approaches that cater to these diverse learning preferences and promote long-term vocabulary development.

Strategies Used by ESL Learners

Despite the challenges, interview data revealed valuable strategies employed by ESL learners to overcome them. A prominent theme involved utilizing context clues within the surrounding text or explanations to infer the meaning of new vocabulary. Students described actively seeking meaning by drawing connections between unfamiliar terms and the broader context provided by the teacher or instructional materials. Students said they pay close attention to diagrams, pictures, and real-world examples alongside new vocabulary, suggesting a reliance on visual aids to enhance comprehension. Students described various self-directed strategies they employed to learn new vocabulary. These strategies included using dictionaries and online resources and drawing connections between new and familiar words. The excerpts below illustrate this:

> "Paying attention to context and visuals helps me understand the meaning of new words even if I don't know the exact pronunciation." (Lim)
>
> "Sometimes the new words are hard to understand just by hearing them. But the teacher shows us pictures or diagrams, and that helps me connect the word with what it means." (Aisyah)
>
> "Connecting new words to my Bahasa Malaysia helps me remember them better." (Nora)

Interview data highlighted the importance of peer collaboration in supporting vocabulary acquisition. Students described seeking clarification from peers during group work or discussions. This collaborative approach allowed them to ask questions, share understanding, and solidify their grasp of new vocabulary through interaction and explanation. For instance, Muhammad explains:

> " Like, in Science class, we learned about photosynthesis. My friends explained words like 'photosynthesis' to me. Now I understand what they mean because we did experiments and saw it happening with plants."

Interview data also revealed that some students developed personal strategies to remember new terms. These included creating memory aids to link unfamiliar terms to familiar concepts. These self-directed strategies suggest a proactive approach to learning on the part of some students. A student highlighted the importance of connecting new vocabulary to existing knowledge:

> "Sometimes the new words sound similar to words I already know in Malay. For example, when we learned about 'evolution', I remembered the word 'revolution' from history class. They sound similar, but they have different meanings. So, I can remember 'evolution' by thinking about 'revolution' but knowing it's about how things change over time in science." (Aisyah)

The qualitative data analysis clearly shows ESL learners' challenges in acquiring academic vocabulary within EMI science classrooms. The complexity of scientific terminology, limited exposure, and pronunciation difficulties are significant barriers to comprehension and participation. However, the analysis also reveals various valuable strategies these learners employ to overcome these challenges. These strategies highlight the importance of context-based

instruction, collaborative learning environments, and the potential of self-directed learning approaches.

Discussion

The main aim of this study is to identify the specific challenges that students encounter in EMI science classrooms and the vocabulary learning strategies they use to comprehend academic vocabulary in an EMI science classroom.

The survey results shed light on the diverse Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) employed by intermediate ESL learners. A clear preference for social interaction is evident, with learners frequently seeking clarification from classmates (mean score: 3.71). This highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative learning environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and receiving peer support (Oxford, 2011). The findings also suggest a willingness to embrace technology-aided learning, with learners reporting moderate use of online materials (mean score: 3.04) and multimedia apps (mean score: 3.46) for vocabulary acquisition. This aligns with recent research advocating integrating technology to enhance student engagement and cater to diverse learning styles (Cardullo et al., 2018).

The data further supports the notion that intermediate learners favor active learning methods. Frequent use of strategies like consulting bilingual dictionaries (mean score: 3.44) and utilizing multimedia apps (mean score: 3.46) suggests a preference for actively engaging with resources to enhance vocabulary acquisition. The mixed-use of VLS categories, including memory strategies (repeating pronunciation, mean score: 3.31) and determination strategies (guessing meaning from context, mean score: 3.06), indicates that learners adapt their approach based on the learning context and vocabulary complexity (Oxford, 2011). While exam-oriented memorization remains a common strategy (mean score: 3.03), it may hinder long-term vocabulary development, highlighting the need for instructional approaches that promote deeper understanding and retention.

The interview data complements the survey findings by providing a richer understanding of the challenges and strategies employed by ESL learners in EMI science classrooms. The inherent complexity of scientific terminology, including unfamiliar prefixes, suffixes, and abstract concepts, emerges as a significant barrier (Echevarria et al., 2017). This resonates with the survey finding that learners hesitate to participate in discussions involving complex terms, suggesting a lack of confidence or understanding. Limited exposure and repetition of new vocabulary further impede comprehension, as traditional lecture formats may not provide ample opportunities for active practice and consolidation. Pronunciation difficulties were also prominent, with students expressing anxiety about making mistakes, hindering participation in classroom discussions.

Despite these challenges, the interview data reveals valuable strategies employed by learners. A prominent theme was utilizing context clues within the surrounding text or explanations. This highlights the importance of instruction that explicitly teaches students how to decode unfamiliar vocabulary based on context (Grabe & Stoller, 2018). Students also reported

relying on visual aids like diagrams and pictures to enhance comprehension, suggesting a need for instructional materials that integrate multimedia elements alongside new vocabulary.

Peer collaboration emerged as another valuable strategy. Students described seeking clarification and sharing understanding with peers during group work or discussions. This collaborative approach aligns with the Vygotskian notion of social learning, where learners benefit from interaction and explanation with more knowledgeable peers (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). Additionally, some students developed personal strategies like connecting new terms to familiar concepts in their native language, highlighting the potential of self-directed learning approaches to support vocabulary acquisition.

Conclusion

This study investigated the challenges faced by English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and the vocabulary learning strategies they employ in English-medium instruction (EMI) science classrooms in Malaysian secondary schools. The findings illuminate the intricate relationship between scientific vocabulary acquisition and successful participation in EMI science classes.

The analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the challenges. Unfamiliar morphology (prefixes, suffixes), abstract concepts, and lengthy technical terms contribute to significant comprehension barriers. To address these, a multi-pronged approach is recommended. Firstly, instructional materials and activities should be designed with the complexity of scientific language in mind. Prioritizing clear and concise language is essential, alongside scaffolding strategies that break down vocabulary into manageable components (e.g., root words, derivational morphology).

Secondly, limited exposure and practice opportunities hinder long-term vocabulary retention. Traditional lecture formats that promote passive learning need to be revised. Teachers should embrace a more dynamic approach, incorporating interactive activities, quizzes, and games that encourage active engagement with new vocabulary within relevant scientific contexts.

Finally, pronunciation difficulties can impede participation and hinder complete comprehension. Scaffolding pronunciation instruction through targeted interventions such as audio recordings, visual aids for phonetics, and creating a safe space for guided practice can alleviate anxieties and encourage active participation.

Future research can explore the effectiveness of specific student-driven strategies for vocabulary learning. Additionally, research on integrating technology to enhance vocabulary learning and investigating methods to scaffold pronunciation instruction can provide valuable insights for teachers seeking to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for ESL learners in EMI science classrooms.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of acknowledging ESL learners' challenges in EMI science classrooms and implementing effective strategies to support their vocabulary development. By creating more inclusive learning environments and promoting active engagement with scientific vocabulary, teachers can empower ESL learners to succeed in science education.

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Appendix A: Students' Interview Questions

Challenges

- Can you describe any difficulties you encounter when learning new scientific vocabulary in your science class?
- Are there specific types of scientific terms that you find more challenging to understand (e.g., words with prefixes/suffixes, abstract concepts)?
- How often do you have opportunities to practice using new scientific vocabulary in class?
- Do you feel comfortable participating in class discussions when new scientific terms are used? If not, why?
- Has your pronunciation of scientific terms ever caused difficulty understanding the lesson or participating in class?

Strategies

- Can you describe any strategies you use to help you learn and remember new scientific vocabulary terms? (e.g., using context clues, making connections to existing knowledge, creating flashcards)

- Do you ever work with classmates to understand new vocabulary? If so, how does that help you?
- Do you take notes or create personal resources (e.g., glossaries) to help you learn scientific vocabulary outside class?
- Have you found any particular resources (e.g., online dictionaries or science websites) helpful for learning new scientific terms?
- In your experience, what are some things your teachers could do to make it easier for you to learn and use new scientific vocabulary in class?

Appendix B: Table 2

Table 2. *Ten of the most frequently used VLS among intermediate-level proficiency learners*

Description	Category	Mean	Std. Dev.
I ask my classmates for the meaning of a new word.	Social	3.71	1.14
I use multimedia apps to learn new words.	Metacognitive	3.46	1.27
I look for a word's meaning in a bilingual (English-Malay) dictionary.	Determination	3.44	1.33
When I try to remember a word, I repeat its pronunciation in my mind.	Memory	3.31	2.01
I ask my teacher for word translation.	Social	3.24	1.15
When looking up a word in the dictionary, I read sample sentences that show its various meanings.	Determination	3.77	1.11
I try to guess the meaning of a word based on the context in which it appears.	Determination	3.06	1.01
I connect new words to my L1	Memory	3.05	1.20
I read online materials to learn new words.	Metacognitive	3.04	1.23
I only memorize words that are directly related to examinations.	Metacognitive	3.03	1.22

**Likert scale 1=Least Used to 4= Most frequent*

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The Impact of Reading on the Development of Language Production of Young Learners at Slovak Primary Schools

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Abstract
Early foreign language learning in Slovakia is still inadequate, especially at the lower secondary level. Therefore, it is essential to gather data that can help improve the educational process. This study aims to determine the impact of systematic extensive reading and production-based training on the language production of young learners in two primary schools in Prešov, Slovakia. The language performance of the groups under investigation was evaluated through written and oral assessments. This was done to determine the effect of reading classes on the language production of young learners, as well as to explore the effects of enhanced text comprehension on the productive language skills of young EFL learners. Computer programs were used for experiment evaluation and statistical analysis to verify the impact of reading programs and teaching modules on pupils' performance. Additionally, the individual productive skills of the learners were analyzed. The study results revealed that the experimental group, which was involved in an extensive reading program, performed significantly better in both written and oral production than the control group. This indicates that the application of reading programs and teaching modules in the selected schools had a considerable impact on the learners' performance.

Keywords: accuracy, extensive reading, oral language production, fluency, written language production, young learners

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Introduction

The importance of reading competence development in a foreign language within language learning is greatly underestimated. Reading programs in schools in Slovakia do not form part of the educational curriculum. Yet, their consistent implementation can significantly impact students' vocabulary skills (both active and passive) and their overall comprehension of a second language. By augmenting the level of exposure to a foreign language, which is presently constrained by the allocated hours in educational institutions, there exists the potential to impact the linguistic aptitude of students not solely in terms of comprehension, but also in terms of expression (Straková et al., 2017). One crucial element in capturing the attention of students in the practice of reading lies in the significance and enjoyment derived from the act of reading. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous establishments and academic bodies modified their literacy initiatives to aid young learners via digital mediums, consequently elevating the reading pleasure of certain children (Hundarenko & Leláková, 2022).

Our research study is aimed at young learners (For this issue, young language learners are children aged approximately 5 to 12.). To “measure” young learners’ progress correctly; it is crucial to consider that there are substantial differences between the assessment of young learners and other foreign language learners. One critical factor in this regard is age. Besides, it is essential to appreciate learners’ cognitive development (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018). Teachers need a clear understanding of language learning, which implies the idea of an ongoing organic process. Lynne Cameron (2001) compared language learning metaphorically to the growing of a plant. The plant develops through the nutrients it absorbs from its environment; different types of growth occur at various stages of development. Assessment, thus, asks how well the “plant” language is growing. At this point, it is essential to mention that progress in language learning - and not achievements - should be assessed and later graded (Rea-Dickins 1997, 2000).

We should assess children based on what they have learned and how they have been taught. Assessment activities should reflect classroom activities. As a tool for assessing young learners’ progress in language production, we use different kinds of language tests and various types of alternative assessments, especially non-threatening informal techniques. Though young learners should be evaluated in an anxiety-reduced, if not anxiety-free, environment, it is necessary to test students, sometimes even young ones, in the traditional way with paper-and-pencil tests (e.g., true-false, matching, multiple choice, and cloze).

This research aims to determine the significance of the impact of extensive reading on the development of language production in young learners. The main objective was to investigate the extent to which reading classes influence their language production. Several issues motivated the research design. They are as follows:

The beginning of lower secondary education is very important for setting the development of language production regarding the developmental specifics of young EFL learners. Lower secondary students are still interested in communication, active work, and self-presentation, but these characteristics are later repressed based on developmental specificities. This significantly influences foreign language production, which loses its dynamics.

Another factor affecting the lower level of oral and written performance of students is the fact that traditional teaching methods, which have been oriented on textbooks and focused on rules of language use, are still present in our educational context and do not allow students to create an appropriate environment for real, internally motivated use of language. The introduction of Content and Language Integrated Learning in Slovak schools, as some kind of innovation, may

increase the authenticity and efficiency of language learning. However, the extent of this impact in lower secondary education is relatively low and sporadic rather than systematic. Therefore, it is necessary to consider other possibilities that would lead to an enhanced learning environment and stimulate language production.

Based on previous experience with creating a virtual reading environment, we investigated the extent to which reading classes influence the language production of young learners. Considering the issues that motivated the research, the following hypotheses were formed:

- applying reading programs and specifically designed teaching in addition to receptive skills development, and thus improving text understanding, will also affect young EFL learners' productive language skills within oral and written communication.

Quantitative analysis of the learner's performance revealed that extensive reading has a positive impact on both fluency and accuracy of their language production.

Literature Review

It is a well-known fact that the four language skills interact with each other. Aydın & Ayrancı (2018) claim that „Developing reading skills will also develop listening, speaking, and writing skills, and that reading comprehension, using what is understood on new subjects and learning new words during reading, can influence listening comprehension as well as oral and written self-expression"(p. 127). Thus, it is crucial that not only teachers but also parents encourage and guide young learners towards this skill.

Approaches to reading as a process and similarly, approaches to instructing reading within a foreign language educational setting have transformed in recent decades. This evolution has shifted the perspective from perceiving reading as a passive act of information absorption to recognizing reading as an active and potentially interactive process (Grabe, 1991). There exist numerous interpretations regarding the nature of reading; however, broadly speaking, it is characterized as a form of language reception. Brumfit (1982) stated that "reading is an extremely complex activity involving a combination of perceptual, linguistic and cognitive abilities"(p.3). In the year 2000, Hedge delineated the essential components required by the reader to comprehend the text: syntactic knowledge and morphological knowledge. As to the cognitive processes, Krashen and Terrell (1983) noted that the child can name, recall, draw, record, point out, underline, categorize, and list. The evolution of language acquisition in a foreign language setting is not directly aligned with this progression, primarily attributed to the restricted timeframe and level of immersion in the new language, a common occurrence. Nonetheless, the phases of linguistic advancement bear resemblance to those observed in second language acquisition. (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

While there has been extensive research on the relationship between reading and language comprehension, fewer studies have specifically explored how reading impacts language production.

One such example is a case study that was conducted in the Slovak educational context at a primary school to involve young learners in leveled reading programs (Straková & Cimermanová, 2012). The study involved young learners at a primary school. At level 1 (ages 7-8), learners focused on distinctions between their native language and English, including phonics, word recognition, and matching exercises. Level 2 (age 8-9) learners were engaged in reading books, progressing from individual words to full sentences, emphasizing pronunciation, comprehension, and effective reading strategies. The reading curriculum tailored for level 3 (age 9-10) explored narrative books,

with students reading segments and writing journal entries. The findings of this research supported our initial assumption that immersing students in the target language through structured reading schemes would enhance vocabulary usage and overall language comprehension.

In the recent past, there has been a decline in the number of research investigations that have focused on the specific examination of the influence of reading on language production. Among the limited number of research publications published in 2020 and 2021, no scientific investigations delving into the effects of reading on language generation were carried out, nor were any academic papers disseminated in Slovakia. The only one concerning young learners was Babiaková (2020), who investigated the reading preferences of younger learners in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Furthermore, the research papers exploring the impact of reading on language production released in the last decade (Aydin & Bagci, 2018; Kumar et al., 2020; Omidbakhsh, 2021; Francis et al., 2021) focus on adult learners and college students rather than young EFL learners. Kumar et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of multiple readings on the academic achievement of students, focusing on oral fluency, lexical diversity, syntactic complexity, and overall performance. Meanwhile, Omidbakhsh (2021) endeavoured to explore the potential influence of storytelling and story reading on the oral language skills and comprehension of pre-intermediate language learners in Iran. He concluded that telling and reading stories are effective techniques for improving EFL learners' oral language production and recognition.

To fill the gap in investigating the influence of reading on language production, there should be conducted more studies to investigate whether that varies across different age groups (e.g., children, adolescents, adults) and proficiency levels (e.g., native speakers, second language learners), or whether exposure to specific genres or topics enhance or hinder language production skills? It would also be interesting and consider contextual factors (e.g., social context, task demands) that mediate the relationship between reading and language production and find out whether the context influences the effectiveness of reading as a language-enhancing activity.

There has been a lot of research focusing on the relationships of the first and second or foreign language conducted in the area of reading. A strong relationship between L2 reading and L2 speaking has been reported in the literature, and some authors claim that the way we read in our first language is reflected in the way we read in a foreign language (Clark, 2022; Coady, 1979; Jolly, 1978). Other research results (e.g. Clarke, 1980) have provided additional evidence for the phenomenon of native language interference. However, these studies indicate that the primary obstacle to effectively utilizing the tools from one's first language lies in a deficiency of foreign language proficiency(Straková et al., 2017).

The research that is presented aims to ascertain the impact of reading programs on the production of written and oral language. It seems that despite early language learning introduction, "language production of pupils, especially in lower secondary education, is still inadequate and does not reach the output level A2 of CEFR" (Straková et al., 2017, p.7). For this reason, it appears essential to verify possible interventions in foreign language education and to obtain data that would provide insight into the options for improving the efficiency of the educational process itself. One potential approach to enhancing language output levels, as suggested by the findings of a prior study conducted by Straková and Cimermanová (2012), involves modifying the quality and size of input provided to learners at this stage. Longitudinal studies that track language development over time and investigate whether consistent reading habits lead to improvements in language production skills have continually consistently confirmed a significant increase in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation in the reproductive-productive activity of

students in the systematic use of reading programs. (Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Hughes, 2011; Guo & Wang, 2013; Geva & Ramírez, 2015; Unsworth, 2016; Gowri, 2018).

Celce-Murcia (2001) analyzed the relationship between reading and accuracy. In her analysis, she found evidence that showed that listening and reading could improve speaking skills because reading could affect both fluency and accuracy in learners' oral performance. Higgs and Clifford (1982) implied that various factors contribute differently to overall language proficiency at different levels and defined them as follows: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and sociolinguistics. In their hypothesized model, vocabulary and grammar were considered the most important across all levels. However, the results indicated that vocabulary and pronunciation are most important at lower levels, while fluency and grammar factors contribute less.

In her research, Larsen-Freeman (2006) explored the dimensions of Complexity**,** Accuracy**,** and Fluency (CAF) in the oral and written production of five Chinese learners of English. Qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that learners became more fluent, accurate, and complex over four months. However, each learner followed a unique path in terms of the rate of improvement. There have been a number of studies involving the overall effectiveness of extensive reading (e.g. Lukáč, 2005; Nakanishi, 2014; Mangen, 2015; Chang, 2016; Straková, 2017). The research has indeed contributed to our understanding of how extensive reading programs impact learners' language production. By examining the effects of such programs, we gain insights into how learners develop their language skills over time. These findings can inform educational practices and help create more effective language learning strategies.

Methods

To find out whether the above-stated hypothesis is proved or not, we measured the performance of two groups of pupils (control and experimental groups) in specific tasks aimed at the production of the foreign language by the medium of a written and oral test. Both groups were given a written test as well as they underwent an oral test (see the characteristics of the tests below). By comparing the performance of the control group with that of the experimental group, we aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental method. The results obtained were analysed using statistical computer programs to verify the impact of reading programs and teaching modules. Additionally, the statistical significance of pupils' performance was evaluated, focusing on individual productive skills. To reach our goals, the following methods were used:

1. experiment evaluation: testing productive skills of pupils to investigate the effect of systematic development of reading competence on language production and comparison of progress within control and experimental groups.
2. statistical evaluation of data obtained from the testing of pupils and finding the statistical significance of the impact of reading competence development on language production.

Participants

The tests were administered to sixth-grade lower secondary learners between the ages of 10 and 12 in two different elementary schools. The learners for the study were selected using non-probability sampling, namely Quota sampling (age groups and language level). In total, there were 95 participants engaged in the study. The students within every educational institution were segregated into two distinct categories: control and experimental. At the moment of examination, both sets had acquired knowledge of the English language for a duration of five years. The learners

were taught by different teachers, and during their lessons, they used different course books (English Plus 2 by Ben Wetz, James Styring, Nicholas Tims, OUP 2010 and Project 2, OUP 2013 by Tom Hutchinson) and practice materials which are related to the national teaching curriculum. Table One below shows the numbers of learners tested and their division in the two above-mentioned groups. The participants engaged in the study were all sixth graders; therefore, according to the Common European Framework, they were supposed to be Level A1 – Movers.

Table 1. *Number of learners involved in the research*

School	*Control group*	*Experimental group*	*Total number*
School 1	18	15	33
School 2	32	30	62
Total number	50	45	95

As the aim of our research was to examine the influence of reading on language production, we tested the learners involved in the study on their productive skills. At the Breakthrough stage, linguistic output is significantly constrained, as learners are expected to respond solely to uncomplicated inquiries pertaining to urgent matters and well-known subjects. They should employ basic expressions to delineate their place of residence and acquaintances, as well as to finalize sentences regarding narratives or brief passages through the accurate selection of words. Therefore, the selection of a suitable standardized test tailored for pupils aged 10 to 12 is crucial, aligning with both the national educational framework and the CEFR criteria. This test should encompass various skills, language structure, and usage knowledge.

Characteristics of the Tests

For the aim of our research, which focused on assessing the productive language abilities of young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, it was imperative to establish and enhance the standards for evaluating the student's performance, which would be assessed upon the culmination of the reading curriculum. The decision was made to use a test for evaluating the learners' performance that assesses skills directly relevant to the range of language uses they would need. Considering the level and age of the learners involved in the research, we were looking for tests that would elicit and subsequently measure the response types on the learners' appropriate level. As for tests for testing reading and writing skills, we decided to use tests for young learners aligned with the Council of Europe's Common European Framework for Languages, namely Cambridge Young Learners English Tests for Movers (Cliff, 2005). Concerning testing the learners' oral production, the research team followed Shaaban's (2005) suggestion about using visual cues in oral interviews at the early stages of acquisition. Therefore, a student might be tasked with selecting images for discussion, while the teacher's responsibility lies in directing the student through inquiries that prompt the application of associated terminology. This technique works well during the early speech and speech emergence stages. To enhance reliability, the learners from each group (experimental and control groups) were recorded twice (before and after the experiment).

Testing Reading and Written Language Production

The Cambridge Young Learners English Test (2007), which was chosen for the research, consists of six parts. Each part begins with at least one example. The examination primarily emphasizes the recognition of vocabulary, orthography, and composing single-word responses. Furthermore, it includes the composition of answers consisting of one, two, or three words, the completion of sentences, as well as the identification of suitable words to fill in the blanks. The assessment is contextualized, and incorporates reading materials such as dialogues and brief narratives, requiring candidates to generate accurate responses grounded in contextual comprehension.

Part 1: there are six definitions and eight illustrations labeled with words. Candidates are to read the short definitions and match/copy the correct words next to them. (6 items)

Part 2: requires candidates to look at a picture and read six statements about the picture. Some of the statements correctly describe the picture, some do not. Candidates label the responses by writing *yes* or *no* as appropriate. (6 items)

Part 3: tests understanding of the context and choosing appropriate responses to the given questions. Candidates read six short dialogues, for which three different responses are given, and they choose the correct response by circling letters. (6 items)

Part 4: candidates read a text to get a general idea of what it is about and look at the pictures above the gaps in the text. Then they write the correct words in each of the six gaps. The missing words are illustrated by the pictures. They are nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the present or past tense. The last task in this part is to choose the best title for the story they have read from three options. (7 items)

Part 5: in this task, candidates read a short story divided into three sections each with an illustration. Then, they answer six questions about the story using no more than three words. The production of correct answers depends on the understanding of the text. (10 items)

Part 6: candidates read a gapped text and complete it by selecting the correct words from a choice of three and restoring them into the corresponding gaps. (5 items)

Testing Oral Language Production

At the primary level**,** assessment should begin with personal-response techniques. As students' proficiency levels increase, teachers can move gradually into constructed response assessment and later into selected-response assessment. For effective and practical measurements of young learners' abilities, progress, and achievement at the early stages of acquisition, an oral interview assessment technique with visual clues was used. This technique works well during the early speech and speech emergence stages. The learners are asked to talk about pictures, and the teacher's role is to guide them by asking questions that require the using related vocabulary.

The speaking test was also taken from The Cambridge Young Learners English Test (2005) and modified for the study. The oral test is a face-to-face interview with one examiner and one candidate. The test lasts approximately four minutes. The examiner's language is scripted to ensure fairness to all candidates. The assessment consists of two distinct sections, wherein individuals must respond to straightforward inquiries regarding an image as well as their personal information. The learners were given various types of open-ended questions which were divided into two categories: general questions and personal questions.

In the initial section, participants were tasked with identifying individuals, animals, objects, and colors, among other elements, depicted in a given image and providing concise responses,

primarily in the form of phrases. This segment of the examination is centered on the comprehension and articulation of responses to oral inquiries. The subsequent section did not involve any visual stimuli; nevertheless, the assessor presented the examinee with personal inquiries relating to family, interests, recreation, education, and acquaintances. To address these inquiries, participants utilized basic phrases and sentences.

The experimental groups received identical instruction and engaged in practice with the same readings, topics, and structures. These activities occurred under comparable conditions, including similar age ranges, speaking skill levels**,** allotted time, and discussion topics. During interviews, the focus was primarily on measuring performance in specific tasks that emphasized language production (fluency**)** rather than mere recognition of correct forms (accuracy)**.**

Findings

After administering the tests and collecting the data, we cleaned and organized it for analysis and subsequent verification of the hypothesis mentioned above**.** Quantitative analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data and provide summaries of the samples and measurements. To determine whether the differences between the experimental groups' results before extensive reading and after reflecting a significant difference from the control groups' results, we used a paired sample t-test of statistical significance.

Statistical significance is determined by the size of the difference between the group averages, the sample size, and the standard deviations of the groups. For practical purposes, statistical significance suggests that two independent groups have different mean values on the same measure, e.g., the results of the two investigated groups are "truly" different (Corbin & Straus, 2014).

Written Language Production

In research, the focus is often on evaluating the performance of a group rather than just the score of an individual learner. To obtain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of different learning strategies, it's important to collect statistical data on the mean score of each group before and after the experiment. This analysis provided insights into the relative success of the different learner groups.

To get an overall picture of the performance of different control and experimental groups of students and thus to be able to compare their performance before and after the experiment, we computed the descriptive statistics of the total scores of each group within the three different schools, which is displayed in Figure One below. Then, we focused on the results of the sample groups on individual tasks.

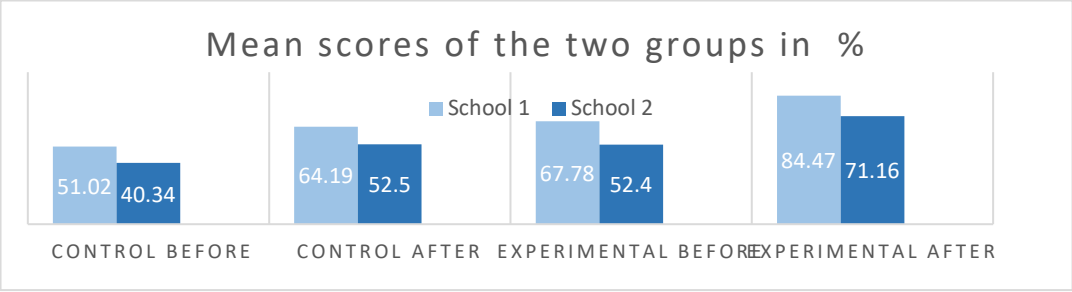


Figure 1. Overall results of each group before and after the experiment

The statistics presented in Figure One provide an overview of the performance of the observed learners. The figures depict the results of each school in both groups - before the experiment at the beginning of the academic year, and after the experimental group completed the reading program at the end of the school year.

Based on the descriptive statistics of the total mean scores of the two schools (control groups 52,19% and experimental groups 63,07%) at pre-testing at the beginning of the experiment and their mean scores (65,4% and 82,69%, respectively) at post-testing after completing the reading program, we can see that performance in the test after the experiment is better in both groups (see also Figure Two). It is not surprising since it becomes clear that learners make some progress within a school year regardless of whether they complete additional learning programs or not. As part of our investigation, it was important to determine the extent of difference in results between the control and experimental groups before and after the experiment. Prior to the experiment, the difference between the control and experimental groups was 10.88%. However, after the experiment, this difference increased to 17.29% (refer to Figure Two for details).

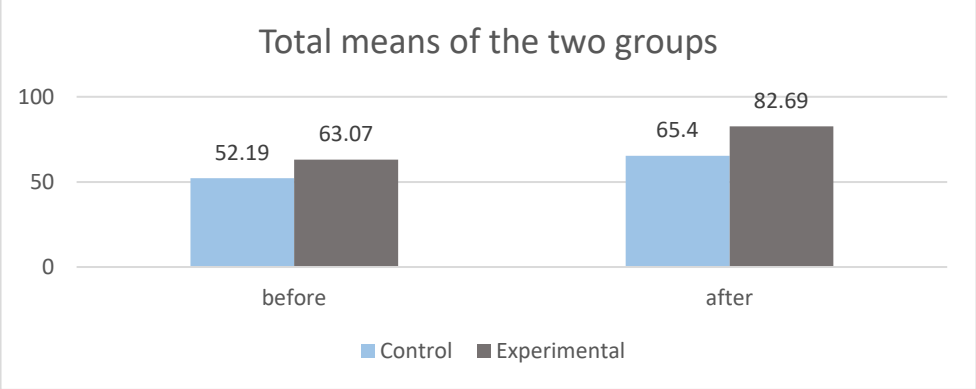


*Figure 2***.** Overall results of the control and experimental groups

To compare the performance of the control and experimental groups and to find out whether the difference in their progress before the experiment and after it was statistically significant, we applied *t-tests*, namely: *Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances*, *and Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances*, which computed the results of the two groups at pre- and post-testing and provided us with statistical evaluation of data obtained from the testing of pupils.

The statistical analysis based on *t-tests* (see Appendix A) revealed that the observed level of *t* is greater than *t Critical one/two-tail*, which means that in each case, we reject the null hypothesis. It can be stated that the observed differences between the sample total means are convincing enough to say that the results of the tests at post-testing after the experiment in both the control and experimental groups are significantly better.

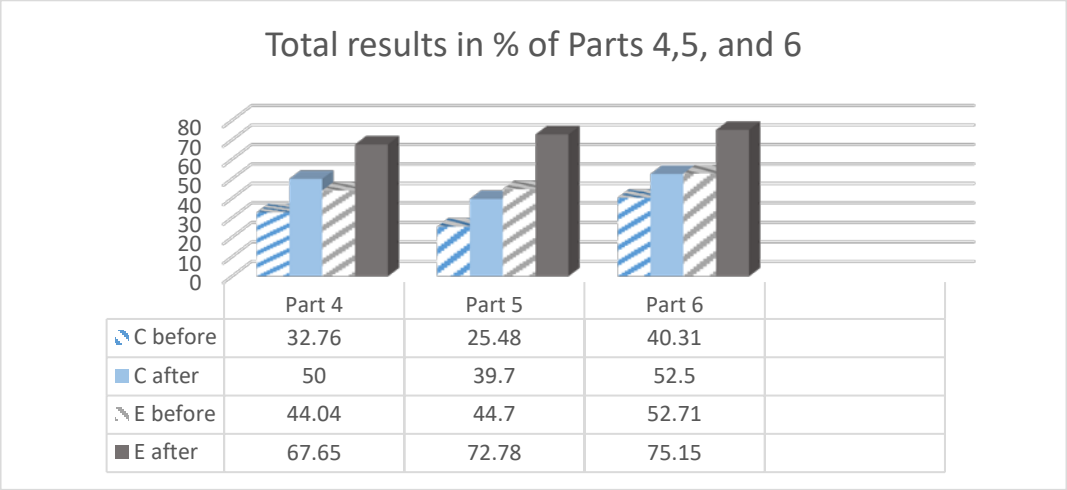
The results of the t-test with equal variances indicate that significant progress was made in both the control and experimental groups. At the ages of ten and eleven, pupils in both groups showed the ability to acquire new vocabulary, logically organize information, classify objects based on perceptible attributes, and analyze the causes of events. Moreover, young learners' foreign language learning curriculum focuses on vocabulary, language use, and oral skills, so the results are not surprising. The greater differences in the t-test values within the experimental group indeed suggest that the program emphasizing reading competence development had a positive

impact on their language production. This finding aligns with the hypothesis that targeted interventions can enhance language production.

The results of the t-test, which compared the performance of the control and experimental groups after the experiment indicate a significant difference in the results of the two groups, with the experimental group performing better (see Appendix B). This finding supports the research team's assumption that an extensive reading program would have a positive impact on the learners' performance.

As the aim of the research was to investigate the development of the learners' productive skills, evaluate the statistical significance of their performance, and analyze the results for individual productive skills, it was necessary to analyse not only the overall results of the tests but especially those tasks that focused more on production than on recognition. Therefore, an in-depth analysis was conducted on sections Four, Five, and Six, focusing on the attributes of the assessments (refer to the characteristics of the tasks above). An examination of the average scores for each segment of the assessments revealed a noticeable enhancement in these specific sections.

To assess the difference in performance across the aforementioned three sections of the assessment, a comparison was conducted utilizing the descriptive statistical data for each section. The outcomes are exhibited in Figure Three.



	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6
C before	32.76	25.48	40.31
C after	50	39.7	52.5
E before	44.04	44.7	52.71
E after	67.65	72.78	75.15

Figure 3. Mean P of Parts 4, 5, and 6 before and after the experiment

The data acquired regarding the performance of learners in specific tasks of the assessments demonstrated that the experimental groups exhibited significantly higher average scores post-experiment compared to the control group, which did not show such notable advancements over a nine-month period in which the experiment transpired. The discrepancy in performance between the control group in sections Four, Five, and Six before and after the experiment is 17.24%, 14.22%, and 12.19%, respectively, whereas the experimental group's performance is evidently superior.

The experimental group achieved improvements of 23.6%**,** 28%**,** and 22.4%**.**

Table Two shows the performance of separate groups expressed as mean scores of the three most productive tasks in the test. Examining the data reveals that the experimental group exhibited superior performance on all components compared to the control group; therefore, we can state that the reading programs and teaching modules had a considerable influence on the development of the learners' productive skills.

Table 2. *Mean scores of Parts 4, 5, and 6 before and after the experiment*

		Mean scores		
		Part 4	Part 5	Part 6
CONTROL	pre-test	2,36	2,67	2,04
	post-test	3,58	4,21	2,65
EXPERIMENTAL	pre-test	3,19	4,69	2,77
	post-test	4,95	7,35	3,85

To acquire the essential statistical data required for comparing the performance of test takers on specific items, item analysis was utilized, offering insights into each item within a test. Through the findings pertaining to individual items, an assessment can be made regarding their level of difficulty, effectiveness, and performance. Our study focused specifically on the facility value (FV), which measures the difficulty of individual items.

The item analysis of Part Four, in which the learners were to read a text and get the general idea of what it is about, and then, based on understanding, fill in the gaps with appropriate words in their proper form (plural/singular nouns, adjectives, verbs) shows significant improvement of the learners' performance in several items. For example, whereas at pre-testing in September at the beginning of the school year, there were only three (3,4%, FV .03) correct answers on item One, at post-testing in June, the number of right answers was seventeen (19,5%, FV .19). Even more significant improvement is evident in another item, which required the learners to fill in the gap with the simple form of the verb *write* (*Today at school our teacher told us to _____ stories about our day on the farm*). This item recorded an increase in its FV from .22 to .60, which means that after the experiment, test takers performed better, getting more answers right than they did before the experiment.

Part Five of the test required learners to read a story and answer questions using up to three-word phrases or even short sentences. This task was more challenging than the previous ones because it required learners to reorganize information and relate form and meaning to produce appropriate responses. Although grammatical accuracy was still important, it was not the only thing that mattered. This part of the test was the most productive and the results showed an improvement in both the control and experimental groups. However, the experimental group had significantly higher scores (7.35) compared to the control group (4.21).

In the final part of the test (Part Six), candidates were given a multiple-choice task. They had to read a text with gaps in it and choose the correct words from a choice of three to fill in the gaps. This task aimed to test their grammatical knowledge and only a small percentage of the task required them to produce language. Despite this, the items were contextualized and meaning-dependent; therefore, candidates needed to understand the context to complete the task. The results showed that both groups had improved, but the experimental group had a more significant improvement. The mean score of the control group increased by 0.61 points (from 2.04 to 2.65) from the pre-test to the post-test, while the experimental group had an increase of more than one point (from 2.77 to 3.85).

Based on the item analysis results, it is evident that the experimental group has made significant progress in producing correct answers by understanding the context. This proves that

the development of the learners' reading competence has impacted their comprehension of the text, leading to the appropriate selection of grammatical forms and structures.

Oral Language Production

The oral performance of the learner was assessed based on their fluency and accuracy. The process of data categorization involved three specific steps which included data coding, data storing, and data reduction. Similarly, like some experts (Corbin and Strauss, 2012; Lodico, Splauding, and Voegtle, 2006), the recordings' transcripts were coded. The accuracy of the learner's performance was evaluated by using a modified Brophy and Good (1970) standard coding system through thematic data analysis. In this step, the coded data was grouped into categories that became the central focus of this study, including "correct response," "partially correct response," and "incorrect or no response." These categories were primarily related to the accuracy of the learner's answers and combined two levels of description, i.e., grammar and comprehension.

To evaluate the fluency of speech, researchers often use Praat software as it allows for a thorough phonetic analysis. However, despite filtering out noise, most of the work still had to be done manually. For this reason, the 4-minute recordings were easier to process using Cool Edit. The researchers analyzed the following measures: 1) the amount of time the student spoke, 2) the number of silent pauses, and 3) the average duration of pauses.

To validate the hypothesis, statistical evaluation of the obtained data from the picture descriptions and face-to-face interviews was applied. The Mann-Whitney U test and independent sample t-test were used to determine if there was a significant difference between the scores of the two groups. To evaluate the success of the intervention, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups (in pre-tests and post-tests) were also compared.

To present the obtained data simply and concisely, descriptive statistics were used. Tables Three and Four display the accuracy scores of learners.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of accuracy for variables in the control group*

Control group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std.Dev.
Pre-test				
correct	30.84	17.14	48.65	7.42
part. correct	44.62	23.53	58.33	9.85
incorrect	24.54	12.82	43.24	8.19
Post-test				
correct	40.04	23.68	54.05	7.91
part. correct	34.75	16.22	52.63	11.14
incorrect	25.21	7.69	45.95	8.17

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics of accuracy for variables in the experimental group*

Experimental group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std.Dev.
Post-test				
Correct	33.20	22.22	50.00	7.67
part. correct	43.01	25.64	55.26	9.20
incorrect	23.79	12.20	43.24	7.44
Correct	43.97	25.64	57.89	9.06
part. correct	35.93	21.62	54.05	8.08
incorrect	21.10	5.26	35.14	6.36

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the significance level ($p>0.05$) of correct, partially correct, and incorrect or no responses in the post-test. The results showed that the significance level was 0.04 for correct responses, 0.01 for partially correct, and 0.02 for incorrect or no responses, all of which were less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of correct and incorrect responses in the post-test.

To compare the accuracy of pre-test and post-test scores of both groups, an independent sample t-test was performed. The results indicated that the control group had a difference of almost 10 points between their two test scores, while the experimental group had a difference of around 8 points. Both groups showed significant improvement in their scores in the post-test. Additionally, the control group's score for "partially correct" responses increased by almost 1 point from the pre-test, while the experimental group's score decreased by almost 4 points. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group, indicating that extensive reading has a positive effect on the accuracy of speaking.

To assess fluency and compare the phonation time, unfilled pauses, and hesitation time before and after an intervention, a t-test, and the Mann-Whitney tests were used. In the pre-test, there was no significant difference between the two groups. However, the results indicate that the subjects in the experimental group achieved significantly better results in terms of the length of unfilled silences and the time/duration of hesitations in the post-test. Although progress was observed in both groups, especially in the experimental group, it was not statistically significant. Descriptive statistics for variables measuring fluency in both groups are presented in Appendices C and D.

According to the results, in the post-test, the mean length of unfilled pauses was lower in the experimental group (6.8s) than in the control group (7.62s). Both pre-test and post-test results for the control and experimental groups indicate that the experimental group achieved better results (-0.91 compared to -0.47) in terms of the number and length of pauses. Even though the number of pauses did not change significantly in either of the groups, the duration of the pauses was reduced, which indicates that the students responded more quickly.

Although the difference was not statistically significant, both groups showed a considerable improvement in their phonation time scores (3.4 compared to 4.2), with a better result for the experimental group. While the time of unfilled pauses decreased in both groups (-3.41 in the control group and -5.22 in the experimental group), the time of hesitation pauses increased due to

the use of fillers such as "ok" or repetition of words from the questions. Figures four and five below show the percentage ratio of the three variables (student phonation time, hesitation time, and unfilled pause time) in both control and experimental groups before and after the tests.

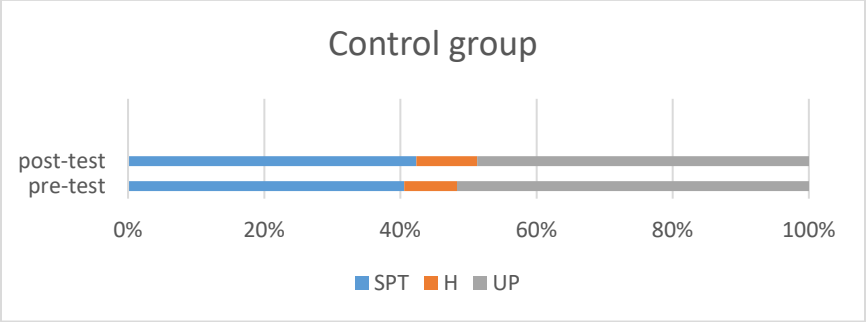


Figure 4. The ratio of variables in the control group in pre-and post-tests

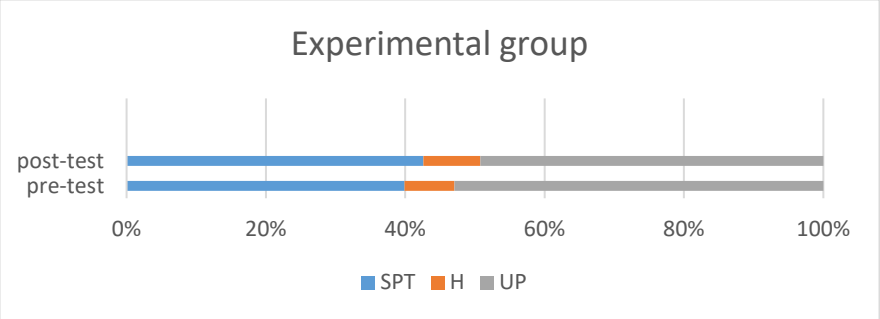


Figure 5. The ratio of variables in the experimental group in pre-and post-tests

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of extensive reading on the development of language production in young learners. The study sought to investigate how reading classes influence the ability of young learners to produce language, evaluate the statistical significance of their performance, and analyze the results for individual productive skills.

We have completed our investigation, and the results confirm that the experimental group, which participated in an extensive reading program, outperformed the control group. A detailed quantitative analysis of the learners' performance showed that extensive reading significantly improves both fluency and accuracy in language production. Extensive reading, which involves engaging with a large volume of texts, has been proven to positively impact learners' productive language skills by exposing them to a diverse range of vocabulary and sentence structures, similar to the findings of Lukáč (2005) and Straková (2017). Furthermore, learners who regularly participate in extensive reading activities tend to improve their fluency, while repeated exposure to well-constructed sentences contributes to greater accuracy in their language production, as found by Nakanishi (2014).

Focusing on the writing skills of learners, we found that they were able to produce correct answers by understanding the context provided. We experimented to determine the difference in results between the control and experimental groups before and after the experiment. The results of the t-tests showed that there was a significant improvement in the post-testing results of both groups after the experiment. This provides compelling evidence of the effectiveness of the experiment in improving writing skills. The t-test values showed more significant differences in the experimental group, which supports the idea that the program which emphasized reading competence development had a positive impact on their language production.

The study found that when it comes to speaking, participants who engaged in extensive reading performed better in terms of using correct grammar and demonstrating comprehension. On the other hand, those who did not engage in extensive reading struggled with using proper grammar and demonstrating comprehension. The data in Table Three shows that both the control and experimental groups made significant progress in their test scores during the post-test. The study found that the experimental group, which engaged in extensive reading, showed a significant improvement of nearly 4 points in "partially correct" responses in speaking accuracy, while the control group only saw a slight increase of approximately 1 point. These results indicate that extensive reading has a positive impact on speaking accuracy, with the experimental group performing better than the control group. It is worth noting that while extensive reading appears to have improved language skills, other activities that require active language use may also lead to similar gains (Straková, Cimermanová, 2012; Straková et al., 2017). These findings support Akbar's (2014) suggestion that integrating speaking and reading skills helps learners apply what they have read in authentic speaking practice, thus improving their fluency. Additionally, extensive reading can enhance learners' ability to comprehend implied meaning and express their ideas, feelings, and emotions (Akbar, 2014). Studies have also shown that extensive reading can improve learners' attitudes towards reading, making it more comfortable and valuable while reducing anxiety (Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018).

The present study aligns with previous research (Hughes, 2011; Garner, 2000) which suggests that reading programs have a positive impact on oral fluency. Our research findings show that the duration of pauses decreased and the length of phonation time increased, indicating improved fluency. The average length of unfilled pauses was also reduced, while the number of hesitation pauses increased due to the use of gap fillers. The various phases of reading programs create opportunities not only for vocabulary development but also for creativity and expressing opinions.

Throughout the study, it has become evident that the implementation of reading programs and teaching modules in the chosen schools has had a significant impact on the performance of the learners. This is further supported by the statistical analysis of both written and oral performance of the investigated groups.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect of extensive reading on the language production skills of young learners. We focused on evaluating the impact of reading courses on their language production abilities, analyzing the statistical significance of their achievements, and scrutinizing the outcomes of individual productive skills. The study's results were promising. We confirmed our hypothesis by analyzing the data quantitatively with descriptive statistics.

The study evaluated group performance instead of individual test scores. Mean scores were calculated before and after intervention and compared between control and experimental groups. A paired sample t-test was used to determine actual differences between groups. Both groups showed improvement throughout the study. Notable differences were observed in successful task completion between groups. The experimental group showed significant improvements in grammatical and contextual responses. The post-test showed improvements in speech duration and pauses.(Straková et al., 2017)

It has become evident from the investigation and detailed analysis of performance statistics that the implementation of reading programs and teaching modules in the chosen schools has had a significant impact on the written and oral proficiency of the learners, in terms of both accuracy and fluency. Verification of the effect of systematic development of reading competence on language production and comparison of progress within control and experimental groups yielded valuable results.

Suggestions

The results of this research have certain limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the findings can only be applied to other groups that share the same demographic characteristics as the research participants. Secondly, the research needs to be expanded in such a way as to include a wider range of discourse features.

Extensive reading and its impact on the English language skills of lower secondary school students in Slovakia have not been thoroughly researched. However, a recent study has revealed findings that can serve as a solid foundation for further research on input-based learning, which can improve language production. This study is significant in improving the quality of teaching and learning environments. The results can have a significant impact on foreign language teaching in lower secondary education and can be useful for EFL professionals who want to implement extensive reading programs to enhance the efficiency of language production in their practice (Straková et al., 2017).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1. *Comparison of group performances as determined by t-test results*
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

CONTROL	*pre-test*	*post-test*
Mean	18,739130	23,847826
Variance	28,930434	33,965217
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	90	
t Stat	-4,368965	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1,67E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1,661961	
P(T<=t) two-tail	3,34E-05	
t Critical two-tail	1,986674	
EXPERIMENTAL	*pre-test*	*post-test*
Mean	24,865853	31,841463
Variance	30,475304	23,680487
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	80	
t Stat	-6,069482	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2,03E-08	

t Critical one-tail	1,664125
P(T<=t) two-tail	4,06E-08
t Critical two-tail	1,990063

Appendix B

Table 2. *Results of t-test comparing control and experimental group*
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

post-test	CONTROL	EXPERIMENTAL
Mean	23,847826	31,841463
Variance	33,965217	23,680487
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	85	
t Stat	- 6,968273	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3,204E-10	
t Critical one-tail	1,6629784	
P(T<=t) two-tail	6,409E-10	
t Critical two-tail	1,9882680	

Appendix C

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of fluency for variables in the control group*

Control group	**Mean**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Std.Dev.**
Pre-test				
phonation time	62.48	30.00	95.00	16.61
unfilled pauses	79.11	51.00	111.00	15.45
hesitation time	12.11	6.00	19.00	3.82
mean length of unfilled pauses	8.09	6.09	10.09	1.10
Post-test				
phonation time	65.89	33.00	98.00	16.38
unfilled pauses	75.37	50.00	104.00	14.52
hesitation time	13.85	8.00	18.00	2.36
mean length of unfilled pauses	7.62	5.36	10.67	1.37

Appendix D

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics of fluency for variables in the experimental group*

Experimental group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std.Dev.
Pre-test				
phonation time	60.41	42.00	82.00	12.42
unfilled pauses	79.52	59.00	91.00	8.68
hesitation time	10.78	6.00	21.00	3.90
mean length of unfilled pauses	7.71	6.31	9.50	0.96
Post-test				
phonation time	64.63	48.00	91.00	11.81
unfilled pauses	74.30	48.00	86.00	9.16
hesitation time	12.33	9.00	20.00	2.77
mean length of unfilled pauses	6.80	5.42	9.33	1.13

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Using Self-assessment Tools to Enhance English Language Skills in an Online Learning Environment

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Abstract
Self-assessment is considered one of the formative assessment tools, and it is helpful for teachers and students. The instructors use self-assessment to track students' progress in lessons, while the students use it to identify their strengths and weaknesses and learn how to overcome the points of weakness in their learning. This study examines the impact of using self-assessment strategies to enhance English language skills in the online learning environment. Therefore, this study is significant as it investigates the advantages and efficacy of self-assessment tools for improving English language proficiency in an online learning setting. This research paper is trying to answer the main question which is to what extent using self-assessment tools could improve learners' English language skills in the online learning environment. The current study has followed a qualitative research method to explore the instructors' perspectives towards the self-assessment tools used to evaluate learners' performance. The research instrument comprises semi-structured interviews conducted with six university instructors from three universities in the United Arab Emirates. The findings revealed the positive outcomes of the self-assessment tools by indicating progress in students' performance in English language skills. These findings will be used to provide recommendations that may inspire teachers to adopt practical self-assessment tools in lectures.
Keywords: English language skills, learners' attitude, motivation, online learning environment, progress, self-assessment tool

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Introduction

Online education has become increasingly popular in recent years in most universities, and with it, the need for effective and valuable evaluation tools has grown. It becomes a necessity for university instructors to provide an exciting learning environment that encourages learners to participate during lectures and aid them in improving their learning skills. In addition, due to the increasing number of universities that offer online learning courses, university instructors need to change their perspectives and create a new strategy for encouraging student's engagement in online assessments (Makinal, 2022). Many studies, such as Joshi (2012), Berridge, Penney and Wells (2012), and Allehaby and Al-Bahlani (2021), have been conducted to investigate the validity of different online self-assessment tools such as using online quizzes, Kahoot, discussion board, assignments, post assessment exit tickets, WWW (What went well - What to do next) technique, social technologies such as wikis, and blogs.

Designing and using effective online self-assessment tools that create an interactive learning environment would increase learners' engagement and motivation to learn English language skills. In addition, self-assessment encourages students to monitor their achievements, take ownership of their learning, and become more self-directed, especially if the self-assessment is supported by clear guidelines and expectations to learners, as well as opportunities for them to discuss their evaluations with their instructors. Jamrus and Razali (2019) explain the importance of self-assessment in English language learning since it fosters critical thinking and reflective practices, aids learners in staying motivated, and evaluates their understanding. The main aim of this research paper is to explore the impact of using self-assessment strategies to enhance English language skills in an online learning environment. The significance of the study arises from the need to evaluate the advantages and efficacy of self-assessment tools for improving English language proficiency in an online learning setting. The main objective is to address the challenges by utilizing these self-assessment tools. By granting learners the ability to evaluate their language abilities, pinpoint areas that require improvement, and establish learning goals, these tools empower individuals to enhance their English skills and foster independent learning.

This study is guided by one primary research question which is to what extent using self-assessment tools could improve learners' English language skills in online learning environment. In addition, there are four secondary questions as follows:

1. How would encouraging students to evaluate their progress affect their performance?
2. What are the tools that can be used in self-assessment?
3. How might analyzing the results of using self-assessment in lessons enhance the effectiveness of the assessment tools?
4. To what extent would improving the quality of self-assessment strategies increase learners' motivation to participate in online assessments?

Literature Review

Self-assessment is introduced as an adequate critical reflection which aids the instructors make an accurate evaluation of learner's levels. Brown and Harris (2013) define self-assessment as "a descriptive and evaluative act carried out by the student concerning his or her work and academic abilities" (as cited in Andrade, 2019, p.2). Self-assessment can have many forms such as student-led conferences, portfolios, rubrics, and guidelines and can be described as an essential skill that learners need to develop for lifelong learning. Self-assessment is necessary especially for

university students since it teaches learners how to give a realistic evaluation of their achievements and track their progress in learning.

English language instructors have developed various self-assessment tools to measure learners' progress, such as reflective diaries, E-portfolios, and learning journals. Conrad and Openo (2018) explain that some course instructors at the university use e-portfolios as an assessment tool and to observe learners' progress by compiling their work during the course. Moreover, Conrad and Openo (2018) elaborate on the role of the learning journal as an assessment tool that requires learners to reflect on their learning progress throughout a period of time. Its main goal is to document the learner's experience throughout the course, including insights gained, possible interactions with peers or instructors, and connections made with their lives, learning, and work. By using journals, the course instructors can monitor learners' growth, such as their increased knowledge, critical thinking, and understanding of a subject. Many studies have been conducted on self-assessment strategies used to improve students' English language skills in online learning environments. The following paragraphs review the studies investigating several self-assessment tools.

To start with, an exploratory study was conducted by Salvadores Menino (2019) to investigate the accuracy of the self-assessment to deliver relevant and reliable results of learners' proficiency when contrasted to objective tests. The research compared the results of the correlations between the self-assessment tests taken by 46 university students studying English as a second language and their external evaluation. The researcher used two research instruments; a table of descriptors (ELP questionnaire) for self-assessment and a standardized test for the First Certificate in English as an external evaluation instrument. The test covered reading comprehension, writing, use of English, listening comprehension, and speaking. The study's findings confirmed the accuracy of the self-assessment tool in reflecting learners' level of proficiency. The researcher proved that there are "significant correlations with high coefficients between the scores achieved in self-assessment and those awarded via external evaluation in identifying such accuracy in students' self-assessment" (p.333).

Alabidi, Owais, Alabidi, and Taani (2022) conducted a study in a private school in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, to examine the impact of using reflective diaries as a productive self-assessment tool on improving self-regulated learning. The researchers aimed to analyze how reflective diaries affected students' cognition, metacognition, and motivation among ESL learners. Alabidi et al. (2022) explained that "using reflective diaries helped teachers to recognize students' skills, epistemological beliefs, and motivation, enabling them to provide students with more effective feedback." (p.2). To achieve the purpose of the study, the researchers used a qualitative approach and collected data using semi-structured interviews conducted with six students. The findings proved the effectiveness of reflective diaries in helping students make connections between prior knowledge and new information, monitoring their performance, and building a sense of responsibility for their work.

Takarroucht (2022) carried out a mixed-methods study to investigate the effect of students' self-assessment on fostering self-efficacy for academic writing. The researcher explored how self-assessment can be a self-regulated skill that improves learners' ability to develop effective learning strategies throughout the writing process. The researcher used a sample of sixty control and experimental EFL university participants and interviews conducted with twenty participants. The findings showed that "applying self-assessment standards enhanced students' knowledge of

writing strategies and linguistic elements necessary for paragraph writing. This raised their awareness of the different aspects of the writing process". (p.165)

Similarly, Al Mwzaiji and Alzubi (2022) conducted a study on writing skills to examine the possible effect of online self-evaluation tools on improving learners' writing skills in English as a foreign language. To achieve the purpose of their study, the researchers used an explanatory mixed-method design. They applied their survey to the preparatory year students at Najran University using self-monitored checklists, self-evaluation questionnaires, achievement tests, and students' portfolios. The findings confirmed the correlation between self-evaluation and academic achievement in writing. However, learners should be aware of using self-evaluation strategies.

Yan, Lee, Hui, and Lao (2022) conducted a study to investigate the effects of using self-assessment mind maps on students' self-efficacy in creativity, self-efficacy in learning English, and academic performance in English language tests. The researchers used a pretest-posttest non-equivalent design to examine the impact of using a mind map self-assessment tool on the performance of 55 students distributed between experimental and control groups of students in a Hong Kong primary school. The results of data analysis indicated the positive impact of mind map self-assessment as a sustainable intervention in enhancing students' creativity and improving their academic performance on tests.

A further qualitative-descriptive study was carried out by Cuesta-Melo, Lucero-Zambrano, and Herrera-Mosquera (2022) to explore the impact of self-assessment strategies on the language learning. The researchers used learners' reflective journals, focus group discussion commentaries, and interviews to investigate the positive and negative effects of using self-assessment strategies on English learning process of 19 undergraduate students at the Colombian Public University. Learners' responses to the interview questions confirmed the positive attitude of learners towards self-assessment since it evaluates autonomy, self-regulation, critical thinking, persistence, and self-efficacy, while reflective journals and focus group discussions were used to utilize in-depth self-assessment.

On the other hand, Mohammed and Hussein (2023) conducted a study to examine teachers' perspectives regarding the effect of self- and peer-assessment tools in increasing learner's autonomy in writing. Using a qualitative research method and unstructured interviews conducted with four teachers teaching writing modules at Salahaddin University, the researchers collected data about the effectiveness of utilizing self and peer assessments. The results of data analysis proved that using self and peer assessment tools such as the rubric had a positive impact and caused learners to become self-regulated and autonomous. Mohammed and Hussein (2023) assured that "when a piece of writing is reviewed by students through self-assessment or peers of the classmates, it will enable them to gain further knowledge about how to detect or find mistakes of learners' writing in many aspects including coherence, unity, grammar, and punctuation." (p.495) However, the results assured that training students on how to do the self and peer assessments is a challenge that teachers should overcome to attain the effectiveness of self-assessment tools.

Boumediene and Fatiha (2023) explored a new way of using self-assessment strategies to improve learners' performance in English writing lessons. The researchers used a mixed-method design to examine a sample of 50 second year students studying at the University of Laghouat. The research instruments included pre/post test and a questionnaire. The findings of the study indicated that the self-assessment strategies helped improve learners' writings through comparing their work to clear standards, identifying punctuation mistakes and correcting them.

The studies mentioned above focused on the influence of using self-assessment as a tool in learning English and enhancing writing skills. The researchers used university and school students in different contexts to prove the positive impact of self-assessment strategies. These studies highlighted the importance of familiarizing learners with the self-assessment process by practicing it during lessons. If learners are not aware of how to self-assess, they will not give accurate evaluations of their understanding. Even though many studies examine the different aspects of utilizing self-assessment in learning languages, there is still a gap in the literature. The current research will bridge this gap by focusing on the impact of using self-assessment strategies to enhance the English language skills, mainly writing skills, of different groups of university students studying in online learning environments in the United Arab Emirates.

Method

Many studies adopted a mixed-method design and used research instruments such as questionnaires, experimental groups, tests, and interviews to examine the impact of self-assessment tools. This research paper explores the advantages and efficacy of self-assessment tools for improving English language proficiency in an online learning setting. To achieve the purpose of the study, a qualitative research method is used.

Participants

The participants consist of six university instructors teaching English courses at different universities in the United Arab Emirates.

Research Instruments

The research instrument comprises six semi-structured interview questions. The researcher interviewed six instructors to explore their perspectives on the self-assessment tools used to evaluate learners' performance and measure students' progress in lectures (See Appendix A for the interview questions).

Research Procedures

Before conducting the interviews, the consent forms were shared with the participants. During the interviews, the researcher used semi-structured questions to collect the instructors' perspectives towards using self-assessment tools. The responses collected were analyzed and categorized thematically.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher fulfilled the ethical considerations by informing all participants about the purpose of the study, the advantages of conducting the study, and the confidentiality of the information shared. The researcher assured the participants that participation in the research was completely voluntary and that anonymity would be maintained. Participants were also free to leave the study without negative repercussions (See Appendix B for Participant Consent Form).

Results

The samples that will be analyzed in this section are related to six university instructors selected randomly. Analyzing data includes interpreting the responses that university instructors

have given to the semi-structured interview questions. The analysis will focus on the main points that arose from the responses.

Theme One: Self-assessment Tools:

In answering the question related to the different self-assessment tools used to measure progress in lessons, most interviewees confirmed using tests, quizzes, rubrics, checklists, prompts or tasks for reflection, goal-setting, peer and group evaluation to evaluate learners' progress in lessons.

One of the participants highlighted the importance of explaining to students the concept of self-assessment and how to apply it.

Participant One: "Once they assimilate the reflection practice, with time it becomes a habit. If a good practice becomes a habit, this indicates achieving excellence…….. Then they need to pinpoint the part they did not understand and think of action in collaboration with the teacher".

Theme Two: The Positive Aspects of Using Learner's Self-assessment

In answering the question related to this theme, the instructors assured the impact of self-assessment on developing metacognition in students, raising self-awareness, increasing learners' motivation, helping learners progress smoothly from dependence to independence and then to interdependence, promoting lifelong learning, leading to self-guidance, self-confidence, and self-reliance. One of the participants elaborated on the positive aspects of using self-assessment by saying that self-assessment encourages learners.

Participant Two: "Self-evaluation helps learners take ownership of their education, gain a better understanding of their areas of strength and need, and receive quick feedback to fix their mistakes and solidify their learning. Self-evaluation also aids students in refining their critical thinking abilities and growing as independent learners".

Theme Three: The Relationship between Learning Outcomes and Choosing Self-assessment Tools

In answering the question related to how setting learning outcomes can affect self-assessment tools, the interviewees indicated that effective and measurable learning outcomes support accurate and hence reliable assessment. The instructors listed the positive aspects of effective learning outcomes when choosing self-assessment tools, such as providing clear expectations for students about what they should achieve by the end of the lecture and guiding instructors to focus on specific areas or skills to evaluate.

One of the participants asserted the importance of adopting a SMART strategy which stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives. This strategy ends up with a clear road map for the instructor and the learner.

Participant Three: "By having SMART learning outcomes, we can set up the right self-assessment tools…. For instance, to progress in writing, learners will learn to follow the writing process and understand their role as independent learners. One of the tools, for example, is to hand them the Writing Correction Symbols, which help them improve their first draft by themselves".

Theme 4: The Relationship between Constructive Feedback and Self-assessment

In answering the question related to the impact of providing learners with feedback on their performance on guiding learners to do self-assessment, the instructors confirmed that constructive feedback might develop an understanding of what is expected from learners, aid learners identify their strengths and weaknesses, encourage students to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals to improve their learning skills, provide students with evaluation criteria that deepen their understanding of the requirements of the task, and finally enhance self-

reflection which is an essential component of self-assessment. One of the participants indicated the importance of constructive feedback by saying that:

Participant Four: "If assessors are providing constructive feedback to their learners, they (the learners) will be in charge of the learning process - Gradually, of course".

Theme Five: Using Self-assessment Tools to Identify Strengths and Weaknesses

The interviewees assured the role of self-evaluation in bolstering critical thinking, developing self-awareness, prompting learners to review and reflect on what went well and what needs to be improved, comparing their work with their peers to identify the skills they need to develop, and setting specific goals to improve their performance. One of the instructors elaborated on the process of self-reflection and its impact:

Participant Five: "The process of reflection is so meticulous that it reveals almost everything about someone's performance in a certain field in life, which ends in highlighting one's strengths and weaknesses. This trait is desired in every student and every worker because the individual will not hide any weak performance. In the end, the process of reflection helps individuals in turning their weaknesses into strengths".

Theme Six: Increasing Learners' Motivation to Participate in Online Assessment

The instructors asserted the direct link between autonomy and motivation. If learners are not provided with efficient self-assessment tools, they may get astray, demotivate, and may not achieve independence. When learners are engaged in the learning process, their motivation will increase because they will feel more in control, and they are more likely to be motivated to take part in assessment. In addition, practical self-assessment tools are expected to increase learners' motivation since they will reflect on what they have learned and what they need to improve. Moreover, the instructors should encourage learners to set realistic goals that motivate them to achieve their targets.

Discussion

The following section discusses the results of data analysis as related to the research questions and in light of the literature review addressed earlier in this study.

Secondary Question One: How would encouraging students to evaluate their progress affect their performance?

The results of data analysis assert that when learners are encouraged to do self-assessment, they will get a better understanding of the concept and will be able to refine their critical thinking abilities. The more learners are motivated, the more their academic performance improves. This applies to self-assessment. When learners are encouraged to do self-assessment by raising their awareness about its importance, their intrinsic motivation will increase, and they will participate willingly in self-assessment practice. The results of the current study matched the findings of the study conducted by Alabidi et Al. (2022) which proved the effectiveness of self-assessment in developing a sense of responsibility and increasing motivation to achieve students' targets.

Secondary Question Two: What are the tools that can be used in self-assessment?

The results of data analysis showed that most instructors assured using strategies such as online quizzes, rubrics, tasks for reflection, and peer and group evaluations. The results of this research resemble the findings of the study conducted by Al-Mwzaiji and Alzubi (2022). In most of the previous studies, the researchers utilized various self-assessment tools similar to the current research but added e-portfolios and achievement tests.

Secondary Research Three: How might analyzing the results of using self-assessment in lessons enhance the effectiveness of the assessment tools used?

The results of data analysis assure the importance of analyzing learners' responses in the self-assessment practice. Analyzing these responses will help the instructors recognize the subject areas where learners are struggling and evaluate the consistency and accuracy of the assessment tool. Hence, instructors will enhance their instructions and the assessment tools during the lectures. In addition, some assessment tools might not give sought-after results, so the instructors can discover the accuracy of the tools by applying a regular analysis of learners' self-assessment activities. Salvadores Menino (2019) emphasized that evaluating the accuracy of the self-assessment tool will help in recognizing learners' level of understanding.

Secondary Research Four: To what extent would improving the quality of self-assessment strategies increase leaners' motivation to participate in online assessments?

This question will be answered by referring to the discussion in the previous question, which indicates that analyzing the results of self-assessment practices will reflect the effectiveness and reliability of the self-assessment tools. However, this question focuses on the self-assessment tools used in online learning environments. To explain more, learners' attitudes towards self-assessment in face-to-face learning might be different from their attitudes in online learning. This is because in virtual learning, learners are totally on their own, and they may suffer from isolation and may fall into depression if they do not understand the purpose of self-assessment activities. In addition, improving the quality of self-assessment tools is related to setting measurable and effective learning outcomes. The results of the data analysis prove the effectiveness of using SMART learning outcomes to select reliable and accurate self-assessment tools. The effect of the reliable self-assessment tool is seen in increasing learners' motivation. The more the self-assessment tool is interesting, the more learners will be engaged. On the other hand, improving the quality will affect learners' self-regulated features.

Primary Question: To what extent could using self-assessment tools improve learners' English language skills in the online learning environment?

As introduced in the results section, using accurate and reliable self-assessment tools will improve learners' autonomy, refine their critical thinking skills, increase their motivation, and enhance their potential to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The results of this research resemble the findings of the previous studies reviewed earlier since they prove the effectiveness of using self-assessment tools to improve learners' academic levels. Since the current study focuses on English language skills, self-assessment tools such as rubrics, mind maps, checklists, self-reflection prompts, online quizzes, game-based quizzes, written assignments, and interactive activities are expected to improve learners' English language skills. When the instructors analyze learners' work scrutiny and provide constructive feedback, they will enhance the impact of the self-assessment tools because learners can pinpoint their areas for improvement and focus more on them. Moreover, English language instructors need to strengthen their instructions to meet the needs of different groups of students. As a result, all students will be engaged and benefit from the self-assessment strategies used. Once learners assimilate the self-assessment practice, with time it becomes a habit. If a good practice becomes a habit, this indicates achieving excellence and producing self-regulated and independent learners.

Implications for Learning and Teaching English:

As discussed in the previous section, the findings of the current study assure the effectiveness of using self-assessment strategies to enhance learning skills in general and English language skills in particular. The findings can be used to provide recommendations on how to help learners self-assess their work, set their targets, overcome the points of weakness in their learning, and improve their English language skills. These recommendations might inspire teachers to adopt effective self-assessment strategies to boost English language skills. In addition, instructors are advised to use the self-assessment strategy discussed in this research paper to enable learners to become more independent, especially students with special needs.

In English language sessions, using appropriate self-assessment tools in writing tasks is essential because writing is considered one of the complex skills that learners struggle with especially when learning English as a second language. Creating an e-portfolio in which each student accumulates the evidence of the self-assessment rubric will help students and instructors. This is because the e-portfolio might include various self-assessment strategies related to the concepts taught at different course stages. By the end of the course, learners will have an overview of their achievements, highlight their strengths and weaknesses, and recall the information they still need to focus on. On the other hand, instructors will benefit from these e-portfolios when they analyze them and find patterns in the learning gaps. As a result, the instructors will improve their instructions and adapt the learning material to meet the needs of all students by using other self-assessment strategies. In addition, progress is measured effectively by learners and instructors.

Conclusion

This study evaluates the effectiveness of using different self-assessment strategies to enhance English language skills in the online learning environment. The data gathered to answer the research questions consists of responses to semi-structured interview questions. Analyzing the responses of the university instructors assures the effectiveness of using self-assessment tools to enhance English language skills. The study recommends that university instructors use e-portfolio as a self-assessment strategy to measure progress during lectures and improve learning skills in general and English language skills in particular.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the data collected from several university instructors. The current research paper concentrates mainly on evaluating the effectiveness of using self-assessment strategies to enhance English language skills in the online learning environment. As a result, another self-assessment strategy may not be helpful or practical to accommodate students' levels and needs if this study is conducted in a different setting.

Future Research

A further longitudinal research is recommended to focus on the effectiveness of using various self-assessment strategies to improve English language skills and learning skills in general. A more comprehensive range of responses might be collected and analyzed to enable the researcher to generate further recommendations to improve English teaching strategies and the learning process. Also, interviews might be conducted with students to recognize their perspectives toward self-assessment strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Instructors

1. What are the self-assessment tools used to measure progress in lessons?
2. What are the positive aspects of using self-assessment?
3. How would setting measurable learning outcomes help choose reliable self-assessment tools?
4. How can providing learners with constructive feedback on their performance guide them on how to do self-assessment?
5. How might encouraging learners to evaluate their progress help them recognize their strengths and weaknesses?
6. To what extent would improving the quality of self-assessment strategies increase learners' motivation to participate in online assessments?

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

USING SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS TO ENHANCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering interview questions.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant ---------- Date: ----------
I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study
Signature of researcher *Rehab Albakri* Date: *20/4/2023*

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Multidimensional Analysis of Differences in Lexico-Grammatical Patterns in Saudi and British Linguistics and English Language Teaching Research Articles

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Abstract
This study explores linguistic variation in research papers published by Saudi and British researchers in Linguistics and English language teaching (ELT). The main aim is to identify and compare interdisciplinary lexico-grammatical patterns between and within the sub-disciplines of these research articles, exploring the extent to which Saudi research articles align with or diverge from their British counterparts. Utilizing Biber's (1988) multidimensional model, this research developed a specialized corpus of academic research articles, which was analyzed using multivariate statistical techniques to investigate linguistic variation. The corpus included tagging of 67 linguistic features, and factor analysis was employed to identify patterns of linguistic co-occurrence. Significant findings indicate that Saudi research papers distinctly differ from British papers in their preference for informational, explicit, non-argumentative, and abstract discourse. Notably, while most sections of the research papers showed variations in non-argumentative discourse, the ELT conclusion sections from both regions demonstrated a tendency towards mixed-purpose discourse. The significance of the study lies in its detailed analysis of how regional differences affect lexico-grammatical choices within academic writing, offering a deeper understanding of linguistic strategies in scholarly communication. The study concludes with recommendations for further research to explore underlying factors contributing to these differences and suggests the development of targeted academic writing aids to support researchers in achieving greater international coherence in their discourse. This could potentially enhance the clarity and impact of scholarly communication across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: British linguistics, English language teaching research papers, lexico-grammatical patterns, linguistics research papers, multidimensional analysis, register variation, Saudi context
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Introduction

Research articles (RA) are the most important genre as they are necessary for the professional growth of scholars. They serve as a medium for communicating and sharing new ideas, information, and knowledge with the discourse community (Musa et al., 2015). Much work has been done on the analysis of such articles. However, most studies (e.g., Alamri, 2020; Kwan, 2017; Alotaibi & Pickering, 2013; Alhuqban, 2012; Alharbi & Swales, 2011) have mainly focused on the "move structure" of RAs. Very few comprehensive studies have described the grammatical features used in different registers. This paper comprehensively researches the linguistic features related to each dimension that perform a particular communicative function in each RA section to fully understand the linguistic features associated with the RAs' language. There is a difference in academic writing conventions and styles across different academic fields. The present study explores the linguistic features in English language RAs published in Saudi Arabia and Britain in Linguistics and ELT. The study's objectives are to investigate linguistic variation in Saudi research papers, explore interdisciplinary lexico-grammatical similarities and differences between Linguistics and ELT research papers, and find linguistic variation among the sub-categories of the selected research papers.

The present study uses the Multidimensional (MD) approach that centres around the co-occurrence of linguistic features specific to the texts. The present study aims to document the patterns of linguistic variation among academic articles by Saudi and British writers. Using MD analysis, we explore the dimensions of linguistic variation in research articles written by Saudi and British writers and the similarities and differences among them concerning those dimensions.

Literature Review

The genre of research papers has become the leading platform for academic knowledge transfer from researchers to other discourse communities (Swales, 2004). Writing a research paper is a challenging task for both native and non-native speakers of English. It is especially difficult for new researchers. They must be aware of linguistic features associated with the research articles in their related fields (Dobakhti, 2011). Much research has focused on analyzing, comparing, and contrasting discourse. Some studies also analyze research papers from the perspective of move analysis (Alharbi & Swales, 2011). For a long time, many researchers and professionals from various fields have investigated and analyzed research articles, such as computer science articles (Mangabeira et al., 2004), sociology (Schwemmer & Wieczorek, 2019), applied linguistics (Pho, 2008), and medicine (Haidich, 2010).

Various studies also take into account examining various sections of research articles. Galaidin (2021), Bhatti et al. (2019), and Darabad (2016), for example, focus on the abstract section of research papers. Alhuqban (2012) conducted a cross-cultural analysis. He examined the rhetorical structures of Arabic and English Abstracts from police and security sciences research articles. The author analyzed 30 abstracts from each discipline using three models: Swales' (2004) modified CARS, Bhatia's (1993) four-move structure, and Hyland's (2000) five-move structure. Alotaibi and Pickering (2013) also compared abstracts (Arabic and English) published in English RAs in the Arab Journal for the Humanities by Arab scholars in the field of linguistics using Hyland's (2005) model. Further, Dhungana (2024) explores the challenges non-native English speakers face in academic writing, emphasizing the need for new researchers that "[they] must be aware of the specific linguistic conventions that characterize the research articles in their disciplines to effectively communicate their findings" (p. 10).

Similarly, the introduction section from pure and applied linguistics has also been studied. The introduction section of some studies was investigated using move analysis. Albatsha and Aleshinskaya (2021), Afshar et al. (2018), Khamkhien (2015), Jalilifar & Kabezadeh (2012), Jalilifar (2010), Khany & Tazik (2010), and Atai & Habibie (2009). Al-Qahtani (2006) conducted a contrastive analysis of the introduction sections from Arabic and English research articles. The research divided participants into three groups: Arab authors educated in the Middle East, Arab authors educated in the United States, and U.S. Native English speakers. The data were analyzed using Swales' (1990) CARS model. The results showed differences between the research introductions of Arab authors and English speakers. In a separate study, Alotaibi and Pickering (2013) examined 20 Arabic research articles from psychology and sociology. They analyzed the introduction sections using Swales' (1990) move analysis. The findings revealed significant differences in the rhetorical moves used in Arabic introductions of psychology and sociology research papers.

The section of the literature review needs to be more attention. Kwan et al. (2012) and Kwan (2006) examined the literature review. Kwan et al. (2012) evaluate two research domains, i.e., design science research and behavioural science research. The results show marked cross-domain differences. Kwan (2006) analyzes the schematic structure of literature reviews in doctoral theses in applied linguistics. The findings highlight that applied linguistics articles' literature review and introduction sections are structurally different. However, there needs to be more sections on the methods and results. The method section was examined by Peacock (2011), Lim (2006), and Bruce (2008). Cotos et al. (2017) suggested a comprehensive cross-disciplinary approach to study the method section that included three moves and sixteen steps. Peacock (2011) evaluated 288 methods sections across eight fields in a comprehensive corpus analysis: science (i.e., biology, chemistry, and physics) and social science (i.e., 38 business, language, and linguistics, law, public and social administration). The study found several interdisciplinary differences in moves and move cycles. Khamkhien (2015) also examined 25 introduction and methods sections of research articles from applied linguistics. The research study aimed to determine the rhetorical structures and lexica-grammatical linguistic aspects that frequently appeared in the two sections of Thai journals written in English.

Numerous researchers from various fields, mainly applied linguistics, have scrutinized and analyzed the discussion section (Jalilifar et al., 2015; Le & Harrington, 2015; Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013; Dobakhti, 2013). Depending on the journal's format, the conclusion section is sometimes considered part of the discussion section. Research has been conducted across several disciplines to examine the conclusion part of the research article (Reza & Rokhsareh, 2015; Vukovi & Bratic, 2015; Aslam & Mehmood, 2014; Morales, 2012).

The concept of ESP genre analysis in Saudi Arabia has caught the interest of a few researchers. Alhuqbani (2013) analyzed the rhetorical structures and verb tenses of each move of RA abstracts from four Arabic disciplines: law, linguistics, medical, and police. There were 40 Arabic abstracts in the corpus (10 from each discipline). The study used Bhatia's (1993) four-move structure and Hyland's (2000) five-move structure. The findings revealed that the number of moves described in the two models varied among these four fields.

Alotaibi (2013) also explored the correlation between RA abstracts and introductions in Arabic and English from two disciplines: educational psychology and sociology. The corpus had 40 RA abstracts and introductions (20 from each discipline). Hyland's (2000) model was used for the abstracts, and the modified version of Swales' CARS model (2004) was used for introductions

and abstracts. The findings revealed significant differences in the use of language in the two disciplines.

Alqahtani and Alhamami (2024) discuss the critical obstacles in L2 academic writing faced by Saudi English primary students, highlighting the differences in rhetorical structures. They state, "Significant differences in the rhetorical moves used in Arabic and English research articles indicate the need for awareness of these linguistic features by new researchers" (p. 65). In 2016, Fallatah conducted a study comparing the writing styles of Saudi English research article (RA) abstracts with international English RA abstracts and Arabic RA abstracts. They used Swales and Feak's (2004) five-move CARS model to analyze the abstracts. The study found that Saudi English RA abstracts differed from international English RA abstracts in several ways: 1. Saudi English RA abstracts showed more variation in the presence of different moves, such as the introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. 2. Saudi English RA abstracts tended to be more verbose, with more words used to convey the same information. 3. Saudi English RA abstracts used excessive citations, acronyms, and itemized lists, leading to a cluttered and less cohesive presentation of information. 4. Saudi English RA abstracts were often multi-paragraphed, unlike the typically single-paragraph format of international English RA abstracts. Overall, the study indicated that Saudi English RA abstracts have distinct linguistic features that set them apart from international English RA abstracts and Arabic RA abstracts.

This study aims to analyze research articles in the fields of linguistics and ELT authored by Saudi and British researchers. It compares all the sections (abstracts, introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and discussion, and conclusion) of research articles. By employing a multidimensional analysis approach, this study endeavors to provide valuable insights into the differences in lexico-grammatical patterns between them.

Methodology

A specialized corpus of research papers published by Saudi researchers was developed. A parallel corpus of research papers published by British researchers was also developed. The articles were selected from two disciplines: linguistics and ELT. A hundred research articles from both disciplines were taken. The total number of articles was four hundred, i.e., two hundred from each country. These articles were further divided into six categories. The sub-categories were based on the sections of the research articles: abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis & discussion, and conclusion. So, the total number of text files in the corpus was 2400.

The data was compiled into a corpus, cleaned, and given unique codes. The Biber tagger was used to computationally identify linguistic features, and their frequencies were counted with Biber's Tag Count program. The frequencies were then normalized and standardized to ensure equal weight of all features. The study followed a procedure that included data collection, data tagging, computation of linguistic features, analysis of co-occurrence patterns, dimension score calculation, ANOVA, and functional analyses to interpret the dimensions. Table 1. shows the codes used in the paper.

Table 1. *List of Codes used in the present study*

	Codes		Codes
Saudi research articles	SR	British ELT literature review	BELTL
British research articles	BR	Saudi Linguistics literature review	SLL
Saudi ELT research articles	SELTR	British Linguistics literature review	BLL
British ELT research articles	BELTR	Saudi ELT methodology	SELTM
Saudi Linguistics research articles	SLR	British ELT methodology	BELTM

British Linguistics research articles	BLR	Saudi Linguistics methodology	SLM
Saudi ELT abstract	SELTA	British Linguistics methodology	BLM
British ELT abstract	BELTA	Saudi ELT analysis and discussion	SELTAN
Saudi Linguistics abstract	SLA	British ELT analysis and discussion	BELTAN
British Linguistics abstract	BLA	Saudi Linguistics analysis and discussion	SLAN
Saudi ELT introduction	SELTI	British Linguistics analysis and discussion	BLAN
British ELT introduction	BELTI	Saudi ELT conclusion	SELTC
Saudi Linguistics introduction	SLI	British ELT conclusion	BELTC
British Linguistics introduction	BLI	Saudi Linguistics conclusion	SLC
Saudi ELT literature review	SELTL	British Linguistics conclusion	BLC

Analysis and Discussion

This section includes the results of the ANOVA test and descriptive statistics. The results of ANOVA show statistically significant differences across categories and within the selected disciplines of research articles from Saudi Arabia and Britain. Descriptive statistics provide mean, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation scores of the two disciplines from both countries. The co-occurrence of linguistic features in the texts defines the linguistic dimensions. Biber labelled dimension one as 'Involved vs Informational Discourse'. Higher frequencies of *verb (uninflected present, imperative & third Person), 'that' deletion, first-person pronoun/possessive, modals of possibility, second person pronoun/ possessive, wh-clause, nominal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, co-ordinating conjunction-clausal connector, do as proverb, wh-question, verb 'be' (uninflected present tense, verb, and auxiliary), sub-ordinating conjunction-causative, adverb/qualifier-emphatic (e.g., just, really). Adverbial/qualifier-amplifier* are associated with higher involved discourse. On the other hand, the higher frequencies of *nouns (excluding gerunds), prepositions,* and *attributive adjectives* are related to informational discourse. The results show the highest frequencies of linguistic features associated with negative polarity, indicating a high information density. Table 2 contains ANOVA results, which present the significance level across categories and within the selected disciplines of research articles from Saudi Arabia and Britain. In the ANOVA test, the mean value is non-significant if $P>0.05$, significant if $P<0.05$, and highly significant if $P<0.01$. A P-value of less than 0.05 is a conventional threshold for considering the statistical significance. Statistically significant differences were attested across categories and within the selected disciplines of research articles from Saudi Arabia and Britain, as the significance level is less than 0.05.

As in the MD model, the linguistic features are in complementary distribution to each other, and the continuum contains narrative features on one side, and non-narrative features on the other; low narrative discourse indicates the presence of non-narrative features. So, Biber labels dimension two as 'Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns'. The features with positive weight include *past tense verbs, third-person pronouns, perfect aspect verbs, synthetic negation,* and *present participle clauses*. Present *tense verbs, attributive adjectives, past participial*, and *word length* co-occur to produce non-narrative discourse on the negative polarity. The results indicate that both countries have non-narrative discourse to a varying degree. On D2, a statistically significant difference between groups (between the two countries regarding their categories) and within groups (between the disciplines with a county) has been observed.

Table 2. *Variance across categories and within the selected disciplines of Saudi and British research articles on five textual dimensions*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Dim_1	Between Disciplines	7178.809	23	312.122	13.034	.000
	Across categories	56898.088	2376	23.947		
	Total	64076.897	2399			
Dim_2	Between Disciplines	426.011	23	18.522	3.977	.000
	Across categories	11065.739	2376	4.657		
	Total	11491.750	2399			
Dim_3	Between Disciplines	4924.187	23	214.095	14.421	.000
	Across categories	35274.582	2376	14.846		
	Total	40198.769	2399			
Dim_4	Between Disciplines	2073.104	23	90.135	10.118	.000
	Across categories	21166.294	2376	8.908		
	Total	23239.397	2399			
Dim_5	Between Disciplines	2053.856	23	89.298	5.097	.000
	Across categories	41624.501	2376	17.519		
	Total	43678.357	2399			

Besides the above two dimensions, "Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Discourse" is another dimension that uses three types of WH clauses to create Explicit discourse. These constructions are: wh-pronoun-relative clause-object position, wh-pronoun-relative clause-subject position, and wh-pronoun-relative clause-object position with prepositional fronting. There are other ways to make discourse explicit, such as coordinating conjunctions, phrasal connectors, and singular noun-nominalization. In contrast, situation-dependent discourse uses content words such as time, place, and situation-dependent adverbs. The difference between explicit and situation-dependent discourse is statistically significant.

The study found that while Dimension 4, which represents "Overt Expression of Argumentation/Persuasion," contained only positive features, all sections of the research papers from both countries had a discourse on the negative continuum. Several linguistic features contributed to argumentative discourse, such as infinitive verbs, modal verbs of prediction, suasive verbs, subordinating conjunction-conditionals, modal verbs of necessity, and adverbs within auxiliary. In contrast, non-argumentative discourse was produced by third-person pronouns, private verbs, and hedges on the negative continuum. Statistically significant differences were found between and within groups on Dimension 4.

Dimension 5 ranges from the positive "Impersonal (Abstract) Discourse" to the negative "Non-Impersonal (Non-Abstract) Discourse." It includes both the production and reception of impersonal discourse through adverbial conjuncts, agentless passive verbs, passive verbs, and usage of 'by'. On the negative side, non-impersonal discourse is produced by the type/token ratio, closely related to the positive features. Dimension 5, like others, exhibits distinct differences within and between groups, suggesting that this dimension captures essential writing characteristics.

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Abstract Section

The study divides research articles into different sections. The first section is the abstract. Biber (1988) believes that 'texts from a single genre might represent several different text types' (p. 170). Statistical analysis shows that on dimension one, both the countries in their academic

genres, i.e., ELT and Linguistics research papers, with negative mean scores, produce informational discourse to varying degrees. According to Biber (1988), the linguistic features integrated and producing informational discourse are mainly used in typical writing. He further elaborates, 'integration refers to how a large amount of information is packed into relatively few words in typical writing' (p. 43). Table 3 shows the mean, maximum, lower bound, upper bound, and standard deviation of Saudi and British abstract sections. The standard deviation helps analyze the spread of the distribution, and the mean describes the relative frequency of words in the entire corpus. A significant linguistic variation exists between Saudi and British abstract sections. Table 3 indicates that on D1, BELTA, with a mean score of -15.64, is the least, and SELTA, with a mean score of -18.67, is the most informational in discourse production.

On the other hand, SLA, with a mean score of -18.08, is more information than BLA (-17.36). So, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of British and Saudi ELT abstracts in producing informational discourse. On D2, the abstract of both countries produces non-narrative discourse. Like D1, on this dimension, BELTA, with a mean score of -2.75, is the least, and SELTA, with a mean score of -3.87, is the most non-narrative. The mean scores of SLA and BLA, i.e., -3.73 and -3.72, respectively, are almost the same in producing non-narrative discourse. The results indicate that on D3, all the countries produce Explicit discourse on positive polarity. SLA (10.18) is the most explicit among others, and BLA, with a mean score of 7.86, is the least explicit. SELTA, with a mean score of 9.88, is more explicit than BELTA (8.57) in producing discourse.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics abstract section across Old textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Abstract_-ELT_UK	100	-15.6487	6.17866	.61787	-16.8747	-14.4227	-28.87	.31
	Abstract_-Linguistic-UK	100	-17.3626	5.73594	.57359	-18.5007	-16.2245	-28.24	.77
	Abstract_-ELT_SA	100	-18.6770	4.79496	.47950	-19.6284	-17.7256	-29.78	-7.62
	Abstract_-Linguistic_SA	100	-18.0850	5.12229	.51223	-19.1014	-17.0686	-29.29	-3.83
Dim_2	Abstract_-ELT_UK	100	-2.7580	3.71114	.37111	-3.4944	-2.0216	-7.38	11.01
	Abstract_-Linguistic-UK	100	-3.7281	2.41754	.24175	-4.2078	-3.2484	-7.38	3.60
	Abstract_-ELT_SA	100	-3.8735	2.27746	.22775	-4.3254	-3.4216	-7.38	2.92
	Abstract_-Linguistic_SA	100	-3.7328	2.95397	.29540	-4.3189	-3.1467	-7.38	6.56
Dim_3	Abstract_-ELT_UK	100	8.5744	5.24650	.52465	7.5334	9.6154	-5.10	34.89
	Abstract_-Linguistic-UK	100	7.8690	5.23045	.52305	6.8312	8.9068	-7.56	25.31
	Abstract_-ELT_SA	100	9.8884	5.27544	.52754	8.8416	10.9352	-1.74	28.79
	Abstract_-Linguistic_SA	100	10.1885	5.02741	.50274	9.1910	11.1860	.97	25.32

Dim_4	Abstract_-ELT_UK	100	-4.0458	3.66045	.36604	-4.7721	-3.3195	-9.27	5.04
	Abstract_-Linguistic-UK	100	-3.6519	3.38008	.33801	-4.3226	-2.9812	-9.27	7.16
	Abstract_-ELT_SA	100	-3.5893	3.73068	.37307	-4.3295	-2.8491	-9.27	7.82
	Abstract_-Linguistic_SA	100	-3.7519	3.37986	.33799	-4.4225	-3.0813	-9.27	6.80
Dim_5	Abstract_-ELT_UK	100	3.3904	6.66973	.66697	2.0670	4.7138	-3.92	36.05
	Abstract_-Linguistic-UK	100	2.8203	4.93934	.49393	1.8402	3.8004	-3.92	25.54
	Abstract_-ELT_SA	100	3.0245	4.37645	.43764	2.1561	3.8929	-3.33	17.59
	Abstract_-Linguistic_SA	100	4.2550	5.74769	.57477	3.1145	5.3955	-3.92	39.68

As far as D4 is concerned, the abstracts of both countries from both disciplines produce non-argumentative discourse. As far as BELTA (-4.04) is concerned, it is the most non-argumentative among others. On the other hand, SELTA, with a mean score of -3.58, is the least non-argumentative. BLA and SLA (-3.65 and -3.75, respectively) produce non-argumentative discourse with very little difference in their mean scores. On D5, the categories from both countries produce abstract discourse. SLA produces abstract discourse on positive polarity with a mean score of 4.25. BLA produces the least abstract discourse with a minimum mean score of 2.82. SELTA and BELTA, with mean scores of 3.02 and 3.39, respectively, produce abstract discourse to a varying degree.

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Introduction Section

Table 4 shows that, like the abstract section, the introduction section produces informational discourse. BELTI, with a mean score of -18.54, is the most informational, while SELTI, with a mean score of -17.00, is the least informational. In contrast, regarding the introduction sections from the area of linguistics, SLI (-18.37) is more informational than BLI (-17.77).

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics introduction section across five textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Introduction_ELT_UK	100	-18.5441	4.28109	.42811	-19.3936	-17.6946	-25.75	1.08
	Introduction_Linguistic-UK	100	-17.7736	3.63739	.36374	-18.4953	-17.0519	-24.52	-8.07
	Introduction_ELT_SA	100	-17.0097	4.25920	.42592	-17.8548	-16.1646	-28.14	-6.50
	Introduction_Linguistic_SA	100	-18.3776	4.44018	.44402	-19.2586	-17.4966	-27.01	-3.16

Dim_2	Introduction_ELT_UK	100	-3.2008	1.97600	.19760	-3.5929	-2.8087	-6.72	3.25
	Introduction_Linguistic-UK	100	-3.2849	2.19376	.21938	-3.7202	-2.8496	-6.36	4.48
	Introduction_ELT_SA	100	-2.7759	2.21240	.22124	-3.2149	-2.3369	-6.42	5.47
	Introduction_Linguistic_SA	100	-3.5973	1.84673	.18467	-3.9637	-3.2309	-7.22	1.69
Dim_3	Introduction_ELT_UK	100	7.3748	3.71309	.37131	6.6380	8.1116	.14	20.39
	Introduction_Linguistic-UK	100	6.5112	3.08548	.30855	5.8990	7.1234	1.01	16.74
	Introduction_ELT_SA	100	9.2789	3.30419	.33042	8.6233	9.9345	2.57	19.14
	Introduction_Linguistic_SA	100	9.5809	4.44557	.44456	8.6988	10.4630	2.04	30.44
Dim_4	Introduction_ELT_UK	100	-3.3070	2.13144	.21314	-3.7299	-2.8841	-8.07	2.03
	Introduction_Linguistic-UK	100	-2.6100	2.17078	.21708	-3.0407	-2.1793	-7.59	3.31
	Introduction_ELT_SA	100	-2.7082	2.70440	.27044	-3.2448	-2.1716	-9.27	8.12
	Introduction_Linguistic_SA	100	-3.8160	2.38922	.23892	-4.2901	-3.3419	-9.27	6.93
Dim_5	Introduction_ELT_UK	100	5.2733	3.67644	.36764	4.5438	6.0028	-3.00	14.03
	Introduction_Linguistic-UK	100	5.8319	3.45458	.34546	5.1464	6.5174	-2.68	14.66
	Introduction_ELT_SA	100	4.9081	4.32371	.43237	4.0502	5.7660	-.95	20.36
	Introduction_Linguistic_SA	100	5.1165	3.72976	.37298	4.3764	5.8566	-2.03	17.18

On D2, both countries produce non-narrative discourse on negative polarity. SLI, with a mean score of -3.59, and BLI, with a mean score of -3.28, produce non-narrative discourse to a varying degree. BELTI (-3.20) is more non-narrative than SELTI (-2.77). On D3, both countries produce explicit discourse on positive polarity. There is a significant difference in the mean scores of SELTI (9.27) and BELTI (7.37) in producing explicit discourse. There is a substantial difference in the mean score of SLI (9.58) and BLI (6.51) in producing discourse on this dimension. On D4, both the countries produce non-evaluative discourse. SLI (-3.81) is more non-evaluative than BLI (-2.61). However, regarding the introduction section of linguistics, BELTI, with a mean score of -3.30, is more non-evaluative than SELTI (-2.70). As far as D5 is concerned, BLI (5.83) is more abstract than SLI (5.11). Likewise, BELTI, with a mean score of 5.27, is more abstract than SELTI (4.90). The findings based on mean dimension scores provide evidence that introductions from both countries in both disciplines differ in their discourse production.

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Literature Review Section

Like other sections, the literature review section also produces informational discourse to varying degrees. BLL (-19.00) produces the highest informational discourse, while SLL, with a mean score of -16.64, produces the least informational discourse. Table 5 indicates less difference

between the mean scores of SELTL (-17.85) and BELTL (-17.00). On D2, all the countries fall on the negative polarity of the continuum and produce non-narrative discourse. Generally, narrative discourse states past events and non-narrative discourse presents a first-hand account of the events (Nijk, 2022). On this dimension, like dimension 1, BLL with mean scores of -3.82 again produces the most non-narrative discourse. The mean score of SLL, i.e., -2.98, shows a significant difference from BLL. Like D1, again, there is significantly less difference on this dimension between the mean scores of SELTL (-2.69) and BELTL (-2.54).

Table 5. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics literature review section across five textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Literature Review_-ELT_UK	100	-17.0026	3.87477	.38748	-17.7714	-16.2338	-25.75	-5.77
	Literature Review_-Linguistic-UK	100	-19.0031	3.94748	.39475	-19.7864	-18.2198	-39.62	-10.98
	Literature Review_ELT_SA	100	-17.8530	4.94834	.49483	-18.8349	-16.8711	-27.87	-5.60
	Literature Review_-Linguistic_SA	100	-16.6436	4.69079	.46908	-17.5744	-15.7128	-28.56	-6.21
Dim_2	Literature Review_ELT_UK	100	-2.5484	2.11950	.21195	-2.9690	-2.1278	-6.30	3.54
	Literature Review_–Linguistic-UK	100	-3.8284	.95580	.09558	-4.0181	-3.6387	-7.38	-1.32
	Literature Review_ELT_SA	100	-2.6944	1.74694	.17469	-3.0410	-2.3478	-7.38	3.47
	Literature Review_–Linguistic_SA	100	-2.9812	1.67404	.16740	-3.3134	-2.6490	-6.91	1.55
Dim_3	Literature Review_ELT_UK	100	7.5324	3.68593	.36859	6.8010	8.2638	-1.13	17.07
	Literature Review_–Linguistic-UK	100	6.2221	2.03624	.20362	5.8181	6.6261	1.62	13.03
	Literature Review_ELT_SA	100	8.9769	2.78658	.27866	8.4240	9.5298	.23	16.37
	Literature Review_–Linguistic_SA	100	8.5147	3.81885	.38189	7.7570	9.2724	.39	23.30

Dim_4	Literature Review_ELT_ UK	100	-2.8857	2.61893	.26189	-3.4054	-2.3660	-7.37	5.37
	Literature Review_–Linguistic-UK	100	-3.9750	1.53272	.15327	-4.2791	-3.6709	-9.27	1.26
	Literature Review_ELT_ SA	100	-3.3711	2.72060	.27206	-3.9109	-2.8313	-8.24	13.56
	Literature Review_–Linguistic_SA	100	-3.7801	2.32669	.23267	-4.2418	-3.3184	-9.27	4.06
Dim_5	Literature Review_ELT_ UK	100	6.4602	3.92245	.39225	5.6819	7.2385	-3.09	21.33
	Literature Review_-Linguistic-UK	100	3.9349	2.33913	.23391	3.4708	4.3990	-3.92	8.73
	Literature Review_ELT_ SA	100	5.0836	3.46112	.34611	4.3968	5.7704	-.06	21.59
	Literature Review_-Linguistic_SA	100	5.9433	4.54923	.45492	5.0406	6.8460	-.85	25.00

According to the analysis, SELTL produces the most explicit discourse on dimension D3, with a mean score of 8.97. BELTL produces less explicit discourse than SELTL, with a mean score of 7.53 for the same dimension. The analysis shows a significant difference in mean scores between SLL and BLL, with 8.51 and 6.22, respectively. On dimension D4, all countries produce non-argumentative discourse. BLL produces the most non-argumentative discourse, with a mean score of -3.97, whereas (-3.78) produces less non-argumentative discourse. On the same dimension, BELTL scores a mean score of -2.88, which is fewer non-argumentative scores than SELTL (-3.37). On dimension D5, there is a significant difference between the literature review sections of ELT and linguistics from Britain. BELTL is the most abstract, with a mean score of 6.46, while BLL is the least abstract, with a mean score of 3.93. SELTL (5.08) produces less abstract discourse than SLL (5.94). As far as D3 is concerned, SELTL, with a mean score of 8.97, produces the most explicit discourse. BELTL (7.53) is less explicit than SELTL on this dimension. There is a significant difference in the mean scores of SLL and BLL, i.e., 8.51 and 6.22, respectively. On D4, all the countries produce non-argumentative discourse. BLL produces the most non-argumentative discourse with a mean score of -3.97 (-3.78), producing less non-argumentative discourse than BLL. BELTL, with a mean score of -2.88, shows fewer non-argumentative scores than SELTL (-3.37). On D5, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the literature review sections of ELT and linguistics from Britain. BELTL, with a mean score of 6.46, is the most abstract, while BLL, with a mean score of 3.93, is the least abstract. SELTL (5.08) shows less abstract discourse than SLL (5.94).

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Methodology Section

Table 6 shows that both countries' methodology sections produce informational discourse. SELTM, BELTM, and BLM, with mean scores of -18.84, -18.14, and -18.80, respectively, show

informational discourse to a varying degree. SLM, with a mean score of -16.94, shows the least informational discourse.

Table 6. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics methodology section across five textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Methodology_ ELT_UK	100	-18.1413	5.64502	.56450	-19.2614	-17.0212	-28.17	1.52
	Methodology_ Linguistic-UK	100	-18.8039	4.06869	.40687	-19.6112	-17.9966	-30.64	-11.53
	Methodology_ ELT_SA	100	-18.8452	4.37437	.43744	-19.7132	-17.9772	-40.03	-5.09
	Methodology_ Linguistic_SA	100	-16.9474	4.98288	.49829	-17.9361	-15.9587	-26.33	.62
Dim_2	Methodology_ ELT_UK	100	-2.5120	2.16418	.21642	-2.9414	-2.0826	-6.75	10.12
	Methodology_ Linguistic-UK	100	-3.4359	1.73155	.17315	-3.7795	-3.0923	-7.38	.76
	Methodology_ ELT_SA	100	-3.2102	1.96183	.19618	-3.5995	-2.8209	-7.38	5.22
	Methodology_ Linguistic_SA	100	-3.2492	1.89568	.18957	-3.6253	-2.8731	-7.03	4.14
Dim_3	Methodology_ ELT_UK	100	6.7529	3.36257	.33626	6.0857	7.4201	-1.68	21.39
	Methodology_ Linguistic-UK	100	5.9185	2.92707	.29271	5.3377	6.4993	.67	16.54
	Methodology_ ELT_SA	100	7.9844	2.91411	.29141	7.4062	8.5626	1.62	14.89
	Methodology_ Linguistic_SA	100	7.5848	4.43638	.44364	6.7045	8.4651	1.80	22.69
Dim_4	Methodology_ ELT_UK	100	-3.5993	2.96344	.29634	-4.1873	-3.0113	-9.27	6.07
	Methodology_ Linguistic-UK	100	-3.7778	2.02541	.20254	-4.1797	-3.3759	-9.02	1.44
	Methodology_ ELT_SA	100	-3.0141	2.71345	.27135	-3.5525	-2.4757	-9.27	7.41
	Methodology_ Linguistic_SA	100	-2.9139	2.80342	.28034	-3.4702	-2.3576	-9.27	5.90
Dim_5	Methodology_ ELT_UK	100	3.3667	3.47389	.34739	2.6774	4.0560	-3.92	13.16
	Methodology_ Linguistic-UK	100	4.7647	3.49118	.34912	4.0720	5.4574	-3.92	14.36
	Methodology_ ELT_SA	100	3.7728	3.63490	.36349	3.0516	4.4940	-3.92	24.92
	Methodology_ Linguistic_SA	100	5.2715	4.09994	.40999	4.4580	6.0850	-1.88	25.00

On D2, the methodology section has been found to produce non-narrative discourse. BLM, i.e., -3.43 have, scored the highest mean scores. Comparatively, BELTM (-2.51) is the least non-

narrative. SLM (-3.21) is a little less non-narrative than BLM. There is less difference in SLM and SELTM mean scores (-3.21). McEnery and Xiao (2010) find that internal comparisons of genres are important indicators of differences. The comparison of the mean scores on D3 indicates the methodology sections from both the disciplines of the research articles as explicit and elaborative in style. The degree of explicitness varies across disciplines. SELTM produces the most explicit discourse, with a mean score of 7.98, while BLM produces the least explicit discourse with a mean score of 5.91. SLM (7.58) is slightly less explicit than SELTM. BELTM (6.75) is somewhat more explicit than BLM. On D4, the mean scores reveal the non-argumentative style of ELT and Linguistics methodology sections with minor variations. BLM, with a mean score of -3.77, is the most non-argumentative. On the other hand, SLM (-2.91) is the least non-argumentative. BELTM (-3.59) is less non-argumentative than BLM. BELTM (-3.01) is more non-argumentative than SLM. On D5, both countries produce abstract discourse. SLM (5.27) is the most abstract, and BELTM (3.36) is the least abstract. BLM, with a mean score of 4.76, is more abstract than SELTM. SLM (5.27) is more abstract than BLM.

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Analysis and Discussion Section

On D1, SELTD, with a mean score of -18.75, is the most informative, while BELTD, with a mean score of -14.00, is the least informative. Table 7 indicates that SLD (-14.86) is slightly more informational than BELTD. BLD (-15.31) also shows informative discourse. On D2, both countries produce non-narrative discourse. There is a slight difference between the mean scores of SLD (-3.26) and BLD (-3.25). BELTD (-2.47) and SELTD (-2.94) produce less non-narrative discourse.

Table 7. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics analysis and discussion section across five textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_UK	100	-14.0028	4.35504	.43550	-14.8669	-13.1387	-22.51	6.71
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic-UK	100	-15.3100	4.66173	.46617	-16.2350	-14.3850	-29.48	-.40
	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_SA	100	-18.7540	4.04695	.40469	-19.5570	-17.9510	-25.76	.15
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic_SA	100	-14.8687	3.79872	.37987	-15.6224	-14.1150	-21.85	-8.56
Dim_2	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_UK	100	-2.4709	1.91220	.19122	-2.8503	-2.0915	-6.76	6.93
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic-UK	100	-3.2515	1.55868	.15587	-3.5608	-2.9422	-6.41	1.55

	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_SA	100	-2.9446	1.86950	.18695	-3.3155	-2.5737	-6.08	4.96
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic_SA	100	-3.2653	1.99735	.19973	-3.6616	-2.8690	-6.64	4.34
Dim_3	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_UK	100	6.0983	2.65056	.26506	5.5724	6.6242	-.10	19.19
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic-UK	100	5.2606	2.79137	.27914	4.7067	5.8145	-4.06	13.90
	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_SA	100	8.3498	2.98242	.29824	7.7580	8.9416	3.32	17.03
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic_SA	100	6.2925	2.94830	.29483	5.7075	6.8775	-2.38	15.65
Dim_4	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_UK	100	-2.1721	2.47550	.24755	-2.6633	-1.6809	-5.99	9.00
	Analysis & Discussion_-Linguistic-UK	100	-2.8376	2.49939	.24994	-3.3335	-2.3417	-8.03	3.81
	Analysis & Discussion_-ELT_SA	100	-2.9942	2.61459	.26146	-3.5130	-2.4754	-7.34	4.14
	Analysis & Discussion_ Linguistic_SA	100	-2.7757	2.90134	.29013	-3.3514	-2.2000	-7.98	8.17
Dim_5	Analysis & Discussion_ ELT_UK	100	5.1148	3.11347	.31135	4.4970	5.7326	-1.42	17.79
	Analysis & Discussion_ Linguistic-UK	100	5.7628	3.90611	.39061	4.9877	6.5379	-3.92	14.83
	Analysis & Discussion_ ELT_SA	100	4.6168	3.70973	.37097	3.8807	5.3529	-1.97	24.86
	Analysis & Discussion_ Linguistic_SA	100	4.9363	3.57326	.35733	4.2273	5.6453	-.82	18.87

On D3, all the countries produce explicit discourse. Table 7 shows that SELTD produces the most informative discourse with a mean score of 8.34. There is a slight difference in the mean scores of BELTD (6.09) and SLD (6.29). BLD (5.26) produces the least explicit discourse. In the field of journalism, primarily argumentative style of writing is used (Steensen, 2018). However, the results show that third-person pronouns, private verbs, and hedges produce non-argumentative discourse in this study. On D4, both countries' discourses fall on negative polarity, producing non-argumentative discourse. BELTD, BLD, SELTD, and SLD, with mean scores of -2.17, -2.83, -2.99, and -2.77, respectively, produce non-argumentative discourse with a varying degree on this dimension. On D5, all the countries produce abstract discourse. BLD produces the most abstract

discourse with a mean score of 5.76. SELTD (4.61) produces the least abstract discourse. BELTD (5.11) and SLD (4.93) also produce abstract discourse.

Linguistic Variation between Saudi and British Conclusion Section

Table 8 shows that both countries produce informative discourse on D1. SLC produces the most informative discourse with a mean score of -16.58. BELTC (-12.96) produces the least informative discourse. There is a slight difference in the mean score of BLC (-14.28) and SELTC (-14.76). Like other sections, the conclusion section also produces non-narrative discourse on D2. There is a slight difference in the mean scores of BLC (-3.02), SELTC (-3.37), and BLC (-3.77). BELTC, with a mean score of -2.94, is the least non-narrative.

Table 8. *Descriptive statistics of ELT and Linguistics conclusion section across five textual dimensions*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Dim_1	Conclusion_ELT_UK	100	-12.9673	5.65299	.56530	-14.0890	-11.8456	-22.47	8.41
	Conclusion_Linguistic-UK	100	-14.2899	5.90948	.59095	-15.4625	-13.1173	-35.38	4.95
	Conclusion_ELT_SA	100	-14.7605	6.89206	.68921	-16.1280	-13.3930	-28.06	12.59
	Conclusion_Linguistic_SA	100	-16.5810	5.44535	.54454	-17.6615	-15.5005	-27.58	-3.73
Dim_2	Conclusion_ELT_UK	100	-2.9472	2.30103	.23010	-3.4038	-2.4906	-7.38	4.93
	Conclusion_Linguistic-UK	100	-3.0266	2.38414	.23841	-3.4997	-2.5535	-7.38	3.03
	Conclusion_ELT_SA	100	-3.3729	2.34205	.23421	-3.8376	-2.9082	-7.19	7.65
	Conclusion_Linguistic_SA	100	-3.7711	2.19187	.21919	-4.2060	-3.3362	-7.38	4.44
Dim_3	Conclusion_ELT_UK	100	7.1226	4.55665	.45566	6.2185	8.0267	-7.75	17.50
	Conclusion_Linguistic-UK	100	5.9959	3.88473	.38847	5.2251	6.7667	-4.09	21.15
	Conclusion_ELT_SA	100	9.3530	4.03562	.40356	8.5522	10.1538	-1.23	20.71
	Conclusion_Linguistic_SA	100	9.8378	4.65385	.46538	8.9144	10.7612	1.81	25.88
Di	Conclusion_ELT_UK	100	-.9010	3.51036	.35104	-1.5975	-.2045	-7.86	7.96

	Conclusion _Linguistic -UK	100	-1.3558	3.46630	.34663	-2.0436	-.6680	-9.27	10.65
	Conclusion _ELT_SA	100	-.8086	4.28909	.42891	-1.6596	.0424	-9.27	12.34
	Conclusion _Linguistic _SA	100	-1.5570	4.56790	.45679	-2.4634	-.6506	-9.27	12.18
Dim_5	Conclusion _ELT_UK	100	5.2564	4.47927	.44793	4.3676	6.1452	-3.92	16.39
	Conclusion _Linguistic -UK	100	4.0554	4.79204	.47920	3.1046	5.0062	-2.67	16.32
	Conclusion _ELT_SA	100	4.6610	4.30400	.43040	3.8070	5.5150	-3.92	16.66
	Conclusion _Linguistic _SA	100	4.4952	4.52528	.45253	3.5973	5.3931	-3.92	18.91

On D3, both the countries produce explicit discourse. SLC (9.83) is the most explicit, while BLC (5.99) is the least explicit. SELTC (9.35) is slightly less explicit than SLC. BELTC (7.12) also produces explicit discourse. On D4, BELTC and SELTC produce mixed-purpose discourse with mean scores of -0.90 and -0.80, respectively. The closeness to the zero mean score means that the function of discourse is mixed purpose. BLC (-1.35) and SLC (-1.55) produce non-argumentative discourse. On D5, both countries' disciplines fall on positive polarity, thus producing abstract discourse. Passives are the main linguistic features for producing abstract discourse. Passives like "by-passives and agentless passive have the same discourse function: to switch the focus of action in the active clause from subject/ actor to object/ patient or the action itself" (Westin, 2002, p. 118). BLC (4.05), SELTC (4.66), and SLC (4.49), with a slight difference in their mean scores, produce abstract discourse. BELTC, with a mean score of 5.25, is slightly more abstract than others.

Conclusion

The findings show that Saudi English research papers differ remarkably from Britain's on all five textual dimensions. Saudi ELT abstracts are more informational, non-narrative, and explicit than British ELT abstracts. At the same time, they are less non-argumentative and abstract than British ELT abstracts. Saudi linguistics abstracts are more informational, non-narrative, explicit, non-argumentative, and abstract than British ones. Saudi ELT introductions are less informative, non-narrative, non-argumentative, and abstract than British ELT. In contrast, they are more explicit than the British ELT introduction section. The Saudi linguistics introduction section is more informational, non-narrative, explicit, and non-argumentative than the British. They are less abstract than the British introduction section from the linguistics discipline.

Regarding the literature review section, Saudi ELT articles are less abstract and more informational, non-narrative, explicit, and non-argumentative than British research articles. Saudi linguistics articles are more explicit and abstract than British linguistic articles. On the other hand, they are less informational, non-narrative, and non-argumentative than British linguistic articles in their discourse production. The methodology section of Saudi and British research papers also shows remarkable differences regarding all the five dimensions. Saudi ELT articles are less non-

argumentative and more informational, non-narrative, explicit, and abstract than British ELT articles. So far, as far as Saudi linguistics articles are concerned, they are more explicit and abstract and less informational, non-narrative, and non-argumentative than British linguistic articles.

The analysis & Discussion section of both the disciplines from both countries shows slight differences on all the dimensions; they produce discourse to a varying degree, and none of the sections is similar in producing discourse. Saudi ELT articles are more informational, non-narrative, explicit, and non-argumentative than British articles. They are less abstract than that of British articles. Saudi and British linguistics articles are almost the same in producing non-narrative discourse. They are more explicit and less informational, non-argumentative, and abstract than British articles in producing discourse. The study results show the most prominent difference in the conclusion section of Saudi and British research papers; mainly, Saudi Linguistics articles are the most different compared to British articles in producing explicit discourse. They are more informational, non-narrative, explicit, non-argumentative, and abstract than British linguistics conclusion sections. Saudi ELT articles are less abstract and more informative, non-narrative and explicit than British ELT articles. Moreover, the ELT conclusion section of Britain and Saudi Arabia produces mixed-purpose discourse on dimension four.

The results confirm that both countries have shown differences in both disciplines in their discourse production. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results also show statistically significant differences (as the p-value is less than 0.05) between all the sections and within sections of both countries. The research findings are significant in highlighting variation among the sections of Saudi and British research papers and achieving the research objective. The study provides a statistical basis for further research. Future researchers may probe the reasons behind these linguistic variations.

The study provides a list of linguistic features associated with each dimension for writing research articles in linguistics and ELT. It will enrich learners' understanding of how to use those linguistic features in their writings for publication. Further, ESP and EAP instructors could introduce linguistic features associated with a particular discourse to the students. Moreover, students can develop a variety of corpora to explore the frequently occurring linguistic features. The study's results can also be used to support the pedagogical practices in language teaching classrooms.

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Teacher Autonomy, Creative Self-efficacy, and Innovative Behavior: Perspectives from Chinese University EFL Teachers

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Abstract
Teachers' innovative behavior contributes to students' academic achievements, school innovation, and even the quality of education. This study aims to investigate the correlations between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior from the perspectives of Chinese university EFL teachers. The significance of the current study lies in exploring how different motivational mechanisms influence teachers' innovative behavior, providing references for improving their teaching effectiveness and professional development. The main research question that guided this study was: What are the interrelationships between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior among EFL teachers? This study recruited 297 Chinese university EFL teachers as the sample, inviting them to fill in a self-reported questionnaire to assess teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior. Results showed that teacher autonomy positively predicted teachers' creative self-efficacy and innovative behavior; creative self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior. The findings suggest that education administrators should offer teachers autonomous support and tailored training programs to inspire their innovation. Additionally, teachers may work collaboratively with their colleagues and obtain peer support to execute innovative practices, which facilitates both students' innovative performance and teachers' professional development. Finally, as innovative behavior is complex and dynamic, future research may add other organizational and individual factors while considering cultural differences and institutional systems to explore teachers' innovative behavior.

Keywords: creative self-efficacy, EFL teachers, innovative behavior, professional development, teacher autonomy

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Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence(AI) technology brings both promising opportunities and challenges to educational reforms (Syerina Syahrin & Akmal, 2024). Confronting such a situation, the Chinese government has mandated that universities and colleges cultivate talents with comprehensible skills to meet the demands of future employers in the workplace. In Chinese EFL educational settings, students have to improve their English proficiency and develop their innovative abilities in dealing with complex situations. As the principal character in implementing teaching tasks and interacting with students, teachers play a significant role in cultivating creative and innovative citizens in this knowledgeable society (Vermeulen et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to explore factors influencing teachers' Innovative Behavior (IB), for it helps to facilitate students' academic achievements and teachers' professional development.

Among a series of variables influencing people's IB, individuals' autonomous motivations have established correlations with their behaviors, including innovation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). According to Self-determination Theory (SDT), employees have three basic psychological needs—the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which significantly predict their sense of autonomous motivations, thus positively affecting their work performance and behavior (Deci et al., 2017). Previous research has investigated these three needs as a construct, but limited studies have differentiated the concrete effects of each need in detail (Cai & Tang, 2022). The Need for Autonomy (NA) refers to a person's need to experience freedom and volition based on their actions. The present study mainly investigates the effect of NA on teachers' IB for these reasons. First, NA stands as the core factor among the three needs, and employees achieve need satisfaction and higher well-being and performance when they get autonomy support from their supervisors (Deci et al., 2017). Second, critics of SDT perceive that autonomy fits individualistic cultures rather than collectivistic cultures, such as in Asia (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, other scholars found that when employees were more autonomous, they became more psychologically satisfied and optimistic at work across all cultures (Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci et al., 2017). As this study was conducted in China where collectivistic culture prevails, it is fascinating to examine whether autonomy affects individuals' IB in Asian educational institutions. Hence, the current study perceives autonomy as one crucial factor influencing teachers' innovative behavior.

In alignment with Bandura's (1977) notions, self-efficacy concerning one's self-confidence in achieving expected outcomes could well predict human behavior. Developing from self-efficacy, Creative Self-Efficacy (CSE) has been attached to great significance in predicting individuals' innovative behavior. Unlike one's intrinsic motivation, which is comparatively stable, CSE is a self-regulatory state susceptible to different contextual factors (Farmer & Tierney, 2017). Employees with higher CSE are more confident and persistent in transferring their novice ideas to innovative performance, even when facing challenges and setbacks (Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Xu et al., 2021). As teachers' CSE relates to their confidence in fulfilling specific teaching tasks and applying new ideas, it positively affects their IB in institutions (Hsiao et al., 2011).

Teachers' creative self-efficacy can further influence the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior in the workplace. When teachers perceive higher autonomous support from their supervisors, they might achieve higher self-efficacy and psychological safety in renovating their teaching approaches. This study aims to investigate the interrelated relationships between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and teachers' innovative behavior.

The significance of the current research lies in unraveling different motivational factors influencing teachers' innovative behavior in the Chinese EFL context, which may provide references for improving student achievements, teaching effectiveness, and teachers' professional development. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to answer the following research questions:

(1) What are the interrelationships between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior among EFL teachers?

(2) Does creative self-efficacy mediate the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior among EFL teachers?

Based on the proposed interrelationships between the three variables as discussed above, this study hypothesizes the following:

Hypothesis 1: Teacher autonomy positively correlates with EFL teachers' innovative behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Teacher autonomy positively correlates with EFL teachers' creative self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 3: Creative self-efficacy positively correlates with EFL teachers' innovative behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Creative self-efficacy mediates the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior among EFL teachers.

Literature Review

Innovative Behavior

According to Scott and Bruce (1994), IB is a multistage process with various essential activities and behaviors at each stage. Janssen (2003) defined IB as a three-stage process: individuals' idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization to improve role performance and group or organization effectiveness. In the educational realm, many scholars adopted Janssen's (2003) three-stage conceptualization of IB. In contrast, other authors explored teachers' IB by focusing on one or two stages, such as idea generation (So, 2013), idea generation, and realization (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010), to fit their research. Given its research purpose to explore teachers' innovative intentions and practices at the workplace, this study defined IB as teachers' willingness to transform teaching practices, efforts to design and implement innovative teaching practices to promote students' innovative performance in class (M. Zhang & X. Zhang, 2012).

Teacher Autonomy and Teachers' Innovative Behavior

Individual autonomy is a broad concept relating to one's discretion in scheduling the work and choice to exercise professional practices (Dikilitaş &Mumford, 2019; Evans &Fischer, 1992). In the educational context, teacher autonomy is a multidimensional concept "mainly focusing on issues of self-governance and experiences of 'freedom' in professional practice" (Mausethagen & Mølstad, 2015, p.31). Previous literature categorized TA into two primary constructs; one construct refers to teachers' classroom autonomy, including teachers' decision-making on their classroom practices, including lesson plans, teaching materials and approaches, curricular development, and student outcome assessment (Ozdemir & Cakalci, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021). The other focuses on teachers' participation in school-level decisions, such as affecting school culture or policymaking (Benson, 2010). This study defines TA as teachers' freedom to determine the curricula, teaching approaches and techniques, teaching contents, teaching processes, and

assessment of student learning and assignments (OECD, 2020).

As TA empowers teachers with the freedom and control of classroom management, they may feel respected and recognized in the workplace (Erss et al., 2016). With a sample of 473 Chinese university EFL teachers, Han, Gao, and Yang (2021) concluded that autonomy positively correlated with their innovation performance and teaching satisfaction. An autonomous teacher will innovate the learning materials, teaching approaches, and evaluation methods to fit students' learning expectations and skills (Orakci &Durnali, 2022). Conversely, teachers' perceptions of restricted autonomy negatively affected their innovations and openness to school improvement (Buske, 2018). These studies have provided empirical evidence that teacher autonomy positively correlates with teachers' innovative behavior.

Creative Self-efficacy and Innovative Behavior

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy refers to individuals' self-judgements to achieve certain outcomes through different actions. Instead of focusing on one's skills or competence, self-efficacy relates to one's perception and internal beliefs to succeed in a particular situation (Orakci et al., 2023). Based on theory related to creativity and innovation management, Tierney and Farmer (2002) defined CSE as "the belief that one possesses the ability to produce creative outcomes" (p.1138). As innovation is complex and challenging in real situations, individuals need specific knowledge, expertise, and self-confidence to transfer creative ideas into innovative outcomes. According to Michael, Hou, and Fan (2011), "Individuals with high creative self-efficacy can mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (p.260). Previous studies reported that CSE produced an internal drive for individuals to carry out innovative activities in the workplace (Nur Hidayah & Rodhiah Rodhiah, 2024; Yuan et al., 2023). With higher creative self-efficacy, teachers are more willing and motivated to execute innovative behavior in teaching activities and professional development (Klaeijsen et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2022). These studies have highlighted the role of creative self-efficacy in predicting individuals' innovative behavior.

Creative Self-Efficacy as a Mediator

As innovativeness is a trial-and-error process, it is significant to create a friendly environment that encourages innovation without the pressure of making mistakes (Fang et al., 2019). On one hand, TA grants teachers trust and respect to execute their professional practices, which may generate higher CSE among teachers (Nembhard &Edmondson, 2006). Teachers with high self-efficacy perceived that they had high autonomy over classroom management (Orakci & Durnali, 2022; Ozkal, 2014). Studies provided evidence of a strong association between teachers' autonomy support and their self-efficacy among EFL teachers (Han et al., 2021; Azari& Amirian, 2020). On the other hand, teachers with higher CSE develop the willingness and readiness to invest their time and energy into classroom teaching or renovate their professional development courses.

Additionally, empirical studies also evidenced that self-efficacy not only highly predicted individuals' IB but also served as a significant mediator between different factors (i.e., innovation culture, leadership, school support) and their IB (Cai &Tang, 2021; Choi et al., 2021; Uppathampracha & Liu, 2022). Conducted in Asian educational contexts, a recent study reported that teacher self-efficacy mediated the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher innovation (Teng et al., 2024). When teachers perceive higher autonomous support and trust from their supervisors, they will develop higher CSE, thus performing more confidently and being

determined to be innovative at work. Therefore, CSE could be an essential mediator in influencing teachers' innovative behavior through interacting with teacher autonomy.

As discussed above, previous studies have investigated the respective effects of autonomy and creative self-efficacy on influencing teachers' innovative behavior. However, few studies have examined the mediating role of CSE between TA and IB among Chinese EFL teachers. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the interrelationships among teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior. Understanding the interrelated correlations of teacher autonomy and creative self-efficacy and their joint impact on teachers' IB could provide school leaders with insights to improve teachers' innovative behavior and performance.

Methodology

Participants

This study employed purposeful sampling methods to recruit Chinese university EFL teachers as the sample, as they need to improve students' language proficiency, learning motivation, and engagement through innovative pedagogical approaches. To generate the population of the participants, the researcher distributed a self-reported questionnaire to 415 EFL teachers in the academic year of 2023. These teacher participants taught various EFL courses in both public and private universities across different provinces in China. The current study informed participants of the anonymous and voluntary basis to administer the questionnaire, finally obtaining 297 valid copies. Table One presented participants' demographic information, including their gender, education level, and years of teaching experience.

Table 1. *Demographic information of teacher participants*

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	85	28.62%
	Female	212	71.38%
Education	Bachelor's degree	34	11.45%
	Master's degree	155	52.19%
	Doctoral Degree	108	36.36%
Years of teaching experience	below five years	82	27.61%
	11–15 years	137	46.13%
	16–20 years	62	20.88%
	21 years and above	16	5.39%

Research Instruments

The current study used a self-reported questionnaire to assess the three variables: teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior. The questionnaire included two sections. The first section collected participants' demographic information, including gender, age, education levels, and years of teaching experience in universities. The second section consisted of three scales: teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior. All the items were rated on a five-Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), and the following presented detailed information on the three constructs.

Teacher autonomy. A seven-item scale developed by Zhu et al. (2018) was adapted to measure teacher autonomy. Sample items were "I have the autonomy to determine specific

teaching objectives of the curriculum I taught" and "I have the freedom to choose teaching approaches in my class." The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this measurement was .889.

Creative self-efficacy. A four-item scale was adapted from Tierney and Farmer's (2002) creative self-efficacy scale, determining the degree to which teachers feel confident to generate innovative ideas to solve problems or confront challenging situations. Sample items included "I am confident to use innovative ideas to solve problems" and "I am able to develop innovative ideas." The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this measurement was .885.

Innovative behavior. A 12-item instrument measuring teachers' innovative behavior consisted of three constructs: innovation willingness, action, and result (Zhang & Zhang, 2012). Sample items were, "I am willing to learn from others' innovative teaching experiences" (innovation willingness), "I apply innovative teaching approaches to improve teaching effectiveness in class" (innovation action), "I encourage students to reflect and negotiate controversial issues at class" (innovation result). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient values of each construct were assessed to be 871, .881, and .886, respectively.

Control Variables

According to previous research, teachers' demographic factors may also influence their innovative behavior (Yang & Huang, 2008); this study considers gender, work experience, and education levels as control variables in hypotheses testing.

Data Analysis

The current study conducted the confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the scales' reliability and validity and employed the software SPSS 27.0 and Amos 26.0 to test the hypotheses through structural equation modeling.

Results

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Before testing the hypotheses, the current study calculated the values of Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) to test the reliability of all scales in this study. Further, the convergent and discriminant validity could be assessed by calculating the average variances extracted (AVE) and the square roots of the AVEs (see Table Two). For this study, the values of Cronbach's alpha and CR of all variables are above the recommended value of 0.7 (Haier et al., 2010). Further, the values of AVE were above 0.05, showing good convergence validity of all scales. In addition, the discriminant validity could be obtained by taking the square roots of AVE, and Table Two provided sufficient proof that the divergent validity was also satisfactory.

Table 2. *Reliability and validity estimates*

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
Teacher Autonomy	7	0.738 - 0.766	0.899	0.559
Creative self-efficacy	4	0.794 - 0.827	0.885	0.657
Innovation Willingness	4	0.765 - 0.809	0.872	0.630
Innovation Action	4	0.793 - 0.815	0.881	0.649
Innovation Result	4	0.798 - 0.824	0.886	0.659

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables are presented in Table Three. Of the three subscales of innovative behavior, innovation willingness scored the highest (M=4.018,

SD=0.587), followed by innovation action (M=3.949, SD=0.636) and innovation result (M=3.900, SD=0.628). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), it is necessary to determine the relationship between the independent variable (teacher autonomy) and dependent variable (innovative behavior) before performing the mediation analysis. The correlation matrix demonstrated that teacher autonomy significantly correlated with innovative behavior (r=0.587, p < 0.001), which met the requisite condition for further statistical analysis.

Table 3. *Reliability and validity estimates*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Gender	0.286	0.453	1					
2. Years of teaching experiences	2.306	1.141	0.111	1				
3. Education	2.249	0.646	0.021	-0.379**	1			
4. TA	3.884	0.518	0.117*	-0.182**	0.196**	1		
5. CSE	4.138	0.599	0.109	-0.180**	0.162**	0.516***	1	
6. IB	3.956	0.531	0.155**	-0.201***	0.208***	0.587***	0.618***	1

Note. Number=297; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.
TA= teacher autonomy; CSE= creative self-efficacy; IB=innovative behavior.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis was performed to measure the proposed variables in this study. This study first constructed the five-factor model as the baseline model and then compared it with other models as demonstrated. Seeing Table Four, the five-factor model fit the data best (χ^2 = 297.505, df = 220, CFI = 0.981, TLI = 0.978, RMSEA = 0.034), while the single-factor model fit the worst (χ^2 = 1500.988, df = 230, CFI = 0.692, TLI = 0.661, RMSEA = 0.137).

Table 4. *Comparisons of model validation factor analysis*

Factors loaded	χ^2	df	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
5-factors: TA, CSE, IW, IA, IR	297.505	220	0.921	0.978	0.981	0.034
4-factors: TA+ CSE, IW, IA, IR	711.890	224	0.775	0.866	0.882	0.086
3-factors: TA, CSE, IW+ IA+ IR	720.874	227	0.793	0.867	0.880	0.086
2-factors: TA, CSE + IW+ IA+ IR	1028.424	229	0.662	0.786	0.806	0.109
1-factor: TA+ CSE+ IW+ IA+ IR	1500.988	230	0.606	0.661	0.692	0.137

Note. TA=teacher autonomy; CSE=creative self-efficacy; IW=innovation willingness; IA= innovation action; IR=innovation result.

Hypotheses Testing

Before testing the hypotheses, this study employed SEM to estimate the hypothesized model fit. According to the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2010), an acceptable model fit was obtained (χ^2 =358.832, df=284, TLI=0.980, CFI=0.982, RMSEA=0.030, SRMR=0.032). Then, this study followed the analytical procedure proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and adopted the Bootstrapping method to test the mediation effect.

First, the study employed the software SPSS27.0 to test the direct effects by performing hierarchical regression analysis. In the hypothesized model, TA was the independent variable, CSE was the mediator, and IB was the dependent variable. The three control variables were teachers' gender, years of teaching experience, and education level. Table Five presents the regression analysis results. Model Three was the baseline model incorporating three control variables, indicating that these three variables significantly correlated with teachers' IB. Compared with model Three, the independent variable (TA) was added to model Four, revealing that TA was

positively and significantly related to IB (g=0.559***, p<0.001). Therefore, H1 was supported. When the three demographic variables were controlled, Model Two indicated that TA positively correlated with CSE (g=0.562***, p<0.001), and Model Five indicated that CSE positively and significantly related to IB (g=0.515***, p<0.001). Therefore, both H2 and H3 were supported in this study.

Table 5. *Regression analysis results*

	Creative self-efficacy		Innovative Behavior			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Gender	0.164*	0.081	0.200**	0.116*	0.115*	0.087
Years of teaching experience	-0.082*	-0.045	-0.077**	-0.041	-0.035	-0.024
Education	0.093	0.030	0.116*	0.054	0.068	0.043
Teacher Autonomy		0.562***		0.559***		0.353***
Creative self-efficacy					0.515***	0.368***
R^2	0.058	0.278	0.089	0.367	0.407	0.491
Adjusted R^2	0.048	0.268	0.080	0.358	0.399	0.483
ΔR^2		0.220		0.278	0.318	0.124
F	5.987***	28.123***	9.573***	42.344***	50.071***	56.241***

Note. Number=297; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Further, the current study adopted the 5,000 bootstrapping method to test the mediation effect of CSE on TA and IB. Table Six indicated that the direct impact of TA on IB was significant (Effect=0.356. SE=0.074, 95% CI [0.220, 0.511]). When CSE entered into the model, the effect of TA on IB was also significant (Indirect Effect=0.255, SE=0.057, 95% CI [0.158, 0.388]). Since the lower confidence interval and upper confidence rate did not include the value of zero, the mediation effect was considered significant, which supported H4. Figure One demonstrates the standard estimates of the finalized SEM result of TA as the predictor of IB via CSE.

Table 6. *Mediation results*

	Effect	S.E.	Z	p-value	BC Lower	BC Upper
TOTAL	0.610	0.096	6.380	***	0.428	0.805
DIRECT: TA→IB	0.356	0.074	4.796	***	0.220	0.511
INDIRECT: TA→CSE→IB	0.255	0.057	4.474	***	0.158	0.388

Note. *** $p < 0.001$; Bootstrap 5000 times; 95% Confidence Interval; Control Variables added.

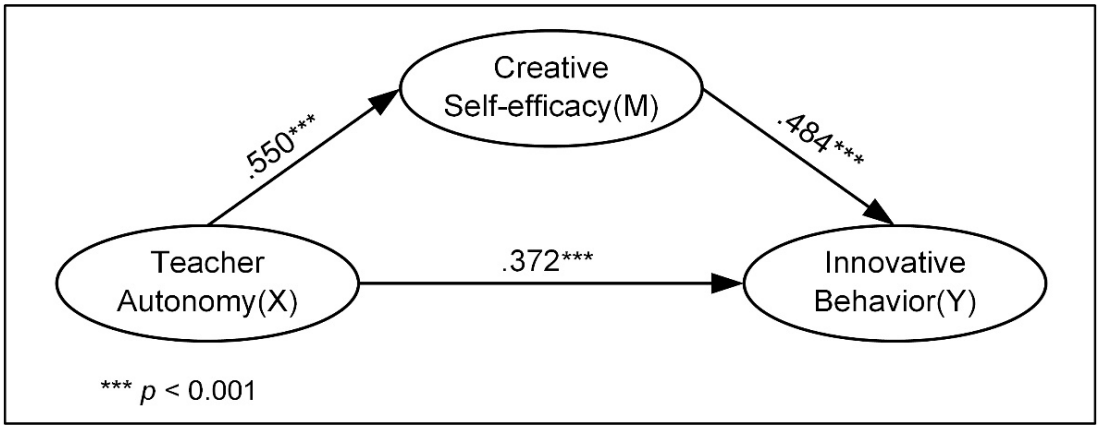

Figure 1. SEM result

Discussion

As proposed in the introduction section, this study aimed to answer the two research questions: What are the interrelationships between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior among EFL teachers? Does creative self-efficacy mediate the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior among EFL teachers? With a sample of 297 Chinese EFL teachers, the regression analysis and SEM results indicated that teacher autonomy positively correlated with creative self-efficacy and innovative behavior. Further, creative self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between teacher autonomy and innovative behavior. The following section presents detailed explanations and implications for future researchers and school leaders.

First, the regression analysis demonstrated that TA positively correlated with EFL teachers' IB. This finding supported studies concluding that teacher autonomy predicts their innovativeness, while restriction of autonomy negatively influences their IB in institutions (Buske, 2018; Ozdemir& Cakalci, 2022). According to Han et al. (2021), EFL teachers would be motivated to make their teaching more innovative and effective if they had certain freedom and autonomy to select teaching resources, organize class activities, and evaluate students' learning outcomes. With autonomous support and trust, teachers are inspired to renovate their teaching processes and work behavior. To sum up, providing EFL teachers with certain autonomy could create a supportive precondition to promote their innovative behavior in daily work.

In addition, the findings indicated that TA positively related to teachers' CSE, and CSE played an important mediating role between TA and teachers' IB. The results corresponded to empirical studies reporting that teachers' perceived autonomy support significantly predicted their self-efficacy in completing given tasks (Azari & Amirian, 2020; Orakci & Durnali, 2022). In the EFL teaching context, when leaders empowered teachers with sufficient autonomy, their self-efficacy increased, which in turn improved their innovativeness and job satisfaction (Han et al., 2021). This finding extends the empowerment process theory to the education realm; supervisors' sharing of organizational power and control with their subordinates strengthens personal self-efficacy, leading to their persistence in behavior to fulfill the established goals (Conger& Kanungo, 1988). Based on these explanations, both motivational factors shall be considered to inspire teachers' innovativeness in the workplace.

Implications for Practice

Regarding the positive correlation between TA and IB, school leaders should be aware that the transformational leadership style, instead of the bureaucratic management system, might give teachers more autonomy to innovate their course design and teaching approaches. However, in EFL settings, Gao (2018) reported that language teachers' exercise of autonomy was quite depressing due to bureaucratic control and critical censure emerging from educational reforms driven by the marketization of education. Therefore, school administrators are suggested to remove the burden of institutional constraints on teachers and create an innovation-friendly school culture to trigger teachers' innovative behavior. When teachers acquire psychological safety, trust, and support from institutions, their innovative intentions may turn into innovative performance through actions, which will facilitate students' learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness (Cai & Tang, 2021).

Further, school policymakers might provide instrumental support and resources to improve teachers' creative self-efficacy and innovation competence. For example, advanced educational

facilities and teaching resources (i.e., online teaching platforms, smart classrooms, and AI tools) might motivate EFL teachers to innovate their instructional approaches. In addition, innovation-oriented seminars and training programs could facilitate teachers acquiring the latest instruction theory, educational technology, and innovation knowledge. With sufficient autonomous support and higher creative self-efficacy, teachers will be enthusiastic and motivated to invest their time and energy in making innovative changes.

Finally, it is worth noting that "the collective strength formed by deep teamwork can reduce the uncertainty associated with employees' work, enhance their self-confidence and self-efficacy, and ultimately promote teacher's agency" (Teng et al., 2024, p.4). Therefore, university EFL teachers might attend formal or informal learning communities, share innovative ideas, and work collaboratively with their co-workers. With peer support and the collective efforts of colleagues invested in innovativeness, individuals might be more committed and persistent in implementing innovative activities (Nguyen et al., 2021). In this way, teachers may gain a sense of job satisfaction and self-actualization, which will facilitate their career improvement and the healthy development of institutions.

Limitations and Further Recommendations

This study has brought innovative findings to the literature exploring teachers' innovative behavior in Chinese EFL educational settings. However, it also has some limitations, which may provide recommendations for further research. First, this is a quantitative study based on participants' self-reported responses; future research could introduce qualitative research methods to examine the results, providing a more detailed picture to explain how and why teacher autonomy and creative self-efficacy influence teachers' innovative behavior. Second, the current study explicitly investigates the hypothesized relationship between teacher autonomy, creative self-efficacy, and innovative behavior. As teachers' innovative behavior is a dynamic and complex process, future studies could add other variables to the current model, including both external and internal factors such as collective innovativeness culture, the principal's leadership style, and teachers' dispositions towards innovativeness. Third, this study is conducted on Chinese EFL university teachers; future research may expand to other disciplines and international contexts. In addition, it is also interesting to explore whether cultural differences and institutional systems might affect teachers' perceived autonomy and innovative behavior.

Conclusion

This study investigates the mediation effect of creative self-efficacy between teacher autonomy and teachers' innovative behavior, contributing to explaining how different impact mechanisms influence Chinese university EFL teachers' innovative behavior. Given the findings of this study, new insights are provided to future researchers that teachers need certain autonomy to execute their professional practices. With autonomy and trust granted by administrators, teachers' creative self-efficacy might be stimulated, which in turn promotes their innovative behavior in the workplace. Therefore, educational administrators shall remove the bureaucratic control of teachers and provide teachers with training programs to increase their innovative willingness and competence by creating a supportive environment. In addition, individual teachers need to obtain peer support from their colleagues to renovate course design and teaching approaches and inject their enthusiasm into making innovative changes in the workplace. In this way, they may grasp the opportunity to advance their career development and achieve higher

satisfaction and happiness in the workplace.

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Code-Switching in the Second Language Classroom: A Narrative Study of a Saudi English Language Teacher's Experience

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Abstract
This narrative study explores the use of code-switching in the second-language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language instructor. The aim was to explore how the instructor experienced code-switching as a student and used it in her teaching. The main research question guiding the study was: How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? The study holds significance in contributing to the ongoing discourse on code-switching in second-language classrooms, providing a nuanced understanding from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it as both a learner and a teacher. Examining code-switching from the viewpoint of a Saudi English instructor can offer valuable insights into teaching practices, student engagement, cognitive benefits, and sociolinguistic dynamics within the Saudi educational context, where Arabic is the dominant language and English is increasingly important. The study utilized a narrative inquiry approach involving a series of interviews. However, excessive reliance on code-switching may hinder language acquisition, and learners should gradually reduce their dependence on it as their proficiency improves. The study provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of second language learners and teachers, underscoring the need for further research using this methodology in the field of second language acquisition.

Keywords: Code-switching, English language learning, Saudi English language classroom, second language acquisition
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Introduction

Code-switching (CS), the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings, including second-language classrooms (Gumperz, 1982; Woolard, 2005). Despite its prevalence, the use of code-switching in second language teaching remains a controversial topic, with debates surrounding its potential benefits and drawbacks in language acquisition. This study aims to explore the role of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language teacher named Sarah. The primary research question is: How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? The study's significance lies in its contribution to the ongoing discourse on code-switching in second-language classrooms, providing a nuanced understanding from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it as both a learner and a teacher. Some researchers argue that it can hinder second language acquisition by reducing exposure to the target language (Cook, 1991; Alrabah et al., 2015), while others maintain that it can facilitate learning by providing scaffolding and reducing affective barriers (Skinner, 1985; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). This study employs a narrative inquiry approach to explore the use of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language teacher named Sarah. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on the lived experiences of individuals as expressed through their stories (Creswell, 2013). By examining Sarah's experiences as a student and teacher, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of code-switching in second language learning and teaching.

Literature Review

Code-switching (CS) refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse or utterance (Gumperz, 1982). It is a common phenomenon in multilingual societies, including the Saudi Arabian speech community, where Arabic and English are frequently used interchangeably in various contexts (Alowidha, 2024). Alowidha (2024) states, “There is a considerable amount of borrowed English words in the Arabic language used in the region” (p. 2852). In his 2016 study on Saudi learners, Masrahi found that Saudis code-switch for both learning and social reasons. “Similar to other bilinguals, bilingual Saudis code-switch when they lack the appropriate word or phrase, using code-switching to fill gaps and maintain the flow of conversation” (Alowidha, 2024, p. 2853). Code-switching helps people identify with a group and show respect and connection to it.

Additionally, bilinguals may code-switch to demonstrate their linguistic abilities, signal belonging to a particular nationality, follow community trends, or for prestigious reasons. Code-switching also arises in educational contexts to clarify or simplify ideas (Masrahi, 2016). The use of code-switching in second-language classrooms has been the subject of numerous studies, yielding mixed results. Alrabah et al. (2015) concluded that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output, with teachers expressing guilt over the loss of second language exposure. Similarly, Cook (1991) argued that the more the first language is used, the less exposure students have to the second language.

On the other hand, several studies have highlighted the potential benefits of code-switching in second language learning. Learner personality and individual differences are key factors in learning a second language (Brown, 2014). Tenés et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between language proficiency and code-switching behavior in dual-language-learning children.

The study aimed to identify the predictors of code-switching in this population, considering factors such as language dominance, vocabulary size, and grammatical competence. The researchers determined that language dominance and vocabulary size were significant predictors of code-switching behavior, with children who had a more balanced proficiency in both languages and larger vocabularies exhibiting less code-switching. The study highlights the importance of considering individual differences in language proficiency when examining code-switching behavior in dual-language learners and contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between language proficiency and code-switching in this population.

Littlewood and Yu (2011) found that teachers used code-switching for various purposes, such as checking understanding, establishing social relations, and explaining grammar. Ghaderi, Moghaddam, and Ostovar-Namaghi (2024) conducted a study exploring teachers' strategies and motivations for using code-switching in English language classrooms. Their research revealed that teachers employed code-switching as a deliberate and strategic tool to enhance language instruction and facilitate student learning. The study identified several key motivations for code-switching, including clarifying complex concepts, building rapport with students, and accommodating learners' diverse language proficiencies. Additionally, the authors found that teachers used code-switching to create a more inclusive and comfortable learning environment, which encouraged student participation and engagement. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature that recognizes the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool in second-language classrooms, while also highlighting the importance of teachers' intentional and strategic use of this practice to support effective language instruction. Similarly, Tang (2002) observed that teachers in China used the first language to explain abstract or culturally specific words and give instructions in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

In light of the findings from Tenés et al. (2023), which investigated the relationship between language proficiency and code-switching behavior in dual-language-learning children, the current study aims to expand on this research by exploring the role of learner personality in relation to code-switching. While previous studies have identified learner personality and individual differences as important factors in second language acquisition (Brown, 2014), few have examined how these factors specifically influence code-switching behavior. By delving into Sarah's experiences and perspectives as both a language learner and teacher, this study seeks to address this gap in the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between learner personality, language proficiency, and code-switching in the context of second language learning and teaching. The findings suggest that code-switching can have a positive effect on students and the classroom environment, particularly in the early stages of learning. The study also highlights the importance of learner personality and the role of teachers in supporting students' language development. Teachers recognize the pedagogical benefits of code-switching, however, its usage should be carefully monitored to avoid over-reliance on the first language (Hazaymeh, 2022). Despite the growing body of research on code-switching in second-language classrooms, there is a lack of studies that explore the experiences and perspectives of both language learners and teachers. While previous studies have investigated either the learner's or the teacher's perspective, few have examined the interplay between the two perspectives and how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom.

There is a lack of studies that specifically explore the experiences and perspectives of Saudi English language teachers who have experienced code-switching as both learners and educators. Previous studies have either focused on the learner's perspective or the teacher's perspective, but few have examined the interplay between these two perspectives and how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom (Alowidha, 2024, Alrabh et al. 2015, Masrahai 2016).

To address this gap, the present study aims to explore the role of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a teacher who has also experienced code-switching as a language learner. By examining Sarah's dual perspectives, this study provides a unique opportunity to understand how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can inform and shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom. As Ghaderi et al. (2024) argue, "teachers' motivations and strategies for code-switching are deeply rooted in their own experiences as language learners, and this connection warrants further investigation" (p. 18).

The present study extends the work of Ghaderi, Moghaddam, and Ostovar-Namaghi (2024) by examining code-switching from the perspective of a teacher who has also experienced code-switching as a language learner. By exploring Sarah's dual perspectives, this study provides a unique opportunity to understand how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can inform and shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom. Furthermore, the study's narrative inquiry approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the motivations, strategies, and perceived benefits of code-switching from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it both as a learner and a teacher.

Methodology

To address the research question, "How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner?" this study employed a qualitative narrative methodology. Following the frameworks outlined by Creswell (2013) and Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), the study explored Sarah's experiences with code-switching both as a student and as a teacher.

Participants

The participant, Sarah, is a Saudi English language teacher with over five years of teaching experience. She completed a four-year undergraduate program in English at a university in Saudi Arabia, where she acquired English as a second language. Focusing on a single subject, Sarah, in this narrative study, allows for an in-depth exploration of the intricate and personal experiences of code-switching in a second-language classroom. By concentrating on Sarah's journey from a student to a teacher, the study captures the evolution of her attitudes and strategies toward code-switching, providing rich, contextualized insights that are crucial for understanding the practice's nuanced effects. This personalized approach enables the investigation of how her unique cultural background, educational experiences, and professional environment influence her teaching methods and interactions with students. Moreover, it highlights individual differences and the significant role of instructor influence in language acquisition, offering a detailed and empathetic portrayal that broadens the understanding of code-switching's impact on second language learning.

Research Procedures

This study, informed by Creswell (2013) and Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), employed a qualitative narrative methodology to explore Sarah's experiences with code-switching both as a student and as a teacher. Over three weeks, three interviews were conducted via Zoom, each focusing on different aspects of Sarah's experiences with code-switching. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in Arabic, the primary language of the participants. Engaging in conversation in the native language created a more relaxed atmosphere, fostering a conversational tone throughout the interviews. The interviews were recorded using Zoom for later reference. The emphasis of each of the three interviews varied. The first interview focused on Sarah's experience learning English as a second language. The second interview covered her experience teaching English to Arabic students. The third interview explored her overall views on learning and teaching English and her insights into code-switching.

Following each interview, the researcher transcribed the dialogue into Arabic and then translated it into English to begin the coding process. The researcher meticulously reviewed the text, annotating keywords and phrases related to the study's topic, before generating initial codes. Following Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) framework, the data was structured into five plot elements, organizing events and sequencing attempts or occurrences. Subsequently, the data was categorized into themes by identifying stories within the transcripts, establishing connections between them, and amalgamating them. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, to identify patterns and themes within the transcripts.

Research Instrument

We used purposive sampling to select Sarah for this research. According to Leedy et al. (2019), purposive sampling involves selecting individuals or objects that can provide the most relevant information about the topic being investigated. The participant, Sarah, is a Saudi English language teacher with over five years of teaching experience. Sarah completed a four-year undergraduate program in English at a university in Saudi Arabia, where she was simultaneously honing her English language skills. She graduated with a commendable GPA (Grade Point Average). One of the authors initially met Sarah during a class in the master's degree program. Notably, Sarah distinguished herself as one of the brightest students in the class, earning praise from her professors and demonstrating high proficiency in her second language. Sarah possessed considerable teaching experience exceeding five years. Additionally, she acquired English as a second language, with Arabic being her primary language. Furthermore, Sarah exhibited a strong interest in code-switching. Therefore, she represented a valuable and knowledgeable participant in this research.

Findings

Sarah categorizes her bachelor's degree experience into two phases: the first two years and the final two years. Given that a bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia traditionally spanned four years, Sarah's delineation provides a valuable framework for examining her encounters with code-switching. In this paper, we delve into these two themes, which encapsulate the majority of Sarah's experiences with language alternation. Notably, significant gaps exist between these

segments of her academic life. The findings are presented in two main themes, reflecting Sarah's experiences as a student and teacher: "The First Two Years" and "The Last Two Years."

The First Two Years: Necessity and Helpfulness of Code-Switching

Sarah's journey as an English language learner was marked by the strategic use of code-switching, particularly in her first two years of study. She found that her native language, Arabic, played a crucial role in her learning process, serving as a supportive tool to navigate the complexities of acquiring a second language. In her own words, Sarah described Arabic as a "*helper*" and believed that it was impossible to start learning a second language without using her first language as a foundation. In her first two years as an English language student, Sarah found code-switching to be a necessary and helpful strategy. Below is Sarah's statement:

> code-switching help me to progress it was a basic it was impossible to start learn a second language without being my first language is the **helper** my first language is found to be helper for me to learn the English language or any other language this for me even when I start teaching the first language remind necessary even if we refuse it and call for not being used it.

Sarah's teachers, who were also Arabic speakers, employed code-switching as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate learning. They used Arabic to explain vocabulary, discuss ideas, and clarify grammar points, recognizing the value of leveraging the students' first language to enhance their understanding of English. When Sarah enrolled in the new department, she found herself in an unfamiliar environment, surrounded by new faces and grappling with a limited command of the English language. She reflected on the challenges she faced during this time:

> it was impossible I will success in the university without using Arabic language the Arabic was everything especially the first two years it was four years in the bachelor the first two years I can say uh 80 % was by Arabic after that period the Arabic using is decrease especially after we know how to used the English-English dictionary.

Sarah's reflection on her university experience reveals the critical role that Arabic played in her academic success, particularly during the first two years of her four-year bachelor's degree program. She candidly admitted that it would have been "*impossible*" for her to succeed without relying heavily on her native language. Arabic was "*everything*" to her during this period, serving as a vital tool for comprehension and communication. Sarah acknowledged that her reliance on Arabic was particularly pronounced during the first two years of her four-year bachelor's degree program. She estimated that approximately 80% of her language use during this period was in Arabic. However, as she progressed in her studies and gained proficiency in using English-English dictionaries, her dependence on Arabic gradually decreased.

Reflecting on this period, she expressed, "My language was nothing, it was zero." Both students and instructors predominantly spoke Arabic, reflecting the university's constraints in providing adequate English language resources. As a growth-oriented institution, financial limitations precluded the establishment of essential language-learning facilities such as language labs or the hiring of English-speaking educators. Consequently, the reliance on local resources was paramount, with instructors primarily hailing from Arabic-speaking countries. Lacking an English center or internet connectivity, classes often revolved around instructors reading passages during reading and speaking sessions.

> the teacher usually read the dialogues in textbook by herself, with Saudi accent so when we hear any American or British accent it was difficult for us to understand. Because the lack of supplement at school

Despite the evident shortcomings in resources, Sarah acknowledged the value of code-switching during her initial years. She asserted, "Code-switching helped me to progress," emphasizing the necessity of utilizing Arabic as a scaffold for understanding academic content. Describing Arabic as a "*helper*," she highlighted its role in facilitating comprehension and task completion within the classroom. Sarah's positive portrayal of code-switching, evident in her use of affirmative adjectives such as "*necessary*" and "*root*," underscores its efficacy as a pedagogical strategy. Even as a teacher, Sarah continues to rely on code-switching to engage her students effectively.

Notably, Sarah quantified her reliance on Arabic, estimating that approximately 80% of her language use during the first two years was in her native tongue. This significant proportion underscores the extent to which code-switching was integral to her learning process, enabling her to bridge the gap between her existing knowledge and the new concepts she encountered in her coursework. However, Sarah also acknowledged that her dependence on Arabic diminished over time, particularly as she developed the skills to effectively use English-English dictionaries. This shift marked a crucial milestone in her language acquisition journey, as she gradually became more self-sufficient in navigating the challenges of learning a second language.

Sarah's experiences highlight the dynamic nature of code-switching as a learning strategy, with its importance being most pronounced during the early stages of language acquisition and gradually declining as learners develop greater proficiency and autonomy in the target language.

The Last Two Years: Reducing Reliance on Code-Switching and Developing Language Proficiency

During the latter half of her bachelor's degree, Sarah embarked on a journey of self-assessment, evaluating her language proficiency and progress by scrutinizing her usage of Arabic. Sarah began to view her use of Arabic as a weakness and actively worked to reduce her reliance on code-switching. She immersed herself in English-language media and sought out opportunities to practice her language skills. During this time, Sarah also encountered a Pakistani teacher who did not speak Arabic, which presented new challenges related to accent variation.

> The last two years my depending Arabic language was decrease and I saw that a weakness on my language to used the Arabic language at the end of the second year I was feeling I don’t improved and our teaching wasn’t good and I have a problem and I was struggle then I discover it was very important

She observed a gradual decline in her reliance on her first language, Arabic, perceiving even minimal usage as indicative of linguistic weakness. Reflecting on this transition, Sarah remarked, "The last 2 years, my dependence on the Arabic language decreased and I saw it as a weakness to use the Arabic language." During this period, Sarah had a new teacher who was from Pakistan and could not speak Arabic, so she was in contact with the students in English. This was the first time Sarah had contact with a speaker who only spoke English. She struggled to understand this teacher, and when the teacher asked a question, Sarah and her classmates asked each other what she meant. The teacher was experiencing the same thing as she didn’t understand Arabic. So, students started

using more English in the classroom. However, at the end of the semester, the students were familiar with the teacher and her wants, and the teacher understood the students' needs. Sarah found it difficult to understand this teacher because of the accent variation. The teacher spoke with a Pakistani accent, but the students were familiar with the Arabic accent. At this time, Sarah discovered a new problem she had in her language. This was not the only situation in which she encountered accent variation. She had the same difficulties with the British and American accents. However, at the end of her bachelor's degree, accent variation was no longer a struggle for Sarah. With the improvement of her language skills, accents did not affect her language comprehension anymore, especially when she went to the United States to study for higher education. In this period of her life, her English comprehension rose to a high level. Her prior bachelor's degree and teaching experience contributed to her improvement. She stated, "If I did not start with code-switching, I think I would not have been successful in my master's degree." Sarah emphasized, "I dedicated significant attention to this skill because I recognized that speaking was my greatest weakness." She attributed her awareness of this weakness to the notable contrast between Saudi and American pedagogical approaches. While Saudi education prioritizes reading and listening, with less emphasis on speaking, American pedagogy places greater importance on oral communication, discussion, and expressing one's opinions. Below are Sarah's thoughts:

> When the accent that you familiar with change for the first time is difficult and you can't understand what happen. After a months of dealing with this new faculty we start understand her speech and start ask each other did you observe we start understand what she said while in the first month she was struggle and we also struggle we can't understand what she said and she wait from us an answers and we are silent waiting her to finish

Motivated to bolster her language competence, she deliberately curtailed her use of Arabic and code-switching, redirecting her focus towards immersive English-language media consumption. By engaging with English-language series, songs, and movies, and sharing these experiences with friends, Sarah honed her language skills and gained insights into Western perspectives, thereby broadening her linguistic and cultural horizons. Consequently, her English proficiency flourished, culminating in a heightened fluency and comprehension. Below, Sarah shares her experience with media:

> I was listening to um Ricky martin, and other multiple singers. They were in my teenager period. I was interesting to translate the words understand how they were thinking uh how they express themselves, at the beginning I found these materials on the TV then we get the internet so we keep watch them on the YouTube and the other websites.

Sarah's interest in English-language media was not limited to academic materials; she actively sought out entertainment content to supplement her language learning. She specifically mentioned listening to Ricky Martin and other popular singers during her teenage years, indicating a personal connection to the music and a desire to engage with English-language content on a more intimate level.

Sarah's motivation for engaging with these materials went beyond mere enjoyment. She expressed a genuine curiosity about the lyrics, eager to "*translate the words*" and "*understand how they were thinking*" and "*how they express themselves*." This demonstrates a deep interest in the

cultural and linguistic nuances embedded in the music, as well as a desire to comprehend the perspectives and experiences of the artists.

Initially, Sarah accessed these English-language materials through television, which provided her with a readily available source of authentic content. However, as technology advanced and the internet became more accessible, she and her peers transitioned to online platforms such as YouTube and other websites to continue engaging with these resources. This shift highlights the evolving nature of language learning in the digital age, with learners increasingly leveraging online tools and platforms to access a wider range of authentic content.

By actively seeking out and engaging with English-language media, Sarah not only improved her language skills but also gained valuable insights into Western culture and perspectives. This exposure broadened her linguistic and cultural horizons, enabling her to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the English-speaking world.

Sarah's experience underscores the importance of immersive language learning experiences, particularly through the consumption of authentic media content. By combining her academic pursuits with a personal interest in English-language entertainment, Sarah was able to accelerate her language acquisition and develop a more nuanced understanding of the language and its associated cultures.

Transitioning to Teaching: Embracing Code-Switching for Classroom Engagement

Sarah's transition to the role of educator prompted a shift in her teaching methodology. Initially dependent on English, she noted a pervasive sense of disinterest among her students, with only proficient English speakers actively participating. Recognizing the need for a dynamic approach, Sarah embraced code-switching as a means to enhance classroom engagement for all learners. While not all students initially responded, the majority exhibited increased interest and participation, resulting in a more dynamic learning environment. Sarah's willingness to adapt her teaching style reflects her commitment to fostering effective communication and learning.

> I didn’t use code switching at the first years of my teaching and most of the students seemed to be not involved in the class at all. Only the students who were already successful in English participated and the rest were only waiting for the class to end.When I practiced code switching all students became involved and participated.

Identifying her weaknesses, Sarah sought strategies to enhance her language proficiency, particularly in writing. Guided by her professor's advice to organize thoughts directly in English rather than translating from Arabic, she adopted this approach to improve her writing skills. Inspired by her own experiences, Sarah now imparts this guidance to her high school students, recognizing its transformative potential in enhancing writing coherence and clarity. By advocating for a shift in cognitive processes from translation to direct English expression, Sarah empowers her students to produce more coherent and impactful written work.

> I was right and thinking I am doing right but when I [went] back to reread it I feel the ideas are not connected so one of my professor mention that when you start writing don’t think in Arabic language because you will going to translate from Arabic to English, instead start thinking by English and organize the ideas in your brain by using English and write it down because when you think in Arabic then translate to English is wrong and your writing

> will be weak since I used this advice my writing is progress really there are a difference when I think in Arabic it be like I translate in wrong way from Arabic to English is never look like an essay in English uh this was one uh I still say that for my students because I never hear this advice before until I experience it usually now when I start grading my students writing I know and it clear the students who think in Arabic and translate to English.

In addition to cognitive strategies, Sarah honed her speaking skills through dedicated practice. Overcoming initial shyness, she embraced her teacher's advice to rehearse presentations in front of a mirror, gradually acclimating to public speaking and refining her pronunciation. Her poised demeanor, articulate speech, and confident delivery stand as testaments to the efficacy of deliberate practice and targeted feedback in skill development. Through perseverance and strategic guidance, Sarah transformed her anxieties into strengths, embodying the transformative power of intentional language practice.

> The most difficult thing I face through the four skills was the speaking, we wasn't familiar with speaking we were usually depend on input skills listening and reading but not speaking we was embarrassed the most strategy I used was one of my professor advise me about it was to talk with myself front the mirror to start discover my mistake and correct myself not only correct myself but I want to be familiar with myself when speak in English as they said normalized I want to normalize it to be normal to see myself speak in English this was the most thing that help me that talk with myself on the mirror also the other thing too was the reading uh reading it help me to increase my vocabulary when I want to write that help me in writing I always reading in our courses or any other materials I found in English I was read

In her role as a teacher, Sarah initially relied heavily on Arabic in her classes, but found that this approach led to a boring classroom environment. By incorporating code-switching, she observed increased student engagement and participation. Sarah also emphasized the importance of learner personality, noting that her own self-awareness and willingness to accept advice helped her improve her language skills.

> The students were comfortable in class and some of them expressed that they are more comfortable, confident, and not intimated any more. A group of my students said that they only knew the words yes and no in English and that English class was the only class they wanted to get over with. They always waited for the class to end. They were never involved in the learning process. The same students expressed their thoughts and feelings about learning English with the help of their native language. all of them felt confident and involved in the learning process. One of them said I don't feel I am not part of this anymore. In fact, anyone can learn English it is so easy.

As a teacher, Sarah recognizes the value of code-switching for lower-level students but encourages her students to challenge themselves and fight to learn English. She maintains contact with her students outside of class, providing resources and support to help them improve their language skills.

Discussion

Circling back to the main research question - How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? Sarah's narrative offers insightful perspectives into this query. During her initial two years of studying English at university, Sarah perceived code-switching as an indispensable and beneficial strategy as a language learner. Her instructors, who were also native Arabic speakers, employed code-switching to elucidate vocabulary, expound on concepts, and clarify grammatical points. Sarah approximated that around 80% of her language usage during this period was in Arabic. This aligns with the findings of Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who observed that teachers used the first language to facilitate understanding and communication. However, in the latter half of her bachelor's degree, Sarah began to view her reliance on Arabic as a weakness and actively worked to reduce her use of code-switching. This echoes the concerns raised by Cook (1991) and Alrabah et al. (2015), who argued that excessive use of the first language can reduce exposure to the target language and hinder second language acquisition. As a teacher, Sarah initially relied heavily on Arabic in her classes but found that this approach led to a boring classroom environment. By incorporating code-switching, she observed increased student engagement and participation, particularly for lower-level students. This offers a nuanced perspective compared to the findings of Alrabah et al. (2015), who found that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output. Sarah's experiences suggest that strategic use of code-switching can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, aligning with the arguments put forth by Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who emphasize the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool. Sarah's narrative also highlights the importance of learner personality and individual differences in second language acquisition, a factor identified as crucial by researchers such as Brown (2014). Sarah's self-awareness, persistence, and willingness to seek out practice opportunities emerged as key factors in her successful language learning journey.

In summary, the findings from Sarah's narrative provide a nuanced understanding of code-switching in second language learning and teaching, supporting and extending the existing literature referenced in the paper. Her experiences underscore the potential benefits of judicious code-switching for facilitating comprehension and engagement, while also highlighting the need for learners to gradually reduce their reliance on the first language as proficiency improves. The study also emphasizes the role of individual learner characteristics in shaping the effectiveness of code-switching as a pedagogical tool.

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the role of code-switching in second-language classrooms. Sarah's experiences as a learner suggest that code-switching can be a valuable tool in the early stages of language acquisition, aligning with the findings of Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who observed that teachers used the first language to facilitate understanding and communication. However, Sarah's recognition of her excessive reliance on Arabic as a weakness in the later stages of her learning journey echoes the concerns raised by Cook (1991) and Alrabah et al. (2015), who argued that excessive use of the first language can reduce exposure to the target language and hinder second language acquisition.

As a teacher, Sarah's use of code-switching to increase student engagement and participation offers a nuanced perspective. While Alrabah et al. (2015) found that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output, Sarah's experiences suggest that strategic use of code-switching can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment,

particularly for lower-level students. This finding aligns with the arguments put forth by Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who emphasize the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool.

Sarah's narrative also sheds light on the importance of learner personality and individual differences in second language acquisition, a factor identified as crucial by researchers such as Brown (2014). Sarah's self-awareness, persistence, and willingness to seek out practice opportunities emerged as key factors in her successful language learning journey, highlighting the need for further research on the role of learner personality in relation to code-switching and second language acquisition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this narrative study provides valuable insights into the complex role of code-switching in second language learning and teaching. Sarah's experiences suggest that code-switching can be a valuable scaffolding tool in the early stages of language acquisition, facilitating comprehension and reducing affective barriers. However, learners should gradually reduce their reliance on code-switching and embrace immersive language experiences to develop greater proficiency and autonomy in the target language. The study also highlights the importance of learner personality and the role of teachers in supporting students' language development through the strategic use of code-switching and other pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the narrative inquiry approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of Sarah's lived experiences, contributing to the understanding of the interplay between language acquisition, code-switching, and individual learner characteristics.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity

This manuscript is an original work

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT & Claude in order to format references in APA style, to improve readability and language and to check for grammar, syntax, and organization. The technology was used with human oversight and control. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Research on Improving the English Listening and Speaking Ability Development of College Students Wearing Masks During the Pandemic

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Abstract
This study investigated the impact of wearing masks on students' English listening and speaking performance in a classroom setting. The study was conducted with 30 first-year students of a practical English course at a southern Taiwan science and technology college. The class was designed using social-cognitive tools and profession-related podcasts to reduce interference from wearing masks. The study tested the impact of wearing a medical mask and a transparent mouth mask on students' motivation, anxiety, and clarity of message communication. Students believed wearing a medical mask and a transparent mouth mask had a stronger motivation to learn, but their classroom anxiety was insignificant. The course used selective podcasts and online voice recording exercises to make students respond more positively. Students were more capable of changing the negative external factors of mask-wearing for their precision English communication. However, students generally did not agree that the use of transparent mouth masks affects the clarity of English communication. Based on this study, the practical English course design and teaching experiences for students' learning needs in mask-wearing circumstances of English teaching environment can further benefit future research.

Keywords: masks wearing, the pandemic, podcast, social cognitive tool

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on traditional education systems. After more than a month of online learning, students returned to physical classrooms with new restrictions and challenges. The post-pandemic era is expected to modify teaching and learning methods, teacher-student interaction models, and the role of assistants. Using masks during the pandemic has created challenges for language learners, especially in imitating lip movements and facial expressions. Innovative teaching methods and technological products can improve teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and English communication skills. The "Content and Language Integrated Learning" (CLIL) teaching method can help students communicate in English and master language skills practically in a cooperative learning environment. Under this circumstance, if teachers could use innovative teaching methods and combine technological products to create more opportunities for teacher-student interaction, they would improve students' learning motivation and their English listening and speaking abilities. According to research, students with good hearing will also improve in speaking (Eggly et al., 1999; Krashen, 1985), reading (Pérez-Segura et al., 2022), and writing (Krashen, 1985). This study aims to use technological tools to enhance teaching effectiveness and overcome the challenges of wearing masks. By participating in classroom activities and combining technological teaching tools in a cooperative learning environment, students can be trained to apply language skills practically, increasing learning motivation and improving English communication skills.

The research questions are:

1. How can students cultivate their oral communication abilities by using multiple themes as curriculum content and designing them according to students' subject backgrounds?
2. How can students overcome pronunciation problems when wearing masks through classroom activity practice and peer review? How can the spirit of cooperative learning be cultivated?
3. Use technological teaching tools to improve learning motivation and classroom participation. How can learning motivation be increased and classroom learning anxiety reduced?

Literature Review

Reports and Research on Masks

In the post-pandemic era, some medical institutions and academic teaching units have begun to study whether children should wear masks. The current mask policies of various countries are: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends that children over two years old wear masks as much as possible when going out. Italy, France, Germany, and other countries agree with the WHO's approach that children can wait until six years old before wearing masks. However, the U.K. does not recommend that school children and teachers wear masks in class because they all need to observe adults' pronunciation. Teachers observe the movements of the mouth to learn to speak. For example, for English /th/, this pronunciation requires looking at the pronunciation parts of the lips and tongue.

There is a similar problem in Taiwan. There is a four-year-old boy whom the teacher discovered to have slurred speech after he first entered kindergarten. It is recommended that the parents seek professional advice from a rehabilitation physician. After a pronunciation assessment and language development screening test, he was diagnosed with arthrosis. Experts have arranged for children to receive speech rehabilitation therapy, which has made much progress. However,

parents, teachers, and children all wore masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented children from seeing adults' mouth shapes; therefore, they heard adults' pronunciations ambiguously.

The little boy's mother mentioned the issue of wearing masks. She believed children learn languages by observing adults' mouth shapes, facial expressions, and clear pronunciation. If parents or teachers wear masks for a long time to interact with children, they will still learn to some extent. Influence children's progress in learning language. There is no relevant research in Taiwan, but physicians recommend that parents and teachers use more standard pronunciation, richer expressions, and coordinated body movements to help them understand what teachers or parents are saying.

Social Cognition, Emotion, And Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is an invisible internal process in the cognitivist approach. When information enters cognitive processing, its processing cannot be directly studied (Doughty & Long, 2008, pp. 256-310). The social cognitive theory believes some processing procedures in SLA language acquisition can be directly studied. As learners interact in a second language (L2) and adapt, adjust, and adapt their behaviors to each other during the interaction, the signs or tools they rely on and relate to become publicly available. For example, when L2 learners encounter unknown words during communication, they use their body expressions or point to an object in the surrounding environment. The two parties will have a good connection between basic words and objects for communication. Atkinson (2014) regarded these as social cognitive tools and proposed:

1. Gaze following: Humans intuitively know that if they do not understand what someone is saying about the here and now, a good way to understand is to follow the direction or object the person is looking at.
2. Gesture: As mentioned above, pointing can be a powerful common index in the environment referenced by language. However, a variety of gestures provide many real-world implications for SLA.
3. Facial expressions: Human faces are one of the richest sources of emotional information. We use them constantly to interpret meaning during interactions.
4. Body posture: Communicating both parties' body posture, movements, and directions becomes the basis for mutual understanding of their environment and taking relevant actions.
5. Objects and artifacts: Natural objects and artifacts provide rich symbolic or symbolic support for language learning and use in the environment around L2 learners. Provide the possibility of language acquisition during mutual communication. (pp. 15-19)

Facial expressions play an important messaging role in face-to-face communication. They are an individual's ability in real-life situations involving face-to-face interactions, including the learner's ability to produce characters' facial expressions and body movements during the narrative process. Make English learners more effective in communicative skills. (Gassin, 1992; Tan, Nabb, Aagard, & Kim, 2010; Weisberg, Casey, Sehyr, & Emmorey, 2020) Second language acquisition theory focuses almost entirely on acquisition's grammatical, syntactic, or phonological aspects. However, there are limits to interpretation in life that cannot account for the complex supralinguistic human facial expressions used to signal emotions and turn-ons. (Engwall, Lopes, & Ahlund, 2021, p. 254)

Therefore, social cognition and its related "tools" become the stimulus and motivation for language learners' willingness to communicate. The more external stimulation and social interaction, the more authentic and meaningful language use. However, in the learning environment during the pandemic, such tools related to social cognition are limited to online learning or learning in offline classrooms. For example, face-to-face communication with facial expressions in an online course may be impossible because the webcam is not turned on. Even if a webcam is turned on, various technical limitations flatten the sound and images and distort reality. Most of the class may wear masks due to government or other pandemic prevention unit requirements or even good pandemic prevention habits. This limits L2 language learners' non-verbal communication and slows their language development.

Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL

In the definition and evolution of CLIL, Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2011) pointed out that CLIL has been implemented in many European countries for decades and is a practice that has been around for a while. The early implementation areas were bilingual and border areas. However, most European countries now use it to promote multilingual (bilingual) systems, and CLIL is considered a reliable and effective tool (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2011, p.5). According to the concept proposed by David Marsh in Finland in 1994, CLIL is a subject or part of this subject using a foreign language teaching situation. This teaching has dual goals: simultaneously learning subject content and foreign language. According to Marsh's bilingualism and the ideal of multilingualism, CLIL will have very positive learning effects for learners in both subject and language. During teaching activities, CALL can be used as a supplement to make children's subject and language abilities more effective and efficient. (Díaz Pérez, Fields, & Marsh, 2018; Marsh, 2013; Nikiforchuk & Hryhorieva, 2021)

Podcast and Language Learning

Podcasts have been used as a teaching tool to motivate students to learn English for nearly ten years. Many studies have pointed out that using podcasts to teach English to native language learners has good teaching effects. In the past three years, some researchers have used mixed research methods to find that podcasts are interesting and can inspire students to learn English listening and new knowledge (Nikolou, 2018; Lio, 2019; Xiangming et al., 2020). There are also two studies using quantitative research methods. The results also have positive feedback; students' listening has improved significantly and is very suitable as a training tool for English listening (Goldman, 2018; Şendağ et al., 2018). Therefore, podcasts can improve language skills, especially listening skills. It can motivate students to learn languages. These researchers recommend that teachers use podcasts as an interesting teaching aid to help students in language learning. Podcast is one of the digital teaching materials for English learners. Teachers can integrate this teaching material into teaching, increase variety, and enhance students' learning motivation.

Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is a very important psychological support component of language acquisition and an important factor affecting the effectiveness of language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Guo & Okita, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Wen, 1997). Zhang (2006) said that motivation refers to the internal process that causes individual activities, maintains the activities, and promotes the activities toward a certain goal. Therefore, students' learning motivation, the

inner motivation generated in English learning activities, and the external learning guide learners to work towards a specific goal of language learning, lasting until the goal is achieved. This study's relevant classifications of English learning motivation include Gardner's (1985) integrative and instrumental motivation and Deci & Ryan's (1985) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Method

The research design is Educational Action Research. Its theoretical framework is based on CLIL.

Participants

The research participants were 30 students from one of the comprehensive universities in southern Taiwan. There were five female students and twenty-five male students. The average TOEIC score of the participants was 400, and they were all moderately weak non-native English speakers.

Instruments

This study was designed as educational action research and used the following research methods:

1. Questionnaire: This study was the questionnaire method, using the English Learning Motivation Scale and the English Classroom Learning Anxiety Scale, and was implemented at the end of the second semester. It mainly explored learners' satisfaction after the pandemic and how their English learning motivation changed after wearing masks. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was to explore the background information of the respondent. It mainly asks about the respondent's age, the number of years they have studied English in the past, and their self-esteem and English ability. The second part was adapted from the accent questionnaire of Jenkins (2007) and was evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, with one representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strongly agree. Another questionnaire was used to explore students' English learning anxiety, which was based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), targeting communication fear and fear of classmates and teachers.
2. Interview: This research used semi-structured interviews assisted by interview outlines. With the interviewees' consent, the entire interview process was recorded for subsequent data processing and analysis.
3. Teacher Reflective Journal: The project hosted regularly writes a teacher reflective journal. Given the problems encountered in the teaching site, teacher-student dialogue, and student-student dialogue, it is compiled mid-term and used as one of the references for adjustments after mid-term.
4. Standardized Listening Test: The participants must take the TOEIC listening test. The main purpose of the listening test was to explore whether the participants could better understand pronunciation and accent after a semester of teaching intervention.
5. Communication clarity test experiment: The participant wore a transparent face mask, a medical mask, and speech through electromagnetic, such as listening to podcasts to measure their ability to recognize different levels of visual assistance and audio interference. Through a series of English-related listening exercises, the students

identified English pronunciations in these three situations, and they were judged on the clarity of communication and the student's ability to receive information.

Procedures

This study was conducted during the pandemic in 2022. The courses were arranged to train listening and speaking. Podcast videos were also provided with the teaching material content, so students had more opportunities to listen to English. Students were asked to complete worksheets and assignments on Moodle. During class, most students still wore masks to practice speaking, and it was because we knew those students who had problems with unclear pronunciation because of wearing masks. The mid-term and final exams also included Podcast supplementary teaching materials and a one-on-one oral exam in the final.

The Implementation Procedure

1. Beginning of semester: listening and speaking pretest
2. During the semester: Podcast English learning and peer evaluation, learning motivation and anxiety questionnaires, and communication clarity experiments.
3. End of semester: learning motivation and anxiety questionnaire, summative assessment, and listening and speaking post-test.

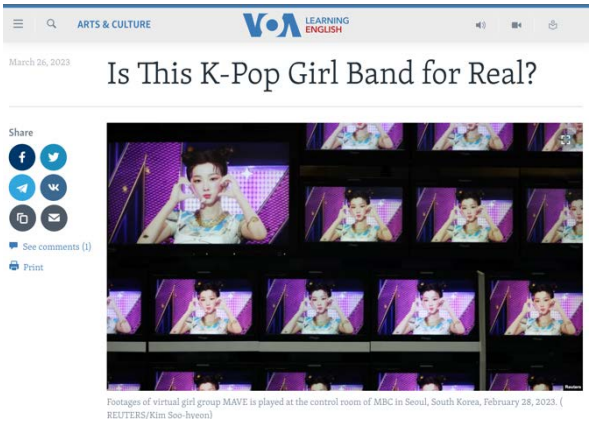
Stages of the Teaching Process

Planning and designing courses with multiple themes: How to cultivate students' oral communication abilities by planning courses with multiple themes and designing according to students' subject backgrounds?

In this study, topics of interest to students were selected as supplementary teaching materials during the classroom teaching process. Among them, materials related to Korean pop music K-pop are used to arouse students' interest in learning and create motivation and an environment for bilingual dialogue. The learning design involved in K-pop includes learning mechanisms based on K-pop that make spoken English more meaningful and practical for students. For example:

1. Song Lyrics Analysis: Teachers chose a popular K-pop song and asked students to analyze the lyrics under the K-pop theme. This activity helped students improve their listening and reading skills and allowed them to understand the history of Korean culture and popular music.
2. Discussion and debate: Teachers organized class discussions or debates to allow students to explore K-pop's impact on the international music market and the role of digital technology in promoting its spread and success. Discussion and debate encouraged students to communicate verbally in English while understanding culture, technology, and digital change topics in-depth.
3. Creative tasks: Students were asked to create music or videos inspired by K-pop. K-pop involved practical applications of English writing and speaking and developed their creativity.
4. Presentation and sharing: K-pop-related presentation activities were also implemented in the classroom. Students shared their opinions and interacted with their classmates in English.

Students better understood these concepts and applied English in real-life situations by connecting K-pop with cultural technology and digital transformation. This approach increased the fun and motivation of learning and made students realize that English was a useful tool for exploring and expressing topics that interested them.



Results

This study investigated utilizing technology to improve teaching effectiveness and address the challenges of wearing masks. Students can develop practical language skills through active participation in classroom activities and the integration of technological teaching tools in a collaborative learning environment, leading to increased motivation and enhanced English communication abilities. The research objectives have been formulated based on analyzing three specific research questions.

Results related to the first question: ***How can students cultivate their oral communication abilities by using multiple themes as curriculum content and designing them according to students' subject backgrounds?***

A pre-test and post-test were conducted to gauge the student's progress in listening and speaking. This approach allows us to assess their development and tailor future instruction to their needs. The pretest for this study was administered in the ninth week of November in the first semester of the 2021 academic year, with 100 TOEIC listening questions. After listening, students chose the most appropriate answer to indicate their listening comprehension. Each question was worth 1 point, for a total of 100 points.

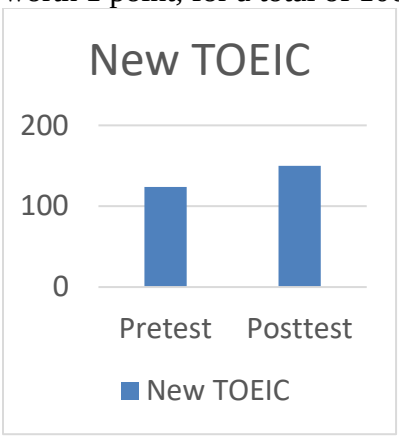


Figure 1. Easy Test new TOEIC listening tests

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The overall mean score on the pretest was 40.70, with a standard deviation of 7.44. The post-test was administered in the 16th week at the end of the second semester of the 111 academic year. The implementation process was the same as the pretest. The overall average score of the post-test was 50.30, the standard deviation was 8.69, and the significance of the pretest and post-test was 0.004 ($p<0.05$). The results show significant progress through two semesters of communication with teachers and peers, clear guidance on listening learning strategies, and multiple absorption of podcasts on different topics.

Results related to the second question**: *How can students overcome pronunciation problems when wearing masks through classroom activity practice and peer review? How can the spirit of cooperative learning be cultivated?***

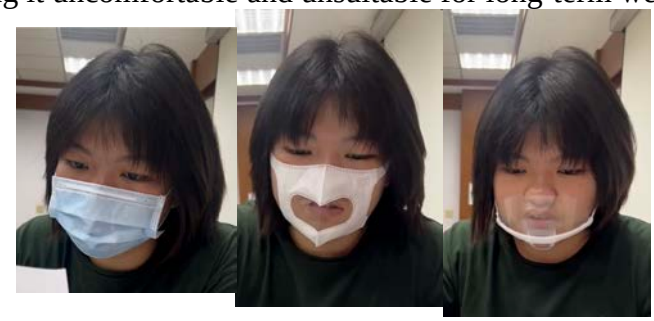
Types of Masks and Learning

In response to pronunciation problems in spoken English learning and the interference of masks with pronunciation, this study used general medical masks, mouth opaque masks, catering masks, and others to compare with the situation without masks.

Mask Selection

When it comes to mask selection, students found general medical masks more comfortable because the overall coverage was complete, and they had become accustomed to wearing them for a long time, so they were generally more comfortable. In addition, if an English-speaking test was taken, the transparent mask around your mouth would fog up, and you would feel disgusted if keeping seeing it fogging up. Transparent masks were tight, and the transparent film in the front was not as breathable. Clear pronunciation might be related to the shape of the mask.

Some students also reported that when they could not hear clearly, the transparent part of the transparent mask could be used to observe the shape of the mouth to help them understand. When wearing a catering mask, the pronunciation was clearer, but the chin was pressed, interfering with speaking, making it uncomfortable and unsuitable for long-term wearing.



Learning Strategies

When wearing masks, students would also adjust their oral pronunciation and control strategies according to the characteristics of different masks. Students' strategies were concluded as follows:

- *I will choose to wear a normal mask to class. Although the sound will be quieter, there are many ways to overcome it.*
- *I will speak louder or make gestures to help others understand my words.*
- *Use gestures.*
- *I will choose to watch some videos of internet celebrities.*

- *Speak louder.*

Impact on Speaking

Students believed wearing a mask had little impact on spoken English because some pronunciation strategies could be used to smooth out their communication.

- *Comparatively unaffected because the volume can be increased.*
- *Pronunciating the words requires more attention and loudness. Otherwise, they will need to be clarified.*
- *Spoken words are difficult to be understood by others.*
- *The long-term effects are good. It will make my pronunciation more accurate and my voice louder.*
- *When wearing a transparent mask, attention may be focused on the mouth, whereas with a normal mask, attention may be on the eyes.*

Post-Pandemic

Students still wore masks with the general medical ones.

- *I will choose to wear a normal mask to class. Although the sound will be quieter, there are many ways to overcome it.(St. 4)*
- *When speaking, pay more attention to the shape of your mouth. (St.1)*

Results related to the third question**: *How can learning motivation be increased and classroom learning anxiety reduced?***

Motivation and Anxiety

Technological teaching tools increased learning motivation and reduced classroom learning anxieties. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the motivation questionnaire assessed students' learning anxieties and motivation.

In English-speaking learning with technology-assisted mask-wearing, students' learning motivation and classroom anxiety were reduced. This study used relevant podcasts as supplementary teaching materials based on the students' majors taking courses. When the teacher used podcasts in the classroom, text reading exercises and reversal teaching of topic reflection were interspersed to promote self-study. The results reflected that students had high motivation for learning spoken English and low classroom anxiety.

The questionnaires and scales were used in this study as follows:

Motivation for Learners with Masks

From the data collected in the questionnaire, using factor analysis, the following three factors were derived:

1) Factor 1: Experience of speaking while wearing a mask Q4, Q7, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q15, Q25, Q14, Q2, Q23

Students' responses in the questionnaire generally believed masks had little impact on spoken English.

Table1. *Motivation for learners with masks*

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
2. I think wearing a mask has a great impact on your English-speaking ability	30	1	5	2.17
3. My voice feels blocked or muffled when wearing a mask	30	1	5	2.50
4. I feel like my speaking speed slows down when I wear a mask	30	1	5	2.07
5. My pronunciation is not clear when wearing a mask.	30	1	5	2.43
6. I speak English better without a mask than with a mask.	30	1	5	2.80
7. I speak English better without a mask than with a mask.	30	1	5	1.97
14. Using a mask affects my communication with native English speakers.	30	1	4	1.93
15. I feel uncomfortable wearing a mask, which affects my spoken English.	30	1	5	2.03
23. Because I wear a mask, others cannot hear me.	30	1	5	2.37
25. I am tired of wearing a mask and trying to be heard clearly.	30	1	5	2.10

2) Factor 2: Mask speaking performance strategy Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q27

Students generally believed English speaking performance is similar between wearing and without masks, and they could have used more techniques to improve communication. However, among the 13 questions, wearing a mask did not negatively impact whether they actively participated in social opportunities where English was spoken, and their active participation was still relatively positive.

Table 2. *Mask speaking performance strategy*

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
8. I behave differently when I wear a mask and when I do not wear a mask.	30	1	5	3.20
9. If I have to bring my exam certificate with me when I speak English, I will want to take some methods or practice to overcome the impact of the mask on my English speaking.	30	1	5	2.53
10. If I have to wear a mask in English, I will speak slowly so that the teacher and classmates can hear me.	30	1	5	2.87
11. When I speak English, if I have to bring my exam certificate, I will speak clearly so the teacher and classmates can hear it.	30	1	5	2.90
12. When I speak in English, if I have to wear a mask, I will use some body language to help the teacher and classmates understand.	30	1	5	2.43
13. For people who need to wear masks in public, joining an English conversation group and exchanging speaking skills and	30	1	5	3.13

experiences with others can improve their English speaking skills.				
17. When speaking in English, I would pay more attention to pronunciation and clarity due to the need to use a mask.	30	1	5	2.37
18. When using a mask, I consciously raise the volume of my voice to communicate with others.	30	1	5	2.83
19. For people who need to wear masks in public, increasing the time and opportunities to practice speaking can improve their English speaking skills.	30	1	5	2.83
20. For people who need to wear masks in public, finding other ways to learn English, such as reading, listening, and others, can improve their English speaking skills.	30	1	5	3.03
27. I can use other people's body language and facial expressions to understand their words.	30	1	5	2.67

3) Factor 3: English speaking practice motivation Q21, Q26, Q28, Q15, Q22, Q24, Q29, Q30

The students were motivated to learn spoken English not because they felt that wearing a mask was inconvenient or hindered. They still clearly expressed their motivation to actively practice speaking English in question 26.

Table 3. *English-speaking practice motivation*

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
21. Because I did not wear a mask, I did not have the confidence to speak, which affected my speaking ability.	30	1	5	2.13
26. I lose motivation to practice speaking skills because of wearing a mask.	30	1	4	1.80
28. I change how I express myself because of wearing a mask.	30	1	5	2.37
15. I felt uncomfortable wearing a mask, which affected my spoken English.	30	1	5	2.03
22. Wearing a mask makes me more confident in my speaking ability and more willing to express myself.	30	1	5	2.67
24. I cannot understand people because they wear masks and speak with thick accents.	30	1	5	2.37
29. Because others are wearing masks and cannot express their opinions verbally, I use technology products to help.	30	1	5	2.33
30. I pretended to understand and tried to skip the topic because I could not hear clearly with the mask on.	30	1	5	2.23

A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used to elicit the participants' learning motivation and anxiety. This questionnaire was adapted from the English Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure English-speaking learning. The three aspects were still consistent with the scale.

1) FLCAS -1 Communication Anxiety 1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27

Students generally did not feel anxious or had other negative emotions about speaking English while wearing masks in class and showed obvious confidence in speaking English in question 1. However, in question 13, they still felt nervous about talking with foreigners in English.

Table 4. *Communication anxiety*

Items	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
1. I feel less confident When I wear a mask and speak in English class.	30	3	1	4	1.90
4. I feel scared when I do not understand the teacher's English.	30	4	1	5	2.50
9. In English class, I feel panicked if I speak English without preparation.	30	4	1	5	3.27
13. I feel nervous if I talk to foreigners who speak English in English.	30	4	1	5	3.53
14. It frustrates me when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.	30	4	1	5	2.67
15. I feel confident when I speak in English class.	30	4	1	5	2.43
21. I feel shy and uncomfortable speaking English in front of my classmates.	30	4	1	5	2.57
27. Learning English requires a lot of grammatical rules, and these rules give me a headache.	30	4	1	5	3.17

2) FLCAS -2 Worry about negative reviews 2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33

Although students were not anxious about speaking English while wearing masks in class in the former aspect (Q17), they still cared about their peers' perceptions and the performance of other students when it came to speaking errors (Q7, 20). On the contrary, students should have cared about teachers correcting their English-speaking errors during class (Q16).

Table 5. *Worry about negative reviews*

Items	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
2. When I wear a mask, I worry about making mistakes in English class.	30	3	1	4	1.73
7. Other students' English skills are better than mine.	30	4	1	5	3.53
12. It bothers me to volunteer to answer questions during English class.	30	4	1	5	2.60
16. I am afraid that my English teacher will correct every mistake I make at any time.	30	3	1	4	2.00
20. other students speak English better than me.	30	4	1	5	3.60
28. I fear other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	30	4	1	5	2.33
30. I get nervous when my English teacher asks me questions that I still need to prepare in advance.	30	4	1	5	2.87

3) FLCAS -3 Test Anxiety 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28

When evaluating English speaking while wearing masks in class, students need to care about the interaction with teachers (Q3). However, they were deeply anxious about the consequences of failing semester grades (Q10).

Table 6. *Test anxiety*

Items	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
3. I tremble when I know I will be called on in English class.	30	3	1	5	2.13
5. It would bother me to take more English classes.	30	4	1	5	2.27
6. During English class, I think about things that have nothing to do with the course.	30	4	1	5	2.60
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	30	3	1	5	2.77
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	30	4	1	5	3.90
11. I do not understand why some people get so upset over English classes	30	4	1	5	3.17
17. In English class, when I am about to be called up to answer a question, I feel my heart start to beat faster.	30	4	1	5	2.83
18. I worked hard to prepare for the English test, but the more I read, the less I understood.	30	4	1	5	2.60
19. I am not pressured to prepare for English class before class.	30	4	1	5	2.53
22. The English class goes very quickly, and I am afraid I cannot keep up.	30	4	1	5	2.40
23. I feel more nervous and stressed in English classes than in other classes.	30	4	1	5	2.53
25. When it comes time to take English classes, I feel confident and relaxed.	30	4	1	5	2.47

Reflections on Teaching

From the teacher's reflective journal and students' feedback, opinions were depicted as follows:

Teacher's Reflective Journal

- *Whether students wear masks is not an important factor in their learning to speak English.*
- *Students are confident in making mistakes, so teachers should actively provide support in and after class.*
- *Even if the students lose their normal voice after being diagnosed and wearing a mask due to the impact of COVID-19, teachers can still provide differentiated instruction.*

Student Learning Feedback

- *It is more important to study more in private. After all, speaking practice is still based on whether the student is willing to speak. If it is difficult or even difficult to speak, it is better than a lot of practice but unwillingness.*
- *It is recommended that the speaking practice time be increased so that everyone can make changes according to their needs and ideas.*

Discussion

This study aims to utilize technology to improve teaching effectiveness and address the challenges of wearing masks. Students can develop practical language skills through active participation in classroom activities and the integration of technological teaching tools in a collaborative learning environment, leading to increased motivation and enhanced English communication abilities. By participating in classroom activities and combining technological teaching tools in a cooperative learning environment, students can be trained to apply language skills practically, increasing learning motivation and improving English communication skills.

The first research question concerns thematic preferences of content choices for developing English-speaking skills. Content is crucial in CLIL because it is the core of subject knowledge and language teaching. By teaching interesting and relevant subject content, students were inspired to learn, improve their language skills, and develop their cognitive and critical thinking skills. Therefore, in CLIL, content received special attention in the teaching of this study. Based on a CLIL learning teaching and learning design, students selected podcast learning content guided by the teacher. The results showed that students made significant progress through two semesters of communication with teachers and peers, clear guidance on listening learning strategies, and multiple absorption of podcasts on different topics. Such research results support the previous studies (Díaz et al., 2018; Marsh, 2013; Nikiforchuk & Hryhorieva, 2021), indicating that using multiple themes as curriculum content and designing them according to students' subject backgrounds improved their listening competence.

According to the student's mask selections, it can be asserted that different types of masks can impact pronunciation in spoken English learning. The study compared the use of general medical masks, mouth opaque masks, and catering masks, as well as the situation without masks. The study found that students generally found general medical masks more comfortable, while transparent masks could cause discomfort due to fogging and tightness. Additionally, some students reported that the transparent part of the mask could help observe mouth shapes for better understanding. However, catering masks interfered with speaking and were uncomfortable for long-wearing. Therefore, selecting masks can play a role in pronunciation clarity and overall comfort during spoken English learning.

Students adapted their learning strategies when wearing masks, which were asserted and discussed. Students had to modify their oral pronunciation and communication techniques when wearing different types of masks. This information could be further discussed regarding the impact on learning and communication in educational settings and the potential challenges and strategies for effective communication while wearing masks.

The impact of wearing a mask on speaking, particularly on spoken English. It mentions that students believed wearing a mask had little impact on spoken English because certain pronunciation strategies could be utilized to improve communication. It also highlights some key points, such as the ability to increase volume while wearing a mask, the need for more attention and loudness when pronouncing words, and the potential difficulty of being understood by others when speaking with a mask on. Furthermore, the text mentions that wearing a transparent mask may direct attention to the mouth, while a normal mask may shift attention to the eyes. Overall, it suggests that wearing a mask impacts speaking, but some strategies can be employed to mitigate the challenges.

Even post-pandemic, students still wear masks, possibly out of habit or as an extra precaution. The researcher mentions their preference for wearing a normal mask to class despite

the potential decrease in sound, indicating a willingness to adapt and find solutions to any challenges. Additionally, the emphasis on paying more attention to the shape of the mouth when speaking highlights the continued importance of clear communication despite the use of masks. This could indicate how individuals are adjusting to the ongoing presence of masks in social and educational settings.

The research questions addressed how to increase learning motivation and classroom participation, as well as how to reduce learning anxiety. The study used questionnaires and scales to measure these factors, and the findings were categorized into factors such as experience of speaking while wearing a mask, mask speaking performance strategy, and English speaking practice motivation. Furthermore, the study utilized the English Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure communication anxiety, worry about negative reviews, and test anxiety among students. The results indicated that while students generally felt less anxious about speaking English while wearing masks, they still had concerns about peer perceptions, speaking errors, and test-related anxiety. Findings suggest that technological teaching tools like podcasts and supplementary materials can positively impact students' learning motivation and reduce classroom anxiety, especially in English-speaking classes where students wear masks. The study used questionnaires and scales to measure motivation and anxiety, and the results indicated that students generally felt motivated to learn spoken English and had low anxiety levels in the classroom when using technological tools and strategies.

Asserting from teacher and student reflective journals, the teacher emphasizes that students wearing masks only significantly impacts their ability to learn English speaking. Additionally, the teacher notes the importance of supporting students who are confident in making mistakes and providing differentiated instruction for students who have lost their normal voice due to wearing masks caused by the impact of COVID-19. On the other hand, student feedback suggests that individual learning is crucial for language learning, and speaking practice time should be increased to accommodate individual learning needs.

The interview results revealed that participants' listening comprehension improved and enhanced their vocabulary acquisition after practicing with podcasts. Regarding the different podcasts, some students prefer to learn with classmates and teachers in class, while other students choose to practice with podcasts at home. Furthermore, students also elaborate that interesting topics would become their priority when they listen to podcasts. They also claimed that speakers' information could connect with their background knowledge. It would help them comprehend the content of podcasts, and interesting and educational podcasts would motivate them to think independently.

Conclusion

From the summary of the three research questions of this study, in the English-speaking course for wearing masks during the epidemic, through the design of multicultural theme content, the course teaching design based on CLIL, and the use of Podcasts, it reduced the classroom anxiety of students and teachers speaking English in the classroom and enhanced the motivation of speaking English. The results also reflected improved students' English listening skills and participation in English speaking.

About the author

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Linguistic Manipulation in Orwell's *Animal Farm*: A Pragma-Stylistic Perspective

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Abstract

Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm* is a rich source of manipulative discourses, especially as embodied in the character Squealer, who masterfully exploits the peripheral entities. Despite its critical and widespread acclaim, the systematic exploration of specific pragma-stylistic strategies that Orwell uses to depict manipulation and propaganda are understudied in the literature. Utilizing an eclectic theoretical framework incorporating Johnson's (2000) manifest rationality theory and the deceptive principle posited by Merzah and Abbas (2020), this study performs a qualitative intra-analysis to unearth the distinct employment of a myriad of fallacies, such as scapegoating, ad nauseam, false dilemma, domino fallacy, historical negationism, and ad ignorantiam. This research aims to explore manipulative rhetoric from the viewpoint of pragma-stylistics. The significance of this research lies in its potential to deepen our understanding of rhetorical strategies in allegorical literature, offering insights into how language can be used to manipulate and influence. This study addresses the central question: How do specific pragma-stylistic strategies enable characters in Animal Farm to manipulate and propagate fallacies, and what implications does this have for understanding similar manipulative techniques in political discourse? The findings suggest a contrast between Squealer's and Napoleon's manipulative strategies: Napoleon, akin to the uncharismatic communication style of Stalin, leverages scapegoating to undermine his adversaries, while Squealer, Napoleon's rhetorical extension, focuses on distorting historical events, exaggerating consequences, and perpetuating falsehoods.

Keywords: Animal Farm, deceptive rhetoric, Gricean maxims, George Orwell, linguistic manipulation, pragma-stylistics, reasoning fallacies

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Introduction

Pragma-stylistics is an interdisciplinary field that combines the principles of pragmatics and stylistics to analyze the use of language in various contexts, particularly in literary texts (Leech, 1983; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). Pragmatics is concerned with how context influences meaning (Leech, 1983), whereas stylistics focuses mainly on analyzing linguistic features and their effects on readers or hearers (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). The amalgamation of these two disciplines examines how authors employ linguistic devices to achieve particular effects, convey meaning, or influence readers' interpretation of a text.

Manipulation and fallacies are central to pragma-stylistics, as authors may strategically utilize language to persuade, influence, or manipulate readers by employing rhetorical strategies, including fallacies (Simpson, 1993; Van Dijk, 2006). Fallacies, often used in manipulative strategies, are errors in reasoning or flawed arguments that might appear logical or convincing on the surface but are ultimately misleading or deceptive (Walton, 1995). This research aims to explore manipulative rhetoric from the viewpoint of pragma-stylistics in Orwell's Animal Farm. Specifically, it examines how characters employ various reasoning fallacies to manipulate others and how these strategies function within the narrative. The significance of this research lies in its potential to deepen the understanding of rhetorical strategies in allegorical literature, offering insights into how language can be used to manipulate and influence. By addressing gaps in existing research, this study enhances comprehension of the pragma-stylistic strategies utilized in Animal Farm, thereby contributing to broader literary and communication studies.

This research addresses the following questions:

1. How do specific pragma-stylistic strategies enable characters in *Animal Farm* to manipulate and propagate fallacies?
2. What implications do these manipulative strategies have for understanding similar manipulative strategies in political discourse?

The objectives can be encapsulated in the following manner:

- To undertake a comprehensive examination of manipulative strategies within the narrative discourse of Animal Farm.
- To analyze the employment of reasoning fallacies such as scapegoating, ad nauseam, false dilemma, domino fallacy, historical negationism, and ad ignorantiam by the characters.
- To investigate how the violation of the four standards that dissent against fallaciousness, as well as the appeal to the deceptive maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, contribute to the manipulative strategies used by the characters.

Literature Review

Pragma-Stylistics

According to Fischer-Starcke (2010), stylistics is a unique field of study that allows for systematically probing literary texts using objective, linguistically-oriented analytical tools. It involves the scientific examination of literary discourse. Modern stylistics endeavors to demonstrate meaning in (non-)literary discourse via the writer's or speaker's choice of words (Hickey, 1993). Pragmatics, as defined by Levinson (1983), can be encapsulated in the equation: [pragmatics = semantics + context]. Pragmatics studies language from a functional perspective, attempting to "explain aspects of linguistic structure in terms of non-linguistic pressures and

causes." Since Hickey coined the term, pragma-stylistics has become an essential approach to discourse analysis (1993).

As outlined by Black (2010), pragma-stylistics focuses on the application of pragmatic theories and models to understand literary works. The modern perspective on stylistics suggests that analysis and interpretation are not limited to literary texts. Pragmatic models such as Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, speech act theory, implicatures, politeness, and turn-taking management are frequently applied to the language used in literary texts (Busse et al., 2010). Hence, pragma-physicians can be viewed as scientists studying the microscopic physical properties of (non-)literary discourse, whether written or spoken.

According to Busse et al. (2010), several central questions underlie a pragma-stylistic investigation of dialogue:

Why and how does a play text/dialogue mean what it does? What is the specific style of a conventional exchange? How can it be analyzed? What are the effects of the linguistic choices made? What do these choices say about the characters'/speakers' interpersonal relations and inherent power structures? How is humor generated? Why do we perceive interactional exchange as, for example, impolite? (p. 40).

To this list, the question "how manipulation and fallacious arguments are formed and detected?" could be added to the list of predetermined questions. By fusing pragmatics and stylistics, more encyclopedic interpretations (i.e., the formation and detection of manipulation and fallacious arguments) of numerous obscure phenomena will be proposed (Hickey, 1993).

Recent studies have made significant contributions to pragma-stylistics by analyzing various texts and contexts. Almas Barakhas and Khlil (2021) explored pragma-stylistics in confessional poetry, demonstrating the application of Searle's speech acts and Grice's maxims, noting that "most of Grice's maxims are flouted, and the quantity maxim is the most dominant flouted by each poet" (p. 170). Bohunická (2020) discussed pragmatization in stylistics, emphasizing the shift to viewing language as social action: "Pragmatization in stylistics represents a change towards perceiving linguistic activity as social action, incorporating the human element into language analysis" (p. 281). Saleh and Alattar (2023) analyzed misdirection in detective novels, revealing the use of Grice's maxims and ambiguity to mislead readers, highlighting that "focalization, the violation of quantity and manner maxims, and the use of ambiguous expressions are the most recurrent strategies in Christie's novels" (p. 64). Khafaga and Shaalan (2022) used computational tools to decode pragma-stylistic meanings in Orwell's Animal Farm, focusing on frequency distribution analysis, and found that "applying a frequency distribution analysis to the linguistic analysis of large data fictional texts serves to identify various types of discourse and thematic categorization" (p. 220). Purba (2022) examined Indonesian presidential candidates' victory speeches using a pragma-stylistic framework, identifying assertive speech acts as dominant: "The result showed that assertive [speech acts] appeared as the most frequent type used in the speeches" (p. 231).

While these studies enrich the understanding of pragma-stylistics, they do not specifically address the systematic use of reasoning fallacies in Orwell's Animal Farm. Previous analyses of Animal Farm have examined political (Al-Asbahi & Khafaga, 2020), historical (Hasan et al., 2020), and sociological aspects (Chen & Liu, 2022). However, there is a lack of focused pragma-stylistic exploration of manipulative strategies employed by characters. This research aims to fill this gap by systematically analyzing how characters like Squealer and Napoleon use specific

reasoning fallacies, such as scapegoating, ad nauseam, false dilemma, domino fallacy, historical negationism, and ad ignorantiam, to manipulate others within the narrative.

By addressing these research gaps, this study will enhance the understanding of the stylistic strategies used for manipulation within the narrative, offering broader implications for both literary works and real-world communication. The findings could serve as a basis for similar pragma-stylistic analyses of other literary works, enabling scholars in linguistics, literature, and communication studies to explore the use of linguistic manipulation and persuasion strategies across various genres and periods. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how language and rhetoric have been historically employed to control and influence individuals and societies.

The Deceptive Principle

Merzah and Abbas (2020) propounded a recent principle labeled as the deceptive principle. The newly engineered principle is modeled on Grice's (1991) cooperative principle, which can be elucidated by presenting the following maxims:

(a) Do not say what you believe to be false. (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. (2) The maxim of quantity: (a) Make your contribution as informative as is required. (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than required. (3) The maxim of relevance: Be relevant. (4) The maxim of manner: (a) Avoid obscurity of expression. (a) Avoid obscurity of expression. (b) Avoid ambiguity. (c) Be brief. (d). Be orderly.

In their model, Merzah and Abbas (2020) argued that interlocutors adhere to the following principle when intending to practice deception: Make your conversational contribution not as is required, at the stage as you make it occur, by the purpose of the direction of the talk exchange in which you evade, ambiguate, and/or are vague, while withholding your real intentions so as not to be honest or accountable for what you say. One might label this the Deceptive Principle. (p. 92) As expounded infra, Merzah and Abbas (2020) advanced four maxims that compose the deceptive principle (henceforth, DP):

(1) The Maxim of Quantity: (a) Do make your contribution as (un)informative (i.e., more or less than is required) as you need to achieve the fostering of a false belief in the target. Withhold relevant information if needed. (b) Do make your contribution more/less informative than is required. Distort (hyperbolize or downsize) reality if need be. (2) The Maxim of Quality: (a) Do not hesitate to falsify/fabricate/lie if it serves your argument better. (b) Do not hesitate to plant seeds of doubt or spread rumors you have no evidence to be true. (3) The Maxim of Relevance: Be irrelevant. Do not hesitate to plant red herrings for irrelevancy. To achieve this: (a) Evade addressing the heart of the matter or answering questions. (b) Practice self-/other face-threatening acts to distract the target's attention. (4) The Maxim of Manner: (a) Be unclear, indirect, and unorderly to enable incoherence, hence deception. (b) Be ambiguous/vague if you need to mislead or hide information of truth/relevance (p. 93).

The deceptive maxims under discussion serve as evidence that the deceptive principle is inherently reliant upon the cooperative principle. Such maxims necessitate an outward appearance of cooperation, given that the efficacy of deception is contingent upon its covert nature. This aligns with the insights from McCornack's (1992) IMT, which posits that while the speaker feigns adherence to the cooperative principle, they judiciously avoid overtly betraying their breach, with the core of the deception rooted in the perceptions of the target.

Manipulation

To clarify what is meant by manipulation, Fairclough (1989) defines linguistic manipulation as "the conscious use of language in a devious way to control others," emphasizing three key elements: intention, discursive distortion, and control" (p. 6). Other scholars, such as Kress (1990) and Van Dijk (1996), broaden the definition to view manipulation as a method of achieving goals via persuasion.

According to Day (1999), manipulation is viewed as a violation of argument, often termed pseudo-argumentation. A further definition of manipulation is postulated by Walton (2007), who describes this concept as a pragmatic process where manipulators employ a specific type of fallacious argument. Manipulation can be understood pragmatically through Handelman's (2009) conceptualization of manipulation, which explains the presence of certain formal features such as fallacious arguments and breaching conversational maxims. Handelman describes manipulation as a mode of deception, emphasizing the element of intentional misleading. He proposes a model of manipulation that includes coercion (maximum control), persuasion (maximum influence), and deception (maximum misleading), with manipulation varying in levels of these three elements.

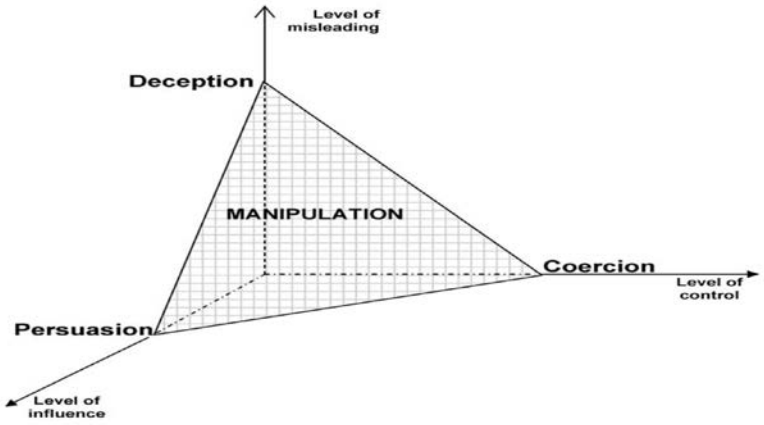

Figure 1. Handelman's (2009) topography of manipulation

The manipulation process hinges on four key parameters: the target (manipulatee), the sender (manipulator), intention, covertness, and the speaker's interest, into the pragmatic processes behind manipulation in literary texts.

For Cialdini (2021), the manipulatee may be controlled or deceived into believing that their actions are driven by their reasoning. Despite these varying perspectives, a common thread in the literature is the understanding of manipulation as an impact on a person to induce them to act in a certain way, whether consciously or unconsciously (Polyakova et al., 2020).

Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm* provides a rich case study for the examination of these concepts. The novel is rife with instances of manipulation, as characters use language and rhetoric to control others, making it an ideal text for exploring how manipulation is conducted and achieved. Fallacies, being ambiguous on multiple levels, aid manipulators in presenting obstacles to the achievement of their manipulative objectives. By studying *Animal Farm* through the lens of pragma-stylistics, readers will have better interpretations of propagandistic discourses.

Johnson's (2000) Manifest Rationality Theory

Johnson (2000) notes that fallacies can often pass unnoticed. He describes a fallacious argument as one that breaches the criteria for a valid argument. He puts forward two categories of fallacious arguments: those associated with the dialectical tier and those tied to the illative core. The former involves the arguer setting conditions for the opponent, while the latter is structured around three elements: premises, warrants, and conclusions. Moreover, as presented infra, he sets forth four standards to discern fallaciousness at the illative core level:

Acceptability

Initially introduced by Hamblin (1970) for assessing arguments, this criterion, as Johnson (2000) elaborates, demands that every component of an argument be framed in a manner deemed acceptable by the listener for rational persuasion. It is inherently pragmatic, emphasizing the need for acceptability within the framework of a dialectical exchange between two parties.

Truth

This standard aligns with the maxim of quality from Grice's cooperative principle, asserting that speakers should convey what they perceive as truth and avoid falsehoods. Johnson (2000) employs the truth criterion as a means to evaluate arguments, wherein the veracity or falsity of an utterance determines the possibility of fallaciousness.

Relevance

Echoing one of the maxims of the cooperative principle, this criterion insists that speakers stay pertinent to their ongoing context. For gauging the fallacy in an argument, Johnson (2000) leans on this criterion. He highlights that "relevance" includes propositional relevance, distinct from its topical and audience counterparts. It is worth noting, however, that the definition of relevance is inextricably linked to its context, rendering it a criterion rooted in pragmatics due to its fluidity across different situations.

Sufficiency

Outlined by Johnson (2000), this criterion emphasizes that the premises should furnish adequate evidence to validate the central assertion. Its pragmatic nature is evident because adequacy can vary across contexts, aligning closely with the Gricean maxim of quantity.

This set of criteria portrays fallacy as a manipulative pragmatic strategy frequently employed in political discourse. In essence, if a speaker aims to manipulate and violates one or more of these criteria, their utterance is considered fallacious and, consequently, manipulative.

In summation, fallacious strategic maneuvering is strategic maneuvering that appears to comply with the rules of critical discussion, but in fact, it does not. This is because neither party will be eager to portray themselves as unreasonable. Given the relationship between fallacies and manipulation, it is apparent that one of the manipulative strategies used by manipulators is to resort to fallacious arguments to achieve their manipulative and persuasive goals. Therefore, the concept of fallacy is crucial in manipulative arguments.

Furthermore, de Saussure (2005) previously asserted that falsity and insincerity corrupt the vision of the world to which human communication refers. Manipulation can also interfere with the inferential processes of elaborating knowledge and making decisions based on reliable information. In the context of the rhetorical tradition, this type of manipulation is recognized as a fallacy. Fallacy, as a process, proceeds through three stages.

Fallacy

Whereas fallacy has been defined in various ways across the literature, the following are the most prominent definitions of this concept: Hamblin (1970) argues that fallacy is an argument

that appears valid but is not true, a definition that is seen as one of the earliest in the literature of logic and philosophy. This interpretation, although integral, seems vague and unable to categorize all types of fallacies effectively. Building on the groundwork laid by Hamblin (1989), Woods and Walton (1989) posit that fallacy is a violation of the rules of a dialogue or conversational exchange. This definition underlines the context of the argument, emphasizing how fallacies oftentimes manipulate the norms of discourse. This approach, nonetheless, may be limited in its feasibility, as it requires an exhaustive understanding of dialogue structures. There is, additionally, unclarity in determining the criteria for fallaciousness. Fallacy, following Johnson and Blair (2000), is a type of argument that is psychologically persuasive but logically faulty. This definition portrays the manipulative nature of fallacies and their persuasive power. It, nonetheless, relies heavily on the distinction between psychological persuasiveness and logical validity, which may not always be well-defined. This aligns with the most basic definition, as presented by Ayto (2000), which states that the noun "fallacy" is stemmed from the Latin "fallacia." This term is derived from "fallere," a verb that translates to "to mislead/deceive." Accordingly and similarly, the fundamental connotation of "fallacia" pertains to deception. Enhancing the definition from a pragmatic foundation, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2003) contend that fallacies are violations of the rules of strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse. Albeit the approach dissects fallacies more intricately, its profound theoretical grounding can be a barrier to operationalizing.

For the sake of this study, multiple definitions will be taken into consideration. A fallacy, in this research, is viewed as a deceptive discourse that appears valid but is devoid of logical coherence. Fallacies, grounded in their pragmatics-driven nature, are deliberate deviations in dialogue that aim to manipulate perceptions, often distorting valid discursive expectations. To complement these definitions, the most prominent types of fallacies are clarified as follows: formal (Copi et al., 2014) and informal fallacies (Walton, 1995). The latter "arise[s] from confusions concerning the content of the language used" (Copi et al., 2014, p. 110), which is suggestive of the core tenets of pragmatics, and hence, this study will give precedence to it.

Since there is no optimal taxonomy of fallacies that are apt for the selected data, the researcher will engineer a taxonomy that is tailored to this context. It is crucial to clarify that the causes of the following fallacies are context-sensitive, arising from a dynamic and fluid set of unfixed triggers.

Ad nauseam

Gula (2018) maintains that this fallacy (also known as ad infinitum) is a form of propaganda: "The propagandist says something over and over again. He may use different words each time, but it's the same point. The theory is that if you say something often enough, people will eventually believe you" (p. 23). In other words, it is a fallacy in which the manipulator repetitively exploits the same word, phrase, story, or imagery to the point of exhaustion, or, as the term suggests, nausea, with the hopes that repetition will lead to persuasion.

Ad Ignorantiam

In accordance with Kreider (2018), ad ignorantiam, also known as appeal to ignorance, is a logical fallacy where a proposition is believed to be true simply because it has not yet been proven false, or a proposition is believed to be false because it has not yet been proven true. The flaw in this reasoning is that the lack of evidence for one view necessarily establishes the truth of its counter-view. This fallacy usually appeals to the deceptive maxim of quality.

False dilemma (also known as a false dichotomy and black-and-white thinking)

According to Lunsford et al. (2013, p.74), a false dilemma tends to obscure the legitimate alternatives of a complicated issue. This fallacy reflects incorrect thinking because it presents an issue or problem as having only two possible solutions when, in fact, there are more fields (Culver, 2019). This black-and-white thinking generates a false dilemma for those who do not identify with either category. This appeals to the maxims of quantity and relevance.

Domino Fallacy

According to Damer (2009), this fallacy, also known as the slippery slope, violates the sufficiency criterion (i.e., the maxim of quantity). The manipulator, by invoking the domino fallacy, assumes, without appropriate evidence, that a particular action or event is just the first in a series of steps that inevitably lead to a specific, usually undesirable, consequence.

Historical Negationism This fallacy, also known as revisionism or denialism, involves the distortion or falsification of the historical record (Pohl, 2020). Although Damer (2009) did not specifically refer to this fallacy, it actually violates the truth criterion (i.e., the maxim of quality). This fallacy is used to negate the validity of documented history and reframe the perceptions and explanations of historical events to obtain desired results by manipulating or deceiving the receiver (Evans, 2002). Therefore, historical negationism can function as a technique of propaganda that supports a particular agenda—political, religious, ideological, etc. (Evans, 2001).

Scapegoating

Walton (1996) posits that scapegoating, also known as blame game/shifting, is a fallacious argumentative strategy where one party assigns blame or responsibility for a particular problem or crisis to another party, without sufficient evidence, in an attempt to exonerate themselves of responsibility or to divert attention from the actual causes. When X is being scapegoated, irrelevant or untrue information could be triggered; hence, this fallacy violates both the truth and the relevance criteria (i.e., the maxims of quality and relevance, respectively).

Methodology

Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm* was selected as the research's focal text due to its allegorical content rich in political satire, reflecting the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Stalinist era (Hitchens, 2003). The novel's characters and events vividly portray power dynamics and manipulation, making it apt for pragma-stylistic analysis (Muradian, 2016).

Moreover, *Animal Farm* has been widely studied in the context of political allegory, but few have shed light on the systematic analysis through the employment of pragma-stylistic strategies exploited by the characters, especially Squealer, who serves as the mouthpiece for the regime (e.g., Omotese, 2012; Nawaz et al., 2015; Turkey & Al- Hilu, 2020). The character of Squealer, in particular, offers an opportunity to explore various manipulative discourses and deceptive strategies, including the use of fallacies, such as ad nauseam, scapegoating, and false dilemma, to mention but three. By selecting Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm*, this research aims to fill a gap in the literature by providing a systematic exploration of these pragma-stylistic strategies, aligning with the frameworks of Johnson's (2000) manifest rationality theory and the deceptive principle proposed by Merzah and Abbas (2020).

The correspondence between Johnson's (2000) manifest rationality theory and Merzah and Abbas's (2020) deceptive principle illuminates a nuanced, multilayered understanding of deceptive/manipulative strategies. The alignment of truth with quality, relevance with relevance, and sufficiency with quantity is explicit. Notably, the acceptability criterion operates as a holistic, overarching element, which becomes impacted when any of the other criteria are violated. Rather

than signaling a theoretical gap, this phenomenon reflects the interdependent nature of the criteria. Any violation disrupts the overall equilibrium of the argument's acceptability.

The analytical process begins by delineating the discourse of the two main characters, Squealer and Napoleon, within Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm*. For the purpose of comparison, their respective dialogues were coded using distinct colors in PDF Expert. Subsequently, these dialogues were isolated and transferred to WordCounter to evaluate the frequency. The results indicate that Squealer's discourse accounts for approximately 80.6% (1338 words) of the total word count, while Napoleon's discourse is about 19.4% (322 words), rendering a simplified ratio of 669:161. This numeric disproportion underscores the varying significance of each character's discourse in the narrative, shaping the selection of extracts for further analysis. The following justifies the selected extracts:

The imbalance in extract selection in this study has several justifications that are interwoven in the research methodology. Squealer's role as the primary propagandist makes his discourse more central to the theme of manipulation, reflecting his status as Napoleon's spokesman and, hence, more representative. This is further underscored by Squealer's predominant dialogue, emphasizing the selection imbalance that stems from his dominant speaking role. Moreover, the analysis pivots toward a qualitative over quantitative approach, prioritizing the richness and thematic relevance of content instead of mere frequency. The thematic focus ensures that the specific quotes chosen best represent and illustrate the manipulation strategies in question. Napoleon's more indirect discourse, subtly conveyed through Squealer, provides an additional layer of justification for why Squealer's discourse is more frequently analyzed. This approach is complemented by methodological transparency, with meticulous and precise selection criteria to ensure that the selections are not arbitrary but carefully aligned with the research objectives. Furthermore, the alignment with research objectives ensures that each extract actively contributes to understanding the novel's manipulation strategies. Finally, an alternative analysis of Napoleon's discourse emphasizes why it requires unique treatment, reinforcing the rationale behind the selection imbalance. This complex interplay of factors creates a nuanced methodology that serves the study's overarching objectives.

This section is sewed up by the following techniques of data analysis:

1. Each utterance or set of related utterances will be numbered in a superscript format. This method allows for the reference of these utterances without needing to rewrite portions of the extract, thus conserving space.
2. Each extract will be contextualized and analyzed sequentially.
3. Each instance of pragma-stylistic realization that indicates manipulative strategies will be tabulated in terms of frequencies and percentages, allowing for more precise characterization.

Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm, a political allegory written by George Orwell in 1945, critiques the events of the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Stalinist regime. The novella revolves around a group of animals on a farm who, under the leadership of the pigs, revolt against their negligent human owner, Mr. Jones, in pursuit of an egalitarian society based on the principles of Animalism.

Central to the novella's narrative is the manipulative strategies employed by the pigs, particularly Squealer and Napoleon, who represent propaganda and authoritarianism, respectively. As the story unfolds, the pigs increasingly betray the tenets of Animalism, embodying the corruption and totalitarianism that plagued Stalin's Soviet Union (Hasan et al., 2020). Squealer,

the persuasive mouthpiece of the pigs, skillfully utilizes language to distort facts and justify the pigs' unjust actions, reflecting the manipulative power of propaganda in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Napoleon consolidates power through coercion, intimidation, and the elimination of dissenting voices, illustrating the oppressive nature of totalitarian regimes. The novella concludes with the animals' realization that they have merely replaced one tyrannical regime with another.

The novel reflects the narrative of a totalitarian regime and advocates for socialism rooted in democracy (Al-Asbahi & Khafaga, 2020). Squealer's role in the story also highlights the manipulative power of propaganda in the Soviet Union (Chen & Liu, 2022). In *Animal Farm*, Orwell (1945/2013) employs the characters of Napoleon and particularly of Squealer to expose the insidious power of manipulation and the tragic consequences of revolutions succumbing to corruption, ultimately serving as a cautionary tale against totalitarianism.

Analysis

Extract (1)

> We pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? [n1] Many of us actually dislike milk and apples [n2]. I dislike them myself [n3]! Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. [n4] Milk and apples (and this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig [n5]. We pigs are brain-workers [n6]. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us [n7]. Day and night we are watching over your welfare [n8]. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples [n9]. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? [n10] Jones would come back! [n11] Yes, Jones would come back! [n12] Surely, comrades," cried Squealer almost pleadingly, skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, "surely, there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?" [n.13] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 23).

Contextualization of Extract (1)

In this extract, Squealer delivers a speech to the more naive species on the farm, defending the pigs' hoarding of milk and apples. He claims that this act of unequal distribution will have overall positive effects on animal society. Squealer's eloquent language makes the pigs' ostensibly selfish behavior appear entirely selfless.

Analysis of Extract (1)

Upon scrutinizing utterances [n.4] and [n.5], Squealer invokes a pseudo-scientific aura, asserting the indispensability of milk and apples for pigs' well-being. Here, the maxim of quality (b) and manner operate in a subtle yet potent manner, insinuating a layer of scientific credibility while failing to offer empirical and clear substantiation. Consequently, there is a violation of the two criteria: truth and acceptability. This calculated ambiguity acts as an appeal to ignorance, constraining the epistemic boundaries of the non-porcine farm denizens. Moreover, Squealer's proclamations in [n.8] and [n.9] further exemplify the deceptive maxim of quality (b) and manner and the violation of truth and acceptability criteria, as they capitalize on an absence of counterfactual evidence, thereby coercing the farm animals into a passive acceptance of the pigs' ostensible altruism. This constitutes a manipulation of the animals' intellectual deficits, exacerbated by their inability to discern the fallacious components within the discourse.

By claiming that disaster will befall the farm if the pigs do not consume special items in utterances [n.10] through [n.13], a more pronounced invocation of the maxim of quality(b) and manner, and, by necessity, the violation of the truth and acceptability criteria, are exhibited. Specifically, Squealer uses the absence of evidence as evidence, implementing an appeal to ignorance and, in consequence, manipulating the informational vacuum to install an anticipatory fear of Jones' hypothetical return. Thus, Squealer emerges as an archetypal Bourgeois manipulator, exploiting pragma-stylistic tools to consolidate material and intellectual hegemony. The socio-epistemic dynamics of the farm are thereby calibrated to manufacture consent and minimize resistance, culminating in a Hegelian master-slave dialectic in which the subordinate animals become unwitting collaborators in their subjugation.

Moreover, Squealer uses the term "comrades" twice to foster a sense of camaraderie and friendship between the in-group (the pigs) and the out-group (the other animals). The primary purpose of this is to manipulate the listeners. This repetitive rhetoric leads to the logical fallacy of ad nauseam, realized through invocation of the deceptive maxim of quantity and, accordingly, violating the sufficiency and acceptability criteria. This is apparent in utterances [n.5; n.13], which is a classic case of ad nauseam, wherein Squealer's consistent use of the term generates a deceptive aura of inclusivity. This resonates with Marxist rhetoric, aiming to create a facade of unity while perpetuating inequality.

Squealer repeatedly insists that Jones would return [n.11; n.12; n.13], employing the reasoning fallacy of ad nauseam, giving rise to the deceptive maxim of quantity and, accordingly, the violation of sufficiency and acceptability criteria. As Gula (2002) posits, the theory behind this fallacy is that if the manipulator keeps repeating the same point using slightly different wording, the receivers would be persuaded.

Squealer also employs two more logical fallacies: false dilemma [n.10; n.11; n.12] and domino fallacy [n.10; n.11; n.12; n.13]. The false dilemma presents the animals with only two choices: to accept Jones' rule or Napoleon's. Consequently, the animals are presented with a binary choice: to accept Napoleon as their leader or risk reverting to servitude under Jones. However, this dichotomy is a fallacious construct; it obscures the fact that the animals could indeed choose a path independent of both Jones and Napoleon, potentially embracing freedom untainted by either oppressive regime. Squealer simultaneously uses the domino fallacy. This line of manipulative reasoning appeals to the maxims of relevance and quality, engendering violating the relevance, truth, and sufficiency criteria, which, in turn, serves as an enabling mechanism for Squealer's manipulation via a false dilemma. The structure of this fallacy can be illustrated as follows: Premise A leads to B, which leads to C, D, and so on. This can be applied to this instance in the following manner: If the non-pig animals consume apples and milk, this means there will not be sufficient apples and milk for the pigs, which leads to the pigs becoming fatigued, which leads to the faltering of Animalism; hence Jones will return. There is an obscurity of how these two options are logically linked, which muddies the clarity of the argument. This thread of thought appeals to the deceptive maxim of relevance, manner, and quantity, hence violates the relevance, sufficiency, and acceptability criteria and, as a corollary, results in the domino fallacy.

In the aforementioned quotations [n.10; n.11; n.12], Squealer presents a false dilemma again when he refers to milk and apples. By using a hypothetical conditional [n.10], he asserts that if the pigs did not monopolize the milk and apples for themselves, Jones would return. He formulates a sentence relying on the second conditional to convey the impression that there is no third option: either the out-group accepts that the in-group monopolizes all the goods for

themselves, or they will be doomed by the return of the tyrant Jones, forcing them into a perceived binary decision. However, there are more alternatives; for example, the pigs and the rest of the animals could share milk and apples. Squealer, by means of the referred-to fallacy, obscures the fact that the pigs are benefiting disproportionately.

Entangled with other pragma-stylistic tools, Squealer leverages affirming the consequent to manipulate the animals into arriving at a misleading conclusion.

Let p represent: The pigs consume milk and apples.
Let q represent: It is for the benefit of all animals.
Let r represent: Squealer employs pragma-stylistic tools.
Given:

1. $p \rightarrow q$: If the pigs consume milk and apples (p), then it is for the benefit of all animals (q).
2. r: Squealer employs pragma-stylistic tools.

Observed:
$P \wedge r$: The pigs are consuming milk and apples (p), then it is not for the benefit of all animals (q).

Fallacious conclusion:
From $p \wedge r$ and $p \rightarrow q$, Squealer puts forward a reference of q: Thus, it must be for the benefit of all animals.

Squealer exploits fallacious reasoning, intertwining truths with falsehoods, to consolidate the pigs' dominance; by asserting $p \rightarrow q$ and cleverly spotlighting p, he misleads the animals into accepting q, diverting from the actual premise $p \wedge \neg q$. The seamless mix of truths and unproven claims reveals Squealer's masterful manipulation, ensuring unquestioned pig authority. To sum up, the pigs are setting privileges for themselves, but Squealer justifies it by implying it is for the greater good.

Extract (2)

Sub-extract (2.1):
"No animal shall sleep in a bed" [n.1] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 16)
Sub-extract (2.2):
"No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets [...] [n.2]* A bed merely means a place to sleep in [...] [n.3] The rule was against sheets, which are a human invention [...] [n4] We have removed the sheets from the farmhouse beds, and [started to] sleep between blankets [n.5]." (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 24)
Sub-extract (2.3):
"No animal shall drink alcohol." [n.6] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 16)
Sub-extract (2.4)
"No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess.*" [emphasis added] [n.7] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 71)
Sub-extract (2.5):
"No animal shall kill any other animal." [n.8] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 16)
Sub-extract (2.6):
"No animal shall kill any other animal WITHOUT CAUSE." [n.9] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 59)
Sub-extract (2.7):

"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS." [n.10] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 88)

Contextualization of Extract (2)

The above sub-extracts show how Squealer has adjusted the original seven commandments into new, distorted ones [in utterances (n.2-n.5); n.7; n.9; and n.10]. The last sub-extract [n.2.7] is, in fact, a summary of all the previously put commandments and mockery of the notion of equality. If all animals are equal indeed, then there should be no ability whatsoever to form a hierarchy between different types of equalities. The pigs have committed to this last commandment specifically. This can be illustrated from the beginning and throughout the text, particularly in extract (1) when Squealer claims that the pigs need more and better food to assist the low-hierarchy organization. He is manipulating language and ideology to suit their ends.

Analysis of Extract (2)

There is conspicuous historical negationism throughout this extract, which can be manifested as the following explication: With respect to the strategy of addition, it can be seen that some words are added to a number of commandments to coerce the animals into coping with the new desired situation without any objection on their part. Squealer easily manipulates the animals into thinking that these laws have never been altered and that these were the implied meaning since the beginning. The first distortion occurs in the fourth commandment, which reads, "No animal shall sleep in a bed" [n.1] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 23). In the course of time, it has been distorted into a new commandment: "No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets* [emphasis added]" [n.2] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 23) With the addition of the prepositional phrase "with sheets." This addition is exploited to violate the fourth commandment without allowing the other animals to know that a particular alteration has taken place.

Exploiting the animals' limited intelligence, Squealer could easily manipulate them by adjusting the commandment and making it seem as if they have misunderstood the implied meaning behind the utterance. He started to comment, saying that "[a] bed merely means a place to sleep in" and "the rule was against sheets, which are a human invention." He further justified his argument by stressing that they "have removed the sheets from the farmhouse beds and [started to] sleep between blankets."

The fifth commandment, which reads as: "[n]o animal shall drink alcohol" [n.6], has been distorted into "[n]o animal shall drink alcohol *to excess* [emphasis added]" [n.7], which holds a different meaning. The first version of the commandment reveals the prohibition of drinking alcohol for all animals. The second version, at the other extreme, holds new problematic implications:

1. Animals can drink alcohol.
2. They should not drink too much.

The first implication clearly mirrors the contrast between the two versions. As for the second implication, it can be said that it is wrapped by a second layer of manipulation because there are no conspicuous boundaries for the phrasal verb "to excess." Squealer can easily control the amount of alcohol that he and his likes can drink. He could put forward this veiled distortion under the pretext of misunderstanding.

The original implication of the sixth commandment (i.e., "No animal shall kill any other animal" [n.8]) is abolished by the addition of "without cause" to be "[n]o animal shall kill any

other animal WITHOUT CAUSE" [n.9]. After the unjust executions in chapter seven, this new distortion has been created. It was, as usual, not an effortful task for Squealer to manipulate the other animals due to their naivety. Although they were suspicious at first, all their doubts soon evaporated. The narration clearly demonstrates this: "[S]ome of the animals remembered—or *thought* [emphasis added] they remembered" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.58) the sixth commandment.

The careful choice of words displays that the animals are never highly suspicious, if any, which makes them a vulnerable target to be manipulated. Further, after reading the new commandment, they instantly thought that the "last two words had slipped out […] [their] memory" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 59) and since the commandment "had not been violated; for clearly there was good reason for killing the traitors who had leagued with Snowball." (p. 59) This evinces that any sort of skepticism has been easily put to death. The original version of the commandment affirms the prohibition of the act of killing animals with or without reason. The second, that is, the distorted version, makes an explicit exception so that the pigs can practice the act of killing as the law stands.

The second technique of historical negationism can be seen when all the seven commandments have been erased from the wall on which they are printed and are replaced by one single commandment which runs as follows: "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS" [n.10] (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 88). This act of replacing represents the third technique to achieve the fallacy of historical negationism. The paradoxical use of "more equal" is a nonsensical commandment/utterance as it carries no logic and breaches the system of language; there is no such thing as more or less equal; the referent does not accept gradability. It is either equal or not, as the term denotes a state of being the same in quantity, size, degree, value, or status; there is no in-between. The commandment under scrutiny confuses the animals by steering them into facing two opposite oppositions: on the one hand, the claim of the equality of all the animals, and on the other hand, it emphasizes the superiority of the pigs (i.e., the in-group) over the non-pigs (i.e., the out-group).

Given:

H = Original commandment / historical fact

$D(H)$ = Distorted / Denied version of that commandment

The distortion or alteration can be represented as follows:

$H \rightarrow D(H)$

Sub-extract (2.1; 2.2):

- H_1 = "No animal shall sleep in a bed."
- $D(H_1)$ = "[...] with sheets."

Sub-extract (2.3; 2.4):

- H_2 = "No animal shall drink alcohol."
- $D(H_2)$ = "[...] to excess."

Sub-extract (2.5; 2.6):

- H_3 = "No animal shall kill any other animal."
- $D(H_3)$ = "[...] WITHOUT CAUSE."

Sub-extract (2.7):

- H_4 = "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL."
- $D(H_4)$: "[...] BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS."

Fallacy logic:

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If *H* is true and *D*(*H*) is presented as true, then it implies that the animals believe *D*(*H*) over *H*.
$H \wedge D(H) \rightarrow \neg H$

When Squealer (S) manipulates the original commandment, it results in the distorted commandment: $S(H) \rightarrow D(H)$. This formula implies that the existence of the historical fact and its distorted version leads to the negation or denial of the original fact. Nevertheless, in reality, *D*(*H*) does not change the truth value of the *H*. Ergo; the fallacy implies that the existence of a denial or distortion negates the truth of the *H*. In this context, Squealer is a historical revisionist, altering the animals' shared history for political gain. Overall, the historical negationism in this extract is exhibited by dint of addition, omission, replacement, and the appeal to the deceptive maxims of quality and quantity, which causes a violation of the truth, sufficiency, and acceptability criteria with respect to Johnson's (2000) rationality manifest theory.

Extract (3)

> "Comrades," he said quietly, "do you know who is responsible for this? [n.1] Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill? [n.2] SNOWBALL!" he suddenly roared in a voice of thunder [n.3]. "Snowball has done this thing! [n.4] In sheer malignity, thinking to set back our plans and avenge himself for his ignominious expulsion, this traitor has crept here under cover of night and destroyed our work of nearly a year [n.5]." (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 46)

Contextualization of Extract (3)

Napoleon's accusation of Snowball regarding the destruction of the half-finished windmill serves as an instrumental tool for him to evade criticism and foster unwavering allegiance. By shaping Snowball as a malevolent figure, Napoleon effectively instills fear among the animals, hence practicing mind-control to achieve his ends.

Analysis of Extract (3)

In utterances throughout [n.3-n.5], Napoleon capitalizes on the deceptive maxims of quality and manner and the violation of the two criteria, truth, and acceptability, which serve as an enabling mechanism for Napoleon's manipulation via ad ignorantiam by insinuating Snowball's guilt in the absence of concrete and unmistakable evidence. This maneuver is seamlessly aligned with Johnson's (2000) concept of manifest rationality, where Napoleon crafts an environment where his assertion shapes a socio-epistemic setting that renders his unverified assertions as ostensibly rational. Importantly, this creates a fertile ground for employing an appeal to ignorance fallacy, converting the lack of evidence against Snowball into a pseudo-confirmation of the traitorous act he is accused of. By monopolizing the narrative and preying upon the cognitive limitations of the farm animals, Napoleon coerces the animals into a form of consent that minimizes resistance, thereby exemplifying manipulation. His approach showcases how manipulation exploits not only the information but also the vulnerabilities of the intended audience.

Napoleon systematically tarnishes Snowball's reputation to render him powerless before the other animals [utterances n.1-n.5]. His use of derogatory labels such as "traitor" and "criminal" (Orwell, 1945/1979, p. 50) is designed to instill negative perceptions of Snowball among the

animals. As part of his manipulative strategies, Napoleon extended his influence beyond mere verbal language by incorporating paralinguistic features, amplifying his persuasive powers. When he "roared" Snowball's name "in a voice of thunder," he taps into the animals' primitive fears, creating a sense of the uncanny. This results in an eerie feeling, familiar yet strange, associated with Snowball's name, triggering compliance among the animals to all of Squealer's arguments. Freud (1999) describes the uncanny as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar." In *Animal Farm*, this uncanny fear is encarnated by Napoleon's potent deployment of detrimental terms such as "avenge," "malignity," "ignominious," and "destroyed." This language paints a dreadful and distorted image of the familiar Snowball, making him appear as an uncanny and treacherous figure. Also, Napoleon uses emotionally charged language ("roared in a voice of thunder") to sidestep the need for factual evidence, which hinders the clarity of the argument.

Napoleon employs the strategy of scapegoating Snowball through false accusations. The absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence; ergo, there remains a consistent lack of q (evidence supporting Snowball's involvement). Despite this absence of evidence ($\neg q$), Napoleon's narrative implies Snowball's responsibility (p). This violation of the truth criterion is an embodiment of Freud's (1999, p. 155) concept that the uncanny derives from "primitive beliefs that have been surmounted." Here, the "primitive belief" is the expectation of truth and evidence in accusations. Napoleon surmounts this expectation by scapegoating Snowball without evidence, resulting in an uncanny feeling of distorted familiarity, hence aiding in his control over the animals. Furthermore, in utterance [n.2], Napoleon constructs a false dilemma by presenting Snowball as the only culprit for the windmill's destruction, subtly appealing to the maxim of manner, relevance, and quantity by reducing a complex issue to a misleading either-or choice. This, by default, engenders a violation of the criteria of acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency.

Napoleon is scapegoating his rival, Snowball, throughout the entire extract [n.1-n.5] via appealing to the maxim of quality and manner, hence violating the truth and acceptability criteria, by means of presenting false information regarding Snowball's involvement. The logic is exhibited symbolically as in the following: $r \wedge \neg q \rightarrow p$.

This interaction, in turn, serves to maintain Napoleon's control over the animals, exploiting their fears and manipulating their perception of the familiar, ultimately distorting it into the uncanny.

Extract (4)

> "Jones's shot only grazed him [n.1]. I could show you this in his own writing, if you were able to read it[n2]. The plot was for Snowball, at the critical moment, to give the signal for flight and leave the field to the enemy [n.3]. And he very nearly succeeded– I will even say, comrades, he WOULD have succeeded if it had not been for our heroic Leader, Comrade Napoleon [n.4]. Do you not remember how, just at the moment when Jones and his men had got inside the yard, Snowball suddenly turned and fled, and many animals followed him? [n.5] And do you not remember, too, that it was just at that moment, when panic was spreading and all seemed lost, that Comrade Napoleon sprang forward with a cry of 'Death to Humanity!' and sank his teeth in Jones's leg [n.6]? Surely you remember THAT, comrades?[n.7] " exclaimed Squealer, frisking from side to side [n.8].

(Orwell, 1945/2013, pp.52-53)

Contextualization of Extract (4)

After The Battle of the Windmill, Squealer resumes practicing mind control by resorting to memory manipulation. He also enfeebles the animals' self-confidence by exploiting their naivety, which is apparent when he calls attention to the fact that they cannot read.

Analysis of Extract (4)

In utterance [n.2], Squealer employs a sophisticated array of manipulative strategies that pivot around epistemic limitations. Here, Squealer deploys an appeal to ignorance fallacy and historical negationism by leveraging the non-porcine farm denizens' inability to read, thereby rendering his claims unverifiable and constructing an epistemically secure narrative. This strategically leverages their inability to challenge or substantiate historical facts, muddling the clear conveyance of information. This fallacy is triggered by the deceptive maxim of quality and manner, hence the violation of the truth and acceptability criteria. Through this strategic manipulation, Squealer obfuscates the pathway to empirical verification. He implies that if the animals could read, they would find proof for his statement, drawing on the fact that the animals cannot challenge him. This manipulation serves to uphold a power structure that systematically disenfranchises the proletariat, represented by the illiterate animals. Hence, this utterance operates at the intersection of various linguistic and philosophical paradigms, epitomizing manipulative discourse.

In utterances [n.3; n.4], Squealer constructs a third conditional sentence to claim via the main clause that Snowball is a traitor and his scheme has been thwarted by Napoleon. This is yet another historical negationism that is realized by the evocation of the deceptive maxim of quality and, accordingly, violation of the truth and acceptability criteria.

The manipulation lies in showcasing the premise as an indisputable face, leading the animals to accept the conclusion unquestioningly. The logical flaw is not in the structure of the argument itself since $p \rightarrow q$ is a valid conditional statement but in the truthful representation of the premise, which is presented as true when it is, in fact, distorted. Squealer presents the narrative as if Snowball's treachery is a fact. Then he gives evidence that is supposed to support his narrative, hoping that this will lead the animals to make the erroneous connection themselves.

If Snowball is a traitor, he would flee from the battlefield ($A \rightarrow B$). Snowball fled from the battlefield. Therefore, Snowball is a traitor. Muddled with other pragma-stylistic tools, Squealer leverages affirming the consequent to practice manipulation.

p: Snowball is a traitor.
q: Napoleon acted heroically to thwart Snowball's treachery.
If p, then q.
q is true.
$\therefore$ p must be true.

This, of course, is a fallacious argument on many levels, as illustrated hitherto. Neither these utterances are true, nor do they represent a valid argument.

Furthermore, the utterance in question [n.3], Squealer shifts blame to Snowball for the chaos that has taken place due to the battle. In [n.4], Squealer continues to Scapegoating Snowball and goes beyond to glitter Napoleon's image before the non-porcine denizens.

Premise 1: There is chaos and discord on the farm
(A = Chaos and discord on the farm)
Premise 2: For any issue on the farm, there must be some entity entirely or mainly to blame

(∀ problems, there exists an entity to blame)
Premise 3: Snowball had associations with events leading to chaos (e.g., the Battle of Chowshed)
(X = Snowball is connected to A)
Premise 4 = Given the narrative pushed by Napoleon and Squealer, it would reinforce their authority and divert blame if Snowball was held responsible;
(It feels sensible to to blame X for A)
Conclusion: X is to blame for A

Following this train of thought, this fallacy leads to the evocation of the maxim quality, for Squealer has not provided any evidence for his claim. Hence, it violates the criteria of acceptability and quality. However, there are contradictious events that showcase Snowball's genuine interest in the betterment of the farm and its inhabitants: Firstly. Snowball's leadership during this Battle of the Cowshed is described as brave and strategic. He has jeopardized his life for the benefit of the other animals: "Snowball, who had studied an old book of Julius Caesar's campaigns which he had found in the farmhouse, was in charge of the defensive operations." (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.26) This evinces his dedication and his initiative in preparing for the battle. Secondly, he showed an interest in committees and education. He has attempted to initiate reading and writing classes, believing education is vital for the animals' continued freedom: "Snowball also busied himself with organizing the other animals into what he called Animal Committees." (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.20) Additionally, his proposal for the windmill is for the farm's long-term benefit, stressing the fact that the windmill will provide electricity, which will mean "a three-day week" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.84) with more leisure time for everyone.

Moreover, in utterances [n.5-n.8], Squealer repeatedly uses the reasoning fallacy of ad nauseam, which revolves around repeating the same argument [*r*] in different phrasing to achieve the effect of persuading the receiver and locating the audience's ability to understand the message accurately.

$r \wedge r \wedge r \wedge \ldots \rightarrow$ Belief in *r*.

Ad nauseam, as stated earlier, is realized by the resource to the deceptive maxim of quantity, thus the violation of the sufficiency and acceptability criterion. Squealer looks at the other animals' naivety as an asset to successfully achieve his goal; this is conspicuous when he resorts to distorting their memories about the specific events he mentions [n.5-n.8]. He does not provide evidence but instead uses rhetorical questions to prompt agreement. This manipulation creates an absence of definitive information, complicating the audience's ability to understand the message accurately. This leads to the exploitation of another reasoning fallacy, that is, historical negationism, which is realized by appeal to the deceptive maxim of quality and manner and, accordingly, the violation of the truth and acceptability criteria. Moreover, Squealer exploits the animals' potential lack of memory or knowledge.

Extract (5)

> "Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labor upon himself [n.1]. Do not imagine, comrades, that leadership is a pleasure! [n.2] On the contrary, it is a deep and heavy responsibility [n.3]. No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal [n.4]. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves [n.5]. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be? [n.6] Suppose you had decided to follow Snowball, with his moonshine of

windmills — Snowball, who, as we now know, was no better than a criminal? [n.7]" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.36)

Contextualization of Extract (5)

The text is a quote from Squealer, who is attempting to justify Napoleon's decision to take on extra labor and establish himself as the leader of *Animal Farm*. Squealer argues that leadership is a burdensome responsibility, and Napoleon sacrifices for the good of all the animals. The quote is an example of propaganda used to manipulate the other animals on the farm into accepting Napoleon's leadership.

Analysis of Extract (5)

In the foregoing text, Squealer utilizes the false dilemma fallacy through the imposition of a limited set of options on the audience, which obstructs a clear and balanced understanding of the situation. The false dilemma manipulates the information pertinence, flow, and factual integrity, which is manifested through the maxims of relevance, manner, and quality, which, in turn, leads to the violation of the three criteria: relevance, truth, and acceptability sequentially [in utterances n.1-n.7]. This implies that following Napoleon is the safer choice, as Snowball is purportedly a criminal. It manifests a dichotomous paradigm wherein there exist only two options for consideration: Option A, representing allegiance to and appreciation of Napoleon, tacitly framed as the judicious choice, and Option B, aligning with Snowball, whom the discourse covertly categorizes as a suboptimal, even perilous, alternative. The presentation omits any intermediary or nuanced positions, compelling the audience to adhere to one of these polarized viewpoints. However, this binary construct (A ∨ B) is flawed, as it disregards other potential alternatives. The binary choice advanced by Squealer corresponds with the Marxist notion of a false dichotomy, where the proletariats are given the illusion of choice while being encased within the boundaries set by the bourgeoisie. This reinforces the idea that the animals are controlled and manipulated, much like the proletariat in capitalist societies.

Furthermore, Squealer claims that Napoleon cares about Manor Farm (p) and is happy to have them at liberty to make choices (q) [n.5]. However, he would not allow them eventually because their decisions cannot be trusted ($\neg r$) [n.6]; hence, Snowball would "avenge himself" [n.7] or "Jones would come back." Logically, this series of events is not necessarily connected.

$p \rightarrow q \rightarrow \neg r \rightarrow$ (Snowball's avenging) ∨ (Jone's returning)

The domino fallacy is used to limit the animals' independent thinking and depict them as incompetent, reinforcing the perceived need for Napoleon's protection and intelligence [utterances n.5-n.7]. The referred-to fallacy is manifested via the maxims of relevance and quality, which trigger the violation of the criteria of relevance, truth, and acceptability. Simultaneously, in utterances [n.6; n.7], Squealer invokes the appeal to ignorance, a fallacy that arises when an assertion is deemed true due to not being conclusively negated or vice versa. Squealer exploits this by insinuating that disastrous outcomes could result from the animals' potential "wrong decisions" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 36) without offering concrete evidence to substantiate this claim. The mechanism of this fallacy is explained as follows: there is an appeal to the deceptive maxim of quality (b) by disseminating unverified information to sow doubt, which, by default, leads to the violation of the truth and acceptability criteria. This serves as a microcosm of Marxist socio-

political dynamics, where the ruling class (the pigs) leverages ignorance and deception to maintain control over the working class (the non-porcine farm denizens). Furthermore, in utterance [n.7], Squealer re-employs the fallacy of ad ignorantiam by presuming Snowball's criminality without concrete evidence, capitalizing on the animals' inabilities to validate or refute this claim. This kind of misleading rhetoric introduces ambiguity, leaves room for misinterpretations, and obfuscates the facts. Following this train of thought, there is an appeal to the maxims of manner, quantity, and quality, and, accordingly, a violation of the sufficiency, truth, and acceptability criteria.

In utterance [n.7], Squealer juxtaposes Snowball's apparent flaws with the burdens and duties Napoleon has assumed, emphasizing the act of pinning the blame on Snowball. In the narrative, a distinct binary opposition is crafted between Snowball and Napoleon, each emblematic of contrasting attributes and values. Snowball is consistently framed in a negative light: he is associated with "wrong decisions" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 36) linked to the impractical or deceptive "moonshine of windmills" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 36) and is even implicitly labeled as a "criminal." Conversely, Napoleon is exalted and presented as the epitome of self-sacrifice, with references to him "taking this extra labor upon himself" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 36). He embodies the essence of significant leadership, bearing "a deep and heavy responsibility," and is also positioned as a staunch advocate and guardian of animal equality, with the assertion that "No one believes more firmly [...] that all animals are equal" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 36) This deliberate polarization serves to bolster Napoleon's stature while concurrently diminishing Snowball's, a strategy adeptly employed to surface the fallacy of scapegoating, and, hence, manipulating the perceptions of the audience. This culminates in triggering the maxim of quality and, accordingly, the violation of the acceptability and truth criteria.

In this light, the text not only illustrates the logical fallacies used to manipulate the animals but also foregrounds the broader theme of exploitation and manipulation. The animals' vulnerability to Squealer's "tactics" reflects the susceptibility of oppressed groups to ideological control, a concept that Marxists accentuate as a way to maintain the dominance of the ruling class.

Results

The presented data in Table 1 showcases the differential utilization of reasoning fallacies by Squealer and Napoleon in Orwell's (1945/2013) Animal Farm, each indicative of their unique strategies of manipulation and control. Squealer exhibits a pronounced predilection for historical negationism, with it constituting 25% (14 instances) of his logical fallacies. Squealer uses the fallacy of historical negationism as a masterful ploy to justify the pigs' tyranny in Animal Farm. The modification of the seven commandments claimed to be an "unalterable law" (Orwell, 2013, p.85) is a chief example of this fallacy employed in the novella. Another fallacy discernibly prominent in Squealer's arguments is ad ignorantiam, comprising 20% (11 instances). The prevalence of these fallacies in Squealer's discourses suggests a calculated effort to distort or obscure facts and appeal to ignorance, thereby clouding the animals' judgment and awareness of their exploitation. However, there is a seldom resort to scapegoating, constituting a mere 5% (3 instances) in Squealer's rhetoric. Conversely, this fallacy overwhelmingly dominates Napoleon's at a striking 83% (5 out of 6 instances). Furthermore, the domino fallacy accounts for 11% (6 instances) of Squealer's fallacious assertions, while ad nauseam encapsulates 21% (12 instances) of Squealer's fallacies. Squealer resorts to the false dilemma fallacy in 18% (10 instances) of his arguments, while Napoleon shows a more restrained use, evident in a mere 17% (1 instance).

Table 1. *Frequencies and percentages of reasoning fallacies used by Squealer and Napoleon*

Reasoning Fallacy	Squealer		Napoleon	
	No.	%	No.	%
Historical negationism	14	25%	nil	Nil
Ad ignorantiam	11	20%	nil	Nil
Scapegoating	3	5%	5	83%
Domino fallacy	6	11%	nil	Nil
Ad nauseam	12	21%	nil	Nil
False dilemma	10	18%	1	17%
Total	56	100%	6	100%

Table 2 reveals divergent rhetorical strategies employed by Squealer and Napoleon. Squealer frequently invokes acceptability (41%) and the maxim of quality (38%) as key elements in his manipulative discourse while sparingly utilizing sufficiency (18%) and relevance (12%). Napoleon, with fewer instances, leans heavily on truth (42%) and acceptability (47%) but shows minimal reliance on sufficiency (5%) and relevance (5%).

Table 2. *Frequencies and percentages of the illative core and DP used by Squealer and Napoleon*

Violation of Illative core level	Squealer		Napoleon		DP	Squealer		Napoleon	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
Acceptability	56	41%	9	47%	Maxim of manner	28	26%	2	17%
Truth	41	30%	8	42%	Maxim of quality	41	38%	8	66%
Sufficiency	24	18%	1	5%	Maxim of quantity	24	22%	1	8%
Relevance	16	12%	1	5%	Maxim of relevance	16	15%	1	8%
Total	137	100%	19	100%	Total	109	100%	12	100%

Discussion

The differential utilization of reasoning fallacies by Squealer and Napoleon indicates their unique strategies of manipulation and control. Squealer exhibits a pronounced predilection for historical negationism, using this fallacy to justify the pigs' tyranny. The modification of the seven commandments initially described as an "unalterable law" exemplifies this manipulation. Squealer's distortion of historical events through strategies of addition, omission, and replacement

aligns with Orwell's critique of Stalinist propaganda techniques. This form of fallacy is conspicuously absent from Napoleon's discourse.

Squealer also frequently employs ad ignorantiam, where a proposition is erroneously deemed true because it has not been proven false. This strategy appeals to the animals' ignorance, clouding their judgment and making them more susceptible to manipulation. Additionally, Squealer's use of ad nauseam—repeating the same point until it is accepted as true—demonstrates his skill in wearing down resistance through repetition. This aligns with Orwell's depiction of Squealer as a "brilliant talker" who could "turn black into white" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p.10).

Conversely, Napoleon relies heavily on scapegoating, using Squealer as his oratorical proxy to communicate his authority and blame Snowball for various problems. This strategy reflects a divide-and-conquer approach common in authoritarian regimes, which marginalizes dissenting voices to maintain control. The stark contrast in their use of fallacies highlights Napoleon's more straightforward and blunt manipulative strategies, focusing on deflecting responsibility and consolidating power.

Squealer frequently invokes acceptability and the maxim of quality as key elements in his manipulative discourse, while sparingly utilizing sufficiency and relevance. Napoleon, with fewer instances, leans heavily on truth and acceptability but shows minimal reliance on sufficiency and relevance. Squealer's manipulation strategies are more diversified and nuanced, likely designed to appeal to various cognitive biases and mental shortcuts that the animals might employ. Napoleon, on the other hand, is more blunt in his methods, focusing on what might be termed "big lies"—making his statements appear acceptable and truthful to a greater extent, even if they are less numerous or sophisticated. This is supported by the narrator's description of Napoleon: "[He] is not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way" (Orwell, 1945/2013, p. 9).

Napoleon is portrayed as an enigmatic figure who prefers to work behind the scenes rather than address the animals directly. He allows Squealer, a more eloquent and persuasive speaker, to communicate his ideas and decisions to the animals. This characteristic of Napoleon is mirrored in Stalin, who was known to be an unimpressive public speaker (Service, 2006). Both Napoleon and Stalin utilized fear and manipulation to consolidate power rather than relying on their oratory skills.

The findings validate the distinctive manipulative styles of both characters, substantiating their roles as architects of a socio-politically alienated community. Squealer's manipulation through historical negationism and ad ignorantiam aligns with Orwell's portrayal of propaganda and historical revisionism, demonstrating calculated efforts to distort or obscure facts and appeal to ignorance.

Napoleon's strategy of scapegoating reflects a more direct and forceful approach to manipulation. By attributing blame to Snowball and other external threats, Napoleon ensures that the animals remain divided and unable to unify against his rule. This strategy mirrors political strategies that rely on creating and maintaining internal divisions to consolidate power.

These findings enrich the understanding of manipulative discourses within literary contexts and their broader implications. The study underscores the importance of critical analysis in recognizing and combating manipulative rhetoric, offering valuable insights for educators, media professionals, and policymakers. The research accentuates how pragma-stylistic strategies, when effectively analyzed, can reveal deeper insights into the ways language is used for manipulation in both literature and real-world scenarios. The nuanced differences between Squealer's and

Napoleon's approaches underscore the diverse applications of pragma-stylistic analysis, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of manipulative discourse.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore how specific pragma-stylistic strategies enable characters in Orwell's *Animal Farm* to manipulate and propagate fallacies and to understand the implications of these manipulative techniques in both literary works and real-world political discourse.

In addressing the first research question, the study identifies Squealer as the epitome of manipulative discourse, predominantly employing historical negationism, ad nauseam, and ad ignorantiam. These fallacies allow Squealer to reframe history, wear down resistance through repetition, and exploit ignorance. This positions Squealer as a shrewd operator within the Orwellian narrative, engineering a collective memory that complies with ideological manipulation. These findings align with Orwell's critiques of Stalinist Russia, a regime infamous for historical revisionism and relentless propaganda (Orwell, 1968; Fitzpatrick, 2000). In contrast, Napoleon emerges as an authoritative archetype, primarily utilizing scapegoating as his manipulative strategy, often communicating through Squealer, who acts as an effective oratorical proxy. This divide-and-conquer strategy is prevalent in authoritarian regimes that marginalize dissenting voices or minority groups to consolidate power, resonating with Marxist theories of class struggle, which suggest that the ruling class maintains hegemony by fostering discord among the proletariat (Therborn, 2010).

Turning to the second research question, it is evident that both characters exhibit distinctive manipulative strategies, violating the illative core of argumentation and employing deceptive maxims. Squealer frequently appeals to historical negationism and ad ignorantiam, with significant violations of acceptability (41%) and the deceptive maxim of quality (38%), illustrating a sophisticated approach to manipulation. Conversely, Napoleon's dominant use of scapegoating (83%) and significant violations of truth (42%) and acceptability (47%) showcase a more direct yet effective manipulative strategy. These combined strategies, while nuanced, are centered on ideological subjugation, often at the expense of logical coherence and ethical communication standards.

The omnipresent mood of powerlessness and hopelessness in Orwell's novels, as shown by Eke and Ikechukwu (2017), reflects the broader human condition, shedding light on the vulnerability of individuals to manipulative discourse. This context highlights the susceptibility of the characters to the manipulative strategies employed by Squealer and Napoleon.

Key objectives achieved by this study include an enhanced understanding of the construction of manipulative discourses within a literary context. These findings have pedagogical implications, offering educators tools to design curricula that promote critical thinking by using *Animal Farm* as a case study in deceptive linguistic strategies. Furthermore, this research serves as a cautionary resource for professionals in media, politics, and public relations, underlining the ethical responsibilities linked to the power of language.

Recommendations for future research include comparative studies that analyze manipulation strategies across multiple political novels, contributing to a more universal typology of manipulative discourse strategies. Additionally, this research lays the foundation for integrating computational methods to identify manipulative strategies in literary works, facilitating an interdisciplinary approach to manipulation detection.

In summation, Orwell's (1945/2013) *Animal Farm* stands as a seminal work in the domain of manipulative discourse, with implications far beyond fictional narrative. Squealer and Napoleon function as embodiments of broader sociopolitical mechanisms designed for manipulation and control. Their methods, as a cautionary tale, offer valuable insights for fostering societal resilience against manipulative discourse. This study significantly contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship, bridging linguistics, psychology, and literature, and equips society with analytical tools necessary to dismantle manipulative narratives in various real-world contexts.

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Analysis of English Language Errors in Medical Writing: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract
Effective communication in medical writing is essential for conveying accurate and understandable information to healthcare professionals and patients. English language errors in medical literature can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and potentially harmful consequences. This systematic literature review aims to identify, analyze, and categorize common English language errors encountered in medical writing. This study identifies gaps in existing literature on language errors in medical writing and reveals areas that need further investigation or where more comprehensive guidelines are required. This study addresses six questions: (1) What types of language errors are discussed in the current literature? (2) What types of medical writing are involved in the current literature? (3) Which countries or areas are involved in the current literature? (4) What are the research methods used in the studies? (5) What tools are used in the studies? (6) What are the limitations of these studies? To answer these questions, this review searched nine databases and one platform, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Fulltext, ProQuest Ebook Central (e-Books), Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online Library (e-Journals & e-Books) (PPV), Science Direct, Cambridge Core e-Books, Oxford Press Scholarship Online (e-Books), Google Scholar, and Carian Bestari@UKM / Discovery Service@UKM. Finally, ten studies were selected, including articles and books. The findings provide insights into types of language errors, types of medical writing, countries or areas of medical writing, research methods, tools, and limitations of these ten studies, highlighting the importance of linguistic accuracy and proficiency in medical writing.

Keywords: English language error, error analysis, healthcare, medicine, medical writing
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Introduction

Effective medical writing is vital for announcing discoveries and treatment options while enabling precise documentation of research findings. Medical writing involves a range of document types, each serving unique purposes and targeted toward specific audiences, for example, medical education, medical journalism, medical marketing of healthcare products, publication or presentation, research documents, and regulatory documents (Sharma, 2010). Each type of medical writing targets a specific audience, including medical professionals, patients, the general public, medical sales representatives, and drug regulators. Undoubtedly, no matter who the audience is, the accuracy of the language is essential to convey information clearly to them. English remains widely used in the medical community (Zhang & Wáng, 2015).

Language errors are "unsuccessful bits of language" (James, 2013, p. 1). Language errors typically refer to inaccuracies in the use of language, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax, vocabulary, and so on. These errors can occur in written or spoken communication and may lead to misunderstanding or confusion. In medical writing, language errors can be particularly problematic as they may compromise the clarity, accuracy, and professionalism of the content, which is crucial for effective communication in healthcare settings. English has been the universal language in the medical community since the late twentieth century (Maher, 1986; Ferguson, 2013). The English language is significant in medical learning and presenting research activities internationally (Piroozan, Boushehri & Fazeli, 2016). English language errors may lead to confusion among audiences around the world. Therefore, it is vital to reduce English language errors. Then, it is necessary to analyze them, which means "error analysis" is essential. Brown (2000) defines "error analysis" as the process of observing, analyzing, and categorizing deviations from the rules of second languages to reveal the systems employed by learners. Error Analysis sheds light on the fascinating journey of language acquisition, where errors serve as stepping stones toward linguistic competence. In medical writing, analysis of English language errors can not be skipped to share clear ideas with the audience. Therefore, this systematic literature review aims to review the research on error analysis of the English language in medical writing to identify the common language errors and the gap in the existing literature.

The researcher tried to cover all the studies on the error analysis of the English language in medical writing. The following nine Databases and one platform were searched: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Fulltext, ProQuest Ebook Central (e-Books), Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online Library (e-Journals & e-Books) (PPV), Science Direct, Cambridge Core e-Books, Oxford Press Scholarship Online (e-Books), Google Scholar, and Carian Bestari@UKM / Discovery Service@UKM. The nine databases have been selected because they are well-known and have a wide range of audience. The platform of Carian Bestari@UKM / Discovery Service@UKM was also searched for its extensive book collection. The study aims to fulfill the following specific objectives: (1) to identify the most common types of language errors discussed in the current literature; (2) to identify the most common types of medical writing involved in the current literature; (3) to find out the countries or areas involved in the current literature; (4) to find out the research methods used in the current literature; (5) to find out the tools used in the current literature; (6) to find out the limitation of the studies.

Literature Review

An error, in linguistics, is when a learner employs a word, speech act, or grammatical item in a manner that appears imperfect and suggests incomplete learning (Richards, Schmidt, 2002).

Error analysis in linguistics has been a significant field of study, particularly in the context of second language acquisition. Aybek and Can (2024) use corpus-based error analysis tools to identify English language errors made by EFL learners who took exams such as PET, PETfS, and CAE. Halim, A., and Halim N. M. (2024) pay attention to language errors in the academic writings of EFL students. Khaliq and Abbas (2024) identify the common syntactical errors in undergraduate students' essay writing and assess learners' feedback during the learning process. Pardede, Lustyantie, and Iskandar (2023) analyze the errors identified in undergraduate thesis abstracts by using corpus tools, and find out that the types of errors most frequently committed in the corpus are "grammatical errors, phrasing errors, and punctuation errors" (p. 361). Ahmad, Shahid, and Farhat (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of errors committed by ESL students from two secondary schools, one public and one private, and found that the private school made fewer syntactical errors which shows the importance of the medium of instruction.

However, English language errors in medical writing are not so commonly discussed. It is necessary to discuss the English language errors in medical writing to get to know the current status of medical writing, improve the quality of English writing in the healthcare and medical field, and encourage accurate writing in this field. Some scholars notice this topic. Farrokh Eslamloo, Heidari, and Ayremloo (2021) analyze errors in the published medical papers in Iranian medical English journals. Jirapanakorn (2012) pays attention to error analysis on reporting verbs in published research article introductions in Thai medical journals. To review the research on error analysis of the English language in medical writing to identify the common language errors and the gap in the existing literature, a systematic literature review was conducted.

Methodology

For this systematic literature review, articles or books in online databases were searched: ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Fulltext, ProQuest Ebook Central (e-Books), Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online Library (e-Journals & e-Books) (PPV), Science Direct, Cambridge Core e-Books, Oxford Press Scholarship Online (e-Books), and Google Scholar. All the searches are from the earliest date to February 18th, 2024. As for the database of ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Fulltext, it produced 19 related dissertations and theses, but all were excluded according to the inclusion or exclusion criteria. The search of ProQuest Ebook Central produced 7 books, but all were excluded. Scopus produced 16 articles based on the search term, but only one was included based on the inclusion criteria. Web of Science produced 2 articles, but both were excluded. Wiley Online Library (e-Journals & e-Books) (PPV) offers 7 articles, but all were excluded. Science Direct produced 3 research articles, but all were excluded. Cambridge Core e-Books provides 5 articles and books, but all were excluded. Oxford Press Scholarship Online (e-Books) produced 5 books of which one was included based on the inclusion criteria. Google Scholar provides 101 associated articles and books from which finally 7 were included based on inclusion criteria. In total, the 9 databases produced 165 related papers and books. 9 articles and books are included based on the inclusion criteria.

Carian Bestari@UKM / Discovery Service@UKM was also searched. This platform allows users to search across various databases, journals, and other resources available through the UKM library system, providing a convenient way to access a wide range of academic materials for their studies and research. There were 138 records through searching e-Resources (EBSCO Discovery) on the platform of Carian Bestari@UKM / Discovery Service@UKM, from which one book was selected based on the inclusion criteria. No grey literature is found after searching on opengrey.eu/,

opendoar.eu/ , and openaire.eu/.

Overall, there were ten articles and books were included. The search term used was “error analysis” AND “medical writing”. At the screening stage, ‘all text’ were searched not just the title, abstract, or keywords to detect the studies related to error analysis of the English language in medical writing as much as possible. As for the criteria, according to the title and research questions of this review, it is set as follows in table 1.:

Table 1. *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

The Inclusion Criteria
1. The articles which were related to error analysis were included.
2. The studies that focused on language errors other than other errors were included.
3. The studies that focused on language errors in English language writing were included.
4. The studies that focused on language errors in medical writing were included.
5. The articles that were written in English were included.
The Exclusion Criteria
1. The studies which were not related to error analysis were excluded.
2. The studies that focused on other errors other than language errors were excluded.
3. The studies that focused on language errors in the writing of languages other than English were excluded.
4. The studies which were not related to writing in the medical domain were excluded.
5. The articles that were not written in English were excluded.

A total number of ten articles or books related to error analysis of the English language in medical writing were selected after a long process of filtration.

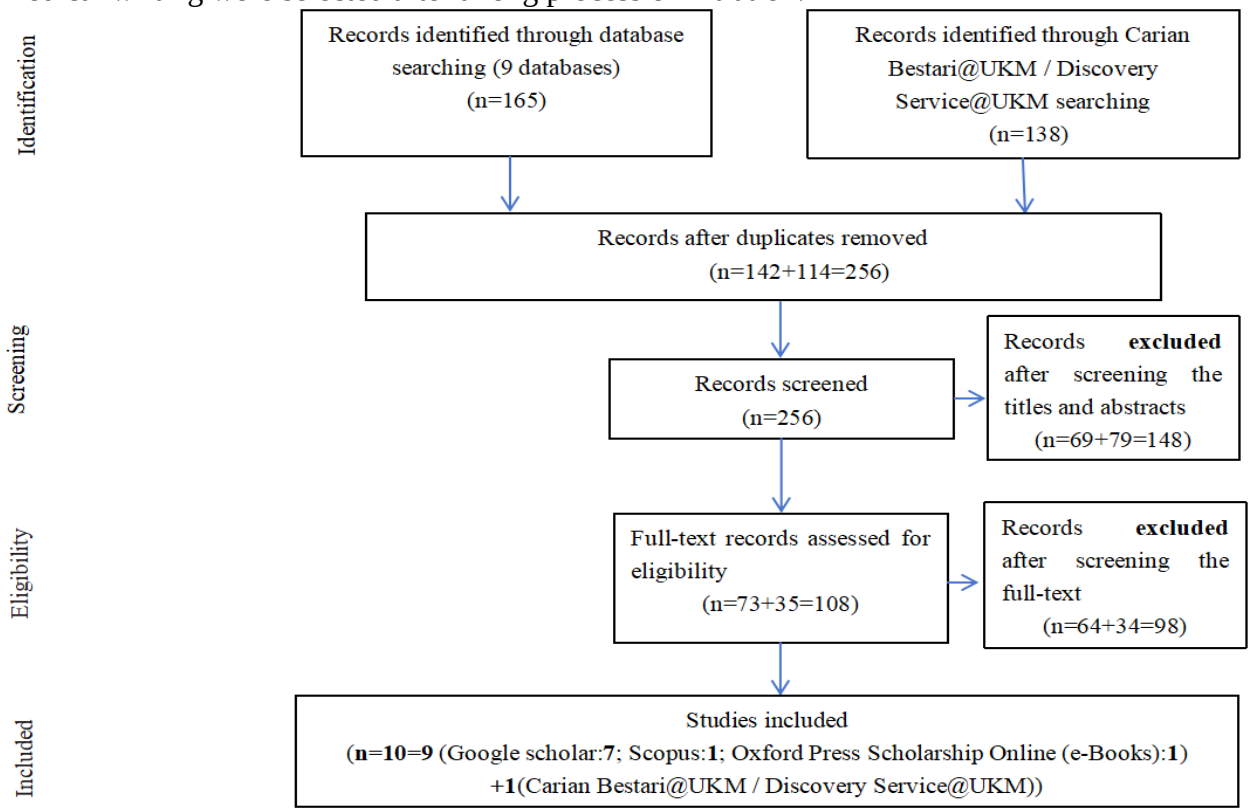

Figure 1. Flow chart showing the process of study selection

Results

The search in nine online databases and one platform produced a total number of 303 articles. Ten articles and books were finally included in this systematic literature review based on the criteria of inclusion and exclusion. This review answered these questions: (1) What types of language errors are discussed? (2) What types of medical writing are involved? (3) Which countries or areas are involved in the current literature? (4) What are the research methods used in the studies? (5) What tools are used in the studies? (6) What are the limitations of these studies?

The ten studies have discussed specific language errors as shown in the following table.2.

Table 2. *Errors discussed in the ten studies*

Studies	Errors discussed in the studies
Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021)	discourse, lexical, grammatical, and mechanical errors
ONO, Tomonori (2013)	12 categories of sentence-level errors
Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007)	10 categories of non-mechanical errors
Flaminia Miyamasu (2021)	lexicogrammatical errors (morphology, lexis, syntax, and orthography)
Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012)	reporting verbs
John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000)	missing or incorrect article, improper word choice, ungrammatical sentence structure
Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016)	mechanic/substance errors, grammatical errors and errors related to syntactic aspects
Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982)	spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors
Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013)	errors of cohesion and coherence, punctuation, grammar, word choice, over-informal lexis and idioms
Steve Hart (2016)	grammar, elements and data and terms

The types of medical writing involved in the ten selected studies are shown in Table 3. below.

Table 3. *Types of medical writing involved in the studies*

Studies	Types of medical writing
Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021)	published medical papers
ONO, Tomonori (2013)	journal articles
Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007)	the medical research abstracts
Flaminia Miyamasu (2021)	prepublication manuscripts
Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012)	published medical research article introductions
John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000)	research papers
Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016)	published article abstracts
Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982)	project papers
Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013)	mock research articles
Steve Hart (2016)	essays and papers

It can be seen that research articles or papers are the most frequently discussed type, followed by abstracts of the research articles, project papers, essays, and reports.

The locations of the medical writing studied are shown in table 4.

Table 4. *The locations of the medical writing studied*

Studies	Location	Area
Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021)	Iran	West Asia
ONO, Tomonori (2013)	various literary sources	various

Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007)	Republic of Korea	East Asia
Flaminia Miyamasu (2021)	Japan	East Asia
Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012)	Thailand	Southeast Asia
John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000)	Japan, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Taiwan, Germany, Switzerland, and Korea	various
Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016)	Republic of Algeria	North Africa
Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982)	Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan	North America
Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013)	Finland	Northern Europe
Steve Hart (2016)	countries or areas where English is a second or third language	countries or areas where English is a second or third language

It needs to be noted that the location here means the countries or areas of the medical writing studied, neither the authors' nationality nor the institutions' location. The results reflect that most medical writings studied are from countries or areas where English is not a native language.

As to the research method, the quantitative method is used in five studies out of the 10 selected studies, the mixed method ranks second with three studies using it, and the qualitative method is chosen by two studies, which can be seen from table 5.

Table 5. *Research methods used in the studies*

Studies	Research Method
Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021)	quantitative
ONO, Tomonori (2013)	qualitative
Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007)	quantitative
Flaminia Miyamasu (2021)	mixed (quantitative and qualitative)
Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012)	quantitative
John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000)	quantitative
Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016)	mixed (quantitative and qualitative)
Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982)	quantitative
Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013)	mixed (qualitative and quantitative)
Steve Hart (2016)	qualitative

As for tools, Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021), Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007), Flaminia Miyamasu (2021), John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000), Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016), and Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982) involve the statistical tools; Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012) and Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013) use corpus tools; ONO, Tomonori (2013), Flaminia Miyamasu (2021), and Steve Hart (2016) use examples to analyze the errors. It can be found that statistical tools help researchers study language errors in a quantitative way, which makes the results evident for the audience to see.

The limitations of these studies are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Research limitations of the studies*

Studies	Limitation
Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021)	Samples were too few and the error source was not systematically discussed.
ONO, Tomonori (2013)	Just qualitative method was used.
Lee, Eun-Pyo (2007)	The samples were restricted to abstract only.
Flaminia Miyamasu (2021)	The writing samples analyzed were from authors of a single institution.

Naruemol Jirapanakorn (2012)	Only reporting verbs were studied.
John R Benfield and Kathryn M Howard (2000)	There were too few examples.
Djemaa Kebaili and Fadhila Hadjeris (2016)	Samples were too few and no authority helped.
Kenneth B Frisof and James L Moseley (1982)	The study just included one university.
Eva Braidwood and Suzy McAnsh (2013)	The statistical result hasn't been shown in the paper although it said it involved a corpus study.
Steve Hart (2016)	Just the qualitative method was used.

The above tables answered the 6 questions and showed the results of this systematic literature review. The results need to be discussed in detail to dig into the information behind them.

Discussion

The ten selected studies including articles and books from nine databases and one platform, indicate that the amount of research on the error analysis of the English language in medical writing is small and far from enough.

This review takes the categorization of language errors in the article by Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021) and classifies the language errors into four types: discourse, lexical, grammatical, and mechanical errors. Taking the definition of the four types of language errors in Nazila Farrokh Eslamloo, Mohammad Heidari, and Parvin Ayremloo (2021) into consideration and trying to avoid ambiguity, this review defines the four types of language errors as follows in table 7.

Table 7. *Definitions of language error types*

Types of errors	Definition
Discourse errors	Errors that relate to coherence, cohesion, ambiguity, and the whole text's meaning, but neither on lexical level nor sentence level.
Lexical errors	Errors of vocabulary including word choice other than functional words.
Grammatical errors	Errors related to tense, use of functional words, and singular/plural, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure.
Mechanical errors	Errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

As to the types of language errors discussed, each study has its specific focus, among which the most frequent types of errors discussed are the grammatical ones (9), followed by lexical errors (7), mechanical errors (5), and discourse errors (3) as can be seen from the table 8.

Table 8. *Types of language errors*

Studies	A	B	C	D
1	√	√	√	√
2			√	
3		√	√	
4		√	√	
5		√		
6		√	√	
7			√	√
8			√	√
9	√	√	√	√
10	√	√	√	√

(Note: the studies are labeled as 1 to 10 according to the orders in the tables shown in the previous part; A means discourse errors; B means lexical errors; C means grammatical errors; D means mechanical errors.)

More studies should be conducted on each type of English language error in medical writing. For example, on the lexical level, Jirapanakorn (2012) discussed errors of the reporting verbs in medical writing, while other kinds of lexicon can also be discussed from the perspective of error

analysis in the future.

Sharma (2017) classifies medical writing into three main types: regulatory medical writing, publication writing, and medical communication. And still, there is medical writing for education purposes and promotion purposes. According to the classification, all the ten studies included in this review focus on the type of publication writing. Among them, two are a little bit special. One pays attention to project papers and one discusses prepublication manuscripts, but these two can also be taken into account in the type of publication writing. More detailed types of medical writing such as reports or medical advertisements should be discussed.

The countries or areas of the medical writing studied, in large part, are locations where English serves as a second or third language, which confirms the theory and method of error analysis since error analysis is a theory born to serve the ESL (Khansir, 2012). It can be found that some studies of error analysis also discussed the English language errors committed by native speakers in "medical writing". Errors in medical writing in Asia are the most frequently studied among the ten studies with a proportion of 40%, followed by medical writing of locations of more than one place (30%), Europe (10%), Africa (10%), North America (10%). Medical writing of more countries and areas should be discussed from the perspective of error analysis, especially for countries and areas of ESL.

In this review, five studies (50%) use the quantitative method; 3 (30%) use the mixed method; 2 (20%) use the qualitative method. The quantitative method is the mainstream in error analysis of English language errors, which is efficient for readers to view the results directly and clearly. The mixed method also is a good choice. Just qualitative method is not that proper since the results are not clearly presented.

Based on the research methods, research tools are selected. In this review, 5 (50%) studies adopt statistical tools; 2 (20%) take corpus tools; 2 (20%) just use examples or sample tools; 1 (10%) use both statistical tools and sample tools. Statistical tools are used in quantitative research. Corpora and corpus tools are also proper tools for error analysis, for they can provide data and help to analyze data, which can be used more in future studies.

The most frequently discussed part of medical writing in these studies is the abstract part and the most frequently appeared English language errors are the lexical ones, among which articles appear the most times. Other types of language errors should be increasingly studied.

The limitations of these studies can be stated as the following aspects: (1) some studies have too few samples; (2) some studies were without quantitative methods and tools to show the results to readers clearly; (3) some studies rely on humans to do error identification; (4) the types of English language errors in medical writing are not systematically discussed; (5) the locations of medical writing are too limited; (6) the source of these language errors are not fully discussed. The limitations of the studies also show the gap between the studies on the error analysis of the English language in medical writing. Therefore, in the future, these gaps can be filled, for example, more samples should be included with the help of corpus; more advanced tools should be used in the studies, for example, AI tools can be used to enhance the efficiency and accuracy, meanwhile, simplify the process of human work; more locations of medical writing should be included, for example, medical writing in Asian countries such as China and Malaysia, European countries such as Russia, France, Italy and so on.

Conclusion

Writing well in the medical field is crucial for sharing new findings and treatment choices

effectively, and recording research results accurately. English has become the predominant language in the medical community since the latter part of the twentieth century (Maher, 1986; Ferguson, 2013). In medical writing, analysis of English language errors can not be skipped to share clear ideas with the audience. Therefore, this systematic literature review aims to find out the common language errors and the gap in the existing literature.

This review searched nine databases and one platform and finally included ten studies including articles and books. Types of language errors, types of medical writing, countries or areas of medical writing, research methods, research tools, and limitations of these ten studies are presented in this review. The most frequent types of errors discussed are the grammatical ones, followed by lexical errors, mechanical errors and discourse errors. Research articles or papers are the most frequently discussed type, followed by abstracts of the research articles, project papers, essays, and reports. The countries or areas of the medical writing studied, in large part, are locations where English serves as a second or third language, which confirms the theory and method of error analysis since error analysis is a theory born to serve the ESL (Khansir, 2012). Errors in medical writing in Asia are the most frequently studied among the ten studies, followed by medical writing of locations of more than one place, Europe, Africa, and North America. The quantitative method is the mainstream in error analysis of English language errors. Statistical tools are most frequently used, followed by corpus tools and examples or sample tools. The limitations of these studies can be stated as the following aspects: (1) some studies have too few samples; (2) some studies were without quantitative methods and tools to show the results to readers clearly; (3) some studies rely on humans to make error identification; (4) the types of English language errors in medical writing are not systematically discussed; (5) the locations of medical writing are too limited; (6) the source of these language errors are not fully discussed. The limitations of the studies also show the gap between the studies on the error analysis of the English language in medical writing. The review reveals the research gap of the studies on the error analysis of the English language in medical writing and points the future direction for it.

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Cowboy as a Symbol of Individualism: A Pragmatic Analysis of *Red Dead Redemption 2*

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Abstract
As cultures are mainly divided into collectivistic and individualistic, members tend to emphasize, through communication, either their position as part of their group or their independence from the group. This emphasis is manifested in using the pragmatic concepts of positive politeness and negative politeness. The present study looks into the reflection of these two cultures in Rockstar's renowned video game, *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018). It aims at identifying the two cultures as present in the game and showing their significance to its narrative. It fills the gap in the studies of language used within video games as well as its cultural reflections. The study addresses the following question: What are the positive and negative politeness strategies used in *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), and what are the implications of using these strategies in its narrative? By adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the researcher analyzed the positive and negative politeness used in the scripted dialogue of the in-game cutscenes through the mixed methods approach. The researcher hypothesized that the protagonist shows adherence to a collectivistic culture using positive politeness, and he begins transitioning towards an individualistic culture using negative politeness. The results showed that 75% of the protagonist's interactions contained positive politeness while only 25% contained negative politeness. This transition explains the protagonist's loss of trust and loyalty to his group as he begins to witness the futility of maintaining such loyalty. It also supports the overall narrative of the game as well as its cultural foundations.

Keywords: collectivism, cowboy, individualism, politeness, pragmatics, *Red Dead Redemption 2*, video games
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Introduction

Video games are currently perceived as reflecting life and culture, and they facilitate understanding of various aspects of social life, including culture (Muriel et al., 2018). As Deckert and Hejduk (2022) state: "Contemporary VGs are greatly heterogeneous and interrelated with sociocultural spheres outside of pure entertainment" (p. 12). Since language forms an essential component of video games (Consalvo, 2021), it can be said that the language of video games contributes to reflecting these various aspects of social life, most notably culture. A culture within video games is "representative of symbols, the environment and narratives that embody a specific community" (Loban, 2024, p. 4). Within linguistics, cultures are divided into collectivistic and individualistic, and they are described in terms of positive politeness and negative politeness (Mills, 2015). Politeness and face are two concepts within pragmatics through which we can understand the communicative behavior and identity of people (Ensslin, 2012). Pragmatics studies the interpretation of utterance in relation to its context (Birner, 2021). Ensslin (2012) contends that scripted dialogue is part of the language used within games. Further, she states that politeness structures are "at work in the language of gaming to enforce rules and regulations while, at the same time, ensuring enjoyability on the part of the player" (Ensslin, 2012, p. 19). Although researchers have explored various aspects of video game language (Consalvo, 2021), little attention has been given to the language within video games, as well as the reflection of culture through such language, particularly the collectivistic and individualistic cultures, from a pragmatic perspective. Accordingly, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the reflection of these two types of cultures through the language of Rockstar's renewed video game, *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018) following Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory.

The study aims to show that Arthur Morgan, the main protagonist of *Red Dead Redemption 2* reflects collectivism within the Dutch van der Linde Gang. In other words, he is one who mostly helps, saves, and cares for the members of the gang and ensures that they work as part of the whole gang for a common shared cause. Such reflection of collectivism is demonstrated by positive politeness strategies used by Arthur Morgan in his interactions with other members of the gang. Further, the study aims to show that, at a certain point in the story, collectivism starts to decrease and is gradually replaced by individualism. This is manifested in the protagonist's transition towards individualism as he gradually realizes the ineffectiveness of collectivism.

The study fills a gap in the studies of language within video games, particularly from a pragmatic perspective. In addition, it studies the language within a video game and its cultural reflections. Furthermore, the study investigates a rarely researched video game within the academic context: *Red Dead Redemption 2*. The objective of the study is to examine the implications of using positive and negative politeness in the narrative of the game in relation to its cultural foundations. Therefore, the study addresses the following question: What are the positive and negative politeness strategies used in *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), and what are the implications of using these strategies in its narrative?

The researcher hypothesizes that Arthur Morgan, the main protagonist of *Red Dead Redemption 2*, attempts to maintain the collectivism of the gang as manifested in his interactions with its various members. These interactions employ positive politeness strategies to maintain collectivism. Such maintenance of collectivism is gradually replaced by individualism through the use of negative politeness strategies.

Literature Review

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is an approach to studying language while taking into consideration the features of contextual background. It deals with the written or spoken discourse and focuses on how texts hold meaning and become unified for their users (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). In other words, it "has to do with a rather slippery type of meaning, one that isn't found in dictionaries and which may vary from context to context" (Birner, 2013, p. 4). As such, it provides explanations on how interlocutors say something and means something different; how they use language for manipulating, challenging or changing ideas; and how such language is used to reflect power in a social context. Pragmatics is currently a fast-growing field of research as an increasingly large number of phenomena rely on context for their interpretation, which is the specialization of pragmatics (Archer et al., 2012). The areas studied within pragmatics include: speech acts, implicature, presupposition, im/politeness, deixis etc. (Birner, 2013).

Politeness

Politeness revolves around the linguistic expressions by which individuals permit others to enter into their space and express friendliness towards them. As such, it is important to be seen as friendly for one to save face and receive appreciation. Linguistic politeness is therefore an exchange of rapport and it deals with how language is used to express sensitivity towards the feelings and desires of other interlocutors (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). Landone (2022) defines politeness as "a rational exercise of communicative actions aimed at compensating for the imbalances that can emerge between people as members of a social structure" (p. 4). There have been many approaches to politeness including those of Leech (1989), Lackoff (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1978), each of which contributed to the area of politeness. Nevertheless, the contribution of Brown and Levinson is considered significantly influential as it linked the ideas of politeness with the concept of 'face' coined by the sociologist and social psychologist Erving Goffman, who conducted extensive research on human behavior and interaction. (Clark, 2022). Goffman stated that many aspects of human interaction could be understood in accordance with the concept of 'face'. This concept has its origins in Chinese cultures and it refers to an individual's position in a cultural group. It is also mentioned in the informal discussions on behavior in many cultures (Clark, 2022).

The essence of politeness theory lies in using appropriate face-saving strategies to deal with the complex relationship between the speaker and the hearer (Birner, 2013). In this respect, Brown and Levinson presented four possibilities; on-record strategies (on-record FTA performance without using redressive action), on-record FTA using positive politeness, on-record FTA using negative politeness, and off-record strategies. When the speaker considers that the weight of FTA is small, the speaker uses bald-on-record; when the speaker decides to appeal to the hearer's desire for approval and likeness, the speaker uses positive politeness (which contains fifteen strategies); when the speaker decides to appeal to the hearer's desire in not being impeded upon, the speaker uses negative politeness (which contains ten strategies), and when the speaker decides to be indirect, the speaker uses off-record politeness (Thomas, 1995).

Positive and Negative Politeness

Positive politeness appeals to the addressee's positive face by considering his wants alongside the implications of these wants as desirable. To consider his wants as desirable, they

must be satisfied by communicating that the wants of the speaker, in part or whole, are similar to those of the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Positive politeness occurs when the speaker wants to indicate in an explicit manner that he is considering the addressee's positive face. To this end, the speaker might use a variety of positive politeness strategies including treating the addressee as a member of a group or a friend, as a person whose wants and personal traits are liked and known, noticing the addressee, expressing exaggeration of interest/approval in the addressee, seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement, asserting common ground and joking (Archer et al., 2012).

While negative politeness addresses the face wants to be infringed by FTA, positive politeness extends to include appreciating the addressee's wants or expressing similarity between the speaker and the addressee's wants. In this respect, positive politeness is in most cases representative of the normal linguistic behavior exchanged between intimates including, but not limited to, interest in and approval of the speaker and addressee's personality, shared wants and knowledge, and implicit commonality of obligations and wants (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

In negative politeness strategies, attention is given to the hearer's negative face by showing a distance between the speaker and hearer as well as avoiding intrusion on each other's territory. Therefore, the speaker uses these strategies to avoid imposing on the hearer. Speakers can do this by paying attention to the other's time and concerns, apologizing and hesitation, asking questions, and using hedges as a means for mitigating the imposition (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021).

Collectivism and Individualism

When discussing culture in the realm of linguistic research, particularly within politeness, culture is divided into distinct tendencies which include: collectivistic and individualistic, and positive politeness and negative politeness. Collectivistic cultures are described as cultures that prioritize the group more than the individual. As such, individuals consider themselves, and are considered, as part of the group and not isolated. Therefore, such a culture emphasizes adherence to its norms and harmony. On the other hand, an individualistic culture is a culture which is characterized by a more isolated relation to groups which may include family or friends groups. Therefore, the prime importance is placed on the individual and it is this individual who exerts efforts to achieve status for himself/herself. Such culture can be considered liberal to the rights of its individual (Mills, 2015). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the behavior of an individual varies from one social context to another. In other words, the norms and values which govern individualistic and collectivistic cultures may not always be relevant to the individual's behavior and may otherwise be substituted by the social context (Briley & Wyer, 2001).

Video Games and Language

Consalvo (2021) contends that "language is a key element of gameplay" (p. 556). In this respect, researchers have explored different aspects of video game language. Such aspects include the language produced around and in relation to video games be they voice or text-based languages. Researchers found that language forms an essential foundation to achieve successful gameplay as it depends on the player's acquaintance with the specific terms and vocabularies employed by a community of a particular game. Nevertheless, this is only one aspect of the complex multi-layered structure of languages related to video games (Consalvo, 2021). Other aspects include the language used within video games as employed in their interface, narrative, etc., the language used by game designers and developers concerning video games, and the language used in instruction manuals

and advertisements on video games (Ensslin, 2012). Therefore, it can be said that language is employed in a variety of aspects in relation to video games (Voorhees, 2012).

Red Dead Redemption 2

Developed and published by Rockstar Games, *Red Dead Redemption 2* was released in 2018 after taking eight years of development. It is a prequel to *Red Dead Redemption*, which was released in 2010. The game is considered a critical and commercial success, occupying the history of entertainment's biggest opening weekend and holding the title of one of the best-selling games. The game's freedom and open-mindedness, notwithstanding its linear narrative progression, is a crucial factor in its success (Donald & Reid, 2020). The game allows players to play as an outlaw in the American Old West by following a narrative path which is composed of stories forming together a complete narrative. It also puts the players in its vast open world, offering exploration and choices while completing the main story. In this way, a player is free to do what he likes in the environment; which, in addition to completing main story missions, involves hunting, playing poker, camping, free-roaming, etc. (Paterson et al., 2020). The game's storytelling is well-known in terms of its complexity and realistic elements to the degree of involving philosophical concepts and thoughts (Rahman, 2023). Compared with other popular franchises, academic research on *Red Dead Redemption* has been relatively scarce (Schoppmeier, 2023).

Related Studies

Anugrah (2019) examined the use of politeness strategies by the main character, Shay Patrick Cormac, in the video game *Assassin's Creed Rogue*. The study aimed to specify which politeness strategies are used by the main character and the purpose behind such use. Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the research concluded that the main character uses 36 positive politeness strategies and 10 negative politeness strategies. The purpose behind using positive politeness strategies more than other strategies is the main character's need to maintain trust, allies, and relationships with other characters.

Balogh & Veszelszki (2020) investigated the use of politeness through the in-game insults in the video game *League of Legends*, which is an online arena game. The researchers hypothesize that online communication through the game elicits more freedom with respect to rudeness compared to offline communication. Therefore, this results in more insults and offensive expressions. The researchers interpreted the insults in the game through speech acts theory, the cooperative principle, face threatening, and other aspects. The researchers concluded that the language in and around the game employs insults and breaches of maxims to achieve various functions.

Ibrahim and Qura (2021) tackled the use of speech acts by a gaming YouTuber, Jess No Limit, focusing on the streaming videos of his online gameplay. The researchers followed a mixed-method design to collect and analyze the data. The researchers concluded that the Youtuber mostly uses positive politeness strategies to seek agreement, attend to his interests, provide rewards, involve the audience in his gaming activities and bring attention to the speaker. Such use of politeness strategies serves the Youtuber in increasing his subscribers.

Sembiring et al. (2022) looked into the employment of politeness strategies by two major characters in the video game *Fate/Grand Order*. The study aimed to analyze these strategies as well as unveil the factors that led to the use of specific politeness strategies. The study adopted Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and followed a descriptive qualitative method. It

concluded that both main characters primarily used positive politeness strategies in comparison with the other strategies. The results indicate that the main characters use positive politeness strategies to form alliances and establish relationships to complete missions.

Accordingly, the present study addresses the gap in the use of politeness strategies and their implications on *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), particularly from a collectivistic-individualistic perspective. Such implications highlight the significance of the language within video games, specifically *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), which is a rarely studied topic.

Methodology

The data is collected from a YouTube video combining the cinematic cutscenes of the main story of *Red Dead Redemption 2*. The researcher watched and carefully observed the lines spoken by characters of the game; transcribed the ones related to the purpose of the research; and analyzed them while relying on the YouTube video to provide a context. Utterances proceeding and following the ones under analysis are tackled where necessary to supplement the analysis.

The research adopts mixed methods of analysis. That is, it combines the qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Dörnyei (2007) states that the qualitative and quantitative methods can be utilized in the data analysis stage in combination with each other. The analysis is focused on the lines spoken by *Red Dead Redemption 2* protagonist, Arthur Morgan, in his interactions with other characters during the cinematic cutscenes of the game. The unit of analysis is restricted to utterances and involves analysis of lines spoken by other characters for explanation. The YouTube video timestamp is also consulted to show the distribution of the instances of positive and negative politeness in the story as well as their frequency of occurrence to support the analysis.

Austin (1990) states that the context in which utterances are produced can be used to interpret their intention. As positive and negative politeness strategies overlap in such cases as jokes (would not cause face threatening) and ridiculing (can potentially cause face threatening) and considering that the gang members share common ground, it is obvious that in some cases an overlap occurs where a decision should be made regarding the intention of the utterance. In this respect, specific criterion is followed which focuses on the context of the utterance. In other words, if the context involves a random interaction between the characters, the utterance is considered unintentional. However, if the context is tense and involves conflict or dispute (where important decisions may lead to dire consequences such as the death of a gang member or failure of a mission), the utterance is considered intentional.

The Model

The research adopts Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness for its relevance to the concepts of collectivistic and individualistic cultures. In particular, it follows the 15 positive politeness strategies and 10 negative politeness strategies mentioned in Table One in Appendix A. For this research, the following table is created as an illustration of the approach followed in the research. It is based on (Gudykunst et al., 1996) concerning communication behavior and cultural tendency, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness with respect to strategy and aim.

Table 1. *The Research Approach*

Strategy	Communication behavior	Aim	Cultural Tendency
Positive Politeness Strategies	High-context communication (Mostly implicit)	Attending to other's wants and desires	Collectivistic culture
Negative Politeness Strategies	Low-context communication (Mostly explicit)	Showing distance from the other and avoiding intrusion	Individualistic culture

Note 1. Adopted from Gudykunst et al. (1996) and Brown and Levinson (1987)

Results

The results show that the protagonist of *Red Dead Redemption 2* uses both positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies in his interactions with other members of the gang. Nevertheless, the use of these two types of politeness is not even, as Table Two in Appendix B shows. In other words, it can be noticed that positive politeness strategies surpass negative politeness strategies, the latter of which are mostly used at the end of Arthur's role in the story, as highlighted by the video timestamp in Table Two in Appendix B. The following extracts are included to exemplify the instances where positive and negative politeness strategies are used in the data, along with the timestamp for each extract:

Extract 1: *Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement (Positive Politeness)*

- Dutch: "Yeah, it's time to go. Let's head to the river."

Arthur: "Ah, leave Cornwall alone. He ain't…look, we need money, but revenge? Now?" (05:32:26)

In this utterance, Arthur is trying to hide his disagreement in response to Micah and Dutch's proposal to attack Cornwall. He does this in the form of "yes, but" by which he agrees with their intention to get money but not through revenge.

Extract 2: *Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity (Positive Politeness)*

- Arthur: "I found a place where we can get some shelter." (00:02:03)

Arthur stated this once he regrouped with the rest of the gang after Dutch sent him to find a place. They were in the middle of a snowstorm, and they needed to stay in a place until it dissipated. Arthur here includes himself (the speaker) and the gang (the hearers) by using the inclusive *we* to stress their common interest.

Extract 3: *Strategy 2: Question, hedge (Negative Politeness)*

- Javier: "And… what about burning their fields?"

Micah: "They don't know we had anything to do with that."

Arthur: "Oh, that so?"

Micah: "Yeah. They think it was the Braithwaites." (03:07:29)

Arthur is questioning the statement of Micah regarding the family's knowledge of the perpetrators who burned their fields. By questioning Micah's statement, Arthur believes the opposite regarding the family's knowledge of their recent act (burning the fields). As such, Arthur is attacking Micah's negative face.

Extract 4: *Strategy 6: Apologize (Negative Politeness)*

- Dutch: "Think of it as payback for my daddy."

Arthur: "Payback?"

Arthur: "I ain't in the revenge business, Dutch." (02:40:53)

In this utterance, Arthur is apologizing to Dutch by indicating that he does not want to be involved in any act of revenge; hence, indirectly attacking Dutch's negative face wants.

It can also be noticed that the mostly used positive politeness strategies are No. 6 (Avoid disagreement) and No. 12 (Include both S and H in the activity), and the mostly used negative politeness strategies are No. 2 (Question, hedge) and No. 10 (Go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting H) as shown in Table Two.

Table 2. *Frequency of occurrence of positive and negative politeness strategies*

Positive Politeness Strategies		Negative Politeness Strategies	
Strategy No.	Frequency	Strategy No.	Frequency
1	8.33%	1	18.18%
2	2.78%	2	27.27%
3	2.78%	3	9.09%
4	5.56%	4	0.00%
5	2.78%	5	0.00%
6	19.44%	6	9.09%
7	2.78%	7	9.09%
8	5.56%	8	0.00%
9	11.11%	9	0.00%
10	2.78%	10	27.27%
11	2.78%		
12	13.89%		
13	11.11%		
14	5.56%		
15	2.78%		
Total	75.00%	Total	25.00%

Discussion

Addressing the research question, the researcher found that all types of positive politeness strategies are used in *Red Dead Redemption 2*, with specific strategies surpassing other strategies. Conversely, only six strategies of negative politeness are used. In addition, the researcher found that there are implications resulting from using these strategies on specific aspects of the game, including its narrative.

The research findings agree with Anugrah (2019) and Sembiring et al. (2022) in terms of using positive politeness more than negative politeness as protagonists in *Assassin's Creed Rogue*, *Fate/Grand Order*, and *Red Dead Redemption 2* attempt to establish and maintain trust and loyalty with other characters. Sembiring et al. (2022) corroborate this by explaining that characters use positive politeness "when they want to gain trust from their hearer, as this strategy would show their friendliness" (p. 154). The protagonist of *Red Dead Redemption 2* uses positive politeness strategies to gain this trust to fulfill his need to belong to the gang as well as attend to the gang's needs and well-being. He transitions to using negative politeness strategies to show his disagreement with the leading gang members, particularly with their leader, Dutch, while trying to maintain their face. This transition towards, and aggregation of, negative politeness strategies near the end of Arthur's role in the story indicates his growing disagreement with Dutch and his transition towards independent decision-making; hence, individualism. The use of specific positive and negative politeness strategies more often than others, such as No. 6 (Avoid disagreement) No. 12 (Include both S and H in the activity), No. 2 (Question, hedge) and No. 10 (Go on record as

incurring debt or as not indebting H) further asserts Arthur's attempts at trying to maintain the gang's wellbeing, and later questioning and opposing the acts of their leading members.
The implications of using these strategies in *Red Dead Redemption 2* are explained in relation to the approach followed by the researcher, illustrated in Table One in the methodology, as well as in relation to the thematic, narrative and cultural aspects of the game.

Game Theme and Narrative

From the early beginning of the game, it is evident that it follows a path which has its foundation in collectivism. We find the gang members functioning as one unit in helping each other and fulfilling a common goal. We find the main protagonist, Arthur Morgan, representing collectivism heavily through his efforts in assisting other gang members and also through their reliance on him to achieve major tasks. It is not reasonable for Arthur to be individualist rather than collectivist as he is part of a larger group. Even the robberies he took part in were for the sake of the gang as a whole rather than for his own interest. As opposed to Dutch, who saw only money at the expense of the members of the gang, Arthur cared less for money and more for his fellow gang members. Kahneman (2012) suggests: "the idea of money primes individualism" (p. 55). That's why we find Dutch making irrational decisions that lead to the gang's downfall because he is looking through an individualist lens that makes him prioritize money over the safety of the gang members. Nevertheless, Arthur showed the exact opposite by trying to keep them safe.

However, the transition into individualism begins to occur when the gang's leadership starts to deteriorate. That's when Arthur realizes that his efforts towards the gang, in general, are useless and are going in vain because of the hasty and unplanned decisions that Dutch is taking. Not to mention that the gang is led into a state of division and turmoil for the same reason. Once Arthur begins questioning the route that the gang is taking, he realizes that he bears accountability for his individualistic decisions (Rahman, 2023). Moreover, the transition of Arthur Morgan towards individualism serves as a transition towards freedom. He does not want to continue affecting the lives of people as a result of taking wrong and hasty decisions and at the same time, he wants to continue living freely. This transition towards individualism aligns strongly with the game's theme, Peter Clark (2018) contends:

> *Red Dead Redemption 2*, just like the American culture surrounding it, wallows in its freedom. The game constantly celebrates the empowerment of following your own path, of having the irrevocable right to live as you wish and, most importantly, existing in a world that expects and encourages this level of freedom (para. 4).

This expectation and encouragement of freedom is partly reflected through the open-world mechanism of the game, which allows freedom of gameplay, and partly through the storyline, which has the main protagonist shifting from reliance on and cooperation with a gang, and following a leadership; towards having freedom of decision and choice. In other words, although the game mechanics and its open world offer freedom of choice, the game nevertheless presents a contradiction by the fact that these freedom-oriented mechanics are contradicted by the limited choices and decision-making that Arthur has to face in the narrative of the game. Ruffino (2022) highlights that: "Arthur has only limited control over the choices of the group and, as a consequence, over his own life." (p. 346). This contradiction further supports the protagonist's endeavor towards freedom of choice; hence, individualism.

Transitioning from collectivism into individualism, through the use of positive and negative politeness strategies, supports the overall narrative progression of the game by providing a change of the protagonist's perspective on the aspects of the story; hence, creating the foundation for disloyalty and eliciting a descend towards the conclusion of the story.

Escaping Civilization

The collectivism that the gang members were enjoying turned out to be a form of aristocratism, by which elite members of the gang control the fate and resources of the whole gang as well as use them for personal interests (Doyle, 2010). This aristocratism is illusioned for collectivism. This is primarily evident as the game progresses. Because of this, Arthur as well as other non-elite gang members have their fate tied to and controlled by the elite members; Dutch and Micah. Therefore, we find that:

> Arthur and the gang's options become more limited as the videogame advances. They are pushed further out on the map; friends and partners betray or leave the group, and some of them get killed. The group must hide from growing numbers of head-hunters and a newly established police force: a sign of an emerging society that is erasing the presence of anarchic and nomadic communities (Ruffino, 2022, p.346).

This places the gang members exactly in the situation they are running from; an aristocratic society whose elite members control the fate of the remaining members. Their aim was to "escape social order because of its oppressive controls" (Wright, 2001, p. 7) only to find that they were under oppressive control themselves. Therefore, Arthur becomes aware that there is no other choice but to follow his own path and try to free the affected members of the gang whose fate, like Arthur's, is tied to the decisions Dutch is making. As a result, Arthur "learns to face his past and live a more honest life" (Rahman, 2023, p. 16). In doing so, he begins rejecting the activities that the gang is engaged in, such as the unnecessary killing, and tries to repent his misdeeds which affect others. He gradually becomes more frustrated with Dutch's decisions to the degree that he begins questioning the gang's morality (Rahman, 2023).

This growing frustration is manifested through using negative politeness strategies which began replacing the positive politeness strategies. It can be said that the closer the relationship, the more positive politeness, and the farther the relationship, the more negative politeness (Eva, 2018). Therefore, the bond between Arthur and Dutch is gradually eliminated as the former transitions towards individualism, through the use of negative politeness strategies, replacing the aristocratism which caused the downfall of several members of the gang, innocent civilians and near the end; the gang itself. This transition supports the conclusion of the story by keeping the remaining members of the gang alive as the game is a prequel to the first *Red Dead Redemption* released in 2010 (Barker, 2018) in which several gang members make an appearance.

Transition from Religious Society to Rational Society

According to Wright (2001), individualism is based on the central assumption of naturally rational individuals, by which the world is looked at with a rational rather than sacred (religious) lens. In a religious society, members have no other choice but to follow and adhere to the traditional social rules, the rules which have their foundation within faith and religion. Such faith and religion are offended when society is changed. On the other hand, in a rational society, members have the right to have rational interests, that is, an equal opportunity. Therefore, change

is always welcomed in this society to meet the changing rational interests. As such, rational individuals can create a living in a civil rather than sacred society, by which regulations are based on rational agreements.

In this respect, the Dutch van der Linde gang in *Red Dead Redemption 2* represents a society of faith or religion by which members obey their leader, Dutch, who promises them the dreamland and the American dream. Just like an actual religious society, Dutch also refuses any attempts at doubting or questioning his endeavors and decisions towards what he thinks is the wellbeing of the whole society. Dutch's, and the gang's, refusal of the civilized society is in fact a refusal of the rational society, as well as a refusal of an individualistic culture and adherence to collectivistic culture. Further, change is not welcomed in this society as it follows what Dutch sees as appropriate. Arthur Morgan was the only member opposing the foundations of this society in favor of the wellbeing – and rational interests – of its members. He saw the importance of rational interests that the gang members were deprived of as a result of following Dutch. Such deprivation made them fall victim to the irrational decisions of Dutch. Therefore, and whenever Arthur attempts to oppose or question Dutch's decisions, he was met with refusal or criticism.

It is also worth mentioning that in the final chapters of the story and particularly following the end of Arthur's role in it, most of the remaining members of the gang chose to adapt to the civilized life of towns and merge with its rational society. Eventually finding a better and calmer life than the sacred life of the gang.

Symbol of the Cowboy

Writing on *Red Dead Redemption* as a franchise, Schoppmeier (2023) states that: "they function as 'cultural interfaces' to the Western" (p. 166). As such, *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018) is a reflection of the Western American culture, primarily through its portrayal of an individualistic hero, the cowboy. According to Slatta (1994), the cowboy represents "rugged individualism, unbending principle, frontier spirit, and manly courage." (p. 252). Arthur is a representation of the standard image of the cowboy. This cowboy takes it upon himself to defend individualism and the freedom of people against the aristocratic society. Near the end of Arthur's role in the story, particularly when he starts disagreeing with Dutch, Arthur starts acting alone and takes the route of helping people and changing their status as he can. He began realizing that people's lives are more important than keeping the gang together. Therefore, the cowboy is also a representation of individualism (Wright, 2001).

Conclusion

This study investigated the reflection of collectivistic and individualistic cultures through the use of positive and negative politeness strategies in *Red Dead Redemption 2*. Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the researcher classified and analyzed the utterances which include positive and negative politeness strategies present in the scripted dialogue of *Red Dead Redemption 2*. The results showed that for positive politeness strategies, No. 6 and 12 are mostly used, while for negative politeness strategies, No. 2 and 10 are mostly used. The results also showed that positive politeness strategies surpass negative politeness strategies, with the latter being mostly used near the end of the story. These results indicate that the game protagonist uses positive politeness strategies to reflect the collectivistic culture and that he transitions towards an individualistic culture through the use of negative politeness towards the end of the story. Such use of positive politeness strategies and transition towards negative politeness strategies

demonstrate the protagonist's realization, especially near the end of the story, that maintaining loyalty to his gang leader would compromise the whole gang. Such transition supports the game's theme by providing a contradiction between the freedom the game offers and the limited choices of its main characters. It also supports the game's narrative by setting the foundation for its conclusion. Furthermore, embracing individualism near the end of the story reflects the Western culture as an individualistic rather than a collectivistic culture. Using positive and negative politeness in *Red Dead Redemption 2* to fulfill thematic, narrative and cultural purposes highlights the potential of the language within video games as a rich environment for further study.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1. *Brown and Levinson's (1987) classification of positive and negative politeness strategies*

Positive Politeness Strategies	Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)
	Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
	Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H
	Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers
	Strategy 5: Seek agreement
	Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement
	Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
	Strategy 8: Joke
	Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants
	Strategy 10: Offer, promise
	Strategy 11: Be optimistic
	Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity
	Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons
	Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity
	Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)
Negative Politeness Strategies	Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect
	Strategy 2: Question, hedge
	Strategy 3: Be pessimistic
	Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition

	Strategy 5: Give deference
	Strategy 6: Apologize
	Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H: Avoid the pronouns “I” and “you”
	Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule
	Strategy 9: Nominalize
	Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring debt or as not indebting H

Appendix B

Table 2. *Positive and negative politeness distributed according to YouTube video timestamp*

YouTube Video Timestamp			
Story beginning	Instances of Positive Politeness	Instances of Negative Politeness	Story ending
(00:00:00) Beginning of the story where Arthur is engaged	(00:02:03)		(07:21:25) End of Arthur’s role in the story
	(00:02:12)		
	(00:14:34)		
	(00:14:45)		
	(00:34:54)		
	(00:51:34)		
	(00:52:23)		
	(01:00:43)		
	(01:29:50)		
	(01:20:20)		
	(01:22:38)		
	(01:25:17)		
	(01:27:29)		
	(01:42:11)		
	(01:53:51)		
	(01:54:59)		
	(02:18:33)		
	(02:18:54)	(02:25:15)	
	(02:39:41)		
	(03:06:54)	(02:40:53)	
	(03:19:21)	(03:07:29)	
	(03:21:58)	(03:08:54)	
	(03:36:33)	(03:09:10)	
	(03:44:00)		
	(03:53:03)	(04:53:25)	
	(05:23:15)	(04:55:13)	
	(05:23:27)	(04.55.44)	
	(05:24:21)		
	(05:32:26)	(05:29:22)	
	(05:42:24)		
	(05:42:44)		
	(06:32:21)		
	(05:53:58)		
		(06:45:31)	
		(06:51:29)	
Total	33	11	

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A Pragmatic Presupposition Analysis in Sir David Attenborough's *Climate Change Speeches*

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Abstract
Climate change is a critical global issue that requires effective communication and public engagement to drive necessary actions and policy changes. Despite the critical importance of climate change communication, this topic has been limited in its coverage within discourse analysis research, making this study's investigation particularly significant. This study aims to examine the communication strategies used by a prominent public figure, namely Sir David Attenborough, in addressing climate change issues. To achieve that, this study conducts a qualitative analysis of Sir David Attenborough's discourse on climate change, with a specific focus on the role of presuppositions in framing his communication strategies. Through analyzing a corpus of his public speeches, this investigation identifies and categorizes the presuppositional triggers employed by Attenborough, particularly those that elicit existential presuppositions triggered by definite descriptions (78% of observed triggers) and structural presuppositions such as restrictive relative clauses (14% of observed triggers). This analysis provides insights into how Attenborough effectively conveys notions of ownership, shared responsibility, and inspires action through strategic use of presuppositions. Examining the persuasive strategies of a prominent public figure, this study makes a valuable contribution to the field and future investigations on climate change communication.

Keywords: climate change language, discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, pragmatic presupposition, presupposition types, Sir David Attenborough
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Introduction

Effective communication plays a vital role in creating awareness and understanding of environmental challenges. To comprehend the implicit assumptions and meanings conveyed through these communications, it is important to conduct a proper pragmatic-based analysis of the assumptions and messages underlying the discourse. Pragmatic presupposition refers to the implicit assumptions or meanings conveyed through communication that are taken for granted or assumed to be true by the speaker, influencing the listener's interpretation of the message (Finch, 2000; Mane, 2021; Matsumoto, 2016).

The study of climate change discourse and pragmatics is necessary for understanding how language is used to shape perceptions, attitudes, and actions around this critical global issue (Fløttum, 2016, 2017; Gillings & Dayrell, 2024). Examining the types of presuppositions and triggers employed in climate change communication can provide valuable insights (Aini & Ariyanti, 2021). Presuppositions, the implicit assumptions underlying statements, can subtly influence the framing and interpretation of climate change, potentially obscuring or emphasizing certain perspectives. Identifying these presupposition triggers can reveal how language is used to establish the taken-for-granted foundations of climate change discourse.

The motivation behind studying Attenborough's speeches is that they have not been explored in pragmatic research before, specifically pragmatic presupposition. Despite his influence and the attention his speeches have earned, their pragmatic aspects have yet to be thoroughly examined. Given the importance of the topics he addresses, particularly concerning climate change, it is noteworthy to investigate the pragmatic presupposition trigger types employed in his speeches. Notably, Attenborough was a native English speaker, allowing him to skillfully utilize the nuances of his mother tongue. By analyzing these triggers, the researcher can gain insights into how Attenborough effectively communicates his messages and engages with his audience, shedding light on the persuasive strategies he employs to raise awareness and inspire action regarding environmental issues.

This study aims to examine the discourse analysis and communication strategies used by a prominent public figure, namely Sir David Attenborough (see appendix A for Sir David Attenborough's Bio), in addressing climate change issues. In particular, the study aims to analyze Sir David Attenborough's discourse on climate change, with a specific focus on the role of presuppositions in framing his communication strategies. By examining the types and forms of presuppositional triggers that elicit presuppositions, followed by using presupposition triggers of Karttunen (n.d.) as appeared in Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996). This research offers insights into the persuasive strategies employed by Attenborough.

According to the study's aim, the researcher asks the following research questions to guide the study discussion:

RQ 1. What types and forms of presupposition triggers are used by Sir David Attenborough in his discourse on climate change, and how do these presuppositional elements shape his communication strategies?

RQ 2. How does Attenborough's use of persuasive techniques, including the leveraging of presuppositions, contribute to the framing and effectiveness of his climate change communication?

To answer these two research questions, the researcher sets the following research objectives:

- To collect a representative sample of Attenborough's speeches and transcripts on climate change topics.

- To conduct a quantitative analysis of the collected sample to identify and categorize the types and forms of presupposition triggers used by Sir David Attenborough in his discourse on climate change.
- To apply qualitative analysis to examine the persuasive techniques employed by Attenborough, including the leveraging of presuppositions, and assess their contribution to the effectiveness of his climate change communication.
- To provide insights into the role of presuppositions in influencing the framing and reception of climate change messages delivered by prominent public figures.

This study is organized as follows, in Section One, the literature review and fundamental concepts are presented to support the study's background. Followed by Section Two, which presents the research methodology employed in this study. Then, in Section Three, the findings are presented, highlighting the answers to the proposed research questions introduced earlier. Finally, in Section Four, the study is concluded with a summary and final remarks on the communication of climate change language in the light of using presupposition types.

This study stands out in its originality for several reasons. Firstly, it focuses on the discourse of Sir David Attenborough (see appendix A for Sir David Attenborough's Bio), a highly influential public figure in climate change issues. While there have been studies on climate change communication, Attenborough's specific discourse has not been comprehensively analyzed in this manner before.

Secondly, the research employs a qualitative approach to examine the role of presuppositions in framing Attenborough's discourse on climate change. Presuppositions, as implicit assumptions, play a significant role in shaping the way information is presented and understood. By specifically analyzing presuppositional triggers, this research provides a novel perspective on the persuasive strategies employed by Attenborough.

Furthermore, the identification and categorization of presuppositional triggers, along with their specific types and forms, offer valuable insights into Attenborough's communication techniques. The findings regarding the prevalence of existential presuppositions triggered by definite descriptions, as well as the use of structural presuppositions like restrictive relative clauses, contribute to the existing knowledge in the field.

Literature Review

This section provides a proper discussion on studying presupposition in pragmatic studies. Followed by a review of the existing literature pertaining to the importance of analyzing climate communications, particularly speeches. Subsequently, it presents a summary of select studies that have employed pragmatic presupposition analysis to investigate various types of speeches.

Pragmatic Presuppositions

The study of pragmatic presupposition, as stated in several studies discussed in this section, holds importance in the fields of linguistics and communication. According to Karttunen (1974), understanding and analyzing pragmatic presuppositions is crucial for comprehending the intended meaning behind a speaker's statement and interpreting it correctly. By examining how presuppositions interact with the linguistic context, researchers can gain insights into the underlying mechanisms of communication and language interpretation. Karttunen's work contributes to the understanding of how presuppositions shape linguistic meaning and the role they play in effective communication (Karttunen, 1973, 1974, n.d.).

Linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and communication have all contributed to our understanding of presupposition. It has been examined in the contexts of interpersonal communication, political interviews, and literary speech, demonstrating its applicability across multiple disciplines. For instance, Stalnaker (1974) investigates the nature of presuppositions in communication. The researcher's work examines how these presuppositions affect the content and interpretation of linguistic utterances. Stalnaker's work offers a comprehensive analysis of the role that pragmatic presuppositions play in shaping meaning and understanding in communication contexts. Recent works continue to explore the realms of pragmatic presupposition in modern communication. For instance, Giora (2003) searches through the cognitive aspects of presuppositions and their relation to context and figurative language. The researcher's work presents experimental evidence and theoretical discussions on the role of presuppositions in shaping meaning and interpretation. Similarly, Green (2012) provides an overview of pragmatics and its role in understanding natural language, discussing presuppositions as part of pragmatic analysis, and highlighting their significance in interpreting meaning in context.

Presupposition indicates that both the speaker and the listener possess some knowledge of the shared utterance between them. In ordinary parlance, to presuppose anything is to assume or take something for granted without explicitly stating it (Mane, 2021). According to Finch (2000), there is a certain degree of supposed knowledge in all communication, regardless of simply semantic information. The extent of this presumed knowledge is affected by contextual factors. This sheds light on the context of pragmatic presuppositions and how it is vital to a given speech or utterance.

Pragmatic presupposition plays a crucial role in shaping the implicit assumptions and background information that underlie effective communication. According to Matsumoto (2016), pragmatic presupposition is what the speaker assumes the addressee is already familiar with in that discourse setting. In addition, Mane (2021) pointed out that pragmatic presuppositions arise from the speaker's assumption about the addressee's familiarity with specific information in the context of the discourse. However, it is noteworthy that pragmatic presupposition might be close to semantic presupposition, but they are slightly distinct. For the users of a sentence, a semantic presupposition of it is a pragmatic presupposition but not the other way around (Sudo, 2014).

Levinson (1983) defined pragmatics as the study of the relationship between language and context, which is fundamental to our understanding of language. In addition, he noted that presuppositions appear to be linked to specific words or characteristics of surface organization in general, which triggers language factors that generate presuppositions. When a speaker presupposes a *p*, the speaker holds the belief that *p* is true and assumes that listeners share this belief (Abrusan, 2022). George Yule defines pragmatic presupposition as "something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. Speakers, not sentences, have presuppositions" (Yule, 1996, p. 25).

According to Yule (1996), six types of presupposition help us identify and understand the implicit assumptions conveyed in language. These types include: (1) existential, (2) factive, (3) lexical, (4) structural, (6) non-factive, and (7) counter-factual presuppositions. The subsequent explanation is founded on Yule's explanation of presupposition types (Yule, 1996). Existential presupposition refers to the assumption that something exists. This means that when a sentence includes an existential presupposition trigger, it presupposes the existence of the entity or object mentioned. Factive presupposition, on the other hand, assumes the truthfulness or existence of a proposition. In sentences with factive presupposition triggers, the speaker assumes that the

complement clause is true. Lexical presupposition is carried by specific words or phrases that inherently carry presuppositions. When these words or phrases are used, they automatically imply specific background knowledge or assumptions. Structural presupposition is related to the grammatical structure of a sentence. It involves the belief that certain elements or relationships exist within the sentence. Non-factive presupposition, in contrast to factive presupposition, does not assume the truthfulness of the complement clause. It only implies the possibility of the proposition, regardless of its truth value. Lastly, counter-factual presupposition assumes the falsity of the complement clause. When a counter-factual presupposition trigger is used, it presupposes that the proposition is not true.

These aforementioned types of presuppositions are utilized in conjunction with triggers. Presupposition triggers serve as markers that point to the underlying assumptions, indicating that they are already part of the shared knowledge between the participants in the conversation or communication. These triggers act as signals, highlighting the presence of presuppositions and serving as indicators of the common understanding that exists within a specific context. They are not explicitly stated but are implied or inferred by the speaker or the writer. Kadmon (2001) claimed that presupposition triggers are linguistic expressions or constructions that are responsible for marking certain information as presupposed, thereby "triggering" the presupposition.

According to Karttunen (n.d.) and Levinson (1983), there are 13 kinds of such triggers, which understandably were chosen to be mentioned in Levinson's book as they are mainly used as presupposition triggers. These triggers are: 1) definite descriptions; 2) factive verbs ;3) implicative verbs; 4) change of state verbs; 5) iterative; 6) verbs of judging; 7) temporal clauses; 8) cleft sentences; 9) implicit clefts with stressed constituents; 10) comparisons and contrasts; 11) non-restrictive relative clause; 12) counterfactual conditionals; and 13) questions.

Pragmatics of Climate Change Communication

Studying the pragmatics of climate change communication is of importance due to the complex and multidimensional nature of climate change issues. The work conducted by Kjersti Fløttum has contributed to the understanding of the role of language in climate change discourse. Fløttum's research highlights the crucial connection between language and the meaning people ascribe to climate change, as well as its influence on attitudes and behaviors. This understanding has implications for effective communication strategies and the potential to shape public perception and action (Fløttum, 2016, 2017).

(Fløttum, 2016) argues that climate change is no longer solely a physical phenomenon but has become a political, social, and cultural phenomenon. Consequently, climate change communication has become a challenge that requires careful consideration of language and discourse.

Fløttum's work goes beyond individual research studies and extends to a comprehensive examination of the role of language in the climate change debate (Fløttum, 2017). The researcher's work brings together contributions from a global team of researchers, utilizing diverse linguistic approaches to analyze climate change discourse across various genres and media. The work explores how information and knowledge on climate change are represented, disseminated, interpreted, and further discussed and debated.

According to Fløttum (2016; 2017), language not only reflects and expresses facts and observations but also has the power to shape and create new realities. The climate change debate is characterized by multiple voices and interests, both explicit and implicit. Fløttum (2016)

highlights the importance of understanding and analyzing these voices to gain a comprehensive understanding of the communication landscape surrounding climate change. By studying linguistic and textual aspects such as words, combinations of words, and entire texts from various contexts (e.g., scientific reports, political documents, mainstream media, and new social media), the researcher can gain insights into how language is used to portray and communicate climate change (Fløttum, 2017).

Presupposition, as a linguistic phenomenon, plays a crucial role in climate change communication by revealing implicit assumptions and background knowledge that underlie the discourse. Therefore, studying presuppositions as a linguistic analysis is essential for gaining insights into the hidden beliefs, values, and biases embedded in climate change communication. Such an understanding is vital for developing effective communication strategies that account for how presuppositions shape the interpretation, acceptance, or challenge of information by different audiences.

For instance, Pounds (2021) highlighted the importance of evaluating presuppositions in environmental argumentative discourse. The research underscores that evaluation in discourse extends beyond explicit expressions and includes both implied and presupposed aspects. This broader approach to the analysis of evaluation is especially relevant when examining different environmental positions and policies, as it reveals the evaluative principles that underlie these stances.

A very recent study by Gillings and Dayrell (2024) analyzes the evolution of climate change discourse in the UK press from 2003 to 2019 using corpus-assisted discourse analysis. The authors track the fluctuations in the usage of the phrases "climate change" and "global warming" over these 17 years. Their results indicate that the media discourse on climate change in the UK underwent two major shifts during this time. Initially, the discourse was largely dominated by articles advocating for climate change action. However, from 2008 onwards, the authors observe an incorporation of climate sceptic voices into the discourse. More recently, in the latter years of the study period, the coverage and public awareness of climate change increased significantly as the issue gained more traction in the public consciousness. This study provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of climate change discourse in the UK media and highlights the importance of employing innovative analytical methods to understand the nuances of this critical topic over time.

According to the research's knowledge, the study of pragmatic presuppositions in communication, such as speeches, concerning climate change issues remains relatively limited. The only study, the research traced on studying pragmatic presupposition for an environmental advocate figure was recently presented by Aini and Ariyanti (2021). Pragmatic presuppositions play a crucial role in understanding the implicit assumptions and expectations that speakers rely on to effectively convey meaning. Investigating pragmatic presuppositions in the context of climate change discourse can provide insights into how speakers frame and present information, as well as how audiences interpret and respond to these messages.

Related Work

While the study of pragmatic presuppositions in communication-related climate change issues remains scarce, this section explores the analysis of speeches from various domains beyond climate change. By examining speeches in different contexts, primarily communications from political figures, the aim is to shed light on the role of pragmatic presuppositions in diverse

communicative settings. These studies provide valuable insights into how speakers utilize pragmatic presuppositions to shape meaning, influence audience perception, and engage listeners. Additionally, the insights gained from these studies will enable the researcher to make meaningful comparisons and draw relevant parallels when examining the use of pragmatic presuppositions in communication-related to climate change based on Attenborough's speeches.

The researcher is aware of only one study that has analyzed the use of pragmatic presuppositions in speeches by climate-change advocate figures, which was conducted by Aini and Ariyanti (2021). The researchers conducted a study to analyze the use of presupposition triggers and entailment used in Greta Thunberg's speech at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the speech based on Yule's framework of presupposition and entailment theory by Griffiths (2006). They found out that the most used presupposition type, out of the five types they found, was existential presupposition, explaining that was justified to draw the audience's attention and sympathy.

From the other domains, namely political communications, several analysis studies were presented to discuss the use of pragmatic presupposition in different political-related speeches. For instance, research conducted by Saputra, Zahrida, and Hati (2021) studied the types of presupposition in Barrack Obama's speech at the Islamic Society of Baltimore. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative research method to analyze the speech. The researcher categorized the utterance based on various forms of presupposition. The predominant types of presupposition identified in the speech are existential presupposition and the least used presupposition was lexical presupposition.

Likewise, Murillo and Yeh (2021) inspected the use of presupposition triggers in the speech of President Rodrigo Duterte during his 5th State of the Nation Address (SONA), which was in 2020 and lasted for 1 hour and 20 minutes. The study used critical discourse analysis to analyze the data and demonstrated that the study of presupposition can enhance the comprehension of political speeches. The results indicated that the president used all six types of presupposition, as suggested by Yule (1996). Lexical presupposition is the most commonly employed of these six types in the speech with 87 occurrences representing 44% of the total. On the opposite, with 4 (2%), the type of presupposition with the least occurrences is counterfactual.

Another research by Liang and Liu (2016) conducted a study on the first campaign speech of Hilary Clinton, analyzing the presupposition triggers present in the speech. These triggers were classified as either 'lexical' or 'syntactic'. The study revealed that presupposition triggers have a significant impact on enhancing information, making language more efficient and livelier, encouraging audience interaction, and fostering a closer relationship between the speaker and the audience.

In a recent study, Lathar et al. (2023) explored the presupposition triggers and types in Joe Biden's victory speech on TV, using a descriptive qualitative approach based on the frameworks of Yule (1996) and Levinson (1983). The researchers collected the script from The Washington Post and identified a total of 1005 presuppositions, comprising 1,313 words. The dominant type of presuppositions found in the speech were existential presuppositions, which accounted for 827 triggers, representing 82.3% of the total trigger frequencies. On the other hand, the researchers found that the least used presuppositions in the speech were of the nonfactual type, only accounting for 0.19% of the total.

In another recent study, Aminah (2021) evaluated the speech of Kim Namjoon at the United Nations General Assembly using a qualitative descriptive method. She used the framework of

Guswita and Widodo (2019), which was based on Yule (1996) and Levinson (1983), to analyze the data extracted from the speech. The results of her research showed that the most used type of presupposition was existential presuppositions with 20 sentence occurrences, representing 62.05% of the total presuppositions used in speech.

Based on the previous studies that have been reviewed, it is important to note that presuppositions do not introduce new information. Instead, they consist of underlying messages that are assumed by both speakers and listeners, and these messages are indicated by triggers of presupposition. Based on this perspective, the significance of the current study lies in its attempt to explore the usage of presupposition triggers in types and contexts that have not been previously examined in the speeches of Attenborough on climate change. By recognizing and analyzing these triggers, the researcher can gain insights into the implicit assumptions that shape and influence communication in these speeches.

Methods

The current study uses a qualitative approach utilizing descriptive measures. This means that the researcher is focusing on understanding a phenomenon by examining its characteristics and features with a brief explanation of the underlying causes or mechanisms. This type of research is often used when the goal is to gain insights into people's experiences, attitudes, or behaviors, and it involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as words, images, or other qualitative information (Kim et al., 2017).

The researcher selected seven speeches, which were publicly available and accessible via YouTube, delivered by Attenborough on the topic of climate change. The sole criterion implemented in choosing these speeches was their relation to climate change. This selection allowed for a focused analysis of how Attenborough addressed the issue of climate change in his speeches using pragmatic presuppositions. The collected speeches are documented in Table B.1 (appendix B).

The data analysis went through three steps. First, the researcher listened carefully to the speeches. Second, the researcher transcribed them using an automatic transcription tool. Once that was completed, the researcher revised the content of the speech to avoid any mistakes in the transcription. Third, the speeches were analyzed to elicit presupposition types using presupposition triggers of Karttunen (n.d.) as appeared in Levinson (1983) and Yule's (1996) framework.

To be more specific, the speeches were analyzed based on a similar framework to Yule (1996), which outlines six types of presuppositions. To combine Karttunen's presupposition triggers and Yule's framework, the researcher adapted the framework of Murillo and Yeh (2021) as originally adapted from Yule's six types of presuppositions (Yule, 1996, pp. 26–30). Presupposition triggers can be creatively formulated using various linguistic forms, which have been classified into six types. Each type encompasses distinct forms of presupposition triggers, as detailed in the following table by Murillo and Yeh (2021) (see Table C.1 in appendix C).

The researcher utilized a color-coding system to categorize each presupposition trigger based on its type and form. The types and forms of presupposition triggers were then calculated and compiled in a table for further analysis. This process allowed for a systematic examination of the data and facilitated a deeper understanding of the presupposition phenomenon in the selected speeches of Sir David Attenborough.

Results

This section presents the statistical profiling results of the analyzed speeches, followed by a descriptive analysis of selected excerpts from those labeled speeches.

Table One provides a descriptive overview of the analyzed speeches, focusing on word frequencies and the most frequent tokens. This analysis offers essential information about the linguistic characteristics of the collected and labeled speeches. Notably, the results presented in Table One highlight several tokens that consistently appear in Attenborough's speeches, such as 'world,' 'planet,' and 'all.' These tokens provide a glimpse into the scope of interest and thematic focus of the speeches.

Table 1. *Statistical words profiling per speech*

Speech ID	Number of words	Number of unique words	Top 5 most frequent words ordered by their frequency.
1	823	398	*all, planet, natural, world, species*
2	330	181	*about, need, human, something, effort.*
3	737	365	*world, all, number, one, climate*
4	360	211	*world, more, today, nature, all*
5	907	369	*security, world, global, change, now*
6	520	270	*World, about, time, parts, now*
7	440	209	*get, going, world, planet, think.*

In Table Two, the researcher presents an occurrence analysis of each type of pragmatic presupposition in the collected and labeled speeches of Attenborough. Additionally, the researcher reports the percentage of each form per presupposition type to provide more in-depth insights into the distribution of presupposition forms within the sampled speeches.

Generally, a total of 334 occurrences of presupposition forms were found in Attenborough's sampled speeches, which accounts for approximately 8% of the total words in his selected speeches. This calculation is based on the ratio of 334 occurrences to the total number of words, which is 4,117 (calculated in Table One). While 8% may not be considered high in some contexts, it is still a significant proportion when analyzing the occurrence of specific linguistic features within a body of text. In the case of presupposition forms, their presence in approximately 8% of Attenborough's selected speeches suggests their notable role in conveying implicit meanings and assumptions. This percentage indicates that presupposition forms are utilized fairly throughout the speeches, contributing to the overall rhetorical impact and effectiveness of Attenborough's communication.

Table 2 *Occurrence analysis of the presupposition types in Attenborough's collective speeches*

Presupposition Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
– Counterfactual presupposition	3	0.9%
– Existential presupposition	262	78.4%
– Factive presupposition	8	2.4%
– Lexical presupposition	11	3.3%
– Non-factive presupposition	2	0.6%

Presupposition Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
– Structural presupposition	48	14.4%
Overall identified presuppositions	334	100%

Note 1: the completed and overall occurrences of the presupposition types along with their trigger forms are presented in Appendix D (Table D.1)

Discussion

These results, provided in the previous section, aim to provide comprehensive insights into the main objective of the current study and to answer the research questions.

To answer the first question, the researcher obtained statistical profiling, as presented earlier in Table One, of the most and least common presupposition types along with their trigger forms, as demonstrated in Table Two, in the representative corpus collected earlier (i.e., Attenborough's speeches on climate change).

RQ.1 What types and forms of presupposition triggers are used by Sir David Attenborough in his discourse on climate change, and how do these presuppositional elements shape his communication strategies?

The findings presented in Table Two demonstrate a noteworthy proliferation of existential presupposition compared to other types of presuppositions, comprising a substantial 78.4% of the overall presupposition types in the analyzed speeches. Within this category, and as shown in Figure One, definite descriptions emerged as the most prevalent trigger form, constituting a notable 77% of the occurrences. Possessive constructions followed as the second most frequent trigger form, accounting for 23% of the triggers observed in these speeches. These results provide insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by Attenborough, highlighting the significance of existential presuppositions in shaping his discourse.

The prominence of definite descriptions as the primary trigger form, as shown in example (1), indicates Attenborough's adept use of vivid and concrete language to engage his audience. By employing definite descriptions, he effectively captures their attention and establishes an immediate connection to the topics discussed. Furthermore, the deliberate inclusion of possessive constructions in a substantial proportion of the speeches, as shown in examples (2), suggests an intentional emphasis on notions of ownership and shared responsibility. This strategic utilization of possessive constructions adds an emotional resonance to the speeches, fostering a sense of collective purpose and inspiring action among the listeners.

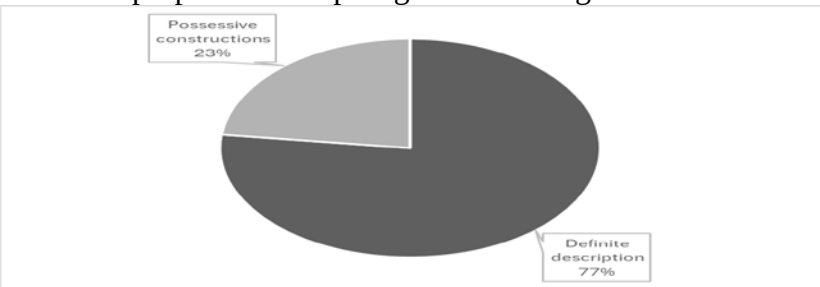

Figure 1. Trigger forms distribution of existential presupposition in Attenborough's speeches

Examples of using existential presupposition within Attenborough's speeches are presented in (1) and (2) below.

(1) Examples of existential presupposition with definite description
… the natural world led to what has been called the greatest idea!
… the rest of life on Earth …
… an unprecedented global understanding.

(2) Examples of existential presupposition with possessive construction
… have brought their best work …
… we go about our lives …
…. our power to do …

The second most prevalent type of presupposition observed in these speeches, as shown in Table Two, is structural presupposition, accounting for 14.4% of the overall identified presupposition types. Within the overall distributions of structural presupposition, and as shown in Figure Two, restrictive relative clauses emerge as the most prominent trigger form, constituting a significant 64.6% of the observed triggers. Comparative constructions also play a noteworthy role, representing 14.5% of the triggers associated with structural presupposition. These findings provide valuable insights into the syntactic strategies employed by Attenborough to convey presuppositional meaning.

The high occurrence rate of restrictive relative clauses within structural presupposition, as depicted in Figure Two, demonstrates Attenborough's use of specific linguistic devices to convey additional information about the referents in his speeches. By employing restrictive relative clauses, as shown in example (3), he restricts the reference of a noun phrase, thereby presupposing the existence and uniqueness of the entity being referred to. This linguistic technique allows Attenborough to provide contextual information and create a more nuanced understanding of the topics discussed.

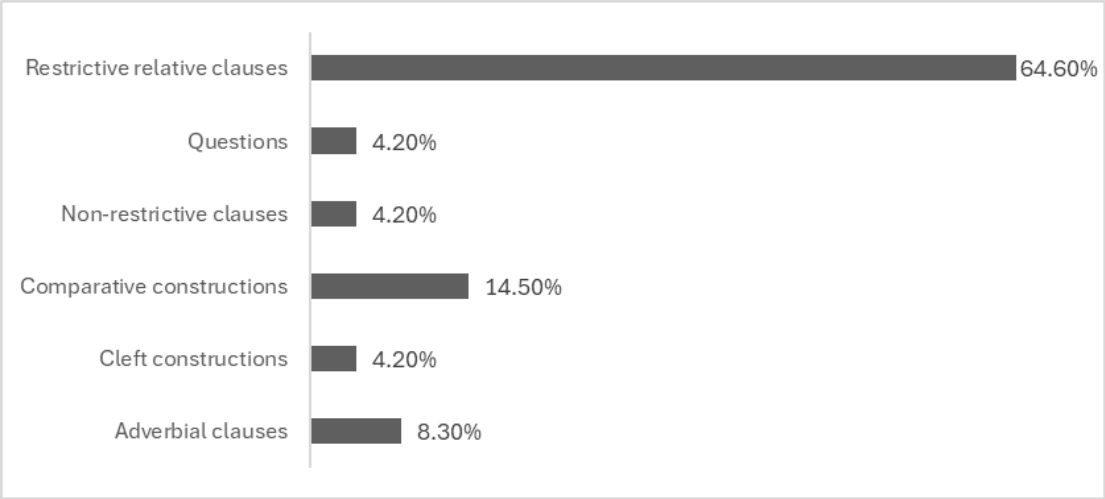

Figure 2. Trigger forms distribution of structural presupposition in Attenborough's speeches

Furthermore, the presence of comparative constructions as triggers for structural presupposition, as shown in example (4) suggests a deliberate emphasis on making comparisons and highlighting relative qualities or characteristics. Using comparative constructions, Attenborough not only presupposes the existence of a standard of comparison but also implies a

contrast or a degree of difference between the entities or concepts being compared. This strategic employment of comparative constructions adds depth and persuasive impact to his speeches.

Examples of using structural presupposition within Attenborough's speeches are presented in (3) and (4) below.

(3) An example of structural presupposition with a restrictive relative clause
… contains concentrations of carbon dioxide that have not been equaled for millions of years.

(4) An example of structural presupposition with comparative construction
…. far faster than I ever imagined!

The presupposition types that occur least frequently within Attenborough's collective speeches investigating climate change are non-factive presupposition and counterfactual presupposition, representing only 0.6% and 0.9% of the overall occurrences of presupposition types, respectively. These findings shed light on the relative scarcity of these particular presuppositional forms in his discourse.

The low occurrence rate of non-factive presupposition suggests that Attenborough tends to rely less on assumptions or implications that contradict known facts or established truths in his speeches on climate change, as shown in example (5) using the verb "*imagine*". This indicates a preference for presenting information that is firmly grounded in factual evidence and scientific consensus, minimizing the use of presuppositions that may introduce speculative or questionable content.

Similarly, the limited presence of counterfactual presupposition indicates a minimal reliance on hypothetical or counterfactual scenarios in Attenborough's speeches. Counterfactual presuppositions typically involve assumptions about events or conditions that are contrary to reality, serving as hypothetical premises to explore alternative outcomes or possibilities, as shown in example (6). The low occurrence of this presuppositional type suggests a focus on presenting concrete and factual information rather than engaging in speculative or hypothetical reasoning.

Examples of using non-factive presupposition and counterfactual presupposition types within Attenborough's speeches are presented below.

(5) An example of non-factive presupposition
… to imagine some of the consequences …

(6) An example of counterfactual presupposition
… if we continue on our current path, if the natural world can no longer support us, if we act fast enough, …

In addition, the analysis, presented in Table Two, reveals a moderate utilization of factive presupposition and lexical presupposition, with occurrence rates of 2.4% and 3.3% respectively. The moderate use of factive presupposition suggests that Attenborough strategically incorporates presuppositions that rely on established facts or commonly accepted truths in his speeches. By grounding his statements in factual evidence, he enhances the credibility and persuasive impact of his discourse. An example of factive presupposition used in Attenborough's speeches is shown below in example (7).

(7) An example of factive presupposition
… recovering we've subsequently learned how important whales are to the entire ocean system.

Furthermore, the prevalence of lexical presupposition, particularly through the use of focal adverbs and change of state verbs as triggers, reveals Attenborough's deliberate choice of linguistic

devices to convey presuppositional meaning. Focal adverbs, such as "*even*", "*too*", and "*only*", serve to implicitly assume the truth or validity of the information being conveyed as shown in example (8). Similarly, change of state verbs, such as "*finish*", "*change*", "*stop*", or "*resume*" presuppose a prior state or condition that has undergone a specific change or transition, as shown in example (9). These linguistic strategies enable Attenborough to convey presuppositions about the dynamic nature of climate change and the need for urgent action.

Examples of using lexical presupposition with focal adverbs and change of state verbs within Attenborough's speeches are presented below.

(8) An example of lexical presupposition with focal adverb
… can only be dealt with by unparalleled levels of global cooperation.

(9) An example of lexical presupposition with a change of state verb
… the only conditions modern humans have ever known are changing and changing.

As a main finding to answer the first research question of this study, the pattern of presuppositions in Attenborough's speeches about climate change indicates a strong reliance on existential presuppositions, primarily definite description, with moderate usage of structural presupposition, specifically restrictive relative clauses. In addition, there is a moderate use of lexical and factive presuppositions. Counterfactual and non-factive presuppositions were observed to be the rarest. These various types of presuppositions help to shape the discourse and convey Attenborough's message about the urgent need for action on climate change.

To answer the second research question, the researcher applied qualitative analyses to the results obtained from the first question which was answered earlier, the second research question is:

RQ.2 How do Attenborough's use of persuasive techniques, including the leveraging of presuppositions, contribute to the framing and effectiveness of his climate change communication?

Analyzing presuppositions can provide valuable insights into Attenborough's persuasive strategies and their impact on audience perceptions and attitudes toward environmental issues. Based on the results obtained earlier to answer RQ1, it is noted that presuppositions, such as existential and structural presuppositions, play a crucial role in framing the discourse on climate change. By employing these presuppositional triggers, Attenborough effectively communicates the urgency, reality, and importance of addressing climate change to his audience.

These findings align with previous research on presupposition analysis in environmental discourse by Aini & Ariyanti (2021). The researchers conducted a similar analysis of Greta Thunberg's speech at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019. They found that existential presuppositions were commonly used to emphasize and draw attention to specific aspects of the speech, while one-way entailment was frequently employed to provide additional details and support the main ideas. This supports the notion that presuppositions, including existential presuppositions, are effective strategies for framing persuasive communication in the context of climate change.

In discussing the role of pragmatic presuppositions, it is useful to consider the similarities between the climate change related speeches by Attenborough and other genres of spoken language, such as political speeches. While the primary aim of this research is not to compare the use of pragmatic presuppositions in environmental and political speeches, examining these similarities, in terms of using presuppositions, can provide valuable insights into how speakers use

pragmatic presuppositions to achieve their communicative goals. For instance, both environmental and political speeches often seek to persuade or convince listeners to take a particular action or adopt a specific viewpoint.

By following that narrative of discussion, the present research findings revealed similarities between the utilization of presuppositions by Attenborough and those observed in the previously examined studies conducted by Saputra, Zahrida, & Hati (2021), Lathar et al. (2023), and Aminah (2021). The shared characteristic between the utilization of presuppositions in Attenborough's speeches and those of a political nature was identified in their tendency to employ existential presuppositions. The findings of these studies are in alignment with the results of the aforementioned studies, indicating that the predominant type of presupposition used was existential presupposition.

Other reasons or factors are suggested to explain existential presuppositions are often dominant in political and climate change speeches. The first reason is to emphasize urgency and crisis. Both political and climate change speeches often aim to convey a sense of urgency and crisis. Existential presuppositions can effectively convey the seriousness of the situation by presupposing the existence of certain problems or consequences.

The second reason is appealing to shared responsibility. Existential presuppositions can be used to emphasize shared responsibility for addressing political and environmental challenges. By presupposing the existence of certain conditions or facts, speakers can implicitly convey the notion that everyone has a stake in the issue and a responsibility to act.

The third reason is framing the narrative. Existential presuppositions can help frame the narrative in a way that supports the speaker's viewpoint or desired policy outcome. By presupposing the existence of certain problems or solutions, speakers can shape the discussion and influence listeners' perceptions.

The fourth reason involves emotional impact. Existential presuppositions can elicit emotional responses from listeners. By presupposing the existence of dire consequences or urgent needs, speakers can evoke emotions such as fear, concern, or empathy. These emotional appeals can be powerful in capturing the attention and engagement of the audience, making the persuasive message more impactful.

According to the above possible reasons or factors, the researcher believes that by utilizing enough existential presuppositions, speakers can enhance the persuasive impact of their speeches and motivate listeners to take action or adopt a specific viewpoint. It is worth noting that the effectiveness of utilizing existential presuppositions in speeches depends on various factors, including the speaker's delivery, credibility, and the relevance of the presuppositions to the audience's values and beliefs.

Conclusion

This study has conducted a presupposition analysis of Sir David Attenborough's speeches on climate change, with a focus on the pragmatic aspects of his discourse. By examining the frequent occurrence of presuppositional triggers and their implications, the researcher aimed to analyze the pragmatic presuppositions employed by Attenborough in his speeches on climate change.

The findings of the study revealed that Attenborough's speeches relatively rely on pragmatic presuppositions, particularly in the form of existential presuppositions triggered by definite descriptions. These presuppositions play a role in shaping the persuasive strategies

employed by Attenborough, as they contribute to the framing and interpretation of his messages on climate change. Additionally, the analysis also identified the presence of structural presuppositions, specifically restrictive relative clauses, which further enhance the pragmatic impact of his speeches.

In the end, this research shows that pragmatic presuppositions might play an interesting role in shaping public speeches about environmental issues, particularly climate change. By examining the pragmatic aspects of discourse, we can gain valuable insights into communication strategies used to raise awareness and inspire action on climate change. Additionally, future research can explore how pragmatic presuppositions interact with other rhetorical devices to understand their impact on environmental speeches.

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AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sir David Attenborough's Bio

Sir David Attenborough, a British broadcaster, biologist, natural historian, and author, is renowned for his pioneering educational television programs on natural history and his advocacy for environmental causes such as mitigating climate change. Attenborough was born in 1926 in London, England, and received his education at Clare College, Cambridge (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). He received the Champions of the Earth Lifetime Achievement Award from the United Nations Environment Program for his dedication to research, documentation, and advocacy for protecting nature and its restoration (United Nations Environment Programme, n.d.)

Appendix B

Study's Original Corpus

Table B.1 References of the study's collected corpus

Speech (No.): Title	Posting date	(YouTube) URL
Speech (1): Our Planet: David Attenborough speech at premiere	5 Apr 2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlKkqQHCCCs
Speech (2): Sir David Attenborough: The future of our Frozen world	17 Oct 2022	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf2egYzg-uc
Speech (3): David Attenborough, People's Advocate for #COP26, Address to World Leaders | Climate Action	2 Nov 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7EpiXViSIQ
Speech (4): Sir David Attenborough | A message to world leaders	24 Sept 2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyYpExl8AJU
Speech (5): Sir David Attenborough speech to the UN Security Council	23 Non 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaweqwsN62k
Speech (6): Climate Change - The Facts with Sir David Attenborough	13 May 2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOctIuyVfnA
Speech (7): David Attenborough: 'Act now on climate change or it will be too late' - BBC News	26 Oct 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgnAMrp5_wM

Appendix C

Presupposition Types and their Distinct Triggers

Table C.1 The presupposition types with their trigger forms applied in the current study

Types of Presuppositions	Forms of Presupposition Triggers	Trigger Examples.
Existential presupposition	definite description possessive constructions	*a, an, the* *his, hers, my, our, their…*
Factive presupposition	factive verbs	*aware, realize, know, prove, glad, odd, be sorry, regret, appreciate, saw* *agree, make sense, amuse, bear in mind*
Non-factive presupposition	something that is not true	*imagine, pretend, dream, wish*
Counterfactual presupposition	Counterfactual conditionals	*if-clause; contrary to the facts*
Lexical presupposition	implicative verbs	*to avoid, manage, forget, happened to, ought to, intend to*
	change of state verbs / aspectual verbs	*stop, resume, continue, begin, given up, finish; take; leave; enter; come; go; arrive; change, cease*
	verbs of judging	*criticize, praise, accuse*
	conventional items	*not restricted to verbs only; lexical items with conventional meaning; nouns that carry conventional meaning*
	focal adverbs	*even, too, only*
	iteratives	*to, again, to return, another time, to repeat, for the ninth time, anymore; to come back, restore, repeal, reestablish*
Structural presupposition	Cleft constructions	*it - cleft; wh- cleft; by cleft*
	Adverbial clauses	*temporal clauses - before, while, since, after, during, whenever, when, as..*
	Comparative constructions	*(adjective-er + than) and (As + adjective + as)*
	Restrictive relative clauses	*who, which, what, that*
	Non-restrictive clauses	*with dependent clauses; with relative pronoun*
	Questions	*interrogative forms; rhetorical questions*

Note 1: as detailed in Murillo and Yeh (2021) and as originally adapted from Yule's six types of presuppositions (Yule, 1996, pp. 26–30)

Appendix D

Overall Statistical Information

Table D.1 The overall and completed occurrence analysis of the presupposition types along with their forms of triggers in Attenborough's collective speeches

Presupposition Type Forms of Presupposition Triggers	Frequency	Percentage
Counterfactual presupposition	3	0.9%
Counterfactual conditionals	3	*100%*

Presupposition Type Forms of Presupposition Triggers	Frequency	Percentage
Existential presupposition	262	78.4%
Definite description	202	*77%*
Possessive constructions	60	*23%*
Factive presupposition	8	2.4%
Factive verb	8	100%
Lexical presupposition	11	3.3%
Aspectual verbs	1	*9.1%*
Change of state verbs	2	*18.2%*
Conventional items	0	*0%*
Focal adverbs	6	*54.5%*
Implicative verbs	1	*9.1%*
Iteratives	1	*9.1%*
Verbs of judging	0	*0%*
Non-factive presupposition	2	0.6%
Something that is not true	2	*100%*
Structural presupposition	48	14.4%
Adverbial clauses	4	*8.3%*
Cleft constructions	2	*4.2%*
Comparative constructions	7	*14.5%*
Non-restrictive clauses	2	*4.2%*
Questions	2	*4.2%*
Restrictive relative clauses	31	*64.6%*
Overall identified presuppositions	334	100%

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The Relationship between Willingness to Communicate in English and Psychological Adjustment of Iraqi EFL Learners

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Abstract

The current research aims to examine the willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students. To achieve the main aim, a sample of 100 male and female Iraqis' undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language was chosen randomly from two different public colleges in Baghdad city for the academic year 2023-2024. Two scales have five Likert alternatives of 17 and 16 items developed by McCroskey & Richmond (1990) and Wais (2010), respectively were administered to the research sample to collect the needed data. The results revealed that Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have a willingness to communicate in the English language. Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have a good level of psychological adjustment. There is no statistically significant difference in the willingness to communicate between male and female students. There is no significant difference in psychological adjustment between male and female students, as for students' willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment relationship, a positive correlation is proved. It implies that the more psychological adjustment a student experiences in the learning environment, the more students have a willingness to communicate in the English language. The researcher recommended creating a very encouraging educational environment would motivate language learners to communicate more.

Keywords: Iraqi EFL learners, psychological adjustment, undergraduate students, willingness to communicate

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Introduction

Students in a new academic environment experience stress (Rienties et al., 2012) from the new facility's layout, safety and security, and the numerous staff offices around the campus. Novel assessment methods via in-class discussions, presentations, and active participation may also induce stress among the students (Adler et al., 2008). Individuals in such unfamiliar circumstances must acquire coping mechanisms to manage academic stressors. Personality-based factors and the situation impact how students address stressful environments (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Psychological adjustment also involves community engagement. For example, individuals who demonstrate high community involvement can effortlessly adapt to specific settings (Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016). Bowman et al. (2019) denoted students' sense of belonging and mental well-being as the two fundamental factors influencing psychological adjustment. Interpersonal relationships, which include students' relationships with peers and perceptions of their role at the institution, significantly impact the sense of belonging. Following past works, a sense of belonging certainly predicted resilience toward stress while fostering a sense of identity, well-being, and academic success. Its absence entails low degrees of social and academic engagement, achievement, and withdrawal from the institution. Maintaining personal hobbies and attitudes also implies good balancing ability.

Following Baker and Siryk (1984), learning motivation, clear academic goals, academic task engagement, and efforts to meet academic demands and accommodate the academic environment are the four factors underpinning psychological adjustment. Past research consistently underscored the significance of psychological adjustment in forecasting achievement and persistence (Bailey & Phillips, 2015). Competence in expressing individual ideas and work-related contributions imply one's adjustment to a new environment. Concerning English proficiency, language ability plays a pivotal role in improving psychological adjustment (Sadoughi, 2018). Students with excellent English language skills easily interact with classmates, professors, and university staff and engage in novel situations that require high linguistic abilities. Meanwhile, less-proficient counterparts become frustrated with their lessons and assignments. Students who struggle to communicate with peers are less prone to build social networks and navigate the new academic environment. Given that students must speak in the L2 lecture hall, less-proficient individuals may hesitate to actively participate in the conversation to avoid committing errors once answering a question or engaging in the discussion (Albertson, 2020).

Based on Albertson, students and teachers may encounter challenges in resolving the friction between students' actual behavior and expectations. Aslan and Sahin (2020) also highlighted the intricacies of participation owing to psychological, sociocultural, and cognitive elements. Self-esteem, anxiety, the fear of committing errors, and the willingness to participate encompass psychological factors, while age, culture, classroom climate, and teacher traits necessitate sociocultural factors. Meanwhile, students' inefficiency in developing their ideas and insufficient knowledge of the educational subject indicate cognitive factors that hinder participation in the classroom. Theoretically, students' willingness to communicate (WTC) highlights an affective individual difference in how prepared students are to engage in target language interactions. Empirical works on WTC and its implications on learning reveal that higher WTC provides students with more opportunities to practice and utilize authentic language (MacIntyre et al., 2001). Following its association with target language interaction, WTC is a crucial individual difference that should be examined when operationalized under a theoretical framework that deems interaction key to L2 acquisition. based on the significant role that

psychological adjustment and willingness to communicate play in second language acquisition, the present study aims to investigate gender differences concerning psychological adjustment and willingness to communicate and the relationship between psychological adjustment and willingness to communicate. To achieve this, the researcher seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. To what level students are willing to use the English language for communication?
2. to what extent do students psychologically adjust to their learning environment?
3. How do male and female students differ concerning their willingness to communicate?
4. How do male and female students differ concerning psychological adjustment
5. What is the relationship between students' Willingness to Communicate and psychological adjustment?

Due to the research questions, the researcher developed two hypotheses as follow:

- Ha: Iraqi male and female students show significant differences in willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment.
- Ha: There is a positive correlation between students' Willingness to Communicate and psychological adjustment.

Literature Review

Willingness to Communicate

This concept has been derived from the works of several communication scholars, such as Phillips, McCroskey, Burgoon, Mortensen, Arntson, Lustig, McCroskey, Richmond, and Baer. Phillips (1965) thoroughly examined reticence that is defined as an individual's propensity to be kept in communication. Meanwhile, McCroskey (1982) defined communication apprehension as the fear or anxiety experienced by individuals communicating with others. Burgoon (1976) emphasized the unwillingness to communicate, which denotes an individual's lack of desire or motivation to engage in communication. Additionally, Mortensen, Arntson, and Lustig (1977) investigated tendencies toward verbal behavior, which are the underlying tendencies of individuals to engage in verbal communication. McCroskey & Richmond (1982) explored a personality trait characterized by social inhibition and discomfort in social interactions, known as shyness. Both McCroskey & Baer (1985) adapted and renamed the willingness to communicate, which implies individual's probability in choosing to communicate (or talk) when they are free to do so.

As a significant construct of personal communication, Richmond and Roach (1992) explained that WTC influences individual's life aspects, which include social, educational, and organizational attainments. Encompassing factors of reticence, communication apprehension, unwillingness to communicate, predispositions toward verbal behavior, and shyness, this concept was established following multiple communication studies. Individuals may choose to engage in communication (talking) when they are free. In this vein, willingness to communicate is a significant component of people's character in communication that substantially affects their social, educational, and organizational attainments. McCroskey & Richmond (1987) inspected introversion, anomie and alienation, self-esteem, cultural divergence, communication skill level, and communication apprehension as the six variables that catalyze individual differences in WTC. Following past works on communication and psychology domains, these variables are related to communication behavior attributes.

Historical Background of Willingness to Communicate

The layers outlined below are the interrelated variables affecting the top of the pyramid, which is language use (communication). The first three layers characterize situational factors, while the remaining counterparts represent consistent WTC factors in L2. Communication behavior constitutes layer I, where authentic L2 communication is interconnected to the pyramid's premise layers. The WTC implies "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" in layer II (MacIntyre et al., 1998). As such, the student is sufficiently motivated and confident in terms of WTC following exposure to L2. Layer III, the final layer of the first group, is categorized into the interlocutor and self-esteem based on inter-individual or inner-individual motivations. Layer IV, the first layer of the second group, concerns the speaker's motivation to communicate following interpersonal and intergroup motives and self-confidence.

The layer addresses a broader context, with events rather than situations at the core of this variable. Although the components in Layer V address context, affective and cognitive aspects are associated with students' attitudes and experiences rather than a case. Layer VI, the pyramid's bottom layer, is the base of communication and concerns speakers' personal and social context. With 'personality' as the base of the pyramid, the limitations of communication are proven to be individuals themselves. Personality significantly impacts the other WTC elements. Given that students apply language learning as an authentic communication ability in various backgrounds, WTC is considered a preliminary step to prepare them to interact with real-life individuals. Much research was performed to investigate students' WTC on multiple contexts following the model's introduction (Yashima et al., 2004; Valadi et al., 2015; Peng, 2012; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Elahi et al., 2019; MacIntyre et al., 2001; Peng, 2016; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Adeniyi et al., 2014; Basoz & Erten, 2019; AlAmrani, 2019; Aomr et al., 2020; Khatib & Nourzadah, 2015).

Based on the current work, academic environment proved to be the strongest L2 predictor. Oxford and Shearin (1994) claimed that a foreign language is usually acquired (entirely) in the classroom. As such, students who strive to learn a foreign language cannot practice it in daily life and for practical purposes. The willingness to communicate may serve as a means of improving students' speaking skills and communication ability in class. Under Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, language is the main channel of mediation. Learning occurs during a social event via student-environment interactions. All students solve problems in their own way, as they construct their learning in a meaningful manner (Fahim, 2016). In line with current scholars, many students have transcended target language acquisition and utilization to include authentic communication as the ultimate goal for language learning (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome, 2011). Apart from well-established variables of peer pressure, language proficiency, motivation, confidence, and stress in speaking English, Shvidko et al. (2015) revealed that EFL students' choice of using English outside the classroom is also influenced by sociocultural, linguistic, individual, and affective elements.

Psychological Adjustment

The degree to which students effectively manage new institutional environment's educational demands and characteristics implies psychological adjustment. University students' diversity creates a difficult and energetic environment that exposes them to various situations, responsibilities, choices, challenges, and decisions. These environmental factors require adjustment (Johnson et al., 2010). Every student's adjustment level differs based on his

background and development (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Baker and Siryk (1984) underscored motivation to learn, taking action to meet academic demands, a clear sense of purpose, and general satisfaction with the academic environment as the fundamental components of psychological adjustment. Students find the transition to college, given the need to accommodate unique social and academic environments (Leary & DeRosier, 2012).

Adjustment implies "psychological and social integration". Following Tinto (1993), colleges are learning communities. Hence, "academic involvement matters more than social involvement" for most colleges (p. 131). Tinto (1993) explained that effective psychological integration involves attaining adequate academic performance and initiating positive interactions with various faculty and staff members, which can immensely benefit students. For example, interaction in a classroom or during office hours (visiting a professor) can provide students with additional learning opportunities to obtain higher grades. As the integration process includes the "adoption of the values and norms of the community's defining group", interactions with the faculties and administrative staff allow students to understand academic community values and norms (Tinto,1993, 1975).

Dimensions of Psychological Adjustment

Psychological adjustment is a continuous and dynamic process that students engage in to complete their coursework successfully and achieve harmony between themselves and their educational environment, professors, colleagues, social, cultural, and sports activities, study materials, and academic achievement. The following dimensions of psychological adjustment are presented below (Nagar et al., 2017):

1. Positive attitude towards education: psychologically adjusted students take their courses and the prescribed subjects seriously.
2. Relationship with teachers: psychologically adjusted students respect and value their teachers as role models, follow their instructions, pose questions, and speak to them.
3. Relationship with peers: psychologically adjusted students maintain friendly fellowship and mutual respect with their peers within and outside the college, care for them, and support them in mitigating personal and academic issues.
4. Time organization: psychologically adjusted students who are time conscious divide their time for educational and social or recreational activities. These individuals avoid tardiness.
5. The study method: psychologically adjusted students apply different study methods compatible with their courses, perform summaries and deductions, and emphasize important points during re-entry.
6. Visiting library: psychologically adjusted students often spend their leisure time visiting the library, borrowing books, magazines, and scientific references, and seeking the information required to write research and reports.
7. Excellence: psychologically adjusted students obtain higher scores in multiple tests that reflect on their quarterly assessment records.

Adopted Theory of Psychological Adjustment

Tinto's (1993) student integration model offers a theoretical framework for students' transition to college. The "academic integration" construct entails students' (i) attainment of good

course grades and (ii) interactions with teaching and administrative staff as the two main aspects of psychological adjustment. From a scholarly perspective, students demonstrate pre-entry attributes before enrolling in college, which influence their goals (graduation) and institutional commitment. High commitment implies potentially high persistence (Cabrera et al., 1999). According to Tinto (1975), there are two (psychological and social) systems at the college that students are integrated into through interactions with peers, instructors, and staff as well as through their academic achievement and extracurricular activities (formal approach). Relatives who complete the integration process typically go on to finish college (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Furthermore, the external responsibilities that students have to their family, friends, and, or occupations can have a good (having supportive parents) or negative (having numerous part-time jobs) impact on their aspirations and their devotion to the school.

Previous Studies

Ali et al. (2018) investigated social adjustment and academic adjustment among university students in addition to the relationship between social adjustment and academic adjustment.to achieve the study objectives, 550 university students were chosen randomly as the study sample. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was adapted as a tool to measure social adjustment of participants. The results found a significant number of participants have a moderate degree of social adjustment, according to the data. Male students are more socially adjusted than female students, but their adjustment is equivalent.

Alobidan (2020) examined the relationship between self-efficacy, adjustment, and academic performance among Saudi Arabia students. To achieve research objective, a no-probability sample of 233 Saudi students who study in the United States of America was chosen. Three scales were employed to collect the needed data. The research used quantitative data and qualitative methods for measuring open-ended questions. The results revealed that taken together, the quantitative and qualitative data showed that Saudi graduate students' higher levels of academic and social self-efficacy are associated with better academic performance and social adjustment.

Uwem et al. (2021) investigated the correlation between the individual components of emotional intelligence and the adjustment of students. A sample of 500 university students from two institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, was chosen randomly. Two instruments were used: Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and the psychological Adjustment Scale. The research adopted a correlational research design. The findings showed that emotional intelligence is essential in psychological adjustment for second-year university students in Akwa Ibom State, which means a positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment.

Li & Zhang (2022) scrutinized the adjustment of Chinese students at a UK university, to identify academic challenges faced by direct-entry Chinese students, and to explore effective coping strategies for overcoming these challenges, which include language issues, subject knowledge, course pace, and time management. Three tools were utilized to collect the required data: qualitative research, in-depth interviewing, and semi-structured interviews. The current research is qualitative looking to discover the deeper meaning of targeted variables among the chosen participants. The results revealed that the academic impediments experienced by students include English language matters, content knowledge of the subject, and time management. These challenges impeded their ability to transition to academic life.

Maftoon & Najafi (2015) sought to determine the relationship between Iranian male and female EFL students and their willingness to communicate. Additionally, an attempt was made to examine the relationship between WTC in general and between male and female Iranian English language learners in particular, specifically, the interaction between the two. To that purpose, thirty advanced students, fifteen of them male and fifteen of them female, were chosen at random from an English Language Institute in Asadabad, Hamedan. They were invited to complete the WTC survey, which was created in 2000 by Baker & MacIntyre, Clément, and Conrod. Iranian female EFL learners are more willing to communicate than their male counterparts, according to the results of an independent t-test. Additionally, the results showed that there is no significant difference in Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate in and out of the classroom. Lastly, a Two-Way ANOVA displayed that there is no difference in the desire of Iranian male and female EFL learners to converse inside and outside the classroom.

There are plenty of factors that could affect WTC. According to Karnchanachari (2019), the factors that affect WTC are a sense of duty, enthusiasm, and security or anxiety, mainly when the student is engaged in the subject matter being covered. Tan et al. (2021) also observed that motivation, personality, self-perceived communication, the value the student places on learning English, and the learning situation are other elements that impact WTC. Interlocutors, the context of the discussion, and their opinions of people who speak the language more fluently than they do all affect these factors and might potentially alter how willing they are to communicate. Chang (2018) investigated the variables that affect ESL university students' willingness to communicate (WTC) from the viewpoints of the students and their oral communication instructor. In addition to a narrative interview with the professor, thirteen students participate in the one-on-one interviews. According to the findings, the course materials help ESL university students improve their conversational abilities by offering essential phrases and sample sentences. The primary duty in encouraging student participation in the classroom should fall on ESL instructors. The relationship between lecturer, students, and their interest in the subject matter is crucial.

Kamdideh & Barjesteh (2019) found in their study that teachers have a significant impact on students' willingness or lack thereof to communicate in the target language because they have the authority to improve students' learning experiences consistent with Lee's (2020) research conclusion that examined the correlation between the teacher and WTC. As stated by Ellis (2008), "It is the teacher who is allowed to take part in all exchanges, to initiate them, to decide on the length of exchanges, to close exchanges, and to include and exclude other participants" (p. 216). Thus, however, teacher and students contribute to the classroom environment, according to Fassinger (1995).

Aomr et al. (2020) investigated the correlation between Libyan EFL students' WTC and classroom environmental variables. The descriptive analysis's findings showed that Libyan EFL students' levels in WTC and classroom environment are moderate. Correlational analysis revealed a favorable association between task orientation, student cohesion, and WTC. Only the cohesion and task orientation of the students were shown to be significant predictors of WTC by multiple regression analysis. There was, however, no apparent association or predictive connection between learners' WTC and teachers' support. As a result of not having exercise speaking English outside the classroom, Alam et al. (2022) said that Bangladeshi undergraduate students don't perform a conversation much with their peers because they feel uncomfortable and embarrassed when they communicate with their friends.

Susanti (2021) examined the willingness to communicate of 29 English department students in a speaking class. he also investigated the elements that influence the willingness to communicate of the students. To collect the data to conduct the investigation and draw a conclusion, an observation was made. It was discovered through data collection that students had a strong willingness to communicate. Additionally, a few factors have been discovered to influence students' willingness to communicate, including communicative ability, personality characteristics like introversion, self-esteem, and anxiety, and classroom variables like task type, subject, and interlocutor. The most significant factor influencing learners' willingness to communicate is, among other factors, the topic assigned. In contrast, it is discovered that the interlocutor, which includes their age and gender—has no impact on students' WTC.

Suvongse & Chanyoo (2022) investigated the psychosocial and psycho-cultural factors that influence a person's willingness to communicate in English to others as a second language. A public institution in Thailand recruited 341 students to take part in the study. A focus group interview questionnaire, an observation record, and a mixed-method study design were used. The results showed that communication anxiety, introversion, and instrumental motivation were the psychosocial factors affecting the participants' L2 WTC.

Zohoorian (2022) carried out his research to examine the relationships between empathy, the big five personality traits, and willingness to communicate (WTC). So as to conduct the study, 302 intermediate students from Mashhad, Iran's English language institutes were chosen at random. In a single session, three questionnaires were given out: the Big Five Factor, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, and the Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language. The Spearman correlation method was utilized for data analysis. The results showed that there was a slight correlation between WTC and agreeableness, openness, and extraversion. Also, there was a slight correlation found between empathy and WTC, agreeableness, and extraversion. Additionally, a minor connection was discovered between neuroticism and empathy.

Methodology

Participants

The current research was accomplished during the academic year 2023-2024. A sample of 100 male and female Iraqi university students studying English as a foreign language was selected randomly from two different public colleges in Iraq to collect data. The research sample was divided into two homogenous groups: 50 males and 50 females. The average age of participants is 19 to 22 years old. Since the researcher intended to measure the two variables of the research generally, students' level of English proficiency was not considered.

Research Instruments

To investigate the aim of the research, a descriptive-quantitative approach was adopted. Two 5-point Likert scales ranging from “strongly true of me” to “strongly not true of me” were employed as instruments to collect the required data. A scale of 17 items was applied to measure the willingness to communicate designed by McCroskey & Richmond (1990), which was conceived as a reliable and extensive scale in research studies over the past years, in addition to a scale of 16 items was employed to measure psychological adjustment developed by Wais (2010). These two scales were modified to be more appropriate and understood for the research sample.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS version 26, the researcher scrutinized the data gathered. The study sample's distribution regarding willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment was examined using the normality test, and the questionnaires' internal consistency was evaluated using the reliability statistic. To determine if the sample means for willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment differ from the test value, one-sample t-test was used to show the extent to which students have these two variables. Additionally, to determine whether there is a significant difference regarding willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment between males and females, an independent sample t-test was utilized. Finally, to identify the correlation between students' willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment, the Pearson product-moment correlation was computed.

Tests of Normality

In order to determine which test is most appropriate for processing the data that was obtained, it was essential to look at the distribution of the research sample concerning willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment. The results of the normality test are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Tests of normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Willingness to Communicate	.057	100	.200*	.986	100	.373
psychological Adjustment	.057	100	.200*	.986	100	.373

Table One shows the normal distribution of the study sample.

Reliability Statistics

Using SPSS software version 26, the Cronbach's alpha test was performed to assess the questionnaires' internal consistency of Willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment.

Table 2. *Reliability statistics*

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Willingness to Communicate	.830	17
psychological Adjustment	.809	16

The reliability values of the questions are shown in Table 2, the values determined to be a = 0.830 and a = 0.809, indicating that the inter-correlations between the questionnaire items have an acceptable reliability index (Bland & Altman, 1997)

Results

This section includes the findings of the current research.

1. To measure students' willingness to communicate, a one-sample t-test was utilized.

T-test

This table exposes the level of willingness to communicate among the research sample.

Table 3. *One-sample test*

	Test Value = 51							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Willingness to Communicate	58.6900	10.43178	7.372	99	.000	7.69000	5.6201	9.7599

The results shown in Table 3 reveal that the mean score of willingness to communicate is (M=58.6900, SD= 10.43178), which is larger than the test value = 51, and the calculated (t) = 7.372 is greater than the tabulated (t) (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance. Meanwhile, the p-value is (0.000), which is lower than (0.05), this implies there is a significant difference between the willingness to communicate mean score and test value proving that Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have a good level of willingness to communicate using the English language among them to improve their level of proficiency.

2. to measure the extent to which students psychologically adjust to their learning environment, a one-sample t-test was used

T-test

This table reveals the level to which students adjusted to their learning environment.

Table 4. *One-sample test*

	Test Value = 48							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
psychological Adjustment	53.7900	9.47330	2.945	99	.004	2.79000	.9103	4.6697

The findings in Table 4 show that the mean score of psychological Adjustment is (M=53.7900, SD= 9.47330), which is higher than the test value = 48, and the calculated (t) = 2.945 is higher than the tabulated (t) (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance. In the meantime, the p-value is (0.004), which is lower than (0.05), this indicates that there is a significant difference between psychological adjustment mean score and test value, accordingly, Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have a good level of psychological adjustment. It means students are driven to finish their assignments, succeed in fulfilling their coursework requirements, put in their best psychological efforts, and are content with their learning environment.

3. to examine the difference between male and female students in their willingness to communicate, an independent samples test was run.

Independent Samples Test

This table discloses the differences of willingness to communicate between males and females.

Table 5. *Group statistics*

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Willingness to communicate	males	50	59.7600	10.55319	1.49245
	females	50	57.6200	10.30334	1.45711

Table 6. *Independent samples test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Willingness to communicate	Equal variances assumed	.051	.822	1.026	98	.307	2.14000	2.08580	-1.99921-	6.27921
	Equal variances not assumed			1.026	97.944	.307	2.14000	2.08580	-1.99924-	6.27924

The researcher employed the independent sample t-test to examine whether there is any significant difference between male and female students in their willingness to communicate. The results in Tables (5,6) indicate there is no significant difference in the means of male and female students (M = 59.7600, SD = 10.55319 and M = 57.6200, SD = 10.30334). Thus, the alternative hypothesis is rejected as there is no significant difference in willingness to communicate between males and females, as shown by the p-value of 0.307, which is higher than 0.05, and the calculated (t) value of 1.026, which was lower than the tabulated value of 1.98 at 0.05 the level of significance.

4. to examine the difference between male and female students in their psychological adjustment, an independent samples test was used.

Independent Samples Test

This table reveals the differences of psychological adjustment between males and females.

Table 7. *Group statistics*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
psychological adjustment	Males	50	55.1000	8.52428	1.20551
	Females	50	52.4800	10.25440	1.45019

Table 8. *Independent samples test*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

						tailed)			Lower	Upper
psychological Adjustment	Equal variances assumed	2.130	.148	1.389	98	.168	2.62000	1.885	-1.122-	6.362
	Equal variances not assumed			1.389	94.834	.168	2.62000	1.885	-1.123-	6.363

The researcher used the independent sample t-test to examine any significant differences between male and female students in psychological adjustment. The results indicate there is no difference in the means of male and female students (M = 55.1000, SD = 8.52428 and M = 52.4800, SD = 10.25440), as Tables (7,8) illustrate. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis is rejected because the p-value (p=**.**168) is more significant at 0.05, and the calculated (t) value =1.389 was less than the tabulated value (1.98) at the 0.05 level of significance. These findings disclosed that there is no statistically significant difference in psychological adjustment between male and female students.

5. to examine the relationship between students' willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment, a correlation coefficient test was used.

This table discloses the correlation between willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment.

Table 9. *Correlations*

		Willingness to communicate	psychological adjustment
Willingness to communicate	Pearson Correlation	1	.576**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
psychological adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.576**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

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

The researcher used Pearson's correlation coefficient test to examine the statistical correlation between students' willingness to communicate and their psychological adjustment to answer question 4. The obtained result, as shown in Table 9, shows that students' willingness to communicate in L2 and psychological adjustment had a positive significant correlation (r =.576) with a p-value of less than 0.05 at 0.05, indicating that they are moving in the same direction. The higher the students have psychological adjustment in the learning environment, the more willingness they have to communicate. As a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

Learning English has been recognized as a challenging and complex language for non-native speakers, not only because it necessitates competence in the main four skills and having the

capacity to express ideas, but also because a willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment are essential factors that could curb students' productivity. Accordingly, the current research investigates the willingness to communicate and the psychological adjustment of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students. Five essential questions were raised to achieve the research objectives. The finding of question one which looked for whether Iraqi EFL learners willing to communicate in the English language came to be congruent with the results of studies conducted by Aomr et al. (2020); Ahmadian & Shirvani (2012); Subekti (2019). it exposed that the research sample had a moderate level of willingness to communicate in the English language. As for question two, the results of the following research Ali et al. (2018), Alobidan (2020), and Adeniyi et al. (2014) are compatible with the current research results that revealed the research sample has a good level of psychological adjustment.

When it comes to the difference between male and female students in their willingness to communicate, the result is consistent with the results of studies conducted by Jung (2011), Valadi et al., (2015), and Baker & McIntyre (2000), Susanti (2021), which concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females regarding their willingness to communicate in the English language, therefore, the alternative hypotheses is rejected. Conversely, the results of studies conducted by Altıner (2018), Ahmadian and Shirvani (2012), and Maftoon & Najafi Sarem (2015) show that there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of their willingness to communicate. Considering the difference between male and female students in psychological adjustment, the findings of the study are consistent with the findings of studies carried out by Adeniyi et al. (2014), Kaur & Sharma (2021), and Audichya (2006), which demonstrated that there is no significant difference between males and females in academic adjustment, consequently, the alternative hypotheses were rejected. However, it is inconsistent with the findings of studies conducted by Ali et al. (2018), Enochs & Roland (2006), Adler et al. (2008), Lalhriatpuii (2023), and Abdullah et al. (2009) that found a significant difference in the level of psychological adjustment in terms of gender. Concerning the relationship between the willingness to communicate and the psychological adjustment of the research sample, the outcomes of Ghonsooly et al. (2012); Peng and Woodrow (2010); Yashima et al., (2004); Riasati, 2012; Zarrinabadi and Abdi (2011) are congruent with the results of the current study. A significant positive correlation was found between the willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment, which came to be compatible with the alternative hypotheses. The more academic adjustment students experience, the higher their willingness to communicate will be, and vice versa. On the other hand, it contradicts the findings of studies conducted by Maftoon & Najafi Sarem (2015), which found a negative correlation between the two variables. It might be argued that offering a more encouraging learning atmosphere in the classroom will encourage language learners to speak more in English classes.

Conclusion

The research undertook to investigate the willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment of the study sample, as well as whether there is a significant difference between male and female students in terms of willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment. Furthermore, the research aimed to examine the correlation between willingness to communicate and psychological adjustment. The findings of the research uncovered that Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have willingness to communicate using the English language. Iraqi EFL undergraduate students have a good level of psychological adjustment. There is no significant

difference in the willingness to communicate between male and female students. There is no significant difference in psychological adjustment between male and female students. Finally, students' willingness to communicate and academic adjustment have positive significant correlations. It implies that the more psychological adjustment a student experiences in the learning environment, the more students have willingness to communicate in the English language. To conclude, the researcher recommended creating a very encouraging educational environment would motivate language learners to communicate more.

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Blended Learning in the Saudi EFL Classroom: Insights from Teachers on Pedagogical Impact

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Abstract

In an era where technology seamlessly blends with teaching methodologies, this study examines EFL teachers' perceptions in Saudi Arabia regarding the impact of blended learning methodologies on student engagement compared to traditional teaching approaches. This paper aims to explore the challenges these teachers encounter in implementing blended learning and its perceived effects on learning outcomes. Through a qualitative research design, the study engaged 42 EFL teachers, selected randomly to encapsulate a wide array of genders, academic backgrounds, teaching experiences, and levels of technological proficiency. A bespoke, researcher-developed questionnaire with open-ended questions was strategically employed to extract in-depth insights into the teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding blended learning within the Saudi educational context. Thematic analysis was utilized to uncover patterns and themes within the responses. The findings reveal that while blended learning methodologies are recognized for their potential to moderately enhance student engagement through increased participation, attentiveness, and enthusiasm for learning, challenges significantly temper their effectiveness. These include technological barriers, disparities in digital literacy, and the complexities of integrating blended learning into existing pedagogical frameworks. Despite these obstacles, the study identifies a cautious optimism among EFL teachers about the potential of blended learning to enrich educational outcomes, provided that the aforementioned challenges are systematically addressed. This research is significant as it contributes critical insights into the evolving role of blended learning in EFL education, highlighting the need for strategic implementation and support mechanisms to fully leverage its benefits in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in Saudi Arabia. Based on these findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations were provided.

Keywords: Blended learning, EFL teachers, pedagogical impact, Saudi EFL classroom, technology integration

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Introduction

In recent years, the worldwide educational environment has experienced a substantial shift, predominantly driven by the unparalleled difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic (Al-khresheh, 2023; Mudjijanti & Srimulyani, 2023). These difficulties have significantly impacted English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Saudi Arabia (Al-khresheh, 2022a). Amidst the global health crisis, blended learning (BL) methodologies were expeditiously and extensively implemented, integrating conventional in-person instruction with digital and online modalities (Ali et al., 2023). Despite its inception as a reaction to a worldwide emergency, this shift has created fresh opportunities for pedagogical advancement and progress within EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia.

The introduction of BL during the pandemic was a challenge for teachers in Saudi Arabia. While it offers an opportunity to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes through a more interactive and resource-rich educational environment, it also disrupts the established dynamics of the Saudi educational system (Abbad, 2021; Alam et al., 2022; Alhusban, 2022; Al-khresheh, 2022b). The pandemic has underscored the importance of integrating technology into EFL instruction, raising critical questions about the ability of teachers and students to adapt to this new learning approach, the effectiveness of these integrated methodologies in improving English language proficiency, and the overall impact on academic achievement.

Due to the increasing reliance on digital literacy and the expanding significance of English in global communication, implementing BL strategies in Saudi EFL classrooms is a national priority, not just educational. This study is significant as it provides critical insights into the evolving role of BL in EFL education in Saudi Arabia. It highlights the potential of BL methodologies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes while identifying the challenges that need to be addressed for successful implementation. Understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences offers valuable information for teachers, students, and stakeholders. The main objectives of the research are to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of the impact of BL methodologies on student engagement, identify the challenges EFL teachers face in implementing these methodologies, and assess the perceived impact of BL on learning outcomes compared to traditional teaching methods. To achieve these research objectives, the following research questions were put under lens:

1. How do EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive the impact of BL methodologies on student engagement compared to traditional teaching methods?
2. What challenges do EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia encounter in implementing BL methodologies, and how do they perceive its impact on learning outcomes?

Literature Review

Definition and Types of Blended Learning

BL, together with the more or less synonymous but less used term hybrid learning (Hwang, 2018), has been used in educational discussions to label the combination of many types of educational constructs. Twenty years ago, it could denote any mixture of different educational philosophies (e.g. behaviourism and constructivism) in teaching regardless of any use of technology, or it could be applied to a mixture of any instructional technology (including film and DVD, not necessarily involving computers) with face-to-face instructor-led teaching (Hrastinski, 2019). Indeed, the coverage was so comprehensive that it was said that "blended learning can be any kind of learning" (Laster, 2004, p. 154).

Today, the term BL has largely settled down to mean learning that includes some online or IT-based element, usually out of class, in addition to traditional face-to-face learning with a teacher in a classroom (Smith & Hill, 2018). It may be regarded as combining virtual and physical learning conditions (Yu, 2015) or integrating distance and traditional learning (Hrastinski, 2019). It embraces both synchronous and asynchronous online activity (Moskal et al., 2013); it may occur when class members and teacher are all present and communicating at the same time, or not: it is often understood as engaging students in their learning more than traditional learning and so qualifying for the term 'active BL' (Armellini et al., 2021).

Allen et al. (2007) further specify the number of instructions that qualify as blended. They regard the term blended as applying where there is between 30-80% of an online component. Below that, it is 'web-facilitated'; above that, it is 'online'. However, that terminology is not widely adopted. In the present study, the teachers are responding in part based on their experiences during the height of the COVID crisis, when one might say that teaching was almost totally online, so not in Allen et al.'s sense. However, their students' online activity has fallen back since, and we regard their teaching as blended today, in a broad sense.

We may note that BL is typically referred to rather than blended teaching. However, a teacher usually creates or selects whatever materials and activities use technology. When blended teaching is referred to, the term is often used interchangeably with BL (Wang, 2023). It has also been pointed out that the role of the teacher and learner in deciding what blended activity is used may also be decided more at an institutional or program level rather than at the level of a specific course or activity where the teacher and learner are central (Armellini et al., 2021), however, it is the latter that we are mainly considering in this paper.

Even within the above definition, BL still embraces teaching and learning regimes of a remarkably varied type. For instance, the teacher who, alongside traditional classroom teaching, has students use augmented reality technology in the classroom (Mundy et al., 2019) engages BL as much as one who has students at home access a discussion board with other students about the class material (QAA, 2020). Nevertheless, those are very different engagements, the former more concept-related and the latter more collaboration-focused.

Given the broad scope of the term BL, it is difficult to generalise from existing studies to any new situation. The nature of the BL and the context of any application of BL readily create unique combinations (Smith & Hill, 2018).

The Impact of Blended Learning

Although a considerable amount of research has been devoted to BL, it is hard to find studies close to the present one, which therefore fills a research gap. In particular, most studies in the literature use measures that are either based on learner perceptions (e.g. in Saudi Arabia, Alhusban, 2022; more generally, Kintu et al., 2017) or on objective improvement in student scores on tests (Tong et al., 2022). The teacher's perspective is overlooked. Furthermore, they primarily target teaching subjects other than EFL and in countries distant from Saudi Arabia (Castro, 2019). Thus, a study of EFL teachers' perceptions of BL at the tertiary level in Saudi Arabia is exceptional and timely.

In some areas of EFL pedagogy, such as the teaching of grammar or reading, the teacher perspective, often referred to as teacher beliefs, has become well-established as worthy of study (Mo, 2020). The teacher's understanding of pedagogy often guides their actual practices, though there may be exciting mismatches (van Vijfeijken et al., 2023). The few studies in this area

targeting EFL teachers and technology, however, usually target what the teachers think they do or should do concerning it rather than, as in the present study, what they think are the benefits and difficulties associated with it (e.g. Ding et al., 2019).

Theorists commonly expect the online element in BL to have beneficial effects because it can easily be aligned with several teaching and learning theories and ideas that are widely regarded positively. For instance, it is usually more learner-centred than the classroom, requiring students to be more self-reliant and manage their learning – choices, amount and timing (Adam et al., 2023). The learner focus also enables learning to be refined to suit specific learner preferences, usually by the learners themselves (Zhang et al., 2020). It is also often social in that peer interaction and cooperation are involved (Machumu & Zhu, 2017). At the very least, it introduces a more extended and varied exposure to relevant materials and activities, mainly because they are usually stored and can be revisited innumerable times (Jost et al., 2021). However, the expectations of theorists are not always fulfilled in reality.

Blended Learning and Student Engagement

Recent studies have underscored the significant impact of BL on EFL teaching, particularly in enhancing grammatical knowledge, oral production, and student engagement. Ali et al. (2023) conducted an experimental study comparing online and BL among first-year medical students, revealing that BL significantly outperformed online learning in improving grammatical skills. Similarly, Al-Qudimi and Hameed (2024) investigated Yemeni EFL students' perceptions of BL, finding it effective in boosting learning outcomes and positively influencing attitudes toward English learning. This study recommended integrating BL into curricula to enhance engagement and motivation. Furthermore, Ali et al. (2023) examined the impact of BL on first-year Arab university students' oral production, demonstrating notable improvements. However, the study highlighted challenges such as limited technological infrastructure and uneven digital literacy, which need addressing for effective BL implementation. These recent findings collectively highlight the efficacy of BL in EFL education and the importance of overcoming technological and pedagogical barriers to fully leverage its benefits.

In a major meta-analysis of many studies in many countries, Cao (2023) found that student attitudes in UAE were the most favourable to BL of all countries included. However, those others were also positive (China, USA, etc.). That was, however, based on a single UAE study of students' attitudes toward a higher education course for teaching Arabic (Al-Qatawneh et al., 2020); furthermore, it did not access teacher beliefs. Another review study (Alammary, 2019) also recorded some beneficial effects of BL on student engagement, but this was based on measuring behavioural features such as time spent by students on relevant web pages; again, the teacher perspective was absent. Öncü and Bichelmeyer (2021), although again not tapping teacher beliefs, focused on BL-related causes of US student engagement. They found that the collaborative learner-centred work it entailed did improve engagement, although the overall level of engagement was still poor.

Pappa (2014) explored the relationship between teacher beliefs about student engagement and self-efficacy in Greek comprehensive schools. Although the study did not specifically compare BL with traditional methods, its relevance lies in highlighting that many teachers, especially during and after the COVID era, feel inadequately prepared to implement BL and lack confidence in their abilities (Zhao & Song, 2021; Zee & Koomen, 2016). In contrast, Pardede (2020) found that EFL secondary school teachers in Jakarta believe BL significantly enhances student interest and

motivation. Similarly, Altay and Altay (2019) noted that teachers and students in various global EFL contexts view engagement as a primary benefit of the online component of BL. However, the perspectives of Saudi teachers on the effectiveness of BL remain largely unexplored. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that increased engagement does not necessarily equate to improved performance, which should be assessed separately (Koomen, 2016).

Blended Learning and Student Outcomes

As Zhang and Zhu (2017) point out, BL is still in its 'beginning period' as a method, so it is not surprising that most articles study its outcome effectiveness. However, that is not usually studied through the teacher's beliefs. The aim is to identify the 'best of blends' (Smith & Hill, 2018), although the idea that there exists one type of BL that will be universally successful in all contexts is probably mistaken.

Cao (2023) described above, again found that achievement in UAE (measured by a test) favoured the BL group more than in other countries included (USA et al., etc.). Alsalhi et al. (2021) further found an achievement benefit for BL with math undergrads in UAE (but failed to describe the nature of the BL). Ali et al. (2022), in a Saudi university context, report superior learning from an online task than a classroom task. Yu et al. (2023) provide the most recent picture in a comprehensive meta-study. They report 'an upper-medium effect on students' learning performance', which is further affected by various variables such as the precise teaching method, the proportion of learning done online, the specific type of online interaction, and the region (implying a possible cultural factor).

Specifically, from the teacher's view, Rachman et al. (2021) report high agreement among Indonesian EFL schoolteachers that language skills were improved by BL (to a greater extent than student motivation). Once again, however, the teacher view is under-represented in research and, in Saudi Arabia, is missing.

Blended Learning Difficulties

Synthesising evidence from Alam et al. (2022), Altay and Altay (2019), Rasheed et al. (2020), and others, several potential difficulties have been identified, especially with the online or computer-based part of BL, and again usually researched from the student viewpoint. They are essentially prerequisites which, if not met, cause problems. Students have to possess or be lent the necessary hardware and software. This is often overlooked in studies in affluent Western settings but authentic in rural Bangladesh (Hasan et al., 2021). Second, the internet connection has to be robust (Rianto, 2020). Next, the materials and activities must be appropriately integrated with classroom instruction and constantly updated. Irrelevant activities, however enjoyable, are problematic (Ginns & Ellis, 2007). They cannot just be made or selected once and then forgotten. This may require additional teacher training and support (Kundu et al., 2021). Furthermore, they must be engaging (Kemp, 2020), and the teacher must decide how much autonomy the students should have in allowing them to use them. Indeed, the willingness of students to engage with the home/online element is required if BL is to succeed (Moskal et al., 2013). Last but not least, the assessment of blended instruction is problematic if the assessment is exams done online (e.g. cheating is hard to eliminate) (Mellar et al., 2018).

Some studies relevant to the present context also highlight teachers' difficulties with BL, although they do not cover all aspects comprehensively. For instance, Rachman et al. (2021) found high agreement among Indonesian EFL teachers on the challenges of preparing materials and using

media. However, their questions did not delve deeply into other issues. Despite BL's motivational and language improvement benefits, some studies report no effect and identify several potential problems. Additionally, teachers' perspectives may differ from student opinions or objective test results, making it difficult to predict what the current study on Saudi teachers might reveal.

Despite extensive research on BL, a significant gap remains concerning EFL teachers' perspectives, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. Existing studies predominantly focus on learner perceptions or objective improvements in student performance (e.g., Alhusban, 2022; Kintu et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2022), often neglecting the critical insights of educators. Moreover, these studies generally address non-EFL subjects and are conducted in contexts distinct from Saudi Arabia (e.g., Castro, 2019). This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the perceptions of Saudi EFL teachers regarding BL and investigating its benefits and challenges in this unique educational and cultural environment. Understanding these perspectives is essential, as teachers' beliefs and experiences can significantly influence the successful integration and effectiveness of BL methodologies. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature by providing insights into how BL can be optimized to enhance English language learning outcomes in Saudi Arabia, considering the specific challenges and opportunities within this context.

Method

This study employs a descriptive and qualitative approach, utilizing a short open-response questionnaire survey outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (2023). The choice of this method is driven by the intention to capture the authentic and unfiltered responses of participants, allowing them to express their views and experiences freely. This approach contrasts with the restrictive nature of closed response items typical in quantitative surveys, as discussed by Cohen et al. (2017), ensuring a more comprehensive and genuine collection of data reflective of participants' proper perspectives.

Participants

In this study, 42 EFL teachers from Saudi Arabia were selected randomly to explore the pedagogical impact of BL. The participants varied in gender, academic qualifications, teaching experience, and technological proficiency. This variety was crucial for understanding the diverse effects of BL in various educational settings and experience levels within the Saudi EFL context. Table One presents the detailed characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. *Profile of Participants*

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	16	38.1%
	Female	26	61.9%
Qualifications	Bachelor's	31	73.8%
	Master's	5	11.9%
	Ph.D.	6	14.3%
Teaching experience	1-10	21	50%
	11-20	16	38.1%
	More than 20	5	11.9%
Technology Proficiency	Basic	7	16.7%
	Intermediate	19	45.2%
	Advanced	16	38.1%
Total		42	100%

The table details the demographic and professional composition of the study's participants. It reveals that a significant majority (61.9%) are female, and the highest proportion (73.8%) hold Bachelor's degrees. The teaching experience varies, with half of the participants having between 1 and 10 years of experience. Regarding technological adeptness, participants are almost evenly split across primary (16.7%), intermediate (45.2%), and advanced (38.1%) levels. This comprehensive demographic snapshot is essential for contextualizing the research findings, particularly given the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the teachers involved. The study focuses on the Saudi EFL context during the second term of the 2023-2024 academic year

Research Instruments

The instrument chosen for this study, a researcher-developed questionnaire, was specifically tailored to provide deep insights into the experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers regarding BL in the Saudi Arabian context. Using open-ended questions was deliberate, per the qualitative research approach recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2023). This format allows for more nuanced and detailed responses, enabling participants to express their views without the constraints of predefined answer choices, as often found in quantitative surveys (Cohen et al., 2017).

The questionnaire begins with demographic questions, gathering essential background information on the respondents. This data can provide context for their experiences and viewpoints, adding depth to the analysis.

The core of the questionnaire consists of three open-ended questions, each aligned with a specific research question. These questions probe teachers' experiences with BL's impact on learning outcomes and engagement, challenges faced during implementation, and its comparative effectiveness to traditional methods. This direct relation to the research questions ensures that the data collected is relevant to the study's objectives.

To ensure content validity, expert judgment was employed. The initial set of questions was presented to knowledgeable colleagues in the field. Their feedback led to revisions, rewording, and a reduction in the number of questions to the current three, focusing on the most critical aspects of BL in the Saudi EFL context. This process of refinement based on expert input ensures that the questions are relevant, clear, and comprehensive in covering the study's scope.

Data Collection

Before distributing the survey, an introductory message was prepared and attached to the email containing the survey link. This message concisely outlined the study's objectives and emphasized its significance, aiming to engage participants and highlight the value of their contributions. The introduction provided a context for the questionnaire, explaining how participants' responses would contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This approach was intended to foster participant engagement and motivate them to provide thoughtful and comprehensive responses.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a method well-suited for qualitative research, was employed to analyze the data. This involved a detailed and systematic review of the questionnaire responses, identifying recurring patterns or themes relevant to the study's research questions. Each theme was carefully defined and named, comprehensively understanding the participants' views on BL in the Saudi

EFL context. The thematic analysis method ensured the findings were grounded in the data, offering valuable insights into the teachers' experiences and perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were thoroughly followed in this work. The study's primary objectives were clearly outlined at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and that opting in would be seen as granting informed consent. This method ensured that participants were fully aware of their participation and the study's objective. All replies were treated confidentially to protect participant privacy and follow ethical research standards, and no personal identifiers were retained.

Findings

The teachers had been given three open-response questions to answer, and their responses were richly varied and informative, though not always strictly answering the question asked. The thematic qualitative analysis showed the following findings for the three research questions.

Teacher Beliefs about Positive Engagement and Attitude

There was an endorsement of what many sources in the literature would see as the typical positive impact of BL on student attitude: "Of course, there is no doubt that BL has an amazing impact on students; it makes students excited to learn and their interactions are different, they enjoy learning more than before" (T16). Therefore, this shows that our teachers' perceptions are consistent with views in other studies based on student opinion (Al-Qatawneh et al., 2020) and that of teachers (Pardede, 2020).

T30 voiced the link between engagement and performance, which again is often stated in the BL literature: "In my experience, BL has enhanced students' learning because it provides more flexibility for the learning process, and as a result, students are more engaged in the teaching-learning process which positively affects their overall achievements." This echoes merits cited, for example, in Adam et al. (2023).

Another teacher, T25, however, was more cautious, suggesting that not all students found it engaging: "In my personal opinion, blended learning facilitates the educational process in many ways, but blended learning requires a specific type of student, and I think the problems of interest of the student and his family and their ignorance of the quality of education are the reason that hinders me." Indeed, when considering the difficulties below, we will see that engagement is often stated as a negative factor or as a prerequisite for BL rather than an effect of it.

Teacher Beliefs about Positive Performance and Achievement

Many teachers regarded BL as more effective than traditional teaching alone, thus supporting the general literature. For example, T12 said: "Blended education is more effective, easier to acquire language and knowledge, and keeps pace with the times". T31 also said: "It helps the student to develop himself, his abilities, and his educational skills". Our teachers, therefore, reflect the views of those in Rachman et al. (2021).

Many also stated or implied reasons for this benefit, such as those mentioned in the literature review above. T11 referred to the additional practice afforded: "I think it has a positive impact by helping students to use language and encourage them to practice it." He also indicated various available resources: "It helps teachers use more effective ways to enhance their classes by

using useful instructional media and tools." That is consistent with Jost et al. (2021) and shows teacher recognition of the benefit of more diverse practice.

Teachers also mentioned how BL caters to the students' preferences: T8 said, "Blended learning has proven effective in enhancing student learning outcomes due to its inherent flexibility. Students can engage with the material in a way that suits their needs and preferences." Again, T2 noted: "With the help of technology, it customises resources and tailors the learning experience to fit every student's need." This chimes with the stance of Zhang et al. (2020) reviewed earlier.

Once again, however, the view was stated that Saudi learners were not necessarily suited to BL. We have not found this point widely made explicitly in the literature, which, as we have pointed out, predominantly taps students' views rather than teachers'.

T29, for example, said, "Blended learning outweighs other learning methods by making instruction delivery effective and result-oriented right from the start, but this type of learning is not fully suited for Saudi EFL learners." He elaborated on that by saying he thought it did help in certain areas: "Traditional teaching methods are more effective than the blended learning methods in Saudi context because having benefits of technology it is also responsible for student poor performance and lack of interest in the learning process. Nevertheless, in the case of English language acquisition and comprehension, the blended method is more effective for the Saudi EFL learners because it helps in skill courses like listening, speaking and reading."

T18, by contrast, made the point that the benefit of BL depended on the student's self-study ability: "If the student is good at self-study, it is a 50% effective method. Otherwise, a waste of time." These teachers then suggest that the whole issue of the learning benefit of BL is far more nuanced and conditioned than much of the literature suggests. Their responses in the next section richly illustrate the wide range of factors that make it complex to derive benefits from BL.

Teacher Beliefs about BL Difficulties

Along with the above, many difficulties were mentioned, affecting engagement, achievement, or both. A few teachers mentioned difficulties with the classroom side of BL, e.g. large classes and rooms of insufficient size (T23, T33). However, most of the points about challenges related to the online component of BL.

A few teachers mentioned how BL made things easier for them: T28 "blended learning makes the teaching easier than traditional teaching methods," T23 "BL facilitates the learning process and allows the learner to search for information by self". However, most of the focus was on the difficulties or challenges of the online side of BL, which fell into the following categories.

The most mentioned challenges were engagement or attention. The citation of these as challenges is disturbing since BL is often said to be beneficial because it inherently generates more engagement than traditional classes. However, these teachers often saw engagement instead as a prerequisite that was not met. This conflicts with much of the literature reviewed, which views BL as a driver of improved engagement.

T18, for example, said, "Keeping students focused and active is an impossible challenge", albeit it is unclear if he was referring to the classroom or online part of BL or both. Probably referring to the online part, T30 said: "…. it is quite difficult to ensure the participation and attendance of students in blended learning." T8 refers to the online aspect of BL, saying: "In certain cases, it was observed that some students may not have allocated sufficient attention to online classes, as they were primarily responsible for comprehending the content independently. Consequently, they may have chosen to disregard these sessions."

T2 also said in detail: “A challenge of blended learning is to keep your learners engaged and motivated throughout the course. This can be difficult, especially when learners have different preferences, backgrounds, and readiness levels for online learning. You must design your blended learning course to appeal to different learning styles, provide feedback and support, and create community and collaboration. You must also monitor your learners’ progress and participation and intervene when necessary to address any issues.” This outlines how the much-lauded flexibility of BL to meet individual needs does not come automatically but has to be worked into the provision by the teacher.

T16 pointed to the teacher's absence in the online part of BL as the issue: “…. some of them have no one by their side through the lesson, then they do not focus on their lessons.” T30 suggested this was especially true of less able students: “…. weak students sometimes feel distracted in the online part of blended teaching.” Alhusban (2022) also highlights the value of teacher presence in online working in a Saudi context.

T25 cited a broader issue of lack of motivation to learn: “One of the problems that I have is that there are only four or five students who care about the quality of education and respond to it in preparation.” However, this teacher was possibly not implementing BL in the usual way where the online material is looked at home after the relevant lesson. The word *preparation* suggests that he was attempting a ‘flipped’ method, where students at home should do the essential work for a lesson first, rather than by teacher presentation. Class time is supposed to be spent on more fruitful discussions and practice of what has already been studied (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). That indeed does require extra motivation from students, which might be hard to obtain in the Saudi context. Perhaps it is better to have the more traditional sequence of classroom presentation first, then online practice at home after that, which is preferable.

The next most common difficulty was internet connection problems. T5 said: “Perhaps the biggest obstacle and problem with blended learning is the interruption of the Internet and the distraction of some students”. T11 also said: “I think that internet connection problems are the main problem”. This, of course, echoes Rianto (2020) in our review earlier.

The other aspect of the technology that could cause difficulty was the availability of devices for the computer-based part of BL. T16 said: “The biggest problem that we may have been the internet connection, and some of the students have no personal devices to use for learning….”. On this matter, T27 added: “Students must be updated in technology so that they can learn properly. - For poor families, the cost will be high!” This is precisely the point made by Hasan et al. (2021) in Bangla Desh.

Related to that theme, somewhat surprisingly, it was suggested by some that students’ computer skills were not adequate. T29 said, “The first challenge is the learner’s unfamiliarity and inadequate knowledge of technology.” T22 also said: “One of the obstacles is the low level of technology use from the students' side.” Similarly, T30 said: “There are a few obstacles or challenges I faced in implementing blended learning. Firstly, students' lack of the proper use of technological resources in EFL learning can limit their engagement….” One would have expected students, as a young group of digital natives aged around 20, not to be facing problems with the use of the technology, which in the context of this study was mainly the Blackboard, not any more specialised programs. Possibly, it refers to some complexities of the Blackboard software itself, though no teacher named that an issue for the students or themselves.

Just a few teachers mentioned other challenges. The student’s level of understanding was cited as an issue, presumably because it was below the threshold assumed by the online materials

(as also found by Alhusban, 2022). T13 said, “The ability of the students, they cannot understand everything”. T19 also said: “The students had a hard time understanding the lesson online.” These remarks appear to refer to understanding not of the technology but the English used or the lesson content. T21 also mentioned “thinking skills” as a problem. This, therefore, shows the teachers thinking of student knowledge as a prerequisite for BL, not just a product, echoing the view above of engagement as a prerequisite rather than a product of BL.

Finally, just one teacher (T29) mentioned a genuine issue that significantly damages student achievement: “…Secondly, the misuse of technology (cheating) that most of the learners do for getting good grades without understanding the concepts”. This refers to online assessments where students' access to other websites or resources when answering is uncontrolled (compare Mellar et al., 2018, in the literature review above). In the study context, assessment has ceased mainly since the pandemic and has moved back to actual exam rooms on campus.

Discussion

Discussion of Research Question One

The study’s findings suggest that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia recognize a moderately positive impact of BL methodologies on student engagement compared to traditional teaching methods. This observation is characterized by a moderate increase in certain aspects of student engagement, as reported by the teachers. Specifically, teachers noted a noticeable, though not overwhelming, rise in active participation in class activities. Students showed increased, albeit varying, levels of involvement in discussions and collaborative tasks. There was also a modest improvement in attentiveness, with students displaying somewhat enhanced focus and interest, particularly in digital content. Teachers additionally reported a slight increase in student enthusiasm for learning, attributed to the BL’s diverse and interactive nature. This moderate enthusiasm was seen in students’ class participation and willingness to engage with new concepts and technology-based assignments. The integration of digital tools with traditional teaching methods has been received positively by students to some extent, contributing to a learning experience that is engaging but within a moderate spectrum.

The observed enhancements in student engagement with BL methodologies, as reported by EFL teachers, can be ascribed to some factors. The amalgamation of digital tools with established teaching practices primarily introduces an innovative learning paradigm that more effectively garners student attention than traditional methods. Nevertheless, the degree of this enhanced engagement is somewhat contingent upon the student’s proficiency and ease with digital technologies, along with the strategic implementation of these tools within the curriculum. Moreover, this increase is relatively modest, while there is a discernible uptick in student participation in interactive discussions and group activities. This observation implies a dichotomy in student preferences, with some students resonating more with the BL approach while others continue to favour traditional pedagogical styles. Besides, the slight elevation in attentiveness and enthusiasm towards learning may mirror students’ diverse spectrum of digital literacy skills and potential inequities in technology accessibility outside the classroom. These factors could ostensibly influence student engagement levels, particularly during the digital segments of BL. Furthermore, the efficacy of integrating digital and conventional instructional methods is pivotal in shaping student engagement levels Al-Qudimi and Hameed (2024). An imbalanced integration may lead to only a nominal enhancement in engagement rather than the profound impact anticipated from a more seamlessly executed BL strategy.

The findings of this question, revealing modest enhancements in student engagement through the use of BL methodologies within Saudi EFL classrooms, present a fascinating point of comparison to existing literature. Al-khresheh (2023) noted considerable engagement in virtual classrooms among Jordanian EFL students during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a more substantial impact of digital integration under certain conditions or in different settings. On the other hand, Hrastinski (2019) focused on exploring the diverse interpretations and applications of BL, which may provide context to the moderate impacts observed in our research. In addition, Cao (2023) performed a meta-analysis that identified a spectrum of BL effects internationally, potentially clarifying the contrast with the more marked improvements reported elsewhere. Armellini et al. (2021) found significant positive responses from students to BL in higher education, juxtaposing the less pronounced progress seen in our findings. The variation in findings might reflect the distinct educational methods, cultural factors, and digital literacy levels among students in Saudi Arabia, underscoring the non-uniform nature of BL's effectiveness across different educational and cultural landscapes.

Discussion of Research Question 2

The study identified multiple challenges EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia face in implementing BL methodologies. A predominant obstacle pertains to technological issues, encompassing inconsistent internet connectivity, a shortage of adequate digital resources for students, and a disparity in digital literacy levels among teachers and learners. These technological impediments often obstruct the seamless integration of BL in the educational process (Alam et al., 2022; Altay & Altay, 2019). Equally significant is the challenge of student engagement, particularly in the online segments of BL. Teachers observed diverse student adaptability to the BL environment, noting that while some students thrived, others struggled with self-motivation and focus outside the traditional classroom. This variance in engagement presents a hurdle in achieving uniform and effective learning outcomes (Yu et al., 2023). Moreover, the preparation involved in BL, including developing and organizing digital content aligned with classroom activities, was considerably more demanding than conventional teaching methods, often placing a strain on teachers. As for the impact on learning outcomes, teachers reported mixed perceptions. Some noted observable enhancements in student performance and more profound comprehension of material through BL, while others believed that the operational challenges might impede these potential advantages. This dichotomy suggests that the efficacy of BL in enriching learning outcomes in the Saudi Arabian EFL context is intricately linked to addressing these multifaceted challenges.

The implementation challenges of BL methodologies, as encountered by EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, indicate systemic issues extending beyond the immediate educational context. Technological barriers, characterized by erratic internet connectivity and limited student access to digital tools, mirror broader infrastructural deficiencies prevalent in educational systems globally, not solely within the Saudi Arabian framework (Rasheed et al., 2020). Complicating these issues are the variable levels of digital literacy among educators and learners, creating disparities in the efficacy of BL engagement. A significant concern is student engagement in online BL components, where the lack of a traditional classroom setting – typically a bastion of structure and direct teacher interaction – necessitates a shift towards more self-directed learning approaches. Such a paradigm shift demands considerable self-motivation and discipline, qualities that may vary widely among students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the augmented preparation time inherent in BL

underscores the complexity of curating enriching learning experiences that synergize digital and traditional pedagogical methods. Developing engaging, educationally robust digital content is labour-intensive and requires a specialized skill set that may fall outside the purview of conventional teacher training. Consequently, the mixed perceptions of BL's impact on learning outcomes can be traced back to these diverse challenges. Although BL can enrich the learning process through interactive and tailored experiences, its success is inextricably linked to overcoming these technological, motivational, and resource-oriented obstacles (Ali et al., 2023).

The findings of this question, highlighting the complexities encountered in implementing BL methodologies in Saudi Arabian EFL classrooms, present a notable contrast to Al-khresheh's (2023) research, which observed heightened engagement within Jordanian virtual classrooms. This divergence underlines contextual factors' significant role in determining BL's efficacy. Furthermore, the study by Alsalhi et al. (2021) identifying the positive influence of BL on mathematics achievement starkly contrasts the variegated outcomes observed in our research, pointing to the influence of subject matter and educational levels on BL's effectiveness. Alhusban's (2022) insights into pioneering BL practices in Saudi Arabia offer intriguing avenues for overcoming the challenges highlighted in our study. These comparative analyses accentuate that the effectiveness of BL is intricately nuanced, being profoundly influenced by the distinct educational milieu and the availability of resources.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings garnered from this study into adopting BL methodologies by EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia impart significant theoretical contributions to educational technology and language pedagogy. Initially, the research delineates the intricate process of assimilating digital tools into established pedagogical practices, thereby underscoring the imperative for theoretical frameworks that encapsulate BL's technological and instructional dimensions. This revelation necessitates a recalibration of existing theoretical models to more accurately reflect the intricacies associated with digital literacy among educators and students, infrastructural constraints, and the cultural determinants impacting the success of BL initiatives. Furthermore, the observed fluctuations in student engagement and the disparities in educational outcomes underscore the urgency for BL theories to adopt a more nuanced and learner-centred stance, acknowledging the heterogeneity of student populations and their distinct learning environments. Moreover, the challenges encountered and the ambivalent views on the efficacy of BL underscore deficiencies within prevailing theoretical constructs, particularly concerning the systemic and infrastructural prerequisites for BL's implementation. Consequently, this research advocates for broadening theoretical vistas to enhance comprehension and facilitate the efficacious deployment of BL across varied educational landscapes, emphasizing areas grappling with technological and structural impediments.

Practical Implications

The findings also present practical implications for various stakeholders in the educational domain. For university authorities, teacher feedback underscores the necessity of robust internet connectivity on campus. Moreover, provisions for students lacking suitable devices or software for BL, such as university-loaned equipment, become imperative. While ensuring internet access at off-campus locations remains challenging, universities can enhance student preparedness by

providing foundational computer skills training, like mastery of platforms such as Blackboard, potentially through mandatory courses. Teachers, on their part, are encouraged to address engagement challenges in BL. This involves devising strategies to make online activities more relevant and captivating, possibly by initially mandating the use of online materials. Monitoring the usage of these materials through subsequent in-class activities and assessments could be a viable approach. Moreover, adapting online content to be more smartphone-friendly may increase student receptivity, considering the prevalent preference for mobile devices over traditional computers.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has some limitations, each coupled with a pertinent recommendation for enhancing future research. Firstly, the limitation posed by the small sample size potentially compromises the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. To mitigate this, future research should attempt to incorporate a more substantial and varied sample, thereby bolstering the validity and applicability of the results. Secondly, while fruitful in providing detailed insights, the study's reliance on a qualitative research framework constrains its capacity for broader statistical generalization and the establishment of causality. In response, it is advised that future studies adopt a mixed-methods approach, amalgamating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to yield a more robust and encompassing analysis. Lastly, the research's primary concentration on teachers' perspectives may inadvertently overlook students' varied and potentially differing viewpoints. To address this, it is recommended that future investigations include research conducted from the students' standpoint, aiming to achieve a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the educational dynamics under consideration.

Conclusion

This study elucidates the nuanced yet affirmatively moderate impact of BL methodologies on student engagement within EFL settings in Saudi Arabia. The evidence delineates a discernible elevation in student engagement, characterized by an uptick in active participation, heightened attentiveness, and increased enthusiasm for learning. Such advancements are primarily credited to the symbiotic integration of digital tools with conventional teaching methodologies, ushering in a dynamic learning paradigm. Nonetheless, the efficacy of BL is contingent upon a constellation of factors, including the digital literacy of students, their access to technological resources, and the judicious deployment of digital tools within the academic curriculum. Moreover, this research delineates formidable challenges in adopting BL, including technological constraints, variances in digital literacy, and the imperative for creating compelling digital content. These impediments underscore the intricate nature of incorporating BL into educational frameworks, highlighting the imperative for holistic strategies to surmount these challenges. Despite these obstacles, the capacity of BL to augment the learning experience and foster superior educational outcomes remains palpable, predicated upon surmounting the identified hurdles and optimally leveraging the amalgamation of digital and traditional pedagogical methods. The findings from this study provide critical insights into the moderate influences of BL on student engagement alongside the attendant challenges, offering significant implications for teachers and educational stakeholders intent on amplifying the effectiveness of BL in educational milieus. Addressing both technological and pedagogical barriers presents a fertile opportunity to exploit the advantages of BL more

comprehensively, thereby cultivating a more immersive and efficacious learning environment for EFL students in Saudi Arabia and potentially in similar contexts globally.

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Examining the Concurrent Contribution of Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Breadth Aspects to Moroccan EFL Students' Speaking Ability

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Abstract

The present paper investigates the contribution of productive as well as receptive vocabulary breadths to Moroccan learners' EFL speaking ability. The study's significance lies in its exploration of the under-researched area of speaking proficiency, furthering our understanding of the link between vocabulary knowledge and language skills. To further probe this connection, particularly in the high school context, this study investigated the relationship between vocabulary size and speaking ability using valid and reliable vocabulary research instruments. This study addressed two research questions: a) to what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores correlate with speaking ability? b) to what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores explain the variance in learners' speaking ability? To answer these questions, the researchers administered the Updated Vocabulary Levels Test, the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test, and a speaking task to 40 tenth-grade EFL participants. Spoken data were graded by reference to IELTS' speaking band descriptors. Results of Pearson Correlation disclosed positive correlations between receptive and productive lexical breadths and speaking proficiency. Moreover, findings of multiple linear regression revealed that receptive and productive vocabulary sizes could explain performance in speaking ability. Implications for EFL vocabulary instruction and speaking proficiency development are discussed.

Keywords: EFL speaking ability, productive vocabulary size, receptive vocabulary size, speaking proficiency, vocabulary and speaking

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Introduction

Vocabulary size has been regarded as an indicator of proficiency in the four skills (Miralpeix & Muñoz, 2018; Nation, 2016; Uchihara et al., 2020). In fact, vocabulary breadth instruments, such as the Vocabulary Size Test (VST), the checklist test, and the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), have been utilized as diagnostic and placement tests. This suggests that lexical breadth reflects overall language proficiency (Meara, 1990; Nation, 2013; Uchihara & Clenton, 2018). To take an example, vocabulary size has been examined with respect to international and local standard proficiency tests such as IELTS (Milton et al., 2010), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Qian, 2002), and Moroccan high-stakes baccalaureate examinations of reading (Agrram et al., 2023), to name a few. This entails that mastery of lexis is crucial in language development and proficiency. While the literature is replete with studies on the association between receptive lexical breadth and reading (Nation, 2006; Pathan et al., 2019; Webb & Paribakht, 2015), writing (Staehr, 2008), listening (Bonk, 2000), and speaking (Uchihara & Clenton, 2018), the number of studies on the contribution of both receptive and productive vocabulary breadth aspects to speaking is still inadequate (Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021). It is worth noting that Uchihara et al. (2020) argued that "…yet surprisingly little is known about the role of vocabulary in speaking" (p.146).

Accordingly, different researchers have called for investigating receptive and productive vocabulary size aspects with speaking ability (Clenton, 2020; Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat, 2020; Schmitt, 2014; Uchihara & Clenton, 2018) because the lion's share of literature has been concerned with receptive skills, namely reading. Further, the extant scholarship that aimed at exploring the link between lexical knowledge and speaking has focused either exclusively on receptive knowledge or productive knowledge of EFL university students. In an attempt to occupy these lacunas, the present study aims to address the limited research on the impact of lexical breadth, in both receptive and productive modes, on the speaking ability of secondary education students. This research has two main objectives: (a) to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between lexis and speaking, and (b) to strengthen the theoretical foundation and provide further empirical evidence on vocabulary acquisition in high school students, building upon the findings of international experts in the field.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores correlate with speaking ability?
2. To what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores explain the variance in learners' speaking ability?
3.

Literature Review

The Vocabulary Knowledge Construct

Knowing what a word means has long perplexed theoretical vocabulary acquisition researchers because of the number of components that comprise word knowledge. In a highly cited model of lexical competence, Nation (2001) listed 18 components that constitute what knowing a word means. This list comprises elements that pertain to receptive and productive modes of form, meaning, and use. In effect, to assert knowledge of a word, one should be able to pronounce and spell the word, know about its associations, collocations, constraints on use and so forth. This model delineates the specific components of word knowledge but is impracticable to adopt in practice, as it would require a test battery of 18 questions for every lexical item to be measured

(Meara, 1996a). As a solution to this impasse, Daller et al. (2007) proposed a lexicon-centered model that limits the number of components to easily measurable dimensions. They introduced three levels of vocabulary knowledge: (a) breadth, (b) depth, and (c) fluency. To expound, whereas the lexical size is associated with the quantity of words a person knows, the depth of lexis concerns how much one knows about those words (Daller et al., 2007). The last dimension is fluency, which is defined as the automaticity and ease with which words are used and retrieved from memory. Proponents of lexicon-centered models endorse it because it makes vocabulary knowledge concrete and easily measurable.

Another crucial distinction in vocabulary acquisition is receptive and productive knowledge. These two modes of knowledge are related to vocabulary breadth and depth (Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat, 2020; Tong et al., 2022). Schmitt (2010) contended that receptive features of knowledge pertain to language skills such as listening and reading, while productive aspects relate to the type of knowledge necessary for writing and speaking. By extension, the same subdivision holds for vocabulary tests. There are many receptive vocabulary breadth and depth instruments like the VST (Nation & Beglar, 2007) for vocabulary size and the Word Associates Test (Read, 1993) for receptive vocabulary depth. With respect to productive tests, the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLT) (Laufer & Nation, 1999) is an instance of a test of productive lexical size. Besides, the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997) is an example of a test of productive vocabulary depth. The receptive mode of vocabulary size has garnered considerable attention in relation to the four skills, compared to the productive mode (Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat, 2020; De Jong & Mora, 2017; Miralpeix & Muñoz, 2018). This, perhaps, stems from the intricacy of defining and measuring productive vocabulary knowledge aspects in comparison to receptive knowledge features (David, 2008; Fitzpatrick & Clenton, 2017). The same trend could be observed in Arabic vocabulary studies. That is, there are only receptive vocabulary breadth and depth tests, while there have not been any attempts to develop productive vocabulary tests of Arabic. For example, with respect to receptive size, Ech-Charfi (2024) developed the Arabic Receptive Vocabulary Size Test, which is based on Nation and Beglar's (2007) VST. Concerning lexical depth, Agrram and Ech-Charfi (2024) measured the receptive collocational knowledge of Moroccan learners and used the Rasch 1PL model to validate a Receptive Collocational Test of Arabic.

In this paper, vocabulary knowledge is defined with reference to Daller et al.'s (2007) lexicon-centered model of vocabulary competence, which is divided into three components. Of special interest to us, however, is vocabulary breadth in its receptive and productive modes in relation to the under-researched skill of speaking. This study fills an important niche in the literature related to the contribution of modes of vocabulary size to speaking proficiency.

Speaking ability

Several researchers have argued that speaking ability is contingent upon good mastery of lexis, although the association between lexis and speaking proficiency has received minimal scholarly attention in the literature (De Jong et al., 2012; Koizumi & In'nami, 2013; Uchihara & Clenton, 2018, 2023). Despite the dearth of research regarding vocabulary and speaking, an emerging number of studies have confirmed the fundamental importance of vocabulary in speaking proficiency (Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021; Miralpeix & Muñoz, 2018; Tong et al., 2022). The findings of these studies support the theoretical relevance of the centrality of vocabulary in speaking ability.

Concerning the theoretical role of vocabulary in speaking ability, Levelt's (1989, 1999a) L1 and Kormos' (2006) L2 modular models of speech production underscore the thesis that speech production is lexically guided. However, they reckon that vocabulary is not the only critical component in their models. They hold that utterance production undergoes three mechanisms, which are relatively autonomous and carried out by specialist modules (Kormos, 2006). The first mechanism is conceptualization; it is the process of conceptualizing a preverbal message, which activates concepts to be encoded. This activation spreads to semantically related concepts as well. The second mechanism is formulation. It is the process of encoding preverbal lexical concepts with the speaker's language. The last mechanism is articulation; it is the actual conversion of the previous mechanisms into an utterance.

These speaking ability models advocate the critical role of lexis in the process of speech production. While it is true that syntactic, morphological, phonological and encyclopedic knowledge are essential for speaking, vocabulary remains a key component in speech production (Nation, 2013). Accordingly, these models support the centrality of vocabulary breadth, depth, and fluency in speaking ability (Koizum & In'nami, 2013; Nation, 2001).

Ultimately, the present study adopts the theoretical standpoint of speech production devised by Levelt's (1989; 1999a) and Kormos (2006) models. According to these theoretical frameworks, vocabulary is an indispensable component in spoken proficiency since without lexis meaning can never be conveyed (Wilkins, 1972). It is worth pointing out that the decision to contextualize the present paper in Levelt's and Kormos' frames is informed by their adoption in a substantial number of studies on lexical breadth and speaking ability (De Jong et al., 2012; De Jong & Mora, 2017; Hilton, 2008; Koizumi & In'nami, 2013).

International Scholarship on Vocabulary and Speaking

On the international landscape, a few attempts have been made to explore the link between lexical breadth and speaking ability. De Jong et al. (2012) purported to explore what best predicts speaking proficiency in L2 learners, recruiting 54 native speakers of Dutch. Their study comprised several variables, including but not limited to grammatical knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and pronunciation skills. For this purpose, they employed a sentence completion test to gauge productive lexical knowledge. They found that pronunciation and productive knowledge of vocabulary were the most important indices of speaking proficiency. While these findings accentuate the centrality of lexical knowledge in speaking ability, their operationalisation of vocabulary size was indefinable. That is, De Jong and colleagues focused on productive vocabulary size, measured by word-frequency as a proxy, at the expense of the receptive mode. In a different attempt, Koizumi and In'nami (2013) conducted a study examining the predictive role of productive lexical breadth, lexical depth, and speed of processing in the speaking ability of novice and intermediate EFL Japanese learners, using L1-L2 translation tasks. Their results showed that lexical breadth and depth strongly predicted speaking proficiency, but speed was not a determinant predictor of speaking ability. This study incorporated three dimensions of lexical competence but discarded the role of receptive vocabulary size. Overall, the overarching limitation of these studies was the research instruments employed in their investigations (Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat, 2020; Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021). In other words, they employed sentence completion and L1-L2 translation tasks to measure vocabulary knowledge, although there are other reliable research instruments such as the WAT, the PVLT, and the VST, to name but a few.

Alternatively, other researchers opted for using valid and standardized tests of vocabulary size to probe the association between speaking ability and vocabulary breadth. Nevertheless, they focused just on one mode of vocabulary size, which is receptive knowledge. For instance, De Jong and Mora (2017) assessed the receptive lexical breadth of 51 upper-intermediate EFL students, employing Meara and Miralpeix's (2016) X/Y Lex receptive vocabulary size test. Their findings disclosed that receptive vocabulary breadth positively correlated with oral fluency. This study recruited EFL university students and discarded the significance of productive lexical breadth in speaking. Similarly, Uchihara and Clenton (2018) investigated the association between receptive lexical breadth and speaking ability of university learners of English as a second language, using a picture narrative task and Meara and Jones' (1988) EVST. Using IELTS speaking scales, their findings indicated that the subjects' receptive vocabulary size correlated with speaking proficiency (r=.552). Likewise, productive vocabulary size of the university subjects was neglected in their study. Employing a valid and reliable receptive vocabulary breadth test and a semi-guided interview, Miralpeix and Muñoz (2018) explored the correlation between receptive lexical breadth and the four skills, including speaking ability, of 42 EFL university learners. They reported that receptive vocabulary breadth moderately correlated with speaking ability (r=. 489). Along the same line of reasoning, the productive vocabulary size mode was disregarded. To conclude, despite the significant findings of these studies, they all focused solely on university-level participants and the receptive aspect of vocabulary breadth.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning other studies that only targeted the relationship between productive vocabulary breadth and proficiency in speaking. To illustrate, Alharthi (2019) used the PVLT and a speaking task to investigate the correlation between breadth and speaking proficiency of 18 EFL university students. The results indicated that productive vocabulary strongly correlated with speaking ability (r=.698, p< .001). This suggests that the stronger a learner's mastery of productive vocabulary is, the more proficient they are in speaking. However, Alharthi solely focused on productive lexical breadth with a limited number of participants, discarding the role of receptive vocabulary breadth. Another study by Uchihara and Saito (2019) purported to examine the link between productive lexical size and L2 speech production, using Lex 30 to gauge productive knowledge and a picture description task for speaking. The findings revealed that productive size was weakly correlated with speaking performance (r= .34). In a more recent attempt, Uchihara and Clenton (2023) examined the correlation between university students' spoken and written productive vocabulary breadth and their speaking ability. They reported that written productive vocabulary size did not correlate with speaking scores. In contrast, spoken productive vocabulary size significantly correlated with speech rating. Although these studies confirmed the significance of lexical breadth in speaking, they exclusively examined productive vocabulary size. However, it is worth adding that Uchihara and Clenton's (2023) study opened a new research venue, which encourages employing different vocabulary breadth aspects and modalities (spoken and written) in future studies.

Thus far, the above-reviewed studies exclusively focused on one aspect of vocabulary breadth (i.e., receptive or productive) in relation to speaking. Clenton (2020) claimed that "We therefore propose that future studies in which comparisons are made between speaking and vocabulary knowledge should include multiple aspects of both" (p.166). In this statement, Clenton urged researchers to use multiple aspects of both lexical breadth and speaking ability to explore the association between them. Along the same chain of thought, Uchihara and Clenton (2018) recommended that future academic endeavors should aim at including receptive and productive

modes of lexical breadth and depth. Thus, it is opportune to note that a few recent studies responded to these calls and endeavoured to attain nuanced understandings of the link among receptive and productive lexical breadths, lexical depth, and speaking ability.

Kiliç (2019) aimed to probe the association among receptive and productive lexical breadths, depth, and speaking proficiency of 54 EFL university students using the VLT, the PVLT, and a speaking placement test. Of interest to us, however, are the receptive and productive modes of lexical breadth. Kiliç's results revealed that both the VLT (r=.40, p<.01) and the PVLT (r=.30, p<.01) correlated with speaking proficiency. Besides, the findings of multiple regression disclosed that depth of lexis explained the highest percentage of variance in speaking scores (11.3 percent). In contrast, productive vocabulary size and receptive vocabulary size only accounted for 5 percent of the variance. This paper showed that receptive vocabulary size had the most minor contribution to speaking ability. In a more recent attempt, Janebi Enayat and Derakhshan (2021) probed the association between receptive and productive lexical breadths with speaking ability. For this purpose, they administered the VLT for receptive breadth, the Lex30 for productive size, and IELTS tasks for speaking proficiency of 46 EFL university students. Their study evidenced that both receptive and productive sizes strongly correlated with speaking ability (Receptive: r= .832; Productive: r=.790). To further explore the link between vocabulary size and speaking, the researchers employed regression analysis and found that receptive vocabulary size uniquely explained 48 percent of the variance in speaking ability (ß=0.485, p<.05), while productive size only accounted for 29 percent of the variance (ß=0.29, p<.05). These findings suggest that receptive vocabulary size plays a critical role in speaking ability and can explain variance in EFL learners' speaking scores along with productive vocabulary size. In much the same way, Tong et al. (2022) used the VLT, PVLT, and IELTS tasks to examine the link between vocabulary size and speaking ability of 312 EFL university students. Contrary to the findings of the previous study, the regression results of Tong et al.'s endeavour disclosed that productive vocabulary size (ß=.32) had the most substantial effect on speaking performance, while receptive vocabulary size (ß = .15) had a weak impact. Similarly, the correlation findings of Tong and colleagues run counter prior findings; that is, whereas receptive vocabulary size weakly correlated with speaking ability (r=.315, p<001), productive vocabulary size moderately correlated with speaking ability (r=.472, p<.001).

As can be observed from the above-studies, the findings of vocabulary size are to some extent conflicting. Even though these studies employed valid and standardized instruments to probe the association between vocabulary size in its two modes with respect to speaking ability, they produced inconsistent results. This entails that this topic merits more attention, recruiting different populations from different contexts to obtain conclusive evidence. To name a common tendency in the reviewed studies, they generally recruited tertiary-level participants. Hence, exploring secondary EFL students' vocabulary breadth and speaking proficiency remains direly warranted.

Based on the above pertinent review, several literature lacunas and methodological research gaps were identified. First, a sizeable amount of studies exclusively examined either receptive vocabulary breadth or productive vocabulary breadth to probe their associations with speaking ability. Second, a number of researchers utilized controversial vocabulary knowledge instruments such as sentence completion tasks and L1-L2 translation tests. Third, most studies on the association and contribution of lexical breadth to speaking proficiency recruited EFL university participants. Therefore, several academic calls have been made to investigate the concurrent

contribution of different lexical dimensions to speaking and employ valid and reliable vocabulary knowledge tests (Clenton, 2020; Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021; Uchihara & Clenton, 2018, 2023). With respect to the informants' niche, it is worthwhile to explore overlooked populations like primary education pupils and high schoolers. By way of conclusion, this paper aligns with the previously reviewed studies, which targeted different vocabulary modes in relation to speaking. However, it differs in the sense that it seeks to address their limitations.

Method

Since the present study aimed to explore the association between receptive vocabulary size, productive vocabulary size, and EFL speaking ability, the researchers adopted a correlational regression research design. This design is non-experimental and only deals with relationships among variables.

Participants

To answer the research questions posed in this paper, the authors used convenience sampling to recruit 40 tenth-grade international stream high school students (12 males and 28 females, aged between 14 and 18 years; M= 15.9; SD= 2.4) from a public high school in Morocco. The subjects' L1 was Moroccan Arabic, and they studied English for around 2-4 years. Their English proficiency level is indicated by their receptive vocabulary size score, in which they showed reasonable mastery of the 1st and 2nd frequency bands (Table Two). The participants received 3 hours of English every week in the first semester of the school year (2022-2023).

Concerning the speaking test, two external doctoral candidates in Applied Linguistics were recruited to assess the participants' speaking performances, following IELTS public band descriptors. These blind raters are also EFL high school teachers who have extensive experience as IELTS tutors. Thus, they have some experience dealing with IELTS scales.

Research Instruments

The Receptive Vocabulary Breadth Instrument (UVLT)

Webb et al. (2017) designed this test to measure receptive knowledge of the most frequent words in English. They contend that the test items, which are extracted from Nation's (2012) British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) frequency wordlists, are useful and probably affect EFL learners' communicative abilities. The authors employed this particular test for several reasons. First, vocabulary level tests have been considered as diagnostic measures of word knowledge at different frequency bands (Schmitt, 2010). Unlike the VST, the UVLT is more comprehensive and provides a good account of the most frequent words in English corpora. To clarify, while the VST uses only ten items for each frequency band, the UVLT assesses knowledge of 30 items. Hence, it serves as a good and reliable diagnostic test of the vocabulary profile of learners. Second, the source of lexical items is Nation's (2012) latest account of British and American English frequency wordlists. Third, the UVLT has an excellent reliability estimate (.96). This entails that its findings will be reproducible irrespective of the number of times the test is retaken. Finally, the UVLT employs a grid format of 10 clusters with three items per frequency band. This format is straightforward and understandable for learners because they only have to check the correct box for each definition. Figure One shows a sample of a cluster extracted from the UVLT. To prevent guessing effects, Webb and colleagues used

distractors from higher frequency bands. For example, if the target words belong to the first 2K level, the distractors are from the adjacent frequency levels (3K or 4K levels).

	choice	computer	garden	photograph	price	week
cost					1	
picture				1		
place where things grow outside			1			

Figure 1. UVLT sample cluster 1

The Productive Vocabulary breadth instrument (PVLT)

Developed by Laufer and Nation in 1999, the PVLT seeks to assess form-recall knowledge of vocabulary items. It uses a sentence-defining format in context with a blank space for the target word. This format may be confusing for learners at first as it leaves many options to choose from (e.g., synonyms of the target word). However, Laufer and Nation supplied the first letters of the target words to limit the possible answers. The PVLT is different from the UVLT because it measures knowledge of 18 words at different frequency bands starting from the 2000 word level. This test was utilized in this study because it demonstrated a high reliability estimate (.91) and has been used extensively in a large number of studies (Alharthi, 2019). Figure Two depicts a sample of the PVLT. As can be observed, the test is very easy to use and offers initial letters to aid students in supplying the correct answer.

The 2000-word level
1. I'm glad we had this opp_____ to talk.
2. There are a doz_____ eggs in the basket.

Figure 2. PVLT Version C sample 1

Speaking Test

To gauge the subjects' speaking ability, the authors employed an IELTS' speaking cue card. The choice of this particular oral elicitation technique is informed by different reasons. Unlike traditional methods of oral elicitation, namely paragraph and sentence reading (Saito et al., 2016), the current task is spontaneous and allows the candidates to produce lexically rich spoken data. Besides, the speaking card is taken from previous IELTS proficiency speaking tests (Appendix A) and has been used by several researchers with IELTS' official band scales of speaking (Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021; Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat, 2020).

Research Procedures

Test Administration

Since the authors employed different research instruments, they collected data on various occasions. To start with, the authors administered the first three levels of the UVLT (1000, 2000, and 3000-word levels) in the first week of March 2023. The decision not to administer the full UVLT to the subjects is based on previous academic endeavours. Agrram (2020) and Agrram et al. (2023) showed that the vocabulary size of Moroccan EFL Master students' and twelfth-grade students is less than 3000 word families. Thus, words beyond the 3000 word level would be challenging for Moroccan EFL tenth-grade learners. With respect to the duration, the authors allocated 30 minutes for the UVLT test. After one week from the first data collection session, the

participants took two levels of the PVLT in 30 minutes as well. The levels were the 2000 and 3000 word bands. Administering the two vocabulary size instruments on different occasions was done to avoid exhaustion, which might affect the participants' performance. Moreover, because the UVLT and PVLT are based on word frequency, the authors considered a one-week interval sufficient to avoid testing method effects (Bachman, 1990; Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021). The testing method effect might interfere with the findings of the study since the two vocabulary tests are predicated on word frequency. As a result, the participants might remember some items from the previous test, which might in turn negatively affect our findings.

As for the speaking test, one week after the PVLT data collection session, the informants were individually interviewed in different empty classrooms to ensure they were comfortable and avoid any student-reliability effects (Brown, 2004). It took around 5-6 minutes to explain and interview each student. Thus, the oral test took place in three different classrooms with the researcher and other colleagues. The interviewers greeted the participants, asked them general questions to break the ice, and explained the task. Afterward, the participants were shown a speaking cue card with interview-like questions about leisure activities. With respect to research ethics, the participants' parents and legal guardians signed a written consent form of participation in all school activities, contests, and other extracurricular activities, including action research and research projects. Their guardians were informed that the recordings are anonymous and students have the right to refuse or drop out of the research study at their convenience. In accord with this, all participants had one minute to prepare for the task and their responses were recorded. The duration of the recordings varied; some participants took 3 minutes while other needed only 90 seconds.

Scoring the Tests

To score the two vocabulary size tests, exact scoring methods were used. For the UVLT, the scoring was straightforward; the participants earned one point for every correct answer that they checked. Concerning the PVLT, the scoring method was also exact but extra attention was deemed to check for the spelling of the target words. Differently put, the subjects earned one point only if they correctly spelled the word.

Given the large number of approaches to gauge speaking proficiency, the present paper employed human rating scoring. This method of assessment requires the assessor to rate the testees' performance against a given scale (Uchihara, 2021). Human rating is very popular in vocabulary and speaking studies and has been profusely used in the literature (Uchihara & Clenton, 2022; Uchihara & Saito, 2019). As regards the chosen scale, this study employed the IELTS public speaking band descriptors to gauge speaking proficiency. This scale comprises four components: fluency, lexis, accuracy, and pronunciation. For each component, there are specific descriptions of proficiency ranging from 1-9 band scores. To achieve the purpose of the study, two blind raters were trained to use the speaking rubric and assessed four pilot recordings to become familiar with the scaling system. The scores of the four components were tallied up and divided by four to attain a holistic score of speaking. To enhance the generalizability and reliability of the findings, Intra-class Correlation Coefficients (ICC) of the two raters were calculated to examine the degree of agreement between the raters (see Table One).

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was utilized to analyze the data. It was mainly used to calculate descriptive statistics, calculate ICC between the raters, check for the assumption of normality and multi-collinearity, and perform regression analysis. Since data were normally distributed (appendix B), parametric tests such as Pearson correlation and Multiple Linear regression were employed.

Results

Reliability Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

To ascertain sufficient agreement between the two external raters, Pearson correlation was used to calculate inter-rater reliability. Table One displays the outcome of the analysis. The reliability coefficients for the speaking ability scores showed excellent correlations between the raters, reaching 0.84. This suggests that the two raters' scorings were consistent and provided evidence that the task correctly measures speaking ability.

Table 1. *Results of Pearson coefficients for speaking ability*

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Significance
Rater 1	1	.849**	p< .01
Rater 2	.849**	1	p< .01

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

Table Two shows the descriptive statistics of the three variables of the study. It displays the mean and standard deviation figures of the subjects' receptive vocabulary size, productive vocabulary size, and overall speaking proficiency. As the table indicates, the participants' performance in the receptive vocabulary size test was satisfactory as they showed mastery of the 1000 and 2000 word frequency levels (M=23.85). Notwithstanding the participants' performance in the receptive dimension, their productive vocabulary size was substantially smaller (M=9.87). For their speaking ability, the table shows that the EFL students' speaking performance was moderate (M= 4.94). These findings reveal that the subjects' receptive vocabulary size is larger than their productive size. Besides, they suggest they mastered the 2000 word frequency level, which is a necessary goal for secondary school EFL learners (Staehr, 2008). This explains their passable speaking performance.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for all the variables under study*

	N	Min	Max	M	S.D
SPEAKING	40	1.00	7.50	4.9442	1.61140
UVLT	40	15.00	33.00	23.8567	5.10075
PVLT	40	4.00	15.00	9.8721	2.86274

Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Breadth and EFL Speaking Proficiency

The first question pertained to the link between receptive vocabulary breadth, productive vocabulary breadth, and EFL speaking ability. To answer this research question, data were checked for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk Test (Appendix B). The normality findings revealed that all three variables were normally distributed since the obtained p-values were greater than the standard alpha level (p> .05). Based on this outcome, parametric tests were used to explore the

data. Table Three shows the Pearson correlation results among UVLT, PVLT, and speaking ability. The table indicates that both receptive vocabulary size and productive vocabulary size significantly correlate with speaking ability. Using Plonsky and Oswald's (2014) benchmarks to interpret the correlation coefficients, receptive vocabulary size largely correlated with speaking ability (r= .739, p<.01), while productive vocabulary size weakly correlated with speaking (r=.318, p<.05). Accordingly, there was big effect size between receptive vocabulary breadth and speaking. Conversely, productive breadth and speaking ability showed a small effect size. These findings suggest that the greater the receptive vocabulary size is, the better the performance in EFL speaking contexts.

Table 1. *Pearson correlation coefficients between receptive and productive breadths in relation to speaking ability (n=40).*

Variable	Receptive size	Productive size	Speaking ability
Speaking ability	**.739****	**.314***	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Contribution of Lexical Breadth to Speaking Proficiency

The second research question was concerned with the joint contribution of receptive and productive lexical breadths to speaking ability. To answer this question, multiple linear regression assumptions such as independence of predictors and multicollinearity were checked. Table Four presents the findings of the joint model. It shows that the receptive vocabulary size and the productive vocabulary size co-jointly explained 60 percent of the variance in the speaking ability of the subjects, as indicated by the adjusted R square (R2= .604, p < 0.000). This model substantiates the role that both receptive vocabulary size and productive vocabulary size play in speaking ability. However, to gain a nuanced understanding of the contribution of the predictor variables, the researchers also explored the individual contributions of receptive vocabulary breadth and productive vocabulary breadth to speaking proficiency. Table Five displays the standardized coefficient (Beta) values of the regression model. It reveals that 72 percent of the variance in speaking scores was uniquely accounted for by receptive vocabulary size (ß=.726, p<.000), while productive vocabulary size only contributed to 28 percent of the variance in speaking ability (ß=.286, p<.05). Since the p-values for both predictor variables are smaller than .05, it follows that their contributions to speaking ability were statistically significant.

Table 2. *Multiple regression model for the joint contribution of the predictor variables*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.790[a]	.624	**.604**	1.0143

a. Predictors: (Constant), PROA, Receptive size

b. Dependent Variable: Speaking

Table 3. Multiple regression coefficient for the independent variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-2.080	.937		-2.219	.033
	ReceptiveSize	.229	.032	**.726**	7.193	.000
	ProductiveSize	.157	.057	**.280**	2.771	.009

a. Dependent Variable: SPEAKING

Discussion

The present study explored the association among receptive vocabulary breadth, productive vocabulary breadth, and EFL speaking ability. It also aimed to examine the contribution of both productive and receptive lexical size aspects to overall speaking ability. That is, receptive vocabulary size and productive vocabulary size functioned as predictor variables, while speaking ability was the dependent variable.

To answer the first research question: To what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores correlate with speaking ability? The findings disclosed that receptive lexical breadth strongly correlated with speaking ability scores (r=.73, p<.01). This means that the more words learners know, even if receptively, the better their speaking performance is. This result is consistent with previous studies, which found positive correlations between receptive size and speaking. To name a few, Miralpeix & Muñoz (2018) found that receptive vocabulary size moderately correlated with speaking performance (r=.48, p<.01). Moreover, Uchihara and Clenton (2018) reported a medium correlation (r=55, p<.01) between receptive vocabulary breadth and speaking performance. More closely related to the current paper's findings, Janebi Enayat and Derakhshan (2021) revealed that receptive vocabulary size strongly correlated with their participants' speaking ability (r=.83, p<..01). This result is further in accord with Derakhshan & Janebi Enayat's (2020) study, which demonstrated that receptive mastery of high-frequency vocabulary plays an essential role in speaking ability. Although the informants in the current study are tenth-grades, the findings showed that vocabulary size positively correlated with their speaking ability, irrespective of their age. However, other studies found dissimilar findings. For instance, Tong et al. (2022) found that receptive vocabulary size did not strongly correlate with speaking ability scores (r=.31, p<..001). This difference in findings might be a result of the number of participants since Tong and colleagues recruited 312 EFL learners. The large sample might have ruled out the variability of individual outliers and provided reliable findings. Hence, it must be borne in mind that conclusions based on small sample sizes should be dealt with utmost caution. To conclude, the findings of the first research question might be explained by the utility of high-frequency words. Since the subjects in this study demonstrated fairly good mastery of receptive vocabulary items (M=23.85, sd= 5.10), it is not surprising that there was a strong correlation between their speaking scores and their UVLT scores. This is predicated on the premise that vocabulary beyond the 2000 word frequency level bears little predictive power in speaking ability (Milton, 2009; Uchihara & Clenton, 2018). Indeed, when speaking, people tend to use common words and avoid low-frequency words and expressions.

As to the productive breadth, the findings revealed a small positive correlation between productive vocabulary size and speaking ability (r=31, p<.05). Thus, the association between

productive breadth and speaking ability was not as strong as with receptive knowledge. This result is in consonance with other studies in the literature that showed that receptive vocabulary size correlated better than productive size with speaking ability. For instance, Kiliç (2019) reported that productive lexical breadth weakly correlated with speaking ability (r=.39, p<.01). Kiliç also reported a greater correlation figure between receptive vocabulary size and speaking ability. An explanation for this might be that receptive vocabulary size develops earlier and faster than productive vocabulary size (Kiliç, 2019). Besides, the form-recognition format of receptive instruments makes knowing a word easier, unlike productive tests which require form-recall knowledge and accurate spelling. Thus, in the current study, the participants are probably still at the stage of developing form-recall knowledge of vocabulary items. Despite the supremacy of the receptive size findings, other researchers disclosed that productive vocabulary size moderately and strongly correlated with speaking ability. To take an example, Tong et al. (2022) found a moderate correlation between productive lexical breadth and speaking proficiency (r=.47, p<.001). Alharthi (2019) and Janebi Enayat and Derakhshan (2021) both reported strong positive correlations between productive vocabulary size and speaking ability (r=.73, p<.001; r=.79, p<.001). These findings reveal that productive vocabulary size is also instrumental in speaking ability, although they are in constant flux.

Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that the participants in the studies that reported moderate and strong correlations between productive size and speaking recruited EFL university students with upper-intermediate (B2) or advanced (C1) levels of proficiency. On a final note, in the present context, since the productive vocabulary size of our participants was very low (M=9.87), it could be argued that the participants might have known the words but were not able to provide the correct spelling (form). Thus, they underperformed in the PVLT. Another reason for this underperformance could be the nature of the test. To expound, the PVLT starts with 2000 word frequency level, discarding the first thousand words. Hence, it might have been too challenging for EFL tenth-grade high school students.

To answer the second research question: To what extent do receptive and productive vocabulary size scores explain the variance in learners' speaking ability? The results showed that the two predictor variables collectively explained R2= .60 of the variance in the subjects' speaking proficiency, which is considered large. This finding corroborates the vital status of lexical mastery of high-frequency words in speaking ability. It also shows that irrespective of other variables such as error in measurement, grammatical knowledge, individual differences, and duration of exposure to English, vocabulary size explained more than half of the variance in the participants' speaking performance. Another overarching finding of the study was the strong influence of receptive vocabulary size on the dependent variable. Differently put, while investigating receptive vocabulary size with speaking, it explained 72 percent of the variance in speaking. However, when holding receptive vocabulary size constant and only investigating productive size independently, it only explained 28 percent of the variance in speaking performance. This means that receptive vocabulary size, in isolation, demonstrated stronger influence on speaking than productive vocabulary size did. Compared to other studies, our findings are in agreement with Koizumi and In'nami (2013) who found that vocabulary knowledge accounted for 60 percent of the variance in speaking ability. Janebi Enayat and Derakhshan (2021) also found that receptive size, productive size, and lexical depth predict (R2= .71, p <.001) 71 percent of speaking ability. Interestingly, they found that receptive vocabulary size when investigated independently had a more substantial influence on speaking ability than that of productive size. In the same vein, Tong et al. (2022)

investigated receptive and productive vocabulary size in relation to speaking. Their findings were comparable to our study R2= .47.

On the other hand, our findings are not in accord with other studies in the literature. Uchihara and Clenton (2018), for instance, found that lexical knowledge only accounted for 29 percent of the variance in speaking ability. Furthermore, Kiliç (2019) found that lexical knowledge only accounted for R2=.167 (16.7 percent) of the variance in speaking ability. Surprisingly, Kiliç's findings suggest that vocabulary depth had the strongest effect on speaking proficiency, accounting for around 11.3 percent. In contrast, receptive vocabulary breadth had the most negligible contribution of around 1.4 percent.

By way of conclusion, the results of the present study further substantiate the role of vocabulary size, at its receptive and productive modes, in speaking ability in the Moroccan EFL context. They shed light on the association between tenth-grade EFL students' vocabulary size and speaking performance. While statistically significant correlations were found between receptive lexical breadth and productive breadth in relation to speaking proficiency, the takeaway conclusion from this study is that receptive vocabulary size had a significant influence on secondary EFL learners' speaking ability. However, this does not entail that productive vocabulary size is less crucial. It simply denotes that meaning-recognition knowledge or basic mastery of vocabulary items aids elementary EFL students when speaking.

The present study's findings suggest several significant implications. Most important of which is that vocabulary instruction should occupy a large proportion in EFL language classes, and a threshold for vocabulary breadth should be determined. For example, a receptive vocabulary size of 2000 or more should be a starting goal for junior high school students to speak with a reasonable degree of proficiency. To achieve this goal, EFL instructors are exhorted to explicitly teach the most frequent words to their novice high school students. Another contribution of this study is the acknowledgement of the primacy of receptive or meaning-recognition vocabulary knowledge in speaking. Plainly put, while collocations, idioms, and lexical associations (i.e., vocabulary depth) are also crucial to teach, the findings of this study demonstrate that receptive vocabulary size contributes the most to speaking ability of EFL learners. This implication might be important at novice levels of proficiency, but with upper-intermediate and advanced learners there are other variables that might assist in speaking proficiency such as strategic competence, discourse management, topic nature, etc.

However, this study is not without limitations. The first limitation that mitigates the generalizability of the results pertains to the small sample size of participants (N=40). These participants were recruited using convenience sampling methods and they form a homogenous group because they all belong to the same educational institution. Second, the vocabulary dimension of breadth investigated in this paper could potentially affect the conclusions of this study. To expound, vocabulary size is only a single dimension of vocabulary knowledge. Thus, other lexical dimensions such as depth and automaticity might also contribute to the participants' overall speaking ability. Third, the use of the PVLT to measure productive knowledge of vocabulary is also another limitation in the context of our study. It might have undermined the participants' true productive breadth because it samples words starting from the 2000 frequency-band. Hence, the first band, which is of utmost importance, was discarded. Besides, the current study relied on a single speaking elicitation technique, which is an IELTS speaking task. This might also constrain the findings of this endeavor. Finally, there is a mismatch between the mode of vocabulary elicitation and the nature of speaking ability. Both the UVLT and PVLT measure

orthographic form of vocabulary knowledge, whereas the IELTS task assesses the participants' spoken form. Taken together, these limitations should be taken into account prior to making any generalized conclusions from this study.

Concerning new research avenues, researchers are exhorted to target different lexical competence dimensions such as receptive and productive vocabulary depth. They are also invited to examine the contribution of the spoken modalities of vocabulary size and depth as Uchihara and Clenton (2023) called for. By way of conclusion, it might be worthwhile to employ objective measures such as lexical diversity, lexical density, sophistication and so on in rating speech samples. This particular measure of rating has received less scholarly attention compared to the human rating approach.

Conclusion

This study explored the link between receptive vocabulary size, productive vocabulary size, and EFL speaking ability of Moroccan EFL tenth-graders. It also inspected the concurrent contribution of receptive and productive breadths to speaking ability. The results of this study revealed a strong positive correlation between the participants' receptive lexical size and their speaking proficiency. Conversely, a relatively weak association was found between productive vocabulary size and speaking proficiency. The findings also indicated that the receptive and productive lexical sizes of EFL learners contributed to their speaking ability. Moreover, they substantiated the role of vocabulary size and high-frequency words in EFL speaking ability.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Speaking task

Describe a free time activity you like to do.
You should say:

- what you do
- who you do it with
- where you do it

and explain why you like to spend your free time this way.

Appendix B

Normality test

Table 6. Findings of normality

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Receptivesize	.131	40	.082	.953	40	.097
Speaking	.086	40	.200*	.979	40	.636
PROA	.074	40	.200*	.976	40	.532

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

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Analyzing the Background and Problem Statement of Ph.D. Theses Written by Arabs in Selected Malaysian Universities

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Abstract
The background and problem statement to the study is the first part of the research and so, gives the reader a first impression. The background should explain the meaning of the concepts/variables; pay particular attention to the dependent variable; state its importance; and then link or relate it to the independent variables with appropriate references; but proceeding from general to specifics, It is what gives the reader the impression that the researcher has a good understanding of the research topic; and of course, the subject matter. This study aims to perform a genre analysis on the apparent structural linguistics and grammatical patterns of 30 PhD theses' introductions and problem statements written by Arabic scholars in English, focusing primarily on the language structure and macro-level move analysis of the selected theses. This study used an updated CARS framework (Swales, 1990) for the move analysis which comprises three primary moves as the theoretical frame. There are three stages to this study. Stage 1 entails the data collection which is important to gain entry to the particular settings in the articles. The 30 PhD theses were accessed from various university library databases; their copies were later compiled in computer-readable form. Stage 2 entails the corpus compilation stage where the theses were edited and saved as a raw corpus to manually tag the moves and search the structural linguistics prior to conducting the search process. The final stage entails the genre analysis which consists of the move analysis and structural analysis. The main findings revealed that the problem statements and introductions of the descriptive theses are made up of two mandatory moves (*Move 1: Situating the Research* and *Move 2: Presenting the Research*) and three elective moves. Meanwhile, the informative theses comprise three mandatory moves (*Move 1: Situating the Research*, *Move 2: Presenting the Research*, and *Move 3: Describing the Problem*) along with two elective moves. The findings revealed differences between the descriptive and informative theses, whereby more phrasal lexical bundles exist compared to clausal ones. This study hence suggests the development of a viable pedagogical template to be integrated into the syllabus, which would serve as a coping strategy for students in responding to the rigorous demands of academic writing.

Keywords: Background of the study, problem statement, genre analysis, Arab students
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Introduction

Since the objective of the current research was to analyze the apparent structural linguistics and grammatical patterns of 30 PhD theses' introductions and problem statements written by Arabic scholars in English, focusing primarily on the language structure and macro-level move analysis of the selected theses, hence, the selection of a certain research topic is typically elucidated in the research background section, i.e., by presenting facts related to the research area. Past research has demonstrated that in thesis writing, students encounter difficulties in writing the research background section.

Evangelista et al. (2013) stated that the second most common issue in thesis writing for students is composing the research background. According to Cummings (2016), such issues occur because most students have poor skills in converting and communicating their ideas in written text. Writing Chapter One of the thesis demands unique academic writing skills. Byrne in Alfaki (2015) asserted the complexity of thesis writing due to the requirement for grammatical competence, conceptual thinking, and judgmental capacities. Al-Mukdad (2019) highlighted the finding that many students do not have a good grasp of grammatical, linguistic, and structural knowledge in academic writing.

Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal, (2016). conducted a study on 103 fourth-year undergraduates and found that they encountered various difficulties in writing their research proposal, conducting the research, and subsequently writing the actual research paper. They face stumbling blocks in research topic selection, data retrieval and collection, adherence to the stipulated time to conduct research, as well as data interpretation.

Literature Review

Over the past century, numerous research has been carried out to examine the mistakes made by Arabic-speaking EFL students when writing their theses (Sükan, & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). Similar results from other recent research about Arab EFL students' severe difficulties with writing English were found, which would hinder their capacity to articulate their ideas in writing. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of students willing to get a diploma in their postgraduate fields. Thus, it became necessary to research the written abstracts as they are considered the essential section of the written theses that will give the reader an idea of the value of the whole dissertation. Hence, to draw attention to its importance and highlight the features that must be included in them, abstract analysis becomes more significant at this point. Especially for those writing their M.A. or Ph.D. abstracts, to guide them on what is needed (Yu, 2021) Any abstract that is going to be written needs systematic and organized work. The absence of these may lead to comprehension problems and may cause less attention. Poorly written abstracts can have unwanted results and may not receive enough credit or be read. To avoid this, what is expected is that a writer should have all the necessary skills to write good abstracts, which should be seen or understood from the moment one looks at the study. Genres and moves should be included and defined so that every reader understands each step clearly without reading the whole research. Genre is a literary term, and genre analysis is a sort of discourse done to check the reliability of communicative purposes. So, it includes an analysis of the style and text. Abstracts as genres have become a key tool for investigators because they offer them a chance to choose the appropriate study for their investigation (Anderson et al., 2021).

Adding extra synonyms to a statement is an example of repetition (Almehmadi, 2012). For example, to emphasize a point, the terms "demolition" and "destruction" could appear twice in a

sentence. Furthermore, they make heavy use of the coordinating conjunctions "and" and "as", which are equivalent to "wa" and "fa" in Arabic. Rass (2015) examined 120 Jordanian students' writing samples and found 426 mistakes that were likely caused by first language interference.

The findings of a study done by Kaya and Yağız (2020) are assumed to help authors in this field be familiar with abstract writing conventions. Also, the results are believed to benefit the production of academic writing materials for scholars and academic writing courses. Since it is a comparative study, the results would help non-natives be aware of the conventions of academic writing and guide them throughout the process involved in global research. However, the results of Ashofteh et al. (2020) demonstrate that non-native speakers use more hedges and are more tentative in their abstracts which shows that they leave more space for opposing views in their claims. Furthermore, Saidi and Khazaei's (2021) study is believed to be used in teaching academic writing to graduate students in English for academic purposes and to help them present their findings globally. Furthermore, Ibrahim and Nambiar (2011) discovered that the student's vocabulary and idea organization were inadequate.

Paraphrasing presents a number of challenges for Arab learners. For instance, they are unable to construct sentences using their own language, reformat them using critical thinking, or rearrange them to improve their academic effectiveness. The interference of their own language (Arabic) is among other issues Arab students face. The distinction lies in the fact that native English speakers and Arab students have different writing backgrounds, styles, and aptitudes. Arab students struggle with organizing writing tasks, the reading-to-writing process, and the interplay between Arabic (L1) and the Second Language (L2), which hinders their ability to apply critical thinking and paraphrase to create new word structures based on their own viewpoints without altering the meaning of the original text.

One of the challenges and concerns that Arabic students in Malaysia face is poor writing abilities, a topic that has been discussed by Arabic scholars. Both teachers in secondary schools and lecturers in universities face challenges related to students' weaknesses in this aspect. Writing skills are a difficult aspect to teach and learn due to the students' lack of comprehension of the ideas and situations pertaining to vocabulary and grammar which make up the foundation of the language. It is challenging for the reader to understand a student's written work if they have poor grammar and vocabulary (Mokhtar et al., 2018). To ensure that students have no difficulties in writing, instructors and lecturers need to guarantee that their students comprehend the vocabulary fundamentals. To guarantee that their writing is easily understood and transmitted correctly, students also need to grasp the fundamentals of Arabic grammar. Writing abilities are intimately tied to other language abilities, particularly reading, in addition to learning the fundamentals of vocabulary and grammar. As a result, lecturers and teachers have an even more difficult task in teaching and learning writing (Sükan, & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). Reading is especially beneficial since it provides children with good writing skills via the introduction of new vocabulary and sentence structures.

In summary, research spanning the past century reveals the persistent challenges faced by Arabic-speaking EFL students in English writing, with systematic errors attributed to interference from their native language. Issues encompass semantics, prepositional usage, syntax, morphology, and spelling, reflecting a distinctive writing style characterized by long phrases, repetitions, and elaborate constructions. Arab learners encounter difficulties in paraphrasing, critical thinking, and restructuring sentences, hindered by interference from Arabic and differences in writing

backgrounds. These challenges extend to organizing writing tasks, the reading-to-writing process, and managing the interplay between Arabic (L1) and English (L2). Notably, Arabic students in Malaysia face additional concerns about poor writing abilities, posing challenges for educators at both secondary schools and universities. Addressing these issues requires a focus on fundamental vocabulary and grammar comprehension, with the intertwined nature of writing, reading, and language skills presenting a complex teaching and learning landscape for instructors and teachers alike. In summary, the multifaceted challenges underscore the need for targeted strategies and interventions to enhance the writing proficiency of Arabic EFL students.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design. Quantitative research design is a systematic and structured approach used to collect, analyze, and interpret numerical data to address research questions and hypotheses. This method employs measurable variables, statistical tools, and standardized instruments to gather information from a representative sample or entire population (Creswell; 2003). This design served the experimental nature of this study in finding the analyzing the background and problem statement of Ph.D. theses written by Arabs in selected Malaysian universities to answer the following research question: What are the organization of the move structures used in the research background and problem statement sections in Chapter One of the PhD theses written by Arab EFL students in Malaysia?

Participants

To combine content analysis (random sampling) and expert opinion for the interviews (convenient sampling), the current study employed a combination of non-random and random sample techniques in real-world scenarios. The study also concluded that there is a good degree of generalization of the results obtained from the use of "structured samples", a phrase that refers to a convenient or purposeful sampling procedure. Being a field study, the participants must be chosen when they are in their natural surroundings (Bordens & Abbott, 2008). The study participants were not chosen based on factors like motives, attitudes, or beliefs because the purpose of the research is to address the research questions through genre analysis and interview feedback. Nonetheless, the conclusions reached from the interviews revealed the participants' attitudes and areas of interest in relation to the theses' genre analysis findings. It is essential to treat the research participants ethically within the realistic framework of the study (Bordens & Abbott, 2008).

Research Instruments

Essentially, a collection of 30 theses served as the research tools in this study. Written theses serve as the format for the texts used in the corpus compilation. This study's main focus is on genre analysis, which was carried out using Vijay Bhatia's (1993) methodology. The seven steps in genre analysis introduced by Bhatia (1993) were duplicated and employed in the genre analysis to perform a descriptive analysis of the chosen genre. The writer's experience and prior understanding of the specialized field of social science components served as the situational background for the genre text gathered and examined in this study. This knowledge is only available to those who are in context within the discourse community for academic purposes. This genre is a part of the professional community of social science authors and reviewers and hence was gathered from social science theses.

Development of Corpus Selection

The academic corpus used for the move analysis consisted of the social science theses. Altogether, 30 articles were collected from 2020 to 2021 whereby the texts were gathered in the form of a computer-based corpus called the corpus of Social Science Theses or CORSST.

Compilation of a Raw Corpus

The raw corpus texts were determined and taken from the various universities' portals. The texts were then saved in a folder on the computer. The steps taken are elaborated here beginning with the compilation of the texts into a raw corpus. Each file was coded separately using representative codes (unique name), the first four letters of each thesis followed by the year of the articles. Next, the texts in each file were converted into plain text format using the Ant File Converter software.

Research Procedures

There are three stages to this study. Stage 1 is the data gathering stage which is important to gain entry to the particular settings in the articles. The articles were accessed from various university library databases. Copies of the theses were then gathered in computer-readable form. Stage two is the corpus compilation stage where the theses were edited and saved as raw corpus.

The raw corpus was gathered and utilized to tag the moves manually as well as computer-based searching of the structural linguistics that was collected manually in a specific database before starting the searching process. Finally, Stage 3 entails the genre analysis. It was conducted using two different approaches: a move analysis and a structural analysis. To ensure that the genre analysis findings are valid, subject expert interviews (Bhatia, 1993) were conducted.

Findings

To address the research question, what are the organization of the move structures used in the research background and problem statement sections of Chapter One in the PhD theses written by Arab EFL students in Malaysia? The findings associated with the Research Question to understand the organization of the move structures used in the background and problem statement sections in Chapter One of the PhD theses written by Arab EFL students in Malaysia. To answer RQ, the researcher employed the move analysis for the future of the grammar used in the research introduction and problem statements of the selected theses. A move analysis is the process of identifying several "moves" that the text uses to accomplish its communication goals. Meanwhile, a structural analysis helps with sentence-level syntactical Analysis (SLSA), which includes identifying the language functions and features that are used in the texts. When it comes to analyzing and comprehending the writings in the genre, the two methods complement one another.

Organization of the Move Structures Used in the Background and Problem Statement Sections in Chapter One of the Selected PhD Theses

Moves are functional units of a text that collectively meet the overall communication objective of the genre; the general organizational patterns of texts typically consist of a succession of moves. Moves can be short or long and usually include one or more propositions. As stated in Chapter Three, the Introduction, Body, and Conclusion, i.e., the three required essay writing movements, were all contained in the chosen articles from the two corpora. Consequently, the standard essay writing format has been adhered to. The frequency and moves employed in the

chosen theses will be the subject of the discussion that follows. The present study adapted Swales' CARS framework. According to this framework, three moves are involved: Establishing a Territory (M1), Establishing a Niche (M2), and Occupying Niche (M3). Each move represents the realization of a communicative purpose.

Move 1: Establishing a Territory

This move is typically achieved in two ways: first, by presenting and analyzing the primary sources of earlier research in the field to underscore gaps in the previous works so as to tackle the research problem, and second, by showing that the research is generally significant, critical, intriguing, pertinent, or worth exploring. Below are the steps for achieving this:

Step 1 -- Claiming importance of, and/or [writing action = stating the research problem and offering proof of the topic's significance for further investigation]

Step 2 -- Making topic generalizations, and/or [writing action = presenting assertions regarding the current status of knowledge, agreement, customs, or a description of a phenomenon]

Step 3 -- Reviewing items of previous research [writing action = summarize earlier research that strengthens the case for studying the research problem; rather than a review of literature, this is an analysis of significant studies that have not thoroughly explored the subject]

Move 2: Establishing a Niche [the problem]

This action relates to presenting a convincing case for the significance and value of the research project. There are several ways to achieve this move such as by highlighting a certain gap in the literature, contesting a popular belief, asking a question, a need, or a hypothesis, or by expanding on prior research.
Below are the steps for achieving this:

Step 1a

Counter-claiming, or [writing action = present a counterargument, point out a void in the literature that you feel has damaged or undermined the dominant theory, or both.]

Step 1b

Indicating a gap, or [writing action = based on a void or underexplored area in the literature, formulate the research problem]

Step 1c

Question-raising, or [writing action = as with gap identification, entails posing important queries regarding the implications of previous research gaps that your study will attempt to fill. As an illustration, one may say: "Despite prior observations of voter behaviour in local elections in urban Detroit, it remains unclear why some single mothers choose to avoid...."]

Step 1d

Continuing a tradition [writing action =amplify or elucidate a research problem by extending on earlier studies. Logical connecting words like "hence", "therefore", "consequently", "thus", or language indicating a need are frequently used to communicate this. As an illustration,

one may say: “Consequently, these factors need to be examined in more detail....” or “Evidence suggests an interesting correlation, therefore, it is desirable to survey different respondents....”]

Move 3: Occupying the Niche

Declaring the contribution of your study in terms of new knowledge or insight as opposed to earlier research on the subject is the last "move" in the research process.
This is also the section where you outline the remainder of the paper's organizational structure. Below are the steps for achieving this:

Step 1a

Outlining purposes, or [writing action = addressing the query "So What?" Clearly state the goals of your investigation]

Step 1b

Announcing present research [writing action = give a brief explanation of your study's goal, focusing on what the investigation will achieve. The "So What?" question still has to be answered in social sciences]

Step 2

Announcing principal findings [writing action = provide a succinct, broad synopsis of the main findings. For example: “The findings indicate a need for...,” or “The research suggests four approaches to....”]

Step 3

Indicating article structure [writing action = describe the structure of the remaining portion of your paper]

Table 1. *Analysis of findings using Swales’ CARS framework*

Universities	Number of selected theses	Swales’ CARS framework			Code	COR SST
		Move 1	Move 2	Move 3		
University A	6	Establishing a territory Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization **Step 3:** Reviewing items of previous research	Establishing a niche Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising **Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Occupying niche Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicatin	TI &P S01 (Thesis introduction & Problem statement 01-6)	

				g RA structure		
University B	6	Establishing a territory Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization **Step 3:** Reviewing items of previous research	Establishing a niche Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising **Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Occupying niche Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicating RA structure	TPS03 (Thesis introduction & Problem statement 07-12)	
University C	6	Establishing a territory Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization **Step 3:** Reviewing items of previous research	Establishing a niche Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising **Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Occupying niche Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicating RA structure	TPS01 (Thesis introduction & Problem statement 13-18)	
University D	6	Establishing a territory Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization	Establishing a niche Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising	Occupying niche Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research	TPS01 (Thesis introduction & Problem statement 19-24)	

		Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research	**Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicating RA structure		
University E	6	Establishing a territory Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization **Step 3:** Reviewing items of previous research	Establishing a niche Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising **Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Occupying niche Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicating RA structure	TPS01 (Thesis introduction & Problem statement 25-30)	

Moves of the Researchers in the Selected Theses

Moves refer to functional elements in a text that collectively serve the genre's overall communication aim; they are commonly used to characterize the broad organizational patterns of texts (Connor et al., 1995). Moves can be short or long, and they usually include one or more propositions (Connor & Mauranen, 1999). As noted in Chapter Three, the problem statement, introduction, and thesis writing style were all included in the corpora of the selected theses. Consequently, the standard essay writing format has been adhered to.

"In the three introduction moves and problem statement of the chosen theses, additive DMs were used in varying proportions. While the reinforcing DMs were employed frequently, the equative DMs were not given much thought. Table Two displays the additive DMs' realization and percentage in the students' moves in the problem statement and introduction of their thesis.

Table 2. *Additive DMs in the students' moves and the Introduction and problem Statement in the theses*

Universities	Number of selected theses	Swales' CARS framework			Code	CORSST
		Move 1	Move 2	Move 3		
University B	6	Establishing a territory	Establishing a niche	Occupying niche	TPS03 (Thesis introduction & Problem	

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		Step 1: Claiming centrality Step 2: Making topic generalization **Step 3:** Reviewing items of previous research	Step 1A: Counter-claiming Step 1B: Indicating a gap Step 1C: Question-raising **Step 1D:** Continuing a tradition	Step 1A: Outlining purposes Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing principal findings **Step 3:** Indicating RA structure	statement 07-12)	

Equative Additive DMs

"In Move 1, the utilization of the Equative DMs in the introduction and problem statement in the selected theses was different, as shown in Table Two. In contrast to the students' problem statement in the selected theses whereby DMs make up 14%, the problem statement did not demonstrate any DM usage. This may be inferred from the fact that in Move 1, the application of the Equative DMs in the introduction is inappropriate. When considering the use of these DMs in the subsequent step, the 14% outcome is deemed to be quite low.

Table Two shows that the way the Equative DMs appeared in Move 2 differed from the previous two moves as the writers contributed a varied density of Equative DMs to this move (72% for problem statement and 100% for introduction). It can be said that all of the Equative DMs were utilized in this move in the theses. However, in Move 2, the maximum percentage was employed. This may imply that to make the text flow, researchers occasionally need to establish connections using Equative DMs, such as "too" for indicating "in addition". Equative DMs like "too" can be utilized to alter adjectives. Writing requires careful consideration of the words chosen and the frequency with which they are used. Consequently, Move 2 requires more of this kind of adjustment than the other two moves. In Move 3, the circumstances were the same as in Move 1, according to Table Two. In other words, the students utilized 14% of the Equative DMs.

Reinforcing Additive DMs

"The results of the application of the Reinforcing DMs demonstrated their significance in achieving the intended meaning and interpretation in the problem statement and introduction of the theses. Here are a few possible explanations. Firstly, there was a comparable focus on the application of the Reinforcing DMs in the three moves. Secondly, the nature of writing the problem statement in the thesis is that statements with Reinforcing DMs typically appear to support or add anything to the preceding phrases in writing. Thirdly, the students mainly relied on a fairly large set of Reinforcing DMs in their theses, which are a sub-branch of Additive DMs in the problem statement and introduction. This was demonstrated by the fact that the Reinforcing DMs were present in all three moves in the theses."

"Based on the analysis of the theses, the Reinforcing DMs were applied in the introduction section by 15% and problem statement by 17%, thus indicating the significant attention on Reinforcing DMs in Move 1. This could mean that the students are aware of the importance of setting the scene to help their readers understand their research topic.

"With regards to Move 2, Reinforcing DMs were used 74% in the problem statement and 69% in the introduction. Reinforcing DMs are important because: 1) they connect the segments so as to strengthen the evidence presented, 2) they ensure fluency in the writing and guide readers in the direction of the discourse, 3) they serve as important clues for the change in direction, and 4) they enrich the presented evidence and extend the flow of the text.

"In terms of Move 3, the usage of Reinforcing DMs is quite low in the theses, i.e., 11% in the introduction and 14% in the problem statement. This could be attributed to the fact that, since adequate evidence has been presented in Move 2, a generalizable conclusion has therefore been reached which only needs to be stated in one or two sentences. Hence, the lower percentage of DM usage. In this move, the Reinforcing DMs was used slightly more in the problem statement, suggesting that the students were more concerned about expressing their ideas than guiding the readers. Generally, Move 1 Step 3 shows past studies by furthering or advancing expertise.

The sample excerpt is as follows:

"Integrating mobile learning technology into teaching and learning is one of the most important strategies employed by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education (Al-Kanjari, Al-Kindi, Al-kindi & Kraiem, 2015), and the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman has focused on increasing the number of future technology and technically-skilled workers by strengthening the field of study based on practical and technical training (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). So, m-learning is the next form of e-learning using mobile technologies to facilitate education for learners and teachers anytime anywhere (Alzaza, 2012). However, the higher education sector in Oman has grown and made significant development in the last decade (MOHE, 2014), and there is heavy investment to improve the education infrastructure, provide increased education opportunities with a focus on women's education to ensure equality and equity (Baporikar & Shah, 2013). At the same time, higher educational standards are essential for any society that seeks to achieve serious progress in its social development (Oman Academic Standard, 2010). And since the human element which is the engine that drives the economy is the yardstick for measuring social progress; it should be nurtured and trained to ensure the future well-being and prosperity of society (Education in Oman, 2014). This is why Oman places such importance on education, qualifications and skills (Sarrab et al., 2015)."

"With regards to discourse functions, the DMs seemed to be utilized for enacting various discourse functions in the three moves. The Additive DMs entail the Equative and Reinforcing sub-branches. This result was also emphasized by Ankawi (2020) who stated that Arabic students face difficulties understanding the writing conventions in universities which use English as the first and second language because it involves "critical thinking and high level of English which is an issue for Arab students" (p.7). Arab students become confused with academic writing due to the differences in culture whereby if the "text in a rhetorical style differs from the style used in their own language, readers become confused and find the grammar and vocabulary are incorrect" (Ankawi, 2020, p.11).

Discussion

This study focuses on the problem statement and introduction sections of the selected theses written by Arab students studying in Malaysia. The rationale behind this is that Arab students have a hard time composing coherent English essays and paragraphs. The findings of the study indicated that in Table 1, the findings showed that in general, active voice usage was mostly used in all moves. Especially, in the purpose move, the active voice was used by 90% with the highest

percentage, while the passive voice was used by 10%. The second most frequent choice was a mixture of active and passive voices that occurred in the method move. This was similar to the previous study findings, which stated that active voice was more frequent than passive voice. On the contrary, the current study revealed that passive voice was the most frequently used in the RA abstracts they have examined. Moreover, the findings mentioned that writers prefer to use the passive form more when they are presenting the procedure of their research and stating their findings. Nevertheless, in our findings, a combination of active and passive voices was used, which indicates that most writers tend to develop their abstracts directly rather than using an indirect style.

The findings of the study further indicated that Arab learners face challenges when studying English as a second or foreign language owing to the distinctions between the English and Arabic linguistic and orthographic systems. Typically, they impart the Arabic stylistic elements to the second language. This is similar to the previous study of Ankawi, 2020, p.11 which aims to examine the compatibility between the theses' structural components and Swales' (1990) CARS model and Bhatia's (1993) theses move structure. The findings from Promsin' (2006) study suggested that the moves in engineering theses differ in both settings. It was found that the 20 theses written by Thai students from the School of Engineering and Technology of the Asian Institute of Technology (an international university) displayed the use of all three moves in Swales' CARS model. Nevertheless, Promsin (2006) found some differences between the move structures identified by Swales (1990) and those in the selected theses. For example, Swales' Step 1 in Move 1: Claiming Centrality and Move 2: Establishing a Niche appear to be an optional move used by the Thai students.

On the other hand, the moves identified in the 20 theses written by Thai students from the Faculty of Engineering, Chulalongkorn University (a Thai university) were found to be compatible with Bhatia's (1993) move structure. However, Bhatia's (1993) Move 4: Presenting Conclusion was often omitted. According to Promsin (2006), the students prefer to start their writing using phrases such as "the objective of this study is…" and "This thesis proposes…" which reflect the use of Bhatia's (1993) Move 1: Introducing Purpose. Interestingly, Promsin's (2006) study highlighted the absence of Bhatia's (1993) Move 4: Conclusion which may be a result of the authors' non-adherence to the IMRD (Introduction, Method, Result and Conclusion) move structure as proposed by Bhatia's (1993) traditional four-move theses structure. Quoting Martin (in Promsin, 2006:54) about the unclear division between the Results and Conclusion units from the students' perspective, Promsin (2006) felt that this was because the students were unable to distinguish between the moves for the Results and Conclusion sections. Within the EAP areas, move analysis and structural linguistics analysis complement one another by concentrating on the general rhetorical patterns of language elements in a range of professional and academic genres. The following section elaborates on corpus-based studies to examine the structural linguistic patterns of academic and professional genres.

In summary, the research investigates challenges faced by Arab students in Malaysia, attributing language difficulties to disparities between Arabic and English. The study examines the structural components of theses using Swales' CARS model and Bhatia's move structure. Insights from Thai engineering theses highlight variations in move structures between international and Thai university settings. The importance of move analysis and structural linguistics in understanding academic genres, particularly within English for Academic Purposes (EAP), is underscored.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the challenges confronted by Arab students in Malaysia when composing English essays, emphasizing the linguistic disparities between their native Arabic and the target language. The investigation, focusing on the problem statement and introduction sections of theses, critically evaluates the alignment with Swales' CARS model and Bhatia's thesis move structure. Notably, the findings draw parallels with Promsin's examination of Thai engineering theses, revealing nuanced variations in move structures across international and Thai university contexts.

Furthermore, the research underscores the significance of move analysis and structural linguistics in understanding the broader rhetorical patterns within English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The observed preferences and omissions in specific moves by Thai students highlight the need for tailored language support to address challenges in academic writing. These insights contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language instruction for Arab learners, with potential implications for curriculum development and support programs aimed at enhancing their proficiency in English academic composition.

In light of the study's findings, educators and curriculum designers should consider incorporating targeted interventions to address the identified challenges. This may include developing resources that specifically focus on mitigating linguistic transfer issues and offering guidance on adhering to recognized academic structures. Ultimately, such measures can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for Arab students studying in English-medium academic settings, facilitating their academic success and integration into the global academic community.

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Investigating Arab Students' Communication Strategies in Speaking English as a Medium of Instruction

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Abstract
Speaking English in a multicultural context is considered one of the main requirements for students to communicate with their teachers and colleagues from diverse backgrounds. Due to the scarcity of these studies about Arab students, our study aimed to investigate the most Communication Strategies (CSs) used by Arab students in speaking English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in a public university in North Cyprus. Besides, it focused more on examining the possible correlation between these strategies and social factors (namely, gender and proficiency level). The study adopted the quantitative research tool, which included 102 participants. The descriptive analysis revealed several CSs adopted by Arab students when speaking English in an EMI setting. The results of ANOVA and t. test reported positive effects of gender and level of proficiency on students' usage of communication strategies. This study might contribute to drawing the attention of Foreign Language Schools to the teachability of communication strategies for Arab learners of English.

Keywords: Arab students, communication strategies, English as a medium of instruction, investigating, speaking English
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Introduction

The beginning of the new millennium has been characterized by several features for higher education worldwide. One of these features is mobility as students are more eager to go worldwide and persuade their university education. This, consequently, has necessitated the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) since it is the language of teaching, research, and technology. Learning English was not merely restricted to be used during education, rather it has become the language of communication in a multicultural community where students from various parts of the world come together and start using English for communication.

Mastering the English language for communication, therefore, has become an essential aspect of the university life of alums while studying abroad, and the use of Communication Strategies (CS) has become necessary for learners as it mitigates their communication and avoids their breakdowns while communicating with others (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). There are several definitions and taxonomies of CSs, and the simplest is "a process in which a message is sent from senders to receivers" (Hua et al., 2012, p. 833) where the sender encodes the meaning using CSs while the listener needs to decode it (Thao, 2005).

The use of communication strategies was established by the framework of communicative competence by Canale and Swain (1980), who defined communicative competence as "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (p. 30).

In a cosmopolitan context, such as North Cyprus, where the international community represents around half of the students, the use of the English language is essential for students. On the one hand, it is the medium of instruction at universities. On the other hand, the international community there has students coming from many different countries: such as Africa, the Arab World, Iran, former Soviet Union countries, Türkiye, etc.

Arabs, in this context, represent a good proportion of the international alums, and this necessitates examining their CS skills when communicating with others, being their teachers, colleagues, or even native habitants of North Cyprus. Consequently, there is a need to examine their communication strategies to determine the challenges they face in interaction. This can reveal if there are any common language patterns concerning the culture. In other words, Arab students use certain CSs as they belong to one community and share the same norms and culture. The importance of this study stems from the need to know the CSs needed by the Arab learners to consider it by the School of Foreign Languages. As students start learning English before commencing their studies, it is reasonably to know the strategies they have or the ones they need to improve. In this way, teachers at the preparatory school of North Cypriot universities can improve their communication skills, which can avoid any breakdowns when speaking. Towards this end, this study examines the most common CSs among Arab students in a public university in North Cyprus. Moreover, it measures if these strategies are affected by gender or language proficiency. Therefore, in the light of the given objectives, our study pursues to answer the following question:

1. What are the most common communication strategies used by Arab students when speaking English as EMI?
2. Is there a relationship between Arab students' use of communication strategies and their English proficiency levels?
3. Is there a gender impact on using communication strategies among Arab students when speaking English?

Literature Review

Communication Strategies Taxonomies

Dörnyei & Scott (1997) defined the concept of CSs as techniques used by speakers to manage Target Language (TL) communication problems and deal with difficulties they face. The given strategies were classified into distinct categories by many scholars, such as Faerch and Kasper (1983), Tarone (1980), and Bialystok (1990). However, our study only followed the taxonomy of Dörnyei and Scott (1995a, 1995b) that presented three categories of CSs based on the speaker's technique in solving problems they face when speaking the TL, including direct, indirect, and interactional strategies.

The first has over fifteen tactics for managing and controlling the conversation (e.g., 'word-coinage,' 'literal translation,' 'code-switching,' 'using similar sound words,' and 'foreignizing'). The second facilitates the communication process between speakers and interlocutors by giving them more time to complete the conversation they start (such as 'processing time pressure' and 'own performance problem'). The third focuses on allowing the speakers to apply some techniques to achieve effective communication (i.e., 'resources deficit' and 'own performance problem strategies').

Communication Strategies among Arab Students and Further Contexts

The recent literature includes several studies about the communication strategies used by Arab students when speaking English (e.g., Abu-Nawas, 2012; Al Alawi, 2016; Aldalbahy, 2022; Hua et al., 2012; Sarwari et al., 2023; Ugla et al., 2013). Many studies in related literature have reported a correlation between language proficiency and specific communication strategies. In the study of Al Alawi (2016), which was done in Oman, it was found that there is a positive relation between the high Proficiency Level (PL) of the students and the adoption of certain CSs, such as approximation and circumlocution. This is in line with the study of Abu-Nawas (2012), who also surveyed of 66 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Zarka University in Jordan. The author found that the advanced-level students adopted approximation and circumlocution as their preferred CSs. Furthermore, the lower-proficient learners of the studies of Al Alawi (2016), Abu-Nawas (2012), and Ugla et al. (2013) adopted specific communication strategies that tend to minimize the use of target language and increase the L1-based strategy, such as reduction, code-switching, literal translation, and self-repair. Furthermore, since EFL learners do not speak English as a first language, it is understandable to have pauses while talking and avoiding them requires indirect strategies as compensation for the shortage of grammar. At this point, the study of Ugla et al. (2013) reported using fillers, self-repetition, and feigning.

Moreover, several studies have examined communication strategies in comparison to other ethnicities, for example, Sarwari et al. (2023) studied types of communications used by national and international students including Arabs when speaking English in one of the Malaysian universities. The results indicated the positive impact of the context, as it contained students with different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, on improving their English communication skills. In the same context, Hua et al. (2012) compared between Arabs and Chinese students in terms of using CSs, and the code-switching technique was the most reported strategy by them, which the participants' PL highly influenced it. Elashhab (2020) explained that low proficient Arab students relied on translanguaging while thinking, producing, and processing English language using their L1. However, Aldalbahy (2022) discovered that switching between two languages was not a sign of students' incompetence due to their preference for using their L1 when interacting with

bilinguals. Besides, they preferred using it in both formal and informal communications, which contributed to improving their English-speaking skills (Khan et al., 2024). Therefore, the impact of proficiency level on communicating in English was found to be insignificant in that EFL students with different proficiency levels used similar strategies to carry on their conversation (Madina & Anwar, 2023).

The use of communication strategies among EFL learners has also been examined by many scholars from the perspective of gender. For example, Amin (2017) found gender differences in using communication strategies in terms of social, affective strategies, negotiating for meaning, and non-verbal techniques. Najjari (2016) revealed the significant impact of the gender variable on using oral CSs by local and international postgraduates. This is in line with the study of Yaman et al. (2013), who stated that women used a variety of techniques during their communication process comparing to men. However, Arshad et al. (2015) concluded that male participants tended to speak English more than females due to factors such as self-confidence and language knowledge.

Method

The current study adopted the quantitative research approach, which is defined as a method that examines and explains a particular phenomenon by collecting numerical data, analyzing it, and getting its results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Applying the given methodology enabled the researchers to obtain information about CSs from many Arab students at a public university in North Cyprus. In this way, the study could be enriched and reflect the actual situation of the adopted CSs. Targeting a specific group of people in a specific context, this study is a case study defined as an attempt to investigate the success and failure reasons in a certain case due to a specific cause (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). Moreover, it helps find the relationships between a specific phenomenon and unique characteristics of a particular group of participants in a fixed context. Thus, choosing Arab students as a community allowed the study to find the preferred communication strategies adopted by the targeted community to see what their preferences are.

Participants

Following the definition of Yamane for the population sample size (1967), the study included 102 male and female participants (61 and 41, respectively) who represented the Arab society at a public university in North Cyprus and were randomly selected to avoid any expected bias and grant the study credit for having a sample that has the same characteristics of the population (Salkind, 2011). The participants were 57.8% undergraduates and 42.1% postgraduates, from different departments: applied sciences (engineering, dentistry, medicine, and pharmacy), social sciences (business, education, economics, law, and tourism) and health sciences.

The research tool was a questionnaire from Zhao and Intaraprasert (2013). The questionnaire was divided into four parts: 1) demographic information, 2) strategies for Coping with Communication Problems (CCP), 3) Understanding the Interlocutor's Message (UIM), and 4) Continuing the Conversation as Intended (CCI). The questionnaire was translated into Arabic using the translation and back translation, which helps make it easier for the participants to express themselves and avoid any misunderstanding when responding to the questions, especially with those with a basic level of English proficiency.

Procedure

This study was conducted in the spring semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The university turned to online classes since the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak in March 2019. Therefore, the data were collected using a questionnaire designed via Google Form. The participants were approached online via Microsoft Teams to fill in the questionnaire. Their voluntary participation and confidentiality of their information were clarified to them from the beginning and their right to withdraw at any time of the study.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (20.0 version) software was used to analyze the data calculating both frequencies and percentages of each question for the participants. The descriptive analysis included the means to show the average of the responses of the participants to the general orientation of the entire population. Also, it used Standard Deviation (SD) to show homogeneous or heterogeneous responses are.

Measuring the frequency can be done in many ways such as measuring the percentage of the questionnaire columns, 'always/almost always, often, sometimes, never.' Since the two categories 'often' and 'always' indicate that the strategy is used by the participants, the percentages of these two choices were added to determine the most frequent strategy among the Arab students. According to this classification, the data was divided into three categories: high, moderate, and low. The strategies reported to be 'always' or 'often' used by 50% or more of the participants were categorized as 'high'. The strategies that were 'always' or 'often' used by 25% - 49% of the participants was classified as 'moderate'. The CSs

that were 'always' or 'often' used by less than 25% of the participants were categorized as 'low'.

Results

The Most Communication Strategies Used by Arab Students

After analyzing the data retrieved from the participants' responses, the following results were found: To start with, the most frequent communication strategies adopted by Arab students when speaking English in an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) were four in Coping with Communication Problems (CCP), one in Understanding the Interlocutor's Message (UIM), and four in Continuing the Conversation as Intended (CCI). The first section of the questionnaire, CCP, revealed that Arab students frequently used four strategies to solve problems while communicating in English as a foreign language, as shown in Table 1. They always or often use '*asking the interlocutor to confirm the meaning*' (32.4% and 28.4% respectively), '*using familiar words, phrases, and sentences'* (18.6% and 40.8% respectively), '*using simple expressions*' (10.8% and 41.2% respectively), and '*correcting the incorrect and inappropriate utterances'* (12.7% and 39.2% respectively). On the other hand, three strategies were the least preferred by the surveyed participants: '*appealing help from the interlocutor*' (2.9% and 11.8% respectively), '*appealing assistance from others*' (2.9% and 8.8% respectively), and '*drawing a picture*' (2.0% and 9.8% respectively).

Table 1. *Strategies for coping with communication problems results*

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always/Always
1. Using synonym or antonym	13.7	52	28.4	5.9
2. Using familiar words, phrases, or sentences	14.7	26.5	40.2	18.6
3. Correcting one's own pronunciation, grammar and lexical mistakes	18.6	38.2	30.4	12.7
4. Speaking Arabic instead when one does not know how to	52.9	32.4	10.8	3.9

say in English				
5. Using simple expression	16.7	31.4	41.2	10.8
6. Using nonverbal language such as body language	20.6	52.9	15.7	10.8
7. Spelling or writing out the intended words, phrases, or sentences	41.2	40.2	15.7	2.9
8. Referring to objects or materials	24.5	50.0	22.5	2.9
9. Repeating what the interlocutor has just said	30.4	52.9	13.7	2.9
10. Speaking more slowly to gain time to think	34.3	39.2	19.6	6.9
11. Correcting the incorrect and inappropriate utterances by yourself	11.8	36.3	39.2	12.7
12. Thinking in Arabic before speaking	29.4	42.2	16.7	11.8
13. Thinking first of a sentence one already knows in English and then trying to change it to fit the situation	30.4	39.2	19.6	10.8
14. Asking the interlocutor to confirm that one has made oneself understood	5.9	33.3	28.4	32.4
15. Appealing help from the interlocutor either verbally or non-verbally	46.1	39.2	11.8	2.9
16. Referring to mobile phone dictionary or another type of document	37.3	45.1	16.7	1.0
17. Drawing a picture	71.6	16.7	9.8	2.0
18. Appealing for assistance from other people around	45.1	43.1	8.8	2.9
19. Making use of expressions found in some sources of media (e.g., movies or songs)	20.6	40.2	22.5	16.7
20. Making up an unfamiliar word to communicate a desired concept (Word coinage)	55.9	24.5	15.7	3.9

The second part of the questionnaire, UIM, included ten items, and the analysis revealed that Arab students tended not to use these strategies effectively in their communication, as shown in Table 2. Among the given items, only one strategy was always/often used by more than half of the participants: '*noticing the interlocutor's gestures and facial expressions'* (14.7% and 39.2%). Furthermore, some of the participants used two strategies: '*trying to catch the interlocutor's main point*' (13.7% and 28.4%, respectively) and '*guessing the meaning*' (35.3%).

Table 2. *Strategies for understanding the interlocutor's message results*

Item	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Almost Always/Always**
1. Asking the interlocutor to slow down	43.1	48.0	7.8	1.0
2. Asking the interlocutor for a repetition	10.8	68.6	18.6	2.0
3. Asking the interlocutor to simplify the language	52.9	28.4	15.7	2.9
4. Asking the interlocutor to write out the key word	69.6	19.6	10.8	0
5. Asking the interlocutor to give an example	33.3	51.0	12.7	2.9
6. Trying to catch the interlocutor's main point	19.6	38.2	28.4	13.7
7. Appealing for assistance from other people around	45.1	41.2	11.8	2.0
8. Guessing the meaning of what the interlocutor has said	20.6	44.1	24.5	10.8
9. Trying to translate into Arabic little by little to understand what the interlocutor has said	42.2	38.2	16.7	2.9
10. Noticing the interlocutor's gestures and facial expressions	18.6	27.5	39.2	14.7

The third part of the questionnaire is CCI, which contains five communication strategies. Unlike the previous parts of the questionnaire, most of the strategy here were frequently used by the participants, as in Table 3. The highest reported strategies that were always or often used were:

'*feeling alright for taking risks while speaking*' (25.5% and 50% respectively), '*sending continuation signals to show one's understanding*' (21.6% and 40.2% respectively), '*trying to enjoy the conversation*' (19.6% and 36.3% respectively), and '*feeling alright if the conversation doesn't go smoothly*' (8.8% and 36.3%).

Table 3. *Strategies to carry on the conversation as intended results*

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always/Always
1. Trying to enjoy the conversation	14.7	29.4	36.3	19.6
2. Sending continuation signals to show one's understanding	8.8	29.4	40.2	21.6
3. Feeling all right for taking risks while speaking	6.9	17.6	50.0	25.5
4. Feeling all right if the conversation does not go smoothly by keeping talking	14.7	30.4	42.2	12.7
5. Responding to the interlocutor despite an imperfect understanding of the message	25.5	29.4	36.3	8.8

Communication Strategies and Proficiency Level

The analysis has revealed several positive correlations between the language proficiency of the participants and their adopted communication strategies. The participants' proficiency level was divided according to the CEFR framework: proficient, independent, and basic. Then, the collected data were tested using ANOVA analysis. In the first part of the questionnaire 'CCP', there were four strategies that contained a significant difference among the varied levels of proficiency: '*speaking Arabic instead when one doesn't know how to say it in English'* (.00), '*using simple expressions'* (.014), '*speaking more slowly'* (.00), and '*making up a new word/word coinage'* (.048).

In the UIM strategies, five strategies showed a difference: '*asking the interlocutor to slow down'* (.011), '*asking the interlocutor for a repetition'* (.035), '*asking the interlocutor to give an example'* (.022), '*trying to catch the interlocutor's main point'* (.042), and '*guessing the meaning of what the interlocutor has said'* (.006).

Regarding the last part of the questionnaire CCI, there was only one significant difference between CSs and PL. This strategy was '*responding to the interlocutor despite an imperfect understanding'* (.020). For this CS, the analysis pattern showed that the lower the linguistic competency is, the more frequently this strategy is used. The distribution of the communication strategies according to their proficiency level is in Table 4.

Table 4. *Communication strategies* and *proficiency level*

Proficiency Level	Communication Strategies	P	Percentage
Proficient	Using simple expression	0.041	56.6%
	Word-coinage	0.048	26.6%
	Asking the interlocutor for example	0.022	16.6%
	Asking the interlocutor to slowdown	0.011	10%
Independent	Speaking slowly to gain time	0.000	28.3%
	Asking the interlocutor for repetition	0.022	25%
	Asking the interlocutor for example	0.022	16.6%
Basic	Guessing	0.006	58.3%
	Trying to catch the main idea	0.042	58.3%
	Responding despite the imperfect understanding	0.020	50%

	Speaking Arabic instead	0.000	41.6%

Communication Strategies and Gender

Considering the third research question, *'Is there a gender impact on using communication strategies among Arab students when speaking English?'* the t. test analysis found that there were six CSs that significantly differed between males and females, as shown in Table 5. As for the CCP, there was a significant difference in the four strategies. In detail, females were more in favor of using '*spelling or writing the intended words strategy'* with '53%' and '32%' for males, and the p-value was 0.046. Furthermore, females were more open to using the '*speaking more slowly to gain time to think'* strategy with '41%' and '29%' for males with 0.032 for the p-value. As for applying the interactional strategies through requesting some sort of help from the interlocutor, the females also outraged the males in two strategies: *'appealing help from the interlocutor verbally or nonverbally'* (56% for females and 39% for males) (P = 0.032) and *'appealing for assistance from other people'*, in which the result was '56%' for females and '37%' for males (P = 0.043).

Table 5. *Communication strategies and gender*

Strategy		P	Female	Male
CCP	Spelling/writing the intended word	0.046	53%	32%
	Speaking slowly to gain time	0.032	41%	29%
	Appealing for help from the interlocutor	0.032	56%	39%
	Appealing for assistance people around	0.043	56%	37%
UIM	Asking the interlocutor to slow down	0.025	60%	31%
	Asking the interlocutor to simplify	0.051	63%	45%

Regarding the UIM strategy, the analysis showed that *'asking the interlocutor to slow down'* was used by '60%' of the females while this percentage dropped to half with males (31%) with 0.025 for p-value. Also, there was also a significant difference (0.051) between males and females related to '*asking the interlocutor to simplify the language*.' While it was a frequent strategy among '63%' of the female participants, only '45%' of the male participants used it to understand the interlocutor's message and make the communication move smoothly. As for the strategies related to UIM, there was a significant difference between males and females, while the results were identically associated with the usage of CCI between male and female Arab students.

Discussion

The findings of the analysis showed the most frequent strategies used by Arab participants were 'asking the interlocutor to confirm the meaning,' 'using familiar phrases,' 'using simple expressions,' and 'correcting their performance' by 50% or more from the participants**.**

Regarding the first strategy 'asking the interlocutor to confirm the meaning,' the Arab students showed that they prefer to use this 'interactional strategy' according to Dörnyei and Scott category (1995a; 1995b), which makes them seek for indirect help from the other people involved in the conversation. Confirming the meaning from the interlocutor resembles a significant skill that helps the speakers cope with the communication problems they may encounter. This aligns with the findings of Ugla et al. (2013) and Al-Saqqaf (2015). In general, Arab students tend to adopt many 'interactional strategies,' except for two strategies: 'appealing help from the interlocutor' and 'appealing assistance from others' (12.7%), which may be because of their desire to depend on themselves as much as possible rather than asking for help from interlocutors. Furthermore, Arab students tend to depend on 'word-oriented strategies,' by picking the words

that make them speak fluently, no matter if their language is simple (Amin, 2017). The Arab students also tend to use 'self-repair' in the direct strategies of Dörnyei and Scott (1995a; 1995b), which reflects their self-dependence in solving their communication problems. This aligns with the results of Rahmah et al. (2020) and AlSaqqaf (2015).

In the second part of the examined strategies, understanding the interlocutor's message, Arab students were not adopting many of these strategies. The only exception was 'noticing the interlocutor's facial expression' which is a nonverbal strategy where the speakers use non-linguistic/paralinguistic means trying to elicit the interlocutor's understanding of the intended message by noticing the gestures and the facial expressions (Klessa & Karpinski, 2012). As for the last part of the questionnaire (CCI), Arab students seem not to have high speaking anxiety, and they can take risks in conversations. For them, communication should not be a source of anxiety and stress. Instead, the speaker should enjoy it since it is a cultural interaction with others. The results indicate that the Arab students believe, we assume, that mistakes are part of the learning process, which goes in line with Oradee's study (2012), who has considered that students are experiencing English language speaking anxiety because they believe that they should produce faultless sentences. When the learners have low anxiety in talking and do not feel ashamed for making some mistakes, they become eager to have more robust communication compared to those with high anxiety (Abu-Nawas, 2012). Furthermore, Arab students tend to be sociable in their conversations as they prefer to signal to the interlocutor that they understand what has been said. This is considered by Zhi-peng's work (2014) as a nonverbal cue to figure out when we speak naturally and effectively.

The second significant finding of this research is related to language proficiency. In other words, the basic and proficient groups frequently use four CSs, while the independent group uses three. The only difference is the type of strategy needed for each group to fill the gaps encountered during the communication. This is against the findings of Wharton (2000), who found that the higher the proficiency is, the fewer strategies are adopted. Furthermore, this result is against the findings of Abu-Nawas (2012) and Zhao and Intaraprasert (2013), who reported the opposite when they studied the CSs among Jordanian and Chinese students in the EFL context and found that the higher the proficiency level is, the more CSs they use. Moreover, the independent group used a variety of CSs used by the proficient and basic groups such as using simple expressions, asking the interlocutor for an example, and speaking slowly to gain time and asking for repetition. Regarding the basic group, they used 'code-switching,' 'trying to catch the meaning,' 'guessing,' and 'responding to the interlocutor despite the imperfect understanding.' These skills are preferred since the basic learners tend to have a low level of proficiency making them depend on 'code-switching' more since it helps them cope with communication problems and this result is in line with Ugla et al. (2013). However, the given finding differs from Aldalbahy (2022), who stated that the technique as mentioned above in speaking English did not reflect students' proficiency levels; they only preferred using it while interacting with their bilinguals. Consequently, students with various levels of proficiency may apply similar strategies in speaking English (Madina & Anwar, 2023).

One more finding in this research is that there is a significant correlation between the strategy choice and the participants' gender (Amin, 2017; Najjar, 2016). In that, women are more open to seeking help from the interlocutors or the surrounding people to keep the conversation going as much as possible, unlike their male counterparts., which is in line with the findings of Yaman et al. (2013). Also, Arshad et al. (2015) discovered that male participants were more

confident in speaking English language comparing to females. Our result is dissimilar to the study of Zhao and Intaraprasert (2013), who revealed an insignificant correlation between males and females when responding to the same questionnaire adopted in this study. This result may indicate that the culture plays an influential role in adopting different communication strategies among males and females. The possible justification for the gender difference in using CSs is the fact that females tend to be interested in socializing more than males, which makes them more cooperative during the conversation and tend to seek help from others for the sake of achieving successful communication. The superiority of females in socializing and language development was approved by several studies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Ellis & Ellis, 1994; Macaro, 2006).

Conclusion

This study followed the quantitative approach to examine the use of CSs by Arab students in one of the public Cypriot universities. Furthermore, it investigated the impact of gender and level of proficiency of the participants on using CSs. The findings revealed that the Arab student tended to use more than eight strategies most frequently when speaking English in an EMI setting. Besides, there was a proficiency level impact on using CSs in that each group had their preferred strategy. Also, both Arab males and females were communicating in English using different strategies.

The finding of this study might be necessary for Schools of Foreign Languages in EMI contexts since it recommends equipping the students with tools that enable them to cope with any collapses during their communication in English. For example, EMI contexts should start teaching communication strategies during the English proficiency courses since they can help the learners improve their communication skills. It is also recommended to focus on instructing the Arab students on the 'direct' and 'indirect' strategies since they prefer them to carry on their communication in English. In addition, there is a need to improve the English course curriculum to focus on 'speaking' more since it is the medium of instruction.

The findings of the study represented one international community (Arab students). Consequently, the results may not suffice to give a clear view of the most preferred CSs by all students. So, future studies may want to conduct a comparative study about the usage of communication strategies among Arab students in three different contexts: EFL, EMI, and English-speaking contexts. This comparison can show what strategies the Arab students prefer when the purpose of using English changes. The study also followed the quantitative approach to investigate Arab's usage of CSs. However, applying the qualitative approach (such as interviews) as an additional method may enable getting further information about the preferred CSs when speaking English in this context.

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Malaysian Rural ESL Learners' Perceived English Language Proficiency

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Abstract
English is a compulsory subject taught in Malaysian schools, offering opportunities for both personal and career development. Even though the English Proficiency Index Report 2019 indicated that Malaysia is ranked quite highly in terms of English language proficiency, the result does not represent the actual ability among many learners, especially in the rural areas, as Malaysian ESL learners face many difficulties in using English, verbally and in writing. Amidst the debate on Malaysian ESL learners' proficiency level, it is important to measure how they perceive their ability to use English. This study intends to investigate Malaysian rural ESL learners' perceptions of their English language proficiency. A survey research design was employed. Two hundred seventy-seven participants of Form 1, Form 3, Form 4, and Form 5 form rural schools in Malaysia who were recruited in this study. The data were gathered from a questionnaire based on the description of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) 'Self-assessment grid'. The interview was also conducted to support the quantitative data. The researchers analyzed the percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation of the questionnaire. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data from the interview session. Findings indicate that positive perceptions of English language learning enhance students' interest, thereby accelerating their proficiency levels. This study offers insight into learners' perspectives on their English language acquisition journey. Future research might consider employing a larger sample size and additional data collection instruments to enhance the significance of findings, particularly regarding ESL students' perceptions of their English language proficiency.

*Keywords***:** English language proficiency, ESL learners' perceptions, European framework for language proficiency, Malaysian rural learners, Self-assessment grid
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Introduction

As Malaysia's official second language, English has always been closely scrutinized. Having a good command of English is viewed as desirable, so teaching and learning English in Malaysian schools is given priority. The government has introduced various incentives to improve the English language standard among students. These include the teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects in English (Foo & Richards, 2004) and the *'Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris' (MBMMBI)* (To Uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to Strengthen the English Language) policy. The aim of these policies is to produce proficient English language users who can survive in today's borderless world. In 2013, Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was introduced in Malaysia together with the establishment of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC). In a nutshell, CEFR provides a detailed description of the requirements learners need to attain to use a language. With the introduction of CEFR, students' English language proficiency will now be evaluated based on international standards, recognized globally. In the quest to achieve the highest standard stipulated in CEFR, attention needs to be focused on the learners. Their inability to acquire the language is the result of various factors including a lack of confidence in using the language for various purposes (Nguyen, Warren & Fehring, 2014). This lack of confidence could be the result of the learners' perspectives of their proficiency level (Takahashi, 2009).

As English is a compulsory subject to be taught in Malaysian schools, it is still great challenges to the students who do not use English as their mother tongue. Reports on Malaysian ESL learners' poor command of English have been abundant (D'Silva, 2019; Rahim, 2019; Choong, 2020). Learners, especially from rural areas, struggled in their English language classrooms due to many factors such as attitude and motivation (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019). Even though previous research findings indicated various reasons that affect learners' proficiency in English (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019; Chan, Yunus, & Mohamad, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2014), the issue of perceived proficiency was not highlighted. Learners' perception of their proficiency is one of the major factors that may influence their motivation to use and learn a language (Bensalem, 2018; Takahashi, 2009; 2008). If a learner perceives his ability as poor, he will not be willing to communicate or to try to improve himself.

Prior to the commencement of this study, interviews were conducted with five Malaysian English language teachers. During the interviews, the teachers were asked to evaluate their students' performances in the ESL classrooms. The data from the interviews revealed that the students in the teachers' ESL classrooms were of mixed abilities, while some of them were proficient as they were able to express themselves clearly verbally and in written form, the majority of them had limited abilities especially in their productive skills. Moreover, the majority of the students were reluctant to interact in English. Verbal interactions were limited to short phrases, and they would switch to their mother tongue when they wanted to express themselves further. Other than that, most students did not radiate a strong inclination towards improving their proficiency, even though some students displayed high motivation and interest in learning English.

Research Objectives

This research objective is stated based on the aim of the study:

1. To investigate the Malaysian rural ESL learners' perceptions of their English language proficiency.

2. To discover the factors affecting the Malaysian rural ESL learners' English language proficiency.

Research Questions

This research question is listed based on the objective of the study:

1. How do Malaysian rural ESL learners perceive their English language proficiency?
2. What factors affect Malaysian rural ESL learners English language proficiency?

Literature Review

In language learning, language proficiency can be defined as one's level of ability to use the language (Takahashi, 2009). According to Harsch (2017), it is generally recognized that the concept of proficiency in a second or foreign language comprises the aspects of being able *to do something* with the language (knowing how) as well as *to know about it* (knowing what). In other words, language proficiency is the concept of knowing how and what a language can be used for. To explain it more clearly, language proficiency means one's ability to execute actions related to using the language, i.e., speaking or writing. as well as his awareness of the elements that constitute a language (i.e., grammar, vocabulary).

Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1981), in their construct of communicative competence, emphasize the ability not only to produce correct forms of language but also to produce language appropriate to the context of use. The introduction of CEFR in 2001 has enabled the assessment of students' proficiency to focus not only on the accuracy of their language production but also on the fluency aspects of language use (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR establishes international standards for foreign languages teaching and learning related to assessment. The framework describes the accomplishment expected of the learners. It has six levels of descriptors categorized as: Proficient users (levels C1 & C2), Independent users (levels B1 & B2), and Basic users (levels A1 & A2). The CEFR self-assessment grid would enable learners to self-rate their proficiency based on 34 scales of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing activities.

In relation to proficiency, this research also delves into the significance of language learners' self-perception of their target language (in this context, the English language) proficiency. Self-perception has been linked to language anxiety and ones' level of motivation (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Kitano, 2001; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2002; Canh & Renandya, 2017; Bensalem, 2018). These researchers claim that individuals who perceive their proficiency as high tend to have low anxiety level, thus are more willing to communicate in the target language. They are also more motivated to further improve their proficiency. In this study, low anxiety, and high motivation in using and learning the English language are important for Malaysian ESL learners because they should strive on harnessing their skills, so they become successful English language users.

Methods

This study intends to investigate Malaysian rural ESL learners' perceptions of their English language proficiency. A quantitative research design named survey method was employed. The participants from Form 1, Form 3, Form 4, and Form 5 in rural school in Malaysia were recruited in this study. In this article, the data were gathered from a questionnaire based on the description of CEFR 'Self-assessment grid'. The interview was also conducted to support quantitative data. The researchers analyzed the questionnaire's percentages, mean scores,

and standard deviation. Content analyses was employed to analyze the data from the interview session.

In choosing the participants, the researchers engaged in a purposive sampling method through the suggestions of the school stakeholders. The researchers also relied on the stratified purposeful sampling to get a wider range of students from each for or grade level. For the purpose of this study, the researchers selected students from different classes indicating the different ages and form or grade levels, in which students from Form One, Three, Four, and Five. Aside from the diversity in age, gender, and their English proficiency level, the participants chosen are from different ethnicities to reflect variation in the sample. According to Zulkefly and Razali (2019), the selected participants from different ethnicities, age, and gender will avoid the sample bias. Moreover, Zulkefly and Razali (2019) clarified that selecting the participants this way is important as the participants represent all people in the population and it includes a wider range of participants. Thus, the research would not have obvious limitations. terms of A total of 22 ESL students in Form One, Three, Four, and Five were chosen for this research. The ESL learners' perceptions of their English proficiency level is evaluated through the a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. A questionnaire is used to get answers from a broad range of participants, while an interview is employed to get in-depth information about the participants' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. Wallace (1997) recommended that the optimum approach is to combine these two techniques (interview and questionnaire) so that the benefits of each may be utilized.

Participants

277 learners from Form One, Three, Four, and Five participated in this research. There were 117 male students and 160 female students. The participants were all from a public school located in Perak, Malaysia. In regards to student's ethnicity, there were 234 Malay students, 6 Chinese students and 6 Iban students. The rest of the participants came from other ethnicities. To choose the participants, a non-probability sampling technique is used (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). These students are chosen as participants based on their overall language proficiency as measured by their achievement in the English language subject during their Standard Three year-end examination. The students were grouped into 3 different levels of English language proficiency, namely Moderate (163 students), Good (81 students), and Excellent (5 students). Besides that, the participants in this study were also competent at A1-level to C2-level.

Research Instruments

Questionnaires. This instrument is intended to learn more about how Malaysian Rural ESL Learners Perceive English Language Proficiency.

Semi-structured interview. The selected respondents from Form 1, Form 3, Form 4, and Form 5 are utilised in the study. The objectives are to clarify questionnaire results and augment previously gathered quantitative data.

Results

The findings for this research were based on the research objective of this study. The data were derived from the questionnaires and later analysed using SPSS software to answer the research question: How do Malaysian rural ESL learners perceive their English language proficiency?

Participants' Demographic Background Information

Out of the 277 students who responded to the questionnaire, 117 (42.2%) were male and 160 (57.8%) were female. For their ethnic groups, 234 (84.5%) of Malay students took part in this research whereas 6 (2.2%) of them were Chinese. Moreover, the respondents from Iban were reported 2 (0.7%) out of total participants. The remaining 35 (12.6%) were noted as respondents from different ethnic groups as mentioned. In terms of the students' Form, 39 (14.1%) respondents were from Form One, followed by 3 (1.1%) participants from Form Three while the 88 (31.8% respondents from Form Four. The remaining 147 (53.2%) were from Form Five. As for English language proficiency, the result indicated that 28 (10.1%) perceived that their level was weak. From the data, it is also discovered that 163 (58.8%) students claimed themselves at the moderate level. Meanwhile, around 81 respondents (29.2%) asserted that they were at a good level. Adding to that, an excellent level of English proficiency was formed by only 5 respondents (1.8%). The demographic background information of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Respondent Information (N = 277)*

Demographic Information	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	117	42.2
	Female	160	57.8
Ethnicity	Malay	234	84.5
	Chinese	6	2.2
	Iban	2	0.7
	Others	35	12.6
Form	One	39	14.1
	Three	3	1.1
	Four	88	31.8
	Five	147	53.1
English Language Proficiency	Weak	28	10.1%
	Moderate	163	58.8%
	Good	81	29.2%
	Excellent	5	1.8%

Malaysian Rural ESL Learners Perceived English Language Proficiency

The following tables (Table 2, 3, 4, and 5) show the response of the participants on the statement of ESL learners in Malaysia perceived their English language proficiency based on the CEFR self-assessment grid. Table 2 indicates the learners' responses regarding their English proficiency of understanding level including listening and reading skills. From the total number of 277 respondents, 42.2% ESL learners with M=3.22 were unsure whether they could recognise the implicit meaning in English. Additionally, only 4.3% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and 1.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. In terms of the difficulty of understanding spoken English, most of the students agreed with the statement with M=3.46 which is the highest for listening skill, followed by students who were not sure about their difficulty in understanding English spoken language, whether live or broadcast with 24.9%. Meanwhile, the respondents who strongly agreed with statement number two were 12.6% and those who strongly disagreed were 2.5%.

For reading skills in understanding proficiency, the respondents were asked if they understand a wide range of demanding and longer English texts. Of the total respondents, the majority of students (41.5%) were unsure, followed by 48.7% of students who agreed with the

statement. The respondents who strongly disagreed were less than those who opted strongly agree and the Mean of this item is 3.16. With regard to the ease of understanding of what students hear and read about English, the respondents agreed with 48.7% with M=3.58 and followed by those who were not sure with the statement with 34.3%. From the result, it also can be noticed that the respondents who strongly disagreed with that statement were 2.2%, whereas the students who strongly agreed were higher with 9.7%. From Item 3 of reading skill, it can be identified that mostly the respondents were unclear about whether they could understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete abstract topics in English with 40.8% and the Mean is 3.20. Meanwhile, the students who responded with strongly disagree scored the lowest with 3.2%. In relation to the statement that students virtually can read all forms of the written English language, the majority of respondents agreed with 49.1%, chased by the result of strongly agree with 15.2%. The least percentage for the statement is strongly agree with 2.9%.

Table 2. *Participants' English Proficiency of Understanding Level*

Proficiency	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	Listening						
Understanding	Item 1: I can recognise implicit meaning in English.						
	1.8%	17.0%	42.2%	34.7%	4.3%	3.2274	.84414
	Item 2: I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of English spoken language, whether live or broadcast.						
	2.5%	16.6%	24.9%	43.3%	12.6%	3.4693	.99453
	Reading						
	Item 3: I can understand a wide range of demanding, longer English texts.						
	2.9%	19.5%	41.5%	30.7%	5.4%	3.1625	.90026
	Item 4: I can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read in English.						
	2.2%	5.1%	34.3%	48.7%	9.7%	3.5884	.81890
	Item 5: I can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete abstract topics in English						
	3.2%	16.2%	40.8%	36.1%	3.6%	3.2058	.87076
	Item 6: I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written English language.						
	2.9%	10.8%	22.0%	49.1%	15.2%	3.6282	.96440

In relation to the learners' English proficiency of speaking level, Item 7 stated the way they expressed themselves in English spontaneously, very fluently and precisely. It shows that 43.3% out of total 277 respondents chose to be unsure about the statement. While 24.95 of the respondents were recorded to agree. Only 3.2% of the learners were reported to strongly agree and 6.1% of the learners chose to strongly disagree. It was probably because the learners lacked the confidence to express themselves in a conversation. Similar to Item 7, the respondents were still not sure about their capability to speak English fluently without much obvious searching for expression (Item 8). For Item 9, the respondents were still doubtful in some way about their flexibility and effectively using English for social purposes. It can be seen from Table 3 that the majority of the students decided to be neutral.

Followed by the rest of the speaking skills level, both spoken interaction and spoken production skills, the students tend to be impartial about the questionnaire items (items 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). However, the respondents' preferences were slightly different between neutral and agree for Item 10 (N=39.0%, A:36.1%) if they are able to use English flexibly and effectively for academic purposes. Following that, the response to the statement that the students can express themselves in English with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly

and effectively in an assured, personal style, the percentage shows that only 4.0% difference between neutral and agree options. From Table 3, it can be concluded that most of the respondents were not distrustful of their speaking skills both spoken and production. The challenge faced by the group of students would probably still be in the dilemma as they had to decide whether they can master English speaking skills or not. Hence, the appropriate exposure should be provided to students, such as CEFR seminars or courses that demonstrate how to effectively employ a student-centred approach in the classroom.

Table 3. *Participants' English Proficiency of Speaking Level*

Proficiency	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**M**	**SD**
Speaking	**Spoken Interaction**						
	Item 7: I can express myself in English spontaneously, very fluently and precisely.						
	6.1%	22.4%	43.3%	24.9%	3.2%	2.9675	.92217
	Item 8: I can express myself in English fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.						
	7.6%	28.5%	38.6%	22.0%	3.2%	2.8484	.95862
	Item 9: I can use English language flexibly and effectively for social purposes.						
	3.6%	16.2%	32.5%	41.5%	6.1%	3.3032	.93740
	Item 10: I can use the English language flexibly and effectively for academic purposes.						
	4.3%	15.9%	39.0%	36.1%	4.7%	3.2094	.91655
	Item 11: I can use English language flexibly and effectively for professional purposes.						
	5.1%	24.9%	50.2%	18.4%	1.4%	2.8628	.82266
	Item 12: I can differentiate finer shades of meaning in English even in complex situations.						
	3.6%	15.5%	50.9%	27.1%	2.9%	3.1011	.82350
	Item 13: I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity in English.						
	4.3%	19.1%	39.0%	34.3%	3.2%	3.1300	.90754
	Item 14: I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion in English.						
	3.6%	19.1%	43.3%	29.2%	4.7%	3.1227	.89650
	Item 15: I have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms in English.						
	6.9%	26.7%	42.2%	20.9%	3.2%	2.8700	.93119
	Item 16: I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely in English.						
	6.9%	26.7%	42.2%	20.9%	3.2%	2.8700	.93119
	Spoken Production						
	Item 17: I can express myself in English with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively in an assured, personal style.						
	6.5%	19.5%	34.7%	30.7%	8.7%	3.1552	1.04314
	Item 18: In English, I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context.						
	5.8%	18.4%	40.4%	31.0%	4.3%	3.0975	.94480

In response to learners' English proficiency of writing level, it can be summarised that the largest number of the respondents were uncertain of their knowledge in different aspects of writing skills. Almost half of the total respondents claimed that they were still vague about their ability to write sentences as well as summarise and review the information from texts appropriately and other sources, including presentation and literacy works (items 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26). From Table 4, it is discovered that only item number 23 the students agreed that they

can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style in English (42.2%). Referring to the same open-ended items from Table 4, the students highlighted their preferences that they can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects in English with 0.4% with a mean 2.87, whereas 3.25 with mean 3.10 and 3.42 for the statement reconstructing arguments and accounts in English in a coherent presentation and writing clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style in English. Thus, different groups of students would have different pace of learning and understanding of writing content delivered by their teachers.

Table 4. *Participants' English Proficiency of Writing Level*

Proficiency	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Writing							
	Item 19: I can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects in English.						
	7.2%	23.1%	54.2%	14.1%	1.4%	2.7942	.82372
	Item 20: I can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects in English.						
	7.2%	24.5%	42.2%	25.6%	0.4%	2.8736	.88991
	Item 21: I can write complex letters, reports or articles, which present a case with an effective logical structure in English.						
	5.8%	21.7%	46.2%	24.9%	1.4%	2.9458	.86851
	Item 22: I can reconstruct arguments and accounts in English in a coherent presentation.						
	3.2%	16.6%	48.7%	29.6%	1.8%	3.1011	.81019
	Item 23: I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style in English.						
	3.2%	17.3%	31.8%	42.2%	5.1%	3.4296	2.55794
	Item 24: I can summarise information from written English sources in a coherent presentation.						
	3.6%	15.2%	49.5%	28.5%	3.2%	3.1264	.83531
	Item 25: I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works in English.						
	9.4%	28.5%	43.0%	18.1%	1.1%	2.7292	.90228

Table 5 displays the overall responses to the CEFR language skills based on the students' self-assessment grid. Based on the table, the findings indicate that the respondents can read with ease virtually all forms of the written English language with a Mean score 3.62 and Standard Deviation 0.96. It is also argued that the respondents would understand with ease virtually everything heard or read in English with M=3.58, SD=0.81. Both most and second frequently perceived by the students were in the reading section. Followed by the statement from the listening section stating that the students have no difficulty in understanding any kind of English spoken language, whether live or broadcast with M=3.46, SD=0.99, succeeded by the statement from writing section stating can write clearly, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style in English with slightly different Mean score 3.42 and Standard Deviation 2.55. Concurrently, the highest Mean score for spoken interaction is 3.30 with a Standard Deviation 0.82. While on the contrary, spoken production reported 3.15 as the highest Mean score. The last two scores from overall English language proficiency perceived by ESL students in Malaysia are both from the writing section (item 19 and Item 26). The students claimed that they can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects in English with a Mean score 2.79 and Standard Deviation 0.82, whereas it illustrated that the students could write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works in English with a Mean score 2.72 and Standard Deviation 0.90.

Table 5. *Participants' English Proficiency of Overall Levels*

Language Skills	N	Maximum	Minimum	M	SD
Listening	277	1.00	5.00	3.2274	.84414
	277	1.00	5.00	3.4693	.99453
Reading	277	1.00	5.00	3.1625	.90026
	277	1.00	5.00	3.5884	.81890
	277	1.00	5.00	3.2058	.87076
	277	1.00	5.00	3.6282	.96440
Spoken Interaction	277	1.00	5.00	2.9675	.92217
	277	1.00	5.00	2.8282	.95862
	277	1.00	5.00	3.3032	.93740
	277	1.00	5.00	3.2094	.91655
	277	1.00	5.00	2.8628	.82266
	277	1.00	5.00	3.1011	.82350
	277	1.00	5.00	3.1300	.90754
	277	1.00	5.00	3.1227	.89650
	277	1.00	5.00	2.8700	.93119
	277	1.00	5.00	2.8700	.93119
Spoken Production	277	1.00	5.00	3.1552	1.04314
	277	1.00	5.00	3.0975	.94480
Writing	277	1.00	5.00	2.7942	.82372
	277	1.00	5.00	2.8736	.88991
	277	1.00	5.00	2.9458	.86851
	277	1.00	5.00	3.1011	.81019
	277	1.00	5.00	3.4296	2.55794
	277	1.00	5.00	3.1264	.83531
	277	1.00	5.00	2.7292	.90228

Analysis of the Semi-structured Students' Interview

Based on the data from the interviews, a survey was conducted with ESL learners who were taught by the four students interviewed. The purpose of the survey was to gauge students' perceptions of their own English language proficiency. The results of the survey would indicate whether or not their performance was in tandem with their perceived proficiency.

Form 1 and Form 3 Participants (Student 1 and Student 2)

Based on the case of Student 1, English is not commonly used for communication purposes. Nonetheless, Student 1 claimed that he put an effort to communicate in English in classroom. It was evident from the interview in which Student 1 stated that he tries to interact with his friends who are good in English whenever he has a chance to create the English social interaction. Student 1 said *"I want to speak in English as I realize that English brings so many benefits in life"*. Thus, this was the reason for Student 1 to learn and use English more in classroom communications. Meanwhile, as Student 2's family background is Chinese and she lives in an area where majority ethnic group is Chinese, Student 2 rarely use English in daily communication. It can be indicated that both Student 1 and Student 2 were not exposed to the English language at home by their parents. Nevertheless, they consider English as a language that plays an essential role in communication in modern life. Student 2 stated that "English is an important language to learn as it can help to communicate effectively with people all over the world".

Form 4 and Form 5 Participants (Student 3 and Student 4)

As Student 3 and Student 4 live in a multiracial neighborhood, when they use English frequently, it creates a positive experience for them to practice English in their interactions. Furthermore, Student 3 has been exposed in such circumstances through her family members who also can speak English, so they can practice English regularly. Besides that, Student 3 disclosed that she started to learn English from movies she watched since she was a child. From the interview, Student 3 revealed that "*I started to like English when watching Harry Potter, Narnia, Mickey Mouse, and Zootopia. Since I love watching English movies, I can also learn how to speak in English from the movies*". Other than that, Student 3 claimed that learning English can open wider opportunities in terms of finding proper job in the future. I *believe English can help us to get a good job in the future* (Student 3). In contrast, Student 4 stated that she has a problem understanding the English language. She needs put effort in improving her speaking and writing skills. She also rarely read and write in English as he is not exposed that much to the English learning material. During the interview session, Student 4 admitted that English is too hard to comprehend so it gradually made him lose interest in learning. Student 4 stated, "*English is hard. I do not understand at all*". This act is reflected in a study conducted by Syuhada and Fatimah (2021) that the learning activities performed which is not in accordance with the students' interest will result in less propitious achievements.

Discussion

1. How do Malaysian rural ESL learners perceive their English language proficiency?

The findings of participants' English proficiency of understanding level revealed that there was a significant result for statement 2 in the listening section which stated that '*I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of English spoken language, whether live or broadcast*' with Mean = 3.4693 and Standard Deviation = 0.99453. On the other hand, the result from the reading section was also significantly exposed by statement 6 which '*I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written English language*' with Mean = 3.6282 and Standard Deviation = 0.96440. From the data, it is indicated that the understanding level of students' English proficiency was the results of the combination of multiple English skills, which are listening and reading skills. Moreover, in order to master listening and reading skills, one of the requirements that students should have is vocabulary knowledge. The results mentioned were in line with Muhamad and Kiely (2017), who stated that vocabulary is the key to good command of the English language. Thus, the students are expected to understand the vocabulary in order to get a better understanding for a better English comprehension.

The results of the Participants' English Proficiency of Speaking Level also demonstrated a significant outcomes. Based on the item 9 '*I can use English language flexibly and effectively for social purposes*', it can be seen that the students perceived English has a remarkable effect on their speaking development skill with Mean = 3.3032 and Standard Deviation = 0.96440. The finding also supports that the students are socially able to accommodate their spoken interaction effectively. The result is relevant to the study done by Muhamad and Seng (2019) which disclosed that life and career skills can be developed if the students can practice English more flexibly. Moreover, the result from the interview, students agreed that English would enable them to advance them to get better jobs in the future. In regard to the interview result, Saputra, Komariah and Yuliana (2017) yielded that proper English communication skills will influence students in choosing their career path.

In accordance with the spoken production from the Participants' English Proficiency of Speaking Level, it is argued that the students can express themself in English with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively in an assured personal style with Mean = 3.1552 and Standard Deviation = 1.04314. According to the result, it is considered as significant as a student from the interview result also admitted that the flexibility of English is effectively affecting her personal style. Besides that, the student added that her English has improved as results of her habit watching English movies since she was child. It is noted that English has an influence on developing one's communication style. Tobroni, Natchiar and Mazlini (2021), revealed that language learning success is attributed to a number of individual factors. The individual factors related to foreign language learning can be divided into affective factors e.g., motivation, attitude, and personality. It is signified that individual factor affects students' motivation to learn English.

Similar to the results of the Participants' English Proficiency of Speaking Level, the findings from the Participants' English Proficiency of Writing Level showed that the students can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style in English with Mean = 3.4296 and Standard Deviation = 2.55794. From the data, it is considered a significant outcome as the students perceived they were able to produce unequivocal essays. Contrarily, Tahir, Shah, Shak, Albakri, and Adnan (2021), the students in the study were not keen to write as their writing skills in the English language are not good due to the low level of language proficiency. Furthermore, it was reported by Ashrafzadeh and Nimehchisalem (2015) that Malaysian tertiary learners were having difficulties in using English vocabulary in their writing. Therefore, it is crucial for students to increase their motivation and interest in enhancing the writing skill based on the students' needs.

Conclusion

According to the findings, it can be indicated that the participants will be a lot more enthusiastic in learning English if the teaching and learning styles are interesting. Thus, the English teachers are expected to be able to provide media or teaching and learning tools must be appropriate and relevant to support the students in improving their speaking skills (Saputra, Tahir, Albakri, Zaini, Mokhtar, Ismail, Anisaturrahmi & Sholihah, 2023). In accordance with other research, Zulkefly and Razali (2019) discovered that it is very crucial for both teachers and students to have effective communication between each other so as to help each other to improve what needs to be improved and change what needs to be changed, in order to have a better language learning experience. It is argued that negative perceptions will lead the insignificant outcomes for the students in learning English. In contrast, positive perceptions toward English language learning will enhance the students' interest in learning English. Thus, the level of students' English proficiency will accelerate.

According to the study's findings, the study is extremely crucial as it will be able to shed some lights on the issues surrounding Malaysian rural ESL learners' level of proficiency. The results of this study may contribute to formulating courses and programmes to ensure that they are proficient English language users are effective English language users.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future research may consider variations in the sample's characteristics due to gender, family history, and race. Future research with a bigger sample size may look at the outcomes of

ESL students' perceptions toward their English language proficiency. ESL researchers may take consideration in employing more instruments in gathering the data for more significant results.

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A Mixed-Method Action Research on Promoting Critical Thinking in the Classroom: Implications for EFL Teachers

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Abstract
Since acquiring critical thinking is a necessity to make sense of today's world, many teachers are looking for effective strategies that they can utilize in their classrooms to help students become apt critical thinkers. The present study, therefore, aims to investigate some of those strategies by adopting a mixed-method action research approach that was designed to implement, track, and evaluate the impact of integrating critical thinking-based instruction and activities as a part of the school curriculum to promote critical thinking skills and dispositions among Moroccan high school students. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the field of critical thinking-based instruction in EFL education, as it can inform teachers, curriculum developers, and other education stakeholders on how to enhance students' critical thinking. Hence, the main questions posed by this study dealt with identifying the most effective instructional activities to develop students' critical thinking and their impacts on students' critical thinking skills and dispositions. The study sample consists of a class of 14 students who were selected to participate in a four-stage action research cycle for one school year. The 14 students were also invited to complete a questionnaire, and then six of them were selected to take part in semi-structured interviews. The study's findings reveal a noticeable and encouraging improvement in students' critical thinking skills and dispositions. Furthermore, the study provides practical implications for EFL teachers to promote students' critical thinking without disrupting the school curriculum.

Keywords: critical thinking, critical thinking dispositions, critical thinking skills, EFL teachers, mixed-method action research

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Introduction

One of the main goals of education worldwide nowadays is the development of students' critical thinking prowess as it constitutes a significant pillar of the 21st-century learning framework (Kokkidou, 2013; Liu et al., 2014; Sellars et al., 2018), and the Moroccan education system is in line with this goal. Consequently, the Moroccan education system has made many reforms to accommodate this emerging trend to enhance the quality of its education by propagating and establishing the different pillars of this framework including critical thinking in the classroom (Ibourk, 2016). Most of those reforms have aimed at shifting the education system from the traditional trend to a more modern one by adopting approaches such as the competency-based approach and the humanistic approach, which are known to focus more on the learners and their role as active agents in the education system. Teachers, therefore, find themselves in a critical juncture as they are required to adopt and apply learning approaches to encourage students to think critically and help them develop their thinking abilities and express their opinions and ideas more fluently.

However, most teachers are unable to do so not only because most of them view critical thinking as "notoriously difficult to teach and develop" (Nieto & Saiz, 2011, p. 202) but also due to the heavy emphasis on standardized tests, especially at the level of secondary school, which as research has frequently shown (e.g., Paul & Edler, 2006; Bensley et al., 2010) seldom aim at developing students' critical thinking (Chouari & Nachit, 2016). Hence, they focus more on teaching for the test with so little or no time to develop such skills and "end up teaching students what to think instead of teaching them how to think" (Rouijel & Bouziane, 2020, p.24) which results in many students leaving high school and venturing into academia suffering from a deficiency at the level of critical thinking (The Superior Council of Education and Training and Scientific Research, 2016 as cited Rouijel & Bouziane, 2020). Teachers of languages, including EFL teachers, also find themselves devoting a considerable amount of time to the teaching of grammar rules and vocabulary and neglecting developing their students' critical thinking in the process. Another reason is that most teachers find it challenging to implement critical thinking-based instruction in class due to insufficient knowledge of the concept (Li, 2016). However, it has been well-established in the literature of language education that developing students' thinking leads to the development of students' language proficiency (Liu & Stapleton, 2018; Saleh, 2019, p.3).

In this context, the present research aims to investigate feasible alternative practices and recommendations that can be adopted and implemented in the EFL classroom at the secondary level to promote students' critical thinking in conjunction with the current practices that focus on preparing students to sit for standardized tests through a process of action research model. Hence, this study is an attempt to add to the emerging body of research in the field of EFL teaching as it aims to provide implications for teachers to improve critical thinking-based instruction in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the findings of this study contribute significantly to the new and scarce literature on developing critical thinking in the EFL classroom in secondary schools through adopting effective critical thinking-based instruction in the Moroccan educational context.

Hence, the present study applies a mixed-method action research model first to investigate students' awareness of the importance of critical thinking, and the main factors that affect its development from their perspective. The study also aims to identify the most effective in-class critical thinking-based instructional strategies and activities that may contribute to developing

critical thinking skills and dispositions, and the impacts of such an instruction on enhancing students' critical thinking awareness and ability. To meet the research objectives, this study is designed to reply to the following questions:

- What is students' level of awareness of the importance of critical thinking?
- What are the factors that hinder the development of students' critical thinking?
- What are the best instructional activities for promoting students' critical thinking?
- What are the impacts of these activities on students' critical thinking?

In this framework, a hypothesis is put forward stipulating that using effective critical thinking-based instructional methods and strategies within an action research model may likely promote students' critical thinking awareness and skills in the classroom and beyond.

Literature Review

Critical Thinking Definition

It is very imperative to put forward a relevant definition for critical thinking because as one defines it, in this case, the teacher will be able to teach it and assess it (Johnson & Hamby, 2015, p.419). Since critical thinking has become such a common buzzword in education, there has been a plethora of definitions of this term. For instance, McPeck (1981, p.7) defines critical thinking as "the skill and propensity to engage in an activity with reflective skepticism" (as cited in Nieto & Saiz, 2011, p.202). Ennis (1996) adds to the previous definition and defines it as "reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p.166). Paul and Elder (2008) view critical thinking as "the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it" (p.2). They also highlight a specific type of thinking called 'egocentric standard' that most students resort to in the classroom, which is mainly based on whether they agree or disagree with a particular issue, relying on their personal beliefs in the process (Paul & Elder, 2013); it is a type of thinking that is subjective and "inconsistent with the spirit of critical inquiry and can lead to intellectual sophistry and manipulation" (Cosgrove, 2011, p.345). Hence, it is vital to inform students on how to think more objectively. To do so, however, students' critical thinking must be improved, which means that their critical thinking skills and critical thinking dispositions must be nurtured (Bensley & Murtagh, 2011; Zhao et al., 2016), and their ability to intentionally use them in given situations (Bensley & Murtagh, 2011).

Teacher's Role in Implementing Critical Thinking-Based Instruction

The literature on critical thinking-based instruction has always suggested that teachers need to be critical thinkers themselves to teach it (Zhang, 2022). The teacher plays a significant role in facilitating critical thinking-based instruction because she helps students become aware of their assumptions and those of others and reflect on them (Mezirow, 1997; Christie et al., 2015) and guides them to make effective changes in their frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997). In this regard, Li (2016) argues that implementing a critical thinking-based approach is dependent on the belief and conceptualization of what critical thinking is and how teachers practice it in their classrooms. Similarly, Abrami et al. (2015) postulate that promoting students' critical thinking skills and dispositions depends on teachers' critical thinking experience, preparation, and availability. Hence, it is the teacher's responsibility to make use of and implement suitable teaching methods in the classroom (Lampert, 2006 as cited in Karami et al., 2012) as well as provide a classroom environment that allows students to "experience both certainty and uncertainty of knowledge and knowing to develop their ability to evaluate conflicting views or evidence" (Cheng & Wan, 2017,

p.157). However, to do so, the teacher should have a good knowledge of those methods and the strategies that can positively influence students' ability to think critically (Karami et al., 2012). Hence, having such knowledge enables the teacher to give specific instructions, implement interventions (Niu et al., 2013), and design classroom activities that aim to improve students' critical thinking.

Interventions of Promoting Critical Thinking in the Classroom

Many activities are used to promote and assess students' critical thinking, such as debates, interviews, presentations, compositions, cooperative tasks, self-assessment and self-evaluation, role plays, and project-based activities (Marin & Pava, 2017). Yet, one of the best and most agreed-on activities in the literature is to engage students in discussions in which they listen and exchange their ideas and arguments with each other in a process of give and take (Chaffee, 2019) by asking and answering questions (Bezanilla et al., 2019). Questioning is essential as it is one of the main qualities of critical thinkers (Saleh, 2019). Jamiai and El Karfa (2022) also highlight the importance of questioning and believe that it is the basis for creating a communicative-oriented approach between the teacher and her students (p. 121) as this approach helps in generating "communication environments to exchange ideas" (Marin & Pava, 2017, p. 84) and act the basis for all other classroom activities. In this regard, Jamiai and El Karfa (2022) recommend using "open-ended and challenging questioning practice; indirect and tolerant error treatment patterns; open patterns of communication and social organization, and the creation of a safe environment in the classroom" (p. 122).

Previous studies on Implementing Critical Thinking-Based Instruction in Secondary Education

In the Moroccan education context, the integration and implementation of critical thinking-based instruction in school in general and the EFL classroom in particular at a secondary level is still somewhat of a novelty, which explains the scarcity of research and experience related to this field of study. The literature also reveals that a great majority of previous research focused mainly on developing critical thinking at the level of higher education (e.g., Chouari and Nachit, 2016; Rouijel and Bouziane, 2020; Ghazlane et al., 2020; Aouaf et al., 2023) with few exceptions that focused on secondary education (e.g., Mrah, 2017, Jebbour, 2019). However, most of those few studies done at a secondary level investigated EFL and ESL textbooks to see whether they promote critical thinking or not, except one study, which was done by Daniel et al. (2017) to examine the use of open philosophically-oriented questions to foster critical thinking among five groups of Moroccan pupils aged between 10 to 15 years old with 30 pupils in each group from two primary and secondary schools public schools in Rabat.

Therefore, the need to conduct more studies at the secondary level and investigate the implementation and development of critical thinking among students in the EFL classroom is crucial to fill this research gap and pave the way for other future studies that target critical thinking-based instruction in Moroccan education settings.

Method

To meet the study objectives, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has been employed in a mixed-method action research design.

Research approach

The choice of conducting mixed-method action research design is most efficient for the purposes intended behind this study as it yields a strong methodological approach, and foundation that targets practical classroom problems (Ivankova, 2015). Moreover, Ivankova and Wingo (2018) advance that opting for quantitative and qualitative methods and combining them with action research "can produce more scientifically sound and more transferable results" (p. 2) and can help "secure an effective and scientifically sound approach to action/intervention planning, implementation, and monitoring" (p. 9). This study also adopts a transformative learning framework within this model of mixed-method action research as they both aim to make better changes (Mezirow, 1991 as cited in Christie et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the use of educational action research in this study is suitable to investigate the research questions of this study as it closely aligns with "classroom inquiry that guides practice through activities, interventions, and reflection that teachers engage in as part of their day-to-day work and can be undertaken by individual teacher-researchers" (Brown et al., 2013, p. 62). Teachers play a leading role in this type of research because they become researchers who investigate what is happening in their classroom to improve their teaching practices which in turn leads them to become "active partners in leading school improvement" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hopkins, 2008 as cited in Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 2), especially if the teacher (and in this case also students) who is considered the primary audience and recipient of the findings of this research choose to share conclusions with secondary audiences such as other colleagues and educators inside the school and beyond it (Oranga & Gisore, 2023). Moreover, the teacher can often collaborate with other academic partners (Kemmis et al., 2014) with more experience and expertise and who will help improve the quality of teaching practices.

Participants

The study participants consisted of 14 students who were at the time of the study in their final year of high school. The students were involved in the study for a year. They were physics sciences stream students and belonged to the same class in a public high school in Taounate, Morocco. They were selected to take part in this study using convenience sampling. This type of sampling was opted for due to the availability of the students at the time of the study, and their willingness to take part in the research. The students had three hours of English per week as mandated by official guidelines, and they were examined in English as a part of the national baccalaureate exam at the end of the school year.

For the students' English language level, they ranged from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate. There were 42.9% male students, 57.1% female students and their ages ranged from 16-18 (71.4%) to 18-20 (28.6%). A majority of 64.3% had been students in the same teacher's class for two consecutive years. The classroom size and the number of participants were ideal for the study as it does not require a large sample population.

Data Collection Procedures

The main data collection procedure used in this study is practical action research. This action research, as shown in Figure One, was adapted from and designed based on Kemmis and Mctaggart's (1988) four moments or stages cycle. The four-stage cycle begins by planning for an action, implementing that action using interventive strategies, observing the action, and then reflecting on it.

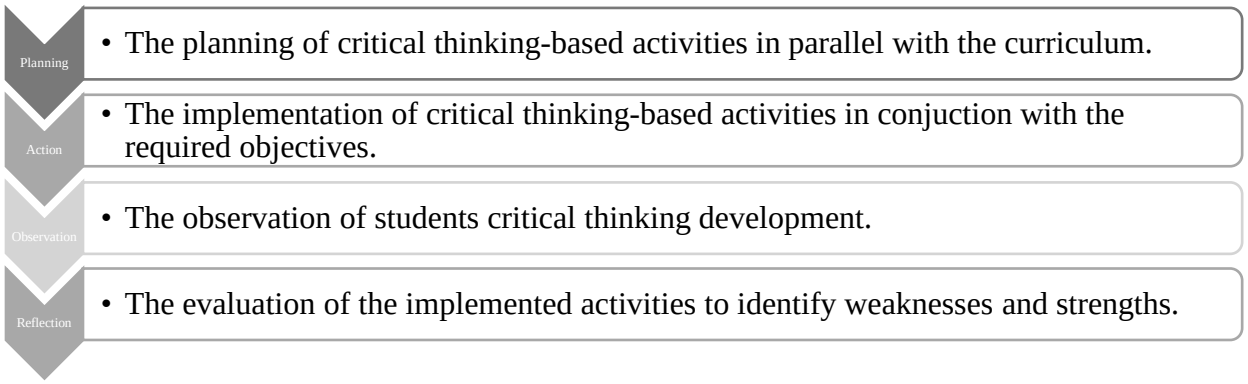

Figure 1. The four stages of the implemented action research

Before beginning the action research cycles, students were introduced to the skills used to analyze and argue critically in class. Students were also introduced to three different types of student talk in the classroom, as has been advanced by Mercer (1995), which are exploratory talk that demands students to "engage with one another's ideas in a critically constructive manner, providing suggestions and comments for joint consideration, challenging and counter-challenging one another's viewpoints with justifications, and proposing alternative perspectives," disputational talk that "contains disagreement and assertions without reasons," and cumulative talk which "features uncritical statements leading to common knowledge by accumulation" (as cited in Liang & Fung, 2020, p. 6). The students were required to take note of the three talks and opt for an exploratory talk when defending their ideas and using their arguments.

The second data collection procedure used in this study is a questionnaire given to the students to complete online after the end of the action research cycle. The first three parts of the questionnaire focused mainly on students' views on the factors that hinder critical thinking development in the classroom, the practical in-class activities that help in developing critical thinking, and the teacher's role and presence in fostering critical thinking. Part four which was adapted from Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version of Bloom's taxonomy of critical thinking skills and Facione et al., (1994) list of critical thinking dispositions, was reserved for students' personal reflection on to what extent they have developed their critical thinking abilities. The questionnaire was designed on a Five-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

To have a more in-depth reflection and seek more details and comprehensive data, semi-structured interviews were carried out with six randomly selected students of the sample population. The semi-structured interview included nine open-ended questions that aimed at gaining more insight into students' experiences and improvement and reflection after the end of the year.

Data Analysis

The action research cycle was designed according to the suggested framework by Kemmis and Mctaggart (1988). The stages of the cycle were recorded manually by the teacher in the form of a reflection logbook to track the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection of the implemented activities and their effect on students' critical thinking. As for the questionnaire, the data were computed and analyzed using the Statistics Package for the Social

Science (SPSS) version 27.0 and Microsoft Excel. Finally, the interviews were transcribed and themed using a content analysis approach.

Results

Findings from the Action Research

The action research cycle stages which as summarized in Appendix A, tracks the beginning of the teacher's intervention and use of critical thinking-based instruction from the planning stage to final reflection stage. The final stage which concludes with a reflection moment highlights the differences observed in students' thinking from the teacher's point of view based on the notes taken throughout the process.

At the level of critical thinking skills, the observation checklist included six primary skills as proposed by Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy. The skills descending from higher-order thinking skills to lower-order thinking skills are as follows: Creating, Evaluating, Analyzing, Applying, Understanding, and Remembering. Students' development in those skills was tracked individually for each student using a scale of 1. Excellent, 2. Good, 3. Satisfactory, and 4. Needs improvement. During the observation and reflection phases, most students showed a considerable improvement at the level of higher-order thinking skills especially when they were analyzing their ideas and making connections with their ideas and those of their classmates as well as when discussing different topics and evaluating the new information and ideas presented to them. They also showed apparent differences in their level of remembering basic concepts and facts, understanding received information, and applying it in new contexts. However, some students showed less improvement in these skills. The reason behind this is that they found the language as a barrier to sharing their ideas and opinions. However, though language posed a barrier for some, students still managed to make use of exploratory talk and they reminded each other during discussions to minimize cumulative talk, and avoid disputational talk as much as possible when presenting their arguments or responding to those of their peers.

As for students' motivation and disposition to apply those previously observed skills, most students showed high levels of curiosity to learn about new issues and formulate questions concerning them, especially when the topics of discussion were of interest to them. Half of them were also open-minded to explore alternative points of view and demand justifications when processing new information. Few students, however, seemed less interested in weighing in and presenting their point of view, and when they were asked about the reasons behind this, they chalked it up to tiredness and demotivation.

Findings from the Questionnaires and Interviews

One of the first questions that students were required to answer was related to their awareness of the importance of developing critical thinking. The results as shown by Figure Two below, reveal that more than half of the students (57.1%) believe that critical thinking is important whereas 42.9% voted maybe and 0% voted no. In the interviews, most students confirmed their awareness of how important critical thinking is, such as Student Two, who stated that "Critical thinking is very important, as it enables us to have the ability to use our brains correctly, meaning that we do not consume the ideas that are presented to us before we are sure of their validity, and that we build logical ideas that come from us, not by following others." Similarly, Student Five advanced, "I am aware of my critical thinking ability, especially in evaluating information, forming logical arguments, and expressing ideas coherently." He further added that "Critical thinking is an

essential skill as it enables individuals to solve problems, make informed decisions, and navigate complex situations effectively."

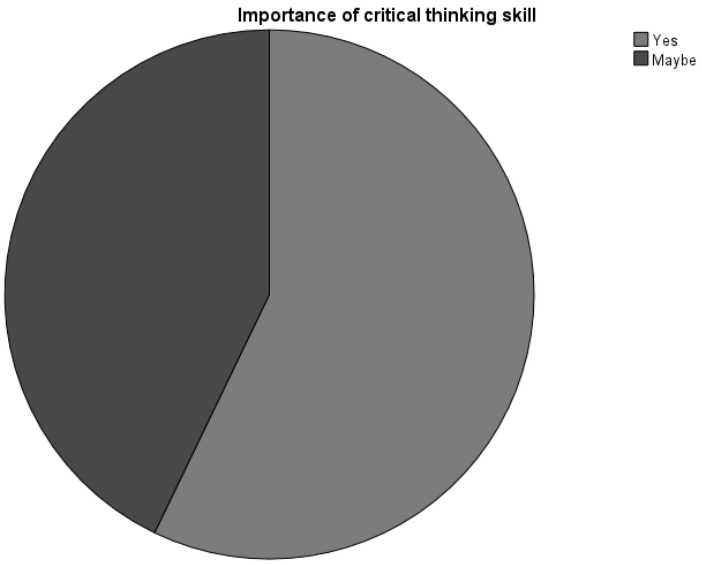

Figure 2. Students' level of awareness of critical thinking importance

For the second question, students were asked about the factors that hinder their overall development of critical thinking. The results were close, as shown in Figure Three, for the factor of "heavy focus on the language system (grammar and vocabulary) over communicative skills,' 28.6% of the students equally strongly agreed and agreed that it impedes the development of their thinking whereas 35.7% opted for neutral. As for the second factor which is the 'language barrier and low level of English' 37.5% of students agreed and disagreed that it affects their development of critical thinking. 28.6% of students equally strongly agreed, agreed, and disagreed with the third factor, which is "Affective factors such as speaking anxiety, inhibition, and lack of motivation." In contrast, 35.7% of them agreed and 21.4% strongly agreed with factor four "the teacher devote time mainly to teaching the important aspects of language mainly comprehension, grammar, and writing." When asked about the factors that hinder students' development of critical thinking, Student Four listed several factors that he found hindering the development of his and his classmates' critical thinking not just in English but in other subjects as well; he stated, "I find that adopting the lecture method most of the time, not doing practical experiments, and not allowing students to put forward views and discuss. Also, not giving students enough waiting time while answering questions is one of the biggest problems we as students face." As for Student Six, she believed the main factors are a lack of topical knowledge and bad communication skills; she stated, "I think that the lack of information and communication skills causes an obstacle to the development of our critical thinking." Other factors, which were mainly affective factors, were highlighted by Student Three, who said, "I think being afraid of telling their honest critical opinion is one of the biggest problems that face students when it comes to students' development; also, not being aware of the expressions that should be used in this skill."

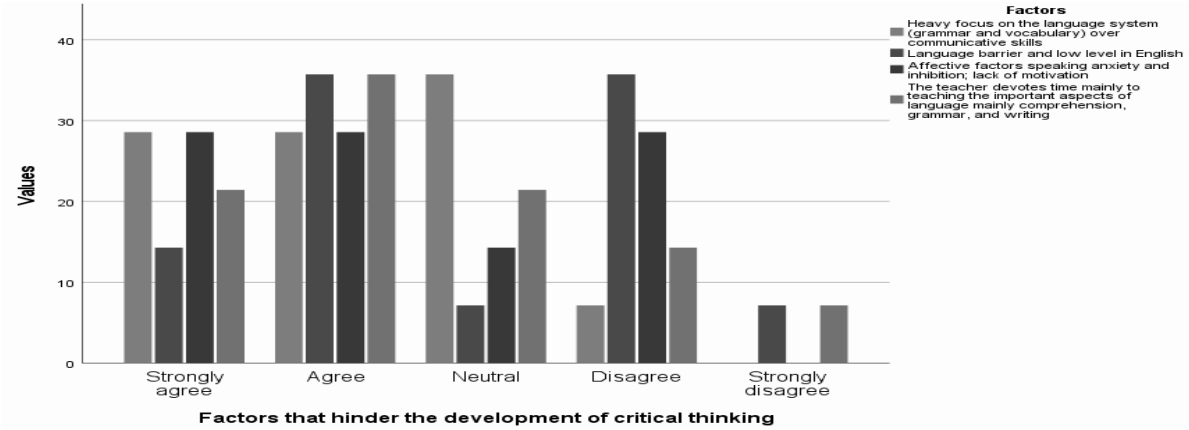

Figure 3. Factors that hinder the development of critical thinking from students' view

For the third question, which aimed at exploring the best classroom activities to promote critical thinking from students' view, the students were asked to rank the different activities from the most effective one to the least effective one. The results shown in Figure Four reveal that students preferred the activity of 'class discussions' as 71.4% of them ranked it first. As for the activities 'justifying an opinion' and 'oral presentations' they were both ranked second by 50% of respondents whereas 'constructing and asking questions' and 'learning new vocabulary' were also equally ranked third by 42.9%. Concerning the activities 'answering questions' and 'debates,' they were ranked fourth by 28.6%. Finally, 'reflective interactions' was ranked by only 7.1% as the least relevant activity. These preferences were also evidenced in the interviews as most students preferred certain activities over others; for instance, Student Three stated, "This year, I loved a lot of the activities that we used to participate in, like debates, class discussions, and oral presentations." Student Five also said that "Activities like group discussions, and creative writing have been particularly interesting in class." Similarly, Student Two mentioned, "Some of my favorite class activities are: class discussions and debates between students about a certain controversial topic or issue." In this regard, Student Four shared how he appreciated the time allocated for discussing questions and topics; he said, "The activity I liked most was at the end of each lesson that there was some time allocated to answer our questions. Also, at the end of the lesson, a classmate would suggest a topic, and we discussed it."

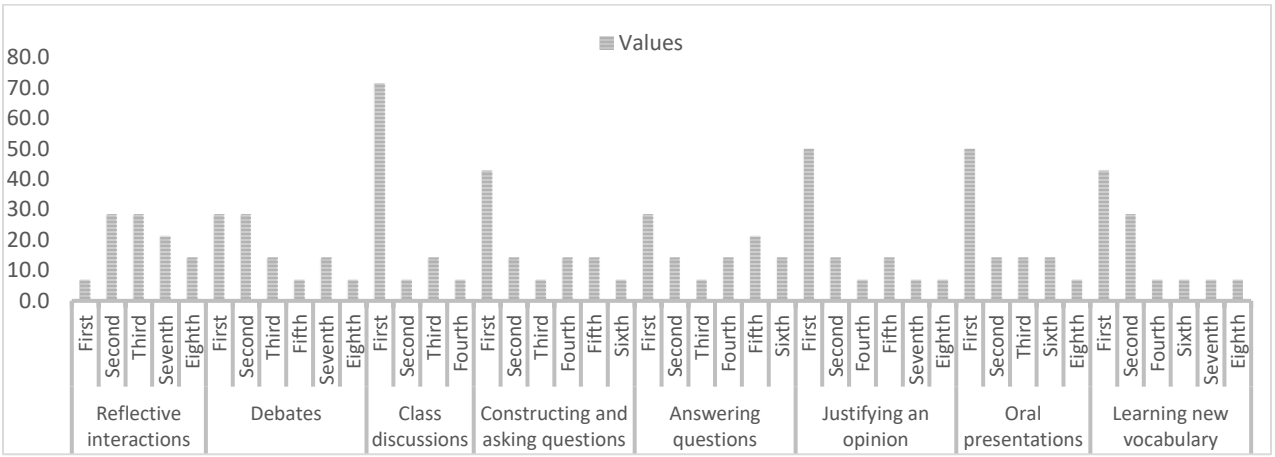

Figure 4. Students' ranking of classroom activities that promote their critical thinking

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As for the final research question of this study, which aimed to explore the impacts of these activities on students' critical thinking, students were asked whether they felt a difference in the level of their thinking after or not. As shown in Figure Five, a majority of 85.7% of them voted yes, whereas only 14.3 voted no.

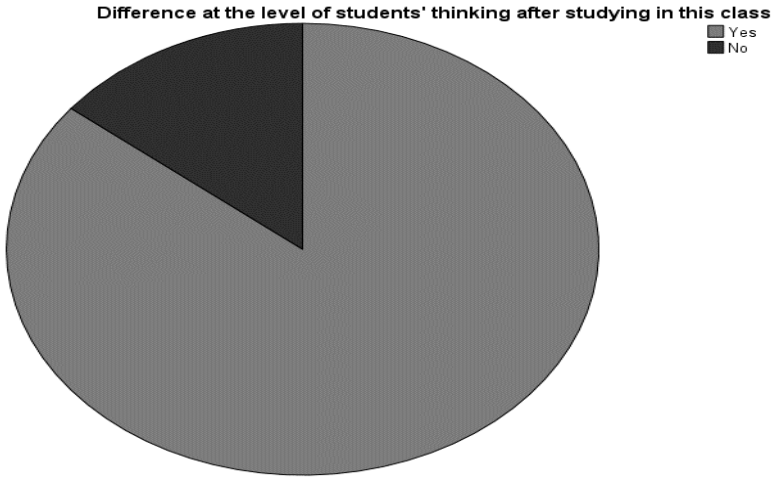

Figure 5. Difference in the level of students' thinking from students' view

Students were also asked to report on how they evaluated their thinking skills after the end of the action research cycles and the school year. The skills were the same as the ones used in the observation checklist and included six primary skills proposed by Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy. The students mainly reported positive results at the level of all six skills as displayed in Figure Six; for instance, 78.6%, 57.1%, 57.1% of students voted good on the following skills: evaluating skill, creating skill and applying skill respectively. Also, a majority of 64.3% voted fair on their level of analyzing skill, and 50% voted fair on their level of understanding and remembering.

As for students' critical thinking dispositions, students were also asked to report on the extent to which they could perform five main mental tasks, as proposed by Facione (2000). Most of them reported positive levels that ranged from extremely to very, as indicated in Figure Seven; for example, 64.5% of students voted that they could process information in an organized and precise manner to a very large extent, and 42.9% reported that they have become open-minded to explore new alternatives views to an equally extreme and very large extent.

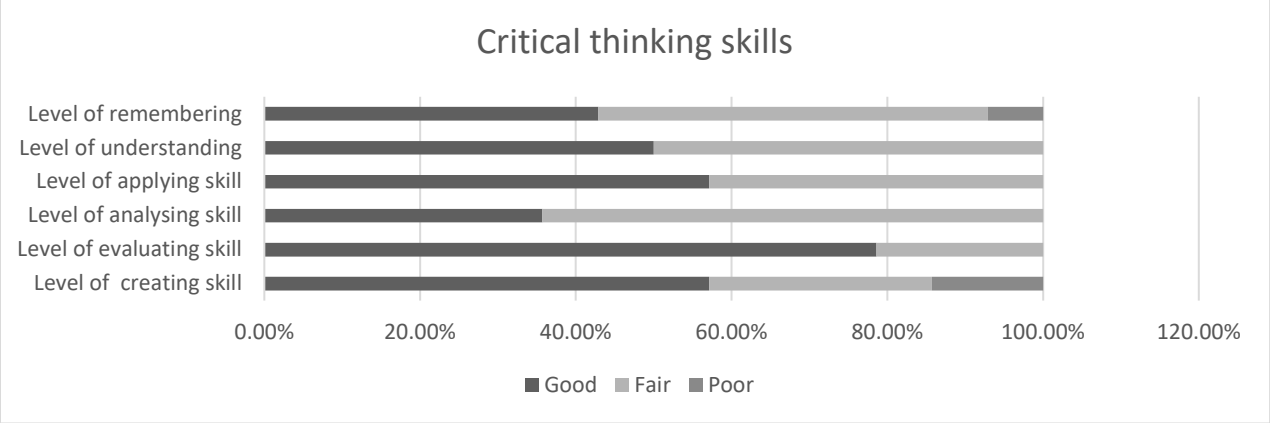

Figure 6. Students' critical thinking skills development

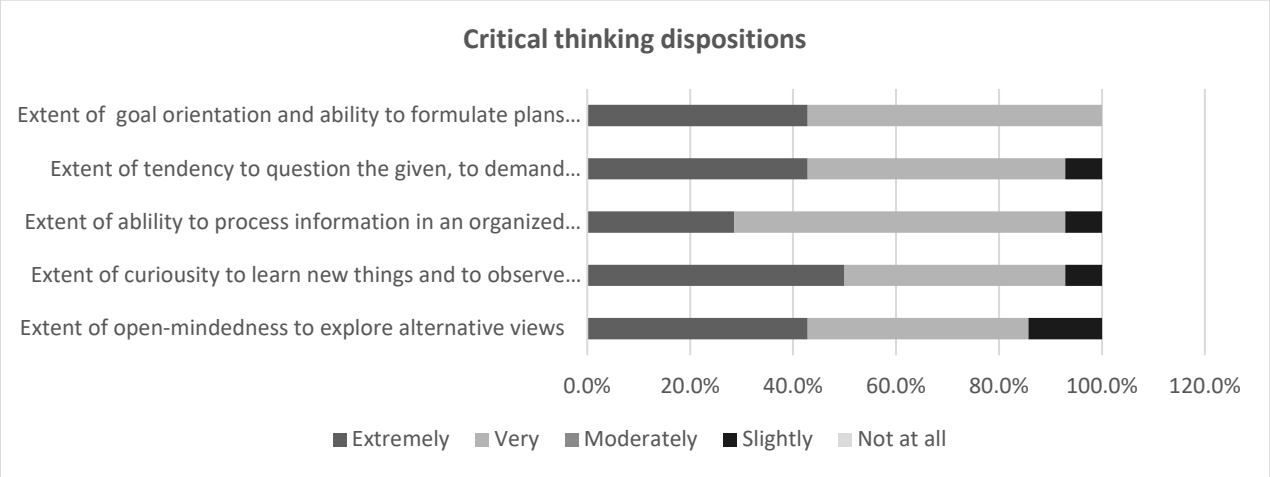

Figure 7. Students' critical thinking dispositions development

Different testimonies from the interviews reinforce this impact of integrating critical thinking-based instruction and activities in the classroom and the positive results reported by students in the questionnaires at the level of their skills and dispositions. An example of this is Student Three, who shared how her experience in the classroom has positively influenced her critical thinking as well as communication; she stated, "Indeed, my experience in the English class has enhanced my critical thinking because now I have become more aware of this skill and I learned to speak loudly about what I don't like without being afraid of how others are going to see me." Likewise, Student Three reported, "So in the beginning, I had difficulties in using the mind instead of emotions, but thanks to the English class, I could use the mind instead of emotions. It also helped me to develop better levels of thinking and criticism." Another testimony that was shared by Student Two sheds light on how her experience in class improved her critical thinking as she said, "My experience in the English class has helped me a lot in this because I often accepted the idea as it was and believed it without analyzing it, but in class with our teacher we would discuss many ideas and we would analyze them and see how true they were." Similarly, Student Five stated, "My experience in the English class has enhanced my critical thinking ability by engaging me with different viewpoints and articulating my thoughts effectively."

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate and highlight the best critical thinking-based instructional strategies that can be adopted to promote students' critical thinking skills and dispositions. Hence, the study was carried out to address and answer the following four guiding questions: "What is students' level of awareness of the importance of critical thinking? What are the factors that hinder the development of students' critical thinking? What are the best instructional activities for promoting students' critical thinking? What are the impacts of these activities on students' critical thinking?" through adopting a mixed-method action research with one class for one school year. The findings revealed that most students reported that they were aware of the importance of critical thinking and believed that the main factors that hindered the development of their critical thinking were affective factors (i.e., speaking anxiety, inhibition, lack of motivation), and the teacher's devoting more time to teaching the important aspects of language (i.e., comprehension, grammar, and writing). As for the language barrier and low level of English, half of the students believed it hindered their critical thinking development whereas the other half

disagreed. This disparity is mainly due to the different language levels among students in the class which has been apparent during the observation moment during the action research cycle. These findings support the view of Özkaya and Semerci (2022), who classified the barriers that impede promoting critical thinking into individual barriers and environmental barriers.

In addition, the previously presented findings and data from the action research, questionnaires, and interviews report a significant development of students' critical thinking skills and abilities after the implementation of critical thinking-based instruction and activities, which aligns with the reflection moment insights collected after the end of the action research cycle by the teacher and which highlighted how the adoption of such instruction had an impact on students thinking abilities and the overall manifestation of such abilities. Such an improvement serves the purpose of adopting and adapting action research to enhance students' learning (e.g., Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Fox et al., 2007; Herr & Nihlen, 2007; Jarvis, 1999; Menter et al., 2011 as cited in Efron and Ravid, 2013) and develop their critical thinking abilities over a long period of exposure (in this study, a full academic year), which is procedure that has been pinpointed by Niu et al. (2013) to be more effective in accumulating critical thinking skills and dispositions. The findings, hence, prove the hypothesis stipulated earlier which put forward that applying critical thinking-based instructional interventions and strategies, namely exploratory talk-based activities such as classroom discussions, within an action research model leads to promoting students' critical thinking awareness and skills in the classroom and beyond.

Limitations and Future Implications

Even though one of the known limitations of action research is its limited generalizability, the findings of this study are promising as they prove that students can improve their critical thinking through using critical thinking-based instruction and activities without making any disruptions or reconstructions of the school's curriculum a suggested by Marin and Halpern (2011). Additionally, by adopting mixed methods procedures into the action research cycle, a more 'solid ground' has been provided to sustain the resulting changes and to guarantee the implementation of the action/intervention results in other professional contexts (Ivankova, 2015). Moreover, the current study determines the overall development of critical thinking, including skills and dispositions. At the same time, there should be specific related-topic research on how certain activities (e.g., debates, questioning) can lead to developing certain skills and dispositions. Furthermore, further hypotheses can be formulated and investigated concerning different critical thinking-based instructional interventions such as immersion-based instructional interventions and infusion-based instructional interventions and their effectiveness in the context of EFL education at the secondary level.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate how adopting action research to implement critical thinking-based instruction in the EFL classroom can help promote students' critical thinking without reconstructing the curriculum. The encouraging observable results obtained from the action research reflection stage and supplemented by findings from the questionnaires and interviews carried out with students align with previous conclusions found in the literature and can be added to the scarce research on students' development of critical thinking at the level of secondary education level. The study showed that students' awareness of the importance of critical thinking in today's world is evident. The study also revealed that two of the primary factors that

can cause a hindrance in the development of critical thinking from students' point of view are affective factors and the time devoted to teaching important aspects of the language over engaging in activities that can foster critical thinking abilities. More importantly, the current study yielded a positive impact of implementing critical thinking-based instruction at the level of both students' critical thinking skills and dispositions as well as their manifestation of those skills and dispositions through the intensive use of exploratory talk during the activities done in class over a long period of exposure. The findings of this study provide a promising example to EFL teachers and practitioners to support students' critical thinking development in the classroom.

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Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1. *Summary of stages and procedures of the action research cycle*

Stages	Procedure
Planning	• Shortage or lack of teaching opportunities to develop students' critical thinking abilities was identified as the main issue in class. Consequently, the classroom objectives and lessons were designed to accommodate critical thinking-based activities without affecting the general guidelines that emphasize preparing students to sit for the final national baccalaureate exam at the end of the year. • Most lessons and worksheets included productive writing and speaking activities that targeted students' critical thinking such as: open-ended discussions, debates, role-plays, interviews, etc.
Action	• At the implementation stage, students were instructed and encouraged to learn how to ask and use open-ended questions that require a complete answer from their peers. They were also instructed and encouraged to listen well to the asked questions,

	analyze them and justify their answers using logical and sound arguments as well as reflect on their arguments. • Students were given various, recent and individualized topics to discuss and reflect on, and were occasionally asked to suggest topics that interested them.
Observation	• A checklist for observations which included two main components: students' engagement and motivation and use of critical thinking skills was developed based on Facione et al., (1994) and Facione (2000) lists of critical thinking skills and dispositions. • Notes were also written down in a manual reflective logbook for whole class performance and individual students after conducting activities that target students' critical thinking.
Reflection	• After all the previous stages were implemented, differences at the level of students' thinking and active engagement were highlighted before and after implementation. • The activities used were also periodically evaluated to identify strengths and weaknesses.

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Factors Influencing Comprehension of Metaphors in Academic Reading Texts among Iraqi EFL Learners

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Abstract

Metaphor is recognized as a valuable tool for analysis and as a means to effectively convey meaning. Although metaphor is supposed to be used to effectively convey meaning, learners of English, particularly those in the foreign language context, often have difficulty comprehending metaphors in academic text. The current study aims to contribute to understand deeply of the influencing factors on metaphor comprehension among Iraqi EFL learners when they read academic texts. The study draws on Steen's (2010) MIPVU model and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory to identify and analyze the metaphorical expressions. The data for the study were collected from two academic reading comprehension texts. Five Iraqi EFL university learners participated in determining the metaphors contained in the texts. The findings revealed that authors of academic texts often incorporate a wide range of metaphorical expressions. These expressions can vary in their familiarity, ranging from very familiar to less familiar and even unfamiliar, to engage readers' cognitive processes and facilitate the conceptualization of the metaphor. The findings revealed that the factors influencing metaphor comprehension are varied and that they are of two broad types: external factors related to cultural and social considerations, and internal factors related to linguistic and educational settings. The findings could enable practitioners to devise more effective approaches for teaching metaphor comprehension to EFL learners.

Keywords: academic reading texts, conceptual metaphors, Iraqi EFL learners, metaphor comprehension

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Introduction

Metaphors, in cognitive linguistics, are reflected upon as a matter of abstract thought (Ungere & Schmid, 2013). It is also viewed as a mental phenomenon, as one set of phenomena is understood in terms of another. The metaphorical relationship manifests itself linguistically; the same word or words describe a specific phenomenon, although the meaning could belong to different domains. In other words, a metaphor can be seen as an extension that helps language users express the idea of one phenomenon to cover another (Cameron, 2003; Hussein & Abdullah, 2016; Hung, 2017). This extension is motivated by a cognitive relation in terms of cross-domain mapping. From a cognitive semantics perspective, metaphor is viewed as a means whereby abstract and intangible experiences are synthesized and conceptualized in terms of more familiar and concrete experiences to give meaning. In other words, to understand the use of metaphorical expressions, one must be motivated to search for abstract understanding (Pedersen, 1999).

Research investigating the use of metaphor as a tool for analysis has shown its significance in academic discourse. Statistical analysis conducted by Steen et al. (2010) reveals that metaphorical words constitute 18.5% of academic texts, compared to 16.4% in news texts, 11.7% in fiction texts, and 7.7% in conversation. Metaphor is essentialy an instrument of human cognition since metaphorical expressions are pervasively used in everyday spoken and written discourses. By using metaphor, one can we can talk and understand abstract and complex concepts through salient and concrete ones. The concreteness and imageability aspects of metaphors can make them an appropriate vehicle for assigning complex or abstract meanings.

Metaphors play a significant role in lectures within the classroom setting; they represent a subset of genuinely communicative uses of metaphor in education. Littlemore et al. (2013) conducted a study focusing on various metaphors used by university lecturers in their lectures. Their analysis revealed that the metaphors used in the lectures served meta-discursive functions, such as summarizing, restating, and evaluating the material. Moreover, these metaphors facilitated the progression and coherence of the lectures by effectively connecting different parts of the lecture topic. In spite of the pervassivness and importance of metaphor in various types of text and discpourse, metaphorical competence is still a marginal issue in foreign language learning contexts. This is an alarming issue as textbooks, for language learners, are one of the essential foundations of information related to the target language.

Metaphors in learning are significant since “metaphors both contribute to and limit understanding, and thus play a gate-keeping role in learning” (Cameron 2003, p. vii). Understanding the metaphors enables the learners to gain valuable insights into the writer’s thoughts (Vengadasamy, 2011). Educators use metaphors to conceptualize abstract notions found in learning and teaching. The choice in the manner of conceptualizations affects the way learners understand and comprehend the reality of teaching and learning. Learners encounter various types of metaphors. Metaphors, consciously or unconsciously, play a dynamic role in shaping the learning context, including in university lectures. The use of metaphors in language teaching and learning has shown significant contributions in increasing the learners’ communicative

competence. Learning the use of metaphors, especially in learning English as a Foreign Language, (henceforth, EFL) helps learners to achieve native-like competency.

The Statement of Problem

One of the most critical issues in studies related to the concept of embodied conceptual metaphor is the role it plays in academic texts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 2003b). Because speakers of different speech communities do not similarly see a particular concept (Salehuddin, 2022), learners in the EFL context often face difficulty in comprehending metaphors, however the metaphor is supposed to be used as an effective means to convey meaning. There appears to be a general lack of attention paid to the learning of metaphorical expressions and their underlying concepts in learning materials, such as those found in textbooks and other learning resources of EFL. While there is a considerable body of research recognizing the role of metaphor in learning, there is a lack of focus on such studies within the Iraqi context and specifically in the field of EFL education. Most of the past studies on metaphor in academic texts tend to focus on other contexts, such as native English-speaking countries (Littlemore, 2001; Cameron, 2003; Littlemore & Low, 2006) or in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts (Danesi, 1992, 1995; Low & Littlemore, 2009; Lantolof & Bobrova, 2014). Therefore, there is a need for research that specifically investigates factors influencing the comprehension of metaphors in Iraqi EFL academic reading texts. There was one recent study conducted by Abdulqahar and Hussein (2023) that revealed that Iraqi EFL learners faced difficulties in comprehending conceptual metaphors in academic literary texts. The study concluded that varying levels of comprehension among the participants might be attributed to and affected by some factors that may lead to non-understanding or misunderstanding. Some of these factors proposed are related to cultural and background knowledge, social and ethnic context, emotional states, cognitive biases, lack of exposure to literary devices, teaching and learning style, critical thinking skills, and interest and motivation.

To the research gap identified above and to complement the study by Abdulqahar and Hussein (2023), the current study aims to contribute to a deeper and more precise understanding of the factors that may influence metaphor comprehension among Iraqi EFL learners when they read academic texts. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following question: What are the factors influencing the comprehension of metaphors in academic reading texts among Iraqi EFL Learners? The findings are expected to enable practitioners to devise more effective approaches for teaching metaphor comprehension to EFL learners.

Literature Review

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) forms the groundwork for the theoretical framework of this paper. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that metaphor is chiefly a matter of thought and the practice of comprehending metaphors is conceptual in nature. This means that the linguistic production of metaphors is headed and influenced by

thought constructions known as conceptual metaphors. The understanding that metaphor is equivalent means that it occurs as a set of communications between two concepts in two different knowledge domains, namely, a source domain and a target domain.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (p. 50). In extending this understanding to a literary analysis of metaphors, Stockwell (2002) states that the cognitive and contextual dimensions are necessary for this approach as "our minds are embodied, not just literally, but figuratively" (p. 4). According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the human conceptual system is structured and defined metaphorically, and largely the processes of human thought are metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; EL-Kanash & Hamdan, 2023). In this sense, thought structures identified as 'conceptual metaphors' precedes the linguistic production of metaphors.

The understanding that metaphor is analogous means that a correspondence between two concepts in two different knowledge domains is known as the Source and Target Domains. In the conceptual metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example, LIFE is the target domain, and JOURNEY is the source domain. To interpret the meaning of LIFE, the ontological structure of the source domain is moved to the target domain. However, comprehending metaphors effectively is based on conventional knowledge. This relates knowledge about the source domain that is both currently and culturally accurate. This means that to understand a target domain in terms of a source domain, one must have appropriate knowledge of the source domain. Regardless of possessing conventional knowledge of the source domain, the context of the metaphor occurrence is another factor that we have to consider when identifying properties mapped from the source domain to the target domain. Only those properties of the source domain that relate the target domain within the context of occurrence selected for interpretation.

Studies on Metaphor Comprehension in EFL and L2 contexts

Many researchers have argued that metaphor plays a vital role in EFL context (Charteris-Black, 2000; Boers, 2000; Deignan, Gabrys & Solska, 1997; Danesi, 1992, 1995; Littlemore, 2001, 2002, 2004; Littlemore & Low, 2006; Low, 1988; Abdulqahar and Hussein, 2023). Some scholars have also argued that EFL learners must have the ability to acquire, produce, and interpret metaphors (Cameron & Low, 1999; Littlemore, 2001). Thus, this recognition of the role of metaphors in language learning research stresses the general lack of attention to metaphors in the EFL and English as a Second Language (L2) classroom (Lantolof & Bobrova, 2014; Littlemore, 2009; Littlemore & Low, 2006; Danesi, 1992, 1995). Danesi (1995) states that the seeming lack of metaphorical competence in the L2 classroom is a major factor that impacts the L2 learners having native-like fluency, arguing that L2 learners do not reach such a fluency until they know "how that language reflects or encodes concepts based on metaphorical reasoning" (p. 5). Emotive metaphorical expressions reflect the necessary role of metaphor in our understanding our emotional state with linguistic differences (Fatemeh et al., 2014). However, being native-like is not a purpose for all language learners, for metaphor appears to be a general difficulty for EFL

learners and generally lacking consideration in the EFL academic settings. The studies listed above challenge the notion that metaphor is primarily used in artistic contexts such as poetry and fiction as it demonstrates that metaphor is present in all registers, with the highest frequency observed in academic texts, followed by fiction and conversation.

As metaphors are pervasive in language, Steen et al. (2010) provide valuable insights into the occurrence of metaphors across different registers in native language texts. Their findings contribute to the understanding of metaphor usage in native language texts and highlight the ubiquity of metaphor across various linguistic registers. In addition, the study conducted by Littlemore et al. (2014) builds upon using the Metaphor Identification Procedures Vrije University (MIPVU) method to investigate the use of metaphors in English texts written by Greek and German speakers at different proficiency levels. The study focused on learners from different L1 backgrounds (Greek and German) and their L2 acquisition of English. The findings of the study indicate that there is a clear relationship between L2 proficiency level and metaphoric density. As the proficiency level of the L2 speakers increased, the metaphoric density in their written texts also increased. This suggests that as learners become more proficient in English, they are more likely to use metaphorical expressions in their writing. The study also highlights that the use of metaphors becomes more sophisticated and creative at higher proficiency levels, with L2 speakers utilizing more creative metaphors and personification metaphors.

Additionally, Littlemore's study reveals that L2 speakers at higher proficiency levels employ metaphors for more advanced functions, such as evaluation and discourse organization. This suggests that as learners progress in their language proficiency, they develop a greater ability to use metaphor strategically and effectively for rhetorical purposes. These findings support the notion that there is a qualitative difference in the use of metaphors since learners develop more proficiency in the target language. The study has shown how metaphor evolves and develops with increasing language proficiency, highlighting the importance of metaphorical competence in advanced language use. Further research incorporating learners from diverse language backgrounds would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between L2 proficiency, metaphor use, and the role of language background in metaphorical expression.

In the same context, Hoang and Boers (2018) investigated whether there is a relationship between L2 proficiency levels and the production of metaphorical expressions. Hoang and Boers analyzed a large sample of 257 English essays written by undergraduate students of English at different year levels in a university in Vietnam. They designed their study to address the limitations identified in Littlemore et al.'s (2014) study by controlling independent variables. The essays were on the same topic and were of similar length, with year levels serving as an indicator of proficiency level. By controlling factors such as essay topics and length, the study aimed to provide a more focused examination of the relationship between metaphor use and proficiency level. Though different studies have been conducted on metaphor comprehension in both ESL and EFL contexts, the EFL setting seems to require more research data, hence the current study involving Iraqi EFL learners.

Methodology

The present study explores through a qualitative design the potential factors influencing the comprehension of metaphors in Iraqi EFL academic reading text. The analysis was based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The corpus consisted of two academic texts selected from a reading textbook used at the departments of the English Language in Iraqi public and private universities entitled *Developing Skills* written by G. L. Alexander (1967) and published by Oxford University Press. The two academic reading texts selected from this book were *Puma at Large* and *Illusion of Pastoral Peace.* Nine metaphorical expressions were systematically identified from these texts using MIPVU. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted as a method of inquiry for five learners from a governmental Iraqi university. The interview encompassed two pre-determined open questions that focused on what the EFL learners understood from the various metaphorical expressions, and how they came to such types of understandings.

Participants

Five EFL learners from a governmental Iraqi university were selected for this study. The participants were enlisted during one of their academic lectures based on voluntary participation. To minimize the variation between the participants' learning backgrounds, the researcher ensured that they had similar educational backgrounds and were all from the same level of study (third-year learners). They had all passed the university placement test in their first year at the university before joining the English classes. The test evaluated their level of English language proficiency.

Data Validation and Raters

Nine metaphorical expressions were systematically identified using MIPVU, three in *Puma at Large*, and six in *Illusion of Pastoral Peace*. The selected metaphors were validated by two specialist raters whose area of specialization is linguistics. The second rater was from the University of Anbar, College of Education for Humanities, Department of English, while the second rater was from the University of Baghdad, College of Arts, Department of English, in Iraq. These raters were highly experienced in linguistics studies and specifically in qualitative analysis.

Instruments

To identify the factors that influence the EFL learners' comprehension of metaphors, the metaphors were selected using Steen et al's (2010) Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije University (MIPVU) model, which is a more advanced and refined procedure to identify metaphorical expressions compared to the previously used model known as Metaphor Identification Process or MIP (Steen, 2007). Unlike MIP, which focuses on metaphorically used words, MIPVU focuses on the identification of all metaphor-related words; these words include all lexical units in the discourse related to cross-domain mappings in conceptual metaphors. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted as a method of inquiry for five learners from a governmental Iraqi university. The interview encompassed two pre-determined open questions

that prompted discussions to explore themes or responses further. These questions focused on what the EFL learners understood from the various metaphorical expressions, and how they came to such types of understandings. The function of the first question was to let the learners clarify what they understood from the metaphorical expressions, while the second question was to have the learners justify their understandings, i.e. how they understood the metaphorical expressions. This allowed the researcher to gather more insights into the learner's cognitive processing of the use and comprehension of metaphors.

Findings

Having presented the theoretical framework for the study, the next section presents the findings of the study which provide some answers to the research question proposed earlier: What are the factors influencing comprehension of metaphors in academic reading texts among Iraqi EFL Learners?

Analysis of the first text*: Puma at large*

The first passage included three metaphorical expressions identified based on the MIPUV and confirmed by the raters. These metaphorical expressions were extracted as given below from their linguistic context. As these metaphorical expressions are connected in one unified and coherent text, they will be analyzed together as one contextual unit. The following excerpts contain the metaphorical expressions identified:

Excerpt1. "It immediately ran away when she saw it and experts confirmed that a puma will not attack a human being unless **it is cornered**." (Alexander 1967, P. 12).

Excerpt 2. "Wherever it went, it left behind it a **trail of dead deer** and small animals like rabbits**.**" (Alexander 1967, P. 12).

Excerpt 3. "**Paw prints were seen** in several places and puma fur was found clinging to bushes." (Alexander 1967, P. 12).

Puma at large starts with the metaphorical expression *at large*, which is not explained explicitly. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003a) image schemas, we know that the Puma is a dangerous animal it is out of the zoo (which serves as the container in an image schema), and '*at large*' implies the metaphorical thought structure that DANGER IS NEAR, a signal that the Puma may be anywhere and near anyone. That is, the conceptual metaphor is derived from the cognition that *at large* means space. More clearly, this animal can move freely so human life can be in danger.

Consequently, all metaphorical expressions identified yield this conceptual reference (metaphor) which is DANGER IS NEARBY and one should be careful. It is assumed that the focus word is *puma*. The selection of *puma* as the focus word for a possible metaphorical concept stems from the fact that the writer mentioned it indirectly. The metaphorical thought that DANGER IS NEARBY is also expressed indirectly by using another metaphorical expression '*it is cornered*.' The context implies that *puma* is not dangerous to humans unless *it is cornered.*

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The next metaphorical expression '*paw prints were seen'* implicates a possible conceptual interpretation that there is a risk in the area where those *paw prints* were seen. Thus, such structure can be attributed and mapped to DANGER IS NEARBY. Overall, the first metaphorical expression *Puma at large,* and the second one *paw prints,* indicate that the danger of the puma has become evident. Finally, the text ends with the repetition of the first metaphorical expression *at large* to emphasize the presence of imminent danger.

Each metaphorically expressed idea is construed as one of the representational forms of a metaphorical thought structure. Therefore, two metaphorical thought structures emerge from the first selected text. The first metaphorical expression conveys the conceptual thought structure that PUMA IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL. The second conceptual thought structure is that DANGEROUS ANIMAL SHOULD BE IN A SECURED SPACE. Based on this cognitive analysis, it can be reasonably inferred that such thought structures may not be overtly clear to the Iraqi EFL learners due to their unfamiliarity with an animal such as a puma, for it is from a completely different habitat from the wild and natural habitats that can be found in Iraq, or for that matter, in any Arab nation. Therefore, the learners' ability to comprehend such metaphorical expressions would be impaired based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) argument that for a metaphorical expression to be comprehended successfully, it must be experienced and familiar to the human mind; in general, people or foreign language learners should be aware and be experienced in using such expressions or at least be aware of such metaphorical expressions. Certain concrete things need not be conceptualized metaphorically, such as rocks, trees, body parts, etc., but are conceptualized in terms of their physical experience. Likewise, certain abstract things, such as days, nights, heat, cold, etc., that do not require conceptual metaphors to reveal their physical properties. However, objects and ideas that are not manifested in a physical sense can be conveyed through metaphorical expressions which can be captured or understood in terms of individuals' experiences. Nonetheless, conceptualization based on physical and social traits does not mean there are no conceptual elements, still, in Kovecses's view (1999), people's perception of experiences and phenomena differs from one culture to another.

Analysis of the second text: *illusion of pastoral peace*

The second passage included seven metaphorical expressions identified based on MIPVU and confirmed by the raters. To be analyzed and discussed properly, these metaphorical expressions were extracted along with their linguistic contexts (see below). As these metaphorical expressions appear in one unified and coherent text, they were analyzed together as one contextual unit:

Excerpt 4. "Illusion of pastoral peace"

Excerpt 5. "Even he still **lives under the illusion** that country life is somehow superior to town life." (Alexander 1967, P. 106).

Excerpt 6. "My friend fails to mention the long and **friendless winter** evenings in front of the TV -- virtually the only form of entertainment." (Alexander 1967, P. 106).

Excerpt 7. "They could be **saved so much misery** and expense if they chose to live in the city where they rightly belong." (Alexander 1967, P. 106).

Excerpt 8. "Country people **run wild** when they go shopping in the city and stagger home loaded with as many of the exotic items as they can carry." (Alexander 1967, P. 106).

The title of the second passage, ILLUSION OF PASTORAL PEACE, is by itself the main metaphorical expression that other metaphorical expressions of the passage center around conceptually. This metaphor is used to denote the illusionary nature of life as being idyllic, that is, life as being peaceful and calm in the countryside. This means that someone who decides to lead his life in the countryside is actually '***under the illusion'*** that there is real peace and calmness in the countryside when there is none. Here the phrase ***'under the illusion'*** stems from the metaphoric notions of CONTROL IS 'UP', and LACK OF CONTROL IS 'DOWN'(Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Although life in the countryside seems to be quiet, there are some drawbacks and problems, as the writer believes. The metaphorical expression ***illusion of pastoral peace*** denotes that peace and quiet in the countryside are just deceptions. When we talk about the countryside, one is invariably concerned with the idea of beautiful nature. This referential coherence or the similarity between living in the countryside and its features mentioned above, like '***pastoral peace***' seems congruent. However, the phrase *'**live under the illusion**'* disrupts this idea. This could pose a problem to some EFL learners who are not accustomed to metaphoric phrases or words that convey the notions of UP to mean something good, and UNDER or DOWN to mean something not good or bad.

Other metaphorical expressions that reinforce or support the idea that life in the countryside is not what it is made out to be are like, ***'the dubious privilege of living in the countryside', 'friendless winter',*** and ***'run wild'***, all of which support the main conceptual metaphorical idea that LIFE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IS ILLUSIONARY. If we closely examine these metaphorical expressions, we find that they all contain adjectives that give negative meanings.

It is worth noting here that a cultural interpretation of metaphoric expressions is a crucial element in understanding metaphoric ideas in cognitive linguistics. The writing style in this passage *ILLUSION OF PASTORAL PEACE* and the metaphorical expressions used are neither universal nor specific. Thus, the image of the countryside with all its attributes can only be accessible to someone familiar with life in the countryside mentioned in the text. To a person living in a city who is either completely or partially unfamiliar with the countryside, the metaphor would be useless in its effect to a degree compatible with his experience. However, people who are intimately familiar with life in such countryside and the nature of life there, they will be able to understand the metaphoric significance of the text.

Discussion

Based on the cognitive analyses of the two reading passages above in terms of conceptual metaphor theory, different assumptions related to the factors influencing metaphor comprehension

might be inferred. It seems that comprehending a textual metaphor would be more difficult than comprehending a single metaphor as a textual metaphor requires other supporting metaphors in the text to be comprehended appropriately. The fictional and narrative approach of *PUMA AT LARGE*, for example, requires different stylistic procedures or more supportive metaphorical expressions to convince the reader of the main controlling idea. These related metaphors may not be all comprehensive for the Iraqi EFL learners due to their unfamiliarity with an animal like *Puma* as it is not available in the Iraqi environment. Therefore, learners' ability to comprehend such metaphorical expressions is based on the familiarity of metaphorical expressions to the human mind, as argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Nonetheless, experiences and phenomena differ from one culture to another, as (Kovecses, 1999; Khajeh and Abdullah, 2012) argued, as in the case of the second passage, *ILLUSION OF PASTORAL PEACE*.

In the case of ILLUSION OF PASTORAL PEACE, the use of the metaphor and a cultural interpretation of the metaphor, cognitively speaking, are significant elements in understanding the metaphorical expression. Some metaphorical expressions are culture-specific and can only be accessible to someone familiar with them as in the case of life in the countryside. This metaphor would be useless in its effect if it is not compatible with the reader's experience of a person living in a city as they are either completely or partially unfamiliar with the countryside. In contrast, the metaphor could be easily understood by those intimately familiar with life in the countryside.

Factors Influencing Metaphor Comprehension

This section offers an answer to the research question proposed above: What are the factors influencing the comprehension of metaphors in academic reading texts among Iraqi EFL Learners? That is, this section discusses the qualitative data yielded by the semi-structured interview obtained after establishing baseline data for overall comprehension of the metaphor. In particular, this section ascertains the factors influencing metaphor comprehension of academic texts among Iraqi EFL learners. The overall findings on the comprehension of metaphorical expressions fluctuated among learners due to the participants' differences in their competence. Through a careful examination of the process of metaphorical cognition, certain factors were found to have affected the learners' reading comprehension, sociocultural, personal, and semantic/linguistic.

Sociocultural Factors

Firstly, sociocultural factors include lifestyle, religion, politics, and values. The participants were largely affected by their Iraqi customs and values, which characterize the nature of Iraqi society. The participants were influenced by sociocultural factors fundamentally linked to the Arabic culture. The selected metaphors may not necessarily be strongly associated with the source domain of the learners' language. Rather, they can be rooted deeply in the target language culture which embodies references to the foreign culture of English speakers. The Iraqi academic textbooks are written using the British English language. It was not surprising, therefore, that some

learners recruited in this study showed a misunderstanding of the highlighted metaphoric expressions found in the texts.

For example, in responding to *excerpt 3*: "**Paw prints were seen** in several places and puma fur was found clinging to bushes", the following elaborations from the interviews revealed logical reasoning in their cognitive processing of the target cultural norms and values as shown by the questions that were directed to the participants. Learner 3's response to excerpt 3: *"Well, the prints of the cat after he walks everywhere."* It seems that the participant misunderstood this metaphorical expression when they interpreted *the cat* based on their cultural background. This is justified by the learner's response to the second question: "*Because it's a cat but I think the male cat is called Puma in America."* In line with learner 3, learner 4 provides the same response to the second question: *"Actually, I always see the prints of cats on my car in the morning especially when it's dusty weather*."

Personal Factors

Some answers appeared to be attributed to personal views in the interpretation of some metaphorical expressions. A case in point is the learner's creation of his identity that is influenced by a myriad of personal experiences. Thus, in reconstructing the comprehension of the metaphors, the learners may be colored by their orientations in their responses. That being the case, their responses cannot be generalized to Iraqi culture as they are shaped by subjectivity. Personal factors can be entrenched and exert specific metaphysical or *I* conceptions of reality as learners process the language. The EFL Iraqi speakers with strikingly different language backgrounds could portray different conceptual and personal images even when faced with similar states of affairs. Thus, comprehension of metaphor use based on personal views would result in different framings of the readers' perception and thought. Languages cannot constrict our capability to identify the world or to consider the reality of the world we live in,still, they can serve to emphasize our views, thoughtfulness, and ideas on specific aspects of the world.

Therefore, responding to Excerpt 11 "Country people **run wild** when they go shopping in the city and stagger home loaded with as many of the exotic items as they can carry.", the participants attributed to their reliance on personal views in the non-understanding of the metaphorical expressions as in Learner 4's response: "*Run like animals in the forest."* It seems the participant did not understand the metaphorical expression as they depended on personal views. This is justified by the learner's response to the second question of this excerpt: "*Wild animals - I always hear this term on YouTube for lion, tiger, snake*."

The examples above are not attributed to cultural or linguistic factors in the verbalized understanding of the metaphoric expressions; instead, the justifications are linked to personal subjectivity to a certain extent.

Semantic/Linguistic Impact

Thirdly, some responses have been affected by semantic cognition in terms of lexical dependency. This means the learner resorted to lexical meaning with no regard for the context of the situation in which the metaphorical expressions are uttered. This rarity of linguistic dependency confirmed the learners' interpretative behavior of resorting more to sociocultural and personal views when trying to comprehend the metaphors as part of the academic text reconstruction.

For example, in responding to Excerpt 1 "It immediately ran away when she saw it and experts confirmed that a puma will not attack a human being unless **it is cornered**", participants relied on their semantic/linguistic views in the literal understanding of the metaphorical expressions. For example, Learner 1's response, "*Well it means two walls and there is a corner*", reveals that they depend on the lexical meaning rather than the metaphorical expression of the academic text. This is justified by the same participant's response to the second question, "*I know the meaning, it's clear that it's a corner*."

The findings revealed that the process of comprehending metaphorical expressions was determined by certain factors: social, semantic/ linguistic, and personal. The interview data confirm a varying degree of influence ranging from social, and political to linguistic factors as the learners cognitively processed the metaphorical expressions. Overall, metaphor in reading texts remains one of the problems that EFL learners face they need a considerable level of awareness of metaphorical realizations to improve their grasp of language use. Thus, the failure to comprehend the metaphor is caused by the lack of cultural or linguistic awareness of the target language. Therefore, an EFL learner needs to develop their cultural awareness of the target language to be able to successfully understand the academic texts. Pedagogically speaking, the textbook designers and authors should take into account the cultural background of the target language. For example, some input in the form of a glossary of unfamiliar terms and illustrations on the culture of the target language should be presented to the learners in advance in the earlier stages of learning. In this way, one might use certain metaphorical expressions that could even contribute to teaching vocabulary to students (Matsevich., et al 2020). Caillies and Declercq (2011) are convinced that it is important to investigate the root of the problem in the teaching and learning of metaphors among EFL learners. Besides, researchers such as Kasim, et al. (2019) show that using metaphors provides a way of understanding a subjective and complex experience in terms of another more familiar experience. The narrative approach that the author adopts in this passage is closer to that of a fictional narrative rather than an academic narrative, which could potentially result in misinterpretation or misunderstanding. This result is in line with Abdulqahar and Hussein's (2023) study that Iraqi EFL learners faced various difficulties in comprehending conceptual metaphors in academic literary texts; these factors may lead to non-understanding or misunderstanding, namely lack of exposure to literary devices, teaching and learning style, and critical thinking skills. In the same way (Littlemore, 2001, 2002, 2004; Littlemore & Low, 2006; Low, 1988; Abdulqahar and Hussein, 2023) stated it is not surprising that mastery of metaphors is generally difficult for EFL learners. Given this lack and the need to understand the difficulties that could then lead to more

successful approaches in related teaching, this area has much to offer in terms of research, especially in an academic setting.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the use of metaphorical expressions is a major aspect of the reading component of the Iraqi EFL academic context. This study examined two academic texts used in the learning of English as a foreign language: *PUMA AT LARGE* and *ILLUSION OF PASTORAL PEACE*. The majority of the metaphorical expressions found in these two texts were generally characterized as being unfamiliar by the learners while a few others were described as being only slightly less familiar from the Iraqi cultural view. The study investigated how the metaphorical expressions used in academic texts were processed by the EFL learners to determine their understanding of the expressions, and in doing so, identify the factors that influenced their comprehension. It was found that the use of metaphorical expressions in academic texts is in general, culture-specific, and it is different from one culture to another. All in all, factors affecting understanding metaphorical expressions can be classified broadly into two categories: external factors related to cultural and social considerations, and internal factors related to linguistic and educational settings.

In addition to the above, mastery of metaphors goes beyond proficiency because they are closely associated with other cognitive skills, such as evaluative perception and logical reasoning. Thus, it is an urgent matter that needs attention among educators. Incorporating metaphorical expressions in textbooks is a serious reading issue that should be taken into account by decision-makers in the EFL learning context, and the Iraqi EFL context is no exception. In light of the findings and the results arrived at, we can conclude that including specialized training on the comprehension of metaphorical expressions for EFL learners is of paramount significance. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings from this study and other similar ones can be utilized by curriculum developers and teaching practitioners to devise more effective approaches for the teaching of metaphor comprehension to EFL learners in Iraq and elsewhere.

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Incidental Writing Skills Acquisition Through Using Literature-Based Instruction

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Abstract

This study delves into the transformative potential of Literature-Based Instruction on the incidental acquisition of writing skills among ESL/EFL students in Salalah, Oman. Acknowledging the pressing need for effective teaching methodologies that bolster writing proficiency, this research employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of LBI in enhancing students' writing abilities. The study involves a sample of 100 intermediate-level students divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group received instruction through literary texts, while the control group followed a conventional curriculum. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, and observations. The findings reveal that students exposed to LBI demonstrated significantly improved writing fluency, coherence, and grammatical accuracy compared to the control group. Additionally, qualitative data indicate increased student motivation and engagement with the learning material. The study underscores the potential of LBI to foster incidental writing skills acquisition and suggests practical implications for curriculum designers and educators in similar linguistic and cultural contexts. Educators can create a more enriching and effective learning environment that improves language skills and nurtures a lifelong appreciation for literature by integrating literature into language instruction.

Keywords: English as a second language, incidental writing skill, literature, literature-based instruction, reading, writing

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Introduction

Today's language teaching, especially in the context of the global reach of the English language, has become increasingly complex. Educators in Oman, recognizing the importance of English proficiency in their society, are motivated to explore innovative methods of language teaching. Among these approaches, Literature-Based Instruction (LBI) is one way, involving the use of literary texts such as novels and poems as central components of language teaching. Paran (2008) defines LBI as a didactic approach targeting diverse skills including language development, reading comprehension, cultural awareness, and critical thinking.

Studies suggest a positive link between reading literature and enhancing writing skills. Palardy (1997) highlights how active engagement with literature positively influences young learners' writing abilities, echoing the attitude that "good writers are usually good readers" (Jay, 2003, p. 131). In this evolving landscape, the integration of literature may not only enrich language learning but also underscore the adaptability and resilience of language educators in meeting their students' evolving needs, especially their writing skills.

This study makes a unique contribution to the field of language education by focusing on Literature-Based Instruction (LBI) and its potential to enhance the writing skills of ESL/EFL students in Oman. The research aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this approach in improving students' incidental writing abilities. The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers, highlighting the practical applications of LBI in English language classrooms. This could lead to the development of more engaging and effective teaching practices that cater to the linguistic and cultural context of Omani students, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes and greater academic success for learners.

Writing as a skill not only aids active communication but is also a central constituent of professional and academic attainment. However, students in Dhofar often encounter substantial challenges in developing their writing skills. These challenges include difficulties with grammar, limited vocabulary, poor sentence structure, and a lack of coherence in their writing. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving academic success, building self-confidence, and unlocking boundless opportunities in educational and professional settings. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the issues related to ESL writing and proposing targeted interventions to improve ESL students' writing skills.

The study has the following objectives: first, to investigate the impact of LBI on students' incidental writing within the context of conventional English instruction in Oman. Second, to assess the receptivity of Omani students towards this innovative instructional approach. Lastly, to identify the challenges teachers may encounter in implementing LBI within the present educational framework.

To achieve these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of Literature-Based Instruction (LBI) on the incidental writing skills of ESL/EFL students in Oman?
2. How receptive are Omani students to the use of LBI in their English language learning?
3. What challenges do teachers face in implementing LBI within the current educational framework in Oman?

Literature Review

This section begins by presenting the theoretical background that underpins the use of LBI. It then considers research papers examining the instruction integrated into the ESL curriculum. The literature review also examines the various benefits of using literature for enhancing students' language abilities and how it relates to language proficiency, with a specific emphasis on writing, taking into account the considerations to be made when implementing LBI.

Literature Stands as a Good Model and Subject Matter for Writing

Previous studies have suggested that LBI has certain advantages over basal reading programs. Literary texts can speak directly to the emotional development of young people. LBI focuses on texts related to their interests, concerns, and demands, which makes the text meaningful to them and therefore more motivating and interesting than other kinds of texts (Palardy, 1997). Adeyanju (1978) contends that literature can be used as a fertile resource to teach morals and human values indirectly and effectively. Literature is also a rich resource for presenting different cultures, thus expanding learners' repertoire of cultural and historical knowledge (Graham & Harris, 1994; Palardy, 1997; Popp, 1996; Raphael, 2004; Samara, 2002).

As Paran (2008) states, "Literature in the language classroom can provide a rich source of input that engages students in the language learning process and helps develop a wide range of skills, including reading comprehension, critical thinking, and cultural awareness" (Paran, 2008, p. 467). Moreover, it improves metacognition, which refers to learners thinking about their own thinking, understanding their reasoning strengths and weaknesses, and retaining strategies to enhance learning and problem-solving (Smith, 2005). Literature can provide readers with insights not easily gained through interpreting their relations with other people or objects (Raphael, 2004).

Literature can also stimulate visual thinking among students, promoting discussion and the free expression of ideas. This encourages the cultivation of innovative thinkers over time (Popp, 1996). It is important not to overlook that reading helps accumulate background knowledge, which is valuable for learning (Carrasquillo, 1998). By reading stories, learners develop a schema about how the stories are organized and written, which helps them to pay attention to the main ideas and omit unnecessary details (Amer, 2003). Having such a schema helps learners when they try to compose narratives.

In addition, literature can function as subject matter for writing, which gives literature its strength as a reading tool to improve writing skills. Through literature, students can draw inferences and formulate their own ideas, which can make them think more critically and creatively because they feel free and emotionally attached to the piece of literature they are reading. Students can write "on or about" literature through given responses to questions that require paragraph or essay writing or take-home composition (Hismanoglu, 2005, p. 58). At advanced stages, students can write their own analysis of the literary texts they read independently with reference to their own life experiences.

From the above, it is evident that literature can play an important role in enhancing students' writing abilities as well as their overall language achievement in the English language. What is needed now is an experiment that can practically explore this effect in a part of the world, Oman, where the culture does not strongly support reading literature and where there are few readers, especially among the younger generations.

Considerations to be Taken when Giving Literary-Based Instruction

Peregoy and Boyle (2008) provide a comprehensive explanation of the difficulties that ESL students may face when they are exposed to literature. They mention that students may experience limited proficiency and background knowledge-related reading difficulties. They imply that the reading text provided for the students must be comprehensible so that it can promote English language acquisition. With later assistance, students can proceed to more difficult texts.

Peregoy and Boyle (2008) also add that sometimes certain issues cannot be easily translated across cultures, such as humor. The teacher must be selective in choosing what to give his/her students. Peregoy and Boyle (2008) recommend several techniques and considerations to be taken when giving literature to students from beginning readers to more advanced ones. For beginners, they encourage teachers to look for graded books and subjects that interest their students. They also suggest different ideas a teacher may teach his/her students to help them read, such as drawing maps that summarize the main events and vocabulary. It is also beneficial to encourage them to share their reading and to accept different feedback. Peregoy and Boyle (2008) encourage giving reading-thinking activities to intermediate and advanced students. This involves inviting predictions from the students about potential endings, analyzing one portion of the text at a time, asking students to write essays about their reading, and completing other activities in their journals.

Review of Related Studies

Recent research continues to support the effectiveness of LBI in improving writing skills. For instance, Johnson and Green (2020) found that integrating literature into the ESL curriculum significantly enhanced students' descriptive writing abilities. Their study highlighted the importance of selecting age-appropriate and culturally relevant texts to maximize engagement and learning outcomes.

To add more, a study by Martinez and Torres (2021) demonstrated that literature-based instruction not only improved writing skills but also increased students' overall motivation to learn English. They noted that students were more enthusiastic about participating in class discussions and writing assignments when the material was derived from literature.

Another study by Lee et al. (2022) focused on the use of literary texts to teach advanced writing skills. Their findings indicated that students exposed to complex literary texts developed better analytical writing skills and were more adept at constructing coherent arguments in their essays.

When it comes to studies conducted in Oman, there have been no studies specifically focusing on the use of Literature-Based Instruction to improve writing skills among ESL/EFL students in Oman. However, there is a growing interest in exploring innovative teaching methodologies within the Omani educational context. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of LBI in improving writing skills among Omani students. The findings from this research could pave the way for further studies and encourage the adoption of LBI in the region.

Method

This section explains the instructions employed in the study. It encompasses the research design, the target population, sample selection, research instruments, and data collection procedures.

The study is an application study with a pre and post-test. The sample of the study was divided into two groups: one group received their typical English class instruction from the Omani public English series book *English for Me*, while the other group received LBI in place of some lessons with their regular English classroom activities for a duration of two months. Additionally, part of the data analysis in this study was informed by observations and notes taken during the treatment period.

Participants

The population for this study comprised Grade 10 female students enrolled in English lessons at an Omani basic education school. A convenience sampling method was employed to select the sample, influenced by the proximity of the school to the researcher's residence and pre-existing partnerships with the school's principal and some teachers. This facilitated access to the classes required for the study. From this population, a sample of 120 female students, who had been studying English for approximately ten years, was selected from four different classes.

The students were then randomly assigned into two groups: a control group and a treatment group, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being placed in either group. This random assignment was crucial to minimize any pre-existing differences between the groups. The decision on which group would receive Literature-Based Instruction (LBI) was made randomly. Both groups were taught by teachers with similar qualifications and experience to maintain consistency in teaching quality.

Several logistical factors influenced the selection process, including the school's proximity to the researcher and existing relationships with school staff, which allowed for scheduling two classes per week for each group. The research was designed so that students did not need to allocate extra time outside their regular class hours, and tasks were tailored to align with their proficiency levels and cultural context. Participation in the research did not affect the students' regular course grades or evaluations.

Out of the initial 120 students selected for the pre-test, only 93 students (46 from the control group and 47 from the treatment group) attended due to absentees on the day of the pre-test. This number was further reduced to 73 students for the post-test, with some students excluded from the data analysis due to missing at least four sessions (20% of the total number of sessions) of the treatment classes.

Research Instruments

The Validity and Reliability of the Pre and Post-test

To establish the validity of the test, it was reviewed and discussed with other grade 10 English teachers at the school to ensure clarity and appropriateness. The teachers supplied useful feedback, suggesting that the time allocated for writing should not exceed 30 minutes and that students would benefit from a model example before commencing their writing, which was a familiar practice for them.

Both the pre-test and post-test were double-marked by two grade 10 teachers adhering to a predetermined rubric, as shown in Table One. The rubric is based on the rubric that ESL teachers developed at Prince William County Public School in Virginia to test EFL students' writing, which follows holistic scoring where writing is viewed as an integrated whole (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). After a discussion with the teachers at the school, the researcher and the teachers agreed that it would be preferable for the scoring system to comprise five rather than six levels

because none of the sampled students' writing performance corresponded to level six. In addition, the strategy followed by the Ministry of Education in Oman follows a five-level criterion, but it gives the teachers the freedom to choose the rubric that suits them. Table One in the appendix shows the rubric followed for marking the pre and post-test. The rate of agreement between the two markers was 95%. Any differences were resolved through negotiation before reaching a consensus for each paper.

The consistency of scores assigned by the two independent raters (teachers) was tested to establish the reliability of the rubric used to collect the students' scores. There was no major discrepancy in the scores between the first and second-raters.

To calculate the aspects in which the students showed progress, if any, the results of students who showed any advancement in their writing ability were reanalyzed to study their progress in the following aspects of writing: vocabulary, coherence, and ideas. The same rubric was used to reexamine the students' papers in the mentioned aspects separately.

Material Used

The material provided in the eight lessons of treatment was collected and prepared, bearing in mind the following conditions. The material:

- Had to be very well written and high quality; classics were preferred when available.
- Had to be of a similar level to the students' current language level or slightly higher than their level.
- Had not to contain any issues that could offend students from a very conservative community.
- Had to include a theme or a character that can be discussed within the limited time of the lesson, which did not exceed 40 minutes.
- Had to be able to stand as a good model for writing or give a very good background for the students to create some writing output.

Three to four tasks were prepared for the class discussion to stimulate the students' critical thinking about the text. Numerous questions were posed later in the class to allow the students to express themselves as openly as possible. Students were given the space to comment on each other's ideas and were asked to link them to the text. Their main thoughts were presented on the board and, when available, pictures and maps were used. The instructions also provided keywords to help the students before their reading commenced.

After class discussion, when the students were ready, they were asked to write two or more paragraphs about a topic related to the literature they had read and discussed. This could involve evaluating the literature, providing a conclusion, or offering their reflections on one or more of the pieces' elements.

It is crucial to emphasize that the students were not given writing instruction. The students were asked to write reflections about the literary pieces they had studied but were not taught how to construct and compose their paragraphs. The experiment was designed to test their incidental learning of writing composition through reading.

Research Procedures

During the treatment, efforts were made to ensure every student received a copy of the material discussed in every lesson. Some prepared writing assignment sheets were distributed to the students at the end of each class for the students to respond in writing to the texts they were

given. Since the students were not usually obliged to do the assignment, not all of them handed in their writing products, although they responded well in class. The strategy was changed at later stages, where the students had to write within the class time limit. Around 10 to 15 minutes of the lesson was assigned for them to write after the class discussion. The post-test was given in the tenth week.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the test were tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS program. The following statistical techniques were used.

1. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations.
2. Independent-sample T-test to find out if any significant statistical differences might be detected between the two groups in the pre-writing achievement test.
3. Independent-sample T-test to compare the scores of both groups in the post-writing achievement test, administered to both groups following the completion of the application.
4. Paired-sample T-test to compare the scores of each group as a separate unit to detect any significant change in their writing.
5. The mean differences were calculated to review the specific aspects of writing that the students had shown progress in.
6.

Other Analysis

To address the second research objective, which concentrates on the student's reaction to the treatment and the difficulties the teacher would face, notes and observations were recorded after the application sessions.

Results

This section reveals the results obtained from the analysis conducted during this research. The data and findings are based on 73 students' completion of both pre- and post-test tasks. The structure of the section aligns with the research questions that drove this study, facilitating a clear presentation of the outcomes. Section one provides a comprehensive examination of descriptive statistics and analysis to assess the improvement levels in writing for the treatment and control groups separately. Section two provides the results of inferential analysis regarding the treatment, derived from observations and notes taken during the treatment phase. Finally, section three consolidates the primary findings, offering a succinct summary of the key results and their implications.

Analysis of the Tests

The first research objective concerned whether learners who received LBI integrated into their curriculum progressed to higher stages of writing performance than students who did not receive such instruction. The analysis and results pertaining to this research question have been divided into three sections. The analysis provided in the following two subsections is based on the results of independent-sample t-tests, first to assess the outcomes of the pre-test and then to assess the outcomes of the post-test. The third subsection presents the data analysis based on a paired-sample t-test used to test the means differences between the results of the pre-and post-tests of each group.

Means of the Pre-test Results of Both Groups

To check the equivalency of the writing levels of the two groups, the pre-test performances of the two groups were compared before the beginning of the experiment. Table one provides details on the achievement test that was administered to both groups in the pre-test.

Table 1. *Independent-sample T-test of the mean pre-test scores of the two groups*

Group	N	df	SD	M	T-value Sig (2tailed)
Control Group	39	71	0.798	2.1795	−1.380-0.172
Treatment Group	34		0.719	2.4265	

From the table, it is clear that there is no significant difference in the means of the pre-test score (assuming that the variances are equal with a P-value of 0.172, which is not significant at the 0.05 level). Hence, although there are slight differences in the mean achievement of both groups, the results of the t-test indicate a similarity in writing achievement prior to the experiment between the group that did not receive the treatment and the group that did receive the treatment.

Means of the Post-test Results of Both Groups

After the completion of the experiment, a writing post-test was administered, which was close in level and nature to the pre-test. The same statistical analysis was administered to determine the mean difference between the results. Table two demonstrates evident and statistically significant distinctions among the means of the post-test scores of the two groups (with a P-value of −0.002, which is significant at the 0.05 level) in favor of the treatment group.

Table 2. *Independent-sample T-test of the mean post-test scores of the two groups*

Group	N	df	SD	M	T-value Sig (2tailed)
Control Group	39	71	0.857	2.2821	−3.169-0.002
Treatment Group	34		0.699	2.8676	

The pre-test showed minor differences between the two groups in the pre-test, as mentioned above, and the differences between the mean post-test achievement scores of the two groups are obviously considerable. This signifies that using LBI was clearly effective in improving the treatment group's writing skills.

Comparison of the Pre-and Post-test Results of the Research Groups

The results of the pre-and post-test of each group were compared separately to measure the improvement in the writing skills of each group. Table Four shows the differences in the means of the pre-and post-test results in the no-treatment group. The figures indicate that the mean difference between the two tests for the group is not significant (p = 0.562 at the 0.05 level). The information in the table shows a mean value of 2.2051 for the pre-test and a slight improvement in the post-test to reach 2.2564. This improvement relates to the improvement in writing that the no-treatment group accomplished by practicing the writing tasks presented in their textbooks during normal classroom instruction. Moreover, such an improvement would indicate the value

of the writing tasks recommended by the curriculum department of the Ministry of Education for enhancing learner performance in this area.

Table 4. *Paired-sample T-test of the mean post- and post-test scores of the no-treatment group*

Control Group	N	df	SD	M	T-value Sig (2tailed)
Pre-test	39	38	0.8407	2.2051	-.585-−562
Post-test	39		0.8181	2.2564	

On the other hand, the results presented in Table Five show that differences in the means of the results of the pre- and post-test of the treatment group are significant at the 0.05 level. The mean score of the pre-test was 2.4, and it increased to 2.8 in the mean score of the post-test. This increase appears to be due to the LBI that was integrated into the students' ordinary English classes during the eight weeks of treatment. The improvement shown in the figures in Table three could also be due to other factors, such as the students' motivation in the class, the novelty of the class instruction that may have attracted the students' attention, or the teacher's efficacy.

Table 3. *Paired-sample T-test of the mean post- and post-test scores of the treatment group*

Treatment Group	N	df	SD	M	T-value Sig (2tailed)
Pre-test	34	33	0.7191	2.4265	−3.597-.001
Post-test	34		0.6996	2.8676	

Figure One compares the mean scores of the no-treatment and treatment groups for students' writing achievement in both the pre- and post-test, making the differences more understandable. The blue, nearly straight line reflects the slight improvement of the no-treatment group from their task-based instruction in their ordinary English classes. The upper skewed red line clarifies the obvious improvement in the writing performance of the treatment group. Overall, this graph shows that LBI, when integrated into the current Omani curriculum, generally improves learners' performance in writing skills.

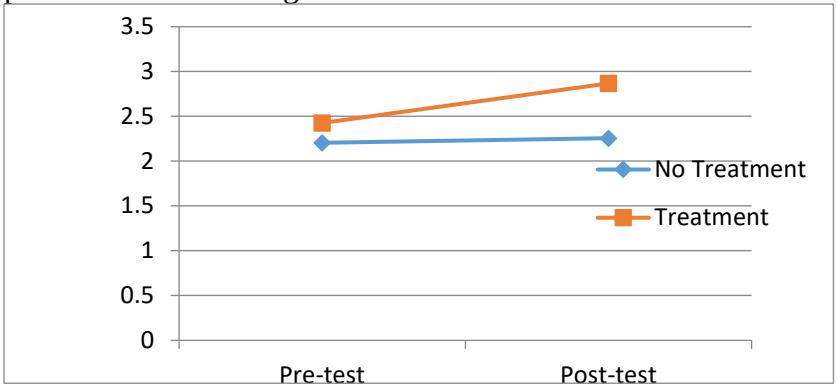

Figure 1. The mean scores of the groups in the pre-and post-test writing test

The Aspects of Writing in Which Students Made the Most Progress

The results above indicate a significant relation between the students' improvement in writing and LBI. This necessitated a micro-level examination of the different aspects of writing to show in what way the students' writing had improved. Figure Two illustrates the differences detected in the students' performances in the following aspects of writing: coherence, vocabulary, and ideas.

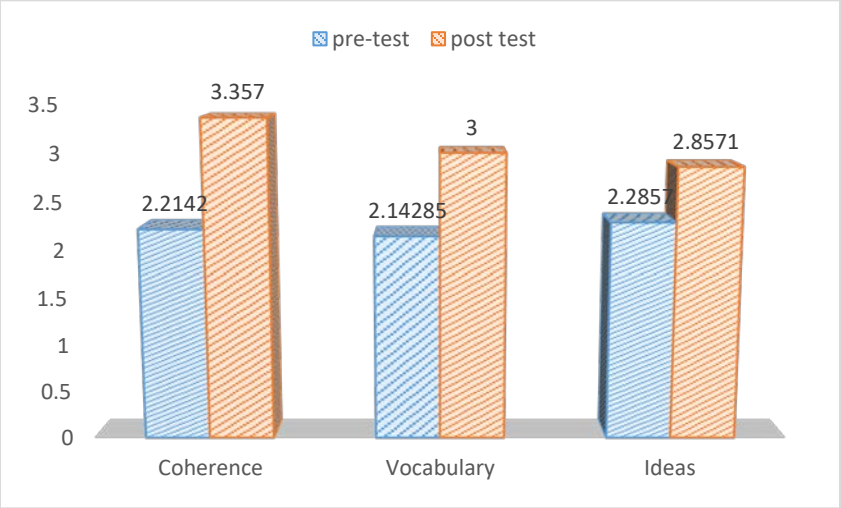

Figure 2. Three different aspects of writing in the pre- and post-tests

The figure illustrates that the students demonstrated significant signs of progress in all the identified aspects. It also shows that the greatest advancement was in the students' ability to make their writing more coherent.

A few students in the pre-test did not even write in the form of a paragraph; they expressed their ideas through separate points. The students were able to overcome such a shortcoming incidentally without being instructed directly about the writing process, but this does not mean that the students had reached the writing level of the texts they were reading. However, it does indicate that selecting texts that capture the reader's attention can have an indirect impact on their writing, even if that reader was not directly instructed about writing.

The same point can be made about ideas and vocabulary; the students were more ready to write after they read about a particular theme or subject. Even though the students' language was relatively poor, the graders were able to detect a change in the way the students expressed their ideas and in the vocabulary they chose to use for their writing. These results highlight the findings of previous studies discussed in the literature review. See (Amer, 2003; Heller, 1999; Amith, 2003).

Reflections on the Treatment

This section presents a critical evaluation of the lessons learned throughout the treatment. It explores the dynamics throughout the eight-week treatment period, drawing on the researcher's observations and notes on the students' responses. The observations made here act as a qualitative examination of how the treatment was used in the setting of the study. This examination will address the second research objective.

The Student's Reaction to the Treatment

It is essential to consider whether this method is appropriate for intermediate-level Omani students. Did the students respond well to this pedagogical approach? How did they respond, and which literary genres did they thrive in?

Teachers observed that when students read and then listened to the teacher reading aloud Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," they were immediately enthralled by its tone. Despite having only rudimentary English skills, many started to draw parallels between the poem and their lives and even tried to decipher its meaning. The ideas in the poem were the subject of discussions with the class as a whole and in small student groups. Surprisingly, even though this theme was not directly expressed, the more accomplished students were able to deduce on their own that the poet was thinking about suicide. It is important to note that the students were uninformed of the poem's fame, unabridged nature, or whether it had been condensed. They were clearly thrilled and proud of themselves for understanding and analyzing poetry generally presented in academic settings. Others wanted to develop their language abilities to convey their ideas better, while some pupils asked to read more poems. A few others even wished to communicate their interpretations in Arabic, albeit this wish was not fulfilled.

Unexpectedly, students showed increased interest when given passages from lengthy fiction works, whether fictitious or true. Students who heard these passages read aloud seemed to have a more profound knowledge of the material and a greater appreciation for the language's beauty. The pre-reading conversations and warm-up exercises also fueled this passion.

Notably, after reading just two pages of *The Alchemist* during the course, one student was so moved by an excerpt that she decided to buy the entire book. Although not necessarily typical of all students, this underlines that the requirements of some students are not being met, and it emphasizes the significance of meeting those needs. All in all, students showed interest and engagement in the class during the treatment.

The Challenges that May Face the Teacher

Several difficulties that could affect any instructor attempting to use this strategy surfaced from the researcher's observations and notes while administering this treatment. The main difficulties were creating instructional materials and introducing a unique educational method to teachers and students.

For several reasons, gathering and assembling materials for the students was time-consuming and difficult. Additionally, numerous literature-based online training examples are sometimes extensive, unsuitable for a 40-minute lesson, or designed for independent reading; thus, they were unsuitable for the short treatment duration of the experiment.

The conservative nature of Omani society presented further difficulties. Due to their discussion of religion, politics, and other delicate subjects, many literary works were deemed unsuitable for students. To prevent potential problems in the classroom, teachers must choose materials with extreme care.

The second obstacle was overcoming the widespread perception that students lacked the skills to engage with unaltered, original literary texts. It was difficult to dispel this myth held by both teachers and pupils. Students first expressed concern when this idea was introduced, saying things like "we are not geniuses" and "she thinks we are college students." It took several lessons for the students to settle down, enjoy themselves, and realize that the challenge was not insurmountable.

The lack of teacher training necessary to successfully administer this form of instruction may present additional difficulties. The success of a strategy can be influenced by familiarity with its methods and features as well as their practical use. Furthermore, it could be difficult for teachers who are not interested in literature to use this strategy well. Since a lack of excitement can negatively impact instruction, teachers must be inspired by what they teach.

Discussion

This study set out to investigate the impact of Literature-Based Instruction (LBI) on the incidental acquisition of writing skills among ESL/EFL students in Salalah, Oman. The research questions addressed were:

1. Does LBI significantly improve the writing skills of ESL/EFL students compared to conventional English instruction?
2. How do students perceive the use of LBI in their English lessons?
3. What challenges do teachers face in implementing LBI?

Improvement in Writing Skills

The results of this study demonstrated that students who received LBI showed significant improvements in writing fluency, coherence, and grammatical accuracy compared to the control group. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Johnson and Green (2020), who found that integrating literature into the ESL curriculum significantly enhanced students' descriptive writing abilities. The improvement in writing skills among the treatment group can be attributed to the rich, authentic language input provided by literary texts, which supported Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis. These theories suggest that meaningful interaction with complex language inputs fosters better language acquisition.

Student Perceptions of LBI

Qualitative data from student interviews indicated a positive perception of LBI. Students reported higher levels of motivation and engagement when learning through literature, as they found the materials more interesting and relatable. This increased engagement likely contributed to the observed improvements in their writing skills. Similar findings were reported by Martinez and Torres (2021), who noted that literature-based instruction not only improved writing skills but also increased students' overall motivation to learn English. The relevance of using culturally appropriate and age-appropriate texts, as highlighted by these studies, was evident in the current study's findings.

Challenges in Implementing LBI

Despite the positive outcomes, the implementation of LBI was not without challenges. Teachers reported difficulties in selecting appropriate literary texts that matched the students' proficiency levels and cultural context. This challenge aligns with the considerations discussed by Peregoy and Boyle (2008), who emphasized the need for careful selection of literature to ensure comprehensibility and relevance. Additionally, logistical issues such as scheduling and ensuring consistent student attendance posed significant hurdles. The attrition observed, with the number of students reducing from 93 in the pre-test to 73 in the post-test, highlights the practical difficulties in maintaining student engagement over extended periods.

Relevance to Previous Studies

The findings of this study corroborate the existing literature on the benefits of LBI in enhancing writing skills. Previous studies by Palardy (1997) and Hismanoglu (2005) also support the notion that literature can serve as a powerful tool for improving various language skills, including writing. However, this study adds to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a specific cultural context—Oman—where limited research has been conducted on LBI.

Implications for Curriculum Design

The positive outcomes of this study suggest that incorporating LBI into the ESL/EFL curriculum can be beneficial. Curriculum designers and educators should consider integrating literature as a core component of language instruction to leverage its potential for enhancing writing skills. The study also underscores the importance of teacher training in selecting and effectively using literary texts to address the diverse needs of students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that LBI can significantly improve the writing skills of ESL/EFL students in Oman. It highlights the potential of literature to make language learning more engaging and effective. Future research should continue to explore the use of LBI in different contexts and with diverse student populations to further validate its efficacy and address the challenges identified in this study.

Limitations of the Study

Despite careful measures taken during the phases of research design and data collection, certain limitations remain: First, the study's focus was restricted to tenth-grade female students at a particular public school in the Dhofar province due to logistical limitations that limited the research's breadth. A more comprehensive, random-sample strategy would improve the study's generalizability. Second, the treatment was only given for eight weeks at a rate of two weekly lessons. Given the progressive nature of writing skill development, extending the treatment's duration and session frequency might make it easier to conduct a more extensive examination of the benefits of literature-based education. This would make it possible to investigate individualized or independent reading in greater detail and independently investigate other literature-based teaching strategies. Another drawback is that a single teacher implementing the research treatment may add confounding factors pertaining to teacher effectiveness and student motivation. Having multiple teachers involved in the treatment administration could produce more dependable outcomes by reducing the influence of unrelated variables.

Future Research

Forthcoming studies should try to compare the results of the current study with those from comparable investigations of larger samples using strictly regulated instructional methods. A teacher training program that focuses on literature-based teaching strategies could be used in a potential study, and it would then be put into practice for a set amount of time in regular classrooms. Such a comparative study could provide an in-depth understanding of how different teaching methods affect students' language competency and performance.

Moreover, future research examining the effects of literature-based training on incidental vocabulary acquisition could replicate the current study with minor alterations. Studies with students at various skill levels, including beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, may also help us gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of literature-based training.

Future studies must broaden their focus to include a variety of individuals and circumstances. Such studies will provide a more nuanced understanding of how LBI affects students' writing and linguistic abilities. These projects could significantly advance the knowledge of LBI by adding to the existing body of literature.

Conclusions

This study supports the role of LBI in English language learners' development in EFL classrooms. Specifically, the findings suggest that LBI can positively affect students' incidental writing performance. As this is the first study to measure the development of writing skills based on teaching literature, it contributes to the growing body of literature concerning second language acquisition.

In addition, promoting a positive attitude toward LBI is essential to convince those concerned to adopt new trends and break away from the routine of typical English classes. It is important to mention that such instruction should match the learners' level and needs. Therefore, teachers should be highly selective, choosing appropriate texts.

Finally, implementing such a form of instruction may require some training for teachers. Teachers need to become acquainted with the available methods and techniques before they start giving their classes so as not to get lost or feel overwhelmed in managing the instruction in their classes. Further, a much greater interest in developing public school libraries or even considering having bookshelves inside the classroom would make implementing such instruction richer and more valid. Even if it is not to implement LBI, developing the reading resources available for students would help foster positive reading habits that are generally lacking in our societies.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Rubric Used for Evaluating the Writing Task

Table One*: The rubric used to collect the data*

Level 5	Conveys meaning clearly. Presents multi-paragraph organization logically, although some parts may not be fully developed. Uses varied and vivid vocabulary appropriate for the audience and purpose. Produces some grammatical errors without affecting meaning. Brings about vivid and interesting ideas.
Level 4	Conveys ideas coherently most of the time. Writes in logical paragraphs. Writes with limited use of transitions but with various sentence structures. Chooses adequate vocabulary. Has interesting ideas.
Level 3	Attempts to express ideas. Writes primarily in a simple manner. Uses highly frequent vocabulary. Produces grammatical errors that seldom diminish communication. Repeats the ideas mentioned in the class with some new ideas.
Level 2	Begins to express meaning. Writes simple sentences/phrases. Limited or repetitious vocabulary. Spells inventively. Uses little or no mechanics/diminishes meaning. Uses the ideas mentioned in the class but brings up nothing new or inventive.
Level 1	Draws pictures to convey meaning. Uses single words and phrases. Copies from a model.

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Do Linguistic Factors Impact Phonological Awareness in L2? A Study of Phonological Awareness of English by Adult Saudi Learners

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Abstract
The study explores the impact of certain linguistic factors on phonological awareness ability in the second language. This study examines the effect of three linguistic factors on Saudi university students' L2 phonological awareness: the linguistic environment (single vs. clustered), the linguistic affiliation of the phoneme (novel vs. non-novel), and the phonological representation of the lexical item that contains the target phoneme (real-word vs. non-word). The linguistic factors that are examined and controlled in this study represented essential differences between the participants' L1 and L2, hence highlighting the effect of L1-L2 distance. The participants were 48 university students majoring in English language. Two phonological awareness tasks were administered, a phoneme deletion task and a phonological judgement task, to test phonological awareness at the phonemic and phonotactic levels. The results showed that the linguistic environment of the phoneme had a significant impact on the participants' L2 phonological awareness. The linguistic affiliation of the target phoneme was another linguistic factor that affected the participants' L2 phonological awareness. Their perception of novel L2 phonemes was considerably poorer than non-novel phonemes. This result confirms the validity of the linguistic affiliation hypothesis in explaining phonemic awareness in L2. Additionally, the results revealed that the quality of the phonological representation plays a significant role in the participants' performance on the phonological awareness tasks in L2 and that the lexical status of the item affected this underlying phonological representation. The findings of this study offer theoretical and practical implications for the acquisition and teaching of a second language.

Keywords: Adult Saudi learners, English as a second language, linguistic factors, lexical status, phonological awareness
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Introduction

L2 speech learning has a special status within L2 learning because, unlike grammar and vocabulary, in L2 pronunciation, no conscious reflection takes place (Ellis, 2004). While L2 learners are generally able to state grammatical rules, or explain why a given sentence is grammatical, they are often unable to state pronunciation rules or explain how a certain sound is produced. In fact, the L2 learners possess knowledge that enables them to perceive and produce L2 speech and to identify native-like and non-native-like pronunciations, but this knowledge is non-verbalizable. Therefore, the L2 learners show manifestations of underlying awareness about the phonological system of the L2. The present study is inspired by this clear difference between the L2 learners' belief to only possess little knowledge of the L2 phonological system and how much they actually know about it and the implication this aspect could have for L2 speech learning.

Language awareness is an approach that has been developed in second and foreign language learning contexts, as well as in native language education. Language awareness refers to "the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" (Carter, 2003, p.64). It is a field of research within second language acquisition that is concerned with determining L2 speakers' knowledge about the target language in general. The central hypothesis in this field requires that the learning aspects of a foreign language to be initially consciously noticed by the learner. Then, awareness about these aspects develops and transfers into accurate use of these aspects in daily speech.

The understanding of the concept of language awareness among applied linguists owes much to Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, which considers awareness as a level of consciousness. The noticing hypothesis is one of the most influential theories in second language acquisition. This hypothesis highlights the role of noticing in learning a second language (Ellis, 2015). It assumes that input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered (Schmidt, 2012). It is common sense to assume that second language acquisition is primarily driven by what learners pay attention to and are aware of in the input from the target language.

The concept of language awareness is broad; it includes phonological awareness, which is considered a part of the learner's awareness of the phonological system of the language and which can be defined as awareness of the phonological structure of spoken words and the ability to access and manipulate these structures (Saiegh-Haddad, 2019). More specifically, this term refers to the ability to perceive, distinguish between, and manipulate sounds, syllable structures, and suprasegmental features (Oakhill & Kyle, 2000). It is widely recognized as an essential component of reading development and disability in both L1 and L2 (Brady & Shankweiler, 2013).

Phonological awareness is regarded as one aspect of the broader category of metalinguistic awareness. Gillon (2007) notes that phonological awareness is the aspect of metalinguistic knowledge that has received most of the attention in the research on language acquisition and reading development. Research has revealed that phonological awareness plays an important role in the development of L1 and L2 language skills such as spelling, pronunciation, listening, and reading (Carson et al., 2013).

The current study aims to explore phonological awareness ability in L2, specifically the phonological awareness of English as L2 among Saudi university students. While some research has been carried out on L2 phonological awareness, no study thus far has investigated phonological awareness of adult Saudi learners of English. Consequently, the present study addresses this gap by examining the very nature of phonological awareness in the L2 context. It aims to shed light on

the nature of phonological awareness in the L2 context and the linguistic factors influencing this ability in L2. More specifically, the study investigates the effects of the linguistic environment, phonological representation, and the phonemes's linguistic affiliation on the level of phonological awareness of Saudi learners of English. The study seeks to enhance our understanding of the nature of and relationship between phonological awareness constructs in L1 and L2. In addition, the study is important as it offers a better understanding of the nature of phonological awareness in L2 and the acquisition of L2 speech. Further, it provides valuable insight into the way underlying L2 phonological knowledge is organized.

The study has important practical implications and could be beneficial to both L2 learners and instructors. The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1- Is there an effect of the linguistic environment of the phoneme on Saudi university students' phonological awareness of English?
2- Is there an effect of the phonological representation of the lexical item on Saudi university students' phonological awareness of English?
3- Is there an effect of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation on Saudi university students' phonological awareness of English?

Literature Review

Phonological Awareness in Second Language

While language awareness and L1 phonological awareness have been widely investigated, studies on phonological awareness in adults learning a second language are somewhat scarce. The limited research on L2 phonological awareness is rather surprising considering the significant number of studies on the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction, which emphasize the general idea that raising the learner's awareness of the phonology of the target language through explicit instruction is beneficial for perception and production in the second language. According to Mora et al. (2014), phonological awareness in the target language entails implicit knowledge about the phonological system of the language at the segmental, suprasegmental, and phonotactic levels. This is often tied to the level of the learner's L2 pronunciation and L2 reading ability. Murphy Odo (2021) states that there are a number of studies that have examined the influence of phonological awareness instruction on word reading of English as an L2. He conducted a meta-analysis of 46 studies on this topic, and the analysis revealed a moderate effect of L2 phonological awareness instruction on L2 word reading. Although some studies have been done on phonological awareness in the L2, the majority of these studies have only focused on the role of phonological awareness in L2 reading acquisition and have not shed light on the factors that influence this ability in the L2.

The phonological awareness skills of second language learners are affected by a number of variables. These variables can be categorized as linguistic factors, learner factors, the degree of exposure to L2, and the amount of L2 instruction (Garrett & Cots, 2017). Some of the linguistic factors that influence learners' performances on phonological awareness tasks include the phonologies of both L1 and L2 as well as the orthographies of the two languages, especially if one is alphabetic and the other is logographic. The underlying phonological representation is another linguistic variable that affects phonological awareness. The quality of the phonological representation of a given word might affect the learner's explicit awareness of the word's phonological structure (Gillon, 2007). Furthermore, a fully developed phonological representation requires sufficient knowledge of phonotactic constraints (Gillon, 2007). With regard to learner

variables, aspects such as age, motivation, aptitude, and economic and social status all influence the development of phonological awareness skills (Garrett & Cots, 2017). In addition, the learner's previous experience of the L1 and its orthography, as well as the learning context within which the language is being acquired, influences the learner's L2 phonological awareness (Gillon, 2007).

The issue which has long divided researchers is the nature of phonological awareness. One hotly debated topic in this field is the classification of phonological awareness. While some researchers view phonological awareness as a metalinguistic skill not affected by the individual's L2 language proficiency or by L1-L2 linguistic distance (Campbell & Sais, 1995; Durgunoğlu et al., 1993; Geva & Siegel, 2000), others argue that this ability has a linguistic component that is language-specific (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011; Saiegh-Haddad, 2004; Saiegh-Haddad, 2007a). Research on the phonological awareness construct in L1 has placed emphasis on the factors affecting the development of this ability. However, very little is known about the effect of these factors on phonological awareness in L2. First and second language, linguistic environment, phonological representation, and linguistic distance between L1 and L2 are all examples of the linguistic factors that might influence phonological awareness in L2 and that possibly underlie phonological awareness in different languages. Examining these factors could contribute to the debate of whether phonological awareness may be better regarded as a universal construct or a language-specific linguistic ability.

Linguistic Factors and Phonological Awareness

There are some linguistic factors that influence phonological awareness skills. These include the phonologies of both L1 and L2 and orthographic influences of the L2, especially in alphabetic languages. Garrett and Cots (2017) point out that the phonological inventories of the learner's L1 and L2 have a considerable effect on the ease or difficulty of successful oral communication. It is assumed that a learner whose L1 and L2 inventories share many characteristics is most likely to face only minor challenges in acquiring L2 pronunciation. However, when the learner's L1 and L2 have strongly divergent phonological inventories, L2 intelligibility and comprehensibility are more likely to be compromised.

The quantity and quality of L2 is another aspect that determines the extent to which adult L2 speakers master the phonology of their L2s. Garrett and Cots (2017) state that it is suggested in longitudinal comprehensibility studies that the degree and quality of input have an effect on phonological awareness skills. In addition, Garrett and Cots show that phonological awareness and subsequent improved L2 pronunciation can be brought about through explicit L2 pronunciation instruction. Other linguistic factors that influence phonological awareness in L2 include the phonological representation of the word, the linguistic environment of the target phoneme, the structure of the syllable in a language, and the linguistic affiliation of the target phoneme.

The Phonological Representation of the Word

One important aspect that is closely related to phonological awareness is phonological representation. Phonological awareness ability involves operations on an underlying representation of phonological structures. Goswami (2012) defines phonological representation as "the mental representation of the sounds and combinations of sounds that comprise words in a particular spoken language" (p. 2625). This mental representation of segments serves as input to the systems responsible for articulation and production (Fernández & Cairns, 2010). The quality and integrity of this underlying phonological representation in long-term memory should influence

the outcome of the phonological awareness operation (Saiegh-Haddad, 2019). Consequently, deficient phonological representation might hinder phonological awareness at three linguistic levels: phonemic, sub-syllabic, and syllabic. Saiegh-Haddad (2019) points out that studying the effect of phonological representation in long-term memory is one way to address the linkage between language and phonological awareness. She emphasizes that learners' phonological awareness decisions are related to phonological awareness quality and that phonological awareness in both L1 and L2 is affected by the quality of the phonological representation. She also argues that in the L2 context, phonological awareness difficulties might become more apparent, especially when factors undermining the quality of phonological representations in long-term memory co-occur. These factors include language status (i.e., whether the speaker is using his/her L1 or L2) and lexical status (i.e., whether the learner is phonologically processing real-words or non-real words). Oz-Vecht and Degani (2022) also assert that the quality and strength of phonological representations affect the phonological awareness performance of bilingual speakers and could predict speakers' performances on phonological awareness tasks. In addition, bilingual speakers often exabit enhanced phonological awareness sensitivity to items in their L1 compared to their L2.

The lexical status of the stimulus word is one aspect of phonological representation to be considered in examining phonological awareness. It refers to the lexical categorization of the stimulus, whether it is a word or a non-word. Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) note that the lexical restructuring model is adequate in addressing the effect of the lexical status of the stimulus word on phonological awareness. According to the lexical restructuring model, the quality of the phonological representation of lexical items affecting phonological awareness is linked to the individual's vocabulary growth and word knowledge in a given language (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011). This suggests that phonological awareness is, to some extent, language-specific, and thus, the same individual may possess different levels of phonological awareness in L1 and L2 (Saiegh-Haddad & Geva, 2010). The lexical restructuring model also suggests that L1 words are more accurately represented than L2 words because of the increasing level of practice and familiarity with the L1 words (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011).

Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) explored the effect of the lexical status of stimulus items on phonological awareness. The participants in the study were normal and reading-disabled native Hebrew college students. They spoke English as their L2. The authors hypothesized that participants would perform poorly on phonological awareness tasks when phonemes were embedded in non-real words than within real-words, especially among reading disabled students and in the L2. Surprisingly, the findings of the study indicated that the effect of the lexical status of the stimulus item on phonological awareness differed across languages and groups. More specifically, only the reading-disabled group performed poorly on the phonological awareness task, which was phoneme deletion in L2, when the phoneme was embedded within non-real words. In general, the study showed that phonological awareness in L1 is not affected by the lexical status of the word, which may be attributed to the students' familiarity with the phonological structure of the L1 and their possession of a large L1 lexicon.

Linguistic Environment of the Target Phoneme

There are specific linguistic factors that influence learners' phonological processing and their phonological awareness ability. The linguistic environment of a phoneme plays an important

role in accessing and processing the phoneme. The position of the phoneme (whether initial or final) and the linguistic context of the phoneme (whether it is singleton or part of a consonant cluster) affect the learner's phonemic awareness. In a study that tested Russian L1-Hebrew L2 bilingual children's phonemic awareness, Saiegh-Haddad et al. (2010) reported that phoneme position had a consistent effect on phonological awareness in the two languages. In contrast, the effect of the linguistic context of the phoneme on phonological awareness did not appear to be uniform in the same language or consistent in different languages (Saiegh-Haddad et al., 2010). More specifically, the linguistic context of the target phoneme had a significant influence on the performance of the Russian speakers who found it more difficult to delete phonemes in a cluster than in a singleton context in both initial and final positions. The influence of the linguistic context of the target phoneme on phonemic awareness was also confirmed in a study done by Saiegh-Haddad (2007a). She examined the effect of this factor on Arabic children who spoke two different dialects of Arabic. The results showed that isolating a phoneme from a clustered context is more challenging. In summary, the findings in these studies suggested that the effect of the linguistic environment factor may be language-specific and could reflect differences in the syllable structure of the languages.

The Linguistic Affiliation of the Phoneme

The effect of phoneme's linguistic affiliation on phonological awareness has been explored in several studies. According to Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011), phoneme awareness is not only a mechanical operation but is also concept-based and is affected by the identity or the phonological profile of the target phoneme being operated on. Research on the role of phoneme identity on phonological awareness has been guided by the linguistic affiliation hypothesis. Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) state that this hypothesis addresses the role of sub-lexical phonological features on phonological awareness and claims that phonological awareness is affected by the degree of familiarity with the phonological structure of the target language. Therefore, factors such as the phoneme identity and the phonological profile of a certain phoneme play an important role in phoneme accessibility and phonological awareness in general. Moreover, Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) argue that phoneme identity could be a significant factor in predicting phonological awareness not only in L1 but also in L2.

The significance of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation lies in the fact that it can determine the extent to which a given phoneme may be familiar to the L2 learner and if an identical phoneme is within the learner's L1 phonemic repertoire. This is the main principle that the linguistic affiliation hypothesis is based on (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011). More specifically, a certain phoneme may be affiliated with a speaker's L1 and, therefore, familiar because it is within the L1 phonemic inventory. Alternatively, a given phoneme might be affiliated with L2 only and might be novel to the L2 learner.

Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) have tested the linguistic affiliation hypothesis. They examined cross-linguistic relationships between phonological awareness in Hebrew as L1 and English as L2 among normal and reading-disabled native Hebrew college students. They reported that the linguistic affiliation hypothesis had an effect on phonological awareness in both normal and reading-disabled groups. All participants in the study performed more poorly on novel phonemes than non-novel ones. Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2011) argued that the findings in their study imply that phonological awareness in L2 is, at least to some extent, language-specific and is affected by the linguistic affiliation of the target phoneme. This reflects the complex nature of

phonological awareness and shows that it embodies both a metalinguistic cognitive component and a language-specific component (Saiegh-Haddad, 2007b).

The effect of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation on phonemic awareness has not only been examined in cross-linguistic contexts but also among speakers of the same language with different dialects. For example, Saiegh-Haddad (2007a) has examined the cross-dialectal validity of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation constraint on phoneme isolation in diglossic Arabic. The findings revealed that the linguistic affiliation of the phoneme was a reliable factor in explaining phoneme isolation, thus reaffirming the external validity of the linguistic affiliation hypothesis in explaining phoneme awareness in diglossic Arabic (Saiegh-Haddad, 2007a).

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 48 Saudi university students (Female = 42, Male = 6) enrolled in the English program at the Department of English Language and Literature at Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University. The sample was random. An additional six participants were excluded from the analysis for failing to complete the phonemic deletion task. The data were collected during the third semester of the academic year of 2023. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and all participants signed a consent form prior to participation. All participants needed to be familiar with the English sounds and pronunciation. Therefore, only students who were enrolled in level five or above in the program and who had successfully completed the phonetics and phonology course were asked to participate in the study. In addition, none of the participants reported any speech or hearing problems. The age range of the participants is between 20 and 23 years. All participants have spent at least seven years learning English in a formal school setting and are currently completing their Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in the English language. Their level of proficiency varies from beginner to intermediate and advanced levels. The study was approved by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee at King Saud University under number / KSU-HE-22-070. Table One presents demographic information.

Table 1. *Demographic data of the participants.*

Age		**No. of hours of speaking English per day**	**Gender**	
M	21.5	2.9		
SD	0.89	1.6	87.5 % Female	12.5 % Male

Design

A repeated measure design was used, which included a within-subject design. Two phonological awareness measures were employed in the study. One measure examined phonological awareness in production. The other measure examined phonological awareness ability in perception.

Phonological Awareness Tasks

The data in the study was elicited using two phonological awareness measures. These measures were presented in the forms of phonological awareness tasks, one of which focused on production and the other one focused on perception. The test items in each task were selected carefully to target certain linguistic aspects and test their influence on the participant's phonological awareness.

Phonemic Deletion Task

In the deletion task, a list of stimulus items was presented orally to the participants, who were required first to isolate and next delete the initial phoneme of the stimulus item. In addition, the participants were required to listen to a list of stimulus items and delete the final phoneme. Phonemes were deleted from either singleton consonant or consonant clusters occupying onset positions, and the participants were required to articulate the remaining part of the word correctly. Therefore, this task was designed to examine the effect of the linguistic environment on phonological awareness in L2.

Another linguistic factor that was addressed in this task was the lexical status of the test item. Half of the items in the task were real words, and the other half were non-real words. The participants were required to delete a phoneme from both the singleton and clustered context in both onset and coda positions. Later, the participants' performances on real and non-real words were compared to determine the effect of the lexical status of the word on their phonological awareness.

Phonological Judgement Task

A list of stimulus items was created, which contained the target novel L2 phonemes. In addition, the test items that contained initial and final consonant clusters were included as novel L2 phonological features that are absent from the learners' L2. Their performance on these three novel L2 features was compared. The stimulus items which contained pronunciation deviations, and which were intended to represent the non-native pronunciation or the incorrect pronunciation in the list were recorded using a software called IPA reader. This software provides a clear pronunciation for IPA symbols regardless of whether the symbols represent a real English word or not. The rest of the stimulus items that did not contain pronunciation deviations and which represented correct native pronunciation were recorded using an online tool called (toPhonetics). The pronunciation of these correct lexical items was based on American English.

This task concentrated on the linguistic distance between L1 and L2 through the presentation of stimulus items that include novel L2 phonological features such as consonant clusters, as well as novel L2 phonemes and the non-novel phonemes that are often contrasted with them. The phonological judgment task is not commonly used in examining phonological awareness; however, Souza (2015) argues that this type of task is effective in measuring phonological awareness, especially in the L2 context. The task was specifically designed to examine the effect of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation (novel vs. non-novel) on phonological awareness in L2.

Research Instruments

With regard to the phonemic deletion task, the participants listened to a number of test items and were asked to isolate and then delete the initial phonemes. Half of the items in the task had a singleton consonant in the onset position and the other half had a consonant cluster in the onset position (see Table Two). Another list of test items was presented to the participants, and they were asked to isolate and then delete the final phonemes. Also, half of the items in the task had a singleton consonant in the coda position and the other half had a consonant cluster in the coda position (see Table Three). All of the items in these two sets were real-words.

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Table 2. *Deletion of the initial phoneme in real words.*

Delete (initial phoneme)	Singleton onset	pronunciation	Clustered onset	pronunciation
Practice items	knife	[naɪf]	stream	[stɹim]
Test items	cake	[kʰeɪk]	breathe	[brið]
	feed	[fid]	flight	[flaɪt]

Table 3. *Deletion of the final phoneme in real words.*

Delete (final phoneme)	Singleton coda	Pronunciation	Clustered coda	Pronunciation
Practice items	smell	[smɛl]	attempt	[əˈtʰɛmpt]
Test items	float	[floʊt]	mask	[mæsk]
	space	[speɪs]	depth	[dɛpθ]

Since the phonemic deletion task examines the effect of the lexical status of the stimulus item on phonological awareness, the participants were presented with another two sets of non-word items. As shown in Table Four, the participants were asked to delete initial phonemes from singleton and clustered contexts. In addition, they were asked to delete final phonemes from singleton and clustered contexts (see Table Five).

The task consisted of 24 items in total including the practice items aimed to test initial and final phoneme deletion. It examined the effect of the linguistic environment and the lexical status of the word that contained the target phoneme on the participants' phonological awareness in English. The following tables present the practice items given to the participants to familiarize them with the nature and requirements of the task, followed by the test items employed to measure their phonological awareness.

Table 4. *Deletion of the initial phoneme in non-real words.*

Delete (initial phoneme)	Singleton onset	Clustered onset
Practice items	[nʊg]	[stlɛd]
Test items	[bɔɪt]	[tlɛn]
	[gʌŋ]	[sgɪl]

Table 5. *Deletion of the final phoneme in non-real words.*

Delete (final phoneme)	Singleton coda	Clustered coda
Practice items	[fum]	[fumz]
Test items	[zɑt]	[zɑts]
	[θɛp]	[θɛps]

The phonological judgment task was first employed by Souza (2015) to parallel grammaticality judgement tasks. This task tests the individual's ability to identify segmental and phonotactic deviations from aurally presented items. The degree to which the listener can detect divergence from native-like pronunciation is taken to indicate the learner's level of L2 segmental and phonotactic awareness. This task concentrates on the linguistic distance between L1 and L2 through the presentation of stimulus items that include novel L2 phonemes for Saudi learners and the non-novel phonemes that are often contrasted with them. These novel L2 phonemes are most likely problematic for Saudi learners of English. For example, the consonants /p/ and /v/ are considered novel phonemes and are most likely problematic for Arabic speakers (Ababneh, 2018;

Al-Badawi & Salim, 2014; Altaha, 1995; Bauman-Waengler, 2009; Watson, 2002). Regarding English vowels, it has been reported that /u/ and /ʊ/ are highly confusable pair for Saudi speakers (Evans & Alshangiti, 2018). Table Six presents stimulus items that are used only for practice to help the participants get familiar with the task and which are not included in the actual score for the participants. Table Seven lists the actual test items presented to the participants, which are arranged randomly into correct and incorrect pronunciation items (see Appendix A). The total number of test items in the task was 22, including the practice items. The participants were given a form that contained a table with the test items in written form (see Appendix B). They listened to each lexical item and had to decide. If the item was pronounced correctly, they would tick the native pronunciation box. However, if they decided the pronunciation was incorrect, they would tick the non-native pronunciation box. It is important to note that the written form of the test item was presented to eliminate any confusion with actual English words that might match the non-native pronunciation. Presenting written forms of the test items ensured that the participants understood that these were the intended lexical items when deciding if the pronunciation was native or non-native like.

Table 6. *Practice words for the phonological judgment task.*

Practice items	Native pronunciation	Non-native pronunciation
pen	[pʰɛn]	[bɛn]
very	[vɛɹi]	[fɛɹi]
book	[bʊk]	[buk]
spray	[spɹeɪ]	[ɪspɹeɪ]
next	[nɛkst]	[nɛkɪst]

Research Procedures

The data collection sessions followed the same order for all the participants in the study. Each session began by briefly explaining the objective of the study as well as the structure of the participation session. The participants first signed a consent form in which they agreed to participate in the study. Next, they filled out a linguistic background questionnaire that contained questions on demographic information and L2 language experience (see Appendix C). Following that, the phonological awareness tasks were administered individually in a quiet room by the researcher. The phonemic deletion task was administered first, followed by the phonological judgement task. All the stimulus items were pre-recorded on mp3 files. The author briefly explained what was required in each task and played the practice words first to ensure the understanding of the participants of each phonological task. Then, the test items were presented to each participant using Media Player on a computer. The participants' answers were recorded and assessed later by the author. Each participant was given a sub-score for each task and then a total score that was made up of the sum of all sub-scores. Each session of data collection took around 30 – 40 minutes.

With respect to the deletion task, in the first part, the participants listened to each stimulus item and were instructed to delete the first sound and correctly articulate the rest of the word. In the second part of the task, the participants listened to each test item and were asked to articulate the word correctly without the final phoneme. The participants' responses were recorded to allow the author to evaluate their answers later and give each participant a score based on the response accuracy in the task. In the phonological judgment task, each participant received a form to write down their answers (see Appendix B). The participants listened to a list of stimulus items. They

were asked to decide if the pronunciation of the item was correct and native-like or not by ticking the box next to either native pronunciation or non-native pronunciation in the form.

Results

Deletion of Initial Phoneme

The descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the deletion of initial phoneme for both the linguistic environment (singleton vs. clustered), and the lexical status (word vs. non-word) is presented in Table Eight. The means reflect the learners' raw scores out of 2. The participants' average performance on the task was higher in singleton than in clustered contexts. Also, it was higher for word than non-word category.

Table 8. *Mean, standard deviation, and median of the scores in the initial phoneme deletion task.*

Linguistic context		**Lexical status**	
		Word	Non-word
Singleton	*M*	1.65	1.13
	SD	.6	.7
	Md	2	1
Cluster	*M*	.81	.52
	SD	.73	.58
	Md	1	0

To answer the first and second research questions regarding the effects of the two linguistic factors on the phonemic deletion task, a repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used, with the two within-subject conditions: linguistic environment and lexical status. The preliminary analysis showed that the sphericity assumption was met with a non-significant value. Additionally, the normal distribution of the data was checked using a histogram and the Shapiro-Wilk test. However, both the visual examination of the histogram and the normality test showed that data were not normally distributed. More specifically, the result of the Shapiro-Wilk test was significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the scores in all the categories in the task were not distributed normally. The violation of the normality assumption is quite common in second language research (Larson-Hall, 2015).

Since the assumptions for a parametric statistical test were not met, an alternative nonparametric test that does not assume normality was required. The application of Friedman's ANOVA is usually recommended in situations where one or more of the parametric assumptions of the univariate ANOVA for repeated measures are violated (Hager, 2007). Friedman's ANOVA was used to analyze the data, and it found a statistically significant effect ($p <. 001$). To identify where the significant difference between the two conditions took place, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed. This test was used in a post hoc analysis to establish within subject differences. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is a non-parametric test procedure for the analysis of matched pair data (Woolson, 2007). This statistical test is more powerful than a t-test when the data are not normally distributed (Meek et al., 2007).

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed that the main effect of lexical status was significant, with participants obtaining higher scores when deleting phonemes from singleton real words ($M = 1.65$, $SD = .6$, $n = 48$) compared to non-real words ($M = 1.13$, $SD = .7$, $n = 48$), $z =$ -

3.85, p <. 001, with a medium effect size (r = 0.4)[1]. However, the effect of lexical status was not significant when participants were deleting phonemes from cluster contexts as shown in Table Nine.

Table 9. *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test of initial phoneme deletion with the condition of lexical status.*

			Lexical status
			Word vs. non-word
Linguistic environment	Singleton	Z	-3.849[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	Cluster	Z	-1.976[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.048

a. Based on positive ranks

Another Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed to identify the effect of the linguistic environment of the deleted phoneme. It revealed that the linguistic environment had a significant effect on the participants' performances as they scored higher when deleting the phoneme from a singleton onset of a real word (M = 1.65, SD = .6, n = 48) as opposed to a clustered onset (M = 0.81, SD = .73, n = 48). For real words, the statistical analysis was significant when considering the linguistic environment, z = - 4.3, p <. 001, with a medium effect size (r = 0.4). Similarly, the participants scored higher when deleting the phoneme from a singleton onset of a non-real word (M = 1.13, SD = .7, n = 48) compared to deletion from a clustered onset of a non-real word (M = 0.52, SD = .58, n = 48). The statistical analysis showed a significant effect for the linguistic environment, z = - 3.73, p <. 001, with a medium effect size (r = 0.4). The results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test of initial phoneme deletion with the condition of the linguistic environment.*

			Linguistic environment
			Singleton vs. Cluster
Lexical status	Word	Z	-4.301[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	Non-word	Z	-3.735[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

. Based on positive ranks

Deletion of Final Phoneme

The descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the deletion of final phoneme for both the linguistic environment (singleton vs. clustered), and the lexical status (word vs. non-word) is presented in Table 11. The means reflect the learners' raw scores out of 2. The participants' average performance on the task was higher in singleton than in clustered context. Also, it was higher for word than non-word category.

[1] The effect size was based on Cohen's guidelines for effect size and was calculated using the formula $r = \frac{z}{\sqrt{Nx+Ny}}$, in which z is the value obtained from the statistical test, and N is the number of observations.

Table 11. *Mean, standard deviation, and median of the scores in the final phoneme deletion task.*

Linguistic context		Lexical status	
		Word	Non-word
Singleton	*M*	1.5	0.56
	SD	.55	.54
	Md	2	1
Cluster	*M*	0.88	0.38
	SD	.53	.57
	Md	1	0

Visual examination of the data revealed that the data were not normally distributed with scores positively and negatively skewed. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk test yielded a significant value ($p < .001$), and that means that data were not normally distributed. Therefore, Friedman's ANOVA was used to analyze the data, and it revealed a statistically significant effect of the conditions ($p <. 001$).

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test found that the effect of lexical status was significant. Participants scored higher in deletion of final phonemes in singleton context of real words (M = 1.5, SD = .55, n = 48) compared to non-real words (M = 0.56, SD = .54, n = 48). The statistical significance was detected when deletion of the phoneme occurred in singleton codas, z = -5.16, p <. 001, with a large effect size (r = 0.5). A similar significant effect of lexical status was found when comparing scores of final phoneme deletion in the clustered coda of real words (M = 0.88, SD = .53, n = 48), to non-real words (M = 0.38, SD = .57, n = 48), z = -4.11, p <. 001, with a medium effect size (r = 0.4) (see Table 12).

Table 12. *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test of final phoneme deletion with the condition of lexical status.*

			Lexical status
			Word vs. non-word
Linguistic environment	Singleton	Z	-5.167[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	Cluster	Z	-4.111[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.048

a. Based on positive ranks

The statistical analysis for the linguistic environment condition revealed that the difference between the scores on singleton and clustered codas in non-real words was not significant, as shown in Table 13. The effect of the linguistic environment was significant only when participants were responding to real words, z = -4.30, p <. 001, with a medium effect size (r = 0.4).

Table 13. *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test of Final Phoneme Deletion with the Condition of Linguistic Environment*

		Linguistic environment	
		Singleton vs. Cluster	
Lexical status	Word	*Z*	-4.304[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	Non-word	*Z*	-1.671[a]
		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	. 095

a. Based on positive ranks

The Phonological Judgement Task

The participants responded to a phonological judgment task that included the three categories of novel L2 phonemes, initial consonant clusters, and final consonant clusters. Table 14 below presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores in the three categories. The normality assumption was checked using a histogram. The data in the three categories were not normally distributed with small to moderate negative skewness. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk test was significant ($p <$. 001), meaning that data in all three categories were not normally distributed.

Table 14. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians of the Scores in the Phonological Judgment Task.*

Phonological judgment task	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median
Novel L2 phonemes	2.75	0.71	3
Initial consonant cluster	3.31	0.74	3
Final consonant cluster	3.19	1.02	4

As for the impact of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation on the phonological judgement task, Friedman's ANOVA, a non-parametric test that does not assume normality of distribution, was conducted to analyze the data. The analysis showed a statistical significance between the three categories in the task $p < .001$. A Wilcoxon signed ranks test revealed that the difference that was statistically significant occurred between novel L2 phonemes (M = 2.75, SD = 0.71) and initial consonant clusters (M = 3.31, SD = 0.74), z = -3.699, $p <$. 001, with medium effect size (r = 0.4). However, the comparison between the participants' performance in novel L2 phonemes (M = 2.75, SD = 0.71) and final consonant clusters (M = 3,19, SD = 1.02) was not statically significant, z = -2.517, p = 012. The only statistical difference occurred between scores in novel L2 phonemes and initial consonant clusters. The participants scored the highest in the initial consonant cluster category but the lowest in the novel L2 phonemes category.

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of the linguistic environment (singleton vs. clustered) and the phonological representation of the word (word vs. non-word) on phoneme deletion among adult Saudi learners of English. Furthermore, the study examined the effect of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation (novel vs. non-novel) L2 phonemes on the learners' performance in the phonological judgement task.

The results obtained from the statistical analysis regarding the impact of the linguistic environment revealed that the participants performed significantly better when deleting initial phonemes from singleton contexts than clustered contexts. Similarly, participants found deleting final phonemes, specifically in real word category, more difficult when the phoneme was part of a clustered coda as opposed to a singleton coda. This result answers the first research question, asserting that the linguistic environment of the phoneme affects the learner's L2 phonological awareness. This finding was in accordance with previous research. For example, Saiegh-Haddad et al. (2010) reported that Russian speakers who performed a phoneme deletion task in Russian and Hebrew found it more challenging to delete phonemes from cluster contexts than in singleton contexts in both initial and final positions. Similar results were reported by Russak and Saiegh-Haddad (2017). They examined the phonological awareness of adult Hebrew speakers using a full phoneme segmentation task, and they found that words with consonant clusters (CCVC) were

associated with considerably lower phonemic segmentation scores than simple words (CVC). It was also reported that Arabic children found isolating the initial consonant from a consonant cluster more challenging than isolating a final phoneme, singleton, or cluster (Saiegh-Haddad, 2007a). Some studies have presented similar findings on children's difficulty in processing initial consonant clusters compared to initial singleton onsets (e.g., Bruck & Treiman, 1990; Treiman & Weatherston, 1992). In addition, other studies have reported that initial consonant clusters were problematic for adult L2 speakers (Altenberg, 2005; Leung et al., 2023).

In the current study, it was challenging for the participants to identify most of the consonant clusters in initial and final positions. It was difficult to recognize the first consonant of the cluster, to delete that consonant, and pronounce the remaining of the word correctly. They appeared to perceive the consonant cluster as one cohesive phonological unit. This might be caused by the unique structure of the syllable in MSA in which consonant clusters are not permitted in the initial position of the syllable. Therefore, the participants were not able to isolate the first consonant from the cluster. Instead, they treated the consonant cluster as one whole unit and mostly failed to separate the first consonant but deleted the whole cluster. In addition, the length of the word affected the phonological ability to access and process L2 phonemes. Ibrahim (2011) reported that the greater the number of phonemes composing the words on which phonemic manipulation is required, the greater the difficulty in performance. Therefore, words that contain clustered phonemes are longer and require more effort in phonological manipulation compared to words that contain single phonemes. Another possible interpretation for this particular result is related to the participants' L1, Arabic. Levis (2018) pointed out that languages actually differ in the degree that they permit multiple consonants to appear as the onset or the coda of a syllable. Consonant clusters are a relatively rare structure in Arabic, especially in initial positions. In fact, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) does not allow cluster-initial words (Al-Ani, 1979; Hamdi et al., 2005).

The second research question addressed the effect of the phonological representation of the lexical item on the learners' phonological awareness abilities. As phonological awareness is facilitated by high-quality phonological representations, the participants were predicted to show higher levels of phonological awareness when processing real words compared to non-words. Consistent with this prediction, the findings showed that the response accuracy was higher when responding to real words on the phoneme deletion task. The participants performed better when deletion occurred in a real word as opposed to a non-word. They scored higher on this task when processing real words than non-words. This might be the result of familiarity with real words which were likely to have adequate phonological representation in long-term memory than non-words. This particular finding provides an answer to the second research question confirming that the phonological representation of the lexical item influences phonological awareness in L2. This finding was supported by findings from earlier studies (e.g., Asadi & Abu-Rabia, 2019; Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011; Saiegh-Haddad, 2004; Saiegh-Haddad, 2019; Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar, 2017) which all concluded that phonological awareness decisions were related to phonological representational quality. The lexical status, frequency, and familiarity of the word all affect the quality of the phonological representation. More accurately, real words are expected to have better phonological representations and are perceived more accurately than non-real words.

The findings of the current study provide support for the lexical restructuring model (Walley & Metsala, 1998). One of the central tenets of this model is that the quality of phonological representation is word-specific and varies from one word to another (Walley et al., 2003). In addition, phonological manipulations of real words, which are already stored and discriminated in

the lexicon with more fine-grained phonological information, should be easier than the phonological manipulation of pseudo-words (Metsala, 1999). In summary, the quality of the phonological representations in long-term memory is an essential determinant of phonological awareness. More specifically, deficient phonological representations might hinder phonological awareness at all linguistic levels: phonemic, sub-syllabic, and syllabic.

A phonological judgment task was employed in the study to examine phonological awareness at the segmental and phonotactic levels. The task focused on novel L2 phonemes that do not occur in Arabic and on initial and final consonant clusters as linguistic structures that are not permissible or not common in Arabic. The task aimed to examine the effect of the phoneme's linguistic affiliation on phonological awareness in L2 and to address the third research question.

The task examined phonological awareness in perception as the participants listened to a list of lexical items that contained incorrect pronunciation of novel L2 phonemes by substituting the L2 phonemes with the non-novel phonemes that are often contrasted with them. For the consonant clusters, the incorrect pronunciations involve vocalic epenthesis in which a vowel is inserted before or in the middle the consonant cluster. The participants were required to judge the pronunciation of each item, if correct or not.

The statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in the participants' performances in the three categories of the task. The participants' accuracy scores in identifying incorrect pronunciation in the three categories of the task were significantly different. They had the highest accuracy in identifying incorrect pronunciations that occurred in initial consonant clusters. Similarly, they achieved high accuracy in identifying pronunciation errors embedded in final consonant clusters. Conversely, the participants had the lowest scores in the task in the identification of incorrect pronunciation of novel L2 phonemes. They generally failed to identify the pronunciation errors involving substituting novel English phonemes with their non-novel counterparts. This finding addresses the third research question and indicates that the phoneme's linguistic affiliation has an effect on the learner's phonological awareness in L2.

The results clearly indicated that the perception and processing of novel L2 phonemes was the most challenging part of the phonological judgment task for Saudi learners of English. This was reflected in their low ability to identify the mispronunciations of the novel L2 phonemes that were substituted by non-novel L2 phonemes. Those novel L2 phonemes that do not exist in the participants' phonemic repertoire could be problematic for Saudi learners not only in production but seemingly in perception as well. This finding was in line with previous studies (e.g., Al-Jarf, 2022; Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2020; Alzinaidi & Latif, 2019) which reported that Arab students learning English have shown difficulty in perceiving and producing phonemes that do not exist in MSA or in their local dialects.

The linguistic affiliation hypothesis addresses the role of sub-syllabic phonological features on phonological awareness. It suggests that phoneme identity or the phonological profile of a given phoneme plays an essential role in phoneme accessibility (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011). Phoneme identity is defined in the present study based on whether the phoneme is present or absent from the participants' L1 rather than on the basis of the phoneme's phonological profile.

Since the participants were required to phonologically process novel L2 phonemes that were not within their L1, it was not surprising that their performance was considerably low. Eckman (2004) pointed out that a plausible explanation for the L2 learners' difficulty with novel L2 sounds is that the L2 sounds in question are not often accurately perceived. The results suggested that the participants perceive the L2 sounds in terms of the phonetic categories

established in the L1 sound system. This resulted in their inability to develop new phonetic categories for the L2 phonemes that were different from those in the L1. In fact, Williams and Escudero (2014) asserted that differences in segmental perception exist between native and non-native speakers. They further explained that L2 learners are likely to perceive some non-native phonemes as instances of the same native category, which often leads to poor discrimination accuracy.

In addition, the phonological representations of the novel L2 phonemes played a crucial role in the perception and phonological processing of those phonemes. The novel L2 phonemes that were included in the phonological judgment task in this study were not within the participants' phonemic inventory. Therefore, the participants might not have developed or were unable to acquire adequate phonological representations for those novel L2 phonemes. According to Saiegh-Haddad (2004), inaccurate and underspecified phonological representations might hinder an individual's ability to access novel phonemes. Moreover, this might be the case, especially for phonemes that have a parallel competing form in the speaker's L1. Other studies have also confirmed the significant role that the quality of phonological representation plays in phonological awareness at all three linguistic levels: phonemic, sub-syllabic, and syllabic (see Saiegh-Haddad, 2007a; Saiegh-Haddad et al., 2011; Swan & Goswami, 1997).

The current result indicated that phonemic awareness was the most advanced level of awareness. It also showed that phonological awareness operated differently on different phonological units and that the same individual might possess different levels of phonological awareness depending on the phonological unit being processed. Research in this field has provided evidence that phonological awareness has different levels that correspond to different developmental stages. Cisero and Royer (1995) stated that phonological awareness follows a developmental progression hypothesis, which suggests that the development of this ability begins with the simplest form of awareness and progresses toward more complex forms.

There is a well-established developmental order for phonological awareness levels. Larger phonological units are easier to bring to awareness and manipulate than smaller phonological units. Wagner et al. (2019) listed the developmental levels of phonological awareness from the easiest to the most difficult level of awareness. They pointed out that the most accessible level of awareness is whole words. The next level is the ability to access and manipulate syllables within whole words. The following level is the awareness of sub-syllabic units. Finally, the most advanced level of awareness is the ability to access and manipulate individual phonemes. It can be concluded that the difficulty with perceiving novel L2 phonemes shown by the participants was because they were operating on the highest and most complicated level of awareness. The participants found the task challenging because it required phoneme awareness, which is considered an advanced level of phonological processing and manipulation.

Conclusion

The current study has investigated the understudied area of L2 phonological awareness. While the field of language awareness has been extensively studied, awareness about L2 phonology has received little attention. Moreover, the existing studies about L2 phonological awareness have mostly focused on its connection to reading skills and L2 literacy. Few studies have considered the linguistic aspects that influence and contribute to L2 phonological awareness ability.

Most of the previous studies on L2 phonological awareness have focused on the speakers of English and other European languages. Most of the existing studies have not examined the L2 phonological awareness of Arabic speakers, or at least adult Arabic speakers. Consequently, the present study was set out to examine L2 phonological awareness of adult Saudi learners of English focusing on the effect of some linguistic factors on this ability.

Since the main hypothesis of the study is that phonological awareness ability is constrained by a variety of universal and language-specific linguistic factors, the first step was to identify the linguistic factors that were likely to affect phonological awareness ability. Next, the phonological aspects that represent a key difference between L1 and L2 were identified through a review of the literature on English pronunciation by Saudi learners of English. It is important to take into account that phonological and linguistic factors that are specific to each language affect how people learn to read in a second language (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005).

The study employed two phonological awareness tasks: a phoneme deletion task, and a phonological judgement task. Results obtained from the phonological awareness tasks revealed that both the phoneme's linguistic affiliation and the linguistic environment influence the participants' level of L2 phonological awareness. The results of the current study were in accordance with previous studies. In addition, the results of the examination of the lexical status of the stimulus item on the L2 phonological awareness ability showed that real words were perceived and processed more accurately than non-real words. The findings revealed that this factor influenced the Saudi learners' level of L2 phonological awareness. This result was interpreted in light of the lexical restructuring model.

With regard to novel L2 phonological features, the results of the study showed that novel L2 phonemes were the most challenging for Saudi learners of English. However, consonant clusters were perceived accurately by the learners. The difficulty that Saudi learners of English have shown in the perception of L2 phonemes has been confirmed by previous studies that focus on Arabic speakers. The results were discussed in light of the linguistic affiliation hypothesis.

When L2 phonological awareness as a whole was examined, it was confirmed that certain linguistic factors had a major influence on the level of L2 phonological awareness. The results of the study showed that three major factors are pertinent to explaining individual variations in Saudi L2 learners' ability to perform mental processes on the phonological structure of words. These were the linguistic affiliation of the target phoneme, the linguistic environment of the phoneme, and the lexical status of the item that contained the target phoneme. The linguistic factors that were examined and controlled in this study represented essential differences between the participants' L1 and L2, hence highlighting the effect of L1 and L2 distance. The results of the study provided evidence that these linguistic factors appear to influence the phonological awareness of Saudi learners of English.

The current study has some theoretical implications. The findings of the current study indicate the importance for researchers to consider the effect of the type of the task, to achieve a valid comprehensive assessment of phonological awareness abilities in L2. Also, it is essential to examine the specific linguistic environment in which the target phoneme is embedded and to interpret the results in light of the linguistic background of the participants. This can be easily achieved by conducting a thorough examination of the nature of errors in the responses of the participants and the linguistic context of the phoneme (Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2017).

Future studies could explore how learning to read in a certain language is constrained by the phonological and linguistic factors particular to that language. These factors include the size

of the phonological unit, syllable structure, stress pattern, and other suprasegmental parameters. It would also be beneficial to focus on individual differences, such as language aptitude, working memory, and motivation, that could be related to L2 phonological awareness, and that could provide a better understanding of how L2 phonological awareness develops. Determining the degree to which these individual differences relate to L2 phonological awareness helps in understanding how L2 phonological awareness develops and operates.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 7. *Test words for the phonological judgment task.*

Stimulus items	Pronunciation	Native pronunciation	Non-native pronunciation
paid	[beɪd]		√
play	[pleɪ]	√	
map	[mæb]		√
behave	[bɪˈheɪf]		√
victory	[vɪktri]	√	
even	[ˈivən]	√	
cook	[kʰʊk]	√	
good	[gud]		√
stood	[stud]		√
stream	[stɹim]	√	
spread	[ɪspɹɛd]		√
scream	[skɹim]	√	

square	[ɪskwɛr]		√
friends	[fɹɛndz]	√	
clothes	[kloʊðɪz]		√
warmth	[wɔrmɪθ]		√
months	[mʌnθɪs]		√

Appendix B

The Phonological Judgment Task

Listen carefully to each word then choose native or non-native pronunciation.

Stimulus items	Native pronunciation	Non-native pronunciation
paid		
play		
map		
behave		
victory		
even		
cook		
good		
stood		
stream		
spread		
scream		
square		
friends		
clothes		
warmth		
months		

Appendix C
English Language Background Questionnaire
Part I: Linguistic Background

A. Personal Information

1- Full name:
2- Phone number:
3- Emil:
4- Place of birth
5- Age
6- Have you been diagnosed with any hearing problems? **Yes.** **No.**

B. Language information

1- First language:
2- What language do you speak at home?

C. English experience

1- How old were you when you started studying English?
2- Have you taken any English proficiency test “e.g., TOFEL, ILETS, Step”?
3- Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?
4- How often were you taught pronunciation in the English classes you have attended?
5- Have you ever attended a specialized course on English pronunciation?
6- On a daily basis, how many hours do you speak English?

a. 0 b. 1-2 c. 2-4 d. 4-6 e. + 6

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EFL Teachers' Perspectives on the English Textbooks of the Adopted Self-Learning Program in Northern Syria

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Abstract
This study investigates the perspectives of the English language teachers who teach the adopted Self-Learning Program English Textbooks in North-west Syria by evaluating the English textbooks. It analyses the effectiveness and suitability of this curriculum in non-formal education settings considering the crisis context in Syria. So, to get an actual evaluation of the English textbooks, teachers proved their viewpoints on the context of teaching and the students' educational levels during war conditions. In this mixed method research, the first tool was a questionnaire with 49 items distributed into five structured dimensions: layout and design, the objectives of the textbook, teaching methods and activities, and language skills. The second tool focused on the qualitative data obtained from interviews with five open-ended questions. A total of respondents from 106 English language teachers in the northern Syria crisis region, 43 females and 63 males, and five separate interviews. Over 60% of teachers believe that the adapted Self-Learning Program English textbooks are appropriate to the context and include a precise sequence of English units that fit children's needs in northern Syrian crisis contexts.

Keywords: Adopted Self-Learning Program, ELF teachers' perspectives, English textbook evaluation, Northern Syria

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Introduction

The ongoing crisis in Syria has significantly disrupted formal education, necessitating alternative educational solutions. One such solution is the Self-Learning Program (SLP), which aims to provide continuous learning opportunities for children in non-formal settings. English language education, a crucial component of global communication, has seen the adoption of specific textbooks designed to meet the unique needs of students in these challenging conditions. Despite the availability of these textbooks, there is limited research on their effectiveness and suitability in non-formal education settings, particularly from the perspective of teachers who implement them. Understanding the teachers' viewpoints is essential, as they are directly involved in the educational process and are familiar with the students' needs and the contextual challenges posed by the crisis. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of the adopted SLP English textbooks used in non-formal education settings in northwest Syria from the perspectives of EFL teachers. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers about the strengths and areas for improvement of the SLP English textbooks. This can lead to better educational outcomes for children in crisis contexts and enhance the overall quality of English language education in non-formal settings.

Syria witnesses an ongoing conflict and instability of life conditions that require an emergency intervention response to go back to everyday life as soon as possible; for UNICEF, “emergencies include natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, and human-made crises such as civil strife and war,” as well as silent emergencies, extreme poverty and children living in the streets (Pigozzi, 1999, p.1). Syrian people have witnessed and endured terrible forms of violence. They have been forced to leave their homes, facing the traumas of ongoing war and recurrent displacement. The conflict has caused extensive damage to healthcare and education facilities on a large scale (UNICEF, 2013). It is evident that the occurrence of war and conflict results in disastrous effects on children and leads to damage to the education obtained by children (Al Zaroo & Hundt, 2003; Davies, 2004; Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). Teachers are influenced by various factors such as inadequate monthly income, the need to switch to non-formal education methods to help students catch up academically, and the challenge of implementing curricula in both formal and non-formal educational environments.

In the textbook evaluation, teachers’ perspectives should be considered because they are at the center of the teaching process, knowing the students’ levels, weaknesses, and strengths. Moreover, teachers’ attitude towards the textbook as they teach it for some time enables them to evaluate it and provide recommendations for change if needed. The proper choice of textbook content and sections should consider the needs of both the students and their teachers to have effectiveness in the teaching and learning process (Ellis, 1998; Rubdy, 2003).

The primary aim of the study was to capture the perspectives of EFL teachers regarding the textbooks used in the English subject within the adopted SLP. This program, accredited by UNICEF, is designed to provide non-formal education to children impacted by the ongoing conflict. The second aim of the study was to evaluate the suitability of the English textbooks in the adopted SLP for the students' educational levels. The goal is to determine how effectively these textbooks facilitate language learning for the students.

Literature Review

Education during the War in Syria

During a conflict, both teachers and children are at higher risk of being exposed to exploitation, abuse and rights violations. Recently in Syria, there was a rise in many community problems such as early marriage and child labor, causing a high dropout rate for education enrollment (Dayıoğlu et al., 2023; UNHCR, 2013). Access to education is lost when children are forced to leave their area of residence suddenly, schools are closed or have no teaching personnel available as they are looking for better paid-job to fulfill their life conditions. Teaching capacity remains overstretched, and many teachers and education personnel are no longer in their teaching posts due to displacement and working as volunteers. This results in poor quality of education, and the recruitment of unskilled teachers with limited financial remuneration impedes learning outcomes achieved by students. The education status has been affected by the current conflict, the status of school infrastructure, access of beneficiaries to education, and the condition of schools that are out of service. The involvement of multiple parties controlling the northern part of Syria has led to the deterioration of educational infrastructure and a lack of funds to cover teachers' incentives, which serve as their primary income. Despite their willingness to teach voluntarily, teachers are facing challenging financial situations. This has forced many to seek non-educational jobs, leading to a significant number of teachers leaving the classroom. Providing the education in weak contexts such as in crises and civil war frames a particular situation (Koshelieva et al., 2023). In 2015, approximately 2 million children were deprived of educational opportunities due to the extensive damage to the educational infrastructure caused by the ongoing civil war. This conflict resulted in complete or partial destruction of around 5,000 schools, severely impacting access to education. The education system in Syria, including tertiary education has been devastated because of the ongoing war (Butler, 2015). The effects on the levels of education vary; one of the research projects discovered that the civil war in all Syria areas had fewer effects on higher education than on primary and secondary education (SCPR, 2014). Education can sustain our children’s lives, keeping them safe and providing and securing cognitive, psychosocial and physical protection (UNICEF, 2015).

Procedures to Fill the Gaps of Education during Crisis in the Northern Syria Context

It is worth mentioning that education in an emergency should be prioritized more in a crisis context as a life-saving intervention (Brock & McCorriston, 2008; INEE, 2010), once education is provided, many psychosocial disorders can be mitigated. Moreover, education can equip children with problem-solving and information skills that might protect vulnerable youth, adolescents and children from all kinds of child labour, exploitation, sexual harassment and abuse. In the most fragile states when there is a conflict, war or human-made disaster, comprehensive budgetary contributions specifically to education be set (Anisimova, 2022; Brannelly & Ndaruhutse, 2008). Education in an emergency context is a collective and participatory work with the responsibilities and commitments of all community members through various activities tailored according to the potentials within the affected people and their communities. To fill the gap, this responsibility starts at home and ends at school because education can not be fulfilled when without engagement and collaboration from all concerned parties. In an emergency context, INEE minimum standards are considered in the humanitarian response to make sure that education activities are implemented in an organized way considering the conflict, insecurity, vulnerability, protection, and available resources. Also, engaging the community and parents in the paid or

voluntary education process can continue creating a culture of volunteerism among community members.

The Adopted English Self-Learning Program

The Adopted English Self-Learning Program (SLP) was created to address gaps and deficiencies in education, particularly for those living in crisis and emergencies caused by conflicts, insecurity, and natural disasters. Self-learning was designed and structured jointly by both UNRWA, UNICEF and the Syrian Ministry of Education as a direct response and support to children who have limited access to education. Now, in the northern parts of Syria, SLP is accredited by UNICEF and an adopted program by INGOs and NGOs that provide educational projects under the supervision of UNICEF in Turkey.

Students and EFL Teachers' Interaction during English SLP Classes in Crisis Context

English language Learning has been significantly affected by technology. Learners can enhance their English skills not only through teachers at school but also by seeking additional support from online videos. This method can be easily followed, even during crises situations. This is a modern trend of learning that learners and even teachers follow to enhance their language capacity. To support this, a lot of EFL teachers keep sharing links for English videos with their students in which these students can practice their skills with other English speakers. Learners should have self-motivation that affects the English learning process. Teachers should inspire students to see language learning as a valuable opportunity. They should emphasize the importance of seizing every chance to practice and improve their language skills, fostering a mindset that views language acquisition as a lifelong and rewarding endeavor (Gardner, 1985; Crookes & Schmidt, 1989). The situation of families is crucial in the education process considering their income, educational background that helps in supporting children's learning specifically learning the languages (Behtoui & Neergaard, 2016). To increase the interaction between teachers and students, EFL teachers have to prepare a lesson plan to enable them to control the English activities according to the objectives of the curriculum before starting teaching. Therefore they build their capacity and allow them to overcome the gaps when delivering the required information to students.

EFL Textbooks Evaluation

As tangible materials for language learning, textbooks are classified as a critical element in language learning programs all over the globe (Richards, 2001; Tosun & Cinkara, 2019) in addition to providing the needed power and energy in English lessons in the classrooms of the learning environment through various practical and theoretical activities, clarifications, and information (Tomlinson, 2002). Authenticity of EFL textbook content can easily increase the learners' motivation to learn the language, resulting in learners being able to communicate and interact smoothly with English. It is obvious that a significant number of EFL teachers prefer the use of structured textbooks during language lessons in classrooms, but the reality might be as Ansary (2002) assures that some EFL teachers ignore the English materials because when sticking to a textbook, it is a kind of losing time until learners be able to respond to the different needs of language skills. Textbooks will pave the way for learning when their content links the language to the learners' main aspirations and the mainstream cultural elements of the target language (Hasan & Raddatz, 2008). Hassan and Raddatz suggest that Syrian EFL textbooks, when compared to

their German counterparts, focus more on cognitive aspects rather than affective and process-oriented aspects.

Many authors of English textbooks emphasize the authenticity of the content, recognizing it as a practical and crucial feature. EFL teachers possess the capacity and ability to assess English learning outcomes critically. They utilize directives for teaching English effectively and have practical knowledge of the language, which enhances their teaching capabilities. The authenticity of the textbooks goes beyond the artificial language used in the classrooms when teachers interact with students. The teachers themselves can make the lessons more energetic by linking real examples from life as mentioned in these textbooks. EFL teachers can judge any English textbooks and learning materials. They have the capacity and ability to assess learning outcomes of English having critical thinking for utilizing directives of teaching English and obsessing practical knowledge of English as they are teachers of it (Chou, 2008). The purpose of English textbooks is to support teachers by providing a distinct view of its principles, objectives, outcomes, as well as content (Ben-Peretz, 1990; Orland-Barak, 2002). There are many aspects to be taken into consideration when evaluating the textbooks in which the results can be more comprehensive (Richards, 2001), such as:

- The main goal of the textbook is to consider its objectives and outcomes.
- Levels of the textbook are intended.
- The period that learners need to finish it.
- Skills that learners will obtain from it.
- Themes included during the learning process.
- Life conditions that the textbook is designed for.
- The targeted learners considering their age and gender.
- The textbook elements and how they are presented.
- The list of units and content starting from the basic to the advanced ones.
- Levels of difficulty.
- The framework that the textbooks are built on.
- The authenticity of the textbooks and real examples.
- Focusing on the engagement of learners.
- Textbook’s affordability.
- The textbooks have a logical scope and sequence of ideas.

While there is a growing body of literature on EFL education in crisis contexts, studies specifically focusing on EFL teachers' perspectives in Syria remain scarce. Existing research has primarily addressed broader educational challenges and the general effectiveness of educational interventions in conflict zones. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the firsthand insights of EFL teachers who directly engage with the Self-Learning Program (SLP) English textbooks in northwest Syria. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of the adopted SLP English textbooks in non-formal education settings from the perspectives of EFL teachers. Doing so seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the educational needs and challenges in this unique context, thereby contributing valuable insights to curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers.

Method

In the present research, a mixed method design was used with qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to measure the variables related to the adopted SLP English textbooks evaluation.

Participants

This study involved 106 EFL teachers from northwest Syria, an area severely affected by ongoing conflict. The sample consisted of 43 females (41%) and 63 males (59%), all of whom were currently teaching English in non-formal education settings. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method due to the challenges posed by the conflict, COVID-19 restrictions, and cross-border issues, necessitating remote data collection. All participants were graduates from English language departments and were teaching in various schools within the crisis-affected regions.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a mixed-method approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative tools. The quantitative data were gathered via a questionnaire adapted from Al Harbi's study (2017), which had been validated and demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient = 0.97). The questionnaire consisted of 49 items classified into five dimensions, rated on a five-point Likert scale:

1. Layout and Design
2. Objectives of the English Textbook
3. Teaching Methods and Activities
4. Language Skills
5. Evaluation

The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Five open-ended questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses about the teachers' perspectives on the adopted SLP English textbooks. The questions focused on the effectiveness, suitability, and impact of the textbooks in a crisis context.

Research Procedures

The research was conducted online due to difficulty accessing the region in person. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to the 106 EFL teachers. After completing the questionnaires, five teachers (one female and 4 four males) were selected for semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted remotely and recorded for transcription. The questions asked during the interviews included:

1. What do you think of the adopted SLP English textbooks as non-formal education for students in a crisis context?
2. To what extent do the adopted SLP English textbooks help students catch up with their English level?
3. What is your judgment concerning the appropriateness of the English SLP textbooks for children in basic education?
4. Do EFL teachers in Northern parts of Syria need training to teach the SLP English textbooks effectively?
5. What do you think of parental involvement in the adopted SLP?

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics via SPSS software. The analysis aimed to determine the overall perceptions of the teachers regarding the five dimensions of the textbooks. For the qualitative data, all interviews were transcribed, and responses were grouped into main themes with the help of a research expert. These themes highlighted the EFL teachers' viewpoints on the SLP curriculum.

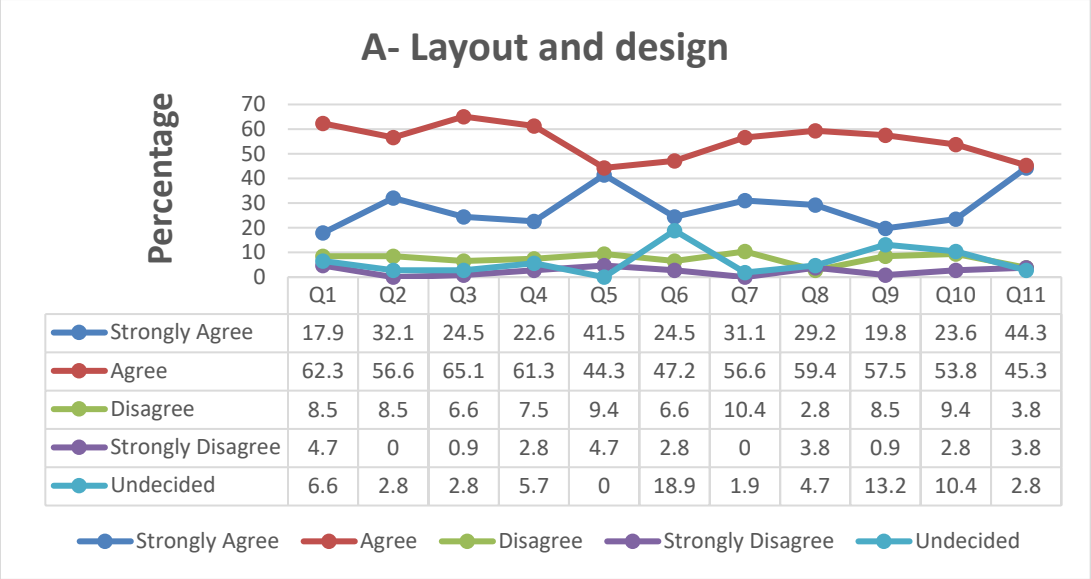
Findings

The current study investigated Syrian EFL teachers' views with respect to the English SLP textbooks taught to the students during the war conditions in the northern parts of Syria. Quantitative findings of the teacher perspectives questionnaire are presented in frequency and percentage for each item in the five sections of the questionnaire to brief and describe the responses that each EFL teacher provided. The descriptive findings are explained in the below tables according to each section of the questionnaire as follows:

Teacher Perspectives

Layout and Design

The average percentage of EFL teachers' responses showed that 55% selected the answer "agree" on the Likert Scale, meaning that there is a tendency for the textbooks to be designed in a friendly way to students as they have vivid colors and drawings that attract students' attention to the main topics of the textbooks as most of the pictures inside the textbooks are intended to facilitate the learning process of students who need a supportive way of textbooks to keep their concentration as in Figure One.



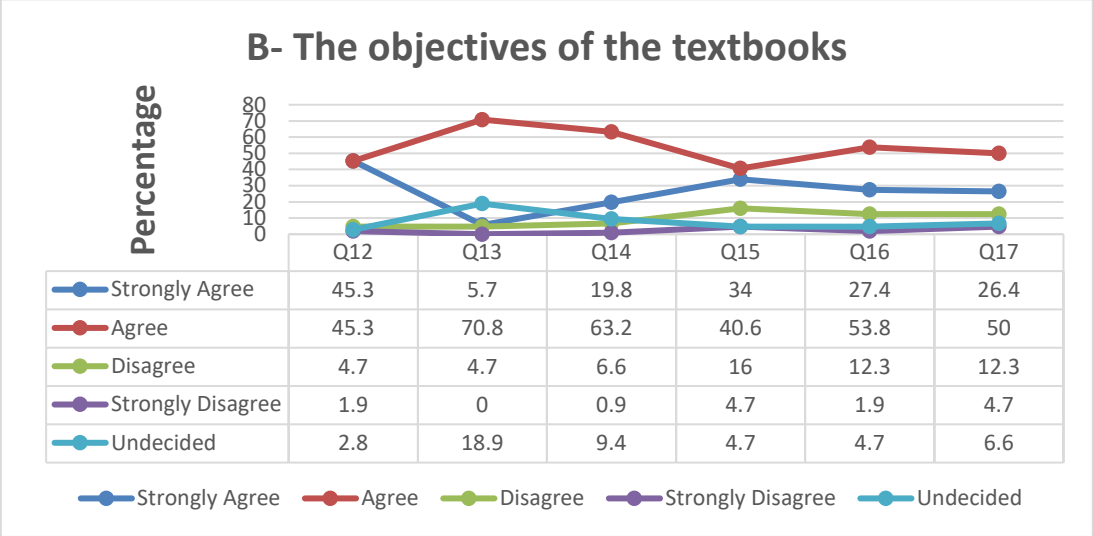
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Strongly Agree	17.9	32.1	24.5	22.6	41.5	24.5	31.1	29.2	19.8	23.6	44.3
Agree	62.3	56.6	65.1	61.3	44.3	47.2	56.6	59.4	57.5	53.8	45.3
Disagree	8.5	8.5	6.6	7.5	9.4	6.6	10.4	2.8	8.5	9.4	3.8
Strongly Disagree	4.7	0	0.9	2.8	4.7	2.8	0	3.8	0.9	2.8	3.8
Undecided	6.6	2.8	2.8	5.7	0	18.9	1.9	4.7	13.2	10.4	2.8

Figure 1. Layout and design

The Objectives of the Targeted EFL Textbook

The EFL teachers provided their judgements as they teach the English textbooks of this curriculum, so this section aims to reflect how the textbooks are linked and consistent in terms of their objectives to each unit that suit learners needs and gaps in learning English. Most of the

answers go close to “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, and the average percentage of the answers scored 54% under the “Agree” answer as in Figure Two.

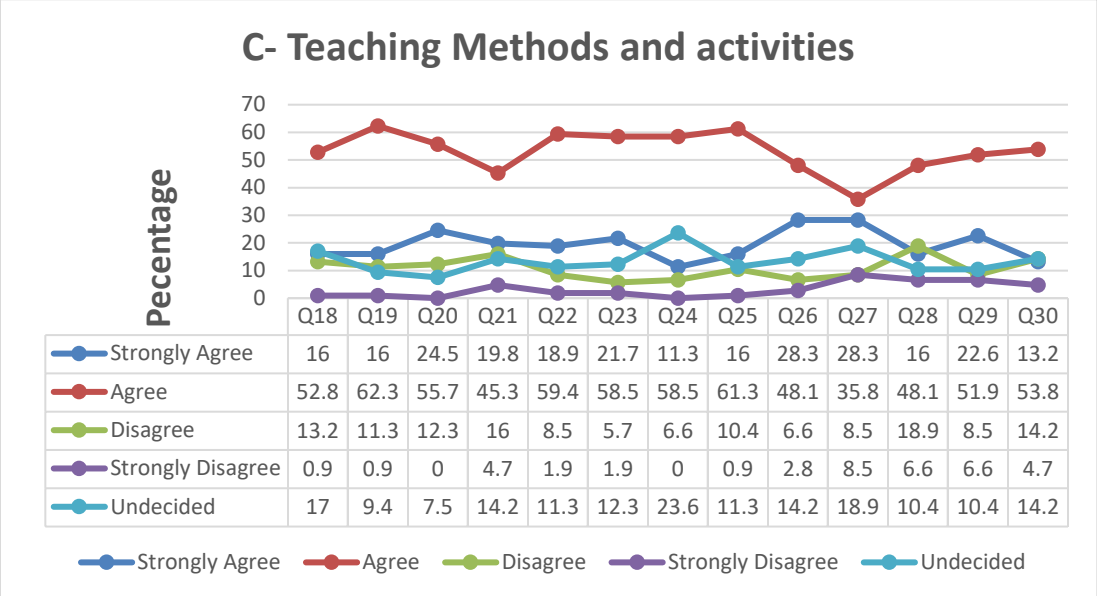


	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
Strongly Agree	45.3	5.7	19.8	34	27.4	26.4
Agree	45.3	70.8	63.2	40.6	53.8	50
Disagree	4.7	4.7	6.6	16	12.3	12.3
Strongly Disagree	1.9	0	0.9	4.7	1.9	4.7
Undecided	2.8	18.9	9.4	4.7	4.7	6.6

Figure 2. The objectives of the targeted EFL textbook

Teaching Methods and Activities

These items focus on the logical progression of topics and how they are integrated into the sequence of units as well as activities in each SLP grade. The average percentage of the answers is 53% under the “Agree” option and at the same time, this result reflects that the SLP textbooks contain information connected to the student environment that is abundant with modernity and scientific accuracy. The highest average percentage was above 60% for the two items (19 & 25), and the textbooks are reported as realistic and having diverse applications of teaching methods in classrooms, which denotes the constructivist theory of learning as in Figure Three.



	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
Strongly Agree	16	16	24.5	19.8	18.9	21.7	11.3	16	28.3	28.3	16	22.6	13.2
Agree	52.8	62.3	55.7	45.3	59.4	58.5	58.5	61.3	48.1	35.8	48.1	51.9	53.8
Disagree	13.2	11.3	12.3	16	8.5	5.7	6.6	10.4	6.6	8.5	18.9	8.5	14.2
Strongly Disagree	0.9	0.9	0	4.7	1.9	1.9	0	0.9	2.8	8.5	6.6	6.6	4.7
Undecided	17	9.4	7.5	14.2	11.3	12.3	23.6	11.3	14.2	18.9	10.4	10.4	14.2

Figure 3. Teaching methods and activities

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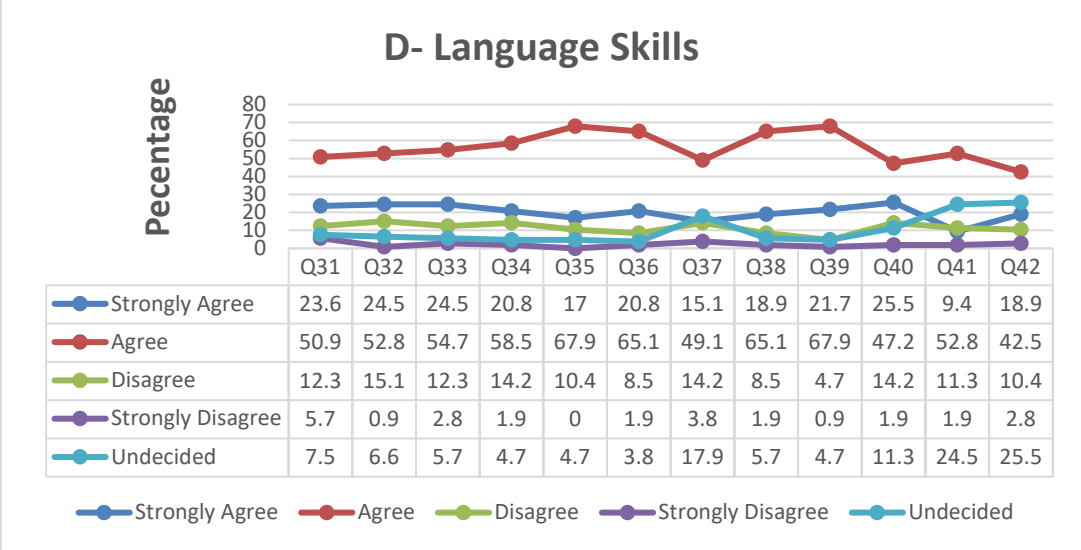
Language Skills

The fourth section of the questionnaire highlights how the English language in the SLP textbooks is simplified and suitable for the students. The average percentage of the answers is 56% under the "Agree" label, and this indicates that the language of the textbooks improves the students' listening skills with simplified activities that increase their ability to pronounce and communicate in English and also helps the students to acquire straightforward and easy grammar as in Figure Four.

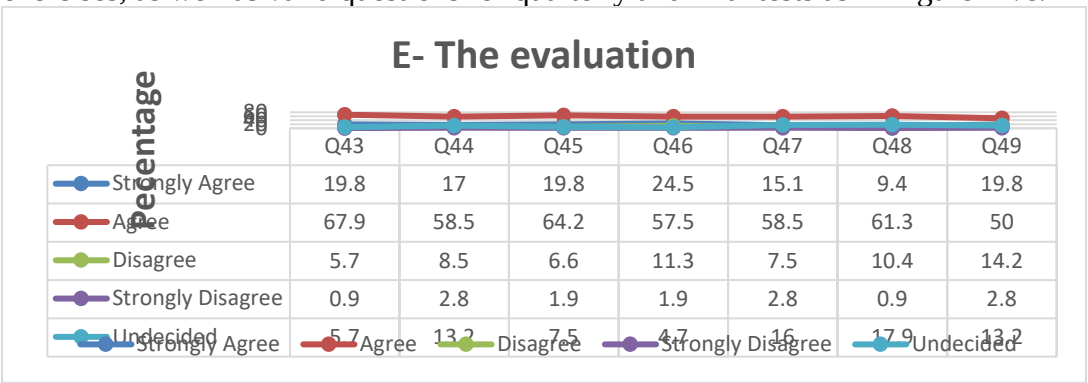


	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Q40	Q41	Q42
Strongly Agree	23.6	24.5	24.5	20.8	17	20.8	15.1	18.9	21.7	25.5	9.4	18.9
Agree	50.9	52.8	54.7	58.5	67.9	65.1	49.1	65.1	67.9	47.2	52.8	42.5
Disagree	12.3	15.1	12.3	14.2	10.4	8.5	14.2	8.5	4.7	14.2	11.3	10.4
Strongly Disagree	5.7	0.9	2.8	1.9	0	1.9	3.8	1.9	0.9	1.9	1.9	2.8
Undecided	7.5	6.6	5.7	4.7	4.7	3.8	17.9	5.7	4.7	11.3	24.5	25.5

Figure 4. Language skills

Assessment and Evaluation

This section got the highest average percentage under the "agree" answer, reaching 60% among the previous sections of the questionnaire which means that the SLP English textbooks are supportive of the English teaching and learning process in a crisis context. The highest score percentage was registered for the three items (43, 45 & 48) as presented in Figure Five. Also, this indicates that there are a variety of exercises and activities in which students can use vocabulary and practice their skills to communicate in English in real daily life. In addition, through EFL teachers' answers, it is obvious that the textbooks have clear instructions for all activities and exercises, as well as valid questions for quarterly and final tests as in Figure Five.



	Q43	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q47	Q48	Q49
Strongly Agree	19.8	17	19.8	24.5	15.1	9.4	19.8
Agree	67.9	58.5	64.2	57.5	58.5	61.3	50
Disagree	5.7	8.5	6.6	11.3	7.5	10.4	14.2
Strongly Disagree	0.9	2.8	1.9	1.9	2.8	0.9	2.8
Undecided	5.7	13.2	7.5	4.7	16	17.9	13.2

Figure 5. Assessment and evaluation

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Teacher Perspectives Reflected Through Qualitative Interview

The qualitative data collected through interviews on teachers' perspectives of SLP curriculum was audio recorded and analysed with open content analysis paradigm. This analysis followed a systematic step in which the answers of interviewed teachers were grouped based on the similarities and clusters provided in the interviews. The emerging themes from the content analysis are:

Simple and applicable curriculum

During the last ten years of the Syrian crisis, increasing drop out rates has been an emerging problem. SLP curriculum is one of the non-formal education curricula to use during emergency and displacement contexts as they do not have formal schooling. This curriculum provides an opportunity for these students to catch up with their peers. The English textbooks of the SLP curriculum have a strong and supportive way of teaching and learning English. Mustafa explained this in Extract 1 and Omar in Extract 1 as below.

Extract 1. (Teacher Mustafa)

"As we are living in Arab countries, English is not used much outside the educational settings such as in schools and university, we call English as a tough subject matter because we are very restricted to practice it publicly except for specific purposes so that English textbooks of the adopted SLP curriculum try to address this gap among learners, I repeat that it is very simple and students' feel satisfied with it".

In this extract, the teacher mentioned that the SLP curriculum is a very crucial curriculum without any kind of complexity as it gives clear information to children in crisis contexts as a non-formal curriculum. The curriculum follows a clear sequence of English activities and exercises that help students to catch up with their peers, but it still needs visual instruments and tools to support students' level like voice recording, videos, etc.,

Authentic Content

The content is genuine and authentic as it links the theoretical information into practical life, and children find it friendly one as it has exemplary drawings and practical easy examples. The content considers the logical progression of topics considering the consistency of English vocabulary and grammar in all stages. Also the content is up to date related to the students' environment.

Extract 2. (Teacher Akram)

"I think English in SLP is explained in a very simple way to keep children in love in education process as the textbooks are very simple not complicated and they contain a lot of exercises and friendly example in which they can keep motivated to learn English and to remember what they learn in exams. I think puzzles and quizzes are very easy that they keep moving on".

It is noticeable that both teachers Akram and Ahmed stressed about the English textbooks content in which the curriculum allows teachers to diversify teaching methods according to the students' levels as the focus is on the educational levels not the age during non-formal settings as we have in north-west Syria.

Parental Engagement in the SLP Curriculum

Most of the interviewees assured that many children in Syria have left schools due to ongoing conflict. Now, parents/caregivers are very keen on life conditions and getting income to stay alive and afford the very harsh economic situation that affects them and their children's

education. Parents can support mostly literacy and numeracy specifically for the basic grades and get satisfied when their children can write in Arabic.

Extract 3. (Teacher Ahmed)

"Parents can easily follow up their children in this curriculum and as we know, there are many parents who lack education and at the same time there might be some parents to support. Parents want to go to work to afford living, so they do not have enough time to catch up in addition to children working to support their parents due to the poor economic situation".

Here the teacher stated that the SLP program comes from the origin of self-learning which means children with the support of their parents can manage their education. In a nutshell, parents cannot replace teachers' roles but can support them based on the skills and knowledge they have.

SLP accreditation

Most interviewees mentioned that they see the copyright of this curriculum as it is prepared and authorized by UNICEF and UWRWA. This curriculum has an accreditation to be taught in non-formal settings specifically for students with weakness in their educational levels mostly during crisis context.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that the majority of EFL teachers perceive the layout and design of the SLP English textbooks as user-friendly and visually appealing, with approximately 65% highlighting the clear structure and consistent format. This finding aligns with Smith (2016), who emphasized the importance of well-designed educational resources in enhancing learning outcomes in conflict-affected areas. A clear and consistent format helps maintain engagement and comprehension, crucial in unstable environments.

Over 60% of the respondents indicated that the textbooks effectively meet their stated objectives. Teachers noted that the content is aligned with educational goals tailored for children in crisis contexts, ensuring continuity in their English language learning despite disruptions. This finding supports Brown and Jaber (2018), who highlighted the necessity of aligning educational content with the specific needs of students in unstable environments to ensure educational goals are met, even amidst disruptions. Also, teachers perspectives and the results of this study confirm that crisis environments which call for specific measures forthe negative consequences can be supported by education (Koshelieva et al., 2023).

About 58% of the teachers found the teaching methods and activities proposed in the textbooks to be practical and engaging. They appreciated the variety of interactive exercises that cater to different learning styles and promote active participation. This positive feedback is consistent with Al Harbi's (2017) findings on the importance of interactive and engaging pedagogical approaches in maintaining student interest and participation, particularly in non-formal education settings.

Approximately 62% of the teachers affirmed that the textbooks adequately cover essential language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They emphasized that the balance of skills helps students develop comprehensive language proficiency. This affirmation resonates with Jackson (2019), who argued for a balanced approach to language instruction to ensure comprehensive language development, which is crucial for students' overall language proficiency.

The study also highlighted the need for teacher training, as identified by some participants, which aligns with Roberts and Peters (2020), who advocated for ongoing professional development to equip teachers with the necessary skills for effective education delivery in challenging contexts. Additionally, challenges such as weather conditions and inadequate infrastructure, noted by the teachers, underscore the importance of adaptable teaching strategies and materials. For instance, the shorter time dedicated to SLP sessions compared to formal education and the impact of weather conditions on the learning environment highlight the need for flexible and resilient educational practices.

In all war contexts, a high proportion of those affected by conflicts are children (Nicolai, 2003). Globally, 50% of children do not receive any form of education (Children's Living Nightmares, 2017). Emergency education should be prioritized as a life-saving intervention (Brock & McCorriston, 2008; INEE, 2010). The main aim of this study is to highlight the effectiveness of the adopted SLP curriculum, mainly the English textbooks, emphasizing their applicability to students with educational weaknesses, especially during crisis and emergencies.

The study elaborated on how the education system and services in Syria have been affected by the ongoing conflict, leading to a shift from formal to non-formal education, particularly in the northern parts of Syria. This shift allows affected children to catch up on their educational gaps and eventually transition to formal schooling after receiving non-formal education, as is the case with the SLP.

The findings underscore the importance of tailored educational materials in crisis contexts. By addressing the identified research gap, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the educational needs and challenges in conflict-affected areas, providing valuable insights for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers. Further research is recommended to confirm the effectiveness of the SLP curriculum in other conflict-affected regions, considering the accreditation by UNRWA and UNICEF.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the perspectives of EFL teachers on the adopted Self-Learning Program (SLP) English textbooks used in non-formal education settings in North-west Syria. The findings indicate that the majority of teachers found the textbooks to be user-friendly, well-designed, and effective in meeting educational objectives tailored for children in crisis contexts. Over 60% of teachers affirmed the applicability of the textbooks, noting their clear structure and comprehensive coverage of essential language skills. The positive feedback on teaching methods and activities underscores the importance of interactive and engaging pedagogical approaches.

Challenges such as the need for teacher training and the impact of inadequate infrastructure were highlighted, emphasizing the necessity for adaptable teaching strategies in crisis environments. This study contributes to the understanding of educational needs in conflict-affected areas, providing insights for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers. Further research is recommended to confirm the effectiveness of the SLP curriculum in other regions affected by conflict. In conclusion, the SLP English textbooks are considered effective and suitable for supporting children's education in non-formal settings during emergencies, helping bridge educational gaps, and facilitating a transition to formal schooling.

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Note: This study was adopted from the first author's MA Thesis.

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Updating Pronunciation Deviations on Sound-Segments Exhibited by Vietnamese Students in English Speaking

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Abstract

The present study is aimed to examine Vietnamese students' deviations in sound segments when they speak English. To its end, two research questions were raised: (1) what pronunciation deviations on English sounds are empirically made by Vietnamese students in English speaking? (2) what deviations appear to resemble those found in other countries? Mixed research methods, including the recordings of oral interactions among learners and between the teacher and learners, were used by the present study. Quantitative data were empirically cumulatively documented over two successive academic years 2021/22, and 2022/23. Results showed that being synthesized with deviations from prior research across countries, two prominent pronunciation deviation processes on English sounds shared by Vietnamese students and others worldwide are: (A) dropping sounds and (B) altering/substituting sounds. However, the process of adding/inserting sounds reported in some previous studies is not evident from the present data. Accordingly, detailed discussions are delivered about the role of the first language in benefiting or impeding the mastery of English pronunciation. Further studies are also suggested for deeper insights into the related issues.

Keywords: English speaking, pronunciation deviation, second language, sounds, Vietnamese

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Introduction

Among complex interplaying variables to motivate or demotivate learners of a second or foreign language (L2) to proactively communicate in a conducive opportunity, pronunciation competence plays an important role in spoken output. This competence variable, as far as the author of this paper is concerned, has yet to be robustly examined from comprehensive aspects and situated-specific dimensions, especially in Vietnamese contexts, where it appears to be challenging to most learners due to remarkable differences between the English sound system and that of Vietnamese language (Dao, 2018; Do, 2018; Ha, 2005; Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011; Nguyen & Do, 2021; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022). The present study argues that this learning challenge is displayed by the fact that learners make pronunciation deviations in spoken output (i.e., when they speak English) relative to the target language standard/native-like forms, particularly at early L2 learning stages. Thus, more details should be learned about these deviations made by Vietnamese EFL learners in their attempts to speak English in the current context of Vietnam compared to those found in other countries. The present study, therefore, aims to seek answers to two guiding questions: (1) what pronunciation deviations on English sounds are empirically made by Vietnamese students in English speaking? (2) what deviations appear to resemble those found in other countries?

The results are expected to provide more insight into L2 learners' typical pronunciation deviation process of accessing, assimilating target language input, and producing spoken output across countries. Pedagogical implications are also gained to facilitate learners to cultivate this competence in a constant, constructive, and productive manner. For the coverage, the present study focuses on sound segments (i.e., consonants and vowels) in English phonology. However, the suprasegmental element group inclusive of syllable stress, prominence, sentence-intonation, and rhythm should be accommodated from the spoken communication perspective. This is basically because data collected on the latter group are still underway on this study's long-term project. Still, it can also be argued that the former group sets the grounds for the latter group (whose occurrences are deemed to impact the former group's qualities in some way in terms of place and manner of articulation/vocalization) rather than the other way round in real-life communicative practices for lexical significations (Rogers & Dalby, 1996). Nevertheless, either segments or supra-segments or both concurrent in explicit training as a type of form-focus in the classroom are beneficial to learners as advocated in the literature (Alshaibani, 2023; O'Brien, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022).

Framed by the research scope and outcomes, the next section will review key pertinent results reported by past inquiries across countries, followed by the methods applied for data collection by the present study. Then, results and discussions are provided. The paper ends with a conclusion.

Literature Review

The existential phenomenon of L2 learners making pronunciation deviations or phonetic errors (mispronouncing words, thus likely resulting in being identified as non-native speakers and somehow prone to a communication breakdown in some way) in English-speaking has long been recognized across countries in the field of L2 education. For instance, Ojo and Umera-Okeke (2007) denoted that in the regions of Amhara and Oromia in Ethiopia, English learners tended to (1) alter/substitute sounds such as the coda /ng/ for /ŋ/ (i.e., these learners pronounced [n + g] instead of /ŋ/ assigned by standard form) in "sing", "thing", or "going"; the initial /z/ for /θ/ or /ð/ in "then", "thought"; (2) adding/inserting sounds such as /ɪ/ before the final consonant of plural

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forms “contents”, “pupils”, or “lengths”; and /r/ being unnecessarily heard in “card”, “sort”, or “desert”; and (3) retaining the silent sounds such as /b/ in “limb”, /k/ in “scene”. In the same line, Oladipupo and Akinjobi (2015) primed two dominant processes made by Nigerian speakers in linking English words: adding /r/ between word boundaries such as "their action", "color of", or "at all", but dropping consonants like /d/ in “old man”, “cold laugh” or /t/ in “exact color”, “test drive”.

Prior research has also reported the remarkable challenge for Spanish EFL students (Calvo, 2013; Martin et al., 2022) to accurately pronounce the English consonant sequence /s/ + consonant, such as in "school". These students also appeared to deviate by adding an initial vowel to the consonant sequence, i.e., [esku:l] instead of [sku:l] in the standard form. Likewise, they produced the deviant [er] for the final *schwa* /ə/ as in “answer” and “computer”. In addition, they replaced /b/ for /v/ and late acquired vowels (i.e., they need relatively complex practice before being able to pronounce accurately), including [æ, a:, e, ə:, ʊə, əʊ] as well as the past tense regular verb configuration “ed”. The *schwa* sound and /∂ʊ/ are also found to be hard for students in Ghana to pronounce accurately (Afrifa-Yamoah et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, motivated by the assumption that a high probability of transferring fossilized (i.e. hardly or never being corrected) L2 pronunciation errors from teachers to students can occur or teacher-induced errors (Nasr, 2011; Nel & Müller, 2010; Olana & Teshome, 2015), an empirical study by (Elkouz & Luna, 2022) was therefore conducted involving Jordanian EFL school teachers when these teachers ran their online video-recorded classes. The transcripted verbatim revealed deviations of (1) altering/substituting vowels and consonants such as /ɪ/ for /e/ in “identify” [aɪ’dentɪfaɪ], /ɒ/ for /ʊ/ in “book” [bɒk], and /v/ for /f/ in “five” [faɪv]; (2) adding vowels like /æ/ in front of the initial consonant cluster as in “special” or /ɪ/ in “style”; (3) misplacing syllabic stresses such as “adjective” with the stress on the second instead of the first syllable or “superlative” stressing the third instead of the second syllable.

Other pertinent studies also reported similar deviations made by EFL learners in Vietnam (Do, 2018; Ha, 2005; Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen & Do, 2021; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Tweedy, 2012), and in other countries such as in Albania (Alimemaj, 2021), Bangladesh (Kesavan et al., 2021), China (Huang & Pickering, 2015), Hong Kong (Leung & Brice, 2012), Iran (Aghai & Sayer, 2016), Iraq (Nasr, 2011), Indonesia (Palupi, 2021), Japan (Makino, 2014), Lebanon (Mirza, 2015), Malaysia (Shak et al., 2016), Saudi Arabia (Alshaibani, 2023), Sudan (Hassan, 2014), Tanzania (Mramboa & Ligembe, 2022), Turkey (Demirezen, 2008), and Myanmar (Zaw, 2022). Fundamental causes of the deviations observed across countries are (i) the impact of the first language (L1) on L2 or L1-L2 contact; (ii) universal learning strategies deployed or developing stages underway, such as rule-overgeneralization of adding /ɪd/ to all regular past tense verb forms; (iii) insufficient learning conditions, such as lack of practice and poor input provided; and (iv) learner characteristics, e.g., age, personality, motivation, and attitude towards L2 (Lindemann, 2017; Nasr, 2011; O’Brien, 2021).

Methods

As addressed earlier, two research questions were pursued by the present study: (1) what pronunciation deviations on English sounds are empirically made by Vietnamese students in English speaking? (2) What deviations appear to resemble those found in other countries?

Data were collected over two academic years 2021/22, and 2022/23 by the researcher himself via taking notes under the consistent principle of spot-by-spot diversely and empirically

(1) while running his regular English classes held at the university and orally interacting with students in the classroom; (2) while monitoring students' working in teams or groups upon given assignments, both inside and outside the classroom; (3) via individual students' self-audio video recorded assignments done at home (i.e., at the student disposal) and then submitted for course grading in due time to the researcher; and (4) when being assigned as an examiner and formally sitting oral examinations of English speaking skills hosted by the faculty. The habitual routine of noticing pronunciation deviations has long been established and constantly exercised by the researcher because in due courses (sometimes right at the end of class sessions, and other times delayed corrections applied) he compatibly and productively draws students' attention to the critical deviations for improvement with relevant explanations (sound features different in English and Vietnamese as well as some notions of word-stress, tone, and rhythm in English speech), followed by correction practice for the whole class or/and individuals, which lasts approximately ten minutes each. This long-term intervention approach is grounded by the argument (Alshaibani, 2023; O'Brien, 2021; Rahmati et al., 2023) that, like other componential competencies for L2 mastery, pronunciation competence as a fundamental component can hardly be acquired in a quick, linear manner, for instance via a focal learning course of two credits or so on English phonology. But by and large, learners should be constructively guided by teachers for further multiple dynamic practices on an iterative principle, probably until motoric habits are relatively formulated.

Approximately half of these classes were online, specifically when social distancing was applied due to the Covid pandemic spreading throughout the country. As a result, data sources were drawn from several communicative backgrounds, including both peer-/non-peer conversations in the classroom (that is, teacher-student and student-student interactions primarily in a spontaneous manner), and monologues of individual students presenting topic-based speeches in recorded videos for grade counts. This multiple communicative background approach is undertaken by the present study because it would afford triangular relevant evidence (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Creswell, 2014). In addition, it takes into account varying situations where students' *willingness to communicate* may differ because this willingness is somehow negatively impacted by the internally emerging force of *language anxiety* or weak confidence/self-esteem in L2 capacity (Alshaibani, 2023; Calvo, 2013; Martin et al., 2022). In other words, the multiple approaches are deemed to allow for uncovering many deviations released by students in different English-speaking environments underpinned by differing statuses of willingness to communicate at specific points, which accommodate both spontaneous and non/semi-spontaneous utterances.

Students rendering deviation data were 278 EFL majors with more females than males, representative of the foreign language student population at this university about male/female ratio; two-thirds of these students majoring in EFL education and the rest in English-Vietnamese translation. They are all Vietnamese speakers, aged between 20 and 21, sophomores studying full-time and seeking bachelor's degrees in EFL at college. These students attended one of the scheduled courses (including English speaking skills, translation, translation theories, and research methodologies in English) taught by the researcher in the past two academic years. Since the researcher in the present study shared Vietnamese as L1 and local social-cultural backgrounds, i.e., intra-cultural communication, it makes more sense and adds another inherent advantage for him to thematically code, categorize, and interpret the 2-year spoken data by the target students and detect their pronunciation deviations empirically based on his subject-matter expertise and direct interactions. Thereby, the researcher could provide suitable adjustment guidelines timely if available. In other words, when these students speak English, they appear to be intelligible and

understandable for the researcher as an intra-cultural interlocutor/hearer despite multiple pronunciation deviations or intelligibility issues. Still, oral deviations can cause some problems for non-native or native English speakers from other countries to grasp what they mean in rapid speech, especially for someone who still knows little about Vietnam's country and culture or who first time communicates with Vietnamese learners in English. Moreover, this directly participatory approach is aligned with the recommendation that it is of paramount importance for teachers to "know which pronunciation features learners have mastered so that teachers do not waste time focusing on features that do not need to be trained" (O'Brien, 2021, p.2), and also fundamentally underpinned by the view that "The instructor must keep the learner's cultural values in mind to optimize the learning environment" (Larrotta & Adversario, 2022, p.5). Additionally, this approach allows for providing explanations and practices of L1-L2 contrastive analyses about sound systems alongside sustaining and motivating learner willingness to communicate.

Following the Foreign Languages Faculty's approval and encouragement, the institution's current research execution regulations on participants' willingness, interests, timeframe, and particularly the anonymity principle in reporting research results, the researcher compiled, processed, and synthesized the collected data deliberately and iteratively. The obtained results are presented in detail in the following section. Before that, all the deviation results had been reviewed independently by three EFL teachers from the same university as the researcher. The reviewing teachers unanimously agreed on the results reported, which means that pronunciation deviations are still prevalent among Vietnamese learners of EFL in general terms, and they need to improve their English pronunciation intensively.

Results

This section will answer the first research question, while results for the second research question will be detailed in the next section. Within this paper frame, two segmental-deviating processes prevalently and prominently observed are reported: A dropping and B altering/substituting. Since the sound-adding process was rarely cast in the target corpus, it will not be provided in this report.

Table 1. *A Dropping sounds*

	Cases	Exemplary deviances	N=278, i.e., 100%
A1. Dropping syllable initial consonants	[b →*]	***b*ring, cele*b*rate**	10 – 50% (applied to all cases presented on the lelf)
	[d →]	***d*rive, *d*ry, *d*raw**	
	[f →]	***f*ree, *f*ly, *f*lower**	
	[k →]	***c*ry, *k*nock, *c*lay**	
	[g →]	***g*roup, a*g*ree, *g*row**	
	[p →]	***p*lane, sim*p*lify**	
	[s →]	***s*treet, cons*t*ruct, *s*chool, *sc*ream,**	
	[s →]	***sp*ring**	
	[θ →]	***th*row, *th*rough, *th*ree,**	
A2. Dropping syllable-final consonants	[b →]	*descri**be,** ro**b,***	10 – 40%
	[d →]	*rea**d**, ba**d**, secon**d,** secon**d**ly*	
	[f →]	*li**fe,** lea**f**, hal**f,** sel**f***	
	[k →]	*ca**ke**, ma**ke,** ta**ke***	
	[l →]	*cu**l**tivate, cu**l**ture, ta**ll***	

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[s →]	*sen**se**, senten**ce,** pronoun**ce***
[ʧ →]	*tea**ch,** tou**ch,** bea**ch***
[t →]	*righ**t**, tonigh**t,** kep**t***
[θ→]	*dep**th,** too**th,** nor**th,** sou**th***
[v→]	*belie**ve**, lo**ve,** li**ve**, ha**ve***

*No sound is heard. ****Bold letters*** are dropped.

As seen in Table one, consonant-dropping occurs in the initial and final positions of syllables (e.g., ***d**rive* and *second*), covering single-syllable, bi-syllable, and trisyllable words (e.g., *celebrate*, *cultivate*). It is also noted that both bi-consonant (CC) onsets such as *drive* or *plane* and triconsonant (CCC) onsets like *scream* and *spring* are dropped the first for the former and the two first consonants for the latter case; meaning that only the syllable adjacent to the nucleus/vowel(s) (V) is retained/pronounced, making the onset of the syllable. This tendency is explicitly navigated towards the tacitly core syllable template of CV (consonant-vowel). This follows that /k/ in *car, can,* or *cup,* is always retained, but in *cry* it tends to be dropped. Similarly, /f/ in *five, for,* or *fit* is orally present, but in *free* it is absent. The second point is that the /tr/ onset is always retained such as *train*, *street* although /tr/ is a bi-consonant onset; in other words, while /b/ in *bring*, /d/ in *drive*, /g/ in *group*, /k/ in *cry*, /p/ in *probe*, /f/ in *fry*, and /θ/ in *throw* are highly likely unpronounced, /t/ in /tr/ onsets is, however, auditorily articulated. Likewise, /n/ in the coda like in *second* or *sentence* is always auditorily heard, while other consonants like /k/ in *cake*, /t/ in *right*, and /s/ in *sense* are likely absent. The retaining case is also applied to /m/ in the coda, such as in *time, September*, and *some time*. In the same way, while /p/ in *probe, problem,* or *practice* is likely dropped, it is retained in the coda of *keep, kept,* or *map*.

As a result, three typical deviations significantly observed in the *dropping process* are tentatively drawn here (1) it explicitly targets consonants and rarely occurs to vowels, (2) nucleus-adjacent onset consonants are always pronounced, but in other positions, the same consonants tend to be dropped, and (3) the coda stop /p/, and nasals /n/, /m/ rather than other coda consonants are auditorily preserved. These three deviation tendencies appear to reflect the characteristics of the Vietnamese language, which has simple consonant onset/coda structures (for more detail, see Nguyen & Dutta, 2017; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Tweedy, 2012).

Table 2. *B Altering sounds*

	Cases	Exemplary deviances	N=278, 100%
B1.	[i:→ɪ]	*t**ea**, l**ea**ve, t**ee**n*	
Nucleus vowels are altered	[e→i:]	***e**lement, **e**lephant*	
	[i:→e]	***e**ven, sp**ee**ch, br**ea**the*	
	[æ→e]	*b**a**d, h**a**t, d**a**mage*	
	[æ→a]	*bl**a**ck, rel**a**x, **a**ction*	
	[ʌ→ɒ]	*m**o**ther, br**o**ther*	
	[ʌ→u:]	*t**ou**ch, l**u**ck, c**u**t*	
	[ʊ→u:]	*b**oo**k, p**u**t,*	
	[u:→ʊ]	*c**oo**l, t**oo**th,*	10 – 30%
	[ɔ:→ɒ]	*sh**o**rt, t**a**ll*	
	[e→eɪ]	*br**ea**th, ah**ea**d*	
	[[eɪ→e]	*br**ea**k, g**ai**n, h**a**te*	

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	[əʊ→ɒ]	*b**oa**t, r**oa**d, c**o**ld*	
	[əʊ→uː]	*c**o**ld, b**oa**t*	
	[aɪ→ɪ]	*l**i**fe, al**i**ve, k**i**nd*	
	[ɪ→aɪ]	*r**i**ver, wr**i**tten,*	
	[eə→ɪə]	*determ**i**ne*	
	[ɪə→eə]	*b**ea**r, r**a**re, squ**a**re*	
		*r**eal**, id**ea,** b**ear**d*	
B2.	[ʃ→s]	***sh**ine, so**c**ial, poten**t**ial*	
Consonants are altered	[ʒ→s]	*plea**s**ure, trea**s**ure*	10 – 40%
	[θ→ð]	***th**eses, **th**eme*	
	[ŋ→n]	*tha**n**k, thi**n**k, si**ng***	

*__Bold letters__ are altered.

From Table two, it is clear that unlike the dropping process only applied to consonants, vowels appear dominant in the altering process. This, therefore, indicates the indispensible nature of the syllable nucleus taken by vowels in the form of individuals or combinations (diphthongs). The vowels must always be retained in one way or another to identify the target syllable. Meanwhile, consonants in both onset and coda positions as seen above can be dropped to simplify target syllables towards that of CV, especially from the learner perspective suggested in the present study. Another notion is that the two-way alteration commonly occurs to vowels; for instance, [e→iː] and vice versa [iː→e]; /əɪ/ and /eə/; and /aɪ/ and /ɪ/. Furthermore, the one-to-two alteration is also exhibited; thus, [e→iː] or [e→eɪ]; [ʌ→ɒ] or [ʌ→uː]. This is because one letter in English orthography, for instance, *a*, can represent multiple vocalizations, i.e., to be read in different ways. Accordingly, *a* in words such as *make* and *take* is read /eɪ/; in *bad* or *hat* is pronounced /æ/; but, in *attest* or *asleep* is prosodically identified as /ə/. Linguistically, this parsimonious strategy, i.e., one visual signifier can be deployed to represent a set of signified items, is not unusual in languages, but at the same time, it may confuse L2 learners, especially for those at early learning stages.

One letter in English to signify two auditory identifications for consonants and the other way round (i.e. one sound can be signified by more than one orthographic form/spelling) is also applied to consonants, such as /θ/ in ***th**ank* but /ð/ in ***th**ese,* /k/ in ***c**ome* but /ʃ/ in *so**c**ial*, /ŋ/ signified in *thi**n**k* and *si**ng***, /ʃ/ found in ***s**ure* and ***sh**ine*, for *potential* /t/ being denoted by the letter "t" in the second syllable but /ʃ/ for the letter "t" of the third syllable. Thus, altering consonants in the present data potentially occurs both in the onset and coda. The nucleus-adjacent /n/ being retained in *thank, think,* and *sing* also reflects the tendency of dropping coda consonants except for /n/ and /m/, as noted above.

Discussions

Firstly, target students utilized the dropping process in English speaking (Table one), which occurs both in onset and coda consonants, especially when these consonants jointly make up a syllable sequence. This process is explicitly reflected by their tendency to deviate in English syllables by dropping/not pronouncing one or two first initial-syllable sequences (for those syllables of more than two initial consonants) except for the pairing case of /tr/ and only retaining the adjacent-nucleus vowel consonant (A1). Meanwhile, they tended not to fully pronounce the

coda except for the cases of /p/, /n/, and /m/ (A2). This dropping process regarding English consonant clusters has been reported by past investigations (Do, 2018; Ha, 2005; Tran & Nguyen, 2022) in Vietnam and some other countries (Leung & Brice, 2012; Makino, 2014; Oladipupo & Akinjobi, 2015). Still, few have significantly and cumulatively reported L2 tendencies in English speaking of (i) targeting the core CV-syllable template, (ii) retaining the bi-consonant onset of /tr/, and (iii) retaining the nucleus-adjacent coda consonants of /p/, /n/ and /m/. As a result, dropping process evidence provided by the present study, on the one hand, again confirms the significant influence of L1 characteristics underpinned by the universal phonological tendency of simplifying syllable structures, especially that of CV (Carlisle, 2001), on L2 learners' oral behaviors. On the other hand, it is reasonably inferred that the goal of pronouncing English consonant clusters in a native-like manner is relatively challenging for L2 learners across countries (Leung & Brice, 2012; Makino, 2014; Oladipupo & Akinjobi, 2015; Elkouz & Luna, 2022; Zaw, 2022), especially at early learning stages. Still, about the influence of L1 on L2 oral behaviors displayed in the universal dropping process, grounded on the evidence from the present study and some earlier others from Vietnam (as mentioned above) exclusively, the researcher proceeds to raise the question: why Vietnamese speakers somehow find it tremendously hard to retain coda stops [t] and [k] explicitly in English spoken output although both coda consonants strongly exist in Vietnamese such as in "tết" [teɪt] (English meaning: Lunar New Year), "khét" [k^{h}et] (over-cooked), "tốt" [tot] (good), and "khóc" [k^{h}ɔk] (cry), "tóc" [tɔk] (hair), "góc" [gɔk] (corner). Vietnamese-based mechanism ultimately enables native speakers to pronounce well the distinction between "tết" with [t] in the coda and "tế" (worship) without [t] in the coda, or between "khóc" with a [k] coda and "khó" (difficult) with an empty coda as an open syllable ending. Thus, the role of L1 impact does not appear to function well in the process of L2 learning acquisition although it is supposed to take place for learners' benefit in theory. Further research should explore more about the L1 influence on L2 assimilation. Accordingly, this is also one of the marked points to which Vietnamese teachers of English should attend and purposefully anchor learners' awareness by detailed explanations about disparities between the two languages when available.

Secondly, the fact that L1 and L2 are asymmetric in their vowel-diphthong profiles and –syllable-nucleus features also makes sense for L2 learners across countries adopting the universal tendency to deviate in English vowels (Alshaibani, 2023; Afrifa-Yamoah, 2021; Elkouz & Luna, 2022; Martin et al., 2022; Nguyen & Dutta, 2017; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; etc.). The present study underscores that the phenomena of making vowel-pronunciation deviations by Vietnamese students in English speaking appear to be prevalent in various cases, especially the two-way alteration of [e→i:/ i:→e]; [əɪ→eə/ eə → əɪ]; [aɪ →ɪ/ ɪ→ aɪ]; [eɪ→e/ e → eɪ] (Table 2, A1), which has yet to be explicitly reported in previous research. Furthermore, as addressed above, vowel deviations are partly caused by the mismatch between orthography and phonetic systems of the English language per se. Put another way, this orthographic-phonetic mismatch challenges L2 learners to immediately recognize what vowel(s) is signified, especially for the case of Vietnamese learners because the aforementioned mismatch is virtually absent in Vietnamese phonology (Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen & Dutta, 2017; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Tweedy, 2012). Another point that should be addressed is that while learning to accurately pronounce English, *schwa* /ə/ is problematic for L2 learners in some countries, such as Spanish speakers (Martin et al., 2022), those from Hongkong (Leung & Brice, 2012), Japan (Makino, 2014), and from Ghana (Afrifa-Yamoah, 2021). Yet, this is not the marked case for Vietnamese students, at least from the data collected in the present study with a relatively larger sample (N=278 over two

successive academic years 2021-2023) than those previously reported from Vietnam contexts (Do, 2018; Ha, 2005; Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen & Do, 2021; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; Tweedy, 2012). The advantage for Vietnamese learners to pronounce /ə/ in English is probably because Vietnamese also has a similar vowel (though not identical phonetically) with its signified spelling "ơ" such as in "mơ" [mə:] (dream) and "thơ" [ðə:] (poetry). Also, English diphthongs /a:/, /eɪ/, and /ɪɔ/ were found problematic for Burmese EFL learners from Myanmar (Zaw, 2022) and also challenging for Indonesians to pronounce accurately (Palupi, 2021), but they are not the marked case for Vietnamese ones; mainly because these diphthongs exist in Vietnamese, e.g., /a:/ in "ta" (we), "tam" (three); /eɪ/ in "ghê" (disgusting), "chế" (devise); /ɪɔ/ in "nói" (speak), "khói" (smoke). Accordingly, it suggests that prior experience from L1 knowledge and motoric practice can be deployed conducively by L2 learners in assimilating the target language as a form of positive language transfer. On the contrary, like learners from other countries such as Malaysia (Shak et al., 2016), Tunisia (Bouchhioua, 2017), Turkey (Demirezen, 2008), and Spain (Martin et al., 2022), Vietnamese students find it hard to pronounce the vowel /æ/ and the diphthongs/eə/, /ʊə/, and /əʊ/ because these sounds are absent in Vietnamese phonology. Still, like the cases of /k/ and /t/ mentioned above, /ŋ/ is frequently used in Vietnamese words such as "không" (no/not/null), "ông" (Mr./grandfather), "anh" (you), "anh hùng" (hero), and so on, but it is still hard for Vietnamese learners to acquire the ability to pronounce this sound in English like in *bang*, *bank*, *sing*, *thing*, *think*, or *thank*. Thus, Vietnamese teachers in the classroom should attend to this point in running practices.

Collectively, we learn that making pronunciation deviations by L2 learners in English speaking is universally predictive regardless of L1, which is more tangible in the case of multiple asymmetries between L1 and L2 such as Vietnamese characterized by a tonally syllable-based language and English characterized by a non-tonally stress-based language (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Nguyen & Truong, 2021; Tweedy, 2012). These contingent deviations are variable depending on specific L2 learners and two fundamental processes are anchored by the present study in particular: (A) dropping sounds and (B) altering sounds. However, concerning another inherently deviant process of adding sounds such as /ɪ/, /e/, /er/, and /r/ (Martin et al., 2022; Nasr, 2011; Oladipupo & Akinjobi, 2015), the present study failed to confirm. Past research (e.g., Nguyen, 2008; Tran & Nguyen, 2022; and Tweedy, 2012) recorded little tokens of sound insertion, particularly vowels between consonants to construct added syllable-nucleuses, generated by Vietnamese speakers in English speaking. At this point, putting aside L1 characteristics and taking into consideration the universal tendency of targeting core CV structure as consistently documented in the relevant literature (Carlisle, 2001; Keys, 2001), one question may emerge why Vietnamese learners appear not to tap into the adding process as much and prevalently as learners from other countries, for instance, Kurdish learners, Iraq (Nasr, 2011) and those from Amhara-Oromia regions of Ethiopia (Ojo & Umera-Okeke, 2007). Thus, future research among Vietnamese speakers may attend to this issue for more in-depth information.

From the teacher's perspective, as addressed somewhere earlier, instead of attributing these deviation phenomena fundamentally to insufficiency in attention, learning, self-practice, and timely self-correction by learners during the L2 acquisition course, we can perceive deviations as signs of L2 learners' making efforts to internalize L2 by taking up given input, advancing their *willingness to communicate*, deploying prior language experience repertoire as much as possible. At some points of making deviations, learners somehow attest their tacit hypotheses about L2 characteristics, specifically here the rules of sound systems shared by L1 and L2. We can also view

this phenomenon as learners' working strategies to cope with task requirements over the transitional stage from pre-perfection to perfection (Larrotta & Adversario, 2022). Accordingly, it is pedagogically advisable for classroom teachers to patiently, constantly, and reflectively figure out dynamic, practitical methods to assist learners in dealing with pronunciation deviations step by step, depending on specific situations. Although a wide range of instructional guidelines, models, strategies, and techniques have been proposed by previous works (Afrifa-Yamoah, 2021; Alshaibani, 2023; Bakla & Demirezen, 2018; Zaw, 2022), probably the goal should reasonably and pragmatically be to enhance speech intelligibility during early learning stages in particular rather than native-like level straightforwards and right from the onset (Lindemann, 2017; Tweedy, 2012). Taking into account multiple adverse contingencies of (i) the universal challenge of L2 acquisition per se, (ii) inherent asymmetries between L1 and L2 characteristics by nature, (iii) complex consonant clusters in syllable templates and a marked orthograpic-phonetic mismatch of English, (iv) insufficient L2 input given primarily via relevant coursebooks/teachers, (v) a pronounced lack of daily L2 practices outside the classroom (like the case of participants in the present study), (vi) individuals' vocal-mechanism constraints already chronically shaped by L1 characteristics, (vii) sustained physical practices until almost becoming orally motoric habits as well as other external, internal factors involved (Alshaibani, 2023; Calvo, 2013; Martin et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2008; Tweedy, 2012), the nativeness principle in English pronunciation mastery is admittedly ideal as an ultimate goal but appears to weigh heavily on most L2 learners practically to achieve within a limited time, especially for Vietnamese ones as far as the present researcher is concerned. The intelligibility goal is also supported by "there is substantial variation in native varieties of English" (Lindemann, 2017, p.204).

Conclusion

Drawing on deviations obtained from the present study compared to those reported by prior pertinent research across countries, two fundamental pronunciation deviation processes shared by L2 learners in English speaking are tentatively established: (1) dropping sounds and (2) altering/substituting sounds. The two processes are variably displayed at differing points and forms in spoken output by L2 learners across countries depending significantly on L1 characteristics, which are explicitly traced in L2 pronunciation performances. The former process is applied to consonants and the latter involves more nucleus vowels. Yet, the present study pointed out the cases in which L1 impact was supposed to benefit L2 pronunciation behaviors, but it was not found, e.g., /t/, /k/, and /ŋ/ in the case of Vietnamese learners. Furthermore, although the process of inserting sounds or epenthesis was documented in some previous studies (Martin et al., 2022; Ojo & Umera-Okeke, 2007; Oladipupo & Akinjobi, 2015), data from the present study did not robustly pinpoint this third process. Therefore, future research should address this issue for more relevant evidence and decent accounts. Another limitation of the present study is that suprasegmental elements have not been covered; thus, further investigations are needed for more comprehensive elaborations and understandings, especially from the across-countries approach. These prospective works would enrich our comprehensive understanding of the L2 pronunciation mechanism, both perceptively and productively. Thereby, better instructional strategies can be employed to support L2 learners' pronunciation targets.

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Exploring the Impact of Learning English on Shaping Saudi EFL Learners' Identities

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Abstract

Language learners' identities are no longer constant and stable but complicated, conflicting, and multidimensional (Darvin & Norton, 2023; Norton, 1997). Its users' identities format language and those identities are dynamic because students engage in many discourses and negotiate their positions within diverse communities of practice. The main aim of this mixed-methods study is to explore how learning the English language impacts Saudi students' identities and what factors contribute to it. To achieve these purposes, the study randomly recruited a sample of 60 male and female college-level students studying for a Bachelor of Education. in English language at Majmaah University's College of Education - Saudi Arabia- were randomly recruited to complete online questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with five male and five female high-achieving EFL English as a foreign language learner. The results showed that knowing English is highly valued in Saudi Arabia and essential to securing a good job and achieving personal financial success. The research participants expressed positive perceptions of the English language, native English speakers, and the culture of English-speaking nations, showing that they possessed both intrinsic solid and extrinsic motivational orientations. The outcomes of the interviews and questionnaires indicated that most respondents still needed to create a new foreign-language identity.

Keywords: cultural awareness, language and identity, multilingual and multicultural settings, second-language acquisition, sociocultural contexts

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Introduction

Learning English as a second language has become a significant aspect of the lives of many people throughout the world. Often, the driving forces behind a consistent effort to acquire a target language are objectives such as improved job prospects and the accompanying social status, a sense of belonging, and sentiments of greater self-esteem that proficiency in the target language is believed to provide. Many believe knowing English will help them obtain a better job, pursue their education, broaden their cultural horizons, or express their personal, political, and religious beliefs (Cook, 2013; Gardner, 2021). Others may consider it an overwhelming challenge to conquer to achieve future, life-changing aims, such as students hoping to gain admission to English-medium institutions and colleges. Learning a second language differs from other pursuits, as it is a highly social process that entails accommodating the characteristics of another culture, so learning English touches on themes of self and identity (Dörnyei, 2001; Qiao, 2024). Anbreen (2015) states that learning a foreign language is a comprehensive endeavor encompassing all aspects of the learner: emotional, intellectual, and social. It is widely acknowledged that mastering a language requires knowledge of grammar, phonology, lexis, and cultural peculiarities. Norton (2006) proposes five common beliefs about identity that underlie most identity-focused second language acquisition (SLA) research:

1. Identity is fluid and constantly changing across time and place.
2. Identity is complex, contradictory, and multifaceted.
3. Language is both a product and a tool of identity construction.
4. Individuality can be comprehended only in the framework of power and relations.
5. Much identity-focused SLA research makes connections to classroom practice.

The interest in identity and SLA resulted from the realization that more than focusing on language and cognition was needed to understand the complex relations between second language learning and the social ramifications in which it was anchored. It has been connected with teaching language for communication, which requires interaction and participation in various social exchanges embedded in diverse sociocultural contexts (Block, 2007; Ellis, 2023). Numerous theories and studies in applied linguistics have evolved to explain the relationship between language learning and identity, such as complexity theory, chaos theory, and sociocultural theory (SCT) (Khodadady, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Acquiring any language is not limited to linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and grammatical structures; it also goes beyond that to know its culture. Language is more than a tool for communication and information transmission. Still, it is closely intertwined with behavioral norms and cultural values that help define an individual's identity (Yihong et al., 2005). With the prevalence of English language learning in Saudi Arabia, students' exposure to it from all sides—culturally, socially, and intellectually—has become increasingly common. Consequently, it can be said that the influence of language learning on identity has become apparent. The current research examines the relationship between English learning and Saudi university students' identities. Also, it endeavors to fill the gap of a lack of studies exploring the effects of second language (L2) learning on Saudi university learners' identity in the Saudi setting.

Research Questions

1. How does learning English impact Saudi university students' identities?

2. What factors contribute to shaping Saudi university English learners' identities?

Significance of the Study

This mixed-methods study implements the essential objectives of its research context and seeks to make significant contributions to support the existing studies. For instance, it endeavors to contribute to the formulation of a more thorough understanding of the complex social, linguistic, political, and gender forces that are included in the process of language learning and identity and agency negotiation in an Arab expanding circle country such as Saudi Arabia. Its outcomes will provide information about how language learning affects identity. The present thesis highlights the factors that can play an essential role in reconstructing Saudi university students' identities. In addition, the implications of the findings of this study will be valuable in many ways (educational, social, cultural, language planning, and future research). Only a few relevant studies were conducted by Saudi researchers in the context of Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study comes to fill this gap.

Literature Review

Identity

One-dimensional or inadequate identity interpretations are common. It refers to our views of ourselves and others (Saida, 2021). Leading SLA researchers define "identity" differently (Block, 2007; Cakir, 2006; Jensen, 2003; Norton, 2000; Witte, 2023). Norton defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 45). Identity is dynamic, and cultural identity requires adopting ideas and practices from one or more cultural communities (Jensen, 2003). Cakir (2006) states that social interaction and community loyalty shape identity.) Identity could be seen as a social product co-created by interactants rather than a psychological construct ingrained in each person (Block, 2007; Witte, 2023)

Language and Identity

Identity and language learning have grown in popularity in recent decades, according to Aliakbari and Amiri (2018). Many linguists believe language reveals identity. They also say language and identity are complicated (Barnawi, 2009; Edwards, 2023). Norton (2000) states that language is a crucial way we shape our identities. Language and identity are complex, paradoxical, multilayered, dynamic over time and location, co-constructed, contextualized in coercive or cooperative processes, and linked to classroom practice (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010). Because identity affects communication, communication can build or change identity. The relationship between identity and language may need to be explained. Language can establish identity in various social contexts, especially multilingual and multicultural settings (Yihong *et al*., 2005). Norton (2000) proposes a comprehensive theory of language learner identity, including language learning in identity development. She defines investment as a social construct related to motivation as a psychological construct.

Second-language Acquisition Identity Theories

Poststructural Perspective on Identity: Multiple and Shifting

Identity has been studied from many angles since applied linguistics introduced it. Usually,

it was considered fixed or unitary. However, poststructuralists have recently examined it. A globalized, poststructuralist, postmodern society views identity as fluid, multifaceted, diversified, dynamic, varied, moving, prone to change, and contradictory. Socially ordered, reorganized, constructed, co-produced, and constantly reconstructed through language and conversation.

Identity combines human action and societal forces (Omoniyi & White, 2008; Zacharias, 2010). Social theorists call identity a process that is not distinct, stable, or coherent (Block, 2007). Some authors, like Hall (1996), use identification to indicate procession. Harr'e (1987) says identity is about ongoing social interaction. Poststructuralists believe identity is unspoken and culturally driven, emerging from discourse interactions (Miyaharay, 2010). Thus, identity is a social, learning, nexus, and local-global "becoming" rather than a class or personal attribute (Wenger, 1998, p. 163).

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory states that people have multiple "selves" that act differently in different situations. Others, like Luk and Lin (2007), believe that people have multiple identities that are "often disorganized, fractured, diverse, and contradictory" (p. 50). For this reason, many academics use "identities," plural. Identity is about "negotiated experience," which means people encounter multiple identities through social engagement and then choose among them (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). Managing multiple identities causes conflict (Armour, 2004; Chen et al., 2021; McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce,1995).

Poststructuralist Subjectivity Theories

As Bakhtin and Bourdieu did, Weedon (1987) studied institutional and communal communication. According to Weedon and other poststructuralist theorists who influenced her research on individual-social interaction, language determines institutional processes and shapes our subjectivity. Current and potential social organization and their social and political effects are defined and debated in language. Still, it shapes our identity and subjectivity. Weedon says "subject" and "subjectivity" refer to a different view of the individual than Western humanist concepts. Poststructuralism views the individual (the subject) as heterogeneous, contradictory, dynamic, and changing over time and social space, unlike humanist ideas of the individual. Foucauldian discourse and historical particularity inform poststructuralism's view of subjectivity as discursively formed and socially and historically grounded. As mentioned, many SLA identity theorists rely on these subjectivity theories. Cultural theorist Hall (1992a, 1992b) and postcolonial theorist Bhabha (1994) have used poststructuralist methods to deconstruct identity categories like race and gender. Hall emphasizes representation in cultural identity because identity is discursive. According to Hall, new ethnicities respect racial experiences without homogenizing them. Hall emphasizes a multilayered rootedness that extends beyond ethnic minorities to other diversity.

Sociocultural Learning Theories

The identity approach views SLA as a sociocultural process rather than a mental and individual activity (Davis, 1995; Ellis, 2021). Relational SLA occurs between speakers in specific sociocultural contexts. Considering learners as members of social and historical groups rather than solo language creators requires evaluating learning or practice appropriation cases in each community. According to anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning is essential to social practice. Newcomers connect with old-timers in a specific community context, gain excellent experience in group activities, and gradually advance toward broader community membership through legitimate peripheral participation.

However, Lave and Wenger recognize that specific social structures in any society can hinder or encourage more general engagement. In developing these theories, Wenger (1998) emphasizes how participation builds a learner's identity. He believes that our identities are shaped by our participation and non-participation in communities of practice. Since our experiences involve connecting with non-member communities, we must refrain from participating. These experiences are different from not joining our group's activities. The latter case benefits from Wenger's peripherality-marginality distinction. Peripherality may enable involvement, but marginality prevents it, according to Wenger.

Previous studies

Different perspectives and dimensions have been studied in identity construction. Saida (2021) investigated whether Algerian EFL students develop new identities by studying English. The study found that most respondents must create new foreign language identities. Additionally, respondents who formed new identities saw their L2 identities complementing their L1 identities. Many factors could explain why Saida's study's number of respondents could not create a second identity. Algerian schools and colleges taught English without regard to society. Another possibility is that conservative students rejected non-local cultures. Pakistani university students were studied by Anbreen (2015) to determine how foreign language learners form identities in class. According to the research, even non-native students use ESL information to create their identities and see future opportunities. Azmi et al. (2021) qualitatively interviewed 90 Terengganu religious high school students. The results showed that learning English did not harm students' Islamic identity. Students learned respect, self-esteem, and teamwork while studying English. These findings suggested that learning English as a second language may help students develop morality and cultural beliefs. Iranian language learners' identity rebuilding and English language acquisition were examined in a qualitative study by Tamimi (2017). The study found that most students thought learning English affected their identity. Respondents also wanted to integrate and identify with target linguistic and cultural norms. Some learners who rejected identity reconstruction through language acquisition argued that they learned English for instrumental, not integrative, purposes. Barnawi (2009) studied two Saudi first-year TESOL master's students at American colleges qualitatively. Based on their classroom engagement competence, both students developed different identities. Both Saudi students struggled to negotiate competence, identities, and power relationships, crucial for engaging and being accepted as genuine and qualified classroom participants.

Awadelkarim's (2021) study examined identity formation, negotiation, and change in eight high-achieving and successful male EFL learners pursuing B. Ed degrees in English language at Majmaah University's College of Education. Results showed the need to empower and maximize these positive traits of multilingual, non-native English language educators. Non-native multilingualism (for teachers and interlocutors) may aid multicompetence and language. Al Asmari (2013) examined how first-year students at the Saudi Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at Taif University felt about English language teaching and learning. One hundred seventy-six freshmen undergraduates were randomly selected for the study. Al Asmari used a quantitative approach to assess participants' views on English language teaching and learning (ELT) topics like the language, English-speaking countries' cultures, teachers' and students' roles, and the native tongue (Arabic). Participants liked English, native English speakers, and English-speaking cultures. This finding demonstrated their strong internal and external motivations. Previous studies

have shown a divide in how learning English affects non-native learners' identities. According to Saida (2021), learning English for non-native learners has no effect, but Azmi et al. (2021) found that it does.

Research gap

The current study is worth exploring because it addresses the impact of learning English on Saudi university English learners' identities by including both male and female learners, which will increase knowledge of Majmaah University students' characteristics. In addition, only a few relevant studies were conducted by Saudi researchers in the context of Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study fills this gap.

Methods

This study used mixed methods to get more profound and accurate participant responses to the research problem. We chose a questionnaire for the quantitative portion because it was given to many respondents. However, some survey ideas were crucial and warrant further study. Interviews were chosen to reveal behavior, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and values.

Population and Sample

This mixed study included English majors from Majmaah University College of Education. It examines how English learning affects Saudi university English learners' identities. 60 19–24-year-old male and female students were chosen to achieve this goal. Both probability and non-probability sampling were used, including purposive interview sampling and simple random sampling of the questionnaire. The sample was more motivated to learn English than their colleagues, as shown by their academic journeys and outstanding performance.

Data Collection Instruments

Since they shared many of the study's goals, Al Asmari (2013) and Mustafa (2017) questionnaires were used for some survey items. The 21 items were Likert scaled. The survey had four sections: a cover page, demographic (personal and general information), English language attitudes, and English-speaking country culture attitudes. Telegram links were sent to the targeted sample to simplify survey data collection. However, Zoom was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with five male and five female high-achieving and superior EFL learners (as shown by their academic records). Awadelkarim (2021) created ten open-ended questions, and Tamimi (2017) created other interview questions for this study.

Data Analysis

After collecting the surveys, SPSS v. 25 was used to calculate percentages and frequency counts of closed-ended responses for each questionnaire item. Tables and figures displayed descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages). Instead, interview data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Each case study revealed themes. After that, all respondents' case studies were examined. Qualitative data were analyzed, and research participants' quotes supported the findings.

Results

Quantitative Data Results and Analysis

The questionnaire responses were from both genders. Figure 1 shows female participants at 58.33% and male participants at 41.67%.

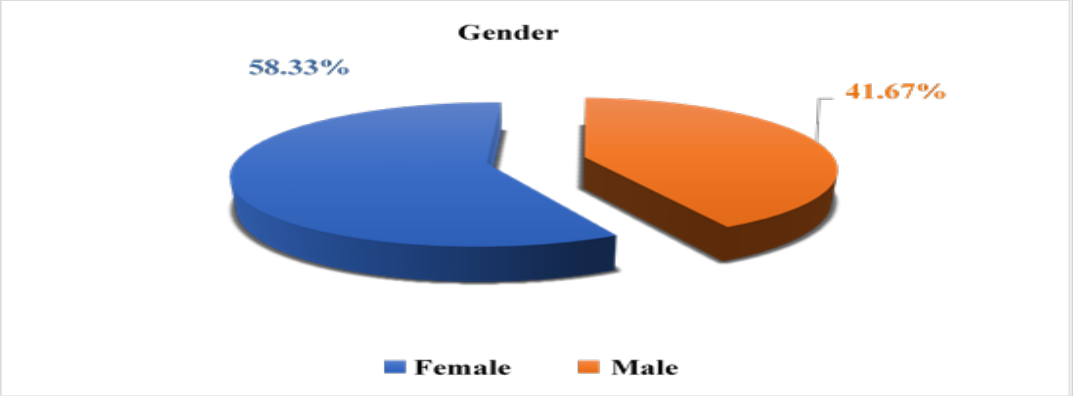

Figure 1. Pie Chart of Gender

As mentioned in section (3.2. Data), the questionnaire consisted of 21 items; nine items were used to determine how Saudi EFL students feel about the English language. The questionnaire also included these items to explore the respondents' inclinations and passion for learning the language and to examine whether learning it affects their identities. Table 1. below describes the items probing participants' perceptions toward the English language in terms of mean values and standard deviations (SD).

Table 1. *Participants Responses to the English Language (N=60)*

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	SD
1. I want to be able to speak English fluently and accurately.	51	9	0	0	0	4.85	0.36
2. English proficiency is among the most critic factors for success in Saudi Arabia.	25	23	8	2	2	4.12	0.99
3. It is excellent that English has a high social standing in Saudi Arabia.	10	17	22	10	1	3.42	1.26
4. English proficiency is an indicator of a well-educatedperson.	10	18	9	18	5	3.17	1.26
5. I believe that English should be the language of instruction in Saudi Arabia (in Higher Education)	9	12	15	16	8	2.97	1.28
6. I would like to learn English even if it were not a mandatory course at the university.	29	25	3	3	0	4.33	0.80
7. I want to speak English because it makes me respected by family, relatives, and friends.	6	10	9	13	22	3.45	1.39
8. People who speak more than one language are more intelligent.	13	19	14	7	7	3.40	1.28

9. I think that learning English has a negative effect on my religion.	0	2	3	20	35	1.53	0.74

Note: *SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, N: Neutral, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation.*

Four items were used to determine whether learning English impacts EFL learners' cultural and religious identities. The participants' responses are exhibited in Table 2. From Table 2 below, particularly item 11, we can see that participants fluctuated between neutrality and disagreement. It may be because they need to learn how positive English impacts their religious notions. Item 12 confirms the participants' disagreement regarding the negative impact of learning English on their identities. They indicated positive attitudes toward openness to others and knowing more about English-language culture.

Table 2. *Participants Responses to the Effects of Learning English on Cultural and Religious Identity (N=60)*

Items	**SA**	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
10. Learning English has affected identity as a Saudi Muslim.	3	3	10	18	26	1.98	1.13
11. English has favorably influenced r religiousideas.	3	9	17	19	12	2.53	1.13
12. I want to learn English to know more about English language culture.	14	32	6	8	0	3.87	0.93
13. The prevalence of the Englisl language in Saudi Arabia has had positive impact on Saudi culture and society.	8	23	14	9	6	3.30	1.18

Eight items were employed to see how Saudi EFL learners perceive the culture of English-speaking countries. From Table 3, we can note that the respondents have favorable perceptions and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations toward the culture of English-speaking countries. Items 15, 16, 17, and 20 proved this point. This result aligns with Nematzadeh and Narafshan's (2020) findings, suggesting that the community created by intercultural film clips gave individuals a sense of belonging in the social world and affected their personal and linguistic perspectives and trends. They added that a sense of detachment brought about by viewing film clips allowed the participants to become more aware of cultural and linguistic differences, developing their identity and language skills.

Moreover, students expressed passion and desire to communicate efficiently with native English speakers. It is apparent from item 20 that 56% of respondents agreed with this statement, with a high mean value of 4.28. Respondents tended to listen to English music, and as it is known,

a piece of music is not limited to a sound pattern or a rhythm; instead, it reflects the heritage and culture of the country and its speakers. Based on this, it can be said that listening to foreign music can revolutionize listeners' cultural and personal identities.

Table 3. *Participants' Responses to the Culture of English-Speaking Countries (N=60).*

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	SD
14. I look forward to knowing more about Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Halloween events.	3	5	4	14	34	1.82	1.19
15. I like to watch English (American, British,Canadian, etc.) films.	29	23	2	4	2	4.22	1.03
16. I like to listen to English music.	25	14	9	6	6	3.77	1.36
17. I need to learn English to get to know English-speaking people better.	22	25	5	4	4	3.95	1.16
18. I would like to study ELT books published inWestern countries.	11	16	18	8	7	3.27	1.25
19. Learning about English-speaking countries' cultures may affect my cultural identity adversely.	3	7	12	27	11	2.40	1.08
20. Learning about the culture of English-speaking countries may help me understand and communicate more effectively with native Englishspeakers.	26	30	1	1	2	4.28	0.87
21. Learning about the culture of English-speaking countries may help me tolerate the differences betweencultures.	16	24	12	4	4	3.73	1.13

Qualitative Data Results and Analysis

This study included ten successful male and female EFL students who differed from their peers. Depending on their answers, each participant's interview lasted 25 minutes.

Thematic Analysis

Based on student responses, the qualitative data analysis, supported by participant quotations, revealed six major themes: English learners' perceptions of identity, favorable feelings toward English through using it for utilitarian purposes and plans, insight and knowledge of various cultures, and fostering tolerance, the feeling of gaining new perceptions, new modes of thinking, and new beliefs or worldviews while learning English, and a view.

Theme 1: English Learners' Identity Perceptions.

Participants defined their identity first in the interviews. The subjects were asked to define "identity ."Examples of their answers are the following:

“a person's identity is their personality, culture, and language. It also affects their behavior and abilities." (interviewee 2); “Our identity is tied to our daily actions. That is, our methods." (interviewee 7); “identity depends on lifestyle and character. It depends on where one lives and comes from." (interviewee 5); "Identity is one's nationality and culture." (interviewee 3); "my nationality, personality, ethnicity, and religion define me." (interviewee 9).

Theme two: Positive attitudes toward English and investing in it for future use.

Learners were asked why they chose English as their major. It was done to determine if students had a positive attitude toward English, assuming that would indicate motivated behavior. Students answered this question differently. Six respondents said they learned English for their university education. In contrast, four said they did it for self-affirmation, prestigious careers with social status, communicating with native English speakers, and opening up to others. There is a strong emphasis on the future in the interview responses, particularly when considering that students pursue academic studies not for their own sake but for future social and psychological targets, such as enhanced self-esteem and acceptance, which they anticipate receiving from the occupations they plan to pursue.

Theme three: Cultural awareness and tolerance.

"Because I learned English, I was able to learn about the cultures of English-speaking countries," interviewee 10 said. Interviewee 7 said, "Learning English did not influence my identity as much as it capacitated me to build tolerance for other cultures." "I realized that no one should be judged by their culture," said interviewee 6. A female participant (interviewee 3) addressed the topic of tolerance from an identity standpoint. She asserted, "Studying English positively impacted my identity in that it enabled me to recognize that there is no one correct identity or culture. Accepting each other's identities is all that is required." These replies are in line with Piasecka's (2018) outcomes. She emphasized that English allowed participants to communicate with people worldwide and make friends with them. It influenced their personalities by making them more open-minded and tolerant of others.

Theme four: Learning English and gaining new perspectives, ways of thinking, and worldviews.

This theme involves understanding and using alternative thinking methods to gain new perspectives. Participants suggested that a person's upbringing, personality, age at which English learning begins (the younger the age, the more significant the impact), English exposure, and, most importantly, living or studying abroad, especially in an EFL environment, can lead to new attitudes or worldviews. Interviewee 9 said, "English has helped me understand the world and my place in it. Even faraway people are closer if you speak their language. So foreign language proficiency affects my life and identity." Interviewee 7 said, "Learning a second language helped me find myself interested in English poetry and translation... I read English novels in my spare time. I also learn Arabic-to-English translation. by increasing my vocabulary." Interviewees 1, 3, 5, and 8 indicated they gained new perspectives. They supported this by comparing their current situations to those before learning English. The differences between L1 and L2 cultures helped them be more open-minded.

In contrast, interviewees 7 and 10 blamed language deficits for their inability to learn new ideas and worldviews in English. Interviewees 1, 3, 5, and 8 indicated that studying English allowed them to understand the various religious views. Norton (2000) said language helps learners form dialogues while negotiating their identities and worldviews. Research on the bicultural and multicultural self suggests that exposure to perspectives that conflict with one's beliefs can change self-perception (Al Wahaibi, 2019). In general, the sample's answers match Awadelkarim's (2021) results as he indicated that:

> Learning a second language affects character but to different degrees. My second language was English, a global language used by millions and a lingua franca. English has greatly influenced my interests, thinking, and openness. That makes me prefer English literature over Arabic (Awadelkarim, 2021, p.807).

Theme 5: Self-View for English Identity Rebuilding

The participants were questioned about whether and how mastering English and exposure to the language had impacted their identities. Additionally, respondents were asked to clarify whether they perceived this influence as positive or negative. Except for two respondents (interviewees 8 and 10), the subjects indicated that learning a foreign language did not contribute to constructing new cultural identities since a person is not someone different while conversing in English. Interviewee 6 claimed, "English is just a subject in school or a specialty in college and is solely utilized in the classroom." The student's standpoint here contradicts Cakir's (2006) view, which is that learning a target language includes learning about its culture, and the culture can play a pivotal role in shaping learners' identities. Interviewee 5 remarked, "I reckon that learning English or any language does not affect the learner's identity; on the contrary, it will make him/her open to others, increase the career opportunities for its learner, so I expect the effect will be positive." To some extent, this seems consistent with Mustafa's (2017) findings. He stated
:

> English is highly prized in Saudi Arabia and is considered a key to employment and individual economic prosperity. The participating Saudi women felt that learning English had a positive impact on their identities and that the most positive impact was on their positive personal traits (p.2).

Interviewee 1 responded, "Learning English prompted me to adopt a positive attitude toward it since English is an international language, and I will use it often in the future." In the interviewees' perceptions, equal exposure to L1 and L2 cannot create two equivalent identities. Only interviewees 6 and 10 asserted that they had constructed new L2 identities due to acquiring English. However, they demonstrated that their L2 identities did not clash with their L1 identities. They were independent, adaptable, attractive, optimistic, self-assured, individualistic, and forceful in English. Their Saudi Muslim Arab identities were considered conservative, constrained, collectivistic, and less self-assured. The students' answers demonstrate that English language study does not influence self-identity construction.

On the contrary, Azmi et al. (2021) stated that English language learners may form personalities like Westerners due to environmental and cultural variables, not necessarily the language spoken or acquired. For instance, the participants mentioned some prevailing phenomena among their peers that may threaten their cultural identities, such as the imitation of the outward appearance of some well-known Western personalities (e.g., mode of attire as a pretext for

obsession with fashion) or the comparison of the rituals of Muslim festivals (Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha) with others occurring in Western nations (e.g., Christmas and Halloween). Modern adolescents are growing up in a multicultural society where forming a cultural identity has grown complicated. Frequently, they must integrate distinct cultural ideas and behaviors imparted to them by various socialization agents that, at times, are in conflict (e.g., parents and TV). In conclusion, developing a coherent cultural identity that enables adolescents to become contributing members of society presents stressful or even more difficult challenges.

Discussion

Respondents in this research displayed favorable views about the English language, native speakers, and the cultures of English-speaking nations, showing that they possess both solid intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations. They were cognizant of the significance of studying English as a global language. Additionally, the results of the existing investigation are consistent with the findings of several studies that declared that most Saudis consider English favorably since it is considered a requirement for personal and national success. Many people in Saudi Arabia tend to believe that those who speak English have a greater chance of achieving success since they have access to more professional opportunities (Alsamaani, 2012; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Faruk, 2013; Mahib your Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Based on the participants' responses regarding the culture of English-speaking countries, more than half of the respondents (53%) showed a very positive orientation toward knowing more about native speakers and their cultures by responding to the questionnaire item "I want to learn English to know more about the English language culture." This result aligns with the conclusion offered by Piasecka (2019), who postulates that learning English includes many facets, such as developing knowledge, comprehension of other cultures, and openness to others.

On top of that, the results also showed that a large number of subjects (63%) presumed that learning English did not change their identities as Saudi Muslims. This assumption goes against what Pavlenko (2003) found. Pavlenko professes that learning a second language is not just about mastering the new language; it is also a way to meet new people and, more crucially, a process of identity formation and personal development. In this study, more students expressed an eagerness to understand the cultures of English-speaking countries to communicate successfully with native English speakers. The students' perceptions of their identities about learning and using a foreign language can be explored from social awareness, cultural understanding, and personal growth perspectives. The survey pointed out that most respondents were conscious of the intricate relationships between language acquisition and their identity and the ramifications that studying English or other foreign languages had on them. They presumed that learning English would provide them with new opportunities in life, allowing them to speak with people worldwide and make friends with them. They have exciting and distinctive prospects for the future. Learning English influenced their personalities by making them more tolerant and accepting of others. In the same vein, the data revealed gender disparities. Women were more concerned with their personalities and thus cited increased openness, tolerance, and self-confidence as benefits of learning a foreign language. Men, on the other hand, showed little concern for these factors. Instead, they prioritized employment opportunities. For example, one of the female students declared that "studying English had a positive impact on my identity in that it enabled me to recognize that there is no one correct identity or culture. Accepting each other's identities is all that is required."

In contrast, one of the male participants justified his aim of learning English as follows: "Because I need it for my life, university, and, God willing, to become a translator." Another significant result is that EFL learners' identities at Majmaah University were unaffected by learning English. Alternatively, students learned values like respect, self-esteem, and teamwork while learning English. Contrary to the assumption that second language learners are brainwashed or Westernized, the people in this study developed positive perspectives through learning English. The same results have been reinforced by research (such as Akram, 2015; Al Wahaibi, 2019; Piasecka, 2019; Saida, 2021). The results of the students' responses to the third section of the questionnaire (Attitudes Toward the Cultures of English-Speaking Countries) were positive. Participants of this research positively reacted to the significance of absorption of the English-speaking countries' culture to comprehend and communicate successfully and productively with their native speakers. This agreement is in accord with Gilroy's (2000) claim that the role of the teacher is to make students aware of cultural differences, not to evaluate these differences. Additionally, students learning a foreign language must assimilate numerous new categorizations and codifications to comprehend and speak the language as proficiently as its native speaker.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study help us better understand how English language learning may impact Saudi university EFL learners' identities. Teachers should know that language can be seen as a way to build self-identity or a sense of belonging to a group. This is because language is a vital part of constructing identity, and identity is a sense of oneself or belonging. In addition, language instructors and curriculum developers could benefit from this study because it enlightens them about students' attitudes and goals of learning English. The classroom is a rich environment in which students' intellectual and social tendencies are evident, such as in preparing for interactions in the target culture, and identity work is an integral aspect of the foreign language classroom. Concurrently, it is essential that curricula be improved and more efficient, as well as that teaching practices that accommodate and reflect the self-images of foreign language learners are developed. The curriculum comprises cultural components, which the instructor conveys, intentionally or unintentionally. Theoretically, learning a foreign language will require the student to adjust his or her values and behavior. Students must be aware of the sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences between L1 and L2 complexity.” Such awareness may aid both the instructor and the student in comprehending concerns about incidental failure and communication difficulties” (Cakir, 2006, p. 158). Another issue that needs to be tackled is the importance of fostering students' communicative competence in the target language to ensure their success in acquiring and using it. Successful and effective speaking requires more than just memorizing correct grammar rules; it also requires contextual awareness. Grammar, discourse, and the ability to use language in social contexts all play a role in communicating efficiently.

Moreover, when teachers use traditional learning materials and teaching methods, learners skilled with technology may perceive a dichotomy of "us versus them." In this case, we must concentrate on how students learn rather than how we teach. This study suggests that students' voices should be considered when designing English curricula or policies. It is recommended that information regarding students' family backgrounds, past and present, prospects for the future, etc., be gathered via surveys or student-teacher or parent-teacher conferences. The information gathered should be considered when formulating English language courses or programs. Preferably, local and global cultures should be harmonious in ESL classes that meet students’ expectations, feelings,

and experiences.

Conclusion

Language learning and identity are intricately linked; both influence and are influenced by each other. This mixed-method research was carried out to provide new insights into the correlation between identity formation and learning a foreign language. Identity is continually impacted by everything and everyone around us, including our relations, readings, beliefs, and language use. Language learners can govern their linguistic growth, evaluate their communicative skills, and (re)define their identities through informal interactions with other learners, specialists, or beginners. This exploratory study was conducted to view what students in the English department at Majmmah University think about the impact of learning English on EFL learners' identities. A combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed. After having analyzed the questionnaire and interview data, it was found that the participants all agreed that English is the language of science and technology. Despite its significance, most respondents stated that learning it as a foreign language would never influence their identities or lead them to adopt English identities. They affirmed that their identities are stable, cohesive, and steady, unaffected by what they do, i.e., their performativity. In sum, the study sample regarded learning English as merely an occupation, a hobby, or a gateway to another world—never a new life path.

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A Study of English Language Learning Anxiety and Teaching Strategies: The Context of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
This study aims to explore learning anxiety related to the English language and review specific coping strategies to develop and propose certain teaching strategies for the students in the preparatory year at the English Language Institute (ELI) studying at the University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This study also looks into the most dominating causes of Anxiety encountered by students and perceived by experienced English instructors in Saudi Arabia. The research questions are: What are the factors affecting the level of Anxiety among the target learners, and how can teachers cope with them to a great extent? An interview schedule was utilized for teachers to address the research questions. In addition, Self-rating questionnaires adapted and modified from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which Horwitz and Cope (1986) developed, were used as the instruments of the study. Based on the mixed method of analysis, it is revealed that a lot of students faced considerable levels of English language learning anxiety, corresponding to the fear of negative feedback/response and evaluation by many stakeholders. Appropriate coping strategies can accordingly be suggested to make teaching fruitful.

Keywords: anxiety factors, coping strategies, English language learning anxiety (ELLA), Saudi first-year students, teaching strategies
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Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed a surge in English language education in Saudi Arabia, including at the University of Jeddah, where the first year of the English Language Program (FYP)embarks on its academic journey. FYP programis a fundamental and obligatory aspect of the initial year curriculum for all newly enrolled full-time students. While proficiency in English is crucial for their future success, many students experience English Language Learning Anxiety (ELLA), hindering their learning and achievement. ELLA research has identified its negative impact on motivation, fluency, and overall performance (Ahn & Heo, 2022; Cheng et al., 2023). However, capturing the specific anxieties faced by first-year students in the Saudi context remains somewhat under-explored. Many researchers explored language learning anxiety, which negatively affects learning outcomes. However, studies have not tackled the issue of how the problem can be sorted out. For example, what strategies (pedagogic or emotional) can be proven to be helpful in minimizing the level of Anxiety that Saudi Foreign/Second language learners currently face? In addition, it is also essential to explore if the implications/recommendations of many studies to deal with language learning yielded any results. If yes, why are students still facing such issues?

Valuable insights have been offered by Al-Ghamdi (2023) on cultural influences and Saudi EFL learner motivations, but the specific anxieties and experiences of first-year language program students require further investigation. This study aims to delve deeper into the distinct ELLA landscape within the foundation year program (FYP)at the University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (KSA). By employing a mixed-methods approach (questionnaires and interviews), we explored the types of ELLA experienced by these students, examining how individual, cultural, and pedagogical factors contribute to their anxieties and their impact on learning experiences. Our findings are expected to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of ELLA in this specific context, informing effective strategies to address anxieties and enhance successful English language learning, especiallyfor the first-year students who are pursuing studiesat the University of Jeddah, KSA.

English Language Learning in Saudi Arabia

Within Saudi Arabia, the official language is Arabic, and learning English has been serving specific purposes, yet the growing significance of English in the global perspective of communication motivates its inclusion across educational levels. Vision 2030, a national transformation plan, prioritizes English proficiency for economic diversification and international communication, technology, trade, and business. Consequently, English is the only compulsory foreign language(as a mode of instruction at the tertiary level), bridging the gap for knowledge exchange and engagement.

Learning Anxiety: A persistent hurdle

Spielberger (2023) says that Anxiety is characterized by negative feelings, physiological arousal, and cognitive appraisals. Language anxiety, a broader term encompassing various forms of Anxiety related to learning and using any language, not just English (Cheng et al., 2023), represents a persistent obstacle in foreign (English)language learning. Language learning anxietyremains a continuing problem because appropriate measures could not be taken in time. Some teachers remain indifferent towards such issues, which they mistakenly consider non-pedagogic. In addition, the teachers who want to do something to combat Anxiety are not properly trained in the direction of handling the students who suffer from considerable levels of

foreign language learning anxiety. Socio-cultural issues are quietly closely related to language learning anxiety, especially in English. Horwitz et al. (2023) delve deeper, defining language anxiety as a complex construct rooted in the specific context of language learning in the classrooms and even outside. English Language Learning Anxiety (ELLA) manifests in various forms, including fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety (Cheng et al., 2023). As Khattak et al. (2011) aptly state, Anxiety facedin the learning process of English language learning can be serious as it hampers students' achievement. This Anxiety can stem from individual characteristics like personality traits, past language learning experiences, and self-confidence in language ability, as highlighted by Dewaele et al. (2023), MacIntyre et al. (2022), Cheng et al. (2023) and Liu & Lin (2022).Language anxiety negatively affects learning in general and language learning in particular. (Ewald, 2007)

Importance of the study

Despite the fact there are many studies in the field of language anxiety, the issues faced by second language learners due to Anxiety are still very crucial. There are many underlying factors affecting learning outcomes; Anxiety is one of them. Many students are able to write, read, listen, and speak, but they are not able to yield results due to Anxiety. The present study is a modest attempt to highlight Anxiety-related issues and offer some fruitful strategies for combating Anxiety and achieving better outcomes.

Research Gap

Language learning is a complicated phenomenon with an unexpected outcome. There are many factors affecting the learning process. Among other variables, language learners' desire and willingness to use a language for communication plays a vital role in learning a language (EFL) and positively affects the learning outcome. However, willingness and desire to learn a language are considerably affected by negative factors such as language learning anxiety (as in the present context). In addition, continuous professional development programs can also contribute to language teaching by tackling Anxiety-related issues. Therefore, such training sessions become imperative for instructors who could later handle those students who are suffering from language learning anxiety.

Literature review

Extensive research underscores the profound effectof English language learning anxiety on students' achievement. Woodrow (2006) conducted research to explore if there was any correlation between English language learning Anxiety and language performance. He conducted another research in 2011 about Self-efficacy and Anxiety and found a correlation. Ewald (2007) emphasizes this point, concluding that high levels of Anxiety typically hinder the language acquisition process.

Types of English Language Learning Anxieties (ELLA)

While ELLA encompasses a general apprehension towards learning and using English, it manifests in distinct ways depending on the specific skill being used: writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Understanding these unique manifestations is crucial for designing effective interventions.

Writing Anxiety involves fear and apprehension associated with the writing process in English. Studies suggest a negative correlation, which means Anxiety negatively affects

achievement in writing skills and even overall performance. (Cheng, 2019; Lu & Zhu, 2023). Contributing factors include cultural influences that lead to Anxiety about negative peer evaluation and high-stakes assessments (Liu & Lin, 2023).

It was recently confirmed by Waked et al. :

"Anxiety in ESL writing can be considered as one of the foes …of ensuring a quality education." (pp.1-7)

Waked et al. (2024) once again confirmed the role of Cultural considerations for second language writing Anxiety. Reading Anxiety involves fear and apprehension associated with reading and comprehending texts in English. Manifestations include avoiding reading tasks, struggling to comprehend the text, and developing negative reactions to reading challenges. (Chen et al., 2022; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2023).

Speaking Anxiety involves fear and apprehension associated with speaking English in front of others. Studies like Al-Hnifat et al. (2020) confirm its detrimental impact on Saudi EFL learners. Fear of negative evaluation, making mistakes, and lack of confidence are key sources (Price, 1991). Vural (2019) found out a close relationship between Personality Traits and English Speaking Anxiety, however the study context was Turkey.

Listening Anxiety involves fear and apprehension associated with understanding spoken English. Ji, Qin, and LI (2022) carried out a systematic review in which they explored Anxiety about listening to foreign languages. However, the study focused more on the definitions and measurements than on the effect or impact. Li, Qin, Ji, and Zou (2023) studied the effects of general Listening Anxiety and Listening Test Anxiety on Self-Perceived Listening Performance Among Chinese English Learners.

Contributing Factors of Language Anxiety

Understanding the roots of language anxiety is crucial for designing effective interventions. This Anxiety arises from a complex interplay of individual, cultural, and pedagogical factors:

Among individual factors, personality traits like introversion and low self-confidence can predispose learners to Anxiety. Past negative language learning experiences can further fuel fear of failure and hinder motivation, as discussed by Dewaele et al. (2023), who talked about the personality trait as the responsible factor for the existence of language anxiety. On the other hand, an essential factor is Self-confidence or Low self-efficacy in language ability, which can fuel Anxiety about using the language (Cheng et al., 2023).In certain cultures, assertiveness and the act of speaking up might be associated with specific expectations along gender lines. In many cultures, including Saudi Arabia, language learning is often viewed as a daunting and demanding endeavor (Al-Seghayer, 2015). The educational environment plays a crucial part in enriching students' experiences and perceptions. One significant factor contributing to English language learning anxiety is the prevalence of teaching methods that emphasize rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction. The learners often need more genuine communication situations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Mouffok, Hamzaoui-Elachachi, and Omari (2023) researched the students' Anxiety in foreign language learning environments and found a correlation between Anxiety and the existing environment. The teachers have to teach the students some learning theories, however indirectly, leading to the attainment of learning objectives. One can't learn anything without making mistakes, be it driving, swimming, or whatever. (Thorndike,1898) Similarly, learning a nonnative language always creates room for trying, making errors, and finally learning. Dewey also talked about learning by doing, which

emphasizes doing or experience of doing something, which makes one better with each experience or trial. (cited in Bruce and Bloch, 2012).

Addressing language anxiety: Coping and Effective Teaching Strategies

There can be many coping mechanisms and teaching strategies that can be designed to address language anxiety. Khattak et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity in language teaching to create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. By understanding and accommodating diverse cultural backgrounds, educators can mitigate potential sources of Anxiety and promote a sense of belonging, cultural identities and pride, empathy etc. (Lee, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Holliday, 2010; Bonner, 2018).

Technology integration (Digital tools and multimedia resources, etc) provides interactive and engaging opportunities for language practice, allowing learners to explore language in diverse contexts and formats (Stockwell, 2010). Digital tools such as language learning apps, online dictionaries, and interactive language learning platforms offer learners opportunities for self-directed learning and practice outside the classroom (Godwin-Jones, 2016; Godwin-Jones, 2016; Wu & Marek, 2017). In addition, by fostering a positive learning mindset and self-concept, these interventions aim to reduce language learning anxiety and enhance learners' confidence, motivation, optimism, and resilience. (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Henderson & Dweck, 2020;Williams and Andrade, 2008). Proper use of authentic materials, scaffolding challenging texts, and building vocabulary knowledge can ease reading Anxiety (Dörnyei& Schmidt, 2023).

Research Questions:

1. How do first-year students perceive and face English language learning anxiety?
2. How do experienced English language teachers perceive the effect of Anxiety on students' language learning experiences?
3. What effective teaching strategies and coping mechanisms can be implemented to mitigate English language learning anxiety and promote successful language acquisition among first year students?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the level and causes of English language learning anxiety faced by first-year students.
2. To examine the perceptions of experienced English language teachers regarding the effects of Anxiety on students' language learning.
3. To develop evidence-based recommendations for implementing teaching strategies and coping mechanisms to address English language learning anxiety among first year students in Saudi Arabia, with the aim of enhancing their language acquisition and academic success.

Methodology

The chosen research design for this study is a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate English language learning anxiety among first-year students at the University of Jeddah. This design was selected because it can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of language anxiety by capturing both subjective experiences and objective data.

The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with experienced English

language teachers at the university. These interviews will allow for an in-depth exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding student anxiety in language learning and their strategies for managing and alleviating Anxiety in the classroom.

The quantitative analysis was based on self-rating questionnaires adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was developed by Horwitz and Cope in 1986. This questionnaire was distributed to first-year students to assess their Anxiety about learning English and identify contributing factors.

Participants

One hundred first-year students (girls) enrolled in English language courses at the University of Jeddah were selected using purposive-convenient sampling as the researcher was a teacher at the same college.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary instruments used for data collection in this study are adapted and modifiedself-rating questionnaires (by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986), which were adapted and, modified and administered to the first-year students. The Scale is on a series of five-point Likert-scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA)1, Agree (Ag-2, Neither Agree nor Disagree (NAD)3, Disagree(DI)- 4, Strongly Disagree(SD)-5, measuring various dimensions of language anxiety, such as fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension.These quantitative data allow for the assessment of students' self-reported anxiety levels and the identification of patterns and trends.

The semi-structured interview was conducted with experienced English language teachers at the University of Jeddah, KSA. The tool includes open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding their perceptions of student anxiety in language learning, as well as their approaches to addressing and mitigating Anxiety in the classroom. This qualitative data provided valuable insights into the contextual factors influencing language anxiety.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures involve several steps to ensure the comprehensive gathering of information from both teachers and students. For the interviews with teachers, a purposive sampling approach was used based on their expertise and experience in teaching English language courses at the university. Once selected, teachers were contacted to schedule semi-structured interviews conducted either in person. During the interviews, participants were asked a series of open-ended questions related to language anxiety, teaching strategies, and classroom experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for analysis.

For the self-rating questionnaires, all first-year students studying the English language at the University of Jeddah were invited to participate. Questionnaires were distributed personally (with the help of concerned teachers who are the researcher's colleagues). Students were provided with clear instructions for completing the questionnaires and given the opportunity to ask any questions before filling in and returning the tool.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select 10 English language teachers with expertise and experience in teaching at the University of Jeddah, while Only 100 student participants were

targeted through convenient sampling, aiming to get a representation of all first-year students of English language at the University of Jeddah, KSA.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyze the interview transcripts and questionnaire responses. Qualitative data from the interviews were thematically analyzed to identify corresponding themes, patterns, and insights related to language anxiety and teaching strategies. Quantitative data from the self-rating questionnaires was analyzed using simple statistics such as percentages.

Table1.*Complete data of the Scale (Appendix. A) for the students (N=100)*

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
Item.1	65	21	3	6	5
Item.2	55	30	6	5	4
Item.3	73	17	4	4	2
Item.4	50	22	9	12	7
Item.5	68	16	7	5	4
Item.6	46	29	11	6	8
Item.7	41	30	14	7	8
Item.8	35	26	17	12	10
Item.9	34	33	21	6	6
Item.10	29	32	15	12	12
Item.11	25	31	17	17	10
Item.12	47	25	3	12	13
Item.13	60	21	4	7	8
Item.14	63	24	3	5	5
Item.15	69	23	2	5	4

Based on the above table, the following figure describes the agreement percentage of the participants (agree and strongly agree) against each item of the questionnaire. If we take a close look, it can be found that even the minimum agreement percentage of the participant is 56% against item number. 11 (I worry about failing to meet expectations in English language learning). In general, the participants have different kinds of Anxiety and worry regarding English language learning and learning specific skills.

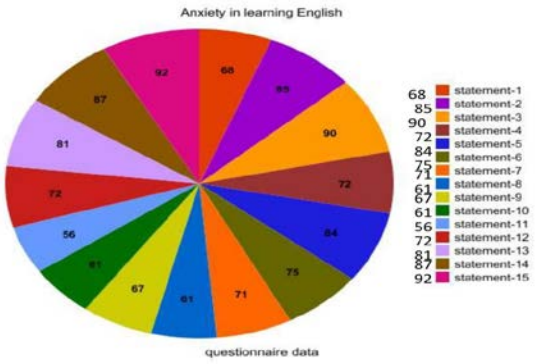

Figure1. Participants' agreement on statements 1-15

Analysis of Speaking Anxiety

Statement. 5-I experience Anxiety when speaking English in public.

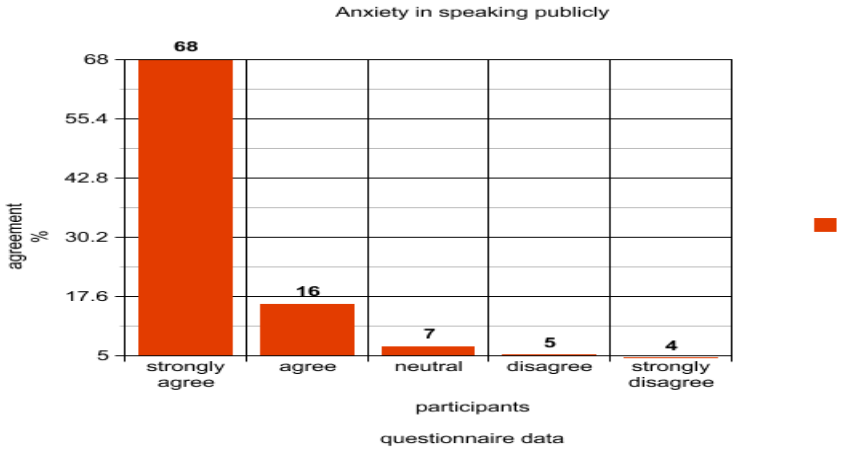

Figure.2. Anxiety experienced in speaking publicly

Sixty-eight percent of students strongly agree that they feel anxious while speaking publicly in class or outside. 16% agree with this statement. So, it is evident that the learners have issues.

Statement 7-I am afraid of making mistakes in English writing tests/exams.

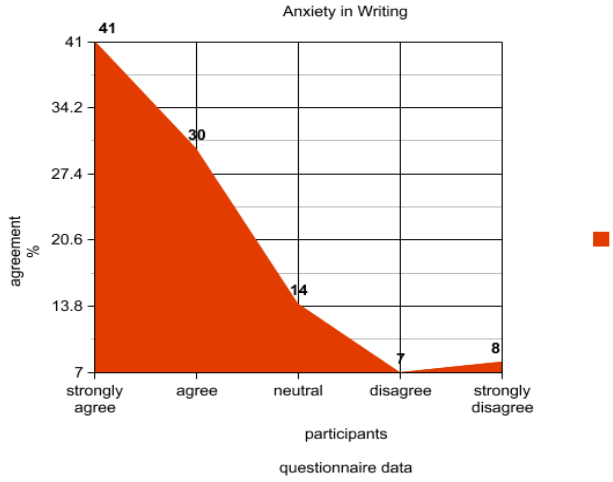

Figure 3. Anxiety due to English writing tests/exams

A total of 71 % agree that the students face Anxiety while taking writing tests/exams. In fact, writing skill is the one skill which is really challenging for the target learners.

Results Related to Research Questions

1. How do first-year students perceive and face English language learning anxiety?

Based on the data, it is found that learners perceive Anxiety during English language learning; therefore, they are not comfortable learning it.

Identified Themes from Qualitative Study: Interviews

Following are the themes that were identified from the interview of the teachers by asking a series of questions related to language anxiety, teaching strategies, and classroom experiences.

1. Experience and Background in Teaching (Code. EBT)

Teachers' qualifications, experiences, and roles in English language education became the focus

of the analysis, as well as an overview of the English language learning environment at the University of Jeddah.

2. Perceptions of Language Anxiety (Code. PLA)

This part focused on the identification of common signs and indicators of language anxiety among students in addition to understanding the impact of language anxiety on students' language learning progress and performance.

3. Classroom Practices (Code. CP)

Teaching strategies and approaches used to address language anxiety were considered for the study. It was ensured that a supportive environment was created to deal with the challenges.

4. Coping Strategies (Code. CS)

Personal support is provided by teachers to students experiencing language anxiety. Effective coping strategies or techniques utilized to help students manage their Anxiety. Besides, a balanced academic challenge with emotional support in the language learning process is created.

5. Professional Development (Code.PD

Training and professional development opportunities related to addressing language anxiety.

Methods for staying informed about current research and best practices in language teaching and anxiety management.

Results of Qualitative data

Theme1: Role of Experienced and Background in Teaching

The theme of 'Experience and Background in Teaching' delves into the qualifications, experiences, and roles of teachers in English language education at the University of Jeddah. Through interviews and surveys with experienced educators, a rich tapestry of backgrounds and expertise emerged, shedding light on the diverse profiles of teachers within the institution. The data revealed that teachers at the University of Jeddah possess a range of qualifications, including TESOL or CELTA. Within the university setting, teachers assumed multifaceted roles, encompassing classroom instruction, curriculum development, assessment design, and student support services. "I completed my Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and have been teaching English for over 15 years. (Teacher A). It is important to adapt teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners. (Teacher B). The findings underscore the importance of recognizing the diverse backgrounds and expertise of teachers in addressing language anxiety effectively.

Theme 2:Perceptions of Language Anxiety

The perceptions of language anxiety provided valuable insights into the identification of signs, indicators, manifestations, and impacts of Anxiety among students (revealed during interviews) as observed by experienced teachers at the University of Jeddah. Additionally, students often exhibited psychological symptoms such as fear of speaking in front of others, lack of confidence, and excessive worry about making mistakes. The respondents noticed that some students became visibly anxious when asked to participate in speaking activities, especially due to fear of making mistakes, which tend to hesitation in their language production.

Theme3: Classroom Practices (CP)

Through interviews, a diverse range of pedagogical techniques and instructional methods emerged. Teachers implemented a variety of teaching strategies to address language anxiety and foster a supportive learning environment in the classrooms by creating a collaborative learning environment. Furthermore, educators incorporated mindfulness and relaxation techniques into

their teaching practice to help students manage their Anxiety effectively and develop resilience in language learning." I encourage pair and group work activities to provide students with opportunities for peer support and collaboration.

Theme 4: Coping Strategies (CS)

Teachers played a pivotal role in providing personal support to students coping with language anxiety. They offered encouragement, reassurance, and constructive feedback to help students navigate their anxieties and build confidence in their language abilities. Furthermore, it was noted that students themselves employed various coping strategies to manage their Anxiety, including deep breathing exercises, positive self-talk, and seeking social support from peers and teachers. Moreover, teachers contended that they always told the students that it's quite common to make mistakes. I encourage them to focus on their progress rather than perfection.

Theme 5: Professional Development (PD)

Through interviews, teachers highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development in equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to address language anxiety effectively. They emphasized the value of attending workshops, seminars, and conferences focused on language teaching methodologies, anxiety management techniques, and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Moreover, educators emphasized the need for institutional support and recognition of the role of professional development in enhancing teaching effectiveness and promoting student success. In summary, the focal point of the proposed PD will be the need of the second/foreign language learners of Saudi Arabia who face a considerable level of language learning anxiety due to which their performance is negatively affected. Experienced pedagogues, trainers, educators, etc., will serve as the resource persons for such PD sessions.

Results of Thematic Analysis

Research question.2- How do experienced English language teachers perceive the effect of Anxiety on students' language learning experiences?

It was perceived by the concerned teachers that students' English language learning anxiety negatively affects their language proficiency and achievement in English. There are many issues related to this condition, especially when speaking and reading.

Research question.3- What effective teaching strategies and coping mechanisms can be implemented to mitigate English language learning anxiety and promote successful language acquisition among first-year students?

It is concluded that teachers should utilize various teaching strategies and pedagogies to create a supportive learning environment in which students feel comfortable. The strategies may be collaborative learning activities, scaffolding and support, and the integration of digital and useful techniques to ease the stress and Anxiety of the students. The teachers should also offer personal and professional support to cater to the learners' needs. Based on teachers' feedback and support, students themselves can utilize some coping mechanisms, positive self-talk, and seek social support from peers and teachers.

Discussion

The results of this research confirmed the negative association between language (English) learning Anxiety and students' performance. Demir & Zaimoğlu (2021) contended

a similar finding emphasizing the negative effect of foreign language anxiety on the decision-making strategies of university students. This research also explored crucial sources of Anxiety perceived by English teachers in Saudi Arabia. It was found that Anxiety was mainly caused by fear of making mistakes. The students were conscious of negative feedback from the teacher in case of errors they committed. That might also lead to a sense of embarrassment among the peer group, which is likely to demotivate the new-speakers or even writers of simple English. A similar finding was observed in a study conducted by Alrashidi (2022). The study also investigated about appropriate strategies to cope with foreign language learning anxiety. Pedagogic strategies include teachers' support, encouragement, and the creation of a suitable learning environment, in addition to resilience as a coping mechanism. The teachers need to be trained in coping with the anxiety level of foreign/second language learners in Saudi Arabia. They need to be trained so that they can be professionally and appropriately developed to handle such common issues. Hussainet al. (2021) advocated similar strategies, especially for speaking skills. The teachers can at least motivate the target language learners to develop writing skills, reading, and listening if they face issues in developing the learners' performance in speaking.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, several conclusions can be drawn to enrich existing practices and support student success. The implementation of collaborative learning activities, scaffolding and support, and mindfulness techniques has shown promise in mitigating language anxiety among students. Educators should continue to prioritize the creation of a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to take risks in their language learning.

It was found that Anxiety among learners can be dealt with through ongoing training and professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in addressing language anxiety. Providing access to workshops, conferences, and online resources can empower educators to stay informed about current trends and best practices in language education, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

Institutions should recognize the importance of fostering a culture of support and collaboration among students and teachers alike. Promoting open communication, peer mentoring programs, and access to support services can create a vibrant learning community where students feel supported and empowered to overcome their anxieties.

Recommendations

Addressing language anxiety requires a holistic approach that encompasses supportive classroom practices, effective coping strategies, and ongoing professional development for educators. By prioritizing these recommendations, institutions can create a conducive learning environment where students feel empowered to overcome their anxieties and achieve their full potential in language learning.

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