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Ideology for Second Language Teachers

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Abstract

This paper criticizes the lack of clarity in second language teacher education, and in the literature on second language teaching more generally, about the relationship between language and ideology. The paper proposes that there should be a reference point for second language teacher-learners which would allow them to position themselves and others. Thompson (1990) provides such a reference point in the form of a framework that can be used to analyse the extent to which the language in texts supports the power of social elites. The paper draws on some examples of orientalist discourse in order to discuss how second language teacher-learners can come to understand the process of the production and reproduction of ideas. The advantage of Thompson's framework is its clear presentation of five ways in which ideology operates and the fact that if second language teacher-learners decide to disagree with him, their own use of the term ideology will be based on principled argument. Such an outcome will be preferable to the current situation in which this valuable concept is rarely dealt with explicitly, and across the literature appears in contradictory ways, leaving second language teacher-learners struggling to identify some coherence around the term.

Keywords: culture, ideology, orientalism, second language teacher education

Introduction

In this paper, I argue that second language teacher education (SLTE) should include, as part of the second language teacher's knowledge base, an understanding of ideology. In the face of a range of meanings encountered in the literature, some more explicit than others, teacher-learners would benefit from having ideology discussed within a clear framework allowing them to place an author's use of the term and relate it to their own understanding. Thompson (1990) proposes a framework within which language found in text is related to discourses and the power of elites in society. I argue that this framework could be used in SLTE courses by adding the relationship between ideology and language to other levels of language analysis (e.g. morphological, semantic, discourse). Such language awareness is the essence of the content that underpins our professional knowledge. Graves (2009) provides a clear summary of thinking about this knowledge base. Her review of two influential proposals gives us six types of teacher knowledge: 1. target language knowledge (including proficiency); 2. general pedagogic skills; 3. pedagogical content knowledge (knowing how to teach language); 4. contextual knowledge (awareness of the personal, institutional and wider social contexts of the learners); 5. pedagogical reasoning skills (ability to create learning opportunities as lessons unfold); and 6. communication skills (Richards, 1998; Roberts, 1998, as cited in Graves, 2009, p. 119). To these, Graves mentions that Velez-Rendon (2002) would add intercultural competence, although this could be included within contextual knowledge and communication skills. By seeing ideology as part of language knowledge, a link would be made to contextual knowledge, inasmuch as this deals with the societies within which texts are produced and read (for the sake of simplicity I refer only to written language). Explicit teaching about ideology as conceptualized by Thompson would also help to establish a *critical* frame for second language teacher education, still not widespread, at least for English teachers (Hawkins and Norton, 2009) despite years of being discussed. It would, moreover, add some substance to a focus on the "historical, and socio-political contexts" referred to in Hatton and Smith's (1995) discussion of "critical reflection" (p. 9). Finally, an understanding of ideology would enable teacher-learners to appreciate better the different contributions to the debate over how to teach cultural and/or intercultural awareness (Kramsch, 2011; Byram, 1997; Baker, 2012) with its emphasis on revealing how language and culture are intertwined.

Multiple meanings of ideology

Even if they think it is important, it is clear that second language teacher educators do not share an understanding of what ideology means. The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Education, for example, (Burns and Richards, 2009) has 13 instances of *ideology* being used. Writers with a critical perspective (e.g. Hawkins and Norton, 2009) are concerned to see how language and power are related, but there is no definition of the term. Meanwhile, other contributors to the volume seem to use it to mean either political viewpoint or beliefs about teaching and learning. The concept of ideology is undeniably complex, perhaps especially so (Wodak, 2007: 1), and the lack of consistency in contributions may be the reason that the term is not included in the index.

Elsewhere in the literature, the second language teacher-learner will encounter a lack of clarity. For example, Waters (2009) argues that current trends in English language teaching (ELT), including demands for authentic language in class, are rooted in a critical perspective which has attained "ideological status" (p. 141). His argument is that there are ideas about ELT which have become common sense despite being, in his opinion, pedagogically unsound. Waters uses

ideology in a way that separates it from the power of social elites and he attempts to undermine the critical theorists by claiming that their position is as ideological as those they attack. At the same time, he imbues the term with a pejorative connotation similar to “dogmatic”.

Meaning in the service of power

In order to work with the concept of ideology, a useful distinction can be made between ideology as “A system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy” (“Ideology”, n.d.) and ideology as “meaning in the service of power” (Thomson, 1990, p. 23). The latter has the advantage of making the link between language (as well as other symbolic forms) and power explicit. Ideology for Thomson is the complex of ideas that presents the status quo of privileged positions for powerful elites as normal. The fact that ideas are naturalised in this way makes them resistant to questioning and this makes it easier for elites to govern. Thompson thus makes the claim that, “to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (p. 56). Language is key here, as it is the norms of a particular discourse that make this happen. The discourse which forms the way we talk about a particular topic can be said to be more or less ideological to the extent that it encourages thinking about the topic in ways that do not challenge the privileged perspective of the elite. This definition also allows for the possibility that discourse can be “ideological and nonideological” (Noth, 2004: 14), so that text might manifest a political discourse but not be ideological in that it does not benefit the ruling elite.

Thompson (1990) identifies 5 typical modes of operation of ideology. These are legitimization; dissimulation; unification; fragmentation; and reification and can be summarised as follows:

- Legitimation refers to a process whereby social relations are justified or rationalized;
- Dissimulation refers to a process whereby descriptive language is manipulated to show a positive evaluation of social relations;
- Unification refers to a process whereby the language used to refer to individuals and groups is standardized and works to create the impression of unity between them;
- Fragmentation refers to a process whereby differences are emphasized between the reader and another group and, at the same time, this becomes a common enemy in opposition to the reader;
- Reification refers to a process whereby situations and the people involved are presented as naturally occurring things, independent of context.

Together they serve the purpose of presenting the ideas of the ruling elite as natural, normal and neutral. To the extent that the mass of the population, and in particular the working classes, internalize these ideas, it is easier for the elite to govern as they see fit. When the hold of ideology weakens, elites may turn to violence to maintain their position. Without the clarity that Thompson provides, the use of the term ideology becomes confused. For example, Root (2012), in an interesting piece on perceptions of English in South Korea, begins with a definition of ideology as a set of specific ideas but runs into difficulties when trying to deal with some ideas being dominant. She ends up dividing ideologies into those with power and those without. This is unnecessarily complex. Ferguson et al (2009), on the other hand, investigated the ideological discourse in textbooks used on accounting courses and are enthusiastic about the practicality of Thomson’s approach and the clarity it provides. Second language teacher-learners could also find it beneficial for analyzing teaching materials and its use would make it easier for them to evaluate a claim that this or that practice is ideological.

The power of language

I have already commented on the fact that there is notable variation in the way the term ideology is used in the literature that might be read by second language teacher-learners and educators. One reason, described at length by Thompson (1990), is the way influential thinkers have given the term negative and neutral meanings over the decades. Another reason is the disagreement over the extent to which language determines how we think. This has long been debated and, no doubt, will continue to be so. To quote just two examples from the last forty years, Halliday (1978) argues that, "The speaker can see through and around the settings of his semantic system" (as cited in Addison, 2011, p. 58), while, Mills (2004: 67) suggests the opposite, writing that, "there is no intrinsic order to the world itself other than the ordering which we impose on it through our linguistic description of it."

There is general agreement, however, that the influence of language (determining or otherwise) works through the establishing of discourses that privilege certain ideas over others, as well as the voices of their proponents. What is privileged is the choice of content and the manner in which it is presented. The elite have power over the mainstream media and centres of education and this power means that what gets said, how it is said and by whom is influenced by the world view of the elite. It is not necessary to have a conspiracy theory to argue, as Marx (1974) did, that,

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (p. 65).

Whatever one's opinion of Karl Marx or the use that has been made of his method of analysis, many of us would recognize the usefulness of this idea for understanding certain aspects of culture, both contemporary and historical. Holborrow (2007), for example, provides examples of how neoliberalism now appears as the common sense approach to running the economy. Similarly, Wrigley and Smyth (2013) detail the way a neoliberal focus on economic competitiveness is apparent in state education in England where "a wider human formation associated with humanities and creative arts" is abandoned for many working class pupils (p. 4). In an earlier, but not unrelated example, Bisseret (1979) looks at the ideologically loaded discourse that presents success or failure at school as largely a matter of inherited intelligence. She sets out the historical context we need in order to understand the role of ideology,

Confronted with the tangible inequalities it had maintained after taking political power and strengthening its hold on economic power, the bourgeoisie was to develop an ideology by which it could justify these disparities and silence an opposition which threatened its newly acquired privileges (pp. 11-12).

Looking further back into history, Marshall (1993), describes a similar process, this time to show how the transatlantic slave trade, which provided the labour power needed to shift the developing capitalist economy into a much higher gear, was justified by scientific racism. Marshall points out the irony of the slave owning bourgeoisie overthrowing feudalism and calling for liberty, fraternity and equality. The discourse of scientific racism presented the argument that the slaves were not of the same race and thus provided the ideological force to fend off criticism.

Learning about ideology in SLTE

Second language teacher-learners engaged in some kind of professional development can expect to encounter the term ideology if they are interested in critical discourse analysis (CDA). However, a review of some examples suggests that here too, there is a lack of clarity about the term. For example, Cots (2006) mentions ideology in a piece about using CDA as an additional approach to working with a coursebook text but he does not define it. This opens him up to severe criticism from O'Dwyer (2007) who questions the apparent assumption that all discourse is ideological and asks for a better reason to have his students, "hunt after ideologies in their reading activities." (p. 373). More recently, Sewell (2013) criticizes Cogo (2012) for the incoherence of mixing a post-modern understanding of language with a Marxist view of ideology. The former, crudely speaking, sees language itself as constitutive of social reality (Mills, 2004) while the Marxist view identifies a relationship between the material power of a social elite and language use in society. The latter view, moreover, sees opportunities for people to challenge the dominant discourse as they respond to the contradiction between material reality as they experience it and the way they see it represented.

Teacher-learners reading about cultural awareness (CA) will also encounter occasional references to ideology (for example, Holliday, 2012). Perhaps more likely, is to find a critical perspective from which asymmetries of power are discussed more or less explicitly. Baker (2012) writes about an approach to intercultural awareness suitable for the modern context in which English is a lingua franca. He comments favourably on the development of critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997), which involves analysis of one's own culture and how other cultures are positioned relative to it. In his call for a "non-essentialist and dynamic approach" (p. 64) to understanding culture in today's world, Baker emphasizes "skills and the ability to view cultures as dynamic, diverse, and emergent" while also acknowledging that classroom teaching will have to include knowledge of specific cultures in order to develop a "deep understanding of culture per se" (p. 67). What is missing here is a discussion of where ideas originate and how they come to be part of the shared patterns of thought and behavior that underpin culture. Holliday (2012), on the other hand, argues that,

the success of intercultural communication will not be modelled around awareness of and sensitivity to the essentially different behaviours and values of 'the other culture', but around the employment of the ability to read culture which derives from underlying universal cultural processes (p. 2).

The relation between ideology, elite power and language is, arguably, the most important of those cultural processes.

Weninger and Kiss (2013), also writing on CA, make this connection as they look at how meaning is made in context and understand ideology "not only as structures of political domination but also as cultural beliefs that are manifest in cultural practices and materials" (p. 711). A few years earlier, Taki (2008) had argued quite specifically for an approach to cultural content in textbooks that focuses on where ideas come from and the process of how meaning is made. Teacher-learners with a framework such as Thompson's (1990) would be able to evaluate for themselves Taki's conclusion that,

What ELT teachers can do with the present ELT texts available on the market is to create critical language awareness in their learners. Teachers should make their learners

cognizant of the fact that language is not simply grammar, but that it is also a system of communication for sharing ideas *and* a way of controlling people and influencing what they think or do (p.140).

Coming to terms with ideology

When Waters (2007a) and Holliday (2007) crossed swords over ideology in ELT, it appeared to be more about the usefulness of Holliday's evidence for claims he makes about methodology, but Waters (2007b) is clearly put out by the suggestion of complicity in reproducing oppressive practice. In my experience, even before discussion can begin on the what and how of ideology, it is necessary to overcome resistance to the idea that teachers may be so involved, either in their pedagogy or their use of texts as learning materials. One way to do this is to distance the discussion from those present and look to the past before confronting the present. Thus, Gray (2010) uses the archive at Warwick University as a resource to research the developing discourse of work in ELT course books and how this now serves to naturalise the idea of job insecurity. In discourse developed since the 1980s, the precarious employment situation is presented as an opportunity for the creative individual to realize their dreams. This "spinning" (Berlin, 2011: 169) of a stressful and undesirable situation serves to legitimize the neoliberal project of ruling elites.

Ideology and orientalism

Second language teacher-learners studying ideology could use Thompson (1990) to consider one of the most overtly political examples of ideological discourse: the way the Muslim world is presented, and in particular the oil producing societies of the Middle East. Sheehi (2011) calls this Islamophobia, although some may prefer Said's (2003) concept of orientalism to discuss this discourse and whether or not it serves to justify western invasion and occupation. There may be flaws in Said's arguments but the concept of orientalism has had a major impact on how we think about the ideological role of discourses about Arabs and Muslims (Achcar, 2013). In ELT, this has been of sufficient concern for a major publisher to produce a volume entitled "Re-locating TESOL in the age of empire" (Edge, 2006). Three years earlier, the editor (Edge, 2003), writing on the eve of the UK/US led invasion of Iraq, had asked if the USA, was moving from a republican age to an imperial age as it bombed its way to regime change in Baghdad. Edge's particular concern was with the morality of English teachers who might possibly don flak jackets and move in behind the troops to establish the new order in the language of the conqueror, all the while assuming that teaching English is a neutral occupation. As mentioned before, the sense that something is natural, normal and neutral has significant ideological power. And in fact, Pathak (2011) describes just what Edge suspected would happen. His account of teaching the new Iraqi army may also be seen to provide some support for Phillipson's (2011) claims about a continuing linguistic imperialism aimed at increasing profits for national and multinational businesses based in the west by extending their reach into new territory, physical and social. Phillipson's concern is largely with the consequences for other languages as ELT is promoted across the world and with the fact that the promoters are the same governments that so enthusiastically argued for the forcible dismantling of the Iraqi regime. The consequences for the people who live in the Middle East are well known. The consequences for local languages include the perception that Arabic is a language of the past. English is seen as the language of the modern world (the same is true to a lesser extent for French), not just for trade but also for studying science and technology (Bentahila, 1983; Al Jarf, 2008). Warschauer (2003) provides the very practical example of

decreasing literacy in Arabic in rural Egypt as school time is reallocated to the teaching of English for computer skills.

Following Gray (2010), we might look to the past to gain some perspective from which to consider how the aforementioned islamophobic/orientalist discourse serves elite interests. For example, writing in the then ELT journal, Setian (1972) presented some contrastive analysis of Arabic and English and in the following discussion she claimed that Arabic speakers did not value time in the same way as Americans. The evidence was the impossibility of distinguishing in Arabic between being *in time* and *on time*. This is actually incorrect but the analysis and, more importantly, the interpretation went unchallenged apart from a letter from an Iraqi teacher (Al Mashta, 1973). Setian provides the following conclusion to her article,

In teaching English to Arabic-speaking students, particularly when the teacher is working *in* the country of the learners, it is strongly advisable to always bear in mind these very basic cultural differences in attitudes toward time, not only in order to ensure teaching with proper comprehension, but also in order to avoid misunderstandings and possible personal friction between students and teacher over punctuality, attendance, and the completion of assignments! (p. 294).

It might seem that such a patronizing attitude is from another time (this might explain why the editors let the article through), but the same way of thinking is evident today. For example, Baker (2012) worries about the fact that CA “is still rooted in a national conception of culture and language” (p.62) that essentialises culture and sees people in terms of them and us. Setian’s depiction of Egyptians in particular, and Arabs in general, comes from that same way of looking at other people. *Other* is used here in the sense discussed by Said (2003),

the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity... whether Orient or Occident, France or Britain... involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us” (p. 332).

In SLTE today, the term “othering” (e.g Holliday, 2012: 69) would be used to describe Setian’s representation of her students. Teacher-learners would benefit from asking how Setian’s interpretation was reached. While the workings of ideology are indeed complex, Thomson’s (1990) approach points us in the direction of the ruling elite’s control of ideas production through its domination of the educational system and its ownership and control of the mainstream media. For example, in a book produced for use in British schools, Pocock (1953) describes the lives of famous historical figures. The collection is made up of texts which are brief but written in such a way as to, “stress the point that one wants to bring home” (p. v). The book includes a chapter on Mohammed, the prophet of Islam. After describing the success of Islam, Pocock asks, “why did this tremendous force all die down?” and answers the question by saying that Muslims believe that, “whatever happens has all been arranged beforehand – so why try to do anything about it?” (p. 28-9). Pocock finishes the chapter with a story which is worth quoting in full.

I was once being driven in a Turkish car in Asia Minor when suddenly there was a bang and a tyre split. The two drivers – there are always two, so as to get two tips –

didn't attempt to do anything about it. And there were no tools. They just said: 'Inch' Allah' – 'God wills it' – sat at the side of the road and smoked. Two or three hours later an American came along in a car, and he and I changed the wheel. Do you see what I mean?" (p. 29).

This metaphor of the supine orient, incapable of helping itself and thus in need of western intervention, is present in many depictions today. What is good for the western elite is presented as what is good for the peoples of the Middle East.

Ironically, Pocock's text was published two years after the Iranian government nationalized the Anglo-Iranian oil company yet this effort to do something about a perceived injustice does not seem to have influenced Pocock in his depiction of Muslims. What he had to say about the UK/USA orchestrated coup against the democratically elected government of Iran in 1953 is not known. The point is not to see conspiracy in every text, although there clearly was a conspiracy to replace the government of Iran with another (Daneshavar, 1996), but rather to see how the ideas of the ruling elite are dominant, reproduced in everyday discourse and perceived as natural, normal and neutral.

Conclusion

If we adopt Thomson's (1990) framework of language and ideology, there is still plenty of room for debate, not least because he allows that gender, race and nationality based oppressions may be independent of social class, a point on which Marxists would probably disagree. On the other hand, his framework provides us with a useful approach for considering the progression from Pocock's (1953) lazy driver to Setian's (1972) absent minded students to Pathak's (2011) language teacher as aid worker. To this we might add Setian's (n.d) eventual destination as president of a company providing language and logistics support to the USA army in post-Saddam Iraq.

As has been shown, the term ideology tends to be used by ELT writers in a confusing manner. However, a definition which sees ideology as meaning in the service of power, supported by discourses constraining the way we think about certain aspects of society, does offer us a clear point of reference and the possibility of placing our arguments within Thomson's (1990) approach, or of differentiating them on the basis of a specific disagreement. The term ideology appears in a variety of contexts of interest to second language teachers. We can all benefit from making it clear how we understand the relationship between the language in texts, discourse, and the power of elites.

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Motivation and Methods in Learning Arabic in an AFL Environment

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Abstract:

Learning a second or other language has been closely associated with English for functional purposes for many decades. In a global context, English is perceived as a necessity for anyone wanting to progress in a career especially at the international level. However, in recent years with the shifting focus and locus of the worlds of business and finance, many have developed a keen interest in learning non-European languages such as Arabic and Chinese. The current paper considers a group of adults taking Arabic classes at their own expense in a non-Arabic speaking environment and outside of their everyday working lives. Aspects of language learning, in particular motivation and self-regulated learning are considered as factors in the learning process. The nature of the language to be learned is also examined with challenging features highlighted through the discussion. Participant responses are recorded and analysed in an attempt to note the interest in the learning process. The focus of the paper takes motivation in general and motivation as affected by the nature of Arabic and the language learning process into consideration.

Keywords: Arabic as a foreign language, motivation, methods, language challenges

1. Introduction

Learning a second language as an adult is viewed as challenging for a variety of reasons. One theory, that of the critical theory hypothesis, proposed by Lennenberg (1967), states that as a result of neurological changes in the brain, adults have difficulty developing full competency in any language if the acquisition or learning process does not begin before puberty. However, over recent decades several other factors, primarily psycholinguistic have been explored as factors in the success or otherwise of adults learning a second language. From a psychological perspective, motivation, attitude and self-regulation are viewed as major contributing factors to achievement of goals in language learning. A second factor is linguistic; languages are systemic and where the target language shares commonalities with the mother tongue, the learner is considered to have definite advantages over languages that differ considerably from the first language (L1). For European language speakers, Arabic, with its myriad differences, constitutes a language that can appear challenging. While Arabic is alphabetic it differs in its phonemes, phonetics, orthographic system, lexical items, syntax and text structure. Nevertheless in recent years, there has been a growing interest in learning Arabic as a second or other language. Up to the end of the 20th century, interest was primarily linked to those wishing to further their knowledge of Islam, a few development workers, academics and occasional travellers. In recent years in Ireland among other countries, interest in learning Arabic has widened beyond the desire to learn it for religious purposes. Some of this stems from greater contact with the Arab world in a more globalized context. Additionally in Ireland, Irish army peacekeepers have been stationed in South Lebanon with the UN peacekeeping initiative for a number of years and now acknowledge the benefits of learning the language of the host country. In addition to military personnel, a growing interest has been observed among private students willing to fund their own study of Arabic through participating in evening classes as an addition to their workdays. The current paper examines reasons why adult learners in a private language institute in Dublin are motivated to devote free time to learning Arabic as a second or other language and the linguistic challenges the language presents these learners. The study was conducted during the academic year 2012 – 2013.

2. Literature review

2.1 Psychological factors in the language learning process

Much work has been done on what motivates learners to study English and such studies frequently conclude that motivation is often instrumental and can lead to professional and financial benefits. (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) Few studies, however, have been conducted on the learning of other languages particularly among private students who often choose to study a language when there is no obvious instrumental gain. In motivational terms, the role of the first language is indispensable as an essential mode of communication within one's own culture and also as an integral part of one's personal and social identities. Moving to the acquisition or learning of a second language involves as Gardner (1985) suggests incorporating elements of a new culture (if the learning takes place in the host culture), in addition to the linguistic codes associated with the new language (Dörnyei, 1998). This can often prove challenging when learning an L2, particularly as learners are often adults and are either coping with or adjusting to a new culture, society and work or study environment. In the case of the current research, the adult learners have undertaken to study a new language, Arabic, in an environment, Ireland, where there is little or no exposure to the target language. In such situations the question of why learners undertake such a task, how they regulate their learning and how they cope with the challenges they face are all relevant questions.

Some work has been conducted in the USA on what motivates adults in a university setting to learn Arabic. Husseinli (2005) found among students surveyed at Yale University that main motivations or orientations for learning Arabic were “travel and world culture orientations, instrumental orientations and cultural identity.” (p. 395) A further study carried out by Bouteldjoune (2012) identified the desire to learn Arabic in order to socialize with native speakers and build relationships with them as one of the primary motivating factors. While the USA has welcomed a large number of Arabic speaking immigrants over recent decades, and recognizes Arabic as a cultural language among the children of many of these immigrants, this is not the case in Ireland. Consequently, the motivation or orientation is more likely to be either for purely cognitive or intrinsic reasons or instrumental where a student might hope to find work in the Arabic speaking world.

Such situations highlight the importance of self-regulated learning, a factor described by Pintrich (2000) as “an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and attempt to monitor, regulate and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goal and the contextual features of their environment.” (p. 553) According to Pintrich, the phases in self-regulation cover the whole learning process and in the early stages involve the creation of goals, activation of prior knowledge and of metacognitive strategies; in the case of language learning such activation involves acknowledgement that languages are systemic. Therefore, even when a language is totally new, the adult learner brings knowledge of how language works and metacognitive strategies from previous language learning experiences that can be re-applied to the new situation.

A further aspect of the self-regulation process is the recognition of the ease or difficulty of the task and the recognition of the capabilities that the learner brings to the task. Schunk (2005) explains that “task value beliefs include perceptions of the relevance, importance and usefulness of the learning” (2) and the liking the student has for the task. A further phase in the process is the learner’s ability to monitor himself/ herself, manage the learning process and recognize strengths and weaknesses and overall progress in the course. Self-regulated learners are viewed as seeking help when needed and as having the ability to adapt their strategies to accommodate their development. With reaction and reflection, learners should be able to judge what they know or do not know and select the strategies they need to employ in order to improve. Much of this research has been conducted with high school students; however, the concept of self-regulated learning is intrinsic also to adult learning. Merriam (2001) summarises the five assumptions that underlie andragogy (methods for teaching adults) and these include ability to direct one’s own learning, independence, identified learning needs or goals, desire to apply learning and intrinsic motivation. Some of these assumptions are still contested but I would argue that adults who undertake to devote some of their free time and money to learning another language for no apparent practical reason display to a great extent the ability to motivate themselves and to regulate their own learning. (See section on participants below)

2.2 Linguistic factors as key elements in the language learning process

The second factor to be considered in the current research is that of linguistic features of the target language. For years, contrastive language elements as key challenges in learning a second or other language were considered unfashionable and irrelevant (Gregg, 1995); however, it is now acknowledged (Kellerman, 1984; Kellerman & Sharwood Smith, 1986; Perdue, 1993; O’Brien 2010) that aspects of the target language, which differ greatly from the L1, may present

specific challenges to the second or other language learner. Challenges, not all contrastive, in learning Arabic facing non-Arabic speakers can be classified as orthographic, morphological, semantico-grammatical and textual.

a. Orthography

The first challenge for beginner learners is clearly that of learning a new orthographic system. Some criticisms of the need to teach Arabic script to new learners have been made and some material for the teaching and learning of Arabic in recent times presents all material in the English alphabet (Arabic for Dummies, 2006). Additionally, many colloquial Arabic materials use English orthography as dialects are generally not written and those studying a dialect clearly intend to use it in the oral form. The Common European Framework (CEF) guidelines for basic language users make no mention of the introduction of a new script in the early stages of language learning and the focus is clearly on European languages that do not present the same challenges at the early stages. Perhaps the guidelines will need some revision given the growing interest in non-European languages particularly those of Arabic and Chinese.

Written Arabic is an alphabetic language consisting of 28 letters. It is also a phonetic language in which there is a direct relationship between the sound one hears and how it is spelt. In both these respects, the language presents little or no difficulty but there are other factors to be considered. Certain characteristics of Arabic orthography, it is argued by Ibrahim, Eviatar and Aharon-Peretz (2002), can slow the processing of the letters and for this reason they argue that learning to read in Arabic is harder than learning other languages. Two main features: the similarity of many Arabic letters with only the number and position of dots to differentiate one from another (Table 1) and the changing shapes of Arabic letter (Table 2) depending on the position of the word can complicate the processing of the letters in words and texts. (O'Brien, 2010).

Table 1. Arabic letters with dots

b	t	th	n	y	ب	ت	ث	ن	ي
r	z				ر	ز			
d	dh				د	ذ			
j	H	kh			ج	ح	خ		

Maamouri (2006) points out that while the Arabic alphabet has just two letters more than that of English, there are over 60 base forms because of the changing shapes of letters given their location in a word. The following table gives examples of the shapes of one letter ه (somewhat equivalent to English 'h') in various positions:

Table 2. Shapes of letter 'h'

هـ	هـ وَاِذِيَّة	نَحْوِ اِسْمِهـَا	بَيْنَ اَوَالِدُهُ
'h' standing alone	'h' as initial letter in 'he' and 'present'	medial letter as in 'river' and as the suffix for her tacked on to the word 'name'	as an attached letter representing 'his' joined to 'house' and as an independent letter because of the non-joining letter 'his father'

The absence of diacritics representing short vowel signs and sounds on many words also presents challenges to deciphering a word and learners have to get used to the absence of these short

vowels in texts. The following example illustrates the ambiguity that can arise from the absence of such diacritics:

Table 3. Ambiguity with absence of diacritics

teacher (female) mdrsah	مدرسة	school mdrsah	مدرسة
mudarrisah	مُدْرِسَة	madrasah	مَدْرَسَة

While Ibrahim et al's study (2002) examined the effects of Arabic orthography on early learners' identification of letter and grapheme to phoneme conversion and concluded that the characteristics identified in the Tables 1 and 2 present serious challenges to young Arabic learners, a similar conclusion could be drawn for adult learners (based on personal experience and informal discussions with learners). The complexity of Arabic orthography has been shown to slow down word recognition because of left hemisphere overload in the process of analysing graphemes and synthesizing these into words and text. Knowledge of topic and context to disambiguate meaning is a major strategy often leading to memorization of text.

However, in spite of such challenges, the benefits to learning the Arabic script are tremendous and essential if a learner is to acquire correct spelling, pronunciation, dictionary skills, vocabulary development and learn to read Arabic texts. Some of the features identified already such as absence of short vowels diacritics and the presence of symbols such as sukkuṇ ْ, a small circle indicating silence or no vowel and shadda ّ illustrating the doubling of the consonant which, if not done correctly, can lead to ambiguity and confusion in transliteration. A good example of this can be found in the most common Arabic Muslim male name of Mohammad as illustrated in the following table.

Table 4. Variety of spelling on one name

English transliteration of name all found in use	Arabic name
Mohammad Muhammad Muhammed Muhamed Muhamad Mohamed Mehmed Muhammet Muhamet Mehmet	مُحَمَّد

With knowledge of the Arabic script, such confusion does not occur. In addition, the bonus attached to learning the script is that it is also useful in languages such as Farsi, Pashtu, Kashmiri and Uyghur.

Acquisition of individual Arabic consonants is generally not onerous and many resemble English consonants. The new sounds of (ain) ع and (ghain) غ along with differentiating between close sounds of the two Hs ح and ه are likely to be the most challenging. Diacritization or vocalization is the most challenging aspect of learning Arabic orthography. While English also has an abundance of short vowel sounds, these are always represented in the written form (bin, bun,

ban); Arabic short vowels are superscripts or subscripts and are rarely present in texts other than those for young learners, thus challenging even the most advanced student of Arabic at times and providing much discussion in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) session and computational and corpus linguistics. Mohamed & Kubler (2008) illustrate the confusion that can arise from the omission of short vowels:

Table 5. Omission of short vowels

I bought an analgesic from the pharmacy	اشتريت مسكن من الصيدلية
maskan (home)	مَسْكَن
musakkin (analgesic)	مُسَكِّن
masakn (they (F) held)	مَسْكَنَ

Omission of shadda and sukkun can also lead to ambiguity as illustrated in the following table with words that follow similar consonant patterns but differ in short vowel structure

Table 6 Omission of shadda and sukkun

he went	ذَهَبَ
he gilded	ذَهَّبَ
gold	ذَهَبٌ

Thus the importance of recognizing the semantic significance of short vowels, the shadda and sukkun should be clear. Learners have to learn to disambiguate such features in readings as they mature as readers into non-vocalized and more sophisticated texts.

b. Morphology

The second challenging area for learners of Arabic is that of morphology. Arabic is classified as an inflectional or synthetic language unlike English that tends towards a morphologically analytic language. An analytic language uses separate morphemes and grammatical words rather than inflections to express relations within a sentence. Of course, English is not a purely analytic language as we see with plural, progressive and possessive morphemes but it is much more so when compared with Arabic which employs inflections in the form of prefixes, infixes and suffixes to express tense, aspect, person, gender, number, voice and case.

The following table illustrates some of the grammatical morphological changes undergone by words in the formation of verb tense, person, noun plurals and possessive adjectives.

Table 7. Grammatical morphological changes

Translation	Transliteration	grammatical morphology
girl/ girls	bint/ banaat	بِنْتٌ بَنَاتٌ
pen/ pens	galam/ aagalaam	قَلَمٌ أَقْلَامٌ
house/ houses	bait/ biiuut	بَيْتٌ بَيْوتٌ
his book/ her book	kitaabuhu/ kitaabuhaa	كِتَابُهُ كِتَابُهَا

More recent teaching materials provide graded introductions to these features beginning with the most regular and moving on to more complex forms. A far more challenging aspect of morphological structure is that of derivation for the production of lexical items. The tri-lateral root system can generate many different variations with slight infix, prefix or suffix alterations as

illustrated in the following table that shows the many derivations from the tri-lateral root K-T-B and all connected to the basic meaning of KTB, to write:

Table 8. Multiple lexical items from a single root

he wrote/ inscribed/ recorded/ composed/ drafted	Kataba	كَتَبَ
to write/ to correspond with/ exchange letters with/ communicate with	Kataba	كَتَبَ
correspondence/ exchange of letters/ communication	mukaatabah	مُكَاتَبَةٌ
book/ letter/ note/ message	Kitaab	كِتَاب
Bookish	Kutubii	كُتُبِي
writing/ handwriting/ inscription/ communication	Kitaabah	كِتَابَةٌ
documentary/ graphic	Kitaabiii	كِتَابِي
writer/ clerk	Kaatib	كَاتِب
notary public	kaatibu al'adl	كَاتِبُ الْعَدْلِ
bookseller/ librarian	Kaatib	
bookstore	maktabah	مَكْتَبَةٌ
office/ desk/ bureau	Maktab	مَكْتَب
clerical work	'amal kitaabiii	عَمَلُ كِتَابِي
Typewriter	aalah kaatibah	آلَةُ كَاتِبَةٍ
to be destined/ fated (to be written)	Kutiba	كُتِبَ
to predetermine	kataba Allah	كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
correspondent/ reporter/ newsman	mukaatib	مُكَاتِب
underwriter/ subscriber	muktatib	مُكْتَتِب

There are patterns and the three letters of the root always remain in the same positional relationship though with some infixes. The goal is to help learners develop an understanding of the word derivation process and to build skills in deriving lexical items from the base root; this is essential for effective use of an Arabic dictionary.

c. Semantico-grammatical

Matching a concept to a form found in the new language can present difficulties for the elementary and pre-intermediate learner, in particular when the relationship between form and concept differs from the mother tongue.

- i. One example of this is in the expression of time at the level of tense. All natural languages have systems for the grammatical realization of time and both Arabic and English employ verb forms to communicate some aspects of time. The temporal focus, however, differs as English is a tense language and Arabic is generally classified as aspectual (O'Brien, 2010). This means that the expression of time in Arabic is concerned more with the nature of the event than with the time relationship of the event to the speaker. The two Arabic verb forms indicate a perfective (completed event) and imperfective event (not completed or continued or was repeated several times). Thus a verb form may

refer to a habitual event or an event in progress with disambiguation provided in the adverbial time phrase as illustrated in the following example.

Table 9. Habituality and progressivity

Amna is writing a letter to her mother.	تَكْتُبُ أَمْنَةُ رِسَالَةً إِلَى أُمِّهَا.
Amna writes a letter to her mother every day.	تَكْتُبُ أَمْنَةُ رِسَالَةً إِلَى أُمِّهَا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ.

In situations that are classed as habitual in the past, the concept of habituality is generally conveyed through the imperfective form of the verb together with the past form of the verb 'to be'. The same verb phrase is also used for past progressive and habitual events with the past marker indicated in the use of the verb 'kaan' (to be- past form). The Arabic perfective form generally expresses punctual and completed events in the past. The following table illustrates how the habitual event is communicated on the verb form in Arabic whereas past habituality in English is generally expressed through the adverbial phrase.

Table 10. Past habituality and past punctual

Amina played tennis yesterday.	لَعِبَتْ أَمِينَةُ التَّنِيسَ أَمْسَ.
Amina played tennis every day last year.	كَانَتْ أَمِينَةُ تَلْعَبُ التَّنِيسَ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ الْعَامَ الْمَاضِي.

Both imperfective and perfective Arabic verb forms (table 11) can encode the equivalent to the English present perfect with the imperfective indicating the English continuative present perfect in terms of an event that is still on-going and the Arabic perfective to illustrate the existential use of English present perfect.

Table 11. English present perfect

Ali has lived (been living) in Dublin for three years.	imperfective verb form in Arabic	يَسْكُنُ عَلِيٌّ فِي دُبْلِينٍ لِمُدَّةٍ سَنَةٍ.
I have not seen him since Saturday.	perfective verb form in Arabic	مَا رَأَيْتُهُ مُنْذُ يَوْمِ السَّبْتِ.

- ii. Another example of conceptual and form differences are found in the expression of conditionality and possibility. In conditional clauses, verb choice can communicate the modality of the event in both languages. Choice between Arabic particles 'law' or 'idha' indicates the likely or unlikely nature of an event while the choice of verb form (perfective or imperfective) indicates time relationship between the event in the main clause and the conditional clause. The logic of sequence affects the choice of Arabic verb form so a likely event will have a verb in the conditional clause in the perfective form and the main verb in present or future form. An unlikely event is expressed through an imperfective verb form in the conditional clause thus giving the opposite of what constitutes verb choices in an English conditional clause as illustrated in the following table:

Table 12. Conditionality

If Mariam goes, I shall go with her.	إن ذهبت مريم، أذهب معها.
If you threw rubbish in the water, the fish would die.	لو رميت زبالة في الماء، فقد موت الأسماك.
If you throw rubbish in the water, the fish will die.	إن رميت زبالة في الماء، سوف تموت الأسماك.

These few examples illustrate some challenges faced by learners of Arabic at the grammatical and meaning interface.

d. Textual

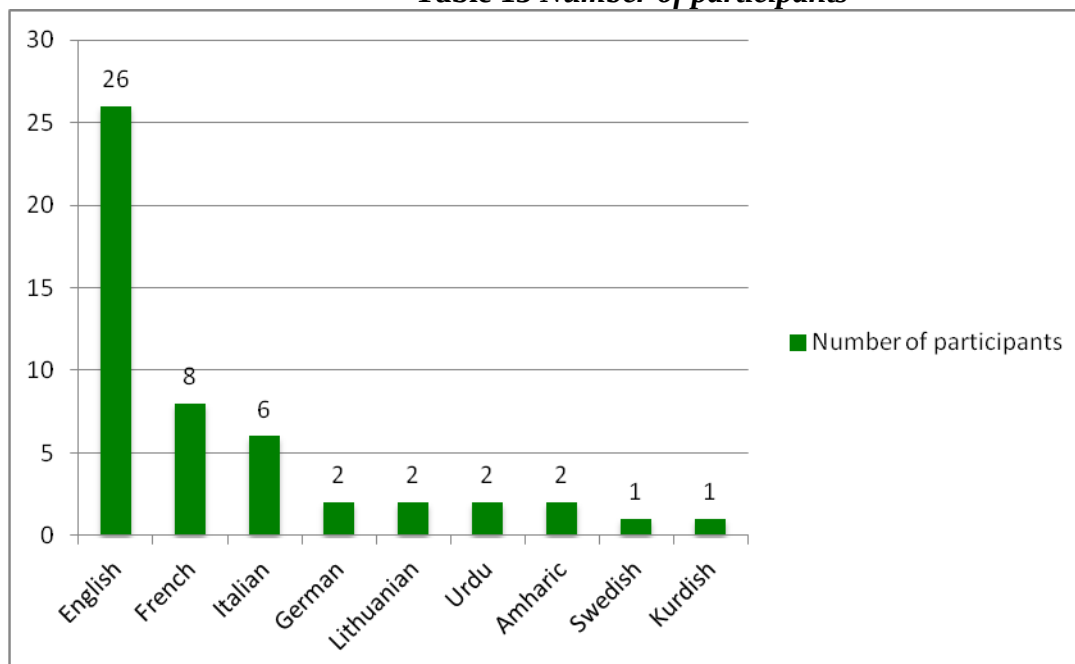
As the learner graduates to reading paragraphs and longer texts, the stylistics of Arabic syntax can be confusing on occasion. The punctuation system differs from that of English and this is textual and semantic rather than systemic as English is. An Arabic text often depends on linking devices such as 'wa' and 'fa' to form a text in the way that English uses punctuation. (Sa'adeddin, 1987). Repetition as manifested in Arabic texts may challenge learners' interpretation of what constitutes a good text. Stylistically, the systems are quite different and as Johnstone Koch (1991, p.27) points out "the texts I have examined are characterized by repetition on all levels: phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic. We have seen repetition of form and content."

2.3 Materials

Materials for teaching Arabic as a second or other language according to communicative methodology is extremely limited for the reasons already referred to in the introduction i.e. that interest until quite recently was primarily for religious purposes and therefore most materials were designed for Qur'anic reading purposes. Another factor that influences the production of material is the diglossic situation as dialect versions of Arabic vary considerably from one country to another. For that reason, language teachers in countries such as Egypt and Lebanon that host a number of language learning institutes generally focus on teaching communication through the local dialect and mostly concentrate on the spoken form. Few discourse analysis studies have been conducted on Arabic as a language and therefore the analysis to inform the development of material in Modern Standard Arabic hardly exists. Some more communicative material has been produced with the increasing interest in Arabic as a foreign language but much still needs to be done. Some existing materials, Mastering Arabic Book 1, along with teacher-developed materials were used with the students who participated in this research.

3. Participants:

Participants were all enrolled in a private language school in Dublin and were studying in their own time. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the research, given details on ethical issues in research participation and given the choice to participate or not. In total, 50 students participated all of whom were studying the language at elementary and pre-intermediate levels. Table 13 shows the range of first languages of participants although most speak English both at home and in the workplace naturally as English is the medium of communication in Dublin.

Table 13 Number of participants

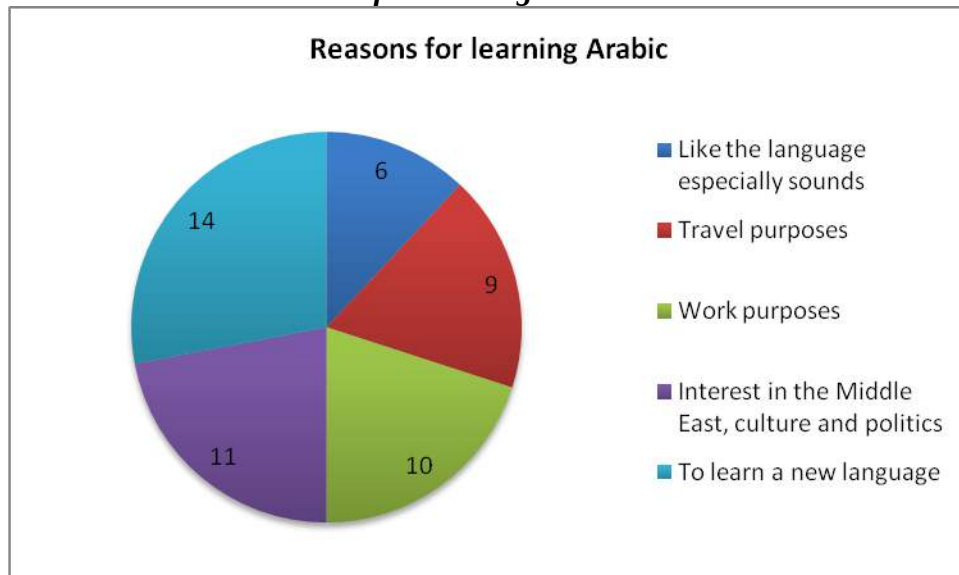
Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing a total of 20 questions that explored their reasons for learning Arabic and included issues ranging from exposure to Arabic on a daily basis, travel to Arabic speaking countries, general motivation for learning the language and the linguistic challenges faced in learning Arabic. The questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of classes and participants were assured that all responses would be categorized according to linguistic origins but no names would be used. It was reiterated that the purpose of the survey was purely for academic research purposes.

4. Results

4.1 Overview

Initial questions asked were aimed at providing an overview of motivational factors for learning Arabic and the use of other languages in day-to-day life. All participants were enrolled in Arabic courses at levels 1 and 2 that would be classed as beginner and elementary. Participants were first asked to indicate the language they spoke most widely on a daily basis, at home, work and in social settings. Of the 50 participants 39 speak English at home, 48 at work and 38 in social settings. Other languages spoken at home included: French (2), Mandarin (1), Polish (1), German (1), and Italian (1).

Participants were asked about their exposure to Arabic through either visiting or living in an Arabic speaking country. While few have lived in the Arab world (1 in each of Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and 2 in Egypt), several have visited Arabic speaking countries. Motivational factors for learning Arabic varied widely and are illustrated in the pie chart below.

Table 14. Reasons for learning Arabic *Font size inside the table should be 12*

Learning another language at a young age would appear to be a factor contributing towards their interest or motivation for learning Arabic with 80% indicating that they had learned a second language at a young age.

4.2 Challenge of learning Arabic

A number of questions focused specifically on what aspects of learning Arabic that proved most challenging (questions 14-19) for them. As the research was conducted with those who are in the early stages of learning Arabic, the questions are concerned with issues that arise in early lessons.

Table 15 Challenges of learning Arabic

Aspects of Arabic	Number of responses that highlight these as difficult
Sounds of the letters	28
Shapes of the letters	14
Differentiating between letters that look the same	18
Recognising how letters change shape in a word	13
Joining letters	11
Letters that do not join	2
Joining letters to make words	8
Letters that change shape in a word	11
Spelling words	6
Learning new words	28
Reading sentences in a story	30

4.3 Correlation between participant profile and language challenges

Having outlined the important linguistic backgrounds and language use of the participants, it is important to correlate this with the aspects of the language which they find challenging. This is in order to understand the relationship of prior linguistic education on learning Arabic, which is considered a particularly difficult language to master. The first language of the participants was used as the dependent variable on which the different challenges indicated were assessed. Of the 50 participants, slightly over 50% (26 participants) are native English speakers, the language through which Arabic is being taught at the early stages of learning and which is the home language of just over 80% of the participants. A Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2) was applied to the data to evaluate how likely it was that any observed differences between the various first language speakers were a factor in what aspects of Arabic they found challenging. The table below highlights some the results for the different tests run.

Table 16. Correlations

Challenge	Pearson chi-square result
Sounds of the letters	0.16
Shape of letters	0.42
Differences between letters that look the same	0.33

It is clear that the participants' first language has no significant impact on what learners find challenging in learning Arabic. The differences in their experiences would seem to indicate that motivational factors have the greatest impact on their success. Motivation and self-regulation as learners were identified in the literature review as vital ingredients contributing towards success in language learning. Participants in the current study indicated that their motivation could primarily be classed as integrative as only 20% focused on an instrumental motivating factor, work purposes, as the main driving impetus. Clearly, participants have involved themselves in the pre-actional process stage of learning language by identifying their reasons for undertaking the course and clarifying their goals. As indicated, these are mainly cultural, travel, desire to learn a new language and finally work purposes. The discussion on the language challenges allows post-actional reflection of the stages of the learning process.

The opportunity to reflect on the learning experience provided an opportunity to identify aspects of learning Arabic that are challenging. Discussion of the various aspects of Arabic above indicated elements that differ and could present challenges. Some sounds of Arabic are similar to those of English but in particular it was indicated that the emphatic letters including the emphatic H, T and S are challenging. These sounds are very easily mistaken for their less emphatic counterparts especially for native speakers of English and while teaching materials stress these letters, in continuous speech it is not always easy to tell the difference between the emphatic and non-emphatic. When we speak about the difference between children and adults learning a language, this area of pronunciation and recognition of sounds is relevant to the discussion. It is generally easier for children to hear, practice and perfect those sounds that are alien to one's L1. One explanation often suggested for this is children's lack of self-consciousness and willingness

to imitate and practice what they hear. Some participants, however, indicated that learning the sounds was easy and these mainly were those whose L1 is not English.

Grammatical aspects of Arabic that were highlighted as difficult were mainly verbs, gender, plurals and case endings of nouns and the concept of the dual. Verbs, in particular for native English speakers present challenges for two main reasons: the inclusion of the personal pronoun in the initial part of verb form and the changing end structure of the verb according to the person being referred to. This is generally a challenge in the early stages of learning Arabic but as learners move along they are likely to find that verb acquisition in terms of tense and aspect becomes less complicated. In terms of nouns, English has a biological gender where males are referred to with a specific pronoun, females with another pronoun and everything else as neuter 'it'. Therefore, for most native English speakers learning gender in another language is generally a challenge even with European languages. This is true also for the concept of case as English does not have case ending and depends on word order to disambiguate the relationship between nouns in a sentence. Plurals with the system of infixes, even for native speakers of Arabic, are challenging.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

This study was exploratory and focused on elementary and beginner levels in learning Arabic. While the study was brief, it has helped to highlight aspects of why adults undertake learning a second and foreign language in an environment that would be classed as input impoverished. It has also focused on the fact that Arabic is a language that many are interested in learning because of the challenges involved and because of interest in the culture and society of Arabic speaking countries. It was also pointed out that materials for the teaching of Arabic communicatively are in short supply and it would be beneficial to develop materials based on a functional systemic analysis of the language. This would greatly facilitate the teaching and learning of the language for practical everyday communication.

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The Null *pro* Subject in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic

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Abstract

This paper investigates the syntax of the null *pro* subject in Early Modern English, Standard Arabic and Modern Standard English and point out how the *pro*-drop parameter works in these languages. The objective is to show how in languages with rich agreement inflection like Early Modern English and Standard Arabic, the null *pro* is allowed in the structural subject position of finite clauses, whereas in languages with poor agreement morphology like Modern Standard English it is not permitted. It further illustrates that the rich AGR inflections in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic serve to identify the null *pro* subject, since the feature-content of the latter (i.e. the *pro*) can be recovered from the AGR morpheme on the verb morphology. Following Chomsky's (1995) minimalist analysis, I show how the nominative Case and agreement features of the (*pro*) subject are licensed and how the tense features of the verb are checked in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic. Furthermore, I present an alternative analysis which accounts for the occurrence of the null *pro* in finite clauses of Standard Arabic. I assume that the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong in the VSO and SVO structures with null *pro* subjects in Standard Arabic.

Key words: null *pro* subject; AGR morpheme; Case, minimalist; D-feature; VP-internal.

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to show that Early Modern English and Standard Arabic are *pro*-drop languages, whereas Modern Standard English is not. The objective is to illustrate that the parametric variation between Early Modern English and Standard Arabic, on the one hand, and Modern Standard English, on the other, can be attributed to the relative strength of agreement inflections on the verb. It demonstrates that in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic, which have rich verb morphology, strong inflection is responsible for licensing features of the subject *pro* and the verb.

This study has six sections. In Section 2, a theoretical background from previous studies on the null *pro* subject is provided. Rich agreement inflections marked on the verb morphology in Early Modern English is discussed and the morpho-syntactic occurrence of the null *pro* subject in finite clauses is explored in Section 3. It is illustrated that Early Modern English carries strong agreement features which consequently force overt movement of the verb from the head V position of VP to the functional head I(NFL). Additionally, how the strong features of the subject (i.e. nominative Case and agreement features) and the tense features of the verb are checked in a Spec-head agreement configuration is examined in Section 3. In Section 4, the null *pro* in Modern Standard English is investigated explaining why the latter is not a *pro*-drop language. In Section 5, a review of the previous accounts of the traditional Arab grammarians and linguists on the null *pro* subject in Standard Arabic is provided. In this section, I investigate the morpho-syntactic properties of the null *pro* and point out how the subject pronouns can be dropped in Standard Arabic. I also provide an analysis based on the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995), where I show how the null *pro* subject moves from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] in order to license its morphological features (nominative Case and agreement features) in a Spec-head agreement relation. Following Chomsky's (1995) minimalist analysis of English, I assume that the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong in the VSO and SVO structures with null *pro* subjects in Standard Arabic. I also assume that the V- feature of I(NFL) is invariably strong in Standard Arabic, given that strong agreement inflection forces movement of the subject and the verb for feature licensing considerations. Conversely, I present an alternative minimalist analysis which accounts for the *pro* subject in Standard Arabic, how it originates in [Spec, VP] and why it moves to [Spec, IP] for feature licensing. Finally, the findings of the study are summarized in Section 6.

2. Theoretical Overview

The phenomenon of the *pro*-drop property, found in languages with rich agreement inflections, has received considerable attention in the syntactic analyses of transformational-generative grammar. It has been the subject of extensive discussion during the past decades. In this section, I review the most important issues that are relevant to the *pro*-drop phenomenon, and I address two issues: the nature of the *pro*-drop subject and the morpho-syntactic properties that a language must have in order to allow the null category *pro*.

The term “*pro*-drop” stems from Chomsky's (1981) *Lectures on Government and Binding* as a cluster of properties of which the null *pro* subject was one. Chomsky (1981) discussed the null subject in Spanish, and other similar languages having the pronominal anaphor PRO, and pointed out that the subject position is ungoverned even in finite clauses in *pro*-drop languages.

Given this, Chomsky suggested that the attachment of inflectional affixes to the verb is affected by a rule of affix movement ("Rule R"), which lowers inflectional features from INFL to the verb. This rule could illustrate whether or not a language displays the *pro*-drop subject. However, the claim that the *pro*-subject is a pronominal anaphor was abandoned in Chomsky (1982) and in subsequent accounts (1986), (1991) and (1995), on the account that the verb is generally agreed to raise to INFL in the syntax. So, the preceding identification of the *pro*-drop subject as PRO was totally rejected due to differences in referential properties: the former does not share the latter's lack of independent reference (Harbert, 1995).

It has been observed that the *pro*-drop subject has a specific reference when it is not pleonastic. Besides, the null category *pro* has the function of a pure pronominal. Chomsky (1982) points out that *pro* is not [+anaphor, + pronominal] (i.e. the feature of PRO) but [-anaphor, + pronominal]. Hence, *pro* is taken to be the null counterpart of overt pronouns. Harbert (1995) illustrates that since the *pro*-subject is not a pronominal anaphor, its occurrence is not linked to the special property of subject positions which is relevant for PRO.

Furthermore, in Chomsky's (1982) theory, *pro* is inserted in the structure to receive a theta role and discharge the Case and AGR, which it carries in *pro*-drop languages. Chomsky (1982) views the *pro*-drop parameter in terms of Case. That is, AGR is assumed to have Case in *pro*-drop languages (as in Italian) and to lack Case in non-*pro* drop languages (as in English). In this connection, Harbert (1995) observes that the *pro*-drop is associated with agreement morphology in two respects. First, *pro*-drop occurs in languages with rich subject-agreement morphology, such as Italian and Spanish, but not in languages with relatively impoverished agreement morphology, such as French and English. Second, pronouns can have a null realization even in non-subject positions in some languages, where those non-subject positions are associated with agreement morphology. Given this, Huang (1989) stresses that, in perfect tense examples in Pashto, where there is object agreement morphology marked on the verb, object pronouns may be null. On the basis of the richness of subject-agreement considerations, many linguists concluded that the licensing of the null *pro* subject is associated with the rich AGR morphology. However, Perlmutter (1971) argues that the mere ability to recover the feature-content of the subject from the agreement inflection is not enough, since more is involved. It has been noted in Chomsky (1982) that the association between the null subject *pro* and rich AGR morphology was not direct. The licensing of *pro* in subject positions is achieved when INFL determines its content features through nominative Case assignment under strict feature matching. Given this, Harbert (1995) states that this usually happens in languages where INFL is generated with nominative Case features in the base. On the other hand, there are other languages where nominative Case assignment is not done via feature matching, but rather, under structural government, which is not enough for feature-content recovery. Harbert (1995:223) stresses that most subsequent analyses on the null *pro* subject "have implemented the connection more directly; empty elements must be identified- i.e. their phi-feature content (categories such as person, number, gender) must be recoverable from their syntactic surroundings." As far as the identification of *pro* is concerned, Borer (1986a) and Rizzi (1986a) suggest that this is achieved via co-indexation with rich AGR morphology.

Before attempting to translate the general association between rich AGR morphology and null *pro* category into an exhaustive theory of *pro*, Harbert (1995), Rizzi (1986a), and Safir (1985b)

distinguish between the degrees of the null *pro* subject and classify the languages on the basis of the following typological differences: there are languages like English which do not permit the overt subject pronoun to be “dropped” (whether it is a thematic or pleonastic pronoun); there are languages like Spanish which permit the “dropping” of both the thematic and pleonastic pronouns; and, there are, however, other languages like German which allow the pleonastic pronoun to be omitted but not the referential pronoun.

Having observed the preceding attempts at arriving at a comprehensive theory of *pro*, let us now briefly point out the major accounts that led to the construction of such a theory. It should be pointed out that Rizzi’s (1986a) analysis is regarded to be the most fundamental adequate account on the null *pro* subject on the basis of which the subsequent research and morpho-syntactic analyses have developed. In attempting to provide a unified account Rizzi (1986a) proposes two distinct conditions on *pro* – a *Licensing* condition, applying to all instances of *pro*, and an *Identification* requirement, applying to referential/argumental *pros*. Rizzi illustrates that *pro* is licensed if Case is governed by a licensing head, which can vary from language to language. In languages, like Italian and Spanish, where the null *pro* occurs in the subject position, INFL is a licensing head. In a language like English, where there is no head counted as a licensing head, the null *pro* subject is not permitted to occur in any position at all. Besides, the null *pro* has to be identified, thus satisfying the identification requirement. It must be coindexed with the features of person/number on its Case-governing head.

On the other hand, there are other linguists who have provided some accounts with a view to developing theories on the *pro*-drop which can offer an adequate analysis of the phenomenon in both language types. The objective is to capture the generalization that the *pro*-drop subject appears to occur in languages which have rich agreement paradigms (as in Italian, Spanish) or do not have agreement inflection at all (as in Chinese), but not in languages with partial agreement morphology (as in English and French). In this connection, Jaeggli and Safir (1989) point out that it is the morphological uniformity, but not the rich agreement paradigm, which has an essential role to play in the theory of *pro*. Jaeggli and Safir propose the morphological uniformity on the basis which they argue that Spanish and Japanese are morphologically uniform: the former has inflectional endings throughout the paradigm whereas the latter does not have at all. They state that English is not, since some forms have endings (such as *she leave-s*) while others do not (*I leave*). They conclude that *pro* is licensed only in those languages which do have morphologically uniform paradigms.

Furthermore, Adams (1987) and Gilligan (1987) explore the syntax of the null *pro* subject in German and observe that in German *pro* can be licensed by morphological uniformity but it cannot be identified. Other attempts to study the null *pro* are also seen in Bennis and Haegeman (1984) in Flemish and Huang (1989) in Chinese.

3. The Null *pro* Subject in Early Modern English (EME)¹

3.1. Agreement Inflections in Early Modern English

As there are universal principles shared by all human languages in the Universal Grammar (UG) which govern the world languages, there are also cross-linguistic variations among languages; such variations (i.e. parameters) are language-specific. One of these language variations is the null *pro* subject parameter. In this section I examine the null *pro* subject in Early

Modern English with a view to pointing out the relatively rich system of agreement inflections marked on the verb morphology and show to what extent Early Modern English differs from Modern Standard English in this regard. I focus on finite non-auxiliary verbs and show their morphological features which force overt syntactic movement. Let us illustrate this point in the following examples (cited from Radford (1997:119)):

- 1a. Thou say**st** true. (Petruchio, *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii)
- b. She taketh**th** most delight in music, instruments and poetry. (Baptista, *Taming of the Shrew*, I. i)
- c. Winter tames**s** man, woman and beast. (Grumio, *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. i)
- d. It looks ill, it eats drily. (Perolles, *All's Well That Ends Well*, I. i)

The sentences in (1) demonstrate that Early Modern English has a rich system of agreement inflections. The agreement affixes marked on the verb morphology in (1) illustrate that the inflectional ending suffixed to each finite verb does agree with its respective subject in each sentence. In this connection, Radford (1997) stresses that in Shakespearean English three present-tense inflections are found: second person singular +*st*, third person singular +*th* and +*s*. It can be noted that the three present tense inflections are suffixes which mark the agreement features between the verb and the subject of the sentence. This is shown in (1a) where the second person singular suffix +*st*, marked on the finite non-auxiliary verb *sayst*, triggers agreement with the nominative second person singular subject *Thou* 'You'. In (1b) the third person singular marker +*th* suffixed to the finite verb *taketh* is in agreement with the nominative third person singular subject 'She'. It can be noted in (1c) and (1d) that the verb ending is the third person singular –*s* which agrees with a non-human third person singular subject. A closer look at finite non-auxiliary verbs and their respective subject NPs reveals that Early Modern English finite verbs exhibit a strong agreement paradigm due to the fact that it has a relatively rich system of verb-agreement inflections.²

3.2. The null *pro* subject in Early Modern English

pro is a pure pronominal which lacks phonetic content, the empty counterpart of lexically realized pronouns such as 'she', 'he', 'it', 'they' ... etc. By *pro*, it is meant the null (non-overt) *pro* subject which has different Case properties from the PRO subject of infinitives; PRO has null Case. *pro* is conventionally designated as little/small *pro* in generative grammar, whereas its big counterpart is known as big PRO. A null subject is a subject which has grammatical/semantic properties but no overt phonetic form. The term 'null subject' usually denotes the null *pro* subject, found in finite affirmative or interrogative sentences in languages like Standard Arabic, Italian and Early Modern English, and not the covert subject, found in imperative sentences like *open the window!*, or the covert PRO subject, found in control structures like *The criminal tried to kill the man*.

The preceding section has demonstrated that finite non-auxiliary verbs in Early Modern English carry strong agreement features (i.e. strong person/number specifier features). Given this, the question is: Was Early Modern English a null *pro* subject language? The answer to this question can be illustrated in the following examples of Early Modern English in (2) along with their explanation below.

- 2a. Hast any more of this? (Trinculo, *The Tempest*, II. ii)

- b. Sufficeth, I am come to keep my word. (Petruchio, *Taming of the Shrew*, III. ii)
 c. Would you would bear your fortunes like a man. (Iago, *Othello*, IV. i)
 d. Lives, sir. (Iago, *Othello*, IV. I, in reply to 'How does Lieutenant Cassio?')

Before I proceed to explain the Early Modern English sentences in (2), it is important to provide their present-day counterparts in (3) which require obligatorily the presence of overt subject pronouns, the latter are italicized for convenience.

- 3a. Have **you** any more of this?
 b. **It** is enough that I have come to keep my word.
 c. **I** wish you would bear your fortunes like a man.
 d. **He** is alive, sir.

A careful look at the difference in the data demonstrated in (2) and (3) shows that in the Early Modern English sentences in (2) the null *pro* subject occurs in nominative positions because it is the subject of a finite clause. It can be observed in (2) that the finite non-auxiliary verbs can have a null *pro* subject and such verbs carry strong agreement features. The difference between (2) and (3) illustrates that Early Modern English has a relatively rich system of agreement inflections marked on the verb. These agreement inflections serve to identify the morph-syntactic properties of the null *pro* argument. For example, in (2a) the agreement marker *+st* on the verb *hast* is a second person singular inflection and serves to identify the *pro* subject as a second person singular subject which has the same morpho-syntactic properties as *Thou*; thus satisfying the identification requirement proposed by Rizzi (1986a) that applies to argumental *pros*. This shows that in Early Modern English the feature content of the subject can be recovered from the verbal agreement inflections on the verb morphology, because finite verbs carry strong agreement features and consequently allow a null *pro* in finite clauses.

3.3. Checking Theory: Chomsky (1995)

The checking theory of Chomsky (1995) is an alternative to the derivational approach to inflectional morphology. It is assumed in this minimalist theory that lexical items are inserted in the structure with their inflectional morphology. For example, verbs are inserted fully inflected under V position of VP. The functional elements like T(ense) and Agr(eement) do not dominate inflectional morphemes; rather they dominate bundles of abstract features. Since these features are symbols in the syntactic representation, they have to contribute to interpretation. Functional features have to be checked in the course of derivation in order for them to be interpretable, because unchecked features are not interpretable. This means that any syntactic representation which does have uninterpretable features violates the Principle of Full Interpretation; this principle states that each symbol of the syntactic representation of a sentence must be mapped onto the interpretation.

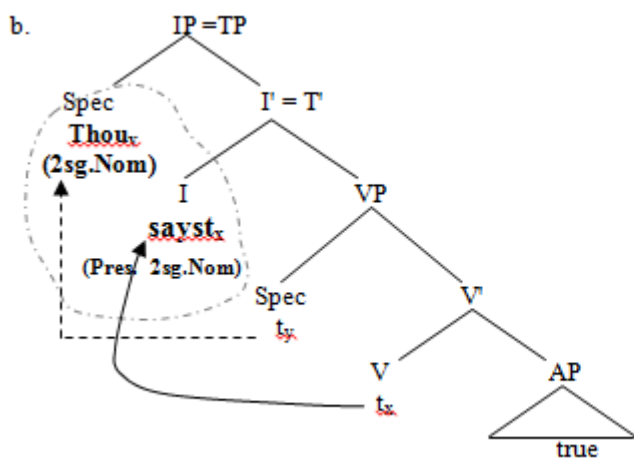
Moreover, feature licensing is accomplished by a matching of the abstract features on a functional head (e.g. T) and a feature in another constituent which acts as the checker or licenser. The checking theory distinguishes two kinds of features: specifier features and head features. In Chomsky (1995), it is proposed that the head T or Agr contains a strong nominal specifier that has to be checked by a constituent with a matching feature, which is here the subject NP/DP. The head features must be checked by a matching head. That is, the head features of T or Agr are

licensed by a verb, which has a matching verbal agreement inflection. This suggests that head-feature licensing is achieved when a lexical head is adjoined to the relevant functional head.

Functional heads like T and Agr contain abstract grammatical features (such as, person, number, gender, tense) which may be strong or weak and which have to be licensed by a matching lexical element (which can be a head or a phrase). All movement is aimed at the licensing of abstract head features or specifier features of functional heads. The checking theory states that a head feature has to be licensed by head-movement; a specifier feature must be licensed by a maximal projection in a Spec-head agreement relation. This means that strong features must be licensed by overt movement (e.g., at the level of the Phonetic Form (PF)/S-structure) while weak features have to be checked by covert movement (e.g., at the level of the Logical Form (LF)/D-structure). When a feature has been checked, it is erased if it is uninterpretable (i.e., if it is a purely formal feature with no semantic content). Any uninterpretable features left unchecked (i.e., which have not been erased) at LF will cause the derivation to crash (i.e., the derived structure will be ungrammatical).

The preceding section has shown that finite verbs in Early Modern English carry strong agreement features. The question is: Can these verbs move from the head V position of VP into the head I(NFL) position (or the head T position)? The answer to this question can be provided by the checking theory. Let us now consider sentence (1a) above, which is reproduced as (4) below for convenience. The objective is to examine the verb movement and show how strong features are checked in Early Modern English syntax.

4a. Thou sayst true.



Given the assumptions of the checking theory, strong morphological features force syntactic movement; strong features must be checked in the derivation, since any features left unchecked will cause the derivation to crash. It can be observed that the verb *sayst* in (4), which originates in the head V position of VP, carries strong agreement features. It is the strength of these features that motivates the verb to move overtly to I(NFL) for feature licensing. The [2sg.Nom] features of the subject *Thou* 'You' mark the second person singular nominative head-features of *Thou*; this illustrates that both the features of *Thou* match. Besides, the [Pres.] feature of the verb *sayst*

marks its present-tense head feature and the [2sg.Nom] features of *says* are specifier-features which require a second person singular nominative subject as its specifier in order for the derivation to show convergence.

Furthermore, the subject NP *Thou* in (4), which originates in the specifier position of VP, has to move overtly to the specifier position of IP. What motivates *Thou* to move higher up is the fact that it has got strong features which have to be checked via a Spec-head agreement configuration. Since there is a subject-verb agreement, due to feature matching, this involves a local checking relation between I(NFL), which has head-features, and its specifier, which has specifier features. The first motivation of the verb movement from V to I(NFL) in (4b) is to enable the specifier features of *says* to be licensed against the corresponding head-features of *Thou*. As a consequence of this movement, the two sets of features match and the specifier features of *says* and the nominative Case-feature of *Thou* are erased, for such features are uninterpretable, thus ensuring that the derivation shows convergence. The other motivation of the verb movement from V to I(NFL) in (4b) is to show that INFL carries a tense feature (i. e. the present-tense head-features of *says*) which has to be licensed in the course of derivation, ensuring that INFL features are interpretable at the logical form, given the assumption that INFL must carry a tense-feature in order to be interpretable at LF.

The syntactic representation of the clause structure in (4b) has revealed that the morpho-syntactic agreement properties are checked by raising the verb to INFL and the subject to [Spec, IP]. This syntactic movement operation allows the verb to be in a local Spec-head relation with its subject; hence its person/number/Case specifier-features can be licensed in the syntax. The preceding line of analysis is in agreement with Radford (1997) that this kind of V-movement operation of a finite non-auxiliary verb from the head V position of VP into the head I(NFL) position of IP was productive in the Early Modern English period at the time Shakespeare was writing his plays, around 1600. But this V-movement operation is no longer productive in present-day English.

4. The Null pro Subject in Modern Standard English (MSE)

4.1. Overview

English has undergone major historical developments and linguistic changes in its syntax, morphology, semantics, lexicon, phonology, etc. while passing from the old period to the middle period and then finally to the modern period, (Bynon, 1976; Lehman, 1992; Trask, 1996). During these historical periods, Jespersen (1938) points out that, English lost its relatively rich system of agreement inflection. Jespersen stresses that Modern Standard English can be characterized by (i) the complete disappearance of inflectional details, (ii) the number of distinct vowels has been reduced, and (iii) the constant change found in many verbs has been abolished altogether except in the single case of *was*, *were*.

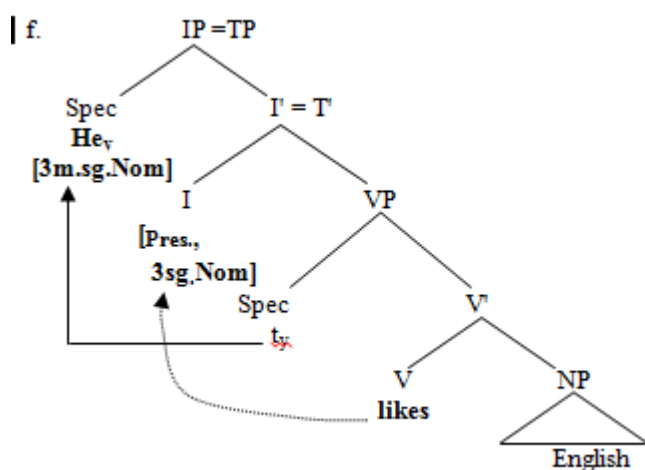
It can be observed now that the differences between the older stages of English and Modern Standard English can be realized in the sense that in the earlier stage of the language, Case morphology was more prominent. Case was visible on nouns and determiners, as well as on pronouns. In present-day English, Case is visible on pronouns (Berk, 1999; Haegeman and Gueron, 1999).

4.2. Movement and Feature Checking in Modern Standard English

In this section I discuss how movement and feature licensing work in Modern Standard English and to what extent it differs from those of Early Modern English with regard to the *pro*-subject property. Let us consider (5) and (5') to illustrate the point.

- 5a. He/She likes English.
 b. I like English.
 c. We like English.
 d. They/You like English.

- 5'a. He/she liked English.
 b. I liked English.
 c. We liked English.
 d. They/You liked English.



It can be noted that the example sentence in (5a), for instance, is an IP which is headed by the functional head I(NFL). The verb *likes* occupies the head V position of VP and the subject NP *He* occupies the specifier position of VP. The subject NP in Modern Standard English has to move overtly to [Spec, IP] for feature licensing. What motivates the subject to move is the need to check its morphological features in a Spec-head relation. However, the verb in Modern Standard English cannot move overtly from the head V position into the head I(NFL) position of IP, because of its poor system of verbal agreement inflection. The verb can move covertly to INFL to check its features; this movement operation has to take place only at LF.

Given this account, the question arises: why do finite (non-auxiliary) verbs not move to INFL in Modern Standard English, while they do in Early Modern English? A possible explanation to this question can be provided if I adopt Chomsky's (1995) minimalist analysis as my framework. Given feature licensing of the checking theory, it can be argued that finite verbs in Modern Standard English carry weak agreement features (i.e. weak person/number specifier features), while their counterparts in Early Modern English carried strong agreement features. It can then be assumed that verbs which have strong agreement features move overtly to INFL whereas verbs carrying weak agreement features cannot do so; the latter can only move at LF. Given this line of analysis, the question is: what decides whether finite verbs carry strong/weak agreement features? This question can be accounted for in terms of the correlation of the richness of the agreement inflections marked on finite verbs. That is, finite verbs have weak agreement

features in languages which have poor (abstract) AGR paradigm (as in Modern Standard English) and strong agreement features in languages which have rich AGR paradigm (as in Early Modern English).

Interestingly enough, it can be observed in (5) that whereas third person singular *+s* is the only regular agreement inflection found on present-tense verbs in present-day English, it can be realized that in Shakespearean English (at around 1600) three present tense inflections are found, for example second person singular *+st*, third person singular *+th* and *+s*. On the basis of this line of argument, it can be argued that finite verbs in present-day English have weak agreement features by virtue of their poor system of inflectional morphology.

4.3. *pro* in Modern Standard English

The preceding analysis has shown that the difference in the strength/weakness of the agreement features carried by finite verbs in Early Modern English and Modern Standard English has resulted in a morpho-syntactic difference; Early Modern English was a null subject language whereas Modern Standard English is not. This can be illustrated below, where (5) is reproduced as (6) for convenience.

- 6a. *[_{IP} *pro* I[_{VP} likes English.]]
- b. *[_{IP} *pro* I[_{VP} like English.]]
- c. *[_{IP} *pro* I[_{IP} like English.]]

All the sentences in (6) are ungrammatical in Modern Standard English because each sentence requires obligatorily the presence of an overt subject. This means that the subject must not be missing in (6). Let us illustrate this further in Chomsky's (1995: 3) own example in (7).

- 7. *e arrived yesterday. ('He arrived yesterday')

Chomsky (1995) points out that the empty category in (7) is a pronominal element, which he calls *pro*. Chomsky (1995:3) states that in (7) "the empty category *pro* is not permitted in this position in English; the counterpart would be grammatical in Italian, a null subject language."

It can be obvious that finite verbs cannot have a null *pro* subject in a language like Modern Standard English where they carry weak agreement inflections. The question posed in this account is: why should this happen in Modern Standard English? The answer can be attributed to the fact that the poor system of agreement inflection in Modern Standard English does not allow us to identify the null subject. That is, the feature content of the subject cannot be recovered from the morpheme on the verb morphology. In this connection, Radford (1997) states that since Modern Standard English has a weak system of agreement, its agreement morphology is too impoverished to allow identification of a null *pro* subject. Example (8) illustrates the point.

- 8a. *[_{IP} *pro* I[_{VP} can go.]]
- b. *[_{IP} *pro* I[_{IP} may come.]]

If we ask questions like (8a and b), we will not be able to tell from the agreementless form *can/may* whether the subject NP is *she*, *they*, *we*, *he*, *I*, *it*, *you*, or whatever. In other words, the agreementless form *can/may* does not serve to identify the null subject, because it is unable to

recover its feature content. Hence, the poor AGR morpheme on the verb is too weak to pick up the subject identity. The reason as to why this happens in Modern Standard English supports the fact that Modern Standard English has lost its verbal inflections. As a consequence of this, present-day English has lost certain morpho-syntactic properties such as, the null *pro* subject, overt V-movement, and overt Case-marking among other things.

5. The null *pro* subject in Standard Arabic

5.1. Previous accounts

5.1.1. Traditional Arab Grammarians

The traditional Arab grammarians developed in their syntactic analysis a notion which seems to be identical to the null *pro* which they referred to as *al-dhamir al-mustatir* ('the hidden or concealed pronominal') in their own grammar. Let us have a closer look at their syntactic treatment of what they call 'the hidden subject' in examples (9) and (10).

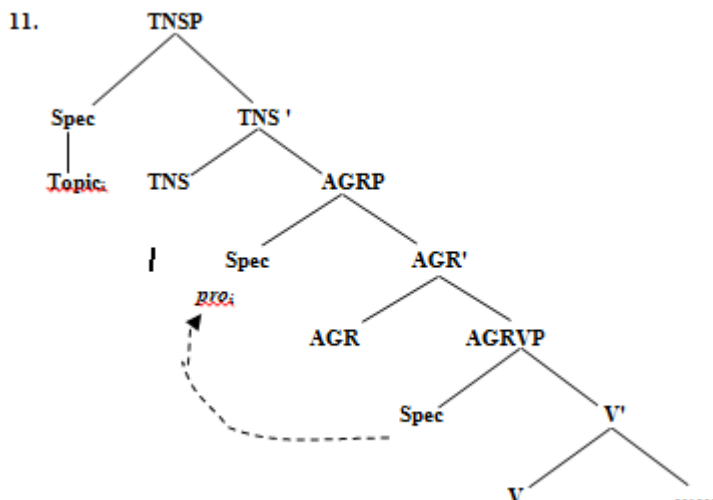
9a.	katab – at wrote-(AGR) f.sg. 'Hind wrote a letter'	hind – un Hind-nom.	risaalat – an letter-acc. indef.
b.	katab – at wrote-(AGR) f.sg.		risaalat – an letter-acc. indef.
10a.	hind – un Hind-nom. 'Hind wrote a letter'	katab – at wrote-(AGR) f.sg.	risaalat – an letter-acc. indef.
b.	katab – at wrote-(AGR) f.sg.		risaalat – an letter-acc. indef.

The traditional Arab grammarians differentiated between the verbal and nominal sentence in their syntactic treatment. For them (9) is a verbal sentence (because it begins with a verb), while (10) is a nominal sentence (because it begins with an NP). The traditional Arab grammarians viewed the subject in (9b) and (10b) as 'hidden' or 'concealed' (to use their term). They identified the morpho-syntactic identity of 'the hidden' subject through the gender agreement manifested on the verb inflection. Furthermore, they argued that (10a) has two subjects; they viewed the first subject 'Hind' (which occurs sentence-initially and precedes the verb) as the topic while they treated the second (which immediately follows the verb) as the 'hidden' or 'concealed' subject (the latter has been analyzed as the null *pro* in the syntactic analysis of modern generative grammar). It should also be pointed out that the traditional Arab grammarians stressed that there is only one subject position (and not two) in (10b).

However, their structural approach to the syntactic analysis of the empty category *pro* could not provide an adequate account of the subject for it could not address and point out the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of *pro* in the same way the transformational-generative approach has done. Hence, my analysis on the subject will be based on the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995).

5.1.2. Ouhalla's (1991) account

Ouhallah (1991) assumes that preverbal subjects in Standard Arabic are topics base-generated in the specifier position of TNSP (= IP) and are coindexed with a resumptive *pro*, which occupies the specifier position of AGRP, and acts as the subject of the sentence at the surface structure. In this position, Ouhalla points out that the null *pro* is identified and assigned Case. This can be illustrated in (11) (the tree-representation is taken from Ouhalla (1991)).



Ouhalla (1991) stresses that the analysis above outlined for constructions with preverbal subjects/topics amounts to the claim that the agreement relation they display is of the same kind like the agreement relation found in the following postverbal sentences with a null *pro* subject, as shown in (12).

12a. ?ishtar – uu daar – an
bought-3m.pl. house- acc.
'They bought a house.'

b. qara? – uu kitaab – an
read-3m.pl. book-acc.
'They read a book.'

Ouhalla emphasizes that these constructions in (12) are like their counterparts with preverbal subjects/topics in that they contain a *pro* argument. However, I shall present a different argument from Ouhalla's, and my analysis will be based on the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995).

5.1.3. Fassi-Fehri's (1993) treatment

Fassi-Fehri (1993) discusses pronominal bound forms on verbs in Standard Arabic which can be analyzed as inflectional agreement markers under AGR or I. Fassi-Fehri stresses that these bound forms serve to identify empty (*pro*) arguments. Let us see how Fassi-Fehri treats the occurrence of *pro* in his analysis of bound forms on verbs. This is illustrated in (13).

- 13a. waSal - uu
arrived-3.pl.m.
'They (m.) arrived.'
- b. waSal – na
arrived- 3.pl.f.
'They (f.) arrived.'

Fassi-Fehri states that if the bound form marked on the verb in (13) were treated as an AGR marker, agreeing with a null *pro*, (as shown in Chomsky (1982) and Rizzi (1982, 1986)), then it can be predicted that, on the basis that the subject argument is overtly present, the same AGR marker must be found. The expected result is not correct, as illustrated by the ungrammatical sentences in (14).

- 14a. *waSal – uu al -?awlaad - u
arrived-3.pl.m. the- boys-nom.
Literally: They arrived the boys.
- b. *waSal– na al- banaat - u
arrived-3.pl.f. the- girls- nom.
Literally: They arrived the girls.

Given this, Fassi-Fehri observes that only a poor AGR marker is compatible when a syntactic subject is phonetically present. This can be shown by (15).

- 15a. waSal – a al -?awlaad - u
arrived-3.m. the- boys-nom.
- b. waSal – at al- banaat - u
arrived-3.f. the- girls- nom.

Although Fassi-Fehri's analysis provides a good account of pronominal bound forms on the verb morphology in Standard Arabic that can be used as either a pronoun or an inflection, it does not offer a satisfactory treatment of the null *pro* subject and how it is identified and licensed in the syntax.

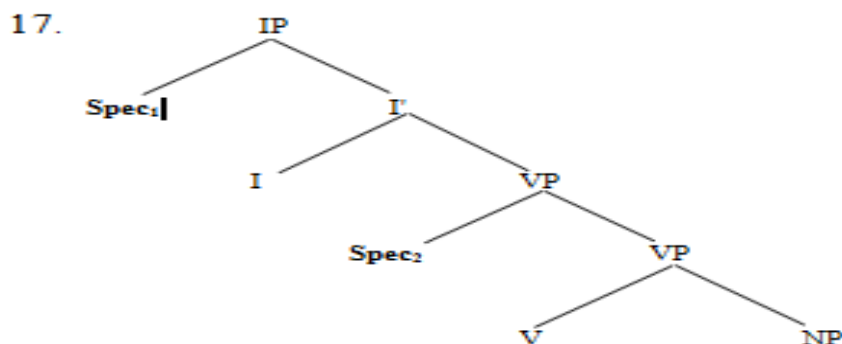
5.1.4. Mohammed's (1990) analysis

In his analysis of the problem of subject-verb agreement in Standard Arabic, Mohammed (1990) discusses briefly the null *pro* subject and views it as an expletive pronominal in Arabic. Mohammed also presents some contexts in which an expletive pronoun can be found in Arabic. He assumes that Arabic is underlyingly an SVO language. He examines agreement within an extended SVO analysis and points out that the verb agrees with its subject only if the subject precedes the verb and that the subject and the expletive pronoun can co-occur. He argues that in VS sentences the agreement features marked on the verb morphology are the result of the presence of the expletive subject. He suggests "a configuration that can create two subject

positions: one position for the real subject and another for the expletive subject" (p. 115). He proposes that VS sentences in Arabic have the following structure:

16. [_S [NP *pro*] [V NP]
 where NP is the subject", (p.115).

Having seen Mohammed's (1990) proposal of agreement within an extended SVO analysis, let us look at how Mohammed's double subject proposal works in the configuration in (17), which he takes to be the structure underlying a simple sentence in Standard Arabic.



Mohammed states that (17) gives us two subject positions: Spec₁ of IP is for the first subject and Spec₂ of VP for the second subject. Mohammed argues that syntactic raising/movement must be barred. He illustrates that "This is because Spec of IP seems to have properties identical to those that were attributed to the subject position of raising verbs; both positions are A-positions and θ -positions. For the sake of consistency, we will assume that there is no Spec-of-VP to Spec-of-IP movement" (p. 118). He concludes that the appearance of *pro* in Spec of IP is optional. "If it appears, it has to be in the domain of INFL. If it does not appear, then I(NFL) moves and adjoins to V in order to have its agreement features dictated by a c-commanding subject" (p. 118).

Although Mohammed's (1990) analysis provides some useful insight into the analysis of subject-verb agreement in Standard Arabic, it does not offer a satisfactory account of the null *pro* subject. Let us summarize his argument in the following two points: (i) Mohammed assumes a configuration which can create two subject positions in one finite root clause in Standard Arabic: one position for the real subject occupying [Spec, IP] and another position for the expletive subject at [Spec, VP], and (ii) Mohammed assumes that there is no syntactic raising/movement of the subject from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] and that such movement is barred.

Given this, I will adopt a different position from Mohammed's (1990). I shall provide an alternative analysis based on the minimalist framework. I shall show that these two arguments of Mohammed are not satisfactorily adequate and that the shortcomings in these two arguments can best be overcome by the checking theory of Chomsky (1995). I shall argue that in a VSO/SVO finite clause in Standard Arabic only one subject position is essentially required and that the syntactic movement of the subject from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] (or potentially Spec of TP) is an essential operation to license the strong morphological features of the subject. In other words, I shall show how the morphological features of the subject and verb are checked while

raising/moving them higher up to their relevant positions in the clause structure of Standard Arabic. I shall also argue that the null *pro* subject moves from the specifier position of VP to [Spec, IP] for feature checking considerations, in order for the derivation to show convergence. More detailed analysis on this issue will be provided later on in the section of Standard Arabic.

5.2. The Null Subject *pro* in Standard Arabic

5.2.1. The Dropping of Subject Pronouns in Finite Clauses

In this section I attempt to show the occurrence of the null *pro* subject in finite sentences and examine whether or not Standard Arabic allows the pronominal subject to 'drop'. This can be demonstrated in (18) and (19).

18a. **huwa** ya – ktubu kitaab – an
 he 3m.(AGR) write-pres. book-acc-indef.
 'He writes a book.'

b. [IP **huwa** I[_{VP} ya-ktubu kitaab-an]]

19a. **pro** ya – ktubu kitaab – an
 3m.(AGR) write-pres. book-acc-indef

b. [IP **pro** I[_{VP} ya-ktubu kitaab-an]]

The missing subject in the *pro*-drop example in (19) clearly has the interpretation of a pure pronominal, on a par with its overt counterpart with an overt pronominal subject in (18). In (19) the null subject *pro* has an antecedent in the discourse much like overt pronouns in the same context.

From sentences in (18a-b) and (19a-b) it can be noted that pronominal subjects are not compulsory (i.e. optional) in finite clauses in Standard Arabic. That is, such pronominal subjects can either be present, as in (18), or absent, as in (19). Unlike Modern Standard English, Standard Arabic permits the subject of a finite clause to remain non-overt. In the syntactic representation in (19a-b), the subject of *ya-ktubu* 'writes' is the null *pro*, which is a non-overt variant of the overt pronoun *huwa* 'he' in (18), which could not also occupy the subject position (19b). The non-overt pronominal subject of a finite clause in Standard Arabic is represented as a non-overt pronoun, *pro*. This shows that since Standard Arabic allows subject pronouns to 'drop', it is a *pro*-drop language. Moreover, it can be noted that the null *pro* subject in (19) realizes the external argument of *ya-ktubu* 'writes', since it is associated with the AGENT thematic role.

In this connection, the question that arises in this context is: Why does Standard Arabic allow subject pronouns to 'drop' in finite clauses while Modern Standard English does not? The answer to this question can be attributed to the fact that Standard Arabic has a rich inflectional system of agreement morphology. That is, Standard Arabic permits pronominal subjects to 'drop' because their morpho-syntactic content can be recovered from the subject AGR morpheme marked on the verb morphology. In the next section I discuss how the content features of the subject *pro* and the rich agreement inflections on the verb can be identified in Standard Arabic.

5.2.2. The Identification of the *pro* and Rich AGR(ement) Inflection

Let us examine the rich agreement inflections manifested in the Standard Arabic AGR paradigm below in order to show how the *pro* can be recovered from the verb morphology. This can be demonstrated in (20), (21), and (22).

Singular

20a.	(1s.m/f.)	(?anaa)	?a – ktubu	'I write'
b.	(2s.m)	(?anta)	ta – ktubu	'You write'
c.	(2s.f.)	(?anti)	ta – ktubi	'You write'
d.	(3m.s.)	(huwa)	ya – ktubu	'He writes'
e.	(3s.f.)	(hiya)	ta – ktubu	'She writes'

Dual

21.	(dual f/m)	?antumaa	ta – ktubaani	'You (both) write'

Plural

22a.	(1pl.m/f.)	(nahnu)	na – ktubu	'We write'
b.	(2pl.m.)	(?antum)	ta – ktubuuna	'You write'
c.	(2pl.f.)	(?antunna)	ta – ktubna	'You write'
d.	(3pl.m.)	(hum)	ya – ktubuuna	'They write'
e.	(3pl.f.)	(hunna)	ya – ktubna	'They write'

As shown in (20), (21), and (22), the inflectional paradigm in Standard Arabic is largely rich; there are eleven distinct forms where every number/person/gender combination has a different affixal form. The inflectional agreement paradigm in Standard Arabic distinguishes eleven persons uniquely whereas the present tense paradigm in present-day English distinguishes only two forms, since they are the only two left, the inflectional form '-s' (used for the third person singular present tense) and the bare system of the verb (used for all other persons).

A closer look at (20), (21) and (22) reveals that the agreement features overtly encoded in the AGR category make the presence of subject pronouns with identical agreement features redundant. From (20), (21) and (22), it can be realized that the AGR paradigm in Standard Arabic is rich enough to be identified; the feature-content of a dropped subject pronoun can easily be recovered from it, whereas the AGR in English is largely poor in the sense that the feature content of a dropped subject pronoun cannot be recovered from it. This further explains why Standard Arabic is a *pro*-drop language whereas English is not. It can be pointed out that the *pro*-drop phenomenon is permitted only in languages where the feature-content of the dropped pronoun can be recovered from AGR.

Moreover, what decides the availability of the null *pro* subject is the inflectional paradigm of the language, given that the rich agreement inflection marked on the verb is realized as the basis of the setting of the phenomenon of the *pro*-drop parameter.

Furthermore, the missing subject of the *pro*-drop sentences in Standard Arabic illustrated above has the interpretation of a pure pronominal, especially when compared with its overt counterpart in the examples with an overt subject pronoun. In this connection, Rizzi (1982, 1986) views a pure pronominal null category as the one which functions as the subject in *pro*-drop sentences. Since the null *pro* subject is a symbol in the language structure, it has to be interpreted in order to be interpretable. The *pro* element is subject to the Empty Category Principle, as an identification requirement. It can be argued that what identifies the null *pro* subject is the rich verbal agreement inflection on finite verbs, which render the empty *pro* interpretable. Hence, the rich AGR-morphology identifies the null *pro* subject in Standard Arabic. In addition to being licensed, argumental *pro* must be identified through binding by grammatical features on the licensing head. In order to be coreferential, an NP has to be specified for person/number on its Case-governing head. Hence, the presence of rich agreement morphology is a necessary condition for this mode of identification.

Furthermore, it can be pointed out that overt realization of the pronominal subject in Standard Arabic has some semantic content, since it signals focus on the subject. This can be illustrated in (23a).

23a. [IP **hiya** I[_{VP} ta – ktubu risaalat – an]]
she 3f.sg.(AGR) write-pres. letter-acc.- indef.
 ‘She writes a letter.’

b. [IP **pro** I[_{VP} ta – ktubu risaalat – an]]
 3f.sg.(AGR) write-pres. letter-acc.- indef.

But if focus on the subject is not needed, then the subject pronoun remains non-overt (i.e. null), as in (23b). The reason why this happens can be explained in terms of the economy principle.³ Given this principle, the overt presence of the subject pronoun is less economical than leaving it null (i.e. phonetically empty). This means that the overt expression of the subject pronoun demands some phonetic material (or sound) whereas this is not required when it is non-overt or null.

5.2.3. Conditions on the Licensing of *pro*

After exploring the identification nature of the null category *pro* in null subject structures, I now need to determine the occurrence of *pro* and how it is licensed. This will help explain the difference between Standard Arabic and Modern Standard English. This can be illustrated in (24) and (25).

24a. *pro* ta – ktubu qiSSat – an
 3f.sg.(AGR) write-pres. story-acc.-indef

b. [IP *pro* I[_{VP} ta – ktubu qiSSat – an]]

25a. *has written a story.

b. *[IP *pro* I[_{VP} has written a story]]

Unlike Standard Arabic, which allows the null *pro* to occur in the subject position in (24), the argument *pro* cannot show up in the subject position of finite clauses in Modern Standard English in (25). The difference between both languages supports my argument that what allows the presence of the *pro* in finite clauses in Standard Arabic relies heavily on the presence of the overtly rich AGR inflection responsible for the identification of the feature-content of the null *pro* subject. Hence, the null *pro* is licensed by an overt (rich) AGR morpheme which is coindexed with it. This line of argumentation is in agreement with Ouhalla's (1999:313) licensing condition on the appearance of *pro*, stated in (26) below, where he examines the morpho-syntactic occurrence of *pro* in Italian and English.

26. Condition on the licensing of *pro*: *pro* is licensed by an overt (rich) Agr category coindexed with it.

Given the preceding analysis supported by Ouhalla's licensing condition on *pro*, it can be concluded that the rich verbal (AGR)eement inflection licenses the null subject *pro* in Standard Arabic. It can also explain the reason why English does not permit the null *pro* element in finite clauses; the poor system of agreement morphology cannot license the empty category *pro* in Modern Standard English.

5.3. Alternative Analysis

In this section, I provide an alternative analysis based on the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995). The position I adopt in this study differs from the arguments posited in Fassi-Fehri (1993), Mohammed (1990), and Ouhalla (1991). The first two argue in favor of assuming a configuration which can create two subject positions in a single finite clause of Standard Arabic: the first position is for the real subject occupying [Spec, IP], while the second is for the expletive *pro* occupying [Spec, VP]. However, I argue that in a single finite clause of Standard Arabic one subject position is essentially needed in the VSO and SVO sentences to account for the syntactic occurrence of the null *pro* subject. I also offer an argument where the null *pro* element can have the same morpho-syntactic agreement properties and treatment both in the VSO and SVO structures in Standard Arabic. The argument that I posit here has found support from the Checking Theory of Chomsky (1995) in the sense that the feature licensing and movement of the subject *pro* and the verb are neatly accounted for; the checking theory has made easier the task of accounting for the agreement properties of the *pro* element in finite clauses of Standard Arabic. Let us consider the following examples in (27), (28), (29), and (30) to illustrate the point.

VSO

27a.	jaa? – a came-3m.sg. 'The boy came'	al-walad – u the-boy-nom.	28a.	jaa? – at came-3f.sg. 'The girl came'	al-bint – u the-girl-nom.
b.	jaa? – a came-3m.sg. 'The (two) boys came'	al-walad – aani the-boys-dual-m.nom.	b.	jaa? – at came-3f.sg. 'The (two) girls came'	al-bint – aani the-girls-dual-f.nom.
c.	jaa? – a came-3m.sg. the-boys-m.pl.nom.	al-?awlaad – u	c.	jaa? – at came-3f.sg. the-girls-pl.f.nom.	al-banaat – u

'The boys came'

'The girls came'

SVO

29a. al-walad – u jaa? – a
 the-boy-nom. came-3m.sg.
 'The boy came'

30a. al-bint – u jaa? – at
 the-girl-nom. came-3f.sg.
 'The girl came'

b. al-walad – aani jaa? – aa
 the-boys-dual-m.nom. came-dual.m.
 'The (two) boys came'

b. al-bint – aani jaa? – at – aa
 the-girls-dual.f.nom. came-dual.f.
 'The (two) girls came'

c. al-ʔawlaad – u jaa? – uu
 the-boys-m.pl.nom. came-m.pl.
 'The boys came'

c. al-banaat – u ji? – na
 the-girls-f.pl.nom. came-f.pl.
 'The girls came'

A closer look at the VSO and SVO examples in (27) and (28) reveals that the verb inflection agrees only with the subject in gender, and not in person and number. The verb in (27) and (28) remains in the singular form in spite of the fact that the number of the subject in each sentence changes from singular to dual to plural, respectively. It can be pointed out that the VSO word order in Standard Arabic allows only partial agreement between the AGR-morpheme on the verb and the subject of the sentence. This partial agreement is in gender features, as shown in (27) and (28).

However, the SVO sentences in (29) and (30) illustrate that the verb and the subject of the sentence agree fully in the phi-features (i.e. gender, person and number features). This shows that the SVO word order displays complete agreement between the AGR-morpheme on the verb and the subject in gender, person and number features.

Let us now examine the *pro*-drop of the subject in the VSO and SVO sentences in Standard Arabic and show the morpho-syntactic properties of the *pro*. The sentences in (27), (28), (29), and (30) will be produced in (31), (32), (33), and (34) but with null *pro* subjects.

VSO

31a. jaa? – a
 came-(AGR)3m.sg.

32a. jaa? – at
 came--(AGR)3f.sg.

b. jaa? – aa
 came-(AGR)dual.m.

b. jaa? – at – aa
 came-(AGR)dual.f.

c. jaa? – uu
 came-(AGR)3m.pl.

c. ji? – na
 came--(AGR)3f.pl.

31'b. *jaa? – a
 came-(AGR)3m.sg.

32'b. *jaa? – at
 came--(AGR)3f.sg.

c. *jaa? – a
 came-(AGR)3m.sg.

c. *jaa? – at
 came--(AGR)3f.sg.

SVO

33a. <i>jaa?</i> – a came-(AGR)3m.sg.	34a. <i>jaa?</i> – at came--(AGR)3f.sg.
b. <i>jaa?</i> – aa came-(AGR)dual.m.	b. <i>jaa?</i> – at – aa came-(AGR)dual.f.
c. <i>jaa?</i> – uu came-(AGR)3m.pl.	c. <i>ji?</i> – na came--(AGR)3f.pl.

It can be observed in the sentences with overt lexical subjects in (27), (28), (29), and (30) that the verb *jaa?* 'came' assigns its external theta role to the subject NP/DP in each sentence. By analogy, I assume that the same is true of the occurrence of *jaa?* 'came' in the sentences with null *pro* subjects in (31), (32), (33), and (34). On the basis of the Extended Projection Principle (EPP),⁴ I postulate that there is a subject position, [Spec, IP], in all the examples in (27-30) and (31-34) above. The projected subject positions of the verb *jaa?* 'came' in (31), (32), (33), and (34) are NP-positions which are not phonetically realized and in which the external theta roles of the verbs are realized. I assume that the specifier position of IP is occupied by an empty/zero element. The question is: What are the properties of this empty/zero NP?

The empty/zero element in (31), (32), (33), and (34) has definite reference: its interpretation is like that of an overt pronoun. Like a pronoun, it may refer to an entity in the non-linguistic context (31-34), or it may be coindexed with an element in the linguistic context. In other words, the non-overt subject in (31-34) is the missing non-overt NP: it is a non-overt pronoun. The null element has the feature combination [-Anaphor, +Pronominal]. This non-overt NP is represented by *pro*, 'small *pro*'.

Surprisingly enough, the data in (31), (32), (33), and (34) provide an interesting observation. It was expected that when the overt lexical subjects of the sentences are dropped the agreement inflections on the verbs in the VSO sentences in (31) and (32) would remain unchanged, but this does not happen. If they remain unchanged, then ungrammatical derivations will be produced, as shown in (31') and (32'). The reason why (31') and (32') are ungrammatical can be attributed to the fact that they are an example of a feature mismatch demonstrated in a Spec-head agreement relation, where the agreement features of the dual masculine subject (encoded in the *pro* subject) cannot match the third person singular features marked on the verb inflection. The same is true of (32'); the plural masculine subject (which is the *pro* subject) cannot match the singular features on the AGR-morpheme marked on the verb. Hence, the ungrammaticality of (31') and (32') can be attributed to a violation of the identification requirement on the licensing of the *pro* thematic subject. The AGR-features instantiated on the verbs in (31') and (32') are singular and therefore cannot license a *pro* argument with dual or plural features. It can be noticed that the *pro* in (31') and (32') has features, reflected by the overt subjects, which are different from those of the AGR-features.

If I compare between the VSO sentences with lexical subjects in (27-30) and those with null subjects in (31-34), then I can find that when the lexical subject is overtly present, the AGR-morpheme on the verb shows partial agreement between the verb and the subject (as in (27-30)), and when the subject is phonetically null (as in (31-34)), the AGR-morpheme on the

verb illustrates complete agreement between the verb and the subject, the latter is here the null *pro* subject. This illustrates that in the VSO sentences the verb morphology behaves differently depending on whether the subject is phonetically absent or present. When the overt lexical subject is dropped in the VSO sentences, the verb agreement inflection appears morphologically identical to that of the SVO sentences. For example, the VSO verb inflection in (31) is the same as the SVO verb inflection in (33); the same is true of (32) and (34). When the subject is phonetically null, the AGR-morpheme on the verb in the VSO sentences takes the same morphological shape as the AGR-morpheme marked on the verb in the SVO sentences. Hence, the AGR-morpheme on the verb, in each VSO and SVO sentence, agrees fully with the *pro* argument occupying the subject position of [Spec, IP] in gender, person and number features. This further stresses that there is complete agreement between the null subject *pro* and the AGR-morpheme on the verb in these VSO and SVO structures.

The reason as to why this happens in the VSO and SVO sentences can be attributed to the fact that Standard Arabic resorts to this technique in order to satisfy the identification requirement, ensuring that the recoverability of the subject identity is satisfied. What allows Standard Arabic to do this is the richness of its verb morphology. In the next section, I discuss the feature licensing of the *pro*, how it originates in [Spec, VP] and why it subsequently moves to the thematic and structural subject position of the sentence, occupying [Spec, IP].

5.4. *pro* and Feature Licensing

Given that the tense head has both verbal and nominal features, Chomsky (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000) proposes that tense in English is specified for two categorical features: the D-feature and V-feature. The V-feature illustrates the interaction between the tense and the verb while the D-feature decides the interaction with the subject. Given feature checking, the V-feature must be licensed by a verbal head, while the D-feature can be checked by a nominal head, namely the subject.

Chomsky (1995) suggests that the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong in English. The strength of the D-feature forces the subject to move overtly from [Spec, VP] to the specifier position of IP for feature checking purposes. The V-feature of I(NFL) is, however, weak in English and does not motivate main verb to move overtly to the head I(NFL) position in overt syntax; the verb can only move at LF to check its features.

In his minimalist analysis, Chomsky (1995:199) points out that "Arabic allows weak and strong inflection, hence weak and strong NP-features;⁵ Arabic is a suggestive case, with SVO versus VSO correlating to the richness of its visible verb inflection." Given the VSO and SVO sentences in (31-34) with null *pro* subjects, where the argumental *pro* and the AGR-morpheme display the same morphological features, I assume that the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong in Standard Arabic and that the *pro* is necessary in these structures to check this D-feature. However, if I assume that the D-feature of I(NFL) is weak in these VSO and SVO sentences, I would expect the subject to remain inside [Spec, VP] at LF. But this does not happen. The reason why this does not happen can be attributed to the strength of the D-feature that motivates the movement of the *pro* subject for feature licensing on the assumption that morphological features have to be checked in order for the derivation to show convergence.⁶

Let us illustrate this below by choosing two examples from the VSO and SVO sentences with null subjects illustrated in (31-34) above and reproducing them as (35) and (36) for convenience.

35a. jaa? – aa
 came-dual.m
 'They (both) came'

b. [_{IP} *pro* I[_{VP} jaa? – aa]]

36a. jaa? – uu
 came-m.pl.
 'They came'

b. [_{IP} *pro* I[_{VP} jaa? – uu]]

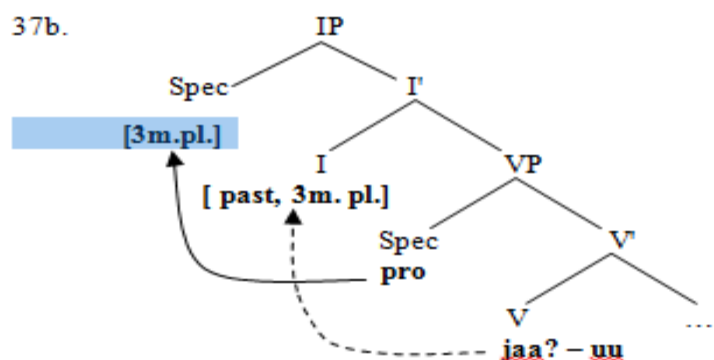
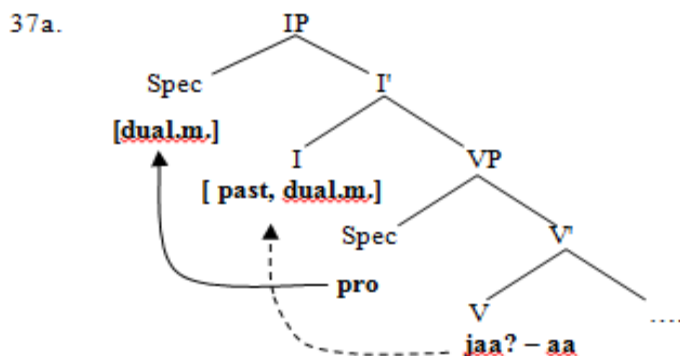
(35) and (36) are null *pro* subject sentences (sentences whose subjects are dropped or missing). In (35) and (36) the subject position is occupied by a *pro* argument which is the thematic and structural subject of the sentence. The question is how to account for the null *pro* subject and how its nominative Case and agreement features are licensed as well as why it moves from the VP-internal position to [Spec, IP] for feature checking in the course of derivation?

It can be observed that the minimalist EPP is perfectly consistent with the derivations in (35) and (36) which takes the D-feature of I(NFL) to be strong. *pro* is essential in (35) and (36) to check the D-feature. Since the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong in (35) and (36), *pro* is expected to originate in the VP-internal position and then moves for feature licensing. If I assume that subjects arise inside VPs, then they have to move overtly or covertly to the specifier position of IP for feature licensing requirements. Given this, I argue that in the VSO and SVO structures with null *pro* arguments in Standard Arabic, the subject *pro* originates in [Spec, VP], and then it moves to the thematic and structural subject position occupying [Spec, IP]. The movement of the *pro* is motivated morphologically by the fact that the D-feature of I(NFL) is strong; the strength of inflection forces the null subject *pro* to move for licensing its nominative Case and agreement features via a Spec-head agreement relationship.

Furthermore, strong inflection can be manifested in overt agreement morphology on the verbs in (35) and (36) where the AGR-morpheme on each verb agrees with the *pro* subject in gender, person and number features. For instance, the AGR-morpheme on the verb (-aa) in (35) is a dual masculine and agrees with a dual masculine nominative subject, which is here the null *pro* subject. Similarly, the AGR-morpheme on the verb (-uu) in (36) is a third person plural masculine which agrees fully with a third person plural masculine nominative subject (i.e. the *pro*). This further demonstrates that the phi-features marked on each verb in (35) and (36) are distinguishable because of the richness of the visible verb inflection in Standard Arabic.

Since the features of the subject match the nominal features of I(NFL) in (35) and (36), the features of the subject (i.e. nominative Case and agreement features) will be checked in the course of derivation. Hence, feature checking takes place between a head and its specifier via a Spec-head agreement relationship (the latter is between the head I(NFL) position and the

specifier position of IP). In the Spec-head configuration, agreement relations are highly local, where there has to be a feature match between the morphological features encoded in the functional head I(NFL) and those features of the subject encoded in the specifier of IP so that the derivation can show convergence. If not, the derivation will crash. In other words, the Spec-head agreement relationship involves checking the nominative Case features and the agreement features of the *pro* subject as well as the tense feature of the verb. This can be illustrated on the tree-representation of the Arabic clause structure in (37).



Following Fakih's (2003, 2006, 2007a, and 2007b) minimalist analysis⁷ of the verb feature licensing in Standard Arabic, I argue that the V-feature of I(NFL) is invariably strong in Standard Arabic. The strong features of the tense motivate the verb to move overtly to check off its morphological features against those features encoded in the head I(NFL) position of IP. If the verb features match the morphological features of the functional head (i.e. the head I(NFL) position) it adjoins to, the features of the verb will be licensed, as shown in the grammatical representations in (37a and b), thus ensuring that feature checking takes place between adjoined elements in a head. In (37a and b) the verb undergoes overt raising/movement to check its tense features against those abstract morphological features encoded in the functional head I(NFL) position. Once features are checked, they get erased in the syntax.

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored the syntax of the null *pro* subject in Early Modern English, Modern Standard English and Standard Arabic and has shown that the grammar of Early Modern English and Standard Arabic differs from that of Modern Standard English. In finite clauses of Early Modern English and Standard Arabic the subject position can be occupied by an empty category, *pro*. However, this property is not found in Modern Standard English because the latter is not a pro-drop language. That is, there is a parametric variation between Early Modern English and Standard Arabic, on the one hand, and Modern Standard English, on the other, in respect of the null subject parameter in that Early Modern English and Standard Arabic allow the null category *pro* in the subject position of finite clauses, with *pro* having the interpretation of a subject pronoun. It can be pointed out that the availability of the null *pro* subject in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic and its absence in Modern Standard English is related directly to the idea that verbal agreement inflection in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic is richer than in Modern Standard English.

This study has shown that finite verbs in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic have strong agreement features (because of the rich agreement inflections they carry) and consequently allow the null subject *pro* to occur in the structural subject position, whereas their counterparts in Modern Standard English have weak agreement features (due to their poor agreement morphology) and so do not allow the occurrence of the null subject *pro* at all. It has been illustrated that the strong agreement features of finite verbs in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic are licensed by overt movement of the verb from the head V position of VP to the functional head I(NFL), whereas the weak agreement features of finite verbs in Modern Standard English are checked at LF. It should be mentioned that this kind of V-movement operation of finite verbs from the head V position of VP to INFL is productive in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic. Moreover, the fact that Early Modern English and Standard Arabic allow the null argument *pro* is due to the presence of overt (subject) agreement inflection. This can be attributed to their rich agreement inflection which can license the null *pro* as a lexical property; it is this lexical property which can account for the parametric difference between Early Modern English and Standard Arabic, on the one hand, and Modern Standard English, on the other. The rich agreement inflection on the verb morphology in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic serve to identify the morpho-syntactic properties of the null *pro* subject, since the feature-content of the latter can be recovered from the AGR-morpheme on the verb.

Given checking theory, it has been pointed out that the V-feature of I(NFL) is strong in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic due to strong inflection which forces overt movement of the verb in finite clauses. However, the V-feature of I(NFL) is weak in Modern Standard English and as a result the verb can only move at LF to check its features.

Furthermore, since Early Modern English and Standard Arabic allow the *pro* element in finite clauses, it undergoes syntactic movement from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] in order to license its nominative Case and agreement features. Hence, the null *pro* subject in Early Modern English and Standard Arabic receives nominative Case and is licensed by rich agreement inflection on the verb.

Moreover, the analysis of the null *pro* subject in Standard Arabic has shown an interesting observation. It has pointed out that the subject *pro* appears to have the same morpho-syntactic agreement properties both in the VSO and SVO structures with null *pro* subjects. Given feature licensing, I have assumed that the D-feature of I(INFL) is strong in the VSO and SVO structures in Standard Arabic. Based on this, I have argued that the null *pro* subject moves from [Spec, VP] to [Spec, IP] to check its nominative Case and agreement features in a Spec-head agreement relation. I have also assumed that the V-feature of I(NFL) is invariably strong in Standard Arabic. As a consequence, the verb moves overtly from the head V position of VP to the head INFL position. The movement of the *pro* subject and the verb is driven by the necessity to check the morphological features via a Spec-head agreement relation, where the nominative Case and the agreement features of the subject as well as the tense feature of the verb are licensed, thus ensuring that all features are interpretable in the syntax.

Endnotes

1. By Early Modern English (EME) it is meant the type of English that was found in the early seventeenth century, i.e., at about the time when Shakespeare wrote most of his plays (between 1590 and 1600). However, Berk (1999) mentions that the EME period spans from (1500-1800). The example sentences of Early Modern English illustrated in this study are cited from Shakespeare's plays.
2. See Rohrbacher (1994) and Vikner (1995) for more details on the correlation between the strength of agreement features and the relatively rich system of agreement inflections in different languages.
3. Economy Principle is a principle which requires that (all other things being equal) syntactic representation should contain as few constituents and syntactic derivations and involves as few grammatical operations as possible (Radford, 1997:259).
4. EPP is a principle of Universal Grammar (UG) which states that not only lexical properties of words be projected in the syntax, but in addition, regardless of their argument structure, sentences must have subjects.
5. The term 'NP-features' is also referred to as 'D-feature' in Chomsky (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000), given that the NP has been broadly analyzed as a DP in the recent analysis of the minimalist framework.
6. Platzack (1994) assumes that the D-feature of I(NFL) is weak in a pro-drop language like Italian. Due to the weakness of the D-feature of I, Platzack takes *pro* to be in the VP-internal position before Spell-Out. However, as quoted in Manzini, R. M. and Savoia, L. M. (1997), Cardinalewtti (1994) and Donati and Tomaselli (1997) provide an argument against this analysis that *pro* cannot be in the position of the postverbal subject in the overt syntax.
7. Fakih (2003, 2006, 2007a and 2007b) assumes that the V-feature of I(NFL) is strong in Standard Arabic on the assumption that the richness of the visible verb inflection forces strong inflections to move overtly for feature checking considerations.

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Using Primary Sources: A Strategy to Promote the Teaching of Civilization to Algerian Students of English

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Abstract

Bound by a shared belief, teaching experience sustains that Algerian university teachers of civilization (American or British) are at their wits' end trying to apply university teaching approaches as "magic" formulas hoping to remedy the problem of how to get their students involved in the aforementioned discipline that has earned a bad name for itself. The discipline in question is regarded by students as boring, monotonous and concerned only with rote memory. Students of English feel that they are forced to mug up facts that have to be regurgitated at the time of the exams or tests. In this regard, what method should teachers adopt to help students enjoy, imbibe, and digest the lectures contents? This paper discussed the feasibility of integrating primary sources in the teaching of civilization, a strategy that most of us rarely, if not never, apply despite the online availability of various digitized primary sources formats. The paper exposed and explained the advantages of modeling and experimenting with this strategy that eventually helps in the maturation of students as future researchers and the enhancement of their critical thinking skills. The hypothesis was highlighted by a case study that proved the efficacy of using primary sources in the teaching of civilization. The outcome showed how learners become highly motivated by engaging themselves progressively and hence shifting from passive and listless dependents to active and curious autonomous learners of English .

Keywords: autonomous learners, civilization teaching, critical thinking skills, primary sources, university teaching approaches

One of the current teaching methods that is gaining popularity and attracting larger following is the use of ordinary or digital primary sources in class. Primary sources are simply the order of the day. Nonetheless, the academic misconception of the Algerian students of English is characterized by their mind that is unfortunately embedded with the archaic belief that the teacher is the major and most reliable source of knowledge in learning civilization and accumulating information that is issued by the teacher. Reacting to this enduring erroneous vision, there is an effective but ignored approach that may largely contribute to enhancing the students' activity so that they become involved in civilization learning. The main objective of this paper then is to convince students to study civilization through primary documents and familiarize themselves with to improve their research skills. Indeed, at the end of their university education they are expected to already be able to understand the specificity of civilization - "knowledge by traces". It is essential for them to develop their learning capacities to understand civilization and eventually give meaning to this discipline.

Shifting from Unmotivated to Motivated Mind

The course of American/British civilization as a discipline with its different components is complex but may seem futile in the eyes of the Algerian students of English. This is an area that most of them reject willingly on the basis that this discipline is most of the time perceived negatively. The students almost collectively are not motivated to get involved in their civilization lectures and "they thought of them, by and large, as a waste of time" (Veccia vi). They are more inclined to stick to the present and the future at the expense of the past. Considering this tendency, the present paper focuses on how to make civilization a more attractive and more accessible field to students who are completely unmotivated as far as "research adventure" is concerned. Civilization is no longer described as an isolated discipline which allows students to assimilate historical/cultural achievements and increase their knowledge in the field of language proficiency. In addition, academic maturation of our students should be fostered by an independent learning and when mastering the respective steps of primary sources such as reading, exploring, interpreting and analyzing, there is no doubt students will successfully develop their critical thinking and writing skills and thus detach themselves from the archaic method of relying on teachers all the time. After all, the use of primary sources by students becomes one of the most efficient ways to get students involved in active learning and initiate them towards the complex field of research.

Distinguishing between a Primary Source and a Secondary Source

To be successful in using primary sources in the classroom, teachers have to begin with a deep understanding of what primary and secondary sources are. As primary and secondary sources are introduced to students, instructional opportunities that allow them to discern the similarities and differences between the two types of sources have to be created besides other opportunities to discuss perspectives, bias, and context. As the teacher and his students work toward a complete comprehension of what primary and secondary sources mean, there should be the opportunity to also discuss vital records and ephemera. These kinds of personal primary sources are frequently overlooked by teachers but make for interesting parts of discussion.

There are written or unwritten sources that provide information about the past. There are primary sources and secondary sources. By definition a primary source is any document/object, created or produced during the period the researcher is investigating. The primary source is basically defined as that material "which is written or produced in the time period students are

investigating.... [It] provides first-hand accounts about a person or event” (Pierce 3). The primary source is directly related to a topic by time or participation. As a first-hand evidence or eyewitness account of an event, the primary source tells about the event without adding any interpretation from a later time. It is used as evidence for theories or when one wants to gain timely perspectives on a subject. It reflects an individual or a one-sided point of view of the participant/recorder. It also reflects the attitudes of the time period in which it was written or produced. It includes an original information or explanation. This definition applies to a primary source available on the Internet. There are various types of primary sources such as advertisements, autobiographies, artifacts, court files, diaries/ephemera, letters, manuscripts, memoirs, memoranda, newspapers, novels, personal interviews, opinion polls, photographs, reports, speeches, and testimony. The list is long but not exhaustive. By contrast, a secondary source is any document containing descriptive or analytical data on primary documents and is created after the period under investigation. Experts even go far by viewing this type of sources as “corruptions of the originals and are prone to successive layers of error and bias (Barton 746). The secondary source is characterized by its interpretation, evaluation, or analysis of the primary source. It can be viewed as part of a conversation about a topic. It is used when one wants to see what others have already discussed. It can be a good place to collect background information or explore what subtopics have already been studied on a given topic. Books, artist’s impressions, blogs, textbooks, encyclopedias, reviews, lectures, and documentaries belong to this type of source.

Yet, caution should be taken: We should not fall into the trap of thinking that a primary source is better than a secondary source because it was created ‘at the time’. There is no rule about which type of source is better. It depends on what we are looking for in the source and how it is used.

A source’s classification as a primary or secondary can change depending on the topic that we are studying. For example, if we are writing about how news is reported on the Internet and the website like BBC.co.uk can be considered a primary source, we are studying news on the Internet and BBC.co.uk represents the object we are studying. However, if we are writing about Margaret Thatcher’s political legacy and we find an article on BBC.co.uk that analyzes it, the article would be considered a secondary source and since we are studying politics, an article on BBC about it is a step or move from the object that we are studying.

Primary Source Documents and Visual Literacy

Usually we, as teachers, overwhelm our students with printed materials (handouts of scholarly articles, book chapters) to be absorbed. The traditional way of giving them lectures allows them a very limited time to react to the covered topic. They simply stagnate in their over-simplistic understanding instead of acquiring complex ideas by encouraging them to do their own activities. Civilization as a discipline should be taught in “the form of problems, trends, movements, interrelationships, processes, but not periods”. It is not fair to see this discipline, taught as inquiry into the past, to provide the student with ready-made approaches and solutions to contemporary problems” (Krug 42). Teaching has changed overtime as it has become more structured and thus gives students more time to get prepared. Primary source documents are used to develop observation and analysis capabilities. They are devoted to the analysis of materials based on objective and deductive observation, and recording facts. Besides being the basis of historical research, primary sources are “widely used in undergraduate teaching as a way to introduce students to voices from the past” (Dobson and Ziemann).

Literature Review

The all-encompassing trends of literature suggest that the use of primary sources can develop students' understanding of civilization while shaping their critical thinking. Educators agree that the student can acquire an appropriate and positive experience of learning when he is exposed to primary sources. To make this practice easier, teachers of course rely on accessible technology in their classrooms. Finally if the available literature makes aspects of the use of primary sources positive, various educators maintain that the use of primary sources can result in efficiency. To confirm these findings, it is important to explore the ways primary sources are used in teaching civilization. In the literature review, recent studies on classrooms adopting primary sources are closely examined.

Serious research development to encourage the use of primary sources in civilization is taking place through works such as Veccia's, *Uncovering our History: Teaching with Primary Sources* in which she explains well that "Primary sources can provide the framework for spirited classroom discussions, debates, and projects that will engage students in memorable ways" (2). Students were asked to do activities while analyzing pictures, videoclips, and documents gathered and brought by the teacher. When students discover how primary sources give evidence of the past upon which hypothesis is formed, they get involved in the motivating process that largely contribute to their gradual shift from passive to active learners. Another effective strategy for using primary source materials is to develop a packet of primary source documents or artifacts that revolves around a single theme, topic, or historical era. In other words, the teacher would collect a range of primary sources concerning, for instance, the *New Deal*. Students would then compare and contrast documents in government, economics, and contemporary world issues in this packet to understand more fully the historical and political context and repercussions of the *New Deal* (Shiveley and Vanfossen 40). The work puts emphasis on primary source document analysis that is believed to provide students an opportunity to connect with civilization in a more autonomous and individual active manner. The civilization course is supposed to enhance the student's curiosity as he voluntarily becomes a major factor in this action research.

As their principal system of methodology, researchers examined sample student work and analyzed their responses and reflections. The previously cited works share a common ground by endorsing the concept that primary source usage provides students with a more positive and effective learning experience.

In addition to historical analysis and interpretation skills, researchers remarked that working with primary sources in civilization encompasses several other benefits. Susan L. Meo explains in her article "In their Own Eyes': Using Journals with Primary Sources with College Students" that using primary sources allows students to see civilization as an ongoing process of constructing the past, rather than a fixed body of knowledge. She accentuated three important thinking skills over the civilization course and required from her students to show civilization understanding - the ability to "identify the basic elements of the narrative structure (the characters' situation, sequence of events, their causes and their outcomes)". Students were expected to identify the author's perspective and evaluate his/her credibility and authority. In this way students developed their historical analysis and interpretation skills, and received practice in "detecting bias, weighing evidence, and evaluating arguments" (336).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present case study was to investigate the impact of teaching civilization with primary sources in the classroom and to measure the implications for the students' development of historical/cultural perspective taking, understanding and approach.

A primary source represents an effective tool that helps both to develop the student understanding of historical/cultural events and expand his awareness of people who were part of these events. Reading newspaper articles written during a particular era, or studying personal letters, diaries, or memos written by historical figures, analyzing ads, political cartoons, and government documents from times past, the whole may create an enjoyable, exciting, and informative environment for most students learning civilization. At this level, the paper hypothesizes that helping students to discover how enjoyable, exciting, and interesting the subjects can be, will improve their comprehension, as well as their participation in the classroom environment.

The studied question in this action research, therefore, is to find out if students understood information and enjoyed studying civilization more when they studied with primary sources as opposed to relying on secondary sources. In this paper, civilization refers to the "interpretive, constructive, analytic, and dialogic process—a discipline concerned with both knowledge of the past and the acts of constructing that knowledge" (Dutt-Doner, Cook-Cottone, and Allen).

Methodology

The use of primary sources as an essential component of civilization curriculum is clearly expanding in today's education institutions mainly universities. It is important for teachers to explore and understand the effectiveness of primary sources as a teaching tool of civilization. The objective of this paper is to assess the effectiveness of using primary sources and how they affect student's understanding of civilization.

Research Questions

The core research question was: How is the student's understanding of civilization affected by the use of primary sources? In this case understanding civilization is defined as the ability to explain the meaning of an historical/cultural event or concept. Students must be able to interiorize the relevance of important historical/cultural events and concepts. The major advantages from taking part in the research were the teacher's willingness or unwillingness to use primary sources and if this teaching strategy was valuable or not to a students learning.

Data

The study was conducted with Master's students in the department of Letters and English Language. The participant population consisted of 34 Master's students who took British civilization. There were more females than males enrolled in the class. The sample lesson concerned the "Scramble for Africa". As the study required the incorporation of primary sources in the British civilization course guidelines and as it was the first experience at the department level, the teacher limited the number of used primary sources so that the participants would be slowly attracted to freely express their opinion on this new tool of learning.

The research process started with surveying students after the given lesson where primary sources were used and the students' academic responses to the lesson were documented. In the following stage the focus group who took the lesson using primary sources was interviewed. Finally the collected data was analyzed. In the participants' survey, three simple questions were

asked to evaluate their degree of interest in the lecture. An area for the participant is added to rate the lesson in comparison to other ones that were not based on primary sources. In the student interview, the aim was to find out how the student viewed the inclusion of primary sources in civilization lessons.

In the next part the data analysis and the obtained results are discussed. The data analysis shows how the focus group of students considered and reacted to learning civilization with primary sources. Analysis is equally concerned with teacher's use of primary sources and demonstrates his ideas on the beneficial sides when such material is integrated into civilization lessons.

Presentation of Results

The study found that the use of primary sources in civilization teaching had a profound influence when students were provided with background information and stimulate discussion about the studied material.

The research was based on two essential questions that needed answers to measure the importance of primary sources in civilization teaching: 1) How do students delineate their current civilization class, knowing that the class is designed around primary sources, and 2) what thinking skills do students in the study have?

The study revealed that 31 of the 34 Master's students who took part in the survey thought their current class was different from the ones they had taken before. Two factors shaped their opinion: The integration of primary sources for the first time in a more intensive way, and autonomous learning in small groups. It is also remarked that 28 students in the study significantly strengthened their civilization lesson comprehension in comparison with the rest of lessons taken in other courses which were not structured around primary sources. 27 students in the study said they liked civilization more after taking their current class where primary sources were a center. Four students were reticent and admitted that they needed more time and 3 students preferred to keep the old method based on the teacher's explanation and insisted on handouts.

As an answer to the second question on thinking skills acquisition by Master's students, it was noticed that these students were skilful to observe details from primary source documents, add extra information to the documents in hand, debate causes and consequences related to the documents, make their own connections, and bring evidence to support their thinking about the documents. Combined with the expressed level of motivation, it appears from this study results that the majority of the focus group was overwhelmingly in favor of the practice and its expansion to all courses on condition they become habituated to the novel strategy.

The last task of students was to hand in their own written summary of the lesson to evaluate their comprehension degree. If students mentioned specific information from the primary sources in their summary, 4 students based their conclusions on information that was not available in the document, confirming their lack of understanding of primary sources. Twenty-eight showed an understanding. However, to progressively develop this understanding, students need adequate scaffolding, familiarity with a topic, background information, and class discussions to help them investigate primary sources.

The study was based on three analysis models: Observe, reflect, and question. During the observe phase, students were asked to identify and notice details. Basic questions were asked like describe what students see, read or hear. What they noticed first or what they noticed that they could not explain. In the reflect phase the students were asked to form a hypothesis and test it

out. So they might ask probing questions such as who do they think created this sort of source and why? How do they think the source was created? What tools were used and where do they think the source came from: place and time? Finally in the third phase of the analysis process, the question phase is where students asked questions that helped them clarify what they were analyzing and what they were researching and could be asked the question what they were still wondering about which might lead to more observations. The whole process is identifiable through its six 'Es': Engage, explore, explain, extend, and evaluate.

Discussion and Interpretation

The results obtained from the student interest survey are highly promising in that they clarify what types of primary sources they are able to explore. It is remarked that students preferred to be taught a civilization topic employing primary source images, political cartoons, or posters rather than the one relying on primary source newspaper articles, speeches, or other long texts. They believed that long text primary sources fostered the least discussion among students, which might have restrained their interest in studying those subjects.

Students were in fact attracted to primary sources according to their types. For instance, the majority preferred to explore photographs, political cartoons, and posters because they were convinced that this material generated lively, fun, substantive discussion. It should be taken into account that civilization teaching has always been based on the teacher's explanation, verbatim note-copying, and old-new handouts, a traditional way that allows only some students to successfully grasp information, while a large portion of them were absent-minded and visibly bored by it. However, those same students adopted a completely different behavior by becoming lively and showing deep interest when they got involved in the discussion or analysis of primary source pictures. This evidence mirrors the fact that for visual learners, integrating such primary source material into civilization teaching turned many of the participants from civilization despisers into civilization enthusiasts. The positive change did not only affect participants who were reluctant to classical lecturing and note-taking or copying but the whole student focus group who admitted that it was the first time they experienced primary source-based teaching during which this action research created a favorable learning environment that kept them provisionally far from the boring routine of a non-stop dictation from the teacher's notes and handouts reading.

The results of this study corroborate those previously achieved by teachers on primary sources use in the civilization course. The obtained positive results from the present case study support the idea of expanding the incorporation of primary sources into civilization lessons to finally initiate our students to get involved instead of keeping them isolated from any contact with the real world of autonomous research.

The primary source materials are found to be an effective but ignored teaching tool that provides students with direct access to a period of one or more individuals, or a specific event/s, encourages them to be in the heart of the matter and establish links between history and human experiences. This type of tool leads to further research since each piece is in itself a 'snapshot' that reflects a slice of life or history.

When teachers use primary sources they are really able to engage students and get them excited about learning. When teachers facilitate the analysis of primary sources with students, they are helping them build knowledge through a profound degree of content comprehension. Primary sources allow students to acquire a deeper understanding of civilization as a discipline in

addition to a more favorable and valuable learning experience. Consequently, students have a free but unexploited means to develop higher-level critical thinking skills and historical empathy.

Historical documents such as letters, text, files, papers, drawings, articles and other pieces of information left behind by those who have left this world, are real treasures for civilization research. Students should learn to read primary sources. But reading a source to find out evidence and reading it to find information requires two different approaches. Books in the field of civilization are usually used to look for information. Primary sources can be read differently. To use them well, they should be placed in their historical context and make assumptions to better understand what was happening when they were created.

Starting a civilization lesson with a primary source image is a powerful way to introduce a topic and it is oftentimes less threatening to the student who struggle with reading fluency and comprehension. Last when the teacher uses primary sources he encourages the student to think creatively and critically. However, it remains necessary to provide adequate background so the student can successfully decode the document. Ideal as it may appear, it is not wise to try to teach a survey of civilization entirely from primary sources (Musbach 31).

Conclusion

From this research, our intention becomes manifest testifying that relying on primary sources in the civilization classroom can be very effective if they are used properly. We fully adhere to Christine Compston's remarks that at its simplest level, a primary source provides students with information about the past for the purpose of making civilization alive and offers them the opportunity to explore "a firsthand account of a noteworthy event, a handwritten draft of a famous speech, a well-worn tool, a letter to a loved friend, a photograph of a family gathering, the business records of a colonial artisan, the notes leading to an important invention or scientific discovery" witnessing that civilization "is about real people and the events that shaped their lives, as well as the actions individuals took that shaped events"(4).

The critical use of primary source documents offers students an opportunity that is characterized by "the comprehensive process of confronting multiple dilemmas, speculate, think critically, and make personal and civic decisions based on information from multiple perspectives" (qtd. in Patterson, Lucas, and Kithinji 68) and thus allows him to understand the human side of history/culture. For instance, when teachers of civilization adopt the use of primary sources: images, photographs and prints, they are helping students build visual literacy skills.

Without background, the student will not grasp the meaning of much that he will read. While he may be willing to do some research to understand a document, he will give up if the document is too complex. Ultimately, the time is ripe to widely adopt this teaching strategy especially when such sources are digitally available free of charge waiting for teachers and students alike to explore them. Primary source documents inclusion in teaching civilization is highly advantageous. The most prominent advantage of the strategy is the way in which the student is engaged to learn, shape, and enhance his critical thinking about civilization and its basic components history and culture.

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Explicit Grammar Teaching Pays off: the Case of Moroccan EFL University Students

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Abstract

This article investigates Moroccan university students' grammatical competence. It verifies a hypothesis stating that after at least five years of explicit instruction of grammar, students should still retain grammatical knowledge. To do so, Swan and Baker's *Grammar Scan Expert* tests were administered to 73 students almost a year after their last course of grammar. Results show that they scored quite well in some structures and that they benefited from both explicit and implicit instruction. However, they scored lower than expected in the grammar structures covered in the four grammar courses they had taken in semesters 1 through 4.

Key words: *Arab learners, explicit instruction, learning EFL grammar*

Introduction

Communicative competence, including grammatical competence, has received a great deal of attention in second language teaching and learning (Canale and Swain, 1980; Savignon, 2011). This competence requires form-function-context mappings which can be put simply as producing accurate and appropriate exchanges and/or sentences. However, before second / foreign language learners reach a good level of proficiency they move from “ignorance through inaccuracy to accuracy” (Shepherd, 2010, p. 354). Particularly, grammar is an essential component of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980) and its teaching and learning have been largely investigated from different perspectives, starting from zero-grammar claims (Krashen, 1981, 1982, 1993) to the consensus reported after surveying a large body of research showing that there is enough evidence to argue for the teaching of grammar (see Ellis, 2006, for many studies arguing for this). Within this framework, this study investigates whether non-native speakers perform well in grammar nearly a year after having received explicit teaching of grammar for four semesters.

Moroccan learners join English departments at university after studying English as a second foreign language for four years in the secondary school. They receive input in which grammar is an important component. At university, they have grammar as a subject for four semesters but many of them still show modest performance of accurate and appropriate choice of structures and words both in their spoken and written productions. Reforms implemented in Moroccan universities (2003, 2009, 2014) all aimed to prepare graduates for the job market or for graduate studies. Ideally, BA holders from the departments of English must attain a degree of communicative competence that will allow them to use their knowledge of English as appropriately and as accurately as possible. However, more reforms are still needed. This state of affairs brings many questions to the surface: is the teaching of grammar handled effectively? Are the students making good use of grammar input? What needs more improvements? How are the improvements to be implemented? Within the framework of these questions, this paper diagnoses students’ weaknesses so as to suggest effective ways for remediation. It attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which grammatical structures do EFL learners retain almost a year after explicit learning of grammar?
2. To what extent is explicit teaching of grammar useful for constructing grammatical competence?

1. Review of the literature

Communicative competence is the aim of any language teaching program including university programs such as the English Studies programs in Moroccan Universities. Extensive research has been done on the nature of communicative competence since it was first coined by Hymes (1971) as a reaction to Chomsky’s (1965) competence and performance dichotomy in addressing knowledge of language. Subsequent research has resulted in communicative frameworks that address teaching communicative competence (Savignon, 1972; Munby, 1978; Canale and Swain, 1980, 1989, 2001; Brown, 2007), and testing communicative competence (Bachman, 1990). The communicative competence, which any system of education targets, is defined in *The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* as: “knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community” (Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p.

99). It includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980).

Grammar has been a controversial and thorny issue of investigations. In an attempt to address the outcomes of research in this area, Ellis (2006) asks eight key questions in a state-of-the-art article on issues in the teaching of grammar such as whether to teach grammar or not, what type of grammar, when to teach grammar, the role of explicit teaching etc (see those questions pp. 83-84). Referring to mainly empirical and classroom-oriented research, he attempts to answer those questions and raises controversies each question has brought. One major conclusion confirms that zero grammar approach has not been adequately backed up and that, instead: “[T]here is ample evidence to demonstrate that teaching grammar works” (Ellis, 2006, p. 102). This conclusion has insightfully enlightened the situation which used to be such “an ill-defined domain” despite more than 20 years of research into grammar teaching methodology (Borg, 1999, p. 157).

However, the findings, confirming that the teaching of grammar has become accepted and has yielded better learning results, have not ended the controversy; rather, other thorny issues still persist. One of these issues is the role of explicit instruction in the teaching of grammar. The debate around this role has been around for more than three decades, mainly since Krashen (1981) put forward his dichotomy of ‘learning’ vs. ‘acquisition’ and claimed no interface between the two. He then discouraged the explicit teaching of grammar claiming that learners would ‘pick up’ the rules and would implicitly acquire language if they were exposed to gradual and adequate input. Among the research studies that directly questioned this theory was Schmidt’s (1990) noticing hypothesis. In this hypothesis, Schmidt brings consciousness and awareness, and in practical terms formal instruction, to the surface. Two decades later, he (Schmidt, 2010) clings to his hypothesis as follows:

“The solution I proposed [to the controversial debate on the role of awareness and attention can play in SLA whereas it has no role in L1 acquisition] (Schmidt, 1990, 2001) was to distinguish between “noticing” as a technical term limited to the conscious registration of attended specific instances of language, and “understanding,” a higher level of awareness that includes generalizations across instances. Knowledge of rules and metalinguistic awareness of all kinds belong to this higher level of awareness. My proposal is that noticing is necessary for SLA, and that understanding is facilitative but not required.” (n. p.)

After reviewing major challenges and objections to the noticing hypothesis that occurred in the literature, Schmidt admits that “none of these objections to the Noticing Hypothesis can be easily dismissed and some clearly have merit”; on the other hand, he claims that the hypothesis has not been refuted (Schmidt, 2010, n.p.). However, other issues have been raised which address learners’ individual differences together with some grammar structures being learned more easily than others. Such differences are related to motivation, language aptitude, age, previous language experiences etc. but neither the space nor the scope of this paper allows for more elaboration of these issues (see DeKeyser, 2005; Schmidt, 2010; *inter alias*). The second issue, of why some grammar structures are learned more easily than others, has been investigated in an attempt to improve the teaching of grammar. DeKeyser (2005) reviews what makes learning second language grammar difficult and relates difficulty to (1) *meaning* with regards to novelty, abstractness or both; (2) *form* as in morphological and syntactic features; and (3) *form-meaning mapping* which can be characterized by redundancy, optionality, opacity, and word

order in syntactic forms. Frequency and transparent form-meaning mapping are reported to facilitate second language learning. More concretely, Ellis (2006), following previous studies, proposes the following determinants as factors of what makes four grammar features easy, or difficult thereof, to learn: frequency, saliency, functional value, regularity, and processability. Through a rigorous methodology eliciting both implicit (based on Oral Imitation Test and Timed GJT –Grammaticality Judgement Test--) and explicit (based on Untimed GJT Ungrammatical sentences and Metalinguistic Knowledge Test) knowledge outcomes, he identifies four problematic features in implicit knowledge and evaluates them against the aforementioned determinants as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: Grammatical complexity of four implicit features (Ellis, 2006, p. 457)

Grammatical structure	Frequency	Saliency (low/high)	Functional complexity	Regularity	Easy/difficult to process
Indefinite article	High	Low	Complex	Irregular	Difficult
Embedded questions	Medium	Low	Complex	Regular	Difficult
Unreal conditions	Low	Low	Complex	Regular	Difficult
Question tags	Low	High	Complex	Regular	Difficult

He also identifies three structures that are difficult to learn through explicit knowledge, namely unreal conditionals, ergative verbs, and dative alternation, and explains that their high conceptual complexity results in their difficulty. Both correlational and regression analyses confirm a relationship between implicit and explicit grammatical scores and proficiency scores as measured by IELTS.

Formal instruction has also been investigated in a large body of research and the major consensus calls for its consistency with SLA theories. Nunan (1998) criticizes grammar materials, including textbooks, that unfold in a linear fashion and that focus only on form rather than function or how the forms are used to communicate meaning. Instead, he suggests an organic approach which will “show them [students] how to achieve their communicative ends through the appropriate deployment of grammatical resources” (p. 103). Examples of a variety of activities are successfully designed in Azar’s UUEGi CDROM, albeit not necessarily organic (see Bouziane, 2005), in which the teaching of grammar takes place through a skill-rich context in which grammar input is provided via all the skills in a variety of activities that make the learning experience more enjoyable. The same author (Azar, 2007) goes even further to suggest a grammar-based approach whose inclination differs from that of focus on form: “Generally speaking, FonF [focus on form] seeks to integrate a grammar component into a CLT [communicative language teaching] curriculum. GBT [grammar-based teaching] seeks to integrate CLT into a structural syllabus, usually in one class (often called a grammar class) within a larger, varied curriculum.” (p. 4). Alternatively, and instead of following types of activities in the teaching of grammar such as PPP model (Present-Practice-Produce) which includes ARC model (Authentic Use-Restricted Use-Clarification) and ESA model (Engage-Study-Activate), Balstone and Ellis (2009) suggest an approach informed by the premise that “[E]ffective grammar instruction must complement the processes of L2 acquisition” (p. 195)

consisting of three principles. The first is *the given-to-new principle* which basically calls for involving the learners' knowledge about the world (given) in introducing or explaining new forms or in their own words: "how a meaning they are already familiar with is expressed by a particular grammatical form" (Balstone and Ellis, 2009, p. 195). The second is *the awareness principle*, which is "directed at making learners aware of how a particular meaning is encoded by a particular grammatical form." (p. 197), and which calls for learners' attending to form-meaning mapping through explicit understanding by exposing students to tasks that will gradually and operationally help with consciousness raising or by encouraging them to monitor their own output. The third is *the real-operating conditions principle* which calls for giving learners opportunities of experiencing the form-meaning mapping in natural-like settings; that is, in communicative situations similar to those common outside classrooms. In brief the two authors describe their approach as

"... the guidance must seek to ensure that what is new is based on what is given and that students pay conscious attention (and possibly develop metalinguistic understanding) of the target feature as a basis for using the feature in real-operating conditions." (p. 200).

Importantly, Scheffer and Cinciala (2011) provide some evidence for the explicit grammar rules being likely to contribute to second language acquisition. The participants in their study (20 upper-intermediate students), were able in most cases (81%) to explain the rules underlying the accurate sentences they produced spontaneously in an oral activity.

Despite the continuous research confirming the effectiveness of instruction in the teaching of grammar, some researchers still doubt its effectiveness. Murphy and Hastings (2006), arguing against explicit grammar teaching and parodying their previous claims (Hastings and Murphy, 2004), assert that grammar is so complicated that even textbook writers fail to put accurate rules for learners to learn it. However, while the two writers criticize textbooks and repeat the real challenges that explicit teaching is attempting to overcome, they do not refute the empirical research findings that argue for it. Particularly in writing, Truscott (1996) surveys various research studies on the effectiveness of feedback to grammar in writing and has concluded that the outcome is unsatisfactory as no way of error treatment proves to be adequately effective. As a result, Truscott (1996) discourages the correction of errors, at least the way it is carried out now, as he strongly believes it is useless and even harmful. Later, Truscott and Yi-Ping Hsu (2008) confirm that correction is effective only when errors are corrected across drafts rather than across written products; hence the lack of learning. However, Truscott's claims are revisited in a study by Van Beuningen et al. (2012) in which they show that comprehensive feedback leads to improvements not only in revised drafts but also in new pieces of writing.

Particularly in the Arab World, findings of previous research document deficiencies in grammar in students' written products. Nemassi (1991) reports that grammar errors represent the highest percentage of the errors made by the Moroccan high school students in the compositions of their last year of studies. Similarly, Bouziane (2002) finds a trade-off relationship in Moroccan high school students' narratives between error-free T-units and years of schooling. At the tertiary level, Dahbi (1984) has computed the fewest error-free T-units in the First Year university students with an average mean of 11.66 as opposed to 15.24, 15.86, and 18.06 in the Second, Third, and Fourth Years, respectively (p.66). On a broader scale, El-daly (2011) studies errors made by five Arabic and five Spanish natives in their narrative and persuasive written products and finds that in their narratives, both groups share errors in seven categories: (1)

tenses, (2) subject-verb agreement, (3) prepositions, (4) nouns, (5) pronouns, (6) missing direct object and (7) articles. Arab students' errors in tenses come to 40.9% of the total errors made in the narrative essays, followed by those of prepositions (13.6%) and subject-verb agreement errors (11.4%) whereas the Spanish natives' errors come in a different order with verb morphology representing 33.8%, followed by nouns with 14.7% and then prepositions and tenses in equal order of 11.8%. In the persuasive prose, however, the two groups share the following errors: (1) prepositions, (2) verbs, (3) articles, (4) subject-verb agreement, (5) tenses, and (6) nouns. In the Arab natives' persuasive essays, prepositions come first (28%), followed by articles and nouns (12% each) and then tense and subject-verb agreement errors representing an even 8%. The author's findings confirm that students' performance differs from a writing task to another and from one correction task to another and thus supports the variability position which "maintains that L2 learners' performance varies according to the kind of language use that they engage in and the kind of knowledge that they acquire." (p. 103).

More specifically, three grammatical items deserve more attention, namely tenses (especially the past tenses), articles, and prepositions as they remain problematic for Moroccan and Arab students. The mastery of tense has been reported to be too complicated for ESL/EFL learners. For example, McCarthy (1991) refers to it as "traditional stumbling blocks for learners" (p. 62) and Meziani (1984) as "the **bête noire** of Moroccan learners" (p. 60). In particular, the meaning and functions of the simple past, which appear to have simple explanations, are claimed to be complicated even for very advanced learners (Riddle, 1986, Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995). Kambal (1980) reports that Sudanese university students made the greatest number of errors in tense in the descriptive, narrative, and argumentative genres with the highest frequency in the narrative (40%, the second most frequent error comes to 21.01%). Specifically in the Moroccan EFL context, Chamsi (1982) claims that most mistakes the Moroccan students make can be attributed to L1 interference. She contrasts the past tense in English and in Moroccan Arabic and points out that there are only six areas where the two languages agree. She thus concludes that "it is therefore not surprising that Moroccan learners find it difficult to grasp the past tense in English" (p. 116).

Besides interference, other researchers attribute errors of tense to two main reasons: (1) oversimplified and confusing explanations provided in textbooks and grammar books; and (2) the complexity of tense system in English. DeCarrico (1986) raises the problem of ambiguity at the semantic level as many grammarians use "tense" and "aspect" interchangeably. Meziani (1985) criticizes the superficial and simplified analyses of tenses provided by grammar books and raises the confusion such analyses may cause.

Another grammar structure, which is problematic for the Moroccan students, is the article system in English. Because this type of error is so frequent in the Moroccan students' written products it needs special analysis. Meziani (1984) found that article errors came third, after "tense" and "prepositions", with a frequency of 17.72 % of the total number of errors in the studied corpus (50 narratives by Third-Year secondary school students).

Other research studies on Arab students attribute the sources of difficulties to three main aspects: (1) Arabic interference; (2) inadequate teaching/ learning; and (3) the complexity of the English system. Kharma (1981) reports instances of interlingual interference but asserts that "... it is mostly inadequate teaching that is responsible for most of the errors" (Kharma, 1981, p. 23). Al-Johani (1982) describes in detail the use of articles in both Standard English and Modern Standard Arabic and points out that there is a striking similarity between the distributions of the uses of the articles in the two languages. However, he reports some differences as well. He

explains that generic articles are the most problematic when the two languages are contrasted as he rightly claims: "the difference between the definite generic article in English and Arabic is a major source of interference and difficulty. This is due to the fact that each language expresses the concept of genericness by a different article" (p.275). However, he claims that the data reported in research on error analysis show that learners of the two languages frequently make errors in shared features of the articles. He then explains that "this means that the learners are not sufficiently made aware of the proper uses of the articles in their own language as well as in the target language" (p. 276).

Similarly, Zreg (1983) attributes such deviant uses to the students' mother tongue interference. However, a cautious remark should be made here. Zreg chose more of contrasting uses of articles in Arabic and English than shared features between them and therefore came to percentages of wrong uses going up to 91.90% which, according to him, "were a result of interpretation of the context in their [students'] native language" (p. 246). Particularly devoted to articles, Alhaysony's (2012) study attributes the article errors made by 100 female Saudi students in their written products to interlingual causes, 57.4%, and the remaining 42.6% to intralingual errors with a high frequency of omission and addition and few instances of substitution errors.

However, another major difficulty can be attributed to the oddity of English articles as compared to other European languages. Standwell (1997) has described the articles to be "an untidy area in each language which has them, and unfortunately each language is untidy in a different way" (p. 269). Very specifically with English, the same author provides examples which contrast English with other European languages in the use of articles, and thus comes to the conclusion that English "... clearly appears to be the odd man out in article usage" (p. 275). It is therefore legitimate to attribute some of the errors of article usage to the weird article system of English.

To sum up, the sources of difficulty are mainly due to the lack of mastery of the English article system which happens to be sophisticated and odd. However, the language interference share should not be overlooked because of the contrasts between English and Arabic article systems (see the differences between the English and Arabic article systems in Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; cited in Alhaysony, 2012, p. 58).

"Aside from the correct usage of English articles, the greatest problem facing the student of English as a second language is, no doubt, the correct usage of certain English prepositions.", reports Takahaski (1969, p. 217). The latter clarifies the logic underlying the use of four prepositions (*at*, *to*, *on*, and *in*) by resorting to other disciplines such as geometry and philosophical and mathematic logic. Khampang (1974) administers three types of diagnostic tests on prepositions of place and time to groups of students from different nationalities (Thai, Japanese, Spanish, and other) in which all the students showed difficulties with prepositions with no specific difficulties related to a certain nationality. The findings also report that there are no differences related to sex, age, number of years or number of hours per week spent in learning English. "One of the particular problems with prepositions is that they carry so little meaning that it is tempting to distinguish a great number of distinct uses for each preposition; in this way most prepositions appear to be strongly polysemous." (Bates, 1976, p. 353). Mueller (2011) starts his investigation from the premises that the prepositions are so opaque that they constrain L2 learners to master them through explicit learning. Instead, the ninety students from three different nationalities (30 Chinese, 30 Korean, and 30 Spanish) in his study used their knowledge of the meaning of the preposition to use the appropriate prepositions in the test. He thus suggests that learning semantically complex features is done through implicit learning based on big

amounts of input. Kemmerer (2005) claims that although spatial and temporal English prepositions have widely been processed in the TIME IS SPACE metaphor premises, the temporal meanings may operate independently of spatial meanings. His evidence emanates from two of brain-damaged participants in his study who scored far better on temporal matching test than on the spatial matching test. He then confirms "... that impaired knowledge of the spatial meanings of prepositions does not necessarily lead to disrupted appreciation of the analogous temporal meanings of the same prepositions." (p. 802). The thorny and complex aspects of prepositions have resulted in the call for further research in all the aforementioned studies. It is not surprising, then, that some authors devote whole books to prepositions (e.g. Bennett, 1975 and Tyler and Evans, 2003, *inter alias*). Particularly, Arab learners are reported to face enormous problems in prepositions. Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) report that Arab learners make the majority of errors in syntax, specifically in prepositions which they qualify as a persistent problem (cited in Al shehab, 2013). Al shehab (2013) finds that prepositions are the most serious problem with the highest percentage of 19.2% of the total of errors committed by Jordanian students of translation.

This review of literature has confirmed that there is enough evidence for formal instruction of grammar including in other skills as writing. This claim does not, by any means, exclude implicit knowledge. The literature review also discusses why some grammar features are easier, and others more difficult, to learn and suggests some principled ways of teaching grammar which are informed by SLA principles. Furthermore it reports previous research studies on Arab learners' challenges in relation to three grammatical items.

2. Methodology of research

2.1. The participants

The participants in this study are 73 university students from the Faculty of Letters and Humanities Ben M'sik, Hassan II University. They have studied 32 subjects among which 24 are either English language subjects or subjects delivered in English as a medium of instruction. In their academic journey, these students have attended three-hour grammar classes for 4 semesters of 14 weeks each including teaching and testing time. They are expected to speak and write good English. After graduation, they are potential candidates for teacher training colleges or for master programs in country or abroad.

Prior to university, these students studied English for at least three years in high school. During this time, the main components of their learning evolved around grammar. In addition to the grammar input upon which most of the textbooks are based, students had special focus on grammar as it represented a big proportion of their exam mark (more than a third together with many other continuous assessment tests and quizzes addressing grammar only). Moreover, teachers insist on accuracy of productive skills by (over)correcting grammar mistakes in oral performance and focusing more on grammar and syntactic mistakes in written products. On a broader level, these students had studied two other languages before taking English, Standard Arabic and French. In both languages, the input was provided from a purely explicit grammar teaching perspective.

2.2. Data collection

Students voluntarily participated in the Grammar Scan. They were given the test papers in class after receiving adequate explanations of the objectives of the diagnostic test and how useful it would be for them and for the researchers. The participants had the choice to remain

anonymous. Due to the length of the expert section of the *Grammar Scan* and other conditions such as hot weather and the timing of the test, there were special arrangements for the students to finish the test a week later because the participants showed special interest in knowing their level on such a diagnostic test. Despite the clear interest the participants had shown, they voiced their concern about the length of the diagnostic tests.

A diagnostic test has been chosen for various reasons. One of them is that it is the ‘type of test that comes closest to being central to learning’ (Alderson, 2005:4). Also, implications can be drawn for improvements of syllabus design as the designers of the *Grammar Scan* tests clearly state: “The tests are best used for syllabus planning: to check learners’ strengths and weaknesses in particular linguistic areas, so as to show what still needs to be taught.” (Swan and Baker, 2008: vii). Moreover, the items in *Grammar Scan* seem to be closer to the input provided in the context being investigated than any other type of test (see the Appendix for details). A proficiency test, for example, would require special preparation and therefore would bias the study given that the preparation time would refresh students’ minds of their grammatical knowledge.

Specifically, the choice of the expert diagnostic grammar tests is mainly informed by the types of questions that Swan and Baker (2008) use to ‘tap into’ the students’ knowledge. We adhere to the authors’ ideas regarding grammar and correctness. The need for accuracy differs from one learner to another. For example, in our students’ case, they not only need a ‘practical working knowledge of English’ (Swan and Baker, 2008), but they also need to reach a level of proficiency that is high enough to enable them to enroll in graduate programs, join the teaching force and so on. It should be noted that the chosen tests do not require any prior preparation. The test contains 30 categories with each category containing diverse questions (see Appendix for details). It also contains items covered by the university system in Morocco (see Appendix). The questions in *Grammar Scan* for experts mostly address grammar judgement as many questions require the students to decide whether structures are right or wrong, normal / unusual or formal / informal or natural, British or American, to fill in the blank, or else to justify why a structure is correct or incorrect, etc.

2.3. Data analysis

The scoring of the diagnostic tests took about four weeks. The nature of the questions required a marking scheme that would not only attribute a mark to a correct answer but also take into account the various cases where the participants selected the correct answer and pointed out the answers that were wrong. The *Grammar Scan* as designed by Swan and Baker does not give a scoring scheme. For the purposes of this study, however, it is desirable to devise percentages of correct items in order to report revealing results. The participants’ scores were calculated and computed in as percentages of the correct answers in each test.

The percentages obtained from the descriptive statistics of the SPSS program were ranked in a descending way. The ranking also shows figures related to maximum and minimum, mean and standard deviation of the students’ scores as a group. As none of the participants scored zero in any test (see minimum scores in Table 3 below) and in order to avoid any extraneous effects, the missing values of the participant who skipped a test or did not finish all the tests were considered zero on SPSS.

3. Findings

The overall findings indicate that the students generally performed quite well as the

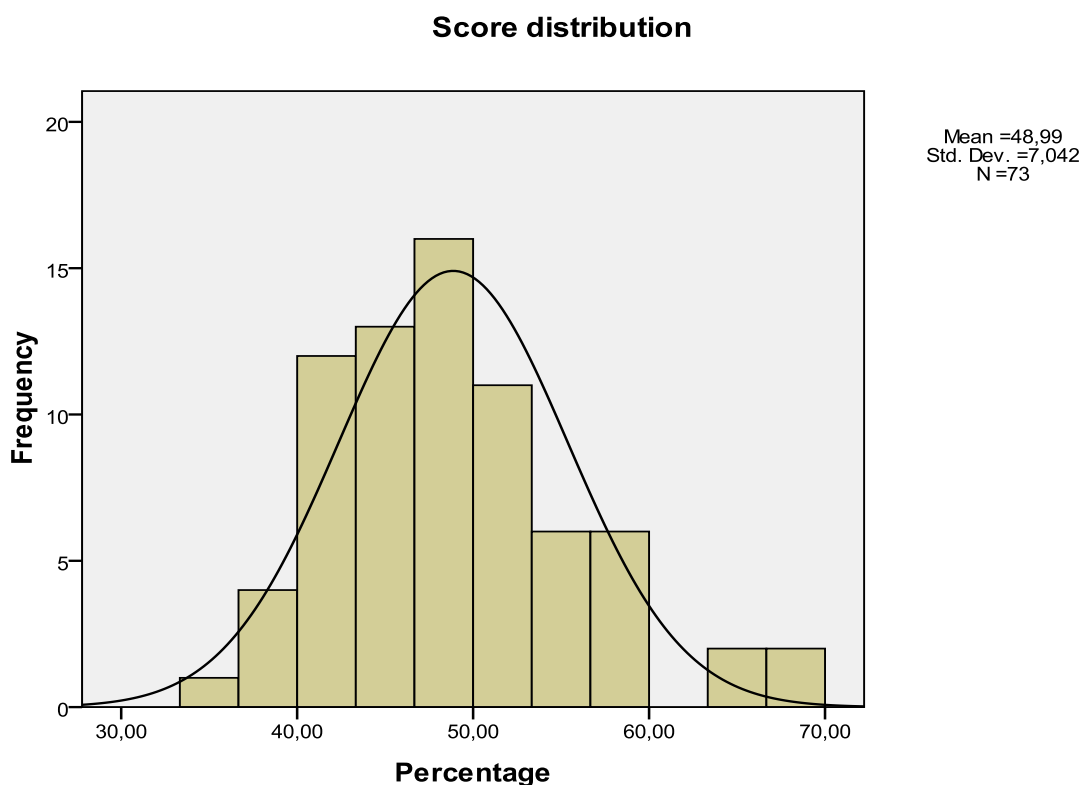
following table shows:

Table 2: Overall scores by Moroccan students on Grammar Scan

N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
73	48.99	48.60	50.00	7.04	33.85	68.85

The standard deviation, together with the close values of the central tendency measures, shows that the students' scores were not scattered a lot from the mean, though the range is quite wide at 35 points. Table 2 shows that nearly 50 % of the students showed knowledge of no less than 50% of the correct answers. The student with the lowest score showed good performance in a third of correct answers as opposed to the top student who scored nearly 70%. It is worth noting here that not all the students did all the exercises (see N in table 3 below for the number of students who did each exercise). The students' distribution was quite normal as the following graph shows:

Graph 1: Distribution of the scores obtained by Moroccan students on Grammar Scan



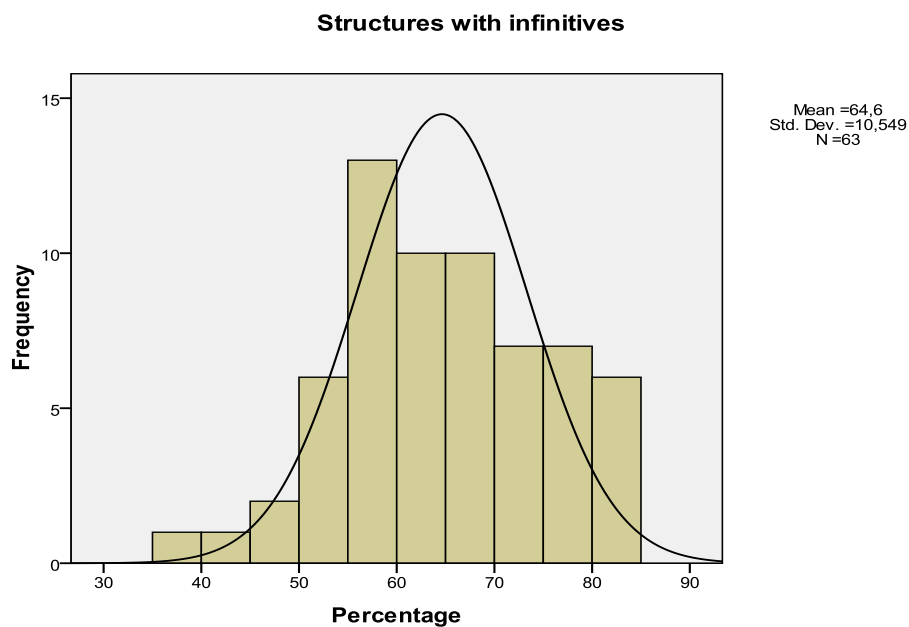
A close look at the above graph reveals that most students, 44%, scored between 40 and 50% and that those who scored between 40 and 60% represent 88% with only 7% who scored less than 40%. The details of the results and their ranking in a descending way are as follows:

Table 3: Ranking of correctly answered grammar items

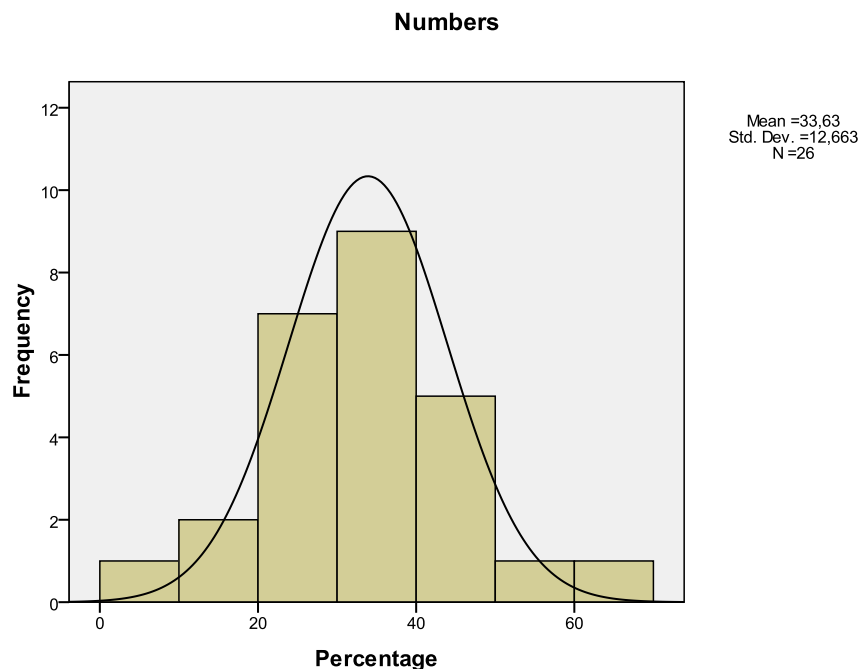
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	STD
Structures with infinitives	63	36	82	64.6	10.54
Relatives	28	37	77	61.22	8.71
Special sentence structures	27	35	75	56.57	9.74
Passives	58	6	82	55.28	15.22
Determiners 2: other determiners	33	39	68	54.82	7.31
ing-forms and past participles	63	26	74	54.28	9.62
Nouns	39	36	72	53.95	8.02
Pronunciation	25	10	81	53.52	21.35
Modal verbs 1	67	33	75	51.78	10.53
Words: other vocabulary problems	25	34	64	51.28	8.10
Social aspects of English	26	34	70	51.21	8.90
Questions, negatives and imperatives	28	33	75	50.98	10.06
Determiners 1: articles, possessives and demonstratives	35	34	72	50.86	8.20
Words 2: other confusable words	25	37	67	50.03	9.27
Spoken grammar	27	33	64	49.38	5.927
Verbs: some special structures	45	17	67	49.1	10.16
Adjectives and adverbs	30	2	63	48.1	13.54
Linking words ; verbs in subordinate clauses	28	34	67	48.05	9.92
Pronouns	36	13	81	47.76	12.76
Indirect speech	28	28	72	47.41	10.75
If	28	24	65	47.06	10.28
Words 1: similar words	26	25	69	46.05	10.99
Comparison	28	19	67	45	11.07
Present and future verbs	68	15	76	42.06	13.43
Modal verbs 2	64	19	65	40.27	11.98
Auxiliary verbs	68	20	80	39.85	12.87
Past and perfect verbs	68	20	62	39.26	10.17
Prepositions	28	22	47	36.83	6.23
Special kinds of English	24	13	60	35.28	12.18
Numbers	26	9	68	33.63	12.66

The N column stands for the number of students who took each test. Actually, there is no correlation between the number of students who took the tests and the scores ($r=-.005$). It is thus very unlikely that the students avoided some tests because they were difficult.

The test with the highest mean is the *Structures with Infinitives* and here are the details:

Graph 2: Distribution of the scores in the test with the highest scores

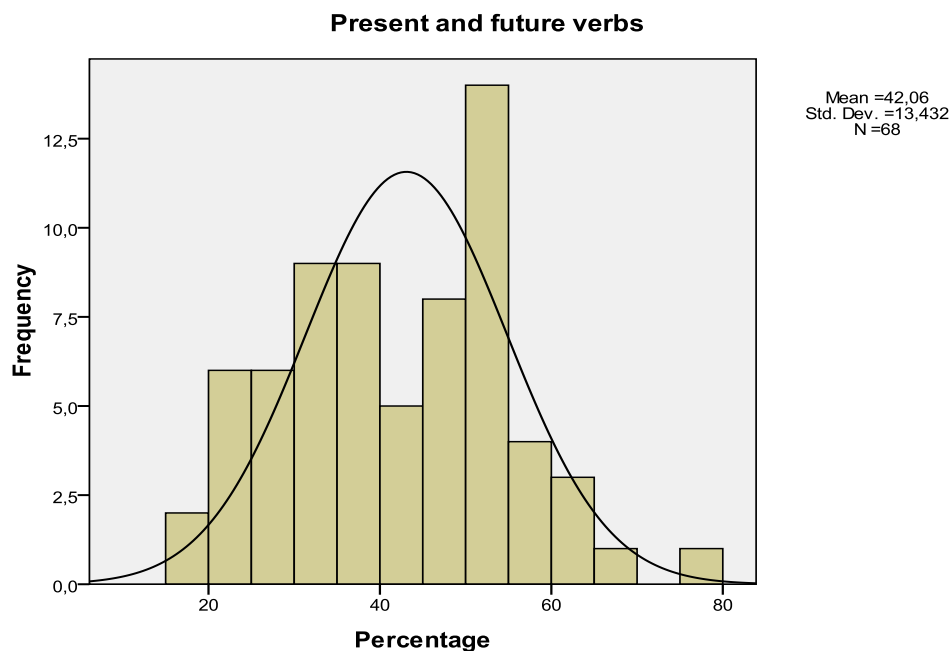
An explanation for the students' good performance on this test can be attributed to the saliency of the questions in this test together with the frequency of this activity in the grammar input. However, the test with the lowest scores is that of *Numbers*:

Graph 3: Distribution of the scores in the test with the lowest scores

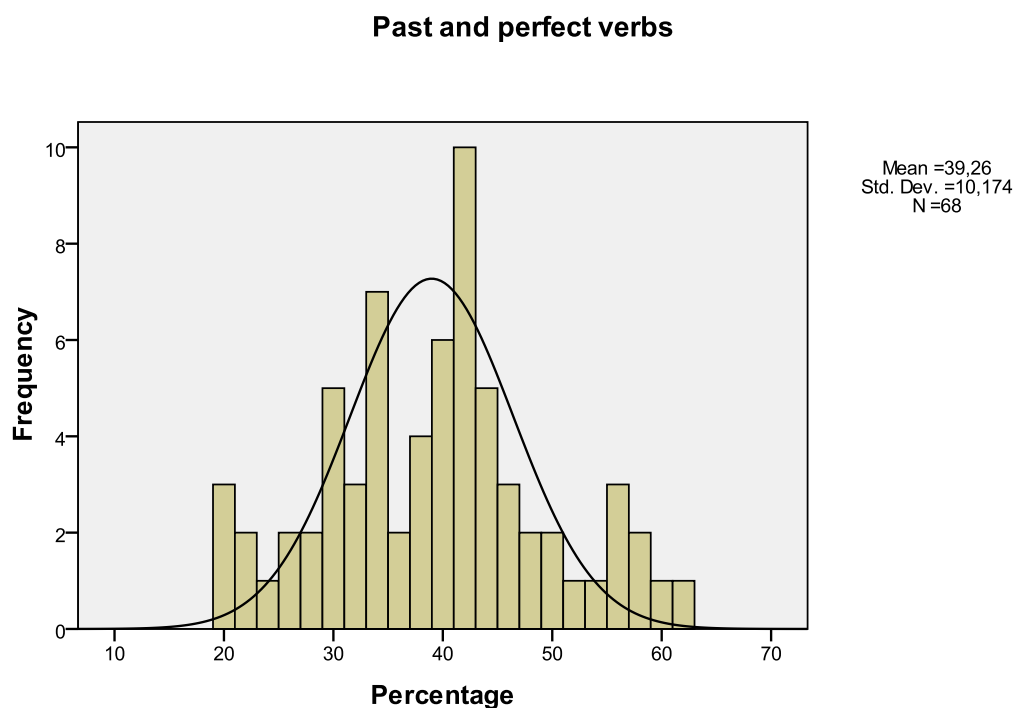
The low scores can be attributed to the fact that students are not familiar with such exercises as they were not part of their grammar syllabi.

Of the thirty tests, the students showed a lot of variations in two tests which are related to tenses:

Graph 4: Distribution of the scores of the Present and Future Verbstest



Graph 5: Distribution of the scores of the Past and Perfect Verbs test



These variations reflect the different levels demonstrated by the students in their acquisition of tenses especially the past and perfect tenses (see the discussion above) and related

items such as indirect speech. Ironically, the tenses are the most taught items as the curricula in the secondary school system in Morocco are structurally based on them together with the big amount of time allotted to these items in the tertiary level and large space they take in grammar textbooks. It should be admitted that there are structures with larger standard deviations but their ranges are smaller than that of the structure in Graphs 4 and 5 or their distributions are not as scattered.

In the light of the above findings, the answers to the research questions come to the following: the students retain various grammatical items, though in varying degrees, after an interval of nearly a year after their formal learning of grammar. They show enough knowledge of grammar to enable them to operate quite confidently in English but this knowledge needs output instruction in the framework of form-function-context mappings so that it can be reflected in their performance, oral or written. It seems that explicit instruction, to answer the second research question, has helped with some structures but not with others. Some structures were also acquired implicitly, which leaves enough room for implicit instruction.

4. Discussion of the findings

The results show that only some structures that have been covered, both in secondary and tertiary levels, have been adequately acquired by the students in the study. The latter use structures which have not been formally taught in class more accurately than others that have been taught, practiced and tested in class; namely tenses (past and present simple and continuous), modals (past and present), and conditionals (real and unreal). Also, despite the amount of time and energy spent on certain structures, their acquisition may require to be taught otherwise. Modals, for example, are taught for about four to five weeks at a rate of three hour-classes a week. An equally important amount of time is devoted to conditionals with around three three-hour classes. The students under study fail to show full mastery of the grammatical structures targeted by the syllabus. Instead, they have shown a fair grasp of grammatical structures that were not targeted by the syllabus. Given the varied input to which they were exposed, through formal instruction such as content classes delivered in English, assigned readings and research or through incidental learning through movies and radio, the Internet and social media, they may have informally acquired the grammatical structures in which they scored higher. This finding backs up the idea that grammar knowledge can be developed through both explicit and implicit approaches. The role of explicit instruction has been highlighted in the literature (see review of the literature above) but the role of implicit instruction should not be neglected.

However the variable of context should not be neglected in the teaching of grammar. Mallia (2014), while investigating Sudanese students' preferences between inductive or deductive approaches to the teaching of grammar and referring to previous research in the Middle East, reports that "... fewer *a priori* generalizations should be made about any single approach being a suitable 'one size fits all', notwithstanding the large volume of literature about approaches adopted for teaching grammar globally, including the Middle East ..." (p. 223). He found that deductive and inductive approaches did not bring any significant differences in students' outcomes after his experiment, though the students overwhelmingly showed preference to deductive delivery. He thus calls for adopting any approach but the key to effective delivery is to account for contextualisation through providing socially-relevant examples. Particularly in the Moroccan setting, the context plays an important role in the teaching and learning of grammar. As mentioned above, the students in this study had already learned two languages, classical

Arabic and French, before taking English. They learned grammars of the two languages through explicit instruction with an enormous tendency to the deductive approach. They were also deductively assessed and a quick look at the textbooks of Arabic and French in primary and secondary levels will provide evidence for this. Therefore the explicit instruction will prevail in the teaching of grammar in the departments of English as long as the same approach is adopted in earlier levels of schooling. Added to this, is that their professors all learned grammar through explicit learning and therefore they are likely to favour it in their teaching.

Also, Moroccan students seem to share many challenges related to some grammatical items with ESL / EFL learners in general and Arab students in particular. The challenges of the structures like tense, article, and preposition systems in English suggest that the sources of such difficulties are the same and therefore further research is needed to understand them more in the hope of working out promising improvements.

5. Recommendations

The discussions above have questioned the effectiveness of the input of grammar both in secondary and tertiary levels. Actually, the Moroccan students study most of the structures in the secondary school system and reinforce these structures in the tertiary level. The weakness exists in the lack of horizontal and vertical coordination. There are no links, or any official mechanisms, which create bridges between secondary school and tertiary systems in Morocco. These two levels of schooling belong to two different ministries with hardly any interface between them. Similarly, the lack of bridges occurs across the subjects. While in the secondary system, the links are created through the textbooks being implemented, the tertiary level input remains compartmentalized. In order for the students to make use of the input provided by the grammar professor, they should see its relevance in the writing, reading, and speaking classes. There is also scarcity of research in university or secondary teaching practices and especially research based on experimentation. The limited available body of research is generally done to get degrees and is shelved in respective institutions' libraries. Added to all these is that the small amount of research done in Departments of English Studies deals mainly with cultural, literary, and recently media issues following the orientations of the professors working in each department.

Teacher professional development should be given due attention in Morocco within a holistic approach to teaching different subjects. It should be put in the fore in tenure and promotion schemes. The scientific community in Morocco should issue documents for novice as well as experienced teachers in order to give guidance of how to teach each subject together with how to create connections across other subjects. For example, in the teaching of grammar, the documents will tackle the different approaches to its teaching:

- Theoretical bases of the teaching of grammar
- Form-function-context mappings to explain that the teaching of grammar involves more than the teaching of grammar rules
- Focus on form and focus on forms
- Explicit and implicit instruction
- Deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar.

It should be noted that the above activities and approaches to the teaching of grammar should be taken from complementary perspectives rather than from mutually exclusive choices. Put simply, they should be taken from the *both / and* rather than *either / or* perspective. Added to these issue are the following:

- The criteria that make some structures more difficult to acquire than others
- How to connect grammar to other subjects
- Teaching grammar through other tasks / skills: task-based instruction, listening, writing, reading etc.
- State-of-the art overviews of the teaching of grammar to Arab students in general and to Moroccan students in particular.
- Corrective feedback and its impact on grammar acquisition to know which errors to correct, when, and how.
- How to test grammar

All the aforementioned items need in-depth discussions and investigations in the Moroccan context in order for the Moroccan teachers to understand the complexities of English grammar structures and act accordingly.

6. Limitations and future research

Like any other study, this one has limitations. One of these limitations has to do with the size of the sample which is too small to be representative. Besides, a more comprehensive study in which students, teachers, and curricula are involved is needed to come to more revealing findings. For example, teachers and students should provide interesting qualitative and quantitative information that will help with more in-depth understanding of grammar acquisition and delivery. Moreover, grammar acquisition can be checked through grammar tests or through students' performance in other skills, especially writing.

Another limitation is related to the test being used in this study. While it was designed for checking the mastery of the content of a certain book with its key suggesting self-study use, knowing its entire content is far from being an index of English grammar mastery. Also, being by nature a diagnostic test, it cannot, and should not, be used for gauging achievements in grammar acquisition. Also its format, mainly based on grammaticality judgement items, may not be the only suitable way for checking grammar knowledge. Grammaticality judgement has been proved to be problematic for such an exercise even for native speakers with a high level of instruction (see the body of research reported in Lennon, 1991; Bartram and Walton, 1991; James, 1977, 1994, 1998; and Moulin, 1998 *inter alia*s). Added to these is the novelty of this type of test to the Moroccan students. However, its diversity and comprehensiveness are the motives of selecting it in our study. Other types of tests and triangulation in data collection should be envisaged in future studies.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, this study shows that the teaching of grammar still needs more improvements to attain aspired results in Morocco. The results of the diagnostic test already indicate the usefulness of explicit instruction, even in the long term, and the importance of implicit input. However, more structuring of such inputs will lead to far better results.

The findings of this study are in line with those in previous research. This shows that Morocco shares the same, almost identical, linguistic system with North African countries and to a large extent many similar features with the Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, there is a room for collaborating to face common challenges.

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Appendix

Grammar syllabi in Semesters 1 to 4 in Moroccan universities	Grammar Scan components (number of questions)
- Parts of speech - Articles - Nouns - Adjectives - Adverbs - Prepositions - Conjunctions - Quantifiers - Verbs: Tenses: present tenses; past and perfect tenses; the future; conditional; present simple and continuous present perfect simple and continuous past perfect simple & continuous; future time: going to; present simple; present continuous; will+inf.; Future continuous; Future perfect Conditionals; tenses and conditionals in context. - Linking words - Modals - Conditionals - Modals: past time reference, present form ; continuous form; perfect form; negation of modality verb - Passives - Reported speech - Relative clauses - Phrases : types (noun, adjective, adverb, prepositional), and functions (subject, object, complement) - Clauses (relatives, defining, non-defining)	- Present and future verbs (11 questions) - Past and perfect verbs (18) - Auxiliary verbs (10) - Modal verbs 1 (21) - Modal verbs 2 (8) - Structures with infinitives (18) - <i>ing</i>-forms and past participles (18) - Passives (11) - Verbs: some special structures (13) - Nouns (24) - Pronouns (13) - Determiners 1 : articles, possessives and demonstratives (16) - Determiners 2: other determiners (20) - Adjectives and adverbs (17) - Comparison (11) - Prepositions (9) - Questions, negatives and imperatives (12) - Linking words ; verbs in subordinate clauses (16) - If (11) - Indirect speech (9) - Relatives (14) - Special sentence structures (17) - Spoken grammar (7) - Special kinds of English (8) - Social aspects of English (12) - Pronunciation (6) - Numbers (14) - Words 1: similar words (10) - Words 2: other confusable words (18) - Words 3: other vocabulary problems (18)

Errors Analysis: A Case Study of Saudi Learner's English Grammatical Speaking Errors

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Abstract

In the field of language learning and teaching, the errors analysis in second language acquisition has become more wide spread in recent years. This is especially the case in regard to learners who are in the early stages of learning a second language. The analysis of the errors made by second language learners while they communicate in the target language has received tremendous attention and consideration by researchers, linguists and EFL teachers throughout the world. In this study, the most common grammatical speaking errors of Saudi learners in intermediate level of English language were investigated and analysed. The purpose of the analysis was to find out more about the most common speech errors that Saudi students commit during the second language learning process and to provide further knowledge regarding the source of these errors. Accordingly, Oral interviews were employed for the collection of data, as the analysis in this study is based on spoken English. A total number of 30 Saudi Arabian students were interviewed personally. Interviews were transcribed in order to be analysed.

Keywords; Error analysis, grammatical errors, first language interference, Saudi Arabia, speaking

Introduction

Speaking is a complex process even when one is doing so in one's first language. Naturally, it becomes even more complicated when speaking in a second language. Researchers have sought to identify the most common errors made by second or foreign language learners in their writing or speaking. Moreover, speaking and writing are considered to be productive skills; learners use their knowledge of the second language, English in the case of this study to communicate. Error analysis provides an in-depth understanding of language learning and enables finding out the source behind these errors in the process of second language learning. Additionally, it aids with the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies and methods to help raise students' awareness of learning a foreign language, including how to do so more effectively.

For researchers and learners, the investigation of errors whether they are semantics, syntactic or phonological, and especially the source of these errors, is important and has a significant impact on understanding the level of the language learner. It also helps to determine the sufficiency and appropriateness of the level of second language learners, which is indicated by the proficiency of language use in communication. Language proficiency and especially accuracy in speaking can stand as an obstacle to communication using the target language. In addition, the meaning of words and the correct use of sentence structures in the second language can be altered because of the incorrect use of tenses and verb forms. This incorrect use can be a result of various factors, which may include the interference of the first language or personal and environmental factors. The interference occurs because of the differences between the systems of the mother tongue and the target language. According to Ellis (1997), recent research gives significant attention to the systematic study of how people can acquire a second language and how the language itself can be learnt. Moreover, second language acquisition involves personal characteristics and environmental factors, both of which influence the learning process. These can be counted as the main sources of error production. The evidence presented in this paper provided linguists, practitioners and researchers with the opportunity to learn more about how errors are produced and to discuss why learners make errors, the present study will examine how errors are acquired, since it will give a clear indication of the major sources of errors produced by Saudi students. The different sources of errors can be classified according to their importance and consistency, which may aid in the further development of English language learning and teaching. The present paper will discuss the most common grammatical errors in terms of frequency, made by Saudi students in Saudi Arabia with a specific focus on Arabic-speaking learners acquiring English as a second language. Reviewing these errors will allow for a critical justification of why they were accrued. Indeed, they will be distinguished and described in each category in order to provide a valuable understanding of the source behind committing these errors by Saudi students while learning English. Moreover, In the process of analysing and classifying grammatical errors which were spontaneously produced by Saudi learners, nine major categories were chosen to represent the specific, important errors commonly made by Saudi learners; the classification of these errors was, initially, based on the comparison between the grammatical structures of the two languages, English and Arabic. Certain errors were, and some of these errors were assumed the result of language transfer and the transference of some Arabic elements to the English language. In addition, some reflect the conflict between the two systems, as students often transfer and overgeneralise the rules of the two languages. Thus, an in-depth analysis of these errors is provided, which is to say, a relationship among the errors spoken by students will be examined in order to provide an area of comparison of the error sources. This will include, for instance, the linguistic differences between Arabic and English, the unconscious

development of student errors and the positive and negative interferences, as the role of the second language will be reasonably discussed.

Background of error analysis

However, before mentioning the resulting classifications of errors, it is worth mentioning the famous classification of errors in the field of language study. Richards (1971), in his study involving learners from different language backgrounds, demonstrated different types of errors relating to the production and distribution of verb groups, prepositions, articles and the use of questions. Based on this, he distinguished three sources of errors (as cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012, p. 6).

1. Interference errors, resulting from the use of elements from one language while speaking or writing another,
2. Intralingual errors, reflecting general characteristics of learning rules, such as faulty generalisation, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply,
3. Developmental errors, occurring when learners attempt to build up hypotheses about the target language based on limited experience.

Moreover, with improvements in the error analysis of adult learners of a second language, another important classification of errors has been added to the field of language study and error analysis. The classifications aid in understanding the sources of the errors as well as in justifying certain criteria chosen as the main guidelines for error analysis in this context. Though choosing a certain category is not easy, experts have also divided the error sources differently; for example, Schacheter and Celce-Murcia (1977) mentioned that distinguishing between intralingual and developmental errors is rather difficult. As a result, Richards (1974) classified errors into two categories according to their causes, which are as follows:

1. Interlingual errors: these errors are caused by mother tongue interference.
2. Intralingual and developmental errors: this kind of errors occurs during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not really acquired the knowledge. In addition, errors are also caused by the difficulty or the problem of language itself" (Heydari&Bagheri, 2012, p. 10).

Additionally, some experts believe that the distinction between intralingual and interlingual errors is not always as clear as is sometimes indicated. They also claim that it is more difficult to identify the various types of intralingual errors described by Richards (1971; as cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). In order to deal with this problem, Dulay and Burt (1974) classified learners' errors into three broad categories:

1. Developmental errors, which are similar to first language (L1) acquisition errors,
2. Interference errors, which reflect the structure of the L1,
3. Unique errors, which are neither developmental nor interference errors.

Moreover, Heydari and Bagheri (2012; as cited in Brown, 1994; as cited in Hasyim, 2002) further classified sources of errors into the following categories:

1. Interference transfer, which is the negative influence of the learner's mother tongue,
2. Intralingual transfer, which is the negative transfer of items within the target language. In other words, the incorrect generalisation of the rules within the target language,

3. Context of learning, which overlaps both types of transfers. For example, the classroom with the teacher and its materials in the case of school learning, or the social situation in the case of untutored second language learning. In a classroom context, the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to make a wrong generalisation about the language,
4. Communication strategies, which are the conscious employment of verbal mechanisms for communicating an idea when linguistic forms are not available to the learner for various reasons.

However, the categories mentioned are not limited to error classification, as the categories chosen to be represented in this case study are implied to have existed prior to the universal classification of errors. At the outset, it is still believed that the most frequent source of errors in second language acquisition no matter what the first language, is the transformation of rules from the first language to the foreign language. According to Collins in his study of errors analysis in second language learning, "learners of different L1 backgrounds may face similar types of challenges" (2007, p. 295). Thus, making decisions regarding the classification of errors and the most frequent grammatical errors is not an easy task, especially in speaking, as many language errors can be better focused and analysed in writing. The most frequent errors may differ from one learner to another, regardless of whether it is within the same context, within the same learning input or under individual circumstances.

Grammatical errors by Saudi Arabian students

Indeed, this study involved a thorough analysis of the data collected from a group of Saudi students. These students live and study in Saudi Arabia and still study at Tibah University in Madinah at the foundation year where this research was conducted. As will be discussed in detail later, a variety of grammatical errors were selected according to their consistency and frequency during students' speech. Accordingly, nine categories have been classified according to their consistency. These types of errors will be presented as the following classifications; unmarked form of verbs, misuse of the verb tense, misuse of articles, misuse of singular and plural, misuse of prepositions, use of sentences without a verb, sentences with pronoun copy, third person pronouns, and misuse of regular and irregular verbs. As the title indicates, only grammatical speaking errors will be the focus of this study. Syntactical transfer errors will consequently be discussed in depth. However, there will be no attempt made to compare or analyse the semantic features (lexical or idiomatic), use of vocabulary or phonological features, although these are important aspects of speaking, especially with regard to pronunciation. The diagram(A) shows the average number of grammatical errors categorised according to their consistency.

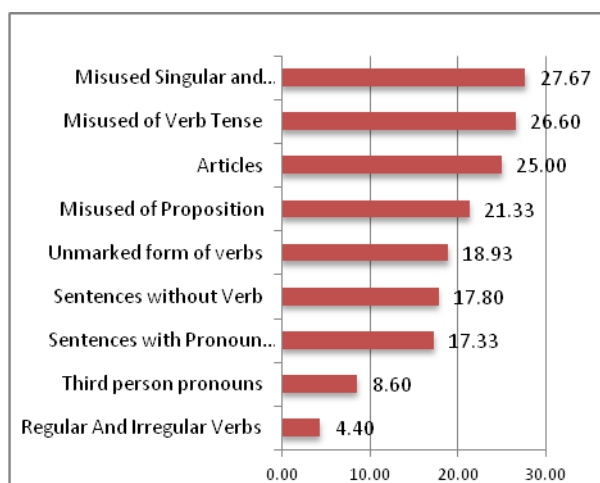


Diagram (A): Frequency of grammatical errors by type in Saudi Arabia

1. Misuse of singular and plural nouns

The first most frequent kind of error to be discussed among Saudi students studying in Saudi Arabia is the “misuse of singular and plural”. In this particular category, and according to the data and the number of errors calculated, Saudi students committed the highest number of errors in this category with an average number of 27.67 as illustrated in diagram (A). One student from this group committed the same error almost 50 times during 15 minutes of speech, although the minimum number was almost quite high compared with other types of errors but was less likely to be the least. It was almost committed at least 13 times by one of the Saudi students in this group. However, the English noun is defined as “a word that is used to name any person, animal, thing, idea, state, or quality (Russell, 1993, p. 16). In addition, according to Scott & Tucker, who analysed syntactic errors, singular and plural nouns can be defined as the following: “singular nouns which should have been plurals, singular nouns incorrectly marked **as** plurals, incorrectly formed plurals, and non-count nouns used with the plural marker” (1974, p. 22).

As a result, student errors will be divided into two main types, in order to identify the source of these errors. These types are as follows:

1.1 Errors with plural nouns

With this type of error students tend to mark plural nouns with singular forms. Many Saudi students in this group committed the same type of mistake when facing problems with the plural form of singular nouns in English. For instance:

1- I think this successful than reading book.

2- To skip the important thing.

From the previous examples, it is obvious that Saudi students experience difficulty when it comes to changing the singular nouns into the correct plural form in English. First of all, it would be useful to point out that English is “an inflectional language, in which prefixes or suffixes play a significant grammatical role” (Fromkin & Rodman, 1998, as cited in **Jing, Tindall & Nisbet**, 2006, p. 5). These prefixes and suffixes play a major rule in formatting the nouns and verbs, such as adding an “s” to change the singular form to plural. According to the literature, during the

early stages, or at intermediate level, most ESL learners of English face difficulty in correctly forming and using English grammar in term of forms. This results in a reliance on their prior knowledge in order to form the components of the English language structure. Mohamed, Goh & Eliza (2004) have indicated that pinpoint misuse of singular and plural forms is one of the most common grammatical errors in English writing among Chinese students. According to the data, Saudi students in this group were unable to determine whether certain forms of English words were singular or plural. As illustrated in the examples, they often simplified the nouns without using the "s" at the end of the words, even though the rule of adding "s" to make singular forms plural is far from new. Indeed, Saudi students have been studying this rule since commencing their English studies in school curriculum. However, in order to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon among students, it is worth noting that they literally transfer the element of meaning of Arabic language, (their L1) into English as they do not literally use the form of the rule in the English language.

1.2 Errors with singular nouns:

With regard to these types of errors, students tend to face difficulty when it comes to certain English nouns, as they are unable to determine whether these words are singular or plural. For example, they substitute certain plural nouns with the singular form, as seen below:

1- The teacher give us a lot of homeworks.

2- There is a competitions.

In these examples, students treated the words "homeworks", "competitions" and as though they were plural in meaning. This is similar to the Arabic language. Indeed, these different words are usually used as plural nouns when expressed in Arabic. However, the English language, on the other hand, uses both the singular and plural form for the same words, although this is in accordance with the different contexts and according to the subject-verb agreement, such as the "verb to be" (is, are, etc.). "Some words that end with the plural form 's' are actually singular in number, whereas others indicate a singular or plural number while maintaining the same form (Kinneavy & Warriner, 1993, pp. 712,972). Indeed, students relied on both the structure of forms and meaning of the Arabic language. In addition to this, they occasionally tended to simplify the rule in English which is due to their intralanguage knowledge of English in this particular category.

2. Misuse of verb tenses

The correct use of verb tenses is a somewhat problematic area to analyse. According to the data, a high percentage of Saudi students mixed different forms of verb tenses. Almost every student in this group committed this error at least 20 times throughout their speech. In fact, the nature of the task given to them shed more light on these types of grammatical errors. Students were switching between tenses even when they had the opportunity to correct themselves. However, with this said, any errors in tense which students were able to correct themselves were excluded from the data, as the major concern of the present study is to determine which types of errors are considered a problem in oral production of the English language. In total, three different types of these errors in grammatical tenses were recorded as follows:

2.1 Misuse of Past tense:

- Last year I had Diploma and come here to complete a degree” instead of “came here.

The other type of misuse of tenses is:

2.2 Misuse of Present tense:

Students tended to switch between different present tenses such as mixing between present simple and continuous: for example:

- I am study English from the intermediate school.

In addition, a similar type of error occurred with the use of future tense:

2.3 Misuse of Future tense:

The following examples explain some of the students' errors when it came to the future tense, with many of them mixing up the present and the future tense in the third part of the interview, when students were asked to talk about their future plans, such as:

- I set front of the TV, I'll be online.

In fact, this type of grammatical error is indicative of a real problem faced by Saudi students; According to the literature, misuse of the verb tenses by second language learners has been divided into two main categories; either the misuse of verb tenses which results in errors like those in 1- “tense sequence: where learners of English may use present simple with past simple tenses particularly with compound and complex sentences” (Noor, 1996, p. 4), or 2- “Tense substitution”, where learners substitute one verb of English tense into another (Noor, 1996). This led students to use different types of verb tenses when they produced a different structure of sentences as indicated in the examples given above. This was illustrated in the examples, with students mixing between the present tense and the future tense when they wanted to describe an action which will happen in the future. Indeed, the tense of sequences was identified as a problem for students and resulted in such errors. In fact, according to Noor (1996), El-Sayed (1983), Arab learners tend to face this problem with tenses when they express themselves in English, as expressing an action using a verb in Arabic requires the use of only one tense. This is in contrast with the English language, where the use of two different tenses can be used in one sentence, although Arabic does not have this kind of language structure. Indeed, this type of error can clearly be identified as “Negative transfer”, with students following the same pattern of their first language “Arabic”. This justifies, to a certain some extent, the fact that Saudi students follow Arabic structure when it comes to this type of error.

Referring to this example in particular, it could be seen as a result of interference from L1, as in English verbs are inflected according to time (tenses), as is the case in the previous examples.

3. Misuse of articles

Following the first two categories, students in Saudi Arabia found the use of “English articles” another problem when producing English sentences during speech. As a matter of fact, almost every student in this particular group committed this type of error at least 22 times during approximately 12 minutes of speech with an average number of 25.0 among the total of other types of errors. This indicated that Saudi students have a real problem when it comes to the correct and appropriate use of English articles. In reference to English language grammar, the use of articles is divided into two main types: definite and indefinite articles. These articles are considered to be adjectives, as they are usually used before a noun in the English language. According to the Oxford dictionary, “definite articles” refer to the word “the” as it is indicative of something specific. On the other hand, the “indefinite articles” unusually refer to the use of “an” and “a” which indicate something unspecific. As a result, errors will be classified according to those two types:

3.1 Definite articles

These types of grammatical errors were noted as being the most common among Saudi students studying in Saudi Arabia. Students tended to describe particular nouns as definite due to the fact that they had not referred to them previously in their speaking context and as such assumed that the interviewer knew what they were talking about. This made their sentences a little awkward when listening to their recorded speech. Moreover, students tended to commit two types of errors with regard to the definite articles:

3.1.1 Definite articles deletion:

Students guilty of this mistake would delete the definite articles from the sentences, and produce full sentences with no mention of articles, such as in the following examples:

1- Since I was in second grades.

These kinds of errors were most noticeable among students as they produced specific sentences with no reference to articles or when speaking about something they had already mentioned, as illustrated in the previous example. The second type of error committed with definite articles was;

3.1.2 Definite articles Redundancy

This error refers to the type of sentence employed by students when using articles to define nouns which are already definite, such as the following:

1- It was the only choice here in the Madinah.

As reported in the literature, Arab students tend to refer to nouns with both types of articles; they are either “definite or indefinite”. According to Noor, (1996), who observed these kinds of errors, he said errors are to “be attributed to negative transfer from mother tongue since Arabic marks the nouns in some linguistic contexts of English language as definite nouns” (p. 18). However, this study reported indefinite articles as the most important type of error due to first language interference. Saudi students in this group committed the most frequent errors, with definite articles also appearing to be most common; even more so than indefinite articles. This could also be related to their interlanguage system, as the Arabic language clearly has this kind of structure. The other type of error when it comes to articles is the “indefinite article” which appeared, at least among this group, to be less common.

3.2 Indefinite articles

With this type of error students tended to substitute definite articles with indefinite, particularly when they were trying to use one complex sentence followed by a short sentence, as seen below:

1- My city always sunny and warm, I see a rains.

2- I take a ride, I went around London, in a sea.

The literature reported that deletion of indefinite articles is most common among Arab learners, and is definitely an example of first language interference (Scott & Tucker, 1974) “Arabic marks nouns as definite or indefinite by the presence or absence of the article. Errors of omission of the indefinite article in English are, attributable to MT interference” (Scott & Tucker, 1974, p. 18). Moreover, some errors with articles could not be identified as definite or indefinite as certain nouns in English require indefinite articles but require no article in Arabic, such as “the something go beneath him in the room”. Indeed, the noun “something” requires no article either in English or in Arabic. This kind of error fits into the category of “unique errors” committed by learners, with the source of such errors would be difficult to identify.

4. Misuse of preposition

According to the data, prepositions appear to be in the middle of the list of grammatical errors, as a source of difficulty for Saudi students in Saudi Arabia. As a matter of fact, the number relating to errors with prepositions was quite surprising, as each student had committed this type of error 14 times during 15 minutes of speech in the recorded interviews with an average number of 21.33 among all errors. Before beginning to analyse the errors which occur with the use of prepositions, it would be useful to point out that English prepositions are considered to be a source of difficulty not only for Saudi students but for all learners of English. As Pittman (1966) described, "prepositions have earned a reputation for difficulty if not a downright unpredictability". In light of this, huge emphasis was placed on establishing the source of this type of error in the case of Saudi students. With regard to this, (Chalker cited in Alayesh), pointed out that the following prepositions are the most frequent when it comes to the use of spoken English language, namely "at, by, for, from, in, on, to and with" (1992, p. 217, Alayesh, 2012. However, in reference to the literature, errors with prepositions are divided into three types, namely errors with omission or deletion, substitution and redundancy (Scott & Tucker, 1974, Noor, 1996). Errors with omission appear when learners use sentences with a deletion of the preposition, thus resulting in sentences without prepositions. Moreover, substitution occurs when learners substitute one preposition of English with another. Finally, there are errors of redundancy, which indicate the use of unnecessary prepositions in the production of English sentences. However, the first two types will be analysed in more detail as they are shown to be the most frequent types of error in this case study. Indeed, they were even more frequent than redundancy of preposition, which appeared to be less common among Saudi learners.

4.1 Errors with preposition omission

With this type of error, Saudi students tended to omit some English prepositions when attempting to produce sentences in English. As a result of certain similarities between Arabic and English in both structure and prepositions, students tended to use English prepositions correctly when there was an equivalent in Arabic. As well as this, errors seemed to be obvious when there was no direct equivalent in Arabic for the English preposition. For example;

1- I want stay here.

2- Her father did not agree let him.

The omission of the preposition "to, with," respectively, indicated that students are literally transferring the structure and the use of prepositions of Arabic language into English, as these sentences, with their current structure, are correctly used in Arabic, although this is not the case in English.

4.2 Errors with preposition substitution

As mentioned in the literature and previous studies related to errors with prepositions, "preposition substitution" seems to be a source of difficulty for English language learners, regardless of their language level. In this case study, Saudi students recorded some errors with prepositions as a result of replacing one preposition with another, thus leading to inaccurate English sentences.

For example:

1- I can't remember what the name was for English

2- Cut classes to two hours

In the examples above, the incorrect use of the other prepositions such as “for” in the first sentence, indicated that students neither use Arabic structure nor English structure in the production of such an error. The use of “for” in the first example is incorrect both in English and Arabic. When students use their intralanguage structure, in this case “English”, they tend to develop their own rules and build on their own unconscious development for the new structure of the English language, which is possibly considered a positive sign of learning to use the new language structure rather than yielding to interference from their mother tongue, namely “Arabic”.

4.3 Errors with preposition redundancy

However, the literature reported that with this specific classification of preposition-related errors, which are defined as preposition redundancy, learners, somewhat unusually, face difficulties, as they may use unnecessary prepositions in some English sentences, thus leading to inaccurate production of the English language as a result of “negative transfer” from first language, (see Noor, 1996, Meziani, 1984). With this said however, Saudi students did not seem to fit into this category, as according to data, only 8 out of 30 students used unnecessary prepositions in some sentences which, thus resulting in language errors such as;

- My class mates in inside the community college.

The use of “in” in this sentence represent an example of using an necessary preposition in oral production, which could well fit into the “unique type of errors”, according to Heydari & Bagheri, who defined these as “errors that are neither developmental nor interference which resulted from incorrect instruction of the language” (2012, p 8).

5. Unmarked form of verbs

The “unmarked form of verbs” was a very common and significant grammatical error among Saudi students, First of all, a definition of the “unmarked form of verb given by Dictionary of English Grammar, Penguin, 2000, “cited in Trask, (2000)”. “The unmarked form is the 'ordinary' or 'basic' form, while the . . . marked form differs from the first in containing extra material or in being confined to special contexts such as, suffice, prefixes , passive, etc”. This was marked by work from Richard (1970), and Corder (1974), who first introduced the concept of the “Intralingual and developmental errors” in second language learning process and stated that “this kind of error occurs during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not really acquired the knowledge. For example, certain errors were highlighted in the data, for example;

- My sister take her Ph.D.
- I am study in the intermediate course.

The use of the infinitive form of the verb in the previous sentences reflects a gap in knowledge when it comes to using the correct form of grammatical tenses and rules, particularly when they must be applied to a certain context. It is true that these kinds of errors could be explained according to the “Intralingual and developmental errors” as they obviously reflect a lack of knowledge or difficulty in the target language itself. Hence, Saudi students made lots of error in using the correct form of the verb and few performed well with agreement as they use the same Arabic patterns and apply them to their use of the English structure where more verb-subject

agreement is required. In other words, using a simple form of the verb without paying attention to the tense used in the sentence or even to the agreement between verb and subject which results in using the unmarked form of the verb can be interpreted as a lack of knowledge of rules according to the explanation of the “interlanguage errors”.

Perhaps in this way, a better justification of this type of error with “the unmarked form of verbs” in the Saudi learners' speech can be seen as a result of “interlanguage errors”.

Indeed, the argument is supported by the present study, and by the number of errors highlighted, specifically 464 errors committed by the 30 students during 10 minutes of speech and an average of 18.93 among the same group. This could well be indicative of strong structure transfer from the Arabic language into English structure. Although the learners were not in the early stages of language learning, they should have had enough knowledge regarding the structure of the English language.

6. Use of sentences without verb

Based on the data of this study, another category of errors among the students in Saudi Arabia, and indeed one of the most frequent errors, was the classification of using sentences without a verb, the average number of errors was only 17 among this group, which is not particularly high in comparison to the other highlighted types of grammatical errors, each student committed this error at least 13 times during their speech. Indeed, it is possible to infer from this that omitting verbs from sentences is considered to be an area of difficulty which should be pointed out in this case study.

Based on the literature, similar studies have found that, for some English learners, especially in their early stages, they face difficulty in applying the rule of English copula, “Copula(tive) is a term used in grammatical description to refer to a linking verb i.e. a verb which has little independent meaning, and whose main function is to relate other elements of clause structure, especially subject and complement” (Tahir, 2009, p. 3, cited in Jafri, 2013). This is close to the classification of errors with verb- formation. (Noor, 1996) Alternatively, this is quite common for English learners, and according to these studies learners delete the English copula as a result of their intralanguage, and particularly learners with low language proficiency. However, two types of errors in verb-less sentences have been highlighted in this study, namely sentences “Deletion of the verb to be as a main verb”, and Deletion of the verb to be as a helping verb”: both of which will be discussed in more detail.

6.1 Production of sentence without verb

The most significant type of error within sentences is the application of the “verb to be” rule. Saudi students tend to either delete the verb “be” in some sentences when it is considered a main verb, or delete the verb when it is used in a sentence as a helping verb, particularly when they are used in different tenses. For example:

6.1.1 Deletion of the verb to be as a main verb:

- I can't remember, they many writers.

As can be seen from the above examples, students produced incomplete sentences of English and deleted “to be” verbs such as “Am. Is. Are”. They produced sentences which contained only

nouns, without referring to any form of verb in these sentences, though the use of verbs are considered to be main verbs in the previous sentences. However, there may well be a simple explanation behind these errors if we compare the structure of Arabic language with the structure of English in these specific examples. We find neither the deep structure nor the surface structure of Arabic use of the verb “to be”. Following the structure of the above mentioned example, such as “they many writers, we beginners, when we small, no other university”, we found that students were following the same patterns of their native language, which, in this study, is Arabic. It was also evident that students were literally transferring the structure of Arabic language into the use of English

6.1.2 Deletion of the verb to be as a helping verb:

As a matter of fact, the deletion of the verb “to be” in oral production of English language sentences was more frequent than other type. More specifically, and according to the data, Saudi students tended to produce this error when using more complex sentences, especially when they used sentences with more than one relative clause, or when using different tenses in the same sentence. Consider the following example:

- We having the same different average in each term.

The omission of the verb “to be” as a helping verb appeared to be more frequent occasionally, when it came to the use of sentences which required a present continuous tense. The jumping between two tenses in one sentence, such as the present and past, led students to focus on picking the correct tense while neglecting the major rule of the helping verbs “be”. However, one can conclude that the verb “to be” was omitted, whether required in a sentence as a main verb or as a helping verb. This was due to the fact that students relied on transferring an element of the Arabic language into the use of English structure, resulted as a source of “inter -language errors”.

7. Third person pronouns

According to the research findings, each student who participated in this study, misused third person pronouns a minimum of seven times during their speech. The number of this type of error is indicated throughout the data with an average of 8.60 errors when compared to other type of student errors highlighted in this study; however, third person pronoun errors were reproduced by every student in this group, thus indicating a systematic problem that must be addressed if pronouns are to be applied correctly by Saudi students. Errors with third person pronouns have been classified into two categories, subjective and objective, as discussed in detail below.

7.1 Third person pronouns: “subjective case”

The English language pronoun in the subjective case has been explained by Oxford Grammar as follows: “The use of person pronouns fit under the rule of using “he, she, it” in the case of singular pronouns and the use of “they” in the case of plural pronouns” (2014).

Consider the following examples:

- (1) I have one brother, she is at high school.
- (2) Me and my mother, it love swimming.

A close look at these examples reveals that, overall, students were able to express themselves and communicate using the target language; however, the errors (using “she” when referring to a

brother; referring to a mother by the pronoun “it” instead of “she”) indicate a common problem with applying the rules correctly. The substitution of these pronouns reflects a gap in the knowledge of their correct usage, despite the fact that students at this particular stage of learning English should have become aware of these rules after studying them for a minimum six years in the Saudi English curriculum. These errors cannot simply be referred to as a negative transfer from the speaker's mother tongue, in this case Arabic, as the Arabic language involves similar variations in the number and gender of pronouns, which should allow for correct application in foreign contexts. This type of error, particularly with subjective person pronouns, could be interpreted as a developmental or ‘intralanguage’ error; Saudi students might know the rules but fail to apply them, especially in oral production, using them correctly in written form but not in spoken production. According to Cook (1999), this pattern of errors made by second language learners may be a product of the developmental stage in learning: “second language users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of their L2 and L1 and in some of their cognitive processes” (p. 185). The second type of third person pronoun errors will be discussed below.

8.2 Third person pronouns: “objective case”

The second type of error in this category refers to the use of the objective case with third person pronouns. The objective case uses the pronouns “him, her, it” in the singular form and “they” in the plural form. Third person possessive pronouns are “his, her, its, hers” in the singular, and “their, theirs” in the plural (see Oxford Grammar, 2014).

The Saudi students in this study committed errors most frequently when using objective and possessive third person pronouns, as each student in this group repeated this type of error a minimum of nine and eleven times respectively. The following examples from the transcribed data have been highlighted for discussion:

- (1) She married with his husband.
- (2) Everybody depend on himself.

As seen in these examples, the errors made in this grammatical category differ compared to those with the subjective pronoun, and more errors of this type were committed. The above examples are still considered to be the result of developmental errors, as students were uncertain as to the correct use of third person pronouns, in particular when mixing the singular and plural forms. Existing literature has reported that learner errors such as mixing between objective and subjective third person pronouns, as occurred in this study, can be interpreted as a result of the context of learning. According to Brown (1980 cited in Hasyim, 2002), this involves the overlap of interlanguage; “errors resulting from the use of elements from one language while speaking/writing another”, and intralanguage; “errors reflecting general characteristics of the rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply”. (Richards, 1971, p. 3, cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). Heydari and Bagheri described the source of this type of error as “the classroom with the teacher and its materials in the case of school learning or the social situation in the case of untutored second language learning. In a classroom context, the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to make wrong generalization about the language” (2012, p.10).

Conclusion

To sum up, the figures mentioned earlier which concluded the most significant and frequent grammatical errors made by Saudi students, who live in Saudi Arabia and studies English for six

years, where most categories has been analysed according to their source in this paper. The most problematic errors were analysed, and their sources were discussed. Moreover, errors which been classified in this study is not limited to the categories mentioned. There are some unique errors such as , the use of the “perfect tense” which was almost neglected to be used by students in Saudi Arabia, as only 6 out of the 30 students have been found to use the “past or the present perfect tense”. Additionally, The abovementioned categories have been chosen according to the majority of errors committed by Saudi students, in addition to grammatical errors with the Use of sentences with pronoun copying, and errors with regular and irregular verbs, which are less common among other types of errors, as illustrated in diagram (A). However, identifying the definite source of these errors is not an easy task. As most of these errors were due to the mother tongue interference, which may support the recent studies of the importance of the role played by first language and in which has a great impact on the process of second language learning.

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Perceptions of American Academic Discourse: Cases of Three Saudi Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

A qualitative study conducted with three Saudi Arabian undergraduate students over the course of summer semester 2013, explored their perceptions of American academic discourse. The focus was on the spoken discourse. The study was informed by the theory of Second Language Acquisition and considered activity and interaction with American faculty and classroom as the space for socialization into the new academic discourse. Students reflected on various activities in and out of classrooms that enhanced their English language learning. Implications for faculty are drawn.

Keywords: second language socialization, academic discourse, Saudi Students in the US.

Introduction

In order to succeed in the American academia, international students must understand and adjust to its discourse. Academic discourse is “not just an entity but a social, cognitive, and rhetorical process and an accomplishment, a form of enculturation, social practice, positioning, representation, and stance-taking” (Duff, 2010, p. 170) and it varies greatly from other vernacular variations of language. To partake in the academic discourse students coming from abroad need to learn the academic language and the rules and norms of the new academic culture, which often drastically differ from their native countries. For instance, in the US participating in class discussions or debates, giving presentations, leading small group discussions are common ways of learning. Speaking up and voicing ones true opinion in front of everyone in class can be an insurmountable task for students, who come from teacher-centered cultures. For instance, Alhmadi (2014) claimed that speaking (compared to reading, writing, listening in English) is the hardest skill to master for Saudi Arabian students.

This article reports on a qualitative study that was conducted with Saudi Arabian students to examine their perceptions of participating in the oral academic discourse in the US. Saudi Arabian students are the second fastest growing student population in the US (Open Doors, 2013). With each academic year their number in the US increases. It is vital to understand Saudi students perceptions on the academic discourse, of which they are becoming a part of, to facilitate their learning, and prepare the incoming students to better adjust to their new academic life. The study revolved around the following question:

What are Saudi-Arabian students’ perceptions about tasks in the oral academic discourse?

This research was informed by the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLS). In the section to follow I briefly dwell on the tenets of the theory and report on research relevant to the problem of interest.

Theoretical Framework

SLS stems from the language socialization theory associated with Schiefflin and Ochs (1986). The essence of both language socialization and SLS is in “socialization through language and socialization to use the language” (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986, p.163). The main difference between the theories of first language socialization and SLS lies in SLS’s “added complexity of dealing with children or adults who already possess a repertoire of linguistic, discursive, and cultural traditions and community affiliations when encountering new ones” (Duff, 2007).

SLS is a lifelong process, through which individuals gain communicative competence, legitimacy, and membership into a new culture or group (Duff, 2007). The most important tenet of the theory of SLS is that new language is acquired through interaction and communication with members of a certain group, society, or discourse (Duff, 2007, 2010). Secondly, SLS is situated within the context of particular meaningful activities and tasks (Duff, 2007, 2010). Duff (2007a, 2010) described the process of language socialization as bidirectional or multidirectional. According to Duff (2007, 2010), institutions or communities into which novices are being socialized strongly influence intellect, emotions, and social positioning of the newcomers (Duff, 2007, 2010). However, while experts introduce newcomers to the norms and rules of the society, novices respond by conveying, “to their more proficient interlocutors what their communicative needs are” (Duff, 2007, p. 311).

Finally, SLS into a new community does not entail absolute appropriation of all the conventions and norms of the new culture (Duff, 2007). In some cases newcomers might even reject practices and norms of the new culture (Duff, 2007, 2010). Often, the process of SLS

leads to creation of new or hybrid identities and practices and/or only partial acceptance of the norms and practices of the new communities. In the following section, I briefly dwell on SLS studies that aid in understanding how international students become part of the new academic discourse.

Background Literature

A large number of studies were devoted to socialization into oral academic discourse through academic presentations (Morita 2000; Kobayashi 2003, 2005; Wang, 2009; Yang, 2010; Zappa-Hollman 2001, 2007), as academic presentations are the most prevalent task in the North American colleges (Zappa-Hollman, 2001). Some of those studies focused on “behind-the-scenes” preparation for presentation and peer collaboration (Kobayashi 2003, 2005; Yang, 2010). Other research was devoted to socialization through whole-class discussions (Lee, 2009), small-group discussions (Ho, 2011), group work (Leki, 2001), and spoken interactions with peers (Seloni, 2012).

Studies on socialization into oral discourse exposed various difficulties that international students dealt with in North American colleges. Zappa-Hollman (2001, 2007) categorized them into linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological (e.g. nervousness, shyness, or insecurity). Among the named difficulties were unfamiliarity with academic tasks and unfamiliarity with the American pop culture (Leki, 2001), nervousness, shyness and insecurity (Morita, 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2001, 2007), the need to translate back and forth from English to students’ native tongues (Lee, 2009), first language socialization (Wang, 2009), as well as the ESL speaker status (Leki, 2001). Such challenges prevent students from full participation in class. Students choose to refrain from speaking up in class (Lee, 2009). In some instances, students are forced to take on inferior roles (e.g. simply holding a poster versus conducting a presentation) within group work even when they can take on complex tasks (Leki, 2001). Ultimately, they feel incompetent and incapable compared to their American peers and classmates (Leki, 2001; Morita 2004, 2009).

Most of these challenges can be overcome through active instructors’ involvement and effective management of the class, and collaborative work (Kobayashi 2003, 2005; Leki, 2001; Seloni, 2012; Yang, 2010). Kobayashi’s (2003) research demonstrated an excellent example of peer collaboration, when together students were able to negotiate the expectations of their instructor, the objectives and purposes of the assignment by utilizing “a variety of available tools and resources including L1/L2 oral discourse and L2 written texts (e.g. course outline, field journal, and textbooks), electronic bilingual dictionaries, the Power Point Program and each other’s ideas and knowledge” (p. 354). Such active and engaged collaborative preparatory work led them to the successful negotiation of knowledge and consecutively to an excellent grade (Kobayashi, 2003).

However, other research shows that collaborative work alone is not always sufficient for successful language socialization. Yang’s (2010) study provides a perfect example for this shortcoming. Despite extensive and laborious preparation for a group presentation and active collaboration within the group, participants did not reach their goals and the results that they had anticipated. Students failed to follow the instructors’ instructions and delivered a presentation without engaging the audience. Ultimately, those students received feedback and a grade lower than they desired.

Research on SLS demonstrated that the instructor’s role is the most important factor in the successful socialization of international students into the oral discourse. Instructors can facilitate socialization in a number of different ways. For instance, successful socialization can

be achieved through ensuring participation of bilingual students, and thoroughly planning and modeling activities (Kobayashi, 2003, 2005; Yang, 2010). Modeling the activity is especially important as it helps students understand what is expected of them and how to prepare for the activity; and ultimately modeling can make a major difference in the outcomes (Kobayashi, 2003, 2005; Yang, 2010).

Additionally, instructors have the ability to create a friendly environment, where they are open and welcoming to various cultures and perspectives of international students, which leads to students' engagement in class discussions and group activities (Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004, 2009). Such pedagogy might also lead to expansion of the "narrow thinking system" of American students who often exclude foreign students from full participation in certain class activities (Leki, 2001). In the context where professors ask international students to share their experiences from their native countries, students feel valued and welcome (Morita, 2009). Consequently, if the instructor never asks for or acknowledges international students' culturally different perspectives, students may feel unappreciated and isolated (Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004, 2009).

Some research explored Saudi Arabian students' language socialization (Barnawi, 2009) and their language needs (Alqahtani, 2011). Barnawi (2009) focused on the process of socialization of two graduate students into the American academic discourse, namely on the questions of identity negotiation rather than on specific tasks or activities in written or spoken discourse, while Alqahtani (2011) inquired about the linguistic needs of Saudi-Arabian students at a University in Great Britain.

Findings revealed that Saudi students choose to stay silent in class. Several reasons were identified. Students in Barnawi's study (2009) felt less competent than their peers and sought out opportunities outside of the classroom to enhance their learning by studying with their peers in the library and visiting professors during office hours. This enabled them to feel more confident in their speaking and listening skills and become more competent members of their academic community (Barnawi, 2009). Students in Alqahtani's study (2011) chose to stay silent in class because "they have been conditioned to learn via rote learning and drilling and are unaccustomed to a framework in which students are expected to ask questions in front of the class" (p. 199).

Although the literature discussed in this section provides invaluable insight into the nature of the process of language socialization, challenges that students face, and support they require, more studies with Saudi Arabian students are needed. I aimed to add to the body of knowledge on international student socialization into American academic discourse, and in particular Saudi Arabian students as their numbers in the US colleges are large and increasing with each academic year. In the following section, I explain the methodology utilized in the study, specifically focusing on participants and setting, data collection instruments, and procedures for data analysis.

Methodology

Participants and recruitment

Participants for this study were three undergraduate students, Hala, Hamza, and Amir (all names are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes) from Saudi Arabia. Prior to the beginning of their studies at the University, they all studied the English language at an Intensive English School (IES, pseudonym). None of the participants had ever lived in any English speaking countries before they came to the US to pursue their higher education. All of the participants started

learning English in Saudi Arabia. Both Hamza and Amir started studying English in the first grade (approximately at the age of 6). Hala was 12 when she began to study English. However, they uniformly described their experiences learning English at their Saudi Arabian schools as mostly ineffective.

Hala (female), who was working on her medical science degree, had only been in the US for 6 months at the moment of the interview. She spent one month at the IES. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Hala was planning to obtain a Master's degree outside of the US for "a different culture, different experience".

Hamza (male) was studying pre-pharmacy at the time of data collection. Prior to starting his studies at the University he spent one year and eight months enhancing his English language ability at IES. He was planning on attending pharmacy school, and subsequently earning both a Masters' degree and a PhD in the field of pharmacology.

Amir (male), similarly to Hamza, was studying pre-pharmacy and was planning to apply to a pharmacy school after completion of his undergraduate degree. Amir studied at IES for eight months before he was admitted into the university.

Table 1. Participants

Student	Sex	Grade level	Marital status	Program of Study	Time at IES
Hala	Female	Freshman	Single	Medical Science	1 month
Hamza	Male	Freshman	Single	Pre-pharmacy	1 year, 8 months
Amir	Male	Sophomore	Single	Pre-pharmacy	8 months

Data collection methods

The aim of this study was to listen to the participants' voices and encourage them to explain how they understood their circumstances (Hatch, 2002). To meet this goal, I utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data. Qualitative interviews lead researchers "to uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their world... and enable researchers learning how to learn from the informants" (Hatch, 2002, p. 91).

To triangulate the data, I also observed students during the classes that they were taking in the summer semester at a large Midwestern U.S. university. I limited my role to nonparticipant observer as my aim was "to capture naturally occurring" phenomena (Hatch, 2002, p.73). Summer semester was divided into Session One and Session Two. Participants were only taking one or two classes during the first session of the summer semester, because they wanted either to travel around the U.S. or visit their home country in the second part of the summer. The first session was 4 to 6 weeks long.

Hamza and Hala were observed during their biology class. The classes consisted of lectures and laboratory work. Students requested that I would only observe them during lectures. Hamza explained that I could not be present in the lab. Due to the scheduling conflicts with other students' classes, I was only able to observe Hala once during her biology class. However, she informed me that all of the other Biology classes were similar to the one that I observed:

standard lectures, where the instructor spoke most of the time, while students were occasionally answering questions with clickers.

I observed Amir during his Public Speaking class. Similarly to Hamza's and Hala's Biology class, Amir's class was divided into theoretical and practical parts. Tuesday meetings were devoted to learning about various types of public speeches through lectures; and on Thursday students presented their own speeches based on what they learned during Tuesday's theoretical class. I observed both types of classes several times. I focused on observing whether or not participants attempted to answer professor's questions in class and any other spoken interactions that might occur between participants and other members of the class (e.g. whole-class peer evaluation of presentations in Amir's class). Additionally, I was interested in observing the lecturing style of the professors: how fast or slow they speak, whether or not they clarify complex concepts, how they check for comprehension, etc. The summary of observations is described in Table 2.

Before or after observing students in class, I frequently had the opportunity to have short conversations about their personal lives, classes, and other informal topics, which helped build connections and rapport with participants. Such informal discussions also added to main data collected via formal interviews and observations and aided in interpreting the data.

Table 2. Observation summary

Student	Class observed	Number of times	Duration of each observation	Total time observed
Hala	Biology (6 weeks)	1	3 hrs	3 hrs
Hamza	Biology (8 weeks)	6	2 hrs	12 hrs
Amir	Public Speaking (8 weeks)	5	2 hrs	10 hrs

Data analysis

I analyzed the Saudi Arabian student interview and observation data according to Hatch's inductive analysis approach (Hatch, 2002). I read the data, highlighted specific elements in the data, and observed whether or not there were connections among them. Examples of specific elements are "nervousness during presentations", "pronunciation mistakes", and "time management". After highlighting and identifying various specific elements, I established my frames of analysis. For the specific elements named above, the frame of reference was "Challenges". Following frame of references analysis, I analyzed data for domains (Hatch, 2002). Domain analysis entails looking for semantic relationships in the data (Hatch, 2002). For example, "time management" is a type of "challenge". Next I reread the data and searched for themes within domains. An example of the theme is "challenges with presentations". At the end, I reexamined the data, noting the excerpts from interviews to support the themes that emerged. The observation data was analyzed more broadly than the interview data, framing around "complete interchanges between interactants" (Hatch, 2002). For instance, when I observed a situation where the professor posed a question and Hala did not respond, I coded it as "lack of response".

Findings

RQ: What are Saudi-Arabian students' perceptions about tasks in oral academic discourse?

In their interviews, participants explained that most of their content classes at the University are lectures. The main activity that students are engaged in during their lectures is listening to the professor. Naturally, opportunities for interaction and development of language skills during lectures are scarce. When questioned about tasks that benefitted the development of their academic speaking and listening skills, students vastly elaborated on their experiences at IES. Participants discussed giving and listening to presentations, conducting debates in class, and watching educational programs on TV, and the role of these activities in enhancement of students' speaking and listening skills.

Unlike many undergraduate lectures, that can be as large as 300 students, the classes that I observed included only 20 to 30 students per class. During these small-scale lectures, the professors would frequently pause and ask questions. In Hala's class, students were supposed to answer questions with a clicker and their anonymous responses were immediately displayed on the screen. Hamza's Biology professor did not use clickers; he posed questions and waited for students to respond orally.

Amir's professor's lecturing style differed slightly. As mentioned previously, I was able to observe Amir's both in his theoretical and practical classes. In general, Amir's professor's teaching style appeared to be more interactive and engaging. Often during the theoretical class, Amir's professor would bring the class to the whole-class discussion, ask them to provide examples and encourage students to ask questions. During practical classes all students were divided into two groups. One group of students presented their speeches, while the other group graded their speeches. Each student gave one speech and two evaluations for two speakers. At the end of the class, students discussed strengths and weaknesses of the presenters. Amir never spoke or otherwise expressed his opinion. At the same time, during the interview he verbalized a desire to have more opportunity for interactions, as the quote below demonstrates:

In class...it would help if we could like interact with people a lot, but basically because a lot of classes [we] are taking are basically lectures, so I don't get to talk that much, it's only like observation and like taking notes, and listening to the lecture. But it would help if there was more interaction with other students or the professor himself. (Amir)

Although participants did not respond to any of the professors' questions in class during my observations, they always appeared to listen attentively and took careful notes. At the end of the class, students came over to their instructors a couple of times to clarify material that they did not comprehend.

Hamza and Hala reported that watching TV as an activity helped them develop their academic speaking and listening skills, stressing the importance of selecting serious and informative shows and movies. Hala mentioned that she often used to watch various English programs on TV in Saudi Arabia, which prepared her for her life in the US. Hamza emphasized that the quality of the programs and shows on TV really mattered.

Actually since I was in Saudi Arabia watching movies... It's very helpful to improve your listening and speaking. Because also when I came here I have not that good English... I came here in the US that helped me, when I was in Saudi Arabia I used to watch American movies it was in English. (Hala)

Watching TV. Watching really good programs on TV...When I watch TV, really good programs about policy [politics], about people teaching other people, about sciences, shows, news, it gives you really good academic language. (Hamza)

Participants spoke extensively about presentation as one of the main activities for the development of their speaking and listening skills. Hamza pointed out that taking notes during presentation is something that helps him enhance his language learning.

Presentations, taking some notes...that definitely help, so much helpful for speaking and even for listening skills... See that's [taking notes during presentation] helping you for like listening and also speaking during the presentation, that's really helpful. Listen to one story [presentation] and then the next day you come up and give your presentation, that's really helpful. (Hamza)

Amir spoke of debate as an invaluable activity to improve their speaking and listening skills. He mentioned that incorporating debate in class could be a really engaging activity for students.

Debate really did help...Definitely. The exciting thing about it, the students gets engaged with that idea, so if they to debate, they want to prove their point, so they talk more and everything. (Amir)

However, debates were only help in his IES classes. Amir expressed his desire to include debate in his university classes. He even shared a way that professors could conduct them in science classes. He provides a specific example of how one could introduce debates into content university class:

Even with organic chemistry or biology, you can debate. If you give two proposals for an experiment, how would you like to proceed with the experiment...Each like make teams, and each one would come up with their own plan. But that's gonna take a while, that's gonna consume the class time, which is very short. (Amir)

One dominant theme throughout the interviews and observation data was the role of the instructor in students' socialization into the American academic discourse. Students spoke of the importance of instructors providing clear directions for assignments, focusing on the most relevant material, engaging students in the classroom, making learning fun, and demonstrating good people skills. Students expressed the need to know a clear purpose, for which they were doing certain tasks. Sometimes faculty was not explicit in their explanations of the assignment requirements and students were unsure of the instructors' expectations. For instance, because of the diligent work of the instructor, Hamza was able to understand the value of reading and invested much effort and time in it:

It depends from teacher to teacher. OK, I had one teacher...She asked us to read a lot of articles, a lot of things, thought articles and stories. That helped us. Compared to other teachers...She wasn't like that, she was specific with reading...We worked hard to deserve a lot...I think that helped me with my writing. (Hamza)

On the other hand, Hala's instructor failed to explicitly explain the value of reading, and Hala was left with the impression that reading in English did not benefit her in any manner. When I asked Hala what activities she considered irrelevant for her language development skills, she responded:

I think that reading. When I was in IES, the teacher always told me "You have to read to improve your writing when you read you know how to spell the word, you know how to create a sentence.... But cause I don't enjoy reading in English, so when I do I feel boring [bored].

Hamza dwelled on the importance of the professor's ability to focus on the most relevant and significant material. He explained that consistency and predictability of how the professor will present the material enhanced his learning:

Sometimes I cannot follow him point by point, but at least I know what he is gonna do. I know what's the important thing because he tells us the important things, writes the important study, the important things. (Hamza)

Hamza shared that he took the same level biology class with a different professor previously but he was forced to drop the class. He explained that the class was much larger (300 students), the objectives were not clear, and he felt overwhelmed by the amount of reading for that class:

He should have been more specific. Especially when you are reading like half a chapter every night. This was a lot of knowledge. And he made us read like half a chapter every day. Like it's a lot of information, we couldn't handle it. We don't know what's important and what's not important (Hamza).

Hamza and Amir expressed their wish that faculty had more empathy towards them as international students and as non-native English speakers. Amir thought it was important not to equalize Saudi-Arabian students with American students in the first year of their study in the US. He has mentioned that he can score poorly on a content test not because the lack of knowledge but because of the linguistic difficulties. Amir explained that even little things like allowing students to use an electronic dictionary could make a tremendous difference for them.

In the first year, I think it wasn't fair treating us the same like the American students with international students, like equaling us... I think that the professor thinks that it's not fair to other students to make exceptions for us, but it's not fair not making exceptions for us. For me the hardest thing was the test. If I didn't get a word in the question I lose the whole question, I don't know what to answer, I don't know what the question is asking. (Amir)

Last an interesting finding was unveiled from the interview with Hala. When Hala elaborated on her experiences in the Communication class that she took during the first semester at the University with only international students, she maintained that she felt much more at ease when she was presenting in front of the whole class. Hala added that having a professor from Korea also made her feel more comfortable:

They [international classmates] learn new language, so that makes me more comfortable, when I do presentations with them first...Also the professor was from Korea.

To conclude, participants perceived that IES classes played an important role in the development of speaking and listening skills. They all discussed their experiences in IES and learning language skills at IES. IES benefitted their socialization into American academic oral discourse more so than attending the lectures. Observing classes allowed me to see that occasionally students do have opportunities to respond to questions from the professor or participate in a whole group discussion. However, students remained silent and chose to listen. This indicated that whole group discussion and responding to questions in front of the whole class were not perceived as opportunities to enhance oral language skills. At the same time students expressed a strong desire for more interaction in class, including such activities as debates. Additionally, one student expressed that she felt more at ease, while working with other international students and an international professor.

Discussion and implications

This study inquired about spoken academic discourse SLS of three Saudi-Arabian undergraduate students in the US. The interviews with participants elucidated that they had little opportunity for spoken academic interactions, and consecutively little opportunity for academic discourse SLS. Unfortunately, I was only able to observe Hala's and Hamza's biology lecture classes, which confirmed findings from the student interviews. Unarguably, the goal of lecture is to deliver content, and unsurprisingly the opportunities for interactions are scarce. Therefore, it would be interesting to observe students in their practical or laboratory classes to obtain more concrete ideas about participants' SLS.

Curiously, when participants did have a chance to speak up or respond to professor's questions, they chose to stay silent. Although Amir had plethora of opportunities to participate in whole-class discussions during his presentation class, and both Hamza and Hala could have answered a question posed by their professors, they never spoke up. This finding illustrates the importance of instructors' and professors' awareness of Saudi Arabian and other international students' "silence" and the need to think of creative ways to engage students and allow them to express their "voice" because many of the Saudi Arabian students can bring valuable perspectives on issues discussed in class based on their background and culture. So, the mission is twofold: to allow Saudi Arabian students to be full members of the discourse that they participate in as well as to allow the American students to broaden their horizons by hearing new opinions, as Leki (2001) was also advocating.

The nonlinearity of the process of socialization is evident from discussions with participants where they elaborate on their experiences outside of the academic classroom, for instance learning English at home via educational TV programs. The realm of the classroom is not the sole space for socialization and academic language development. Similar to Kobayashi's (2003, 2005) research, this study demonstrated that socialization of the discourse is a non-stop process, whether it is through collaboration with students outside of the classroom, or through watching educational programs on TV and simply conversing with the native English speakers and gaining confidence in talking in the English language.

Similarly to findings from previous research (Barnawi, 2009; Leki, 2001; Lee, 2009; Morita 2004, 2009), participants felt that they were less competent than their American peers due to linguistic difficulties. Unlike in previous studies (Zappa-Hollman, 2001, 2007) participants did not report on any sociocultural issues. Although they chose to stay silent in instances where they could have spoken up, they didn't express feelings of inadequacy or discomfort due to a new academic cultural environment. This confidence could be explained by the fact that they spent a significant amount of time studying at IES, where they began their process of socialization into new academic culture.

The theory of SLS (Duff 2007, 2010) stresses the importance of the instructor's role in the process of international students' socialization. In line with the tenets of the theory and findings from previous research (Kobayashi, 2003, 2005; Yang, 2010), this study suggested the vital role that the instructor plays in Saudi Arabian students' socialization. Instructors must understand that these students are coming from a very different education culture and might have trouble with verbalizing their difficulties and challenges. This means that faculty should be made more aware of the needs of international students, specifically Saudi Arabian students. For instance, students expressed that often the objectives were not clear to them. Instructors could be more precise in setting expectations for international students.

Another interesting finding pertains to SLS with other international students. Hala mentioned that she felt much more uncomfortable when she had to present in front of American peers rather than in front of other international students. Hala's discomfort points to the importance of Saudi Arabian students' participation in ESL classes, where they might feel less intimidated and have more opportunity to practice speaking up or participate in the group discussions.

Limitations and further research suggestions

This research added to the body of knowledge on international students' SLS into oral academic discourse. It was especially important because no prior studies were devoted to SLS of Saudi Arabian undergraduate students. The study unveiled interesting findings on how Saudi Arabian students perceive their experiences of socialization into American academia. However, research is limited in two ways. First, this study investigated language socialization of Saudi Arabian students in the medical field. The process of socialization might be different for students in other disciplines, specifically in social sciences like business, education, history etc. This could be a worthwhile direction for research on undergraduate Saudi students' SLS.

Second, students' classes were only 4-6 weeks long. Conducting a more longitudinal study (e.g. throughout several semesters or years of study) would add more insight into Saudi Arabian student SLS. Perhaps, following up with the same research participants during their graduate studies in the US would allow us to determine whether the process of SLS during their undergraduate studies facilitates their socialization into graduate academic spoken discourse as it can greatly vary from undergraduate discourses.

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Explication of Conjunction Errors in A Corpus of Written Discourse by Sudanese English Majors

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Abstract

Cohesion is deemed to be an indispensable aspect of all written discourse and, hence, this study is intended to explore the employment of the cohesion subset of conjunctions by Sudanese final-year English majors at a large governmental university. The corpus comprises fifty argumentative and narrative essays, and Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of conjunctions was utilized as a model for analysis. It was revealed that the corpus was replete with inappropriate conjunction use and it was difficult to dissociate these errors from the students' overall poor writing quality. Yet, on the whole, additives constituted half of the entire errors, followed by causals and adversatives. Concerning additives, and addition proved to be the most problematic, as students tended to transfer both the pervasive use of and and its multiple semantic functions in Arabic into the altogether different English discourse. Among causal conjunctions, because and so misuses together formed the bulk of errors, since the students were apt to confuse result and cause relations in English. Finally, but and although misuse accounted for two thirds of all adversatives errors, largely due to the students superimposing conventions of Arabic discourse, where double- marked subordination is permissible., on English where such a practice is regarded as erroneous. The analysis is accompanied by numerous examples to illustrate the (erroneous) employment of conjunctions in the corpus.

Keywords: Cohesion, Conjunctions, , Discourse, Errors, Language Transfer

Introduction

The ubiquity of the influence of English as the lingua franca of the 21st century can be little doubted. It is the global language of commercial transactions, international communication both in formal settings such as electronic media and at the popular levels of creoles. The hegemony of English extends to the academia where, as Hyland (2007) asserts, English is the predominant medium of instruction in post-graduate domains even where it does not hold a formal status. Within research, English is the undisputed language or *Tyrannosaurus Rex* (Swales, 1997) of publication, particularly in the realm of science and technology. It can thus be concluded that the mastery of English is crucial to personal, professional and academic success in our contemporary world. This entails competence in both spoken and written discourse in both transactional and interactional aspects of the language. As a communicative skill, writing has a diversity of forms such as argumentative texts, expository prose, narrative compositions, academic discourse, etc. Indeed, according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), in their everyday life, people engage in many types of writing, and the use of writing in our increasingly literate world is more pervasive than is normally acknowledged. Yet, many scholars such as Richards and Renandya (2002) concede that, of all language skills, writing is the most accomplished and, hence, the most challenging for EFL students and native speakers alike. The primary difficulty of writing emanates from the dual need to generate and organize ideas and to translate them into readable texts (Prommas and Simwongsuwats, 2011). Moreover, writing is a peculiar and solitary form of communication addressed to an absent addressee and lacking the aid of extra-textual elements such as physical contact or verbal signs. This necessitates, in the view of Crystal (2000), a level of formality and comprehensiveness of devices and complexity alien to other language skills. The composing process involves combining structural sentence units (words, phrases and clauses) into cohesive and coherent larger structures as opposed to shopping lists, for instance. One of the most important characteristics distinguishing writing involving composing is the presence of surface features (cohesive devices) holding together discourse (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) as well as an underlying logic of organization (coherence) which is more than the mere sum of sentences. In other words, mastering the techniques of effective writing entails familiarity with the underlying principles of English discourse. Of the two above interlocking terms, the present research will concentrate on the employment of *cohesion* by a sample of Sudanese English majors.

Literature Review

The Notion of Cohesion

In any serious discussion of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan's ground-breaking book *Cohesion in English* (1976) is the place to begin. In line with their functional linguistics, the authors assume the unit of text to be the building block of language and, hence, assert that *A text has a texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text* (ibid:3). They also point out that cohesion is one of the linguistic system's major resources for text construction. In fact, cohesion embodies the existence of overt textual cues rendering it possible for readers to sense the semantic relations within it in order to enhance the semantic potentials in the text.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesion included four categories. These comprise *reference* (i.e., the indication of preceding information such as pronominal, demonstratives, definite articles, comparatives); *substitution* (i.e., the replacement of one component by another including nouns, predicates and adverbials); *ellipsis* (i.e., the omission of a component such as noun phrases, predications and adverbials); *conjunctions* (i.e., the indication of specific meaning

which presupposes existing items in discourse, such as additives, adversatives, causals and temporals) and, finally, *lexical cohesion* (i.e., the repetition or variation of the same lexical items), as seen in the semantic interplay within (an imagined) text of such items as *The Amazon Basin, rainforest, transpiration, equatorial zone, precipitation, flora and fauna and relative humidity*. . Since the use of cohesive devices in a certain written text is so abundant as to render a detailed investigation of them all a difficult task, the present research will be confined to a substantial part of cohesive devices, namely conjunctives.

Halliday and Hasan's Taxonomy of Conjunctions

Conjunctions are variously known as *conjunctives* by Halliday and Hasan; *connectors* by Zamel (1983) ; *discourse connectors* by Parrot (1990) and *discourse markers* by Cowan (2008). Unlike other cohesive devices such as ellipsis, conjunctions are not cohesive in themselves but by virtue of their specific meanings (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; 226). Instead of reaching out to the preceding or following text; they express certain meanings which presuppose other components in discourse. Moreover, in contrast to the aforementioned cohesion types, the semantic relations specify that what follows is systematically connected to what has gone. This implies, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976:227) that conjunctions do not require a specifiable element in a context for their interpretation. Conjunctions are crucial in pinpointing logical relations in written text and, hence, enhancing its readability, since they allow the anticipation of what follows (Martinez, 2004).

Conjunctions fall into the four subcategories of *additive*, *adversative*, *causal* , and *temporal*. Regarding additives, Additives introduce discourse unite which reiterate or enhance cardinal points or add up pertinent new information to previously mentioned statements. It is mainly expressed by such expressions as *and*, *or*, *also*, *furthermore*, *additionally*, *etc.*The category of additive conjunctions is structurally used to coordinate through accumulating information to a presupposed item in the text. Concerning adversative conjunctives, they include such expressions as *but*, *yet* ,*nonetheless* and *conversely* and they highlight the contrast or concession in light of new information. With regards to causal conjunctions, they are employed to express reason or purpose they include expressions the likes of *so*, *thus*, *as a result of* and *with respect to*, and they present information logically following or are a consequent of preceding discourse. Temporal conjunctions can be instantiated by *at first*, *finally*, *next* and *concurrently* and they ae utilized to connect two discourse units with either previous, simultaneous or subsequent textual segments.

Error Analysis Hypothesis

Error analysis is regarded by James (1998: 1) as the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language. This subfield hinges on the concept of *error*, viewed by Corder (1975) as *a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker reflects the competence of the learner*, unlike the related concept of *mistake* which refers to *a performance error that is either random guess or a slip in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly*. One of the most important contributions of error analysis to the field of foreign/second language acquisition is its dealing with learners' errors as a guide to the inner workings of the learning process, rather than undesirable phenomena as seen in the former Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Ellis, 1985: 53; James (1998: 1) emphasizes that making errors is one of the characteristics associated with human and distinguishing them from animals and artifacts. She maintains: *error is likewise unique to humans, who are not only sapiens and*

loquens, but also homo errnas. Not only is to err human, but there is none other than human error (ibid: 1). She further explains that speaking a language and making errors at speaking are both parts of our humanity.

Corder (1967, 1975, 1981) is the first to advocate the significance of error in the language learning process. He claims that learner's errors provide evidence of the system of the language he/she is using. He (ibid) counts three different ways in which errors are important:

- (1) To the teacher: they tell him how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what remains for him to learn.
- (2) To the researcher: they provide him evidence of how language is learned and what strategies the learner employs when tries to communicate in the target language.
- (3) To the learner: making errors is a device he/she uses in order to learn (Corder, 1967 ,in Ellis, 1985: 25).

These views are supported by Selinker (1972) when he points out that there are two highly important contributions Corder made in the field of second language acquisition: (a) errors of learners are not random, rather they are systematic and (b) errors are not negative or interfering, in any way, with learning a target language, but a necessary positive factor of testing hypotheses. Likewise, Dulay et al. (1982) acknowledge the importance of learners' errors indicating that analyzing the learners' errors serves two main purposes: First, it provides significant information from which inferences about the language learning process can be made. Second, it shows which parts of the target language are difficult to learn and then delay the learners' ability to communicate correctly.

Types of Errors

In Error Analysis paradigm, learners' errors are classified into two main types: *interlingual* and *intralingual* or *developmental* errors, as follows:

Interlingual Errors

According to Richards (1971 – quoted in Freeman and H Long, 1991: 58), interlingual errors are the ones that can be traced to learners' first language interference. They are also considered as *errors similar in structure to semantically equivalent phrases or sentences in the learner's native language* (Dulay et al., 1982: 171). The identification and analysis of interlingual errors has traditionally been the concern of the study of bilingualism (Richards, 1971 – cited in Richards, 1974: 172). He views the process of interference as the intrusion of features of one language into another in the speech of bilinguals. It is postulated that one of major concern of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is contrasting the systems of two contact languages in order to predict the learning difficulties. And there is a great consensus among the advocates of the CAH that *those elements that are similar to the learners' native language will be simple for him, and these areas that are different will be difficult* (Richards, 1974: 172). Therefore, interlingual transfer is of two types: positive and negative transfer.

According to Ellis (1985: 22), transfer is negative when there is proactive inhibition, which means the way in which previous learning prevents or inhibits the learner of new habits. That is why transfer is commonly known as 'interference' and it causes learning difficulties, resulting in errors. Positive transfer, in contrast, takes place when the first and the second language habits are

the same. In this case, errors do not occur. Therefore, positive (unlike negative) transfer facilitates the language learning process.

Intralingual/Developmental Errors

Intralingual errors are defined as “*similar errors committed by SL learners, regardless of their first language*” (Freeman and Long, 1991:58). They are also known as developmental errors being defined as “errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language (Dulay et al, 1982:195). Richards (1974: 174) views intralingual errors as those reflecting aspects of rule learning instantiated by incomplete mastery of rules and failure to learn in the first place. He further explains that these developmental errors occur when the learner tries to build up hypotheses about the English language on the basis of his limited experience in the classroom or textbook. According to the sorts of strategies employed by the learner, Richards (ibid) puts developmental errors into four main groups: (1) overgeneralization, (2) Ignorance of rule restrictions, (3) incomplete application of rules, and (4) False concepts hypothesized.

Previous Studies

Zamel (1983) points out the importance of conjunctions to interpretation of ideas, since they prepare readers to anticipate the ideas that follow. It logically follows, according to McCarthy (1991), that the mastery of use of conjunctions is an essential skill for EFL students to write effectively. Consequently, a plethora of studies has been devoted to the investigation of the use of cohesive devices by EFL students (e.g. Ostler, 1987; Hamoushi, 1999; Khuweileh and Al-Shoumali, 2000; Ting, 2003; Olateju, 2006; Mohammed-Sayidina, 2011). More specifically, some international studies have inquired into the mastery of conjunctions by EFL students (e.g. Crewe, 1990; Field and Yip, 1992; Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali, 2000; Chen, 2006; Heino, 2010). On account of lack of space, due mention will be made of only a few studies that, like our study, deal with problems of conjunctions faced by Arab learners.

Khuwaileh and Shoumali (2000) conducted a study about the writing skills of Jordanian academic students in Arabic and English. They depended on text-analysis of students in both languages. They found out that the students who wrote a poor composition in English have the same poor writing in their mother tongue since their writing lacks coherence and cohesion. One of the reasons of this deficiency was that the poor texts lack the logical connectors or conjunctive adjuncts, as 36% of students did not use signal words to guide the discussion of their arguments in English, though they had good ideas.

Hinkel (2001) calculated the median frequency rates of explicit cohesive devices employed in academic texts of native and non-native speakers who spoke different mother tongues (Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Arabic). She used corpus-based comparative study and found out that linking adverbials or sentence transitions are used by all non-native groups at significantly higher median frequency rates more than those of native speakers. Non-native speakers 22 overused these adverbials and they did not use them effectively as advanced learners. This was due to "the focus on transitions in writing and composition instructions for university level students."

Abusharkh (2012) studied the use of conjunctive adjuncts among three groups of Palestinian students at the college level. He used Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion theory in his analysis of argumentative essays of the students. He found that additive adjuncts 23 were overused by the beginners and intermediate learners, especially the additive 'and'. He also found that the least used conjunctive adjuncts were causal and temporal among the three groups. They also underused other conjunctive adjuncts. Adopting a performance analysis approach, this study focuses on EFL learners' use of conjunctions. A total of 60 essays written by Arabic-speaking

second-year university English majors were scrutinized. Out of 2936 logical connectors used, 2672 (91%) were judged to be correct, a finding which runs counter to those reported by other researchers. The correct production of most of the connectors was most probably due to systematic form-focused instruction, practice and feedback since they are closed-class words and most of them have equivalents in Arabic. A three-dimensional analysis of the 264 errors detected indicated that they were mostly selection and insertion errors committed for interlingual and intralingual reasons. Form-focused instruction can be made more effective and learner-centered by taking into account the cognitive strategies underlying the most common errors. Further rigorous performance analyses are needed in other aspects of cohesion before passing single-minded judgments about EFL students' competence in the use of cohesive devices based on unreliable data collection tools such as perception questionnaires, predictive contrastive analysis, recognition tests and teacher-imposed composition topics.

The final and most pertinent study to us is Muftah (2013) investigate the use of conjunctions in argumentative essays written by English as a Foreign Language fourth-year undergraduate Libyan students majoring in English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University in Libya. A corpus of 32 argumentative essays was collected from a sample of 16 students in order to be investigated in terms of Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomy of conjunction. Findings showed that the Libyan EFL students used the conjunctions inappropriately, and that the adversative conjunctions posed the most difficulty for the learners, followed by additives and causals. Of the adversatives, on the other hand was the most difficult conjunction for the participants, followed by but and in fact. With the use of additive conjunctions, moreover was the most problematic, followed by and and furthermore. Among the causals, the conjunction so was the most challenging, followed by because. The difficulties encountered by participants in employing the conjunctions can be attributed to three reasons: 1) first language (Arabic) negative transfer; 2) overgeneralisation in the second language (English) and 3) the presentation of conjunctions in lists in ESL/EFL textbooks without showing the subtle difference between them in terms of semantic function. These findings are discussed in this paper with implications for teaching the use of conjunctions in the Libyan context.

Within the Sudanese context, studies on the mastery of cohesive devices and its relation to writing quality are few and far between (e.g. Braima, 1996; Abdallah, 2000; Arabi, 2010) and are mainly directed at overall textual properties rather than an in- depth investigation of cohesive categories including , for example, the use of conjunctions, as will be attempted in the present study.

Questions of the Study

The study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- How well does this sample of Sudanese English majors handle conjunctions in their written discourse?
- 2- Based on The Contrastive Hypothesis and Interlanguage Theory, what are the underlying reasons for conjunction errors in the corpus?

Methodology

Participants

The subjects of the present study are fifty fourth year English majors who were about to graduate with a B.A. degree in English from the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Al Neelain

University, Sudan. The main rationale for choosing this sample is their homogeneity, since they are all Sudanese nationals who have been learning English as a *foreign language under the same syllabus for eleven years: seven at Basic and Higher Secondary Schools and four as a major university subject*.

Instrument

The instrument of this study is 50 answer sheets randomly chosen from the Final Examinations of the academic year 2012-2013. The choice of the researchers fell on the examination written production for two reasons, the first of which is that under such condition the attendance is complete and so ensuring a wide and representative research sample. Second, in examinations students perform at their best in the knowledge that the assessment of their answers will be incorporated in their final grades. Consequently, the type of written samples they produce will embody such textual aspects as conjunctions. One such an ideal environment is a course entitled *Advanced Essay Writing* (one of nine courses prerequisite for fourth year students). In the final examination of this course, the students were required to develop a topic sentence namely, *It is interesting to have a job that involves travelling* into a coherent paragraph. In a second question, the students were provided with the option of developing one of the following thesis statements into a coherent and well- organized essay:

a) *Banning smoking in public places protects people's health.*

b) *Learning a foreign language is important for every student*

The body of writing produced in answer to the above questions furnished the setting for the conjunctions analyzed in this study.

Procedures

To empirically find answers to the research question of *What conjunction features pose the greatest challenges to this student sample*, each of the fifty sheets was first tagged with a card containing the abbreviation of the type of writing - AW (Argumentative Writing) or NW (Narrative Writing) together with the serial number of the writing script (1,2,3, etc). Subsequently, each erroneous *F- unit* is written out on the sampling card. In this study the *F- unit* is employed as the basic textual unit, rather than the orthographic sentence, since it includes all the main and dependent clauses operating at the textual level, which are treated as separate textual units from this perspective. This will allow for the analysis of conjunctions which operate within and across sentences. A component in each *F- unit* containing a conjunction error and its category is then underlined alongside the target correct form written between two brackets. For analysis purposes, conjunctions are semantically divided into four categories: *additive*, *adversative*, *causal* and *temporal*. For instance, the following text portion *I sat at the last place, so no one on it*, is dealt with as below:

Table 1. Conjunction Error-sampling Card

24/NW	Conjunction errors
Error	Type
I sat *at the last place, <u>so</u> no one on it.	Causal conjunction misuse

Discussion and Analysis

Cohesive relations, as used in the present study, are based on the categorization set forth by Halliday and Hasan (1976). An initial survey of the distribution of the four cohesion types revealed conjunction to be the most widely employed category. Indeed, on average, each of the fifty students commits almost seven errors of this type. This could be attributed to the prevalence of grammar and structural linguistics in teaching English in Sudan, as pointed out by Noureen (2002).

Statistics below first provide figures on the distribution of each type, followed by a deeper consideration of each category and the possible explanations. Due to space constraints and their relatively insignificant distribution, temporal cohesive devices will not be dealt with separately. It is hoped that explanations of the other categories will illuminate the functions of this type. It is to be noted that asterisks will be used to mark the ungrammatical sentences in the corpus.

Table 2. Types of Conjunction Errors

Type of Conjunction	No. of Errors	Percentage	Mean
1. additive	172	50.29%	3.44
2. causal	88	25.73%	1.76
3. adversative	48	14.03%	0.96
4. temporal	34	9.94%	0.68
Total	342	100%	6.84

Additive Conjunction Errors

Table [2] below shows this type of errors to be the most prominent among conjunction errors detected in the examined written discourse. The errors of this category, alone, account for half of the entire errors relating to conjunctions. Additive errors are further sub-classified into four smaller-groups (addition, misuse, replacement and omission) in accordance with what process a certain group of errors entails. The following table shows the frequency of occurrence of the groups in the corpus.

Table 3. Types of Additive Conjunction Errors

Type of conjunction	No. of Errors	Percentage	Mean
a- addition	118	68.9%	2.36
b- misuse	33	18.9%	0.66
c- replacement	19	11.1%	0.38
d- omission	2	1.1%	0.04
Total	172	100%	3.44

The conjunction errors of the addition subcategory entail using a particular conjunction in sentence positions where it is not applied. They include the following conjunctions: *and*, *or*, *also*, *in addition*, *add to this*, *even* and *as well*. The statistics reveal addition errors including *and*, *or* and *also* as the most frequent conjunctions. Moreover, among the three, *and* is the highest in

prominence scoring 76 of the 118 or 64.5% of all addition errors. The last four types (*in addition*, *add to this*, *even* and *as well*) are neglected for being insignificant in numbers.

The typical embodiment of addition errors is when students unnecessarily insert 'and' in the contexts where it does not apply. Below are some examples:

[1] *At last, it is interesting to have a job that you enjoy * it and like *it provide you *an opportunity to travel to see many places and to see or know many people you do not know*them.* [34/AW]

The above – cited sentence reveals an excessive use of and, which is exacerbated by the repeated ideas the writer uses to argue for his/her point. For example, the text portions 'you enjoy it and like it', and 'to see many places – to see many people' are tautologous versions of the same items. Swan (1980: 130) argues that words for repeated ideas can often be left out. Therefore, the repeated words 'to see many' (in the second clause joined by and) can be dispensed with. Hence, the part of the sentence becomes 'you can travel to see many places and people'. Turning now to the issue of this subsection, additive and, is not free from repetition. Surprisingly, it is reiterated three times in only one sentence, adding nothing important to the first clauses it conjoins. But, it is interesting that the overuse of additive and has been noted by other researchers such as Khalil (1989) and Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000), among others.

When *and* is used alone as a cohesive item (as distinct from *and then*) it often seems to have the sense of 'there is something more to be said' (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Another example embodying 'and' redundant insertions is presented in the following text:
[2] *... when it got out from *this mouth something as a football with red *color, and produced strange sound and *he attacked me and lied me on the earth and approach to kill me, but* [28/NW]

Regardless of the syntactical and spelling errors, the structure of the above – sentence is marred by additive (ands). Four (ands) in only one sentence is an indication of the students' unfamiliarity with the conventions of English conjunctions. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 71) argue against this way of using *and*, commenting that:

There is no motive to place 'and', 'also', 'in addition', etc between all clauses or sentences; in fact, such a practice renders the text dull.

The pervasive errors of *and* are ascribable to two main factors. The first (*intralingual*) is related to the nature of and occurrence in different English sentence positions together with the complex, semantic relationships it establishes. Van Dijk (1980: 58) explains that one of the problems in semantics of natural connectives is their possible ambiguity. i.e. the same connective may express different types of connection, and one type of connection may be expressed by various connectives. He further specifies that 'and' may be used to express a conjunction, as well as, conditionals, casuals, temporals and local connectives. The second factor (*interlingual*) is associated with the learners' mother tongue interference (Arabic in the present case). Unlike English, widespread use of 'and' is allowed in Arabic. i.e. if two or more items (of sequential or additive nature) are joined together by / wa / wa / / واو (the Arabic equivalent of 'and'), each item can be preceded by 'واو'. Taking the above-cited example of Halliday and Hasan: *men, women and children*, the Arabic equivalent is 'الرجال والنساء والأطفال' / *al-rijaal wa al- nisaa wa al- atfaal* /. This Arabic convention of using 'and' may negatively influence the way Arab learners of English use English additive 'and'.

Or is the second most predominant errors of additive conjunction type with 19 cases (16%). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976: 246), the basic meaning of *or* relation is alternative. That means it is commonly used not to add new information (like additive *and*), but rather to express another possible opinion or explanation, etc. in the place of the one just given. For instance

Perhaps she missed her train. Or else she's changed her mind (quoted in Halliday and Hasan, ibid p. 247).

Or indicates that either the first event will take place or the second and not both. In other words, the sentence is acceptable if the speaker intends to carry out either the first act or the second in some time in the future. As far as the present study is concerned, the surveyed written texts reveal unnecessary insertion of conjunction '*or*', to the extent that, the text patterns connected by *or* seem to be ornamental rather than alternative. Below are examples demonstrating the case:

[3] *I tried to ride this bus or find place in bus.* [40/ NW]

[4] *Smoking it's very bad habits and very shameful when somebody smoke among the people especially in the common places or in the public places.* [46/AW]

While it is evident that the expression *ride a bus* is a miscollocation of *take a bus*, the second clause *find place in bus* is not an alternative act to the first. On the contrary, the two clauses are identical in meaning. Therefore, the use of *or* and the second clause (it joins) are redundant altogether. The same holds true of the second sentence since there is no difference in meaning between *the common places* and *public places*. Like *and*, alternative, *or*- addition errors are bedeviled with the content-repetition characterizing the subjects' writing. The subjects believe that repetition of the same idea reinforces it. Another reason for redundant use of *or* could be the students' ignorance of the complex nature of grammatical and semantic conventions governing the occurrence of *or* in different textural contexts.

Conjunction addition errors involving *also* come third in frequency with 15 occurrences (12.9%). They involve using the additive *also* in the textual context where it is not required, as shown in the coming examples.

[5]... *the governments is direct their sitizens to let that habit in public places, but unfortunately after all these directions, also there are persons never take care about this bad habit.* [28/AW]

[6] *And also if we read books that speak about health, also we will find most of talk about it.* [39/AW]

As explained in the previous section, students base their argumentation on repeating themselves in multiple contexts. For instance, instead of developing an idea through more explanation, examples, evidence, justification, etc, they keep beating round the same notion. This is evident in the repetitive, even obsessive, use of some words. Sentence (5), for example, comprises three clauses that are difficult to control, especially for EFL students. Therefore, it ought to be split into three simple sentences. In this sentence alone, the writer uses four conjunctive words: *but*, *unfortunately*, *after*, and *also*. Therefore, the sentence would have been more manageable had he split it into three simple sentences, as in

The government has issued directions forbidding smoking in publics. Unfortunately, nobody abide by them. Moreover some smokers do not care about non-smokers' health...

With reference to *also*, it is redundant in the first part of the third clause, because it is not common in English to connect two clauses by more than one conjunction. Swan (1980: 130) maintains that: *one conjunction is enough to join two clauses – we do not normally use two*. He provides the following example to illustrate the point: 'Although she was tired, but she went to work'. Such a sentence is rejected for the conjunction *but* being redundant as the contrast is already maintained by *although*. The same is true of the second example where the writer places *also* in the second clause, though the first one begins with *and also*. Arabic interference is the most plausible cause of the subjects' problems inherent in the redundant use of *also*. It is common in Arabic (the Sudanese colloquial in particular) to double-mark subordinate sentences; one at the beginning of subordinate (dependent) clause, and another at the beginning of the main (independent) clause. For example, the Arabic equivalent of the same example as above is

... "ولكن لسو الحظ بعد كل التوجيهات دي يرضو في بعض الناس ما بخطوا بالهم للعادة الضارة دي."

/laakin lisuu ai- hadh ba3d kul al- tawjihaat di bardu fi ba3d al- naas maa bikhutu baalun lil al- 3aada al- daara di /.

The underlined words are Arabic equivalent to the English conjunctions *but*, *unfortunately* and *also*, respectively. This sentence should be re-written in English as:

After all these directions, some people practise this bad habit

The two clauses are joined together with only one subordinating conjunction: *after*.

Additive conjunction misuse errors involve using a conjunctive in an inappropriate textual context. In other words, it is incorrectly employed in a context where its function does not apply. Additive misuse comes second in frequency, with 33 occurrences (18.9%). The errors are further broken down into smaller classes due to a conjunctive word each class includes (*and*, *or*, *also*, *in addition to*, and *for example*).

Once again, 17 or 52.9% of all additives inappropriately used involve *and*. This underscores the fact that (as in 'additive additions') students have far more problems with *and* than with other conjunctions. There are some contexts in the students' written corpus where 'and' is either vague in its meaning or incorrectly used to join two items of different grammatical status. Errors of this type are embodied in the following examples.

[6] *The place was full of boys and girls all friends and have the same ages* [21/AW]

[7] *Student themselves require *take a foreign language for various reasons and broaden their education.* [18 /AW]

In the first example, *and* is incorrect or at least vague since the relation between the presupposing text segment '*have the same age*' and the presupposed one (the segment that went before) is not additive in nature, rather it is referential. It can be revised as:

The place was full of friends (boys and girls) with the same ages..

: Or, better still, as:

The place was full of friends (bys and girls) of the same ages.

In the second example, *and* joins two text segments of different grammatical status: the noun phrase *various reasons* and verb phrase *to broaden*. Another problem is that even if the verbal phrase is changed into a noun (broadening), the segment needs some modifications to allow using additive 'and', otherwise it can be deleted altogether as in

Students, themselves, require taking a foreign language for various reasons such as ...,and broadening their education.

(*and* is correct here)

Or

Students, themselves, require taking a foreign language for reasons, including broadening their education

various

(and is omitted altogether).

And misuse errors of this type may be put down to the language users' ignorance of the target language syntax and semantic systems governing the use of additive conjunction 'and', rather than mother tongue interference (Arabic)

Addition replacement conjunction errors are comparatively smaller in number (amounting to 10 cases or 11%) . It entails placing one additive conjunction in text positions where another is appropriate. The most obvious conjunctions involved in the errors are: *and*, *in addition* and *moreover*. Like addition and misuse errors, *and* is the most problematic among other additive conjunction errors involving replacement. This is clearly demonstrable, since errors associated with *and* include 60% of all additive conjunction replacements. In the corpus, *and* is uncovered as being replaced by *or*, *also*, *regardless*, and *in addition*. Furthermore, 50% of *an*-replacements occur with alternative-additive *or*. The remaining conjunctions (*also*, *regardless* and *in addition*) are alike in frequency (16.7 each). Below are some examples to illustrate the errors involving 'and/or'-replacement:

[8]... *how to treat with computer or (and) internet ...* [15/AW]

[9]...*since the methods in the schools or (and) universities involve* [25/AW]

In these two sentences, *or* is used in the semantic contexts where additive *and* is obligatory. This is necessitated by the fact that the meaning relationship between the pair of clauses in each sentence is not alternative; rather it is additive. The second constituent (internet) of the first sentence is not an alternation to 'computer,' since it cannot be accessed without knowing how to operate computers. The same argument applies to the second example. Drawing on the context, *methods at universities* (the one that is linked by *or* in the second example) does not alter the *methods at schools*; rather it is added to it. The main reasons behind such *and/or* replacement errors could be intralingual. The writers are not sufficiently acquainted with the grammar and semantic nature of *or* in English, as seen below

[10] *Our duty *to stand beside the government, to fight against his habit, also (and) to *advise the coming generation from the dangerous of smoking ...* [15/AW]

From the context, the writer of the above sentence, most likely, intends to enumerate his/her duties toward making people stop smoking. He/she does this in succession as indicated by parallel verbal phrases *to stand*, *to fight* and *to advise*. he replacement error takes place when the writer uses *also* (before the last enumerated duty *to advise*) instead of *and*. Another example is provided below:

[11]-... *Improving heir education, and extending the scope of *knowledge (knowledge), in addition to (and) increasing their culture ...* [24/AW]

The writer of the above-sentence commits two errors involving *and*. The first occurs when he/she predicates the second clause (one of three clauses found in succession) with *and* instead of a comma; and the second when placing *in addition to* immediately before the last clause (standing for the last enumerated benefits of learning a foreign language) in lieu of *and*.

*Causal Conjunction Errors***Table.4 Types of Causal Conjunction Errors**

Type of Errors	No. of Errors	Percentage	Mean
a) misuse	53	60.9%	1.06
b) addition	23	26.1%	0.46
c) replacement	10	10.9%	0.2
d) omission	2	2.1%	0.04
Total	88	100%	1.76

Causal conjunction errors come second in frequency, accounting for 22.4%, following additive conjunctions. Like additives, causal conjunction errors are sub-classified into four major types: addition, replacement, misuse and omission. Table [4] reveals that the causal conjunction errors involving misuse are the highest in frequency, comprising 53 occurrences or 60.9%. To find out which causal conjunction poses the greatest difficulty for the subjects of this study, the errors are further put into the following smaller groups according to the conjunction each group subsumes. Misuse errors including *because* and *so* are the most prominent, having the same frequency of 31 occurrences (35.7% each).

With regards to causal *because*, errors take place when students use it in textual contexts where its meaning / function does not apply. The following sentences displays *because* misuse errors.

[12] ...if he *study *the law in Arabic, he *failure, and he*come back to his country
because the lack of foreign language. [29 / AW]

Apart from the serious syntactic problems in example , a sentence containing four clauses is probably too difficult to command, particularly for EFL students. Before identifying the causal conjunction error, it is important to explain that the writer expresses the importance of learning a foreign language (especially, English) for Arab students. Generally speaking, the way the writer forms subordinate clauses (together with numerous syntactic errors his/her sentence contains) impedes the coherent flow of meanings, if not break down the communication altogether.

Using *because* to link the segment *the lack of foreign language* to the previous part of sentence seems to be incorrect. This is due to the fact that the constituent *the lack of foreign language* is not the cause of *failing to study law in Arabic* since there is no relation between *studying law in Arabic* and *learning a foreign language*.

Another incorrect use of *because* is illustrated by the following:

[13] through the revolution of communication, so all the world becomes like or need to speak one language, because of the direct link of all world countries. [31/ AW]

It is difficult to find out what the writer wishes to convey, not only due to the incorrect use of causal conjunction *because*, but also because of the redundant use of *so*, *or* and *through*; all compounded by the syntactically and semantically incorrect manner of encoding the intended

meanings.. The meaning of conjunctive expression *because*, in the last part of the sentence, is not congruous, as *the direct link between the world countries* is not the reason for the need to speak one language. On the contrary, *the direct link ...* is established by virtue of the revolution in communication technology as shown in the revised version, underneath.

Due to (because of) revolution in communication technology, the whole world has become one community speaking one language. Therefore, it is important for any member to learn that language.

Being equal in frequency of occurrence to *because* so misuses stand out as the most prominent causal conjunction errors, (35.7%). The conjunction *so* is regarded as the simple form of causal relation markers, besides *thus*, *hence*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *accordingly*, etc. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 256). Furthermore, it occurs only initially, unless following *and* (Halliday and Hasan, *ibid*). The errors involve using *so* in a textual context where its meaning does not hold. Below are some examples (extracted from students' written texts).

[14] *Finally if we *stoped *the smoking in public places, we can save *or *protects our health form the harm of smoking. So we must protects our heads. [19/AW]*
 .[[15] *I sat *at the last place, so no one on it [25/NW]*

What is unconventional with *so* in both examples is that its meaning is completely reversed. The reversal stems from the fact that *so* is used to mark the 'result' and not the 'cause' as is customary in English. In the first text portion, for example, it is the 'health protection' that entails 'stopping smoking in public places', not the opposite (as the writer has done). Note the revised version:

Finally, if we want to protect our health, we must stop smoking, especially in public places.

The same holds true of the second example. The manner in which the writer uses *so* in the second clause literally means that he/she sat on the last seat, as a result it was empty (there was nobody sitting on it). In fact, the writer intends to convey the opposite.

I found a free seat in the corner. So I sat on it

Even this way of using *so* is not acceptable in discourse analysis/ pragmatics, since the meaning added after *so* is implied in the sense that it can be understood by the addressee from the context, depending on his *schema* knowledge. To put it another way, one looks for a chair, conventionally to sit on, not to dance or stand on. The subjects of the present study write in formal English in the same digressive manner they chat in colloquial Arabic Compare the original Arabic version of the same second example , from which literal translation into English is rendered.

أنا قَعَدْتُ فِي الْمَقْعَدِ الْآخِرِ لِأَنَّهُ مَا كَانَ فِيهِ زُول / *ana qa3adata fii al- maq3ad al- akhiir lanahuu maa kaan fiihu zool* / . The underlined word (/ *lanahu* / لِأَنَّهُ) is incorrectly analogized with English *so*, a process that reverses the meaning of 'cause – result' in English.

Addition is the second most predominant type of causal conjunction errors with 23 cases (26.1%), following the ones involving misuse processes. It takes the form of unnecessary insertion of a particular causal conjunction in contexts where it is not obligatory. Of these causal conjunctions, *so*, *if* and *so as* are the most problematic. The subjects' written corpus reveal certain positions where the causal conjunction *so* is superfluously used. There are 10 cases of *so* additions (41.7%). Two instances will suffice:

[16] *.. the sun is shining, the sky is cloudy, so my friends *are advanced and I promise to meet them [16/NW]*

[17]-*When I got home he was watching T.V. so joined him I sat on the chair.... [18/NW]*

Regardless of the meaning contradictions shown in the two clauses of the first sentence (How on Earth can the sun shine in the cloudy sky!), the causal conjunction *so* is redundant (ornamental) rather than denoting a causal relation, which is originally denied between the two text components. Similarly, the relationship holding between the first clause of the example and the second is not causal – result in nature. Therefore, the presence of *so* at the initial position of the last sentence is needless. The addition errors of this type can be put down to the writers' ignorance of causal-conjunction rule restrictions.

Adversative Conjunction Errors

In the corpus, adversative conjunction errors come third in frequency, accounting for 12.2%. They are further put into smaller groups according to the process each group of errors involves (misuse, addition, replacement and omission). The following table statistically shows the distribution of these types of errors in the corpus.

Table.5. Types of Adversative Conjunction Errors

Type of Error	No. of Errors	Percentage
a) misuse	23	48%
b) addition	19	40%
c) replacement	4	8%
d) omission	2	4%
Total	48	100%

Adversative errors involving misuse come first in frequency among other processes, standing for 48%. This group of errors includes *but*, *although* and *on the other hand*. It is observable that most adversative-conjunction misuse errors have *but* (66.7%) or 15 cases. This result denotes that the conjunction *but* poses more difficulties for the subjects than *although* and *on the other hand*. The errors entail using *but* in textual contexts where its meaning or function does not apply. Below are some examples:

[18] ... it will be **also the key to access different *and important knowledge as *well as enjoy speak it, listen to it on radio, T.V *or use it to read about literature *and art of other area *and people but, a foreign language will be very helpful to broaden you education as *well.*
[31/AW]

The writer of this verbose sentence (comprising 25 words and 8 conjunctions) argues for the importance of learning a foreign language. The intended idea of the last clause, which is incorrectly punctuated and anticipated by the adversative-relation conjunction *but*, is that learning a foreign language is particularly important for improving one's education. This idea, in fact, is the last one of learning a foreign language advantages mentioned, in succession, by the writer. Accordingly, the relation between the last portion of the sentence (joined by *but*) and the others is additive rather than adversative in nature. Consequently, additive-emphatic conjunctions such as *furthermore*, *in particular*, *moreover* should have been used instead of *but* to antecede the last clause.

The errors related to *although* are comparatively lower in frequency (6 cases). One example will clarify:

[19] **Because many people become sick and die of smoking although they do no *smoking even one day in their life, *but breath polluted air that came from bad behaviour of the smokers.* [19/AW]

Generally speaking, the manner in which the writer of this sentence expresses him/herself, along with the redundant words he/she employs to convey his/her messages makes it difficult to trace the intended meanings. Assuming the writer desires to signal causal-relation between this sentence and the previous ones, then attaching another subordination beginning with *although* and ending with redundant *but* is unjustifiable. This type of errors might well provide another instance of the students' florid writing style to be expected from Arabic-speaking writers. Hence, the expression *breath polluted air that came from bad behaviour of the smokers*, can be paraphrased as *passive smoking* as shown in the following revised variant of the whole sentence:

Because some people die or become sick of passive smoking.

It is evident so far that both *although* and *but* are either misused or unnecessary. Another incorrect use of *although* is evident in the following subordination.

[20] ... although it is harmful, *but smoking in public places must be banned to protect the health of the people* ... [35/AW]

Example [20] has an error of a dual nature. First, the subordination is double – marked, by *although* (in the first clause) and *but* (in the second clause). Second, the conjunctive *although* itself is misused. Cutting out the redundant *but* from the second clause, the sentence should have been:

Although it is harmful, *smoking in public places must be banned to protect the health of the people* ...

Using *although* in the context above is incorrect as the relation between the first and second clauses is *causal – result*, and not adversative. Therefore, one of the causal conjunctions (such as: *because, since, as, for, as for*) would be appropriate in the context where *although* is incorrectly used. For example

Because it is harmful, smoking in public places must be banned

The errors such as the ones discussed above, are most likely due to the language users' ignorance of the lexical dimensions of collocation.

Amounting to 40%, adversative conjunction additions come second in frequency, with 19 occurrences. They involve three adversative conjunctions: *but, however, and unfortunately*. Furthermore, the addition errors including *but* are the most salient, constituting 80% of all errors of this subcategory. The errors involving *however* and *unfortunately* are alike in frequency of occurrence (each forms 10%). As a result, discussion and analysis are limited to conjunctive word *but*. Below are some examples:

[21] ..., some of them aim to be a member in some *country that *speaks a different *language, but *other learn a foreign *language for other purposes such as, *make the opportunity for getting job broader. [27/AW]

In example (21), the writer intends to present the reasons for learning a foreign language. With no regards to his/her poor vocabulary, numerous syntactical and spelling problems, the second clause of this sentence, which is erroneously conjoined by the adversative *but*, is not contrary to the first. Rather, it is one of the purposes for learning a foreign language the writer begins to enumerate in the first part of the sentence. Viewing it another way, this part of the sentence *learning a foreign language for help in finding a job* is not antithetical to *learning a foreign language for being able to communicate with the native speakers of the language*, as /expressed by the writer.

But is also found unnecessarily co-occurring with *although* in one sentence. The coming statements illustrate the case.

[22]... *although they do not smoking even one day in their life, but breath polluted air that came from bad behaviour of the smokers.* [19/AW]

[22] *Although it's not easy to acquire a second language, but all students should be required to take a foreign language ...* [50/AW]

While in English two clauses are not usually connected by two conjunctions, double- marked subordination is common in Arabic and, hence, errors as above will result, as discussed in the earlier part of this study.

Pedagogical Implications

The consideration of cohesion patterns in students' written production has revealed unduly large stretches of erroneous cohesive relations, and these statistics are the more striking in the light of the fact that the sample students are on the verge of graduating from university. It, hence, seems that most of these errors have been fossilized into their interlingual systems. This calls in for an investigation of the courses offered at this university as a possible indicator of cohesion misuse as symptomatic of larger writing issues. Out of the thirty- seven courses offered, only three are allotted to writing. The first of these is in the first year and the other two are in the second and third year. The courses are entitled *Writing*, *Writing Composition* and *Expository Writing* respectively. While the titles of these courses hint at rhetorical and current- traditional approaches concerned with the organizing structure and essay patterns of the 1960s and 1970s, no writing course is offered in the fourth and final year. This is significant, since the only contemporary linguistics course, namely *Discourse Analysis* is provided in the fourth year. However, by then it will not instill in the students those textual properties (of which *cohesion* is our concern) and will, consequently, be a mere academic exercise divorced from students' writing already moulded by the environment of structural approaches evidenced in the fact that there are five grammar courses in the syllabus but, yet again, the best of these *Functional Grammar* is offered in the final year. It would be plausible to postulate that much the same conditions exist in other Sudanese universities. The neglect of discursal aspects was corroborated by a study carried out by Abdullah (2005) on post- graduate writing research in Sudan, and in which he found that the bulk of research was devoted to error analysis of grammatical and spelling mechanical errors at the level of the sentence, disregarding the fact that these errors do not necessarily impinge on writing quality. Even the two studies dealing with cohesion regard it as yet one more element of the paragraph structure as in current- traditional approaches, and cohesion is singled out without consideration of the other textual, contextual and non- linguistic factors making up the text. It is the contention of Abd Allah (and ours too) that any remedy of writing problems presupposes a change of pedagogy through implementing more textually- based paradigms as a framework for teaching writing. In so doing, due consideration will be given to the text as an embodiment of actual language use involving linguistic and non- linguistic elements all of which geared towards the fulfillment of a communicative purposes. Only then can a system for rectifying the above cohesion errors manifested in the present study be feasibly devised.

Conclusion

The subject of cohesion first rose into prominence in the 1970s within post- Chomskyan linguistics in its strands of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, Textlinguistics and Discourse Analysis which all, more or less, stressed the *text* as the basic unit of linguistic analysis. Cohesion is one condition that a text has to fulfill to be a text at all. The study of cohesion was given impetus by the publication of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) book *Cohesion in English*, and in the wake of this work, a considerable body of research has been amassed. Taking this cue, the present study investigates the handling of conjunctions within a corpus drawn from fifty Sudanese English majors.

Of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) four semantic categories, additive conjunctions presented the greatest difficulties for the subjects. Errors involving additive conjunctions, alone, stand for 50.29%, followed by causal conjunctive relations (25.27%). Taken together, these two types comprise three- fourth of all errors.. Within additives, the conjunction errors including *and* and *or*, make up for 77% of all additive errors. As for causal conjunctions, the errors relating to *so* and *because* are the most obvious in the subjects' written corpus. Concerning adversative conjunctions, the errors involving *but* over-number other conjunctions (forming 64% of the errors of this type), with *although*, trailing behind *but* in frequency (12%). Temporal conjunction errors, however, are the least in frequency. They constitute 9.94% of the total errors of conjunctive type. All in all, the conjunctive words *and*, *or*, *so*, *because*, *but*, and *although* are considered the most difficult for the subjects to deal with, on grounds of intralingual interference, semantic ambiguity and interlingual confusion. Neither the latter category nor statistics for single items are presented in the study for lack of space. It is hoped that further research will be carried out not only on the rest of cohesive devices but also such aspects as the correlation between cohesion use and lexical dimensions.

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The Effects of Writing Intervention Program on Foundation Level Students at Shinas College of Technology, Oman

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of a pilot study that investigated the effects of the process genre approach on academic writing proficiency of the foundation level students at Shinas College of Technology, Oman during the third semester (April-July) of 2013. This study included an intervention program where the study group was taught using context-specific materials employing the process genre approach. The study consisted of a pretest, mid and final- semester examinations as research instruments. At the end of the study, data was analyzed using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether the process genre approach had an impact on the performance of the study group in examination settings. The findings indicated statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) differences across the three tests; the pretest, the mid-semester and the final-semester examinations. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the context-specific materials delivered through the process genre approach are effective in enhancing students' academic writing proficiency that will help them perform better in examination settings in English Foreign Language (EFL) programs in the context of technological education in Oman.

Keywords: Academic writing proficiency, accuracy, composing, intervention, process genre approach

Introduction

Improving writing proficiency in learners who study English as a foreign or a second language has become one of the major concerns among the foreign language English writing instructors in contexts where students have had little or no experience with either their native or the target language as literate product of an educational system (Leki, 2001). Given the role that academic writing plays in Omani tertiary level education, it is mandatory for the students studying at the colleges of technology in the Sultanate of Oman to be proficient in academic writing skills (Al-Badwawi, 2009). Shinas College of Technology which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Manpower in Oman is one of the seven colleges, which conducts professional courses in Engineering, Business Studies and Information Technology leading to certificates and diplomas. It is mandatory for each student to acquire a satisfactory level of competence in all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Therefore, the students who are enrolled for a study program with the college of technology should first sit for a placement test in English and based on their scores, they are placed in groups regardless of their prospective specialization. The English Language Center (ELC) of the college conducts an English program for the freshmen in four levels (1, 2, 3, and 4) in order to develop their linguistic proficiency to meet the requirements of the Post-Foundation specializations.

Being English teachers in the foundation English program at the Department of English, Shinas College of Technology for the past two years, the researchers have observed that a majority of foundation students from all the four levels (Levels 1 to 4) demonstrates low performance in the college based mid-semester examination (MSE) and the final-semester (FSE) examination. Test result analysis performed for the quality assurance purposes of the college for the academic year 2013-2014 indicates that a considerable number of students from all the four levels (level 1 to 4) have received low marks for writing skill even though most of them have been able to perform well in other skills (reading, speaking and listening). Given the condition stated above, the current pilot study aims to address the academic writing issues experienced by foundation level students at Shinas College of Technology.

Research problem

As stated in the introduction, the Foundation Level English program at Shinas College of Technology lasts one semester (16 weeks) and during the semester foundation level students are required to sit for two examinations (MSE and FSE). This is to emphasize that level 1 and 2 students study general English while level 3 and 4 students need to study academic English which includes different types of descriptive writing. In the examinations, level 3 students are expected to be able to produce a well-thought out and organized paragraphs in line with the academic writing conventions. During the first and second semester in 2012-2013, the researchers taught writing skill for two different groups of level three students. Analysis of the tests results of mid semester and final term exams of 2013 (second semester) by the quality assurance unit of the college indicated that most of the students had not performed well in writing. In extreme cases, students wrote nothing and only copied the question on to the answer script. Other students had problems with content, organization and language use. It should be noted here that these students have studied English as a subject at school for almost ten years in addition to studying the writing course for one semester (16 weeks) at the college

Lack of writing proficiency in the target language constantly poses problem for foundation level students both in academic and social contexts. The students at Shinas College are from different majors such as Engineering, Business Studies and Information Technology and most of

them aspire to find a job after graduation while a few chooses to pursue their higher studies at a Higher College of Technology or a local university where degrees are awarded.

The low performance in writing skill in the college based examinations and other evidence from the classroom-based writing instruction suggest that writing needs to taught systematically to the foundation level students. If not, what students write does not conform to discourse and genre requirements demanded in academic writing. Therefore, given the problem described above, the researchers decided to conduct an intervention program on writing to foundation students (level-3) in which Process genre approach and context-specific materials were included in classroom instruction with the premise that the Process genre approach allows students to learn more effectively by exposing them to see writing as a process rather than a product (Badger & White, 2000). In other words, Process genre approach involves several stages such as pre-writing, planning, composing, revising, editing and producing a final draft.

Literature review

This section will focus on the relevant and important theories and pedagogical approaches in teaching writing to EFL learners. The crucial role that approaches to writing plays is explained in general and the process genre approach is explained in particular. Moreover, the effects of context-specific writing materials and the process genre approach in enhancing academic writing proficiency of EFL learners are described with reference to published literature and its relevance to the current pilot study.

The students at Shinas College of Technology are expected to master academic writing skills during their respective study programs such as Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies. Even though there are different views of what constitutes academic writing, the general view held by most of the authors which the researchers reviewed is that academic writing displays students' understanding of an expository or argumentative topic and of writing conventions.

The responsibility of the writing teacher is to expose students to various writing strategies which include combinations of activities such as outlining, drafting, or free writing (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007) based on their level of general and academic writing experience. Despite all the efforts that teachers exert in an EFL class to help learners achieve academic writing proficiency, "many learners never move beyond composing single sentences or perhaps paragraphs" (Williams, 2005, p. 1). In the next section, we will discuss why a condition of this nature prevails in many EFL academic writing contexts in general and Oman in particular by referring to generally accepted findings in second language (L2) acquisition research.

Model-based approach

The literature that describes the field of writing instruction suggests that teaching of writing was language focused in traditional teaching contexts and writing was used as a means of reinforcing language which had already been learned in spoken form. Therefore, the emphasis in writing instruction was on correctness. To produce a piece of writing that is correct, it was necessary to provide learners with a good model from a textbook (or from the teacher). This kind of instructional method is known as model-based or product approach in which the students were required to follow a procedure when they wanted to write. Students using the product approach are normally told to write an essay imitating a given pattern. Generally the focus of such writing is on the written product rather than on how the learner should approach the process of writing. Writing is viewed as "mainly concerned with the knowledge about the structure of language, and

writing development is mainly the result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher” (Badger & White, 2000, p. 154). Model-based approach is therefore teacher-centered, as the teacher becomes the arbiter of the models used. Due to some weaknesses and limitations of the Model-based approach, Process approach emerged as a counter reaction to it (Yan, 2005).

Process approach

Writing is often referred to as composing because it emphasizes the importance of communication and the creative process that learners go through. Emphasizing why writing needs to be seen as a process rather than a product, Liebman-Kleine (1986, p. 785) argues that “process is not a dogma, but a concept that enables people to see writing in a new way and thereby ask questions that were not asked as long as people saw writing simply as finished products”.

The process approach movement began with studies about the composing process of writers (Emig, 1971; Perl, 1980) and resulted in informing students how to approach a writing task. Even though an effective piece of writing, or the product, is the ultimate aim for any writer, there are different methods or strategies available to reach the product stage. This was recognized by some composition teachers and researchers (Emig 1971; Hairston, 1982; Zamel 1983) and the traditional thinking about writing was questioned.

Most proponents of the process approach (Shih, 1986; Tessema, 2005; Williams, 2005; Yan, 2005; Zamel, 1983) agree that the number of stages can range from three to five such as prewriting (conceptualize/ think), drafting (first attempt), revising (improve on the first draft), proofreading (correct the text), publishing (Share the finished product). Several empirical studies that investigated the effects of process approach (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Urzua, 1987; Zamel, 1983) have found positive results.

Despite the wide recognition of the Process approach in EFL/ESL classrooms, it is not free from criticisms in that some authors argue that process-based instruction will give learners a false impression of what will be expected from them once they leave the classroom (Williams, 2005). Even though there are arguments against the process approach, one may think if ESL/EFL learners can improve their writing in L2 writing classes, it is most likely that they will be able to transfer these skills to other settings such as tests or examinations. However, given the weaknesses of Process approach, some authors began to argue that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced (Martin, 1993; Swales, 1990). As a result of the argument of the authors stated above, a new approach called Genre approach came into being. In the following section, we explain the Genre-based approach with reference to the literature that deals with it from different perspectives.

Genre-based approach

“Genre” refers not only to types of literary texts but also to the predictable and recurring patterns of everyday, academic and literary texts occurring within a particular culture (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). A genre-based approach places great emphasis on the relationship between text-genres and their contexts (Hyon, 1996). In doing so, it aims to help students become effective participants in their academic and professional environment as well as in their broader communities (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). However, limitations of the Genre approach led to the conclusion that using the genre approach exclusively might not be capable of making learners competent writers. Therefore, similar to the Product and Process approaches, the genre

approach has also been criticized by its opponents. Badger and White (2000) therefore, proposed a merger of the two approaches under discussion, hence the development of the Process-genre approach to the teaching of writing came into existence.

Process genre approach

From the theoretical perspective, a number of authors (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003) in L2 writing have called for the integration of process oriented and genre based approaches to teaching writing to students in L2 contexts. It was argued that writing is complex in nature and that writers require knowledge not only of linguistic features, but the process of writing and also the social context to produce successful texts (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000). In actual teaching situations, the L2 writing instructions are commonly a mixture of several approaches and teachers typically integrate the main elements into their practice (Hyland, 2003). From the theoretical viewpoint, instruction that combines key elements of process based and genre oriented approach should help students gain complex view of L2 writing, as the students should learn the necessary writing skills of planning, drafting, and revising the written drafts and gain explicit knowledge of linguistic features in relation to the social context (Badger & White, 2000).

The issue of skills dealing with the process of writing is addressed by the process approach, whilst the knowledge of social context and its influence on textual features is addressed by the genre based approach. By using an approach integrating process writing and genre, it is expected that students should gain the necessary knowledge of textual features, process of writing and social context to deal with writing as a complex activity. The students at Shinas College of Technology study Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies and they are required to write project reports, business letters, job applications, advertisements and memos and to design and develop web-based materials. Therefore, the Process genre approach (PGA) seems relevant and important for the study context of the students at Shinas College.

Stages involved in process genre approach

Students must first recognize the recursive nature of the writing process. Even though the phases mentioned below are presented in a linear fashion, they are not necessarily meant to follow in the order suggested.

Pre-writing phase:

At this stage, students are supposed to become familiar with the genre and the relating conventions through direct instruction by the teacher or models they are provided with.

Composing:

In composing, students structure the ideas in meaningful sentences based on the conventions of the specific genre. Thus, students construct sentences and paragraphs, but, their ideas are hardly ever completely formulated before they write their first draft, therefore, they need to produce multiple drafts at this stage.

Re-reading and revising:

Once the first draft is completed or while students are still busy composing, they are encouraged to re-read their text firstly to determine whether their subject content matches the topic and what they intended to say (Shih, 1986).

Peer-editing:

Peer-editing means that students read each other's work, and then offer feedback on content, structure and grammar. Peer-editing is also a form of input, as discussion on content with other students might lead to the addition of ideas.

Teacher feedback:

The teacher should edit and evaluate the students' first draft once it is written, self-edited, peer-edited and revised, possibly re-written.

Arguments against the Process genre approach

It seems difficult to find concrete criticism against the use of the process genre approach in the literature about writing. This may be due to the fact that the process genre approach is a relatively new approach in teaching writing in ELT (Badger & White, 2000). Moreover, it has not been determined yet, whether the process genre approach helps students to write better and/or faster in examination settings. The assumption underlying the process genre approach is that if students are instructed based on genres and have had the opportunity to analyze and manipulate model examples, then they should be able to compose more effectively in an examination setting. However, it was not possible for the researchers to find any empirical studies that could corroborate the assumption that helps students to write better and faster in examination settings. A few studies summarized below give information on the effect of the process genre approach on students' writing skills.

Empirical evidence on Process genre approach in application

The studies reported below are similar to the current pilot study in some features such as research design and research questions. Chelli and Hassina (2012) investigated the effectiveness of the Process genre approach on EFL written productions of the first year students at Biskra University, Algeria. This research was conducted in order to confirm or reject the hypothesis that the implementation of the process genre approach would bring positive results in the students' EFL written productions. The experimental group which consisted of 40 students was taught using the PGA while the control group which consisted of a similar number that of the experimental group was instructed through the Product approach. At the end of the study, writings were evaluated in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity using T-Unit as a measure of analysis. The findings related to fluency revealed that the control group recorded a slight increase in the means score from pretest to posttest (12.56 to 13.17) with a difference of 0.61 while the experimental group increased significantly from pretest to posttest (12.17 to 17.81) with a difference of 5.64. All in all, given the findings of this study, researchers state that the Process genre approach can help EFL students develop their writing competence better than the Product approach.

Nordin, Halib, and Ghazali (2010) conducted a study at the University TeknologiPetronas, Malaysia to investigate the effect of the process genre approach on the writing skills of engineering students. The experimental group received writing instruction based on the Process genre approach while the control group was taught through the Genre approach. The findings of the study indicated that the writing ability of students in the experimental group was significantly better than those in the control group. A school-based study conducted in Indonesia by Nihayah (2009) reported that after the implementation of the Process genre approach, her students' writing ability had improved. The researcher provides statistical evidence in her study to support

the positive effects of the Process genre approach in improving writing ability of the students. In an attempt to enhance the writing ability of foundation level undergraduate students in a Malaysian International University, Jackson (2012) employed Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) combined with the Process genre approach and the researcher concluded that the use of CLIL combined with process genre approach was effective in enhancing academic writing skills of tertiary level EFL/ESL students.

It should specifically be noted that, to the best of our knowledge, - no studies have been conducted in the Omani context on the application of the Process or the Process genre approach. The studies described above, which were mainly conducted in different teaching contexts, suggest that the Process approach and Process genre approach are beneficial in improving academic writing skills of students who study English either as a second or a foreign language. Therefore, given the findings of the studies stated above, the researchers believe that application of process genre approach in academic writing class would be more beneficial to our students whose linguistic needs are specifically linked to different genres.

Given all the theoretical, empirical and pedagogical underpinnings of different writing approaches, their strengths and weaknesses and the success of previous studies on the use of process genre approach in the EFL/ESL classroom situations as described above, the researchers employed process genre approach in their pilot study to investigate its effect on learners' academic writing proficiency in the context of Oman technological education.

In an attempt to engage with the research problem stated above, the researchers formulated the following research question and the hypothesis.

Research questions

Does the application of the process genre approach and context-specific materials in writing interventions help tertiary level EFL students perform better in an examination setting?

Research hypothesis

The application of the process genre approach and context-specific materials in writing interventions help tertiary level EFL students perform better in an examination setting.

Materials used in the study

As discussed earlier, the majority of students in the foundation program at Shinas College of Technology were not proficient in academic writing in the target language even though they had studied English in schools for several years and at the college for several months. The researchers hypothesized that their students' academic writing proficiency could be developed by using context-specific materials delivered through the process genre approach since this approach involves several stages which follow each other.

Instructional materials in any given language program play a very important role and is generally considered the second most important factor in EFL classrooms after the teacher (Riazi, 2003). Given the pedagogical value of materials as indicated by Riazi (2003), the researchers used context-specific materials with the premise that they help learners improve their academic writing proficiency. Based on the course outline for level 3 students in our institution, the researchers prepared teaching materials in which they followed a specific order for each writing topic to be covered in a given semester.

Contextually-developed materials

Since the main objective of our pilot study was to investigate the effects of a process genre approach in developing writing proficiency that will help students to perform better in an examination setting, the researchers developed extra materials because the writing tasks suggested in the prescribed textbook- *Ready to write: perfecting paragraphs fourth Ed*, by Blanchard and Root (2010) which is used in level three were not adequate to provide students with ample opportunities in writing practice. Both psychological theories of skill acquisition and second language acquisition theories suggest that considerable practice is required to automatize a skill (DeKeyser, 2007). Moreover, practice in writing improves performance in writing. Therefore, given the theoretical underpinnings and the research evidence from studies conducted into skill acquisition by a number of researchers (Anderson, Fincham, & Douglass, 1997), the extra writing activities the researchers developed and used with the study group were consistent with Ortega's (2007) model for the design of activities. In his model, he proposes that the following two principles should be considered when designing activities for EFL learners to practice in class:

1. Practice should be interactive.
2. Practice should be meaningful.

When applied to writing, Ortega's model implies that teachers should design interactive activities in which the writing teacher exposes his students to various writing strategies such as outlining, drafting, or free writing (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007; Spack, 1988). The topics for developing modules were selected from the prescribed textbook-*Ready to write: perfecting paragraphs* by Blanchard and Root (2010). Based on the delivery plan issued by the English Language Center in our institution for level 3 writing, the researchers prepared extra tasks for the topics stated below:

1. Getting organized: The key to good writing.
2. Understanding paragraphs.
3. Expressing your opinion.
4. Comparing and contrasting.
5. Writing personal and business letters.
6. Description and comparison: Bar graphs
7. Analyzing causes and effects
8. Writing personal and business letters

In designing academic writing tasks, the researchers followed a process genre approach by including the stages such as pre-writing, composing, pre-reading and revising, peer-editing and teacher feedback. Moreover, the researchers maintained the principles stated above such as providing context to the learner in a meaningful way, providing forms and functions relevant to the activities, and making the content of the activity related to different kinds of writing such as comparing and contrasting, expressing an opinion, analyzing data and personal and business letters.

Methodology

As noted above, given the writing difficulties encountered by the foundation level students studying in level three at Shinas College of Technology, a pilot study was conducted to investigate the effects teaching materials for instruction of writing in and EFL context, using the Process genre approach. In this study, a quantitative research framework was used because the researchers needed a research design that would enable them to detect the effects of a specific

intervention. Moreover, the statistical tests form a part of the design in that they will inform the researcher whether there were any statistically significant differences among the mean scores of the three tests conducted for the intervention group during the study (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). The research, according to Nunan and Bailey (2009) was one group pre-test post-test design in which no control group randomly selected and randomly assigned was included. The participants were 19 Omani college students who studied English in the Foundation English program-Level 3 during the third semester of 2013 (April-July) at Shinas College of Technology in Oman.

The subjects for the study were selected from a level 3 Foundation English program because the students had already completed their studies at level one and two (where they had received instruction in listening, speaking, reading and writing). Therefore, it was assumed that the participants in the intervention group had already acquired the basics of writing. It should be noted that in Foundation level (Levels 1 and 2), students are exposed to general English where they are expected to study the basics of writing paragraphs, whereas level three, four and Post Foundation students are taught academic writing in which they are required to write texts belonging to various types of genres such as writing personal and business letters, compare and contrast essays, analyzing causes and effects, explaining a process, describing graphs and charts and expressing opinions.

The study lasted for 9 weeks with a total of 54 hours classroom instruction. The study employed four research instruments such as pretest, mid-semester examination, semester-end examination (Level Exit Examination) and the treatment instrument to gather data. A pretest on writing was administered for the study group to measure their writing proficiency before any instruction began. At level two, they study writing different types of paragraphs in which they are required to include a topic sentence, supporting ideas and a conclusion. Therefore, it was assumed that the intervention group had already studied the mechanics of writing a paragraph. On the first day of the class, the researchers administered the pretest and their answers were rated in accordance with the writing rubrics of the English Language Department and recorded in a paper for later analysis.

For the mid-semester examination which was held in May, 2013, the level 3 students were given a choice for writing. The students were instructed to select one question from the two questions. One question was meant to test students' ability to think critically, analyze and solve problems. Therefore, one question was based on expressing an opinion while the second question sought to test students' ability to write a business letter (writing a letter applying for a job).

Even though there were 20 students allocated for the pilot study group, one student left the course soon after the instruction commenced, so there were only 19 students in the class. Of the 19 students, except two, all the others wrote a letter applying for the job in the mid-semester examination. In accordance with the examination rules and regulations of the College, written answers are marked by two examiners and the average of the scores given by the two examiners is taken as the final marks.

Inter-rater reliability

After the two raters had evaluated the writing task in the final semester examination using the criteria stated above, an agreement between the two raters was calculated using Pearson's Product Moment ($r = 0.93$, $n=19$, $P < 0.01$). The statistics show that the general agreement between the two raters concerning writing scores of the study group subjects (19) was 0.93, which is a high agreement.

In the final-semester examination, the students had to answer two writing questions (guided-writing and free-writing). The allocation of marks for guided writing and free writing was 15 and 10 respectively. For guided writing, the students were required to write a compare-and-contrast paragraph of about 150 words while the free-writing question was based on a bar graph. The writing rubrics used in the semester-end examination included content, organization and vocabulary, use of transitional words, grammar and spelling. The five aspects were differently weighted for both free-writing and guided writing tasks. The content, organization and vocabulary and grammar and spelling were weighted equally (4 points) each, the use of transitional words received 3 points making a total of 15 points for the guided writing task while the same writing rubrics were used for rating the free-writing task in which the points were allocated as follows: Content, organization and vocabulary (3 points) each and use of transitional words, grammar and spelling (2 points) each making a total of 10 points. Given the two writing tasks which the students were required to write in the semester final examination, they could claim 25 marks for writing skill.

It should be noted that the writing rubrics used to score the writing tests conducted by the English Language Center of the college has four aspects namely content, organization and vocabulary, use of transitional words and grammar and spelling. The scoring of writing is highly subjective. Therefore, a standard writing scale should be used. The researchers propose the writing scale proposed by Jacobs, Wormuth, Zinkgraf, Harfiel, and Hughey, (1981) may be more appropriate than the present writing rubrics used in the center because the writing scales proposed by Jacobs, et al (1981) includes five aspects namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Data analysis

With the help of SPSS statistical software, One-Way ANOVA was performed using the three data sets (scores from pretest, mid-semester and final-semester examinations) which the researchers had obtained from the study group during the study and the results of the ANOVA is indicated in the Tables 1 and 2 below. According the descriptive statistics of ANOVA summary included in Table 2, F –value (29.19) and the p-value (0.001) are high across the three set of scores (pretest, Mid-semester and Final-semester examinations). Therefore, it can be considered this kind of significance is due to the treatment effects where the study group was taught using context-specific materials through the process genre approach (independent variable).

Table 1 and 2 below indicate descriptive statistics calculated from the test scores of the pilot study group (N=19) using the One-Way ANOVA test.

Table 1: Descriptive results of the ANOVA test performed on pretest, mid and final-semester examinations of the pilot study group (N=19).

	Pretest	Mid-semester Exam	Final Semester Exam	Total
N	19	19	19	57
$\sum X$	178	241.5	302	721.5
Means	9.36	12.71	15.89	12.65
$\sum X^2$	1726	3220.75	4965	9911.75
Variance	3.24	8.39	9.15	13.91
Std. Dev.	1.80	2.89	3.02	3.72
Std. Err.	0.41	0.66	0.69	0.49

Table 2: ANOVA Summary

	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean squares (ms)	F-value	P-value
Between groups	404.71	2	202.35	29.19	<.0001
Error	374.36	54	6.93		
Total	779.09	56			

Findings and discussion of the results obtained from the study group

This section presents and discusses the collected data from the study group and interprets these results in the light of previous research.

As indicated earlier, the main objective of the current study was to investigate the effects of the process genre approach in enhancing writing proficiency that will help foundation level students to perform better in examination settings. On applying the concepts relating to the descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency and variability, in order to answer the question the researchers posed, “Does the application of the process genre approach and context specific materials in writing intervention help tertiary level EFL students perform better in an examination setting?”, One-Way (ANOVA) was used to analyze the interval data gathered from pretest, mid and final semester examinations. The ‘SPSS 11.0 (2010)’ statistical package was used for all the data calculations in the study.

Table 1 and 2 above indicate the descriptive statistics calculated from the scores obtained from pretest, mid-semester and final semester examinations. At the outset, it should be noted that the mid-semester and final semester examinations for Foundation level students are designed, moderated and conducted by the testing unit of the English Language Department. However, the pretest in the study was designed and conducted by the researchers and it was marked by two raters from the English Language Department of the college.

In language research, measures of frequency are used to indicate how often a particular behavior occurs (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Therefore, in second language research, frequencies and measures of central tendency provide a summary of the basic characteristic of the data. The most common measure of central tendency is the mean which provides information on the average performance of a group on given tasks, and helps the researcher obtain insight by condensing a large amount of data (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Even though the mean does not provide information on the performance of each individual on a given task, the mean informs a researcher how a group as a whole performed on a given task. As shown in Table 1 above, according the descriptive statistics, the difference of mean scores and standard deviations across the three tests (pretest, mid-semester and final) on writing performance of the study group in the final semester examination is statistically significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$). This is to emphasize that the study group performed much better from the pretest ($M=9.36$, $SD=1.80$) to Mid-semester examination ($M=12.71$, $SD=2.89$) with a mean difference of 3.35 within the group and also from Mid-semester ($M=12.71$, $SD=2.89$) to Final semester ($M=15.89$, $SD=3.02$) with a mean

difference of 3.15. When compared the mean scores of the pretest ($M=9.36$) to the Final-semester examination ($M=15.89$) of the study group, the mean difference is 6.53 which is significantly a higher value which clearly testify that the study group made a significant progress in writing from pretest to the final-semester examination. In other words, according to, One-Way ANOVA summary in Table 2, F -value (29.19) and the P -value (0.0001) are higher across the three sets of scores (pretest, Mid-semester and Final-semester examinations). F -ratio tells us measured differences within groups and measured differences between groups (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Therefore, it can be considered that this kind of significance is due to the treatment where the pilot study group was taught using context-specific materials through process genre approach (independent variable).

When the results of a study are analyzed quantitatively, statistical significance of data indicates that findings of that research are stable. Therefore, given the description provided by Nunan and Bailey (2009), findings of our study related to the research question as stated above can be reliable. Moreover, given the higher value of F - (29.19) in the study group, it is evident that the average performance of the individual subjects on writing had improved from the pretest to the Final-semester examination.

Based on the findings of the study group which was taught using the process genre approach, it can be asserted that instructional procedure which consisted of teacher prepared materials in addition to the use of the prescribed textbook (*Ready to Write-2*) and the process genre approach were useful for the foundation level students at Shinas College to perform better in the Final-semester examination than in the pretest and Mid-semester examination. Given the success of the instructional procedure as discussed above, it can be concluded that the hypothesis which the researchers had formed at the beginning of the study in an attempt to answer the research question, "The application of the process genre approach and context-specific materials in writing interventions help tertiary level EFL students perform better in an examination setting", can be accepted.

Limitations and delimitation of the study

As noted above, the current study did not deal with other language proficiencies such as speaking, listening and reading even though they are also important aspects of language proficiency. This study focuses on academic writing proficiency because it will allow us to gain an understanding of the usefulness of applying the process genre approach to improve writing proficiency of EFL college level students who are the focus in this pilot study. Moreover, the outcomes of this study cannot be generalized to learners who are not cognitively mature enough to carry out the writing tasks suggested in the prescribed textbook for Foundation level 3 students and whose educational level is different from the subjects in the current study even though they study academic writing in similar situations and levels at other educational institutions both in and outside of Oman.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has presented the findings of a pilot study based on the quantitative data gathered during the study. The major findings of the study include the results of comparing writing performance in the pretest, Mid-semester and Final-semester examinations within the study group. On the whole, given the values of F (29.19) and P (0.001) calculated using One-Way (ANOVA) indicated that the study group which was instructed using the Process genre approach in writing had performed better in the Final-semester examination than in the pretest

and the Mid-semester examination. Therefore, given the results that emerged from this study, it can be stated that the instructional tools which included the contextually-developed materials and the process genre approach were useful in helping foundation level students studying academic writing programs in Omani Colleges of Technology to perform better in examination settings.

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Dialogic Signs of Resistance: a Case Study of Reading Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

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Abstract

Dialogic criticism constitutes an ideal case for reading and interpreting literary texts as it does not talk *about* the text but *to* the text or more precisely *with* the text so that neither voice is excluded. It, according to Clifford, proposes a reading transaction that is precisely the space readers wish to explore as the borderland between 'self' and 'other' and a potent location to ask questions and have discussions. Both the reader and the text are opened, exposed, and the 'self' is strengthened rather than diminished. For a further investigation into these claims, a case study through the application of participant observer is conducted on four groups of graduate students in a 'post-colonial' educational setting to explore their dialogic engagement with a literary text. We contend that 'dialogic readers' go through a complex cultural exchange whose identities constructed not as an 'archaic survival' (Clifford), but as an ongoing process, politically contested and historically unfinished. Such a proposal could be taken up as providing sufficient power to guide literary criticism particularly in post-colonial educational contexts, and contributes to the field of literary theory and criticism. It also provides readers of an alternative approach to textual meanings and analysis.

Keywords: Dialogism, dialogic criticism, post-colonialism, literary criticism, classroom literature

Introduction

Although literary criticism provides keys to literary interpretation, the enterprise of literary theory has been largely accepted without reference to the voices of the indigenous and minority groups. In its colonial/Enlightenment/modern history, literary theory has been treated as unproblematic and it grants the traditionally voiceless little space within the classrooms of universities (Balzer, 2006). Before the introduction of reader-response theory in the 1980s, formalism was the dominant theory for approaching literary texts in the twentieth century. Both theories, however, deny readers the opportunity to read with 'non-Western' eyes. Likewise, New Criticism, which played a prominent role in literary theory, has worked to reinforce the power of the English literary canon (Ghandi, 1998). One result of this limited methodological approach to textual analysis has been, according to Mukherjee (1995), the creation of a putative 'universal' reader. Therefore, focusing on the universality of human experience erase "the ambiguities and the unpleasant truths that lie in the crevices" and forget that "society is not a homogenous grouping, but an assortment of groups" (p. 450). In this sense,

the editor-critic feeds readers on a vocabulary that pretends that human beings and their institutions have not changed a bit during the course of history, that they all face the same problems as human beings (p. 451).

To probe further, a consideration of classroom practices also provides an understanding of the ways 'informed' interpretations of literary meanings are achieved; Marshall (1995) examining the 'power relations' inherent in teaching literature, concludes that classroom discussions are products of the teacher's previous academic experience, very much like discussions in a science and maths classroom. Classroom discourse and discussions have their own conventional ways of talking about literature that affect students' understanding of literature and represent a type of tacit curriculum in conventional modes of literary knowledge (Eagleton, 1996). Such discussions hinder examining ideological assumptions since students develop an implicit, but informed, understanding of responding to literature (Marshall, 1995).

Such ideological assumptions on which 'doing' English is based are defined as 'cultural models' (Gee, 1996), which are simplified emblematic visions of an idealised or normal reality that varies across cultures. Cultural models, according to Gee, are ideological because they involve what is considered valuable and act as though they represent reality. If cultural knowledge is the basis of meaning-making, then these assumptions or master myths can limit ways of thinking, since culture can best be seen as the source, rather than the result, of human thought and behaviour (Crotty, 2003).

Our endeavour in this research paper is to explore further potential of Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic criticism in the context of post-colonial studies. Our assumption is that in this particular juncture of history that is often marked with a proliferation of methodology and co-construction of meaning, dialogue remains an outstanding approach when local readers are exposed to foreign texts. If the study of literature is to regain its lost favour among the new generation of readers whose prospects go beyond the positivistic approaches or those informed by literary theory whose contestation has become a feature mark in recent years, it has to acknowledge the ultimate potentials of dialogism as way of co-construction meaning. In response to this demand, we adopt Bakhtin's dialogic approach to text in an attempt to answer questions, such as how do learners read across cultures? How is their reading located in a certain history? How could learners read across cultures so that dialogue is opened rather than closed, and see more than just what things

seem to be? Based on dialogic underpinnings, we contend that dialogic eludes dualistic binaries such as civilised/primitive, self/other where a learner “acknowledges not only the primacy of the context, but the possibility of the textual resolution as a productive indeterminacy” (Moore, 1994, p. 4). Such dialogic reading, we argue, opens further possibilities through the text and ultimately to the real world from which the text comes so that readers might engage not only with the text, but also with the community it represents (Moore, 1994).

Dialogic Criticism

Bakhtin (1981) contends that “the image of an idea is inseparable from the image of a person, the carrier of that idea” (p. 56), and thus the idea “begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogue relationships with other ideas” (p. 61). In such dialogic relations, ideas cannot be separated from their holders and people cannot be rhetorically manipulated in isolation from the ideas that shape their discourse. Whereas, in rhetoric criticism, for example, judging the work is mostly affected by ideological differences, dialogics “concerns the relations among persons articulating their ideas in response to one another, discovering their mutual affinities and oppositions, their provocations to reply, their desires to hear more, or their wishes to change the subject” (p. 70).

Bialostosky (1998) claims that dialogic criticism re-creates the images of specific persons who voice their ideas in specific texts and contexts. By situating an utterance historically and imaginatively in another person’s utterance, the productivity of dialogue could be maintained since it depends on discovering the mutual bearings among person-ideas that have not yet engaged one another, and in reconstructing the mutual bearings both parties have. As such, dialogics introduces a different way of talking that challenges the very language of the interlocutors. Instead of appealing to the audience, such voices could intrude on the claims of other persons excluded from that audience and who are nevertheless affected by the issue it is considering.

The dialogic reader as such would re-voice others’ discourses in pursuit of his/her own theme. He or she would not seek for an impossible coincidence of the reader’s and the others’ utterances but would reveal and answer representations of the one in the other. Talking about the value of such representation, Bakhtin asserts

one can speak of the absolute aesthetic need of one person for another, for the seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying of the other, which alone can create his extremely completed personality; this personality will not exist if the other does not create it (1981, p. 109).

Dialogic textual engagement allows an ‘ultimately shared standard of truth’, which could be attained through a ‘regulatory principle of exchange with others’ (Todorov, quoted in Bialostosky, p. 793). In dialogic exchange, Bialostosky claims, “such a standard of truth would reduce the sense of radical otherness to an as yet unsolved problem and would direct further discussion to locating the higher principle that would synthesise the difference one had stumbled on” (p. 793). Dialogic exchange acknowledges difference between the realm of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, where both are open to recognition.

In her dialogic approach to the literary text, Dunlop (1999) challenges the dichotomous generic and historical conventions aiming to dissolve the boundaries between public and private history and between fact and fiction. Her approach acknowledges the cultural complexity not as simply

socially constructed and defined but rather as essentially human, which ultimately leads to a genre of critical pedagogy that acknowledges multiple subjectivities and multiple forms of discursive practices. In her work with students reading texts dialogically, she finds that although the tension of difference among learners and the texts they engage with becomes evident, engagement with dialogues forces participants to question their own positioning and discover that “critical scrutiny and destabilisation of one’s own subject positioning and exploration of the many discursive positions encountered is necessary” (p. 60). She adds:

we [the students and herself] were forced to interrogate our own subjective positions, our biases, our privileges, and our assumptions about the other, within cultures and across difference and similarities.

This involves a process of 'self-othering' (p. 61).

Dialogic interrelation between the reader, the text, and the wider context constantly renews itself, in which internal values of exchange extend into the dynamics of external cultural contact. Unlike dialectical binaries, such as, those of conqueror/conquered, absorption/resistance, or loser/winner, dialogics extend their perspectives so that they operate a ‘dialogics of exchange’ where identities may exchange cultural products. In response to binary structures, such civilised vs. Savage, where colonial systems intend effect change through the school boys’ uniform, for instance, aiming to ‘civilise the savage’, the multiple and hybrid tendencies of cultural dialogics acknowledge that the uniform as a mode of exchange, does not change the boys (Giroux, 1992).

Dialogic approach to the text in ‘post-colonial’ literature classrooms

Dialogism is a practical mode of engagement with knowledge in general and textual meaning making in particular. It aims to decolonise criticism and resist meanings informed by the mainstream narratives of Western literary theory. It proposes a reading tradition that goes beyond the reader and the text, aiming to posit the reader in the world both in and beyond the text. It proposes dialogic reading as the reading transaction that is precisely the space learners wish to explore as the borderland of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and a potent location to ask questions and have discussions. Both the reader and the text are opened, exposed, and the ‘self’ is strengthened rather than diminished. Dialogic readers’ identity is thus constructed “not as an archaic survival, but as an ongoing process, politically contested and historically unfinished” (McQuaid, 2009, p. 47).

While dualistic binaries that focus on pure identity miss the value of the blurring boundaries between such binaries, those whose identity is defined through dialogic interaction continue to negotiate dialectical history in ways that are invisible to dialecticians (Wegerif, 2008). Dialogic meaning making transcends a relation that occurs outside that dialectic binary by revealing a wider field of intersecting binaries, each altering the others. As such, a dialectic single binary is transcended through dialogism to a multi-dimensional field and thus transcends and infuses the text, where dialogic readers entering the reading process, go through a complex cultural exchange instead of binary absorption or resistance between the ‘self’ and ‘other’, between white and non-white, or between coloniser and colonised.

Furthermore, dialogic interrelation between the reader, the text, and the wider context constantly renews itself, in which internal values of exchange extend into the dynamics of external cultural contact. While dialectal binaries (e.g. conqueror/conquered) underscore polarised identities, dialogics extend their perspectives through the operation of ‘dialogics of exchange’ where identities may exchange cultural products. Clifford (quoted in Moore, p. 11) argues, dialogics

would respond to binary structures, such as civilised vs. Savage through exchange. He reports that while colonial systems intend effect change through the schoolboys' uniform aiming to 'civilise the savage', students adopting multiple and hybrid tendencies of cultural dialogics acknowledge, and only then, uniform as a mode of exchange, rather than a change of the boys' identities (Moore, reasons:

when your non-Native enemies do not function by such a system of exchange but instead assume either your absorption in or resistance to the enemy culture, and when the enemies are thus blind to both their own and your participation in exchange, then a different sort of war ensues, and a different sort of tragedy takes over. Yet dialogic cultural exchange occurs even in the midst of dialectic culture wars. To move beyond such a dialectical history requires precisely the recognition of inexorable and mutual, dialogical historical exchange (p. 12).

When binary and dualistic approaches miss the dialogics of cultural exchange, they enact the historical polarising violence that demonises the 'other', thence the 'self' (Howard and Gill, 2001). Dialogic cultural exchange, however, makes vital cultural negotiation by registering exchange beyond polarisation discourses. Dialogic reading though works as a resisting movement, adopts a non-oppositional 'pragmatics' of cultural exchange, which loses and yet survives historical struggle. Moore points out that dialogical cultural exchange "survives both because part of the culture operates outside the terms of that struggle and because dialogics survival, unlike dialectic synthesis, maintains difference within the dynamics of opposition", and thus eludes cultural dualism (p. 17).

A post-colonial critique, thus, should be non-oppositional and heteroglossic, since colonial hegemonies are based on dualistic oppositions. It is crucial to emphasise here that non-oppositional dialogics does not call for complicity, since what is aimed at is a 'mutual cultural exchange'. Moore summarises the dialogic reading mechanism of cultural interaction that leads to a 'genre' of resistance:

'resistance' would equal a dualistic pattern; 'absorption' would equal a dialectic pattern; and a 'nexus' of exchange would equal a dialogic. Thus resistance would be two monologisms in dualistic competition; absorption would be two monologisms in dualistic cooptation; and exchange would be a dialogism of multiple voices in collaboration, not in a utopian sense but in the sense of mutual cultural dynamics rather than hegemonic cultural domination or inertia (p. 18).

While dialectic dualism selectively locates a final meaning within the colonial subject of history as against colonised object, "a dialogic emphasises, however, the changeability of 'both' participants, the colonised and the coloniser, the text and the author, the text and the reader, by showing how they are not aligned dualistically but rather are surrounded by influences in a multiple field" (Moore, p. 18). While dualistic structure seeks a thesis or antithesis that focuses on the definition; 'the 'what' of each opposing term in order to effect their synthesis', dialogic reading seeks to 'locate 'where' each term stands in its place in the contextual web' (p. 20).

Dialogic systems of knowledge acknowledge not only the primacy of context but also the impossibility of textual resolution. Through the reader/textual dialogue, readers seek a productive indeterminacy as it accounts for a relational interplay of attractions and aversions that constitute the dynamicity of the complexity of the two parties (the reader and the text). It would

be, as Krupat (quoted in Moore, p. 22) puts it, “not to overthrow the Tower of Babel, but, as it were, to install a simultaneous translation system in it; not to homogenise human or literary differences but to make them at least mutually intelligible”. Since literary theory has a tendency toward dualistic critique, it finds itself aligned with the hierarchy of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, which, without examining the ethics of a colonial context, projects various unfortunate forms of the ‘noble savage’ onto the colonised other. Such dualistic epistemology, Moore affirms, “can produce a politics of exoticism, an ‘orientalism’, on the economics of mercantilism and commodification, reading the text for academic lucre” (p. 19).

Additionally, a dialogic approach to the text resists hegemonic and universalistic claims as well as ethnocentric projects. ‘Aesthetic universalism’ ignores the particular, different, and other culturally specific modes and codes. In fact the multiplicity of dialogic perspectives that acknowledges the ‘other’ as an ‘other’, cannot ignore the other cultural perspective from which the text is produced. Thus, the dialogic reader is neither called to adopt that perspective nor to insist on the absolute difference from the perspective of the ‘other’. Besides rejecting ‘cultural absolute difference’, dialogics resists homogenising criticisms. Dialogic reading and criticism thus calls for learning from the cultural contextual elements surrounding the text to produce a more accurate criticism of that text. Such dialogic scepticism towards universalist assumptions, such as the imperial selfhood is indeed a prerequisite to ‘careful’ negotiation of critical and cultural exchange with texts. Hence it would not be naïve to suggest that the particular possibilities for intercultural critical participation are multiple, however sensitive. The impossibility of knowing the ‘other’ without an alternative participatory epistemology of exchange, inscribes the native ‘other’ as the vanishing sign. Moore claims that “an alternative epistemology of exchange logically opens up both perceptions of historically specific native cultural survival and of academic participation in recognition of that survival” (p. 27). Thus universalistic projects can miss the political context of dialogic cultural survival in a given text: “A dialogic critique, however, finds textual and contextual ways for critical selves to speak neither of nor for the other but with the other” (p. 27).

In conclusion, for a post-colonial world to sustain a decolonising, it becomes crucial that critical projects are framed by assumptions of multiple cultural possibilities practiced through the creation of dynamic and multiple spaces. Dialogics offers a post-colonial subject to cross from the colonised ‘self’ to an understanding of a post-colonial ‘other’. Such a process requires an engagement in a dialogue (with the text and beyond) that is not merely a cognitive, but also a participatory and contextual engagement. A post-colonial learner can perform a participatory process of knowing by dialogic and through transcending ‘the cultural constellations’ or ‘force-fields’ (Achebe, 1965) that shape colonial binaries. Recognising the complexities of cultural representations, dialogics emphasises a ‘process’ rather than ‘destination’ and the ever changing over the static stance of knowledge. It pays attention to the mediator or interpreter, rather than what it is pointing to and ostensibly avoiding the essentialising of difference, with all that this politically and culturally entails (Murray, quoted in Moore, p. 22). Such readers are able to link the text ethically to the context by acknowledging new paradigms in the cross-cultural contacts.

A case study: context, methods, and sampling

The case study was conducted in an English department in a ‘post-colonial’ higher education institution. Using a case study approach (Guba and Lincoln 1985; Merriam 2001, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Bloor and Wood, 2006), we aimed to gain a ‘thick description’ (Creswell, 2007) of the students’ dialogic engagements and interpretation of the given text. In the case study, we

also aimed to gain an emic perspective of two directions of the current study: the students' construction of meanings and their co-construction of dialogic meanings as inferred from the text. It is both the descriptive characteristic and interpretive intent that made case study research most suitable for addressing these two perspectives. Specifically, our investigation ranges between the notions of beliefs (those regarding the text) and those of pedagogical practices (the implementation of the dialogic-based intervention). Therefore, the case study provided us with a holistic approach for these two issues in terms of beliefs and sentiments regarding meaning and dialogue.

Sixteen undergraduate students were 'purposefully' (Barbour 2001; Taylor 2007; Maxwell, 2002) selected as research participants. The students were assigned into four groups to dialogue, negotiate and analyse a text, *Heart of Darkness*. The students engaged with a dialogic approach to read, analyse and discuss different aspects of the text. The classroom seminar discussions were audiotaped, transcribed and analysed according to dialogic theoretical tenets.

During the intervention, the researchers were visible research participant in the classroom. They engaged in dialogic discussions of the text at hand and surveyed the students' comments and responses. In this respect the very act of observation of participation entails self-reflexivity in research and a move away from conceptualising research as an 'objectifying methodology' to an understanding of research as 'an intersubjective methodology' (Tedlock, 2000: 471). In the final session of the seminar, the students provided personal narratives about their current experience in terms of their perceptions of different pedagogical issues handled in the previous sessions. We see personal narrative and story-telling as an emancipatory approach in which the students unfolded themselves while expressing meanings, which emerged in a context of conversation and story-telling. The context of the dialogue was carefully crafted by the students and ourselves to fulfil our emancipatory aim. In this sense, their narratives were not distorted by fear of negative consequences regarding what was said. These conversations and stories were satisfying both as ends in themselves and as means to better understanding and for providing solutions of the current situation.

The analysis of students' interaction is informed by the works of Linell (2009), Markova (2003), and Wertsch (1993), which assume that human communication entails the interaction of diverse perspectives, and is embedded in a socio-historical context. Linell (2009), for example, argues that the importance of adopting dialogic analysis as an interpretative methodology lies in its close analysis of either spoken or written transactions or utterances for their embedded communicative significance. We take up the assumption that the meaning of dialogic utterance is mediated between those it responds to and those it anticipates (Wegerif 2008). Therefore, the basic unit of analysis is the transaction: the involvement of two or more parties reciprocally affecting or influencing each other's worldviews. In this respect, we adopt a post-structuralist approach to analysis and meaning-making (S ndergaard, 2002). Post-structural analysis, as S ndergaard argues, explores the ways in which subjects hold and develop. It highlights the various subject positions in their everyday exchange, within the repertoires of 'self' that the subjects have already acquired.

Text selection

Although there were many challenges associated with this study, careful selection of the text was our primary consideration. We used Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a basis for our intervention that focused on the dialogic reading and interpretation of the text. We estimated *Heart of Darkness*, in particular, has the potential to endorse our investigation of the possible

ways to challenge ready-made interpretation of texts. Conrad and his fiction have a crucial relevance to issues around colonialism, representation, cultural involvement in perceiving the 'self' and the 'other', among others. His fiction has invited immense critique, research, and debate over a plethora of cultural issues. Bhabha (1994) citing Edward Said (1994) perceives the novella as exemplary of the seminal text "that invites the most comment and interpretation" (272). Naipaul (quoted in Fincham and Hooper, 1996) remarks, "Conrad's value to me is that he is someone who sixty to seventy years ago mediated on my world, a world I recognise today. I feel this about no other writer of the century" (p. xi). Fincham and Hooper insist that Conrad's "complex representation of the relationship between Europe and her ex-colonies complicates the reductionist mapping of the centre versus the periphery, the dominant versus the marginal, and the empowered versus the unempowered" (p. xii). Fincham and Hooper (1996) contend that Conrad anticipated post-modern and post-colonial representations through undermining the dominant ways of understanding and seeing of the world. Furthermore, they see his fiction as creating "complex articulations between form and history, narrative and ideology and demands to be taken seriously nearly a century after it was written precisely because of its relevance to the analysis of post-colonial ambiguities" (p. xiv).

Heart of Darkness has attracted the attention of leading literary theorists and raised debate among other cultural theorists since; according to Cooper (1996), it "foregrounds issues of authority, legitimacy, and canon-formation" (p. 3). Armstrong (1996), addressing the issue of epistemology of cultural difference, argues that the text can neither be understood as racist, nor as a model of ethnographic objectivity. He points out that the novel has elicited divergent responses ranging from seeing it as a daring attack on imperialism to a reactionary purveyor of colonial stereotypes. He argues that the novel has such a contested position because "its enactment of the dilemmas is entailed in understanding cultural otherness in inherently double and strategically ambiguous" ways (p. 23):

The text dramatises the impossibility of capturing the Other in writing, [...]for the very reason that understanding otherness requires an ongoing reciprocity between the knower and the known through which each comments on, corrects, and replies to the other's representations in a never-ending shifting of positions (p. 22).

He also claims that the novel's "textual strategies aim to educate the reader about the processes which might make dialogue with the Other possible" (p. 24). This is achieved through scrutinising Marlow's failure of representing the 'other' without having dialogue with this 'other'. Moreover, Hampson (1996) argues that the novel has multi-layered meaning. It requires the reader to emphasise the 'idea' behind imperialism, which might lead the reader at one level of interpretation to assume that the story is an exploration and enunciation of that 'idea'. At another level, the reader could take up the psychological dynamics underlying Marlow's ambivalence as he is split between two worlds.

Discussion

In our intervention with the students, we addressed two areas of investigation: a) we examined dialogic reading and its pedagogical potential for problematising essentialised textual constructions of meanings. B) We also trace changes of meanings embedded in their responses, and how they realised these meanings in the context of the dialogic intervention. The following areas of discussion emerged from the students' interaction with the text: their construction of

Africa, black/white 'divide', European-African relations, reflections on Marlow's representations, attitude of the novella, and realisation of textual colonialist meanings.

Therefore, it is crucial to highlight that our interpretation of the students' textual meaning-making is informed by the dialogic underpinnings, which is twofold: a) the recognition of the plurality and dynamicity of textual interpretations, and b) acknowledging the conundrum of whether meanings reside in the text itself or in the students' 'inner meanings' based on their assumptions. In our approach to the students' textual interpretations, we maintained a reflective and reflexive position based on the dialogic underpinnings. As such, our contention in this research is that one 'true' and 'authorised' interpretation does not exist and nothing grants such interpretations validity. Within the post-colonial critique and framework, we hold a position that the text is a driven system of meaning and there exists an assemblage of texts which embody colonial meanings that construct an ideology of colonialism, or cultural essentialism. However, what might appear to be an 'inner' interpretation of the students, which resonates with a 'reader response theory' repertoire, remains highly contestable in our reading of the students' responses, since it de-contextualises the meaning-making process from its social and academic contexts.

Congo is the setting of *Heart of Darkness*; therefore, Africa was a recurring theme of the seminars discussions. The students' textual interpretations could be divided into two categories: the first sees Africa as a *vague* and *primitive* place and the Africans are *uncivilised*, *cannibals*, *ignorant*, *tribes with no religion*, *people who refuse to be developed* and *tribes with no system*. The second category sees Africa as *poor*, *victim*, '*victim but primitive*', and '*rich weak man*', and Africans are helpless, *poor*, and *scavengers*. It is important to point out that these categories or sets of responses do not divide the students into groups, but rather delineate the variation of their responses, since similar students provided responses that fall into more than one category. Additionally, over the seven seminar sessions, the tone of the students' responses regarding the image of Africa was tempered to include words around the *victim* theme. This section details these constructions alongside our interpretation and argument.

The first set of responses that interpret Africa as a *vague and primitive place*, and the Africans as *uncivilised cannibals* is significant in its indication of the normativity and endorsement of textual representations. Generally, it could be noted that these responses are shaped by their early occurrence, assertive mode, naturalness, and spontaneity, as well as providing justification by reference to certain events in the novel.

In session 1, we introduced the novel by asking general questions regarding the title, setting, author, etc. One question regarded the possibility of a geographical significance of the story. Said provides the following view of Africa:

R1: *Is there a geographical significance of the story?*

Said: *I think, yes, there is, since the events took place in Africa and we know that Africa was full of cannibals, bad people, ignorance/ from this point darkness comes*

R1: *I heard something very interesting/ could you repeat what you have said about the Africans?*

Said: *yes/ the cannibals/ the primitive/ and the river is like the snake/ they all come under the umbrella of darkness (G1, S1).*

Prior to this question, the title *Heart of Darkness*, was the point we were discussing and *darkness* was the theme of that discussion. When we asked about the *geographical significance*, Said remains concerned with *darkness* in his response. Although he directly answers the *geographical significance* question by discussing events [that] took place in Africa; he elaborates by providing an opinion of Africa as being *full of cannibals*, *bad people*, and *ignorance*. These phrases ensued

naturally in his speech, since the last phrase, *from this point darkness comes*, indicates that his major concern is still the *darkness* issue. Moreover, his digression about *the river as a snake*, and *all come under the umbrella of darkness*, indicates that *darkness* is the idea he is thinking of. Yet, Said's opinion of Africa, and the way he articulates that opinion indicate an impulsive view of Africa when it is first mentioned. Said's 'natural' and spontaneous connotations attributed to Africa reflect a dominant worldview of Africa, which Said unconsciously reproduces.

In the following quotation, the students' views regarding their interpretation of Africa are not different from Said's. What is significant, however, is the nature of these responses and the degree of assertiveness and certainty. Unlike Said's spontaneity while providing a view of Africa, Islam and Doa seem to be more conscious of the answers they articulate. They tend to provide justification and elaboration to their answers, which they back up by interpreting certain events in the text.

R1: *what kind of representations/ descriptions does Marlow give us about the Africans?*

Islam: *he talks about them as uncivilised, savage, and primitive people/ I think he is realistic in his views/ we don't have media to say that he maybe biased*

Isra: *he depicts them as scavengers who are just interested in things that make them alive/ they do many other things for survival...*

Doa: *I remember he called them cannibals/ Marlow tries to understand those cannibals/ I think they throw the dead body from the boat in order not to eat it/ because they were hungry/ so he sympathises with them although they are cannibals*

R1: *you said they are cannibals/ is this yours or Marlow's opinion?*

Doa: *they are cannibals/ so he tried to understand them not like Kurtz or other white characters (G2, S1).*

Islam refers to Marlow's representation and expresses her agreement with his representation as *being realistic*. The value of this response, we argue, is twofold: first, she is aware of the textual representation of Africa, which indicates an interpretative ability that enables her to read these representations, since Marlow's representations might be difficult for them to interpret. Second, and more interestingly, she refers to other sources of knowledge *we don't have media to say that he maybe biased*. The significance of this reference is that for readers like Islam whose interest in literature is exceptional, textual 'realities' become sources of knowledge, and a 'reality' that shapes their understanding, position, and judgements. The occurrence of media in Islam's speech is also significant since she identifies another source of knowledge that she relies on for knowing about different cultures.

Like Islam, Doa, holds a similar view of the Africans, but she goes beyond that as she interprets *throwing the dead body in the river* as a sign of cannibalism on the part of the Africans. While the burial custom for people travelling in the sea is to heave the dead body in water, Doa's linkage of this act to African cannibalism indicates that she articulates a far-reaching certainty in her worldviews about the Africans as cannibals eating human bodies. This becomes more obvious when she confirms that this is her own opinion, not Marlow's, and through her search for *Marlow's sympathy* with the Africans *although they are cannibals*. Such interpretation indicates that students like Doa hold a firm image of the Africans as cannibals, which might be estimated and stereotyping all Africans as cannibals. In fact, Doa finishes Isra's uncompleted utterance *they do many other things for survival...* by Africans as *cannibals* and justifies that *because they were hungry*. Although Isra disagrees with Doa's opinion of Africans as cannibals, it is highly significant that Doa exploits Isra's utterance to articulate her own ideas. People often tribute their meanings either of right and wrong reading to others' ideas.

The following extract exemplifies the students' elaboration of other textual representations that deal with the idea of blackness:

[A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow... the black shadows of disease... (p. 134)]

Anas: *I have read something about the word 'white'/ it is the sign of good not only in Victorian age but in the Christian belief/ the skin of Elisabeth the First was not so white so she always put a veil on her face*

R2: *Why do you think so?*

Isra: *it's racism/ whether to be good, innocent, or beautiful, you should be white*

Anas: *this reminds me of Heathcliff when the father brought him, not being a white, the rest of the family considered him an evil child*

Isra: *and he is humiliated by the family*

Anas: *they classify people as black/ white and brown to say white people are smarter than black people (G2, S2).*

This is an interesting digression regarding the concept of 'blackness'; and a 'cultural' and historical contextualisation through which Marlow's extensive use of the word 'black' is connected to 'cultural' ideology and so realised as a sign of racism. Anas's remark regarding the Victorian Age and Christian beliefs about whiteness designates the importance of contextualising cultural understanding for the purpose of understanding textual representations. Connecting *goodness, innocence, and beauty to whiteness as racism* in Isra's view suggests a dialogic moment when both Anas and Isra build on each other's ideas to critique racist representations. Interestingly, recalling historical and other examples of textual representations (*Heathcliff, Wuthering Heights; Friday, Robinson Crusoe; and Othello, Othello*) to interpret textual meanings in hand is a remarkable progress in the students' sense of criticality and in their understanding of textual representations. Additionally, this contextualisation seems to connote a genre of dialogic reading that surpasses textual 'realities' to wider cultural and historical contexts while attempting to understand whiteness/blackness.

The second set of responses focused on the position of the captain of the boat who seems to be Marlow's friend. However, through critique of Marlow's account of this character, the students demonstrate an ability to connect these images to wider issues of coloniser/native relations. Here, we focus on the students' interpretation of this particular relationship and trace its development in their critique. Marlow introduces the native captain of the boat as follows:

[And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. ... instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed... (p.70)].

Students in the following dialogue attempt an interpretation of this extract:

R1: *how do you read this...?*

Hiba: *...the fireman is helpful to Marlow/ I think he is Marlow's friend*

Tariq: *there are many other friends on the boat and in the station...*

Hiba: *but not all African are friends...*

Batool: *in 'Robinson Crouse', Friday is his friend but his family or his tribe are not*

R1: *how do you see this friendship?*

Batool: *they are slaves*

Hiba: *I think these people are dangerous because they make a civil war/ I will kill you by your friend by your brothers/ this is immoral...*

Tariq: *they are mimickers*

Batool: *their followers/ I mean followers of the Europeans*

Tariq: *they behave in the same way as colonisers (G4, S3).*

Interestingly, although our intention of providing this quotation was to help the students read Marlow's account of natives who cooperate with the European 'expedition' to Congo, a wide variety of responses emerged in our discussion. This extract is indicative of several themes a) the developmental nature of dialogic interaction through which the students arrive at a profound understanding of such relation. Whereas they start interpreting this relationship as a form of *friendship*, other views emerge indicating that this *friendship* is *dangerous* on the part of the natives, which becomes *immoral*. b) The students' articulations and use of words also evoke those of literary theory such as Tariq's remark about natives as *mimickers*. c) It implies an understanding of the nature of such relationships as being helpful to Europeans who gave some natives command over the other natives. d) Batool's reference to the relationship between *Friday* and *Robinson Crusoe* provided an opportunity to introduce the concept of mimicry (we also refer to this quote and extract in 'the students' realisation of colonialism' section below).

The following two extracts epitomise the students' critique of civilised/uncivilised binaries backed up by reasoned examples from other literary texts. Ali's evocation of two settings: Centre/margin; the British and Indian in *Passage to India*; his thought out criticism entails a conspicuous attempt to defy such binary thought.

Ali: *I have read in 'Passage to India' / the first two pages is just a detailed description of two scenes... in the story he compared between the two stations: one belongs to the British and the other to the Indians/ there is a sentence here, civilised/ there is a sentence there, uncivilised/ here are trains/ there are bicycles/ civilised/ uncivilised and he repeats these images until you believe that thing... (G1, S3).*

Another example is Islam's reference to *The Lord of the Rings*, both the book and the movie, she comments:

Islam: *This (European African relation) reminds me of the epic 'The Lord of the Rings', I have read and seen/... they are always focusing on the idea of East and West and the middle of earth/ people coming from the east are always barbarians/ they just use the arrows/ they try to kill from far away/ they are so naïve/ they kill for any simple reason/ and they always say that's the evil comes from the east (G2, S3).*

In her reference, Islam comments on the *East/West* binaries by connecting them to North/South or the European/African 'divide'. Like Ali, she demonstrates a reasoned account by reconceptualising her previous experience in reading binary knowledge. Islam however goes beyond Ali in her reference and contextualisation as binary images in the epic are not directly stated. Phrases like *East/West*, *barbarians*, *naïve*, *use of arrows*, and *kill from far away* are purposefully chosen. The significance of this is that for students to understand colonial relations, they must first understand binary discourse through its creation of images and metaphors, which enables them to defy and disrupt binary logic.

Emergent ideas classified under this theme are crucial to this study for several reasons. First, they reflect the students' critique of Marlow's accounts. Second, they demonstrate the transitional dialogic stages and positions the students take up while discussing Marlow's 'realities'. They also extend that discussion to a general critique of Conrad and the novel in general with reference to other English literary texts, particularly the classics. Third, and most

significantly, these responses reflect the students' understanding of Marlow's 'failure' in his accounts and representations of Africa; they ascribe this failure to two things: a) *Marlow establishes anticipated stereotypes about Africa inferred from his culture, his representations are implanted in him, and his consciousness makes him use concepts from his cultural 'knowledge'*; and b) *Marlow distances himself from those he represents, hence, he fails to provide evidence of dialogue or reciprocity with the Africans, the 'other', therefore his account of Africa is a one-sided discourse.* The following section traces these 'developmental' positions.

In this extract, the students attempt to interpret the anonymous narrator's reference to Buddha while describing Marlow's manner of sitting and way of speaking.

Said: *I think Marlow stands neutrally in this novella/ he represents the white side of this novella/ he is not like Kurtz, so he is not a coloniser*

Muhammad: *the writer, I think, likes to say that I will give you wisdom, knowledge that you wouldn't find anywhere/ that's is about Buddha and his followers/ he puts himself in Buddha's position and the readers are like the followers of Buddha*

Ali: *and what makes you sure like that (reading) [... with his legs folded before him, he has the pose of Buddha preaching in European clothes... (p.36)] (paraphrases) 'what we have said is something lazy and now there is a silence to get somebody to give the real knowledge who is Marlow'/ this is a technique/ a convincing style...*

Muhammad: *in the state of silence, information will be clear/ so the word 'silence' means that he is highly reliable (G1, S1).*

Contrasting Marlow with Kurtz, Said views Marlow as a neutral, outside observer of events. Unlike Kurtz, who is interpreted as *a coloniser*, Marlow is *the white side of the novel*. In his interpretation, Said discredits the value of Marlow's representations of the Africans, and the textual 'realities' that arise because Marlow is the key character and a first narrator who introduces this story from a particular 'point of view'. Muhammad's interpretation of Buddha's image seems to go alongside with the textual claim regarding Marlow's role as a seeker after truth, which suggests a possibility of a transmission of textual 'realities' to readers. This becomes evident when he refers to the *state of silence* as *highly reliable*. *Readers and Buddha followers* are thus located in the same position; followers without questioning (Fothergill, 1989). In paraphrasing the quotation, Ali's mocking tone hints that *Buddha's image* and *state of silence* are not signs of reliability, but rather a technique used by the writer to prepare readers 'to hunt for meanings', to use Fothergill words.

Discourse and language constitute another version of textual 'reality' the students seem to take up as a source of trusted knowledge about the Africans. In the following passage, Batool feels that Marlow is being objective [*they were not enemies...*].

Batool: *names give readers ideas about people/ he named them savages/ in the beginning of the novel, I feel he is objective/ he says [they were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly know (p.40)] (G4, S2).*

Batool juxtaposes these phrases with Marlow's reference to the Africans as *savages* feeling that the latter statement is more objective as far as they are *not enemies or criminals*. This raises the fundamental issue of textual 'realities' for the interpretations produced by students. Juxtaposing Marlow with Kurtz, and phrases of varying degrees of account (*savages* vs. *enemies...*), produces a highly textual impact regarding the ways the students construct knowledge, and promotes a sense judgment. This is to argue that 'norm reference' (evaluating vis-à-vis comparing) and 'dialectic reading' might call on Batool to accept the word 'savage' not only as a less

intimidating attribute, but also a textual 'force' that makes her believe in Marlow's objectivity while referring to the Africans as such.

However, the following extract suggests that the students, Sura and Misa, take up dialogic positions in their attempt to understand Marlow's representations of the Africans.

Sura: *I think in all the story, Marlow is not dehumanising the Africans/ for example, when he describes them as dry sticks, very weak, they were setting, and their backs are against each others, and they are powerless*

Misa: *I think he over-generalises them as inferior creatures and savages/ this means his sympathy doesn't help (G3, S1).*

Sura is sympathetic to Marlow's reference to some Africans as *dry sticks, very weak, and helpless*. Misa, however, does not allow this sympathy to last long and reminds Sura that Marlow's sympathy with the Africans *doesn't help, since he over generalises them as savages*. This example reflects the nature of the dialogue the students have while trying to arrive at textual interpretations. Misa sees savagery to be equal to dehumanisation and thus takes the former to be a stereotype that Marlow creates for the Africans, which is obviously something she does not approve of. Interestingly, Sura does not argue with Misa and the transaction is closed with Sura's utterance, which suggests a dialogic nature of interpretation when an interlocutor gives up exchange. We understand this silence in the part of Sura as either a consent of Misa's point of view or a preference to suspend dialogue. In both cases, we argue that a dialogic interpretation take place as both were listening attentively to each other's views.

Again, the following dialogue unfolds two discrete points of view regarding Marlow with the direction of charging him as being responsible for providing *unpleasant image of local people*:

Tariq: *Marlow bears imperialistic mind and thus commits bad deeds to those people*

Batool: *how? Did he manipulate the others? Marlow?/ could you provide us with examples of these deeds ... he looks sympathetic with the African*

Tariq: *... the issue is that his image of local people grows increasingly unpleasant/ I think this is what Marlow does.*

Batool: *Marlow is a victim of the prejudices he brought with him to Africa*

Tariq: *I think Marlow plays the two roles, he was a victim then he became a victimiser (G4, S3).*

Here, Tariq burdens Marlow with the responsibility of *committing imperialistic deeds*. This is an indication of over stated interpretation of Marlow's position in the novel. Tariq's position, according to Batool, seems to take up a prejudicial or dogmatic account. In response to her challenge, it appears that Tariq slightly modifies his position by acknowledging the double roles of Marlow as a victim and victimiser. The moderate modification in his position through discussion with Batool, although not explicitly articulated, suggests a dialogic tradition through which the students search for an 'in-between' area or a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994, 1996) that is distinctly different from the original views. We recognise in Tariq's moderate change in position an implication of dialogic interaction and a shift of a dichotomous mode of discussion into a dialogic one. In fact, tracing the provisional nature of the positions Tariq's view of Marlow, which ranges between *victim, victimiser, increasingly unpleasant* and *imperialistic mind*, implies a dynamic and constantly changing mode of dialogic textual interpretation and meaning making. More evidently, the students' understandings of Marlow's account of Africa are provisional and temperamental, though they echo the nature of dialogic interaction when they attempt an appraisal of Marlow's case. These responses also reflect an indicative maturity in their critical

accounts, especially when connecting Marlow's representations to images borrowed from his culture, and a lack of communication and reciprocity with those he speaks for.

Muhammad: *I think when Marlow travelled he asked about the Congo, the nature of his job/ it's common sense to say that Marlow will establish a stereotype about the Congo / he judged his experience/ I think he anticipated those images before he saw them*

Ali: *... this is the role of the unconscious/ he wants to cover what is inside his mind/ and after that he said some words that are related to his reality because they think about Africans as things, as criminals, as beasts...*

Muhammad: *I think they were different from him therefore he talked about them in negative words (G1, S3).*

While Muhammad refers to Marlow's account as a stereotype established by his experience, Ali talks about the role of his unconscious and an articulation of reality that exists in his mind. Building on Ali's views (*Marlow uses some words that are related to his reality...*), Muhammad, shifting from his previous position, offers another explanation *since they are different, he talks about them negatively*, which is a clearly articulated dialogic and hybrid critique. Such a provision in Muhammad's responses, also highlights a dialogic merit; where meanings oscillate in the area between utterances. Additionally, both responses *unconscious meanings and difference leading someone to speak negatively* are highly suggestive of eighteenth-century European thought regarding stereotyping Africa as full of 'cannibals' and 'beasts'. Such a response resonates with Said's (1978) argument regarding European's polarisation of knowledge regarding the non-Western people. Said maintains that Europeans were not 'telling lies' nor dislike non-Western peoples, but their 'knowledge' was filtered by their culturally informed prejudices. Therefore, this knowledge produced

a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar [...] and the strange [...] When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis [...] the result is usually to polarise the distinction- the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the westerner more Western- and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions and societies (Said, 1978, p. 45-46).

Within this reading of the students' interpretation and challenge to textual accounts, we recognise a genre of resistance to those 'realities' provided by the text. The discursive nature of these interpretations suggests a dialogic multiplicity of constructing meanings beyond a static reading or interpretation of textual meanings. It is possible to argue that the dialogic relationship between the text, the students, and among the students themselves allows creative and shared 'response-abilities' through which all interlocutors become agents for the co-construction of meanings.

Shahd and Hiba's criticism/critique of Marlow's representation both ascribe his vision of Africa to the interference of his culture, though he attempts a sympathetic representation of the Africans.

Shahd: *when we talk about Marlow, we forget that he is European/ I think he sympathises with the Africans but he portrays their image with European eyes*

Hiba: *I think Conrad depicts how he was brought up/ how he thinks and this is the way he realises the world/ I think this is something implanted in himself/ he can't live outside himself/ so I think this is the reason why he couldn't give the Africans their real names/ I think he*

introduces his nation's ideas about them without thinking or even making contact with them or conversation (G4, S3).

This example demonstrates a the students' ability to outperform the immediate textual constructs as a source of knowledge to a wider contextualisation of the text. Deeming Marlow's accounts of the Africans as being informed by a genre of 'cultural knowledge' *implanted in himself*, Hiba articulates 'knowledge' about the 'other' as culturally produced. Arguably, reading the text culturally is highly significant for realising the 'whys' behind textual constructs, and so a reasoned critique of the versions of reality, particularly when these accounts create particular stereotypes about the 'other', such as in Marlow's case with the Africans. Although both students refer to Marlow's cultural background as a 'reality' that informs his understanding of Africa, Hiba goes beyond that to enunciate a dialogic value by critiquing Marlow's *failure* to attempt *contact* or *conversation* with Africans. This implies that dialoguing with the 'other' could disrupt forms of stereotypes and culturally informed knowledge about the 'other', and promotes understanding the 'other' in his own terms.

Interestingly, this extract also registers one of the few occasions when the students alternate Marlow with Conrad, which raises a highly contestable issue regarding the students' position of the novella itself. In fact, the students demonstrate remarkable difference while identifying the positions of Conrad and the novel. While some students, Doa and Muhammad, for example, identify a position of Conrad as defending the Africans, others take the novel as a colonialist text based on the assumption of the ways Marlow introduces and represents Africa. It becomes challenging to accept or refuse either of these positions, which echoes the various and contestable positions literary critics, including post-colonial ones, attribute to *Heart of Darkness*. As for the students, this position is reflected in some of the ways they read Marlow's accounts of the Africans.

Islam, who looks sympathetically at Marlow, suggests he is internally conflicted; according to her, although, he is angry about the Europeans' deeds in Africa, he is not able to say that.

Islam: *he has a conflict inside himself/ he can't say no, that's wrong, that should not happen/ but actually inside, he is still angry/ he is conscious/ they shouldn't do that/ I mean Europe shouldn't do such things in Africa (G3, S3).*

Such an interpretation reflects an important 'split' in Marlow, since he adopts a "contradictory position as the self-aware and critical but a complicit employee of the company" (Fothergill, 1989, p. 41). This 'homo-duplex': a double view or position, as Fothergill argues, reflects a deep state of contradiction and ambivalence. Islam's interpretation provides cognitive tools and live examples, not only to challenge textual essentialism and claimed realities, but also those of the students themselves. Additionally, her interpretation of Marlow and hence Conrad in this dialogic context challenges the one particular and 'authorised' interpretation of the text, thus, a promotion of a multiplicity of textual interpretations.

In furtherance to Islam's point, Anas draws links between Marlow's case and cultural representations, in general, with reference to himself as *our cultural judgements*.

Anas: *I think culture always affects our judgement on things/ and I think Marlow is affected by the European culture and when he gave us the picture of African people he is never objective/Marlow has a dominant power/ when we talk about power, we see a clear image that the world is like a forest/ and the strong defeats the weak (G2, S3).*

This might indicate a sort of transferring Marlow's issue into a problem of representation all cultures share. Anas's reference to himself and his culture is another indication of reflexivity that is attained while discussing the text. We recognise such provisional positions the students appear

to take up in relation to the text and in transforming textual matters to wider cultural issues, such as Anas's reference to his *own* culture, underlie the power of literature in its impact on readers. In addition, Anas provides an understanding of power, which is not only a mark of the European conquer's manipulation of the Africans, but also a hint to power that enables dominant discourse, in general. By referring to Marlow's position as the one who owns the voice which is a production of power, Anas implies an understanding of how European colonial powers nurtured and 'objectified' particular 'knowledge' about the 'other' (Said, 1990), who is potentially voiceless (Spivak, 1988) by assuming the position of being weak. However, Anas's elaboration of the image of the *world as a forest where the strong defeats the weak* suggests a sense of rejecting current global relations, which are based on powerful/weak relationship.

Tracing signs of dialogic resistance of textual meanings

The students' attempts to understand the novel's position on the issue of colonialism is a significant theme through which they adopt different accounts in terms of locating the text. The various positions they take up, as the following examples demonstrate, are suggestive of sensible reasoning regarding the way they judge the novel as a whole, which indicates a provisional and dynamic shift of their worldviews. Specifically, these responses demonstrate that a) Conrad is an *opponent to capitalism and colonialism*, hence the novel might be taken as an early 'post-colonial' text. b) Other responses, however, suggest that Conrad is a culturally biased writer through his *introduction of reversal relation of white/black, civilised/uncivilised concepts*; and c) a third group sees the novella as a hybrid text and Conrad as having *a double identity: someone living in two worlds*. These responses are detailed below.

While some responses take up the novella as a critique of the European colonialism, others challenge this view, classifying the novel as a colonial text. In fact, these two extreme positions are interesting in their indication of the idea of the plurality of textual interpretations we attempt to explore through the dialogic approach. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasise that these two different positions in the part of the students do not classify them into two groups, but rather the students' provisional positions appear to oscillate between the two positions, which suggests that dialogism promotes the dynamicity of judgments. Below, Doa perceives Conrad's position as a defender of the Africans by uncovering the European brutality towards *weak and defenceless people*:

Doa: *I think Conrad is against colonialism/ he wants to tell us how the Europeans treated the Africans in a bad and inhuman way/ we know about this by reading his novella/ Ok/ I agree that Marlow misrepresented Africans, but I think Conrad wants to tell us Marlow's story not his own (G2, S4).*

Heart of Darkness is a highly controversial text in terms of Conrad's position to European colonialism (Sarvan, 1980; Armstrong, 1996; Fothergill, 1989; Hampson, 1996). Interestingly, Doa's understanding of Conrad's position as a writer who is against colonialism is informed by the assumption that Conrad and Marlow are distinguished from each other. This seems to be inferred from her reading of the constructs provided by the story. In fact, there exists the possibility that Conrad introduces Marlow in a critical light, so that darkness, savagery, and other meanings attributed to the characters of the story could be used by Conrad as an early critique of European colonialism. Therefore, the values introduced in the novel might not necessarily be those of the author himself. Although such a line of reading disagrees with some post-colonial interpretations of the text, the possibility of such an engagement and understanding might locate Conrad's position in *Heart of Darkness* as a 'post-colonialist' writer. Therefore, it is possible that

Conrad attempts to represent Marlow and the colonial values from a critical perspective. Thus, Doa's interpretation of the two positions is a thought out consideration of the multiple textual possibilities, particularly the author's positions.

On another level, Islam sees *Heart of Darkness* as a result of Conrad's real experience while travelling to Congo.

Islam: *I think Conrad in his novel is against/ or in other words, questions the idealism of capitalism and colonialism/ Conrad wrote his novel on the basis of his own experience/ it is realistic/ in his experience he criticises the point of view: 'we must go to Africa to free man', but in fact, the Europeans go to Africa in order to make the Africans and the natives more miserable in the shackles of slavery/ I think Conrad wants to say that (G2, S3).*

According to Islam, Conrad questions the European presence in Africa, and registers the suffering of Africans caused by white colonisers. In her interpretation, Islam employs knowledge of Conrad's biography. *Heart of Darkness* is often thought to be connected to Conrad's real-life experiences. Therefore, Islam's contextualisation of Conrad's biography "seems to invite comparison of the two spheres, the literary and the real (a 'real' which, of course, we only have access to through other, usually written accounts)" (Fothergill, 1989, p. 6). Acknowledging the fact that Conrad himself gave credence to the biographical reading of literature, Islam recognises another level of interpreting textual constructs within their historic, geographical, time, and cultural settings. Additionally, it could be argued that Islam's interpretation of the text underlies a practice of colonial discourse analysis. However, instead of owing this interpretation to her own reading and discussion around the novel, she states that *Conrad wants to say that*. Islam's trust in literature is exceptional and her judgement echoes her worldview of the value of textual meanings.

Unlike Doa and Islam, Hamza deems *Conrad as biased* and the darkness Conrad speaks about *reflects the darkness of the psyche of the White*.

Hamza: *Conrad wrote this novel to introduce us to the darkness of Africa/ I think he is biased with western colour since he depicts Africa as dark, but my point of view after reading the novella, I think darkness was in the heart of the psyche of the White because they treated the Africans in a savage way/ you finally discover that the darkness in their souls and in their hearts not in Africa itself (G2, S4).*

In reference to the colour issue, Hamza rejects the novels' '*association of blackness to Africa*'. This opinion seems to reflect an employment of a wider cultural stand to textual interpretation. Obviously, Hamza, being sympathetic with the Africans, values the novella on the basis of the *darkness* issue, which suggests that the textual construct through which darkness is associated with Africa provokes a preoccupation that readers might rely on while valuing the work as a whole. Arguably, this might encourage readers to 'read' and sometimes 'mis-read' the work in terms of dislocating reference to *who says what*. Talking about *the White's savage way of treating African*, Hamza seems to miss a point that Conrad himself is the one who uncovers and registers this behaviour.

Hiba discusses textual discourse and language, which designates another level of dialogic critique of the text.

Hiba: *after reading the novella, I think it is the reversal of concept of white and black, civilised and uncivilised/ it is about a psychological and physical journey of Marlow to reach his inside reality/ the whiteness of the European (G4, S5).*

Hiba judges the novel as the *reversal concept of white/black, civilised/uncivilised* binaries. She also hints at another level of interpretation the *psychological journey of Marlow* or the white

man's search for reality, which can only be discovered through differentiating the 'self' from the 'other'. Hiba observes of the novel's discourse and attempts to deconstruct Conrad's binaries, through this, she embraces multiple dialogic perspectives in interpreting and critiquing the binary constructs of the text. Within such an approach, Hiba's combination of two levels of interpretations, cultural and linguistic, indicates a profound gain in dialogic analytical skills. Such progress in textual analysis when combined with dialogue around wider cultural issues, like the one we attempted in our discussions, gives weight to dialogic readings of textual meanings. The third category, which identifies Conrad's position as 'split' between two worlds, demonstrates exceptionally articulated dialogic responses in their moderate accounts regarding the novel. Anas's following comment exemplifies some of these responses:

Anas: *it is not a matter of extreme things, but I think the ideas in this novel reflect Conrad's conflict as someone who lives between two worlds/ the European and the African/ his own personal life and his story reflect this fact... (G2, S5).*

In addition to its indication of profound knowledge about the novel and the author, Anas's comment of rejecting extreme positions while judging the text enunciates the core intention of our dialogic approach in recognising the value of *living between two worlds*. Conrad once called himself 'Homo duplex' indicating a double position or displacement, which provides a useful key to an understanding of Conrad's life and the ambivalences of his work (Fothergill, 1989). Acknowledging the fact that Conrad had double nationality, two professional careers, mixed social/class identity, he became politically, culturally, socially, and not least, linguistically hybrid, which might call readers to read him with a critically as someone 'inside-and-yet-outside' (Fothergill, 1989). Arguably, we recognise Anas's view that the novel reflects the enunciative locations dialogic attempts to create, which appeared through tracing the shift between Anas's initial positions and the current one.

Tracing the students' realisations of colonialist meanings

Colonialism is a recurring theme that intersects the whole set of data created by the students' readings and dialogue around the text. Although data provided in the previous sections could be interpreted in line with this theme, in the current section, we focus on the students' realisations, reflections, and connections of textual meaning to their wider accounts and visions of culture.

The students' recognition of the possibility of colonialist meanings in *Heart of Darkness* is mediated around three areas: a) tracing possible colonialist meanings in the novel and connecting these meanings to other canonised literary texts: the classics and particularly 18th century texts included in their syllabus; b) attempting an understanding of these meanings within a 'colonial discourse analysis', and c) recognising and resisting colonial legacies by connecting them to contemporary issues. While it remains controversial to take the novel as a colonialist text, the students' readings and discussions around the novel especially Marlow's accounts of the Africans provoked emergent thoughts regarding European colonialism, which they contextualise in critiquing current 'colonial ideologies'. In fact the students' accounts of colonialist assumptions oscillated in and out-side the text, and between the past and present.

Muhammad and Said, in the following extract, refer to the 19th century, the time when the novel was written in an attempt to reach an understanding of the concept of colonialism. They also compare what the concept could mean in those times to the current understanding.

Muhammad: *colonisation at that time (time of writing Heart of Darkness) was not evil/ at that time no one says colonisation is bad*

Said: *how come?*

Muhammad: *it[colonisation] is bad, but who can say that in those times (G1, S2).*

The period 1899 – 1902 marks the time *Heart of Darkness* appeared in public. It also marks a heady age of the high tide of European imperialism. During those times, colonialism was the Empire's source of glory and pride; *no one would say that it was bad*, Muhammad reasons. However, from the second half of the 20th century onwards colonialism has been subject to fervent criticism. In his remark, Muhammad articulates the change of peoples' perceptions over time, which we recognise as an inferential ability through which he connects textual meanings to time, particularly current times. Thus, it could be argued that although textual representations of highly charged concepts might be contestable, it is possible that readers, particularly dialogic ones, could reach an understanding of the dynamic nature of textual meanings and their evolution.

Similarly, broadening the contextualisation of the concept, Sura, Nour, and Wala conceive of the concept of colonisation as a genre of ideological practice regardless of *who* adopts it.

Sura: *I think we have to distinguish between two terms colonisation and occupation/ I think occupation is found with army but colonisation by both arms and ideas or ideology, so what happened in Iraq is occupation and that of Jordan is colonisation/ Egypt, Syria, and Jordan all suffer from colonisation...*

Nour: *a nation can control another in different ways and by many things/ the Americans can control us from a remote place without coming here*

R1: *how?*

Wala: *we are culturally attacked, by media/ by net/ by many things*

Sura: *the books we read*

R1: *which books do you mean?*

Sura: *many books we read, for example, English literature*

Nour: *I think it is not only English literature/ many other literatures do the same (G3, S4).*

Sura finds *ideas and ideology* distinctive features of *colonisation*, which is different from *occupation*. The indicative remark Sura raises is an understanding of colonisation as the employment of ideas as apparatus colonial powers use to *control other countries*, which opened the space for other ideas to emerge. Both Nour and Wala, building on this view, through dialogic interaction, talk about the different ways colonisation is practiced, *media, net, many things*, and, according to Sura, *books*. A broadening of the contexts in which colonial ideology could be practiced further abstracts the concept, a conceptualisation that emerged in the course of their dialogue. We realise the students' accounts and building on each others' dialogic values through the discursive nature of dialogue create a non-dogmatic understanding of matters discussed, such as the one in hand. Therefore, an understanding of the concept of colonialism surpasses specific referents such as that of European colonialism, into an abstraction, where colonial ideology becomes the key point of discussion and the subject of criticism. Furthermore, the students' reference to time as present rather than past while discussing the concept implies that colonial ideology is not bounded by a time frame; they critiqued the concept as an 'idea' or an abstract construct, irrespective of a time frame, and it remains an ideology that is of concern. In line with this argument, we find the students' approach and realisation of the concept in this manner a remarkable one. They realise that colonialism or neo-colonialism is an ideology that was practiced in the past and still exists now, which invites them to critically reflect on their own critical cultural awareness. However, such a conceptualisation invites them to transfer and practice their criticisms and thus resist colonial ideology as well as other forms of ideological

assumptions from a diasporic and hybrid 'third space positioning', which brings about non-dogmatic accounts while practicing critique.

Attempting a colonial discourse analysis, the students practiced a genre of discursive dialogue in and out-side the text, which invites them to recall and discuss a plethora of relevant texts and issues, particularly contemporary ones. In so doing, dialogic practice creates further spaces in which to construct their multiple realisations and locations through which they enunciate their views. The following extract exemplifies the way the students dialogue, digress, and elaborate around this theme.

[... He (Kurtz) began his argument that 'we white, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings – we approach them with the might as of a deity', and so on. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded' etc. etc. ... (p. 117].

Ali: such a text points out that they want to justify their mission in Congo, they say that this mission is a noble one and we are going to make people more civilised in this primitive area but at the end we discover that this mission is not a noble one/ they justify their mission under the umbrella of civilisation

Muhammad: I think this text is not to justify but to convey an opinion of colonialism/ we come to Congo to make people civilised/ that's true, nowadays we hear something similar things but the difference is only in terminology/ now, we hear a lot about freedom the equality between men and women, the human rights

Ali: yes, for example Iraq

Muhammad: not only Iraq, look at Jordan

Ali: When Bush in his campaign told us that he wanted to establish democracy in Iraq, and freedom for the sake of Iraqis but what we see now is not what he claimed/ it's quite opposite /also we have a real reason and a good reason/ the good reason we want to develop people and make them civilised and the real reason remains inside minds

Muhammad: we can say surface meaning and deep meaning

Said: it's a kind of hypocrisy (G1, S2).

The lines Marlow reads from Kurtz's report triggered the students' reactions and responses towards colonial discourse. In simple expressions with profound meanings, the students attempt to explain how colonial powers authorise their presence and domination of other people and their land. The congenial flow of the students' dialogue implies accordance in their views, which is a notable feature of other related themes. It could be argued that, in reaction to Kurtz's ideas, the students adopt a consistent vision and argument, which indicates that they locate themselves in one position that of the 'other'. In their defence as well as in their reference to Iraq, they not only connect Kurtz's discourse to contemporary issues, but also thoroughly understand the tools of colonial language, which appears, for example, in Ali's phrases *real/good reason* or Muhammad's *surface/deep meaning*. Said, who once approved Marlow's representation of Africans as *uncivilised* and Africa as *full of cannibals*, also joins the group in their criticism of colonial issues, which is typical of the other students. Additionally, the argument expressed in this example suggests concern about currently circulated discourse such as *freedom, man/woman equality, human rights*. It could also be argued that bringing these issues into the discussion over colonial discourse reflects the students' concern for their cultural image, since recently these issues are largely argued in the Arab world.

The message of enlightening the 'other' operates strongly in colonial discourse (Said, 1978, 1983; Ashcroft, et al. 1989). The students' reading, analysis, and discussion of textual recalling

of some 'national' figures who assumed the responsibility and the 'burden' of spreading the 'message of enlightenment' to other people provoked an understanding of colonial discourse as embedded in textual accounts. In the following extract, the students provide a rationale and an analysis of Marlow's recalling and contextualising of some national figures in his narrative:

[... from Sir Francis Drake to John Franklin, knights, titled and untitled – the great knights of the sea ... and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire (Marlow, p.63) ...]

Islam: *I think he provided these names to make us believe his ideas are more realistic / it gives his story more realistic value/ names make the text more reliable*

R2: *but do you know those people?*

Islam: *no but when you give me those names, I think they are reality and I don't have to know them/ there is something which you need me to know and believe...*

Anas: *(interpreting) 'these are our ancestors, we glorify and praise them as they are the source of our power/ 'the torches and the messengers', I think refer to Christianity which tried to enlighten other peoples (G2, S2).*

Conrad's allusion to these figures implies a sort of reader whose competence enables the correct decoding of historical referents as heroic figures. Even if readers do not know who those people are, "competence is something a text both assumes and can create" (Fothergill, 1989, p. 15). Therefore, the intention of stating such names is typically interpreted by Islam and Anas. While, for Islam, they give the text *realistic value*, Anas goes beyond that claiming that they are a *source of glory and power*. Both cases, however, indicate a harmonious conceptualisation of the reason for including those names. Conrad's reference to the '*messengers as bearers of a spark from the sacred fire*' in the next paragraph endorses the idea of enlightenment, where those national figures are agents of the 'civilising mission' ((Fothergill, 1989, p.15). Therefore, Anas's interpretation of *those people are as sources of glory and power*, and the *torches as indicators of Christianity that aims to enlighten other people* is indicative of his realisation of the colonial '*message*'. We recognise in Anas's connection between glory, power, and enlightenment, on the one hand, and European Christianity, on the other a reading of colonial discourse that is based on textual representations, since the phrase a '*spark from the sacred fire*' is suggestive of Christianity. In this line of argument, it could be estimated that textual realities have the potential to construct meaning. *Heart of Darkness*, in terms of its selection of the Congo setting and the European ivory 'trade' alongside the many other accounts the novel gives would enable colonial meanings to emerge out of the text itself. The reader's responsibility then becomes a 'share' of these constructs irrespective what kind of 'share' he or she provides.

In the following passage, Tariq articulates a compelling analysis of colonial discourse by connecting colonial ideology with culture and power:

Tariq: *any form of colonisation comes from one spot from one culture/ this culture has certain beliefs that it is the superior, the powerful, the most advanced economies/ and the other cultures are inferior, so it is our responsibility to send our sons to enlighten them/ so they try to convince their people of that/ but the real thing, they want to make easy life for their people/to find other natural resources/ in the past the ivory was a precious thing so they went Africa / but they treated Africans in totally inhuman way/and if they have the chance to return back without a disease, they tell these stories to people back home (G4, S5).*

The salient feature of Tariq's comments is the connection he makes between colonial discourse and cultural assumptions from one side and literature from the other. He reads in Kurtz's discourse in his report directed back to Europe, a genre of narratives and an epistemology

travellers and colonisers held about themselves, their culture and the 'other'. It was the custom for those travellers to report their knowledge about foreign 'races' they encounter overseas *if they had the chance to return back without a disease*. The link Tariq makes between colonisers' stories and the way they perceive their culture as powerful and superior and the 'other's' as inferior informs their 'realities' about themselves and about the 'other'. Therefore, as far as this 'other' is *inferior and uncivilised*, it becomes the *powerful and superior's responsibility to enlighten* those 'dark races': 'the white man's burden' (Young, 1995), in other words. Reading Tariq's comment this way, we recognise a thought out reading and contextualisation of textual constructs, which he embraces to analyse colonial discourses. Interestingly, the students', through such responses, are transferring textual reading and analytic skills to reflections on wider cultural issues.

The students' elaboration on the possible colonialist meanings and the connections they made to their lives and to their realisations of contemporary cultural, social, and academic matters provoke a wide range of responses. The discursive nature of these responses makes categorising them under several headings possible. However, the students' association of colonialism with the political and social scene resonates powerfully in their worldviews, which makes it a recurrent theme:

Muhammad: *I want to associate things with colonisation, in Syria for example the prominent language is French that is because of the French colonisation to that country, and the same in Jordan the most important language is English*

Said: *besides language, I would say the political effects/ we know that there are many problems in the Middle East*

Ali: *I think they changed our own ways of thinking/ we believe that they are an ideal society*

Muhammad: *we make this*

Ali: *even in literature and history, they affect us/ if you compare between Shakespeare and Al-Mutanabbi you are made to think that Shakespeare is more rhetorical/ there is a picture in my mind that Shakespeare is the first poet or play writer in the whole world.*

R2: *where do you think this picture comes from?*

Ali: *it is before the university, I think from my childhood (G1, S4).*

Associating *language spread*, the *political problems in the Middle East*, and the *change of their ways of thinking*, as well as *glorifying English literature, Shakespeare in particular* connote the discursive nature of the students' reflections on colonial issues discussed in the text. The recurrence of these issues at various stages of the seminar sessions attests a conviction through which they rearticulate a socially and politically circulated discourse. Ali's reference to *Al-Mutanabbi*ⁱ and juxtaposing him with *Shakespeare* and taking the latter as *more rhetorical* echoes another discourse which significantly goes beyond the academic setting to a social or cultural one. For Ali, we argue, *Shakespeare is no longer more rhetorical than Al-Mutanabbi*, since evoking this idea while discussing colonial legacies signifies Ali's realisation of the fallacy of his previous perception. Furthermore, Muhammad's illusion that *we make this* could be read as reference to themselves either as a group of students discussing the issue or to Jordanians, a 'once colonised people'. At any rate, Muhammad alludes to the colonised people's share in stereotyping the image of Europeans' ideal societies. In so doing, Muhammad adopts an intermediate position where he directs his critique not only to colonial discourse but also to the colonised in stereotyping this image of Europe and themselves.

Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted an interpretation of the students' worldviews as presented in their responses and traced their textual meaning-making while reading and discussing *Heart of Darkness*. Data revealed wide variation among students' views while interpreting the text, which reflects the multiplicity and discursiveness in their realities that inform their interpretations. Although their analyses regarding some points reflect a reproduction of received knowledge, other responses reveal thought out inferences. The students' responses exceeded our expectations, as they have been indoctrinated with both literature and scientific facts. Paulo Freire (1985) argues that 'normalising education' manifested by 'particular informed meanings'. In their reflections, the students place their current experience of dialogic engagement against their formal education through which they recognise that the spaces created by the dialogic engagement and the shared knowledge they gained could loosen the 'righteous' and 'taken for granted' interpretations. In their remarks, the students realised that 'standardised' readings of a literary text remain open to dialogue, hence, to challenge. We argue that dialogic approach enables a 'counter education', as opposed to a 'normalising education', where learners could recognise and practice the skills and tools of deciphering the politics of institutional indoctrination.

Based on our findings, we claim that the students adopt a dialogic interaction with the text in the ways they transcend dualistic and dichotomous oppositions into assuming the right for textual meanings as an 'Other' having the right to be voiced, represented, and acknowledged. They give equal, dialogical attention to their own voice and the voice of the text; such a mode of textual interaction promotes a critical reflection on the process of 'difference' exploration. Therefore, readers' subject positions are 'double-voiced' or 'constructing the "self" in relation' instead of 'single-voiced' or expressing 'adherence of the "self" viewpoint' while realising textual ideas. Thus, dialogic readers would tend for an exchange of voices rather than holding antithesis to a given thesis or an answer to a proposed question (Bialostosky, 1986) in her search for an understanding of the writers' psychology and position.

Furthermore, the search for elements in and beyond the text registers another dialogical element in terms of discovering the experience of the cultural context behind the text that gives the words their validity and meaning, through which readers could explore the 'borderland' of the 'self' and the 'other' represented by textual meanings (Moore, 1994). Therefore, acknowledging the psychological and cultural positions of textual ideas enables 'third-space positioning' which surpasses dialectic binaries into a 'multi-dimensional' field. Dialogical mode of interaction transcends and infuses the text in such a way readers get through a complex process of cultural exchange instead of binary absorption between the 'self' and the 'other' where 'culture' operates outside the exchange since the aim turns into 'dialogic survival' rather than 'dialectic synthesis'.

Third, the primacy of context and the impossibility of textual resolution is implied in the students' dialogic approach to valuing the text. This appears not only in their search for wider contextual elements, but also in the ways they come to understand and evaluate the text in terms of these elements. We contend that the students gain deeper knowledge about textual background and practices critical reflexivity, which appears in their search for reciprocity construction of meanings. They participate in a genre of dialogic reading that shifts into not only a participatory epistemology, but also contextual exchange. As such, the reader and the text turn into dialogic interlocutors where readers and ideas could discover mutual oppositions and affinities.

¹ Abu at-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi, according to almost all Arab critics is the most renowned of all Arab poets (Badeau and Hayes, 1992).

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Global English and World Culture: A Case Study of the Subjective Worlds of English Teachers in Taiwan

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Abstract

Most discussions of global English and world culture are at a macro-theoretical level since there are few attempts to examine these concepts in a daily context. This study aims to present different perspectives on world culture and global English from two native and two non-native English teachers in Taiwan. A qualitative methodology 'Portraiture' was used to explore their conceptions of English and English teaching. The findings show that the NS teachers shared more world culture and global English ideas than the local teachers did. The teachers' learning experiences are believed to contribute to the finding. The contrast between the two groups of teachers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds suggest that the value of empowerment in world culture and the advocacy of ownership in global English complement each other as western constructions, but the world may not yet be ready to embrace global English and world culture.

Keywords: English as an International Language, Global English, Teacher's Belief, World Culture

Introduction

The global spread of English is one of the major controversies in applied linguistics (Seidlhofer, 2003, p.2). It continues as globalization progresses. More and more attention has been given to the topic, not only from applied linguistics (see Jenkins, 2006), but also from fields such as economics (e.g. Lysandrou & Lysandrou, 2003) and politics (e.g. Ives, 2006). With the emergence of a global language, discussions on the possibility of a global culture or world culture abound (e.g. Robertson, 1992; Inkeles, 1998). Topics like global English and world culture are interdisciplinary in nature; however, these topics are usually approached in a theoretical manner. Rarely were these concepts connected with real life experiences. As a bold attempt, this qualitative study aims to provide grounded insights into how four English teachers in Taiwan experienced and conceived the evolving world and English through the lenses of world culture and global English. The purpose is to explore related issues emerged from connecting the macro theoretical and micro practical perspectives. Moreover, the experiences and conceptions of two groups of teachers with contrasting linguistic and cultural backgrounds (North-American native speakers and local Taiwanese) provide entry points to examine theoretical concepts in global English and world culture.

Global English

The idea of 'global English' (Graddol, 2006; Sonntag, 2003) or 'global Englishes' (Pennycook, 2007) can be traced to the studies in World Englishes and Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles, and is usually associated with English as an international language (EIL) (McKay, 2002) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Seidlhofer, 2001). One line of studying global English is rooted in linguistics. The main assumption is that global English is developing into a linguistic system that contains its own features. Studies concerning global English--phonology (Jenkins, 2000), pragmatics (House, 2002), lexicogrammar (Seidlhofer, 2004), and spoken academic ELF (Mauranen, 2006).

Another approach to global English focuses on its socio-cultural implications. The birth of a global language challenges the taken-for-granted connections between languages on the one hand and place, nationality, race, and culture on the other. Just as globalization transcends the national boundaries and worldviews based on national societies, global English confronts fundamental assumptions on the roles of language. It also arouses polarized reactions: scholars on the left (e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998) lament that the Empire used English to exploit the world and destroy other languages while those on the right see global English promoting mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation (Gimenez, 2001) and facilitating (economic) development (Fishman, Conrad, & Rubal-Lopez, 1996).

In this paper, the term 'global English' is used in a general sense to refer to the global spread of English, not a particular variety of English. The reason of using the term 'global English' is that the global spread of English is conceptualized as part of the globalization process. Globalization leads to global English, which facilitates the process of global integration in a reciprocal way (Graddol, 2006, p.58).

The concepts related to global English may be categorized into the following four domains. (1) Ownership: English users and learners around the world can and should become participants in the evolution of this global language (Widdowson, 1994). (2) Identity: What language(s) we speak and who we are do not have direct and clear connections (Brutt-Griffler, 2005; Erling, 2007). (3) Culture: Cultures are decoupled from English, which becomes 'cultural free' or 'the most culture-rich language' (Medgyes, 1999: p.187-188). (4) Pedagogy: Communicability and

intercultural intelligibility replace conformation to native-speaker norms as the teaching goals (Alptekin, 2002; Sifakis, 2004). These theoretical ideas contrast with a reality different from the proposed ideal; for example, empirical studies showed that most nonnative learners and users still appeared norm-dependent (see, e.g., Matsuda, 2003; Bokhorst-Heng et al., 2007) while issues of re-colonization with the spread of English and its harmful consequences for national and local identity remain a major topic. Global English brings tremendous impacts and implications for contemporary human life, and among the implications, culture stands out as a key issue because it relates to all aspects of human life.

Cultural globalization and world culture

In the cultural dimension of globalization, three major perspectives offer a general picture (Held et al., 1999). With the development of a single global economy, a (homogeneous) global culture is expected by the *hyperglobalists*. In contrast, seeing the nation-state maintaining its hegemony over cultural development, the *skeptical* perspective projects a more divided world, with fundamentalism gaining ground to counter the dominance of a global capitalist culture. Defining globalization as a multidimensional process, the *transformationalists* focus on hybridity and creolization of cultures, --global cultures indigenized and local cultures globalized-- cultures mixing and interacting to produce new forms of culture. This approach posits that there will be global elements but also local distinctions. The transformationalist perspective is currently the mainstream paradigm in both sociology and applied linguistics (Dewey, 2007).

At the first glance, the global physical landscape appears standardized by multinational brands since you can see them at most cities worldwide. Scientific and technological development combined with the advance of capitalism has in the past several centuries transformed the world. This structural convergence has hyperglobalists heralding the emergence of a global culture. On the other hand, though the visible environment seemingly converges with the dominance of the modern nation states, institutions, organizations, and market forces, the spiritual outlook has not homogenized. Instead, more and more people in postindustrial countries have moved closer to the religious sectors as globalization swept the world (Thomas, 2005). Secularization did not accompany modernization as proposed by earlier scholars (e.g. Durkhem, 1965). Fundamentalism even gained ground with the help of internet and mobile phones in regions like Islamic countries (Mehran, 2003) and India (Kamat, 2004). While large-scale global surveys indicated that western values such as equality and democracy were increasingly adopted in newer generations, certain authoritative and paternalist values also remained strong in many places (see Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart, 2006). Most scholars in the globalization discourse tend to acknowledge that the world is both diversifying and standardizing in different dimensions, as illustrated by the term ‘*a heterogeneous world culture*’ (Van Der Bly, 2007).

The concept of ‘world culture’, developed by the neo-institutionalists in sociology, notably John Meyer at the Stanford University, provides a unique lens to interpret the phenomenon by seeing culture as institutional rules instead of a symbolic or meaning system. Boli and Thomas (1999) propose that world culture is characterized by universalism, rationalization, and individualism. Drori et al. (2003) assert that world culture is founded on “*science as a world institution, a culture frame and an ontology*” (p.8-9). Drori, Meyer, and Hwang (2006) posit that “*the two core features of modern world culture, rationalization and empowered actorhood are constructed and expanded through scientization*” (p.56). By focusing on the underlying norms, values, and ontology, the concept of world culture shifts the discussions surrounding global cultures to the *foundations* of cultural products, practices, and perspectives. World culture

stresses the roles modern institutions and organizations play in shaping human beings' worldviews and ways of making sense of the surroundings. The idea 'universalization of the particular' or 'Glocalization' (Robertson, 1992) echoes the theme that underlying rules converge to produce diversified representations. (For details about world culture, see Lechner & Boli, 2005).

Two Parallel Discourses: Global English and World Culture

Rooted in the (western) Enlightenment ideas, world culture 'spreads' worldwide along with the diffusion of modern institutions. World culture theory is founded on the empirical studies that focus on how two major institutions facilitated the development of world culture. (1) Modern schooling: Ramirez & Boli (1987) on the worldwide expansion and institutionalization of schooling; Meyer et al. (1992) on worldwide official curriculum guidelines. (2) International and modern organizations: Boli & Thomas (1999) on international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); Drori (2005) on United Nations; Drori, Meyer, & Hwang (2006) on formal organizations such as government and corporation. Individuals' worldviews are shaped by schooling (childhood), media (adolescence), and corporations (adulthood), all of which contribute to the development of world culture (Inkeles, 1998).

The global spread of English took similar paths, through (international) government, corporations, media, and education (Crystal, 2003) and same direction from the west (center) to the rest (periphery). But unlike world culture which is embedded in modern schooling, English was not a subject in compulsory education in most expanding-circle countries until recently (cf. Nunan, 2003). From a neo-institutional perspective, the inclusion of English in the official curriculum at a global level should shake up both the English language and people around the world because of the roles mass schooling plays in shaping individuals' worldviews. As a language that carries various cultural meanings, English gradually begins to play a role in the worldwide citizen-construction process through institutionalized education.

Teachers may absorb this imagined ideal of a global village with English as its language and world culture as its ontological foundation, or construct their own ideals incorporating their own cultures. At the individual subjective level, how these abstract ideas connect with real life remains unclear since very few studies approach the issues from a grounded perspective. This study aims to explore potential issues around global English and world culture by (1) investigating how four English teachers in Taiwan, two native-speaking English teachers (NESTs) and two Taiwanese teachers, conceived the evolving world and English through their experience and (2) comparing the teachers' conceptions in terms of world culture and global English.

Methodology

"Qualitative research has traditionally been seen as an effective way of exploring new, uncharted areas" (Dornyei, 2007: 39). Moreover, since the focus is on individual experience, a particular methodology 'Portraiture' is used. Portraiture focuses specifically on pursuing core understandings of the participants through in-depth life-history interviews with adult participants (Witz et al., 2001). The method is particularly suitable to investigate how values and deep concepts of adult participants were formed by thoroughly examining their life experiences (Witz, 2006). Portraiture as a qualitative method that incorporates the systematic approach of social science, particularly that of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and the aesthetic approach of art (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) has been proved to be effective in accessing

data related to unobservable and immeasurable mental activities, such as cultural norms, belief, and ideological assumptions (Dixson, Chapman & Hill, 2005).

In-depth interview was used as the data collection method. Two female Taiwanese English teachers and two male native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) were interviewed 3-4 times; each interview lasted around 1 hour. The gender divide reflected the real situations: 86% of the English teachers in Taiwan's secondary schools were female (Ministry of Education, 2010), while more than 65% of the forty-thousand-plus Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) with a working visa in Taiwan were male (Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training, 2010). Gender, not a main dimension in data analysis, may play a role in interpreting the results of the study, so this is a limitation.

All the interviews were voice-recorded with the participants' consent. The interviews with local teachers were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed in Mandarin and later translated into English for cross-comparisons and reporting while those with NESTs all in English. The participants were in their late 30s with around 10 years of teaching experience in secondary and/or tertiary levels. In an earlier study (Author, 2008), the researcher interviewed experienced teachers on the issue of world culture, so with generational comparison in mind, the focus in this project turned to the younger teachers. It is also believed that the inclusion of NESTs would yield valuable insights into how world culture and global English are reflected in the subjective experiences of teachers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The first interview session was semi-structured, focusing on the participants' experiences, practices, and various perceptions on life issues. Major topics include their path to becoming an English teacher, teaching experiences, and personal life decisions. This subjective understanding formed a basis to interpret their perceptions and conceptions related to English. Unlike most interview studies that directly prompt participants for responses to certain prescribed questions, in this study the participants' concepts about English were explored through real incidents and their reflections in the subsequent interviews. The researchers tried to identify important passages in which the participant expresses deep feelings and reflections. These would yield islands of understanding at the initial stages. The researchers sought to identify '*internal sources and structuring*' (Witz, 2006) and analyzed the data by both immersing in the passage--which often requires an intuitive mentality to tune in with the wave of the participant's flow of mind--and constant connections and comparisons within and between the passages, a key principle of grounded theory. After a holistic comprehension of the interview data, the researchers would make some conjectures about the uncertainties and explore them by asking relevant questions in the next interview. An individual timeline that marked significant personal and contextual events and life paths helped the researchers to achieve contextualized subjective understanding through life history. For each participant, each interview session was scheduled at least two weeks apart to give the researchers the time needed for deeper understanding and analysis of the data. The recursive process continued until the researchers had acquired sufficient and necessary understanding of the participant's subjective world for the purpose of the study.

The following discussions and analysis were filtered through the researcher's subjective position. To ensure credible and dependable interpretations of the data, the researchers complied with the systematic approaches, which include constant cross-comparisons within the data, follow-up verification with the participant, and data-based analysis. In the next section, due to limited space, only a brief sketch of the participants is presented, followed by discussions on world culture and global English from the participants' lived experiences.

Participants

The researchers set out to recruit both native-speaking English teachers and local Taiwanese English teachers. It is supposed to generate interesting insights and comparisons by including both native and non-native English teachers in the study. Gender balance was considered during the recruiting stage, but since most English native speakers were males and most local English teachers were female, in the end two male native-speaking teachers and two female local teachers were recruited. Another criterion was that the participating teachers should have taught for more than five years. In other words, novice teachers were excluded because the study aims to explore experience and perceptions of change.

Wendy

Wendy grew up in an authoritative family in southern Taiwan. Her father decided for her which school and department to study, even her first job after graduation. In the fifth grade, she had a dream of becoming a teacher after meeting a strict teacher who helped her become successful in school. After graduating from a vocational school, she taught English in a cram school. Cram schools are private enterprises that provide supplementary instruction to formal schooling. Sometimes branded as ‘shadow education’ (Bray, 1999), it is a common practice in East Asia, especially at the secondary level. This experience further ascertained her interest in teaching. But her father arranged a job in a bank for her. She was not happy working in the bank, and a manager suggested her father to have her study abroad. After a few months, her father sent in the resignation letter for her and she was off to the United States for a language school. Wendy stayed in the U.S. for almost 6 years, where she grew independent, living alone outside campus and teaching part-time at a Chinese school. After she obtained the Bachelor’s, her parents urged her to continue studying for the MBA. Without parents by her side, she had made up her mind to study what interested her: teaching English. After completing her Master’s in TESOL, she returned to Taiwan. She first taught in a vocational school, and later in the current private university for 9 years. Due to the influence from her primary school teacher, she was a strict teacher as well.

Susan

Sue grew up in a traditional farmer’s family, following her family’s expectation to become a teacher. She was a playful girl and believed that her personality conflicted with what the society expected a typical teacher to be, namely highly disciplined, obedient, and moralizing. In the junior high school, she was touched by her English teacher’s care and transformed from an abandoned student into an academically successful star. She studied extremely hard and was able to become a high school teacher. She taught in the junior high school for one and a half years and then in the high school for ten years. At first she paid great attention to help students achieve academic success, but later her students, a few years after graduation, told her that they only remembered those little life stories she shared in class. Lately she began to shift more focus to teaching morality and how to be a good citizen.

Chuck

Chuck was a full-time cram-school teacher from America, who first came to Taiwan on Fulbright scholarship in 1994. Then he fell in love with this place and has been living on the island for more than nine years. His students ranged from second graders to young adult learners. In college he majored in sociology, and had always been interested in people. “My biggest

strength has always been, to get along with other people, relating to people.” He never thought of becoming a teacher, but after some experiences he found out that teaching allowed him to make a positive difference to the world, and decided to teach English in Taiwan. His internal thirst for self-growth drove him to leave his hometown to live on the other side of the earth. He felt connected to the people and culture in Taiwan. In his words, the interpersonal relationship in Taiwan is “more real, genuine” than that in the U.S., which values individual privacy more.

John

John was a Canadian who spent his childhood in Belgium. In his teenage years his family moved to Ontario, and later to Victoria, where he went to college, first majoring in English but later transferred to developmental studies. His first job involved government contracts, and one task was teaching English to the immigrants. This positive experience led to his decision to teach in Taiwan because he was quite concerned with the rise of China and hoped to learn more about East Asia. He had been teaching English in Taiwan for six years, mostly at the secondary level but also adult tutoring. One of his favorite hobbies was yachting, and he had sailed to many places in the world. His journey and unusual experience probably related to his sharing most ideas in world culture and global English.

World culture and the participants’ worldviews

There is a tendency for the participants to absorb or incorporate different worldviews, particularly in their young adulthood. However, the cultural milieus in which the participants grew up still play an important role in their teaching practices. Wendy and Susan basically played a conservative teacher’s role, being strict and rigid, which is congruent with how a good teacher was traditionally conceived in Taiwan and East Asian cultures. But they adapted to some new educational norms. For Chuck and John, resonances with world culture ideas such as human rights and rational progress appeared frequently as reflected in their assumption on individual rights and students’ roles. But their ideal society, the goal of human civilization, seemingly resembled Eastern Oneness that sees individuals as part of a larger entity.

The local teachers gradually came to respect students’ individual human rights, which they did not enjoy when they were students but fought for their own rights as they became teachers. The fighting experiences, Wendy’s rebelling against her parents’ will to choose her major when she was in the U.S. and Susan’s resolution to be a super fair teacher treating each student equally and respectfully due to her once being an abandoned student, paved ways for their accommodation of student’s individual agency. But overall speaking their teaching practices and educational beliefs were closer to the Oriental philosophy that stresses social harmony and collective achievement.

Wendy saw students as passive and inert learners; teacher plays a dominant and aggressive role, determining what students should learn and what level they should achieve. Teacher’s influence can be as much as parents’. The idea of individual agency, empowered children, and inborn human rights does not fit with Wendy’s worldview. Students are supposed to earn their rights from performing their duty and responsibilities. Susan had a similar view, but stressed more on the collective sense of community. She even punished those who failed to remind their classmates not to do a misconduct that harmed the reputation of their class even though these students did not make any misbehavior.

On the other hand, both Chuck and John showed their admiration of the Eastern worldviews. Chuck immersed himself in the Taiwanese culture and appreciated everything and

everyone around him. While most NESTs in Taiwan are sojourners who seldom stay for more than five years and some even never learn to speak any local languages, Chuck rode a motorcycle to the local market and chatted with local elders. In Chuck's words, "you can talk about the real thing, real self" in Taiwan. The distance between individuals is much shorter in Eastern cultures compared to Western ones. People involve with others' business and see others' life deeply connected to their own. For John, his change was more conceptual and abstract. On how to make the world better:

[A]t one point I thought it could be done quite simple, and now I realize, I don't know if it's impossible or something, it's much deeper than just feeding people. It's changing people's beliefs, in Taiwan, in Canada, everywhere. It seems flaky: at spiritual level, everything is connected. There's no other, in a sense, we ARE the others. I mean, you're not me and I'm not you, but everything is ONE. And the idea that, somebody is god, finding out the solution to everyone, it's ridiculous, we're all struggling. By changing yourself, you change the idea of the other. (John 4th interview, capital words John's emphasis)

The step John took, to change himself in order to change others, implies tremendously deep philosophical and religious ideas of the East.

Though Chuck and John reflected on their worldviews and changed their ways of seeing the world, their teaching practices still manifested their cultures of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2002) that emphasize students' agency. Chuck valued participation (the process) over performance (the result of education). John's educational ideals were the dialogue style in the Greek tradition, in which teacher and students engage in constant arguments. Meyer and McEneaney (2000) pointed out the world culture concepts of equality and active participation in educational settings, and these ideas are illustrated in the following excerpts:

I know in Taiwan there're a lot of people that have this idea that controlling the student, you have to control them; I don't agree with that philosophy. I don't like the sound of the word; I don't think it's a good way of education. (Chuck 3rd interview)

The actual performance is actually not the most important part. The most important part for me is when they're practicing with their partner; they repeat these dialogues again and again. That's the key to me. (Chuck 3rd interview)

The methodology of teaching English in Asia comes from the teaching of Confucius; the idea of Confucius: students listen, the teacher talks, the teacher writes, the students absorb the knowledge, there isn't a dialogue in which you can, like in Greek tradition, you can argue back and forth. So that presents a challenge teaching a language because you can't teach a language when people just listen to you. (John 1st interview)

Both Chuck and John valued students' initiative actions, and encouraged students to express and develop their own ideas. Here this slight worldview convergence suggests that globalization and the cultural contacts and mixture it brings produce a two-way process; more cultural elements from other cultures contribute to world culture, not just western science and rationality overpowering other cultures.

Global English and the participants' concepts of English

Fundamental worldviews are closely connected to how the teachers conceive and teach English. Wendy's and Susan's ideas about English stemmed from their lived experiences grounded in the Taiwanese culture, corresponding to the concept of English as a foreign language (EFL). Though they gradually recognized the importance of communication (at the global level), English for them remains mostly a subject area to teach and learn. Chuck emphasized a lot on communication because many courses he taught are conversational ones. He paid relatively little attention to norms and standards because he did not have to deal with tests. John tried to use teaching materials with local contents to provide students with the notion of EIL, which he picked up recently.

Wendy conceived English as a school subject to be mastered through diligent learning. Like most students in Taiwan, she learned the language as a foreign language; she had foreign tutors in high school to help her pronunciation. She worked very hard to improve her English when studying in the U.S. In her teaching she put emphasis on the basic skills such as pronunciation, spelling and grammar, and that was how she learned English. Similarly, Susan used her own way to teach English, which included three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and reading. She started from vocabulary and gradually shifted to reading as students proceed along. She taught English as a foreign language, but saw it as a future global language:

If you are not competitive it's very hard to survive in the future. You would be like those grandmas or gramps who cannot speak Mandarin (if you don't speak English). In the future you might have a problem taking mass transportation (if you don't speak English). (Susan 3rd interview)

Forty years ago most Taiwanese spoke only Taiwanese, a local dialect. Then the Nationalist government used Mandarin as the only official and public language. While people could still use the local native tongues to communicate in their community, all citizens had to learn this national language in order to communicate at the societal level. Susan saw English taking a similar role as a socio-politically advantaged language in Taiwan. Wendy's and Susan's perceptions of English might reflect how most secondary English teachers in Taiwan conceived English: as a subject matter that students have to master through systematic studies of English vocabulary, grammar, and texts. For these teachers, English is a global language not because of its global presence but its socio-political power at the global level. It is a language all students must master if future success is desired,

The NESTs' conceptions of English differed from Wendy and Susan probably due to their relationship to the language. English was their first language and thus they learned English differently. Their learning experiences pointed to the importance of helping students see the need to learn the language. John elaborated how he motivated his students to learn English:

I try to get them to think international...I used to push this, ENGLISH IS THEIR LANGUAGE. It's the language that belongs to the world, it's not a foreign language, and it's important that they put their culture into English. I give the example like, ChoDouFu (stinky tofu); I said, if you look into an English dictionary, you would see the word sushi, and that was not an English word twenty years ago. It's becoming an English word...maybe one day, ChoDouFu would be in the English dictionary...you should in fact put your culture into the language because it's a world language. Every other culture in this world is

influencing this language, approaching this language...you clearly make it your language, you teach to the rest of the world by putting your culture into the language. (John 2nd interview, capital words John's emphasis)

John admitted frankly that the idea of seeing English as the students' own language was a *selfish* one because it would be easier for him, the English teacher and native speaker. However, if the students realize the practicality of the language, they are supposed to learn with higher motivation. John attempted to rid the EFL concept and plant the new EIL concept in his students' mind:

Before learning English, I think many people have this resentment, why are we learning English, why not Chinese, and that's really understandable... it's important for them to realize that it's truly their language, and they can't think of it as an American language. They must think of it as a language of young people, as a language of (pause) international culture... You're not learning English to speak to Americans. You learn English to speak to Brazilians, to Japanese, German people. (John 2nd interview)

John saw English more as a useful communication tool, rather a cultural colonizing medium. He began to pick up this EIL idea very recently, probably after 2005, when the news that non-native English speakers had outnumbered native speakers became widely-known. The EIL rationale fit with his teaching philosophy and served well to encourage learners' motivations.

For Chuck, the issues concerning EFL, EIL, and global English did not seem to be an important topic. Compared to John, he seemed not mindful of the identity issue of English. "I think the goal is communication, be able to understand." He focused on his own teaching, helping students learn English without bothering to touch upon all those sensitive issues behind this powerful language. Chuck did not have to deal with the test part because of his role as a NEST. It is common that local teachers take care of test preparation while NESTs focus on interacting with students and making English fun and interesting. This dual track system—NESTs teach conversation and communication (what is used) while local teachers focus on grammar and reading (what is tested)—is popular in English-teaching institutions across Taiwan, where the government started to recruit NESTs from inner-circle countries to help English teaching in remote areas (Chang, Chern & Lo, 2008). Simultaneous team teaching involving a NEST and a local instructor has been implemented in many places, particularly in East Asia countries such as Japan and Hong Kong (see Lai, 1999; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). In such a system, local teachers are in charge of the traditional EFL goals: learning NS norms and rules, basically 'learning' English; on the other hand, NESTs only need to focus on 'using' English, so this might lead to NESTs' higher resonance with global English ideas, an intriguing phenomenon that may be related to the testing culture in East Asia.

Discussion

In light of the participants' lived experiences, an interesting question emerges: Why did the concepts of world culture and global English resonate more with the NESTs than with the local teachers?

A possible explanation is that the underlying ideas of world culture and global English reinforce each other. Empowerment as the central value in world culture and ownership as the guiding principle in global English go hand in hand. To take ownership over a nonnative

language requires a high degree of empowerment. The NESTs, with an empowering mentality growing up in environments saturated in ‘world culture’, showed a higher degree of accepting the ownership idea for nonnative speakers. In the world culture perspective, education is to build “a cultural base or model of modern society that emphasizes expanded and universal participation” (Meyer & McEneaney, 2000, p.192). Participating in world affairs, interacting with international societies, and engaging in intercultural communication are regarded as desirable and valuable. Isolation and seclusion denote outdated norms. Global English allows people to participate in world society, and the participation may lead to the development of a global identity and a sense of global citizenship. Empowerment and self-determination founded on human rights constitute the theoretical assumptions for both world culture and global English.

However, the critiques against world culture may apply to global English as well. World culture stemmed from the (western) Enlightenment project, with core values in liberal individualism that praises individual agency and self-determination. These values may be taken for granted in European and North American cultures, but not in other cultures. The term ‘empower’ already implies unequal power relationships that cannot be changed by simply giving power to the powerless. In addition, in the conceptual framework of world culture and global English, individuals (often in peripheral situations) are given the ownership of a dominant culture and a global language, while in fact economic conditions never allow them to develop the owning capacity. It is the powerful that empower those powerless with such emancipative ideas of *world culture*, which promotes diversity and prosperity of local cultures constructed on a universal cultural platform, and *global English*, which advocates speakers of other languages to take charge of a global language in their own ways. Promoting both ideas serves the interests of the powerful because it leads those powerless to share the worldviews and language of the powerful. Global capitalism as the source of power behind world culture guarantees the prevalence of a global language because “[l]inguistic and cultural differences are barriers to trade and profit” (Kushner, 2003, p.21). World culture and global English may serve as a decoy, the sugarcoat that beautifies and moralizes the privileged, the elite.

The NESTs have had much more experiences growing up in a world culture environment in which they had contacts with different cultures and English variations; thus, it is natural for them to embrace both ideas. John and Chuck differ from typical NESTs in that they both stayed in Taiwan for over five years and have integrated into local cultures. Moreover, this study only probe their conception of English, not attitudes toward a particular variety of English, so these differences may explain why they have a different attitude from those NESTs in Jenkins’ (2007) study. Also how the participants learned English influences greatly how they perceived English. For the NESTs, English has always been the communication medium, so bringing other cultures into it and letting students take ownership do not change their relationship with it. In contrast, the local teachers learned English in EFL ways, through regularity, standards, and most importantly, tests. With a strong testing culture in which tests are privileged, it is not surprising to see, for example, Japanese secondary students refuting the idea that English belongs to international users (Matsuda, 2003). Even if the local teachers recognize the variations, the norms and standards remain integral to their teaching. Unlike the NESTs who grew up speaking English as their mother tongue, most English learners do not use English in their daily life. Perhaps they will use it when they start to work, but when they learn it in the compulsory education, English remains an academic subject instead of a communication medium. Global English or ELF teaching model (Kirkpatrick, 2006) should be a better sell in adult English education, not in the elementary and secondary education in non-English-speaking countries, where penetration of

English into students' daily life remains peripheral. In official curricula and language policies, sometimes it is Standard English that denotes global comprehensibility while local variations are obstacles to international communications (Farrell & Tan Kiat Kun, 2008). The above reasons contribute to most nonnative teachers' and students' acceptance of native-speaker norms (e.g. Timmis, 2002).

Conclusion

This study investigates four English teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions related to the concepts of global English and world culture. The findings suggest that NESTs resonate more with the ideas of global English and world culture, both of which are theoretical productions of western academia. Based on the subjective experiences of the two Taiwanese teachers, it may be argued that while NESTs' may urge their nonnative students to 'see English as their language', it seems unlikely that students identify with English in the near future. As this is an exploratory qualitative study with only four participants, the claims are limited. Further studies are necessary to examine these rudimentary findings and help us understand how the global influence the local culturally and linguistically in the globalizing world.

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Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategy Use and Performance on a Reading Test with Multiple-format Tasks

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Abstract

Metacognitive and cognitive strategies collaborate in the actual taking of reading tests (Phakiti & Li, 2011). In certain EFL contexts, it was found that metacognitive strategies regulated cognitive strategies that directly affected test performance. However, a question can be posed as to whether this finding applies to other EFL contexts, for example, Saudi Arabia. Besides, effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on performances on different reading-task formats remain unexplored. Therefore, this study examined effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on performance on a reading test composed of four task formats, among 98 Saudi EFL learners. Data comprised scores on a reading test and responses to a strategy questionnaire. Findings showed that cognitive strategy use mediated the effect of metacognitive strategy use on test performance. The use of both metacognitive and cognitive strategies had small to medium effects on performances on the task formats. Most strategy subscales were directly related to performances on the task formats. It was concluded that Saudi EFL learners make use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on reading tests in a manner similar to that observed in other EFL contexts. Also, different reading tasks demand versatile uses of metacognitive and cognitive strategies. This study ends with implications for strategy instruction and reading assessment, the current theory, and future research.

Keywords: Cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, reading tests, task format, test performance.

Introduction

Recent research on L2 reading (see Alderson, 2000; Anderson, 2005; Hudson, 2007) has shown that successful performance on reading tasks involved appropriate use of skills and regulation of strategies. On the basis of the information-processing theory (Newell & Simon, 1972), scholars (e.g., Phakiti, 2008; Purpura, 1999) uphold the view that strategies used in reading tests can be categorized as metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. While the former refer to a set of conscious tactics that regulate cognitive processing of linguistic input through planning beforehand, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating performance, the latter represent conscious behaviors that help with understanding, storing, and recalling of linguistic information. In other words, metacognitive strategies comprise planning, monitoring, and evaluation, whereas cognitive strategies encompass comprehension, memory, and retrieval.

There have been recent calls for more research on how strategic competence shapes performance on language tests (e.g., Phakiti, 2008). One area of strategic competence, in need for more research, deals with how the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies influences performance on reading tests. In this respect, Phakiti (2006) notes that the use of such strategies on reading tasks can be described as “a synchronic situation-related variation between metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies” (p. 83). This suggests that the ways in which metacognitive and cognitive strategies are used on reading tests are determined by situational factors, including task formats. However, it remains unexplored as to how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use relates to performance on a reading test composed of multiple-task formats.

Performance on language tests, including tests of reading, highly varies among learning settings depending on a multitude of context-specific factors (McNamara, 1996). Research on how metacognitive and cognitive strategies are used on reading tests in a variety of EFL settings would allow us to compare relevant findings across these settings (Phakiti, 2008). From my experience as an EFL instructor in Saudi Arabia, there is almost a lack of emphasis on the role of strategic awareness among learners in intensive English programs. Learners believe that they have to rely only on their knowledge of English to do well on their exams. And, if they are confronted with challenging questions, they try to make maximum use of test-wiseness. This would ultimately reduce any chances of positive effects of assessment on learning (or positive washback). Therefore, it is hoped that this study would draw the attention of EFL practitioners in Saudi Arabia to the importance of implementing strategy instruction, especially for purposes that serve reading assessment.

Literature Review

Research on how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use relates to performance on reading tests first started in the late 1990s. In one of the earlier studies, Purpura (1998) investigated the relationship between strategy use and performance on a standardized test. The researcher had 1,382 EFL respondents from language centers in three European countries. The respondents first filled out a metacognitive and cognitive strategy questionnaire. Then, they took a test composed of two main sections on reading comprehension and English usage. Using structural equation modeling, the researcher found two factorial structures: One factor represented metacognitive strategy use which consisted of planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies; and, another represented cognitive strategy use which comprised comprehension, memory, and retrieval strategies. Based on this model, the researcher concluded that use of metacognitive strategies had a significantly direct, positive effect on the use of cognitive strategies.

In a different setting, Phakiti (2003) had 384 Thai EFL students at the university level take a reading achievement test in a multiple-choice format. Then, the respondents reported their strategy use by answering a metacognitive-cognitive strategy questionnaire. On the basis of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, the researcher found that the use of both metacognitive and cognitive strategies influenced the overall test performance in a positive way. However, Phakiti (2003) did not describe the relationships between strategy variables and performance variables, for example, how the use of planning strategies related to test performance, given that the test was administered in a multiple-choice format.

In another study, Phakiti (2006) had a sample of 358 Thai EFL learners take a reading test and immediately fill out a strategy questionnaire. Using structural equation modeling, the researcher found that test takers' use of comprehension strategies was largely enhanced by their use of memory and retrieval strategies, and that test takers regulated their use of memory strategies through monitoring strategies. He also found that test takers used evaluation strategies to coordinate their use of retrieval strategies, and that monitoring and evaluation strategies mediated the effect of planning strategies on cognitive strategies.

Drawing on previous research on the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on reading tests, Phakiti (2008) attempted to validate Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of strategic competence. The researcher had a sample of 561 Thai EFL learners report their strategy use after completing two achievement exams. Each of the exams was a multiple-choice format, composed of gap-filling and comprehension tasks. Using structural equation modeling, the researcher found that metacognitive strategy use executed cognitive strategy use, which had a positive effect on test performance. The researcher concluded that his findings validated Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model, which suggests that test performance is influenced by strategy use.

In general, the previous findings suggest that metacognitive strategies regulated cognitive strategies that in turn influenced reading test performance. However, it is not yet evident whether these findings also apply to EFL learners in other contexts, like Saudi Arabia. Besides, the previous studies focused on the extent to which metacognitive and cognitive strategies relate to performance on reading tests in general. That is, no attempts have been made yet to link between strategy use and performances on reading tasks that have different formats. Hence, with a sample of Saudi EFL learners, the current study aimed to investigate how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use relates to performance on a reading test as a whole and multiple-format tasks that make up the test.

Research questions

The research questions the current study attempted to answer are as follows:

1. How does each of metacognitive strategy use and cognitive strategy use relate to overall performance on a reading test?
2. How do metacognitive and cognitive strategies relate to performances on true/false, multiple-choice, fill-in vocabulary, and constructed-response task formats?

Method

The method followed in this research can be described as follows.

Setting and participants

The research took place in an intensive English program that is part of a governmental institute in Saudi Arabia. The participants were 98 male students, aged from 19 to 24. They were at the

elementary or second level of the program. Students at this level are expected to have attained a command of English that accords with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines (2012) for reading at the Intermediate Mid level. That is, on average, participants were “able to understand short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge, although some misunderstandings may occur” (p. 23). At the time data for this study were collected, the participants were almost finished with level two.

Instruments

Two instruments, a strategy questionnaire and a reading test, were used. The questionnaire consists of metacognitive and cognitive strategy scales and their subscales (Phakiti, 2008) (see Appendix for the English version). The questionnaire was validated in previous research through piloting it with populations of EFL learners (see Phakiti, 2008). The questionnaire was translated into Arabic, and the translation was cross-checked with the English version by two Arabic native speakers who held MA in TESL. Suggestions for changes or improvements were made by the researcher. Table 1 displays a distribution of metacognitive and cognitive strategy scales and their subscales in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Distribution of metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the questionnaire

Scales	Subscales	No. of items	Items
Metacognitive	Planning	6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
	Monitoring	5	7, 8, 9, 10, 11
	Evaluation	6	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
	<i>Subtotal</i>	17	
Cognitive	Comprehension	4	18, 19, 20, 21
	Memory	4	22, 23, 24, 25
	Retrieval	5	26, 27, 28, 29, 30
	<i>Subtotal</i>	13	
	<i>Total</i>	30	

The reading test was part of the formative assessment of students' achievement of reading skills. It was specifically on a topic related to food and nutrition which constitutes a whole unit in students' textbook. However, the text selected for the test was not familiar to students in order to have them apply the reading skills they developed during the course. The test consisted of four task types. The first task comprised true or false statements that measured students' ability to judge the truth of a given statement. The second task included multiple-choice items which required students to select the option that represents the best answer to a given question. The third task consisted of fill-in vocabulary items which prompted students to select a word, from a group of words, that best fits the context of a given sentence. The fourth

task contained constructed-response items that called for the provision of short, open-ended answers to information questions. Each of the four tasks had five items on the test.

Data collection

At the time of the test, it was brought to students' attention that they should complete the questionnaire—attached to the test—once they are finished with the test. To motivate students to complete the questionnaire, they were told that they would be rewarded two extra points in their total grades for the subject. Students were allowed forty minutes to complete the test. Strategy data were collected immediately after the test to ensure the elicitation of data specific to the test. The researcher, the instructor of the subject, was available all the time to guide students through these procedures and answer any questions.

Data analysis

To prepare data for analysis, composites for strategy scales and subscales were produced by adding up scores on relevant strategy items on the questionnaire and dividing the totals by the total number of relevant strategy items. This method controls for error effects that are due to a participant's random selection of responses (Schmidt & Hunter, 1999). Each of the task types on the reading test was scored out of five; and so, the total score on the test added up to 20. The scores were used to symbolize the overall test performance as well as individual performances on the four task types.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of strategy and performance variables

	<u>N</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Skewness</u>	<u>Kurtosis</u>
MetStrs	98	2.14	5.00	3.60	0.65	-0.38	-0.11
PlanStrs	98	2.00	5.00	3.81	0.75	-0.53	-0.26
MonStrs	98	1.40	5.00	3.24	0.91	-0.23	-0.68
EvaStrs	98	2.00	5.00	3.77	0.76	-0.37	-0.77
CogStrs	98	2.18	4.68	3.72	0.59	-0.45	-0.33
ComStrs	98	1.25	5.00	3.91	0.84	-1.04	0.94
MemStrs	98	2.00	4.75	3.47	0.71	-0.15	-0.57
RetStrs	98	2.20	5.00	3.79	0.69	-0.11	-0.92
Total Score	98	6.00	19.00	13.55	3.09	-0.56	-0.28
TF	98	0.00	5.00	3.65	1.14	-1.03	0.95
MC	95	1.00	5.00	3.73	0.95	-0.56	-0.20
FV	98	0.00	5.00	4.05	1.50	-1.32	0.54
CR	98	0.00	5.00	2.23	1.18	0.22	-0.31
Valid N (listwise)	95						

Note. MetStrs=metacognitive strategies; PlanStrs=planning strategies; MonStrs=monitoring strategies; EvaStrs=evaluation strategies; CogStrs=cognitive strategies; ComStrs=comprehension strategies; MemStrs=memory strategies; RetStrs=retrieval strategies; Total Score=the total score; TF=true/false; MC=multiple-choice; FV=fill-in vocabulary; CR=constructed response

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of metacognitive and cognitive strategy subscales, and performances on the reading test and its four tasks. Since the values of skewness are within

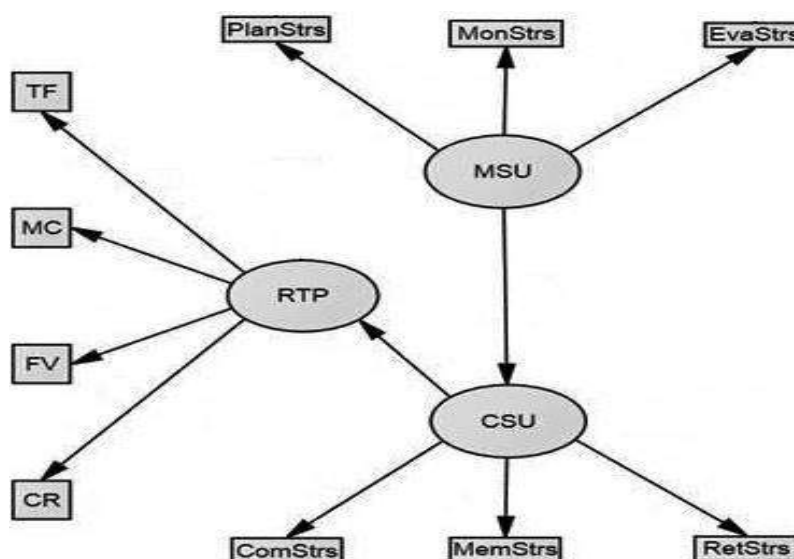
(-2 and +2) and kurtosis are almost near zero, the strategy and performance variables can be said to be normally distributed (Rubin, 2010). This indicated to the researcher that the number of participants was adequate for advanced statistical analyses. The questionnaire had a coefficient alpha of 0.832, which suggests that this instrument was highly consistent in measuring strategy use across its items. As validity and reliability checks of the reading test, the participants' scores on the test were correlated with their scores on another reading test at the same level. The correlation was substantially positive: $r(96) = 0.492, p < .01$.

In order to determine the extent to which strategy and performance variables can be linked to each another, two analytical procedures were employed. First, structural equation modeling (henceforth SEM) was used to confirm that hypothesized relationships between metacognitive strategy use, cognitive strategy use, and reading test performance would apply to the data (see Schreiber, Stage, King, Nora, & Barlow, 2006). In statistical terms, SEM serves to either explore or confirm relationships among a set of factors (underlying variables), and between these factors and their indicators (observed variables). SEM is an analysis that combines multiple regression, factor analysis, and path analysis. Multiple regression provides estimates of directional relationships among variables. Factor analysis determines a common, underlying factor for a set of observed variables. And, path analysis tests the fit of the overall SEM model. According to Phakiti (2008), SEM is useful in strategy research because it controls for measurement error in data analysis, which maximizes generalizability of research findings. Second, multiple linear regressions were used to regress scores on the four task formats on the use of each of the metacognitive and cognitive strategy subscales. Linear regression measures the strength of predicting an outcome variable from one or more predictor variables. The analytical procedures were performed using SPSS Amos 19 (IBM, 2011a) for SEM, and SPSS Statistics 19 (IBM, 2011b) for regression analyses.

Results and discussion

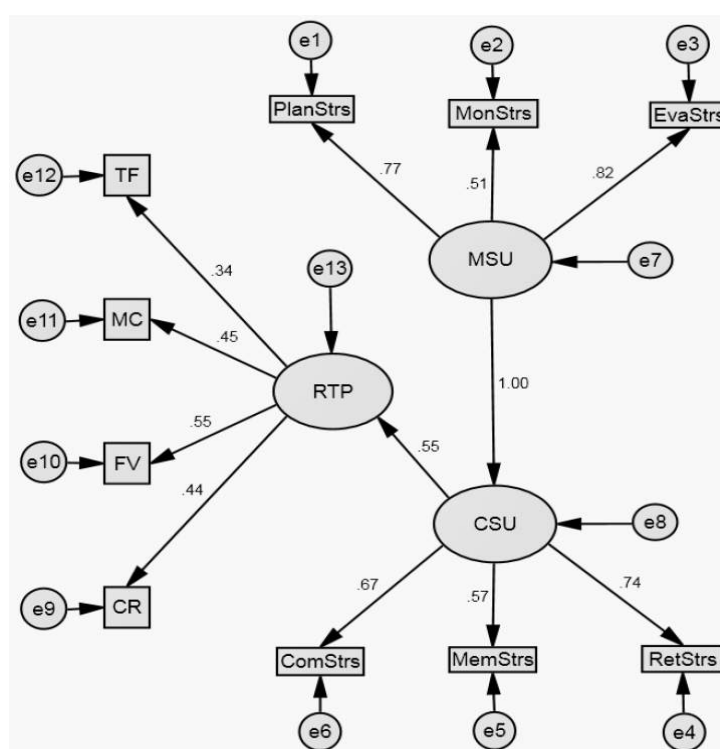
The answer to the first research question called for confirming whether the hypothesized relationships that join metacognitive strategy use (MSU) and cognitive strategy use (CSU) and reading test performance (RTP) on the reading test actually existed.

Figure 1. A hypothesized model of the relationships between MSU, CSU, and RTP.



A hypothesized model of the relationships among MSU and CSU and RTP (see Figure 1 above) was based on the previous studies (Phakiti, 2003/2008; Purpura, 1998). In this model, MSU executes CSU that in turn influences RTP. Also, MSU represents the common, underlying factor of planning strategies (PlanStrs), monitoring strategies (MonStrs), and evaluation strategies (EvaStrs). CSU represents the factor of comprehension strategies (ComStrs), memory strategies (MemStrs), and retrieval strategies (RetStrs). And, RTP is the factor of performances on the four task formats: true/false (TF), multiple choice (MC), fill-in vocabulary (FV), and constructed response (CR). The arrows that link MSU, CSU, and RTP indicate the directions of effects, whereas the other arrows connect factors to their respective indicators.

Figure 2. A SEM model of the relationships between MSU, CSU, and RTP in this study.



SEM was used to model the relationships between strategy scales and test performance. The SEM model was respecified and retested several times in order to reach a model with a good statistical fit. The result was that the model did not depart significantly from the data (Chi-square ($\chi^2_{(33)} = 39.613$, $p = .199$). The Chi-square estimate here needs not be significant in order for the SEM model to be fit (Byrne, 1994). Figure 2 above shows the SEM model of the relationships between MSU, CSU, and RTP using the actual data in this study. The structures of MSU and CSU are no different from those reported in previous research (e.g., Phakiti, 2008). Besides the variables that appear in the hypothesized model (Figure 1 above), the model in Figure 2 shows estimates and directions of regression weights (effects) among MSU, CSU, and RTP, and estimates and directions of loadings in factorial structures of the three variables. Random errors of measurement in the model are indicated by (e) followed by serial numbers. Standardized effects are reported here because they reflect the strength of the effect of each predictor on an outcome in comparison to those effects of other predictors on the same outcome (Shultz &

Whitney, 2005). Kline (2011) categorizes four magnitude levels of standardized effects as follows: nil for .00-.09, small for .10-.29, medium for .30-.49, and large for estimates equivalent to .50 or larger. All effects in the model in Figure 2 have levels of significance ranging from .05 to .01.

Table 3 displays standardized direct, indirect, and total effects of MSU, CSU, and RTP on strategy subscales and performances on task formats. Total effects are sums of direct and indirect effects. Indirect (or mediated) effects are effects of a predictor on an outcome through a mediating variable. More than half of the total effects were large (i.e., $>.5$), and there was roughly an equal number of medium and small total effects. Because the total effects incorporated both direct and indirect effects, they are more illustrative of how sizeable the overall effects among strategy and performance variables were. Nine out of the twelve direct effects were large, and the rest were medium. Also, six out of the twelve indirect effects are medium to large. These results indicate the strongly regressive relationships between strategy and performance variables. At the level of the factorial structures, MSU and CSU accounted for a large amount of variance in their respective strategy subscales. Also, RTP accounted for a medium to large amount of variance in the performances on the four task formats (TF, MC, FV, and CR). MSU had a large direct effect on CSU which, in turn, had a large direct effect on RTP. MSU also had a large indirect effect on RTP, through the mediation of CSU. Each of MSU and CSU had a medium indirect effect on the performance on FV task items, and small indirect effects on the performance on the other task formats (i.e., TF, MC, and CR).

Table 3. Standardized total, direct, and indirect effects in the SEM model

Variables	Total effects			Direct effects			Indirect effects		
	MSU	CSU	RTP	MSU	CSU	RTP	MSU	CSU	RTP
MSU	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
PlanStrs	.772	.000	.000	.772	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
MonStrs	.507	.000	.000	.507	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
EvaStrs	.823	.000	.000	.823	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
CSU	1.003	.000	.000	1.003	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
ComStrs	.676	.674	.000	.000	.674	.000	.676	.000	.000
MemStrs	.572	.570	.000	.000	.570	.000	.572	.000	.000
RetStrs	.741	.739	.000	.000	.739	.000	.741	.000	.000
RTP	.551	.549	.000	.000	.549	.000	.551	.000	.000
TF	.186	.186	.339	.000	.000	.339	.186	.186	.000
MC	.246	.245	.447	.000	.000	.447	.246	.245	.000
FV	.300	.300	.545	.000	.000	.545	.300	.300	.000
CR	.241	.240	.437	.000	.000	.437	.241	.240	.000

Note. Degrees of shading reflect magnitude levels: =large; =medium; =small; =nil.

Generally, the SEM results confirmed the hypothesized relationships among metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and reading test performance. Students used their metacognitive strategies to regulate their cognitive strategies, which influenced their test performance. Metacognitive strategy use was structured of three strategy subscales that comprised planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In other words, test takers controlled their test performance by means of strategies they used to plan how to answer the test, how to monitor their response behaviors, and how to evaluate their test taking. Also, cognitive strategy use was the factor underlying the three cognitive strategies of comprehension, memory, and retrieval. Thus, while using their cognitive strategies, test takers were processing textual information using their comprehension, memory, and retrieval strategies. The overall reading test performance, on the other hand, was composed of individual performances on the task formats (true/false, multiple choice, fill-in vocabulary, and constructed response) that make up the test.

Metacognitive strategy use exercised a regulatory function over the use of strategies that reflected the cognitive processes of comprehension, memory, and retrieval. Thus, similar to the findings of Phakiti (2008) and Purpura (1998), metacognitive strategy use is strongly, directly related to cognitive strategy use. Cognitive strategy use, on the other hand, mediated the effect of metacognitive strategy use on reading test performance. In fact, the size of the indirect effect of metacognitive strategy use on reading test performance was almost equivalent to the size of the direct effect of cognitive strategy use on reading test performance. This indicates that metacognitive strategies were necessary to execute comprehension, memory, and retrieval processes through cognitive strategies. As Phakiti and Li (2011) suggest, this fact reflects a form of collaboration between metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the attainment of goals of language use. Purpura (1999) also reached the same conclusion when noting that the use of both metacognitive and cognitive strategies is important to achieving high levels of performance on reading tests.

In addition, cognitive strategy use was strongly associated with the performance on the reading test. By extension, cognitive strategies for comprehension, memory, and retrieval accounted for performances on the four task formats including true/false, multiple choice, fill-in vocabulary, and constructed response. Though indirect, the magnitude of the effect of metacognitive strategy use on reading test performance was greater than that of cognitive strategies on reading test performance. Nevertheless, the effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategy use on performances on the four task formats were small to medium in size. This agrees with the previous findings of Phakiti (2008) and Purpura (1998) in that strategy use on certain reading tasks did not contribute to test performance significantly.

The second research question examined the extent to which the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies could predict performances on the task formats (i.e., TF, MC, FV, and CR respectively) that made up the reading test. Results of regression analyses were used to answer this question, as shown in Table 4 below. Results of all ANOVA tests indicated that all regression models significantly predicted performances on task formats on the basis of strategy subscales (see Table 5). Each one of the three metacognitive subscales (planning, monitoring, and evaluation) predicted performance on a certain task format (CR, TF, and MC respectively). As for the three cognitive subscales, only memory and retrieval strategies significantly predicted performance on certain task formats. That is, while memory strategies predicted performance on two task formats: MC and FV, retrieval strategies predicted performance on all four task formats.

Table 4. Regressions of task performances on strategy subscales

Strategies \ Tasks		TF		MC		FV		CR	
		β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
MSU	PlanStrs	.253	.238	.158	.370	.421	.062	.762	.007*
	MonStrs	.318	.024*	.098	.384	.128	.378	.221	.219
	EvaStrs	.381	.078	.715	.000*	.397	.078	-.073	.792
CSU	ComStrs	-.058	.760	.184	.232	-.174	.395	.066	.807
	MemStrs	.307	.069	.284	.037*	.379	.037*	.150	.529
	RetStrs	.703	.001*	.505	.002*	.738	.001*	.679	.018*

Note. MSU=metacognitive strategy use; CSU=cognitive strategy use; TF=true/false; MC=multiple choice; FV=fill-in vocabulary; CR=constructed response; β =regression coefficient; p =significance level; asterisk * indicates significance within .00 to .05.

Table 5. Results of ANOVA tests of regression models

Strategies \ Tasks		TF	MC	FV	CR
		$F(3, 95)$	$F(3, 92)$	$F(3, 95)$	$F(3, 95)$
MSU		260.139	432.163	236.621	143.626
CSU		282.948	445.410	241.367	122.895

Note. All F values are significant at .000.

In regard to metacognitive subscales, planning strategies enabled test takers to perform well on constructed-response items. Thus, planning how to respond to the reading test helped test takers perform well on this task which called for writing answers to comprehension questions. It is possible that test takers read these items before they read the text, which allowed them to attend to the information required to answer these items while reading the text. Monitoring strategies caused test takers to score high on true/false items. Perhaps, because rushing to mark either a true or false answer would be risky since test takers thought of these items as profitable. Evaluation strategies were especially effective with multiple-choice items. While answering these items, test takers were obviously engaged in an evaluative process to decide which option to choose. As was the case with true/false items, test takers did not want to risk choosing just any

answer on a multiple-choice item because of the high possibility of scoring higher on these items.

As for cognitive subscales, memory strategies were associated with high performance on multiple-choice and fill-in vocabulary items. It seems that because these task items represent selected-response formats, test takers employed tactics that drew on memory. Therefore, test takers found it useful to link the content of these items to what they had in mind as a result of reading the text and/or going through the previous task items. Interestingly, retrieval strategies were used on all four task formats. This indicates that test takers used their understanding of the questions to recall relevant information according to the text and/or their background knowledge. In contrast to the other strategies, comprehension strategies did not have any significant correlations with performance on any of the four task formats. This suggests that test takers did not make sufficient use of comprehension of textual information in their answers to the four tasks.

Therefore, with the exception of comprehension strategies, each strategy subscale was directly related to the purpose of a certain task format. For example, when test takers needed to decide about a true/false item, they had to exercise monitoring of their dealing with this format. Optimum performance on constructed-response items required the use of planning strategies in order to attend to the required information in the text before the provision of the answer. Evaluation strategies were necessary in order to judge the options on the multiple-choice task. Memory strategies were especially helpful in answering multiple-choice and fill-in vocabulary items. Test takers made heavy use of retrieval strategies in their response to the four task formats. The main reason for this was probably because test takers could retrieve relevant information from their reading of the text as well as background knowledge in their answers to all task formats.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, metacognitive strategy use regulates the use of cognitive strategies that reflect reading processes of comprehension, memory, and retrieval. And, cognitive strategy use directly affects reading test performance. Consequently, the level of reading test performance is determined by the extent to which metacognitive and cognitive strategies are used systematically. Nevertheless, the effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategy use on performances on reading tasks with different formats are expected to range from small to medium in size. This can be linked to the role of other factors such as test-taker characteristics, level of working memory, task difficulty, and others (Phakiti, 2008; Purpura, 1998).

Like their counterparts in previous research, Saudi EFL learners use metacognitive strategies to execute cognitive strategies in a manner that influences performance on reading tests. To be precise, planning strategies help test takers think about how to actually respond to the questions on the test. Monitoring strategies involve control of response behaviors by which a test taker can take any necessary steps to provide the best answer. Evaluation strategies aid test takers' attempts to determine the right answer on selected-response formats. Evaluating each choice in terms of its relevance to either the required information, the topic of the text or subject matter, or the content of the question itself can help better decide on the best answer. As for cognitive strategies, memory strategies help with selected-response formats because test takers can use memory associations of pieces of information to determine the right choice. Through retrieval strategies test takers can relate the content of the questions to the information they learned from the text or their background knowledge. This aspect makes retrieval strategies

usable with a variety of task formats. Comprehension strategies, however, are likely to be the least used among cognitive strategies at a beginner's level. Accordingly, test takers at this level tend to use compensatory strategies, like use of memory associations and retrieval of similar forms, to make up for any deficiencies in comprehension skills.

The most important contribution of this study to the current research lies in demonstrating how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use relates to performance on different formats of reading-testing tasks. Generally, the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies when responding to multiple formats of reading tasks is positively correlated with test performance. For example, planning strategies help the test taker manage his use of comprehension, memory, and retrieval abilities in response to constructed-response questions. Monitoring strategies aid performance on tasks that require judgment such as true/false questions. Evaluation strategies boost performance on selected-format tasks such as multiple-choice questions. As regards cognitive strategies, memory strategies facilitate response to selected formats, including multiple-choice and fill-in vocabulary questions. And, retrieval strategies are in demand with all task formats. Therefore, skillful use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on reading tests involves matching these strategies with task formats.

Implications for practice and research

This research has important implications for practice in the fields of language learning and testing. First, offering learners enough training in the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies on reading tasks is essential if they are to perform well on these tasks. In particular, recent research on efficacy of strategy instruction (e.g., Akkakoson & Setobol, 2009; Erskine, 2010; Wichadee, 2011) has pointed out significant positive effects that instruction of metacognitive and cognitive strategies can have on performance on reading tasks. Besides, if learners receive enough training in metacognitive strategy use on reading tasks, they are likely to benefit from it in their use of cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are manifests of reading processes that may not be executed well in the absence of metacognitive strategies.

Strategy instruction is especially encouraged with readers whose comprehension skills are low compared to the majority at the same level of language learning. Alderson (2000) argues that poor readers can be trained in how to make use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies, which can boost their reading performance and test scores. For the most part, strategy instruction should present learners with descriptions and exemplifications of what metacognitive and cognitive strategies are and how they are used. Moreover, Zhang and Seepho (2013) recommend that learners be made aware of the range of potential strategies they can use on a given test, especially metacognitive strategies. Training in strategy use demands ample time and tremendous effort on the part of both teachers and learners (Wichadee, 2011). Therefore, strategy instruction needs to be planned for well in advance and never abandoned, because its potential outcomes can serve both short- and long-term goals of developing reading skills.

The findings of the current study have practical suggestions for teachers on how to implement strategy instruction of metacognitive and cognitive strategies. First, teachers are advised to introduce to their students the two notions of metacognitive and cognitive strategies in a simple, yet practical manner. Thus, the teacher may inform students that metacognitive strategies mean a learner's thinking about how to respond to a reading test, how to track and check his progress during the test-taking, and how to determine the quality of her responses to the test questions. Then, the teacher brings about the link between how these thinking processes affect a learner's actual test-taking by regulating cognitive strategies or more specifically the

way a learner understands textual information, stores the information in his memory, and retrieves the information when needed.

In a testing setting, the test taker is engaged in active and quick thinking about what to do, and may experience uncertainty about which strategy to use. However, strategy training and practice using a variety of reading-testing formats can help the learner automatize strategy use, and so when responding to a given task format, he can perform faster and even better. When designing assessments of reading, teachers are advised to employ a variety of task formats. Such task formats may include true/false, multiple-choice, fill-in vocabulary, and constructed-response items. This would certainly motivate students to make full use of their metacognitive and cognitive strategies. At the same time, it would offer students an ample opportunity to practice the strategies they have learned through strategy instruction.

The current study offers insightful findings in regard to how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use interacts with task formats, and how such an interaction influences performances on the overall test and the individual tasks. These findings are significant contributions to the current theory and research on metacognitive and cognitive strategy use on reading tests. The current theory should be formulated in a manner that accommodates EFL learners in various contexts. The fact that learners use their metacognitive strategies to regulate their cognitive strategies in a manner that serves their reading test performance appears to be applicable to all EFL contexts. The current theory should also take into account how strategy use interacts with task format, and how this interaction influences test performance. Strategy use is unlikely to influence test performance in isolation of any effects from task formats. It is now evident from this study that different task formats demand flexible and versatile use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Thus, the manner in which these strategies are used can aid the response to a given task format.

More research that studies how metacognitive and cognitive strategy use relates to performance on multiple-format reading tasks is recommended. Such research may help both confirm the findings of the current study and allow for comparisons of findings from different learning contexts. For the sake of conducting comparative studies, future research may consider the use of the metacognitive and cognitive strategy questionnaire as well as SEM, as did the current study. Regression analyses can then be used to examine the extent to which performance variables can be predicted on the basis of strategy variables. It is also advisable that future research be focused on metacognitive and cognitive strategy use on tests of other language skills, including listening and writing. Future research can also make use of online-report or introspective measures, including the approach (Assiri, 2011) which combines stimulated recall, self-observation, and retrospective interview.

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Appendix. Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategy Questionnaire

Directions: Read each statement and indicate how you actually thought when taking this reading test.

Circle the option for each statement that best describes how you thought.

1. I planned what to do before I began to complete the reading test.
2. I made sure I clarified the goals of the reading tasks.
3. I considered essential steps needed to complete the reading test.
4. I made sure I understood what had to be done and how to do it.
5. I knew what to do if my intended plans did not work efficiently.
6. I flipped through the reading test before I actually started to complete it.
7. I was aware of the time limitations and constraints in this test.
8. I knew how much of the reading and test tasks remained to be done
9. I knew when I lost concentration while completing this test.
10. I immediately noticed when and where I had any confusion when dealing with the text.
11. I knew when I felt worried, tense or unmotivated to complete this reading test.
12. I checked if I understood the texts and reading tasks.

13. I checked my own performance and progress as I moved along the test tasks.
14. I evaluated my plans or goals of the reading tasks constantly.
15. I knew when I should read or complete the test more quickly or carefully.
16. I double-checked my reading comprehension or performance.
17. I immediately corrected my misunderstanding or performance mistakes when found.
18. I tried to understand the relationships between ideas in the text and tasks.
19. I tried to understand the content of the text and tasks without looking up every word.
20. I thought what was going to happen next while I was reading the text.
21. I analyzed what the author meant or tried to say in the text.
22. I tried to interpret hidden ideas/meanings in the text.
23. I translated the text, tasks or questions into my first language.
24. I summarized the main information in the text.
25. I reread the text or tasks several times when I felt I did not understand them.
26. I related the information from the text or tasks to my prior knowledge or experience.
27. I knew which information was more or less important.
28. I identified or guessed meanings of unknown words using contextual clues.
29. I applied my learned grammar rules while completing the reading tasks.
30. I guessed meanings of unknown words using root words.

Note. Each statement on the questionnaire was followed by this scheme of options:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Fair, Reliable, Valid: Developing a Grammar Test Utilizing the Four Building Blocks

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop and analyse a grammar test, focusing on validity, reliability and fairness. Effective test development requires a systematic, well-organized approach, thus ensuring the veracity of the proposed inferences from the test scores, (Downing, 2006a). This systematic approach is outlined in the paper, expounding on how the test developed from the initial stage of identifying the construct to be measured, to the final stages of administering the test. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the test results which highlights possible threats to the test's validity, reliability and fairness. It also places the construct map under scrutiny, and questions whether the construct was successfully tested. The test was developed utilizing the four building blocks propounded by Wilson (2005). Each building block is explained in detail which gives insight into the process undertaken to write and analyse the test.

Keywords: validity, reliability, fairness, testing grammar, construct map, building blocks

Introduction

Whether formative or summative, high-stakes or low-stakes, assessment has become an integral part of education. Around the world, millions of students take exams each year. In many countries, success on a language proficiency test has become a prerequisite for foreign students to be admitted to a university. However, little consideration is given to the intricate process of test writing, or the numerous factors that test writers contemplate. In many educational institutions, different versions of the same test are administered. In order to ensure justice for the students, the tests, although different in content, have to be equal in difficulty. Moreover, test writers have to create assessments that minimise factors that could cause a misinterpretation of results. This paper aims to shed some light on the test writing process by expounding on one of the methods used for test writing and analysis. The four building blocks are outlined in turn, the first of which is the construct map.

The Construct Map

The test, which is the measurement instrument, had a distinct purpose. As Wilson (2005) purports, “An instrument is always something secondary: There is always a purpose for which an instrument is needed and a context in which it is going to be used” (p.6). The aim of the test was to evaluate grammar competency amongst English language learners. Thus grammar competency is the construct which is the theoretical object of interest in the participants. As Wilson (2005) states, “we assume that the construct we wish to measure has a particularly simple form- it extends from one extreme to another” (p.6). Hence, it was assumed that some of the participants would be weak in grammar and others would be stronger. In order to gauge their varying competency, it was imperative to formulate a construct map which would be a graphical representation of how the construct developed. In test development, the construct map is “refined through several processes as the instrument is developed” (Wilson, 2005, p.6). However, the purpose of this paper was to trial a test, consequently any changes to the construct map, would only be made if the test were to be developed further.

The Common European Framework (CEFR), initially published in 2001, was central to forming the construct map. The CEFR is a guideline used to validate language proficiency. The framework consists of six reference levels, which have widely been adopted in Europe as a yardstick for grading an individual’s language proficiency. Figure 1 shows the different levels of the CEFR and a description of the skills required to be categorised in each band.

Figure 1. *The six levels of the Common European Framework*

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Common language proficiency tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), use the CEFR to equate scores obtained on their tests to language proficiency. The CEFR also contains scales for the different language skills such as reading and speaking. However, there is no scale for grammar. The task of aligning the CEFR with grammar was carried out by the British Council. Their work was based on research which suggests there is an order in which grammar is acquired.

Naturalistic theories propound that there is a natural order and sequence of acquisition. Corder (1967) suggested that language learners have an inbuilt syllabus for learning grammar. The Natural Order Hypothesis claims that “the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p.12). It is upon this assumption that the construct

map was made. It purports that there are items of grammar that learners at A1 level will know, and others that they will not know until much later in the learning process, as they progress along the continuum. As Larsen-Freeman (2001) states, “there has been no definitive acquisition order established, and thus teachers are still left to their own resources for judgments on how to proceed” (p.263). Thus, the British Council and the European Association for Quality Language Services (EQUALS) embarked upon a project (the Core Inventory) intending to “make the CEFR accessible to teachers” and “answer the question put by many teachers over the years of what to teach at each CEFR level” (“Core Inventory for General English”, 2010).

The British Council and EQUALS developed the Core Inventory through iterative and collaborative processes, working with partner organizations as well as with examination boards. They also drew from many sources. These included; an analysis of the language that is implied

by the CEFR band descriptors, an analysis of syllabuses of EQUALS members who implemented the CEFR, a content analysis of popular textbooks, and teacher surveys. They analysed the data to find consensus points “which were common to a strong majority (80%) in each of the data sources” (“Core Inventory for General English”, 2010). Examination boards (Cambridge, ESOL, City and Guilds, Trinity) provided further assistance by commenting on language points they considered to be relevant to each band. Figure 2 shows the Core Inventory and Figure 3 shows the construct map.

Figure 2. The Core Inventory compiled by the British Council and EQUALS, Core Inventory for General English, 2010

	A1	A2	B1
Grammar	Adjectives: common and demonstrative Adverbs of frequency Comparatives and superlatives Going to How much/how many and very common uncountable nouns I'd like Imperatives (+/-) Intensifiers - very basic Modals: can/can't/could/couldn't Past simple of “to be” Past Simple Possessive adjectives Possessive s Prepositions, common Prepositions of place Prepositions of time, including in/on/at Present continuous Present simple Pronouns: simple, personal Questions There is/are To be, including question+negatives Verb + ing: like/hate/love	Adjectives – comparative, – use of than and definite article Adjectives – superlative – use of definite article Adverbial phrases of time, place and frequency Adverbs of frequency Articles – with countable and uncountable nouns Countables and Uncountables: much/many Future Time (will and going to) Gerunds Going to Imperatives Modals: can/ have to/should Past continuous Past simple Phrasal verbs – common Possessives – use of ‘s, s’ Prepositional phrases (place, time and movement) Prepositions of time: on/in/at Present continuous Present continuous for future Present perfect Questions Verb + ing/infinitive: like/want-would like Wh-questions in past Zero and 1st conditional	Adverbs Broader range of intensifiers such as too, enough Comparatives and superlatives Complex question tags Conditionals, 2nd and 3rd Connecting words expressing cause and effect, contrast etc. Future continuous Modals - must/can't deduction Modals – might, may, will, probably Modals – should have/might have/etc Modals: must/have to Past continuous Past perfect Past simple Past tense responses Phrasal verbs, extended Present perfect continuous Present perfect/past simple Reported speech (range of tenses) Simple passive Wh- questions in the past Will and going to, for prediction
	B2	C1	

Grammar	Adjectives and adverbs Future continuous Future perfect Future perfect continuous Mixed conditionals Modals – can't have, needn't have Modals of deduction and speculation Narrative tenses Passives Past perfect Past perfect continuous Phrasal verbs, extended Relative clauses Reported speech Will and going to, for prediction Wish Would expressing habits, in the past	Futures (revision) Inversion with negative adverbials Mixed conditionals in past, present and future Modals in the past Narrative tenses for experience, incl. passive Passive forms, all Phrasal verbs, especially splitting Wish/if only regrets

Figure 3. The Construct Map

Level	Description
5 (C1)	The student is able to use the following grammatical structures: • Inversion with negative adverbials • Narrative tenses • Passive tenses • Phrasal verbs, especially splitting • Modal verbs in the past
4 (B2)	The student is able to use the following grammatical structures: • The future perfect continuous tense • The future perfect tense • Mixed conditionals • Relative clauses • Expressing habits in the past
3 (B1)	The student is able to use the following grammatical structures: • Complex question tags • 2nd and 3rd conditionals • The past perfect tense • The present perfect continuous tense • The modal verbs must/can't deduction
2 (A2)	The student is able to use the following grammatical structures: • Adverbs of frequency • The past continuous tense • Possessives • 1st conditional sentences • The present perfect tense
1 (A1)	The student is able to use the following grammatical structures: • Prepositions of time, including in/on/at • Past simple tense of the verb 'to be' • Possessive adjectives • Comparatives and superlatives • The present simple tense
0	No evidence of any grammar competency

The Item Design

The next step in the test development process is to find a way “to stimulate responses that can constitute observations about the construct that the measurer wishes to measure” (Wilson, p.41). The aim is to operationalise dimensions of the construct into items that give an accurate representation of the ability of the participant. In order for the test to be reliable it must give an accurate indication of the ability of the student. Test reliability is discussed in detail later in the paper. However, it is worth noting that there were several decisions that had to be made with the intention of producing a reliable test. The first of these was the test item format that would be used. As Downing (2006a) purports, “The creation and production of effective test questions, designed to measure important content at an appropriate cognitive level, is one of the greatest challenges for test developers” (p.10). There are many different formats that a test can adopt. Perhaps the two most common type of item are the open-ended item format and the fixed-response format (Wilson, 2005). The choice of which format to use depends largely on the construct. It is pertinent to choose the format that will enable operationalisation of the construct. There are various advantages and disadvantages of each format. The open-ended item format has been praised (RePass,1971; Iyengar, 1996) as it enables the examinee to express his thoughts, without giving any prompts or cues. Moreover, this format allows for detailed responses to complex issues, as well as revealing the examinees logic and reasoning. However, open-ended items do have some shortcomings. Firstly, they may not be responded to due to ineloquence rather than indifference; examinees may not respond to open-ended questions because they are unable to express their thoughts. Furthermore, open-ended items can be difficult to grade, while necessitating a certain degree of subjectivity.

The fixed-response format is often used as multiple-choice items or a Likert-type response scale. In contrast to the open-ended format, the fixed-response format is easier to grade, as possible responses are limited. The objective nature of the test limits scoring bias. In addition, students can potentially respond to many items which can permit wide sampling. When conducting a study and asking for voluntary participation, requesting long open-ended responses can deter would-be participants, whereas they may be more willing to answer fixed-response items.

There are also disadvantages of the fixed-response format. Firstly, there is the criticism that multiple-choice tests teach misinformation (Toppino & Brochin, 1989; Rees 1986), can suggest the answer to the examinee, and allow for guessing. The use of item-person matrixes can however highlight possible occurrences of guessing. Another shortcoming of fixed-response items is that it is difficult to measure certain learning outcomes such as displaying thought processes and articulating explanations. The progression of some constructs may be demonstrated by higher-order thinking skills, such as those found in Bloom’s Taxonomy. It is a lot harder to demonstrate analysis, synthesis and evaluation with fixed-response items. Despite these shortcomings, the fixed response format was favourable for the purpose of testing grammar. This is due to the nature of grammar itself. It would be very difficult for an open-ended item to specify to the examinee what grammatical structure was required of them. One possible way would be to rely on the use of grammatical terminology. For example, one may ask an examinee to answer a question using the present perfect continuous tense. The problem with this approach is that it would not be testing the construct, solely, but also their knowledge of

grammatical terminology. Hence, an examinee may get an item wrong, not because they are unaware of the grammatical structure, but because they are unaware of the terminology. This would have a damaging effect on the reliability of the test. Moreover, it is likely that in an open-ended item, the target grammatical structure would be used in the stem itself, and easily duplicated, which would also impact upon the reliability of the test.

The fixed-response format was advantageous for this test. However, much rests on the writing of good items. "One of the greatest limitations of the selected-response formats derives from the creation of flawed selected-response items" (Downing, 2006b, p.290). As a result, certain good codes of practice were adhered to when writing the items. Firstly, each item had four possible options. Rodriguez (2005) holds that three options are sufficient and that "using more options does little to improve item and test score statistics and typically results in implausible distracters" (p.11). However, having four options does lower the probability of randomly guessing the correct answer. Moreover, Lord (1977) demonstrated that when reliability is estimated using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula, it increases when the number of options increases. Having five options would obviously lower the probability of guessing further, however, as more options are added it is more likely that the options would not be statistically functional (Downing, 2006b), as a result four options were opted for. Secondly, the options were homogenous in content. Hence, if the target item was an object pronoun, the three distracters were also object pronouns. The options were also similar in length in order to avoid giving a hint to testwise examinees. Thirdly, extra care was taken to ensure that the items were independent of one another. Thus, the answer to an item could not be found in the stem of another item. Finally, the items did not contain unnecessary or high-level language which could have introduced construct-irrelevant variance into the measurement. This would have affected the fairness of the test. "If some students have an advantage because of factors unrelated to what is being assessed, then the assessment is not fair" (McMillan, 2001, p.55). As Abedi (2006, p.383) states, "complex language in the content-based assessment for non-native speakers of English may reduce the validity of inferences drawn about students' content-based knowledge." While every effort was made to write good test items it is possible that some of the items were flawed. A discussion of the items will follow in the results section. The full test is shown in Appendix 1.

The Outcome Space

The next building block, the outcome space, is concerned with scoring the responses of the examinees. Scoring the test correctly has great implications for the validity of the test. If the test scores are to be valid a scoring key must be accurately applied to mirror the examinee item responses (Wilson, 2005). The term outcome space was introduced by Marlon (1981) to describe a set of categories which are devised to grade examinee responses. As Wilson (2005) purports, "inherent in the idea of categorization is an understanding that the categories that define the outcome space are qualitatively distinct" (p.63). This is even the case for fixed-response items, such as multiple tests and Likert-style survey questions. With open-ended items it is pertinent to develop an outcome space which provides example item responses belonging to the different categories. This requires researching the variety of responses that examinees could give. However, in fixed-response items such as multiple choice questions and true-false survey questions there are traditionally two categories; one category for choosing the correct answer and another category for choosing the wrong answer. However, this is not the only possible way to grade multiple choice items.

Multiple choice item responses may also be categorised, where an examinee scores a point for choosing a distracter which is considered a better response than the other distracters. This is highlighted in the question in figure 4.

Figure 4. *A multiple choice item that could use polytomous scoring.*

Q. Who was the 41st President of the United States of America?

- a) George Bush b) Abraham Lincoln c) Ronald Reagan d) Tony Blair

The multiple choice item in Figure 4 could be scored using two categories. If the examinee chooses the correct answer, (a), they score one point, if they choose any of the distracters they score zero. Alternatively, the distracters could be graded in order, to show partial success. As Wilson (2005) states, this is done when the difference between the distracters is large enough, and when “there is a way to interpret those differences with respect to the construct definition” (p.70). Subsequently, the outcome space may award points for each distracter accordingly; (a=3, c=2, b=1, d=0).

Another possible scoring scheme is to award negative marks for an incorrect answer. A disadvantage of this is that it causes cautious students to refrain from answering items, even if they possibly know the correct answer. The analysis focuses on the items themselves, rather than the overall score. Therefore negative marking could have had the effect of leaving certain items with very little statistical data available. Furthermore, it was believed that the measurement model would highlight possible instances of examinee guessing.

The traditional method of scoring multiple choice items was chosen. Negative marking was rejected for the reasons outlined above. Polytomous scoring was rejected because there are no significant differences between the distracters which could be interpreted with respect to the construct. In many of the items the options are homogenous. Figure 5 is taken from the test paper.

Figure 5. *An item from the test.*

Q. Ali is tall and _____ hair is black.

- a) our b) your c) her d) his

The answer to the item in Figure 5 is a possessive pronoun, as are the other three distracters. Therefore, due to this homogeneity there is no ‘better’ answer amongst the distracters. As a result, the most valid scoring scheme for the test was adopted, which was to give one point for a correct answer and zero for an incorrect answer.

The Measurement Model

The final building block, the measurement model aims to “relate the scored outcomes from the items design and the outcome space back to the construct that was the original inspiration of the items” (Wilson, 2005, p.85). Two main approaches to measurement have emerged, the first one has been coined Classical Test Theory (CTT). The theory purports an examinee’s observed score

(X) is a combination of their true score (T) in addition to some error (E) that is made in measurement.

$$X = T + E$$

CTT deals with the relationship between these three variables in the population. CTT has a number of limitations and shortcomings. Firstly, item difficulty and item discrimination are group dependent. As a result the p and r values “are entirely dependent on the examinee sample from which they are obtained” (Hambleton & Jones, 1993, p.43). Secondly, scores obtained using CTT applications are test dependent. The true-score model which formed the foundation for CTT “permits no consideration of examinee responses to any specific item” (Hambleton & Jones, 1993, p.43). CTT is viewed as test oriented rather than item oriented. Subsequently, the theory cannot aid in predicting how well an examinee may do on a test item. Finally, as Hambleton et al. purport (1991, p.4), the assumption of equal errors of measurement is implausible since test scores are unequally precise measures for examinees with different abilities.

The second main approach to measurement is item response theory (IRT), which is also referred to as Modern Test Theory. IRT is a “general statistical theory about examinee item and test performance and how performance relates to the abilities that are measured by the items in the test” (Hambleton & Jones, 1993, p.40). Here the focus is on item-level information rather than test-level information. IRT “is a measurement approach that relates the probability of a particular response on an item to overall examinee ability” (Guler, Uyanik & Teker, 2014, p.2). Subsequently IRT overcomes some of the shortcomings of CTT, namely that “IRT ability parameters estimated are not test dependent and item statistics estimated are not group dependent” (Guler et al., 2014, p.2). There are further advantages of IRT. In order to assess reliability, one does not need to conduct strict parallel tests. Furthermore, examinee ability and item statistics are highlighted on the same scale. The Rasch Model is a special case of IRT. However, there are key features of the Rasch Model which distinguish it from the item response modeling tradition. The Rasch Model fits the data to the model rather than fitting the model to the data. The Rasch Model seeks to highlight the items which are bias and for whom, the items which define the trait to be measured, and the examinees which are properly measured by the items (Wright, Mead & Draba, 1976). The Model purports that a person’s ability and the item difficulty are central to a person’s measure on a trait. For this paper the Rasch Model was used as the measurement model as the primary focus was on each item as it related to the examinee on the continuum of the construct map. Moreover, it was paramount to observe whether any of the items over or under discriminated relatively to the discrimination of all the items.

Sampling

Thirty male examinees undertook the test. In order to eliminate selection bias, and strengthen the internal validity of the study, the examinees were randomly selected from mixed-ability classes in a boys’ school in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. All of the participants were studying English as a foreign language, and were either aged 15 or 17. ‘Random sampling is free of the systematic bias that might stem from choices, made by the researcher or others’ Gorard (2013, p.79).

Item and Test Analysis

The test analysis focuses on validity, reliability and fairness, which are three important facets of any meaningful test. “The primary measurement standards that must be met to legitimize a proposed test use are those of reliability, validity, and fairness, which are also value-laden concepts” (Messick, 2000, p.3).

Reliability

Test reliability “refers to the consistency of scores students would receive on alternate forms of the same test” (Wells & Wollack, 2003, p.2). Test reliability is important because it ensures that test scores show more than random error. Moreover, test reliability is a prerequisite for test validity. A test cannot be valid, if it is not reliable. Subsequently, it is right to analyse the reliability of the test first. After all, “If the test is unreliable, one needn’t spend the time investigating whether it is valid—it will not be” (Wells & Wollack, 2003, p.3). There are different ways to ascertain the reliability of a test using Rasch theory. WINSTEPS Rasch Software calculates person sample reliability which is akin to the test reliability of CTT. Moreover, it calculates item reliability, which is a desired feature of this analysis which CTT does not report. Cronbach’s alpha is the most commonly used index to gauge the internal consistency of a test, which utilizes the following formula:

$$\hat{\alpha} = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k p_i(1-p_i)}{\hat{\sigma}_x^2} \right)$$

Cronbach’s alpha ranges from 0 to 1.00. Values close to 1.00 indicate high consistency. Values above 0.7 are good for low-stakes testing, while values less than 0.5 are unacceptable (George and Mallery, 2003). Table 1 shows the Cronbach Alpha value.

Table 1. The Cronbach Alpha Score & Person Reliability value

SUMMARY OF 30 MEASURED Person								
	TOTAL SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	MODEL ERROR	INFIT MNSQ	ZSTD	OUTFIT MNSQ	ZSTD
MEAN	12.5	25.0	.03	.52	.99	-.1	1.09	.0
S.D.	5.0	.0	1.28	.05	.31	1.2	.91	1.1
MAX.	22.0	25.0	2.67	.68	1.75	2.7	5.02	2.4
MIN.	4.0	25.0	-2.28	.48	.56	-2.3	.32	-1.6
REAL RMSE	.56	TRUE SD	1.15	SEPARATION	2.08	Person RELIABILITY	.81	
MODEL RMSE	.52	TRUE SD	1.17	SEPARATION	2.23	Person RELIABILITY	.83	
S.E. OF Person MEAN	= .24							

Person RAW SCORE-TO-MEASURE CORRELATION = 1.00

CRONBACH ALPHA (KR-20) Person RAW SCORE "TEST" RELIABILITY = .84

The table shows that the Cronbach Alpha person reliability value is 0.84, and the model reliability is 0.83. Table 2 shows the item reliability value of 0.89. These results indicate that the estimated measures are reliable. This suggests that the test allows us to discriminate between examinees based on their ability, and also discriminate between items based on their difficulty (Bond & Fox, 2001).

Table 2. *The Item Reliability Value*

SUMMARY OF 25 MEASURED Item								
	TOTAL SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	MODEL ERROR	INFIT		OUTFIT	
					MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD
MEAN	15.0	30.0	.00	.49	.98	-.1	1.09	.1
S.D.	7.0	.0	1.49	.09	.26	1.0	.79	1.1
MAX.	28.0	30.0	3.34	.78	1.71	2.3	3.70	3.0
MIN.	2.0	30.0	-3.19	.42	.66	-2.0	.30	-1.4
REAL RMSE	.51	TRUE SD	1.39	SEPARATION	2.71	Item	RELIABILITY	.88
MODEL RMSE	.49	TRUE SD	1.40	SEPARATION	2.84	Item	RELIABILITY	.89
S.E. OF Item MEAN = .30								

Validity

The second step in the process is to check for test validity. The meaning of validity in testing has evolved over time. In 1954, the American Psychological Association purported four types of validity: concurrent, construct, content and predictive. Predictive and concurrent validity were later combined to form criterion-related validity (Smith, 2001). For Messick (1989, 1995), “validity is a unitary concept realized in construct validity and has six facets of content, substantive, structural, generalizability, external, and consequential” (as cited in Baghaei & Amrahi, 201, p.1052). It is this definition of validity that will form the basis of the analysis, with the most important aspects discussed. The data was analysed using WINSTEPS Rasch Software.

A glance at the item person matrix yields some preliminary observations possibly affecting validity, such as overfit.

Table 3. Item Person Matrix

GUTTMAN SCALOGRAM OF RESPONSES:

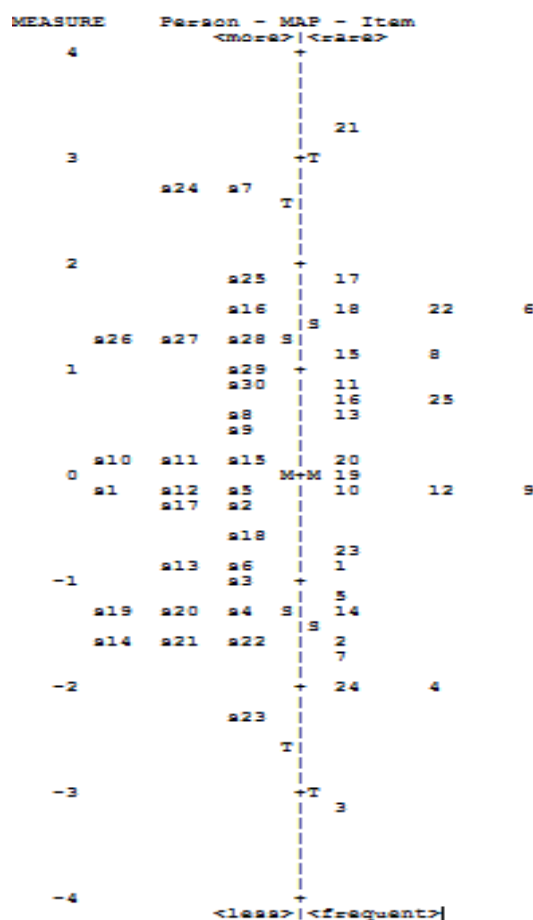
Person	Item
	2 1 2 11121121 1 1212
	3447245139029036518568271

7	+11111111111111111111111110100 s7
24	+1111111111111111111111111010101 s24
25	+1111111111111111111111111011001100 s25
16	+1111111111111111111111111001111010010 s16
26	+1111111111111111111111111001110010100 s26
27	+111111111111111111111111101111000000 s27
28	+11111110011111111111111110100110 s28
29	+11111111111111111111111110100101000 s29
30	+111111111111111111111111100000100 s30
8	+111111111111111111111111100000100000 s8
9	+11101111111111111111111110101100000 s9
10	+11111111111111111111111110001000100000 s10
11	+1111111111111111111111111001001001000000 s11
15	+11111111111111111111111110010010010100000 s15
1	+1110111111111111111111111000000010001001 s1
5	+1111111111111111111111111000010000000000 s5
12	+111111111111111111111111100101000000100000 s12
2	+1111111010000000101000000110 s2
17	+1011101101111111111111111000000001000 s17
18	+110100001000111000110011001010 s18
6	+11111000101001100000000000 s6
13	+11111010100100010000000000 s13
3	+1111100000100000000010010 s3
4	+1111000000000101000100000 s4
19	+1000011000001000100011000 s19
20	+1010010101001010000000000 s20
14	+1001101000000100001000000 s14
21	+1100011100001000000000000 s21
22	+0111000101000000000001000 s22
23	+0000010000010000000010010 s23

	2 1 2 11121121 1 1212
	3447245139029036518568271

The table does not show a perfect Guttman pattern. An initial look at the matrix immediately highlights a problem with item 6 and item 24. Item 6 is from level 2 of the construct map, yet only 7 examinees answered the question correctly. However, item 24, which is from level 5 on the construct map has a facility of 25. Such results threaten the validity of the measurement. The matrix does however show that the students with less ability tended to get only the easier items correct. This is important for the validity of the test, even if the difficulty of the items does not match what was initially expected from the construct map.

The concern of the content facet of validity is “that all the items or tasks as well as the cognitive processes involved in responding to them be relevant and representative of the construct domain to be assessed” (Baghaei & Amrahi, 201, p.1052). An item person map (Figure 4) is used to help provide evidence for the content facet of validity.

Figure 4. *The Item Person Map*

The item person map in Figure 4 scales the ability of the examinees, on the left hand side, as well as the difficulty of the items on the right. As the item person matrix highlighted, item 24 was one of the easier items on the test. Students did not need to be placed very highly on the scale, in terms of ability, to have a predicted chance of 50% of getting the item correct. Moreover, the map suggests that item number 3, with a facility of 28 was too easy. There are a few gaps in the item difficulty continuum, which suggests that some areas of the construct were not covered by the test. The item difficulty did not fully correspond with what was expected from the construct map.

Another way of viewing the content facet of validity is to ascertain whether the students' responses align with their abilities, by looking at the point-measure correlations (PT-MEASURE). Negative correlations usually mean that the responses to the items contradict the continuous latent variable. Table 4 shows the items with the lowest correlations. The correlations for items 17 and 18 were negative, at -0.09 and -0.07 respectively. This is because, although the items were difficult, students with lower ability answered them correctly. Such items threaten the validity of the measurement. The majority of the items do, however, have positive correlations.

Table 4. *The items with the lowest correlation*

ENTRY	TOTAL	TOTAL		MODEL	INFIT	OUTFIT	PTMEASURE-A	EXACT MATCH					
NUMBER	SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	S.E.	MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD	CORR.	EXP.	OBS%	EXP%	Item
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----													
17	6	30	1.83	.52	1.64	2.0	3.70	3.0	-.09	.45	70.0	82.6	17
18	7	30	1.58	.49	1.71	2.3	2.58	2.4	-.07	.47	70.0	80.4	18
6	7	30	1.58	.49	1.16	.7	2.97	2.8	.21	.47	83.3	80.4	6
15	9	30	1.13	.46	1.38	1.6	1.35	.9	.26	.49	60.0	77.2	15
21	2	30	3.34	.78	.97	.1	1.17	.6	.26	.30	93.3	93.3	21
3	28	30	-3.19	.76	.78	-.2	.30	-.3	.41	.23	93.3	93.3	3

The substantive aspect of validity “deals with finding empirical evidence to assure that test-takers are actually engaged with the domain processes provided by the test items or tasks” (Baghaei & Amrahi, 2011, p.1052). One way of evaluating this is by doing a multiple choice distracter analysis, looking at the P-values, which would show “the degree to which the responses to the distracters are consistent with the intended cognitive processes around which the distracters were developed” (Wolfe & Smith, 2007, p. 209). However, as was previously mentioned, the distracters are mainly homogenous, and so no conclusions relating to the construct map were drawn from the distracters examinees chose. Another indicator of the substantive aspect of validity is person fit statistics. Person fit statistics concern “the extent to which a person's pattern of responses to the items correspond to that predicted by the model” (Smith, 2001, p. 296). Table 5 shows the highest and lowest INFIT and OUTFIT mean-square statistics.

Table 5. *The highest and lowest INFIT and OUTFIT mean-square and Z-Standardized statistics*

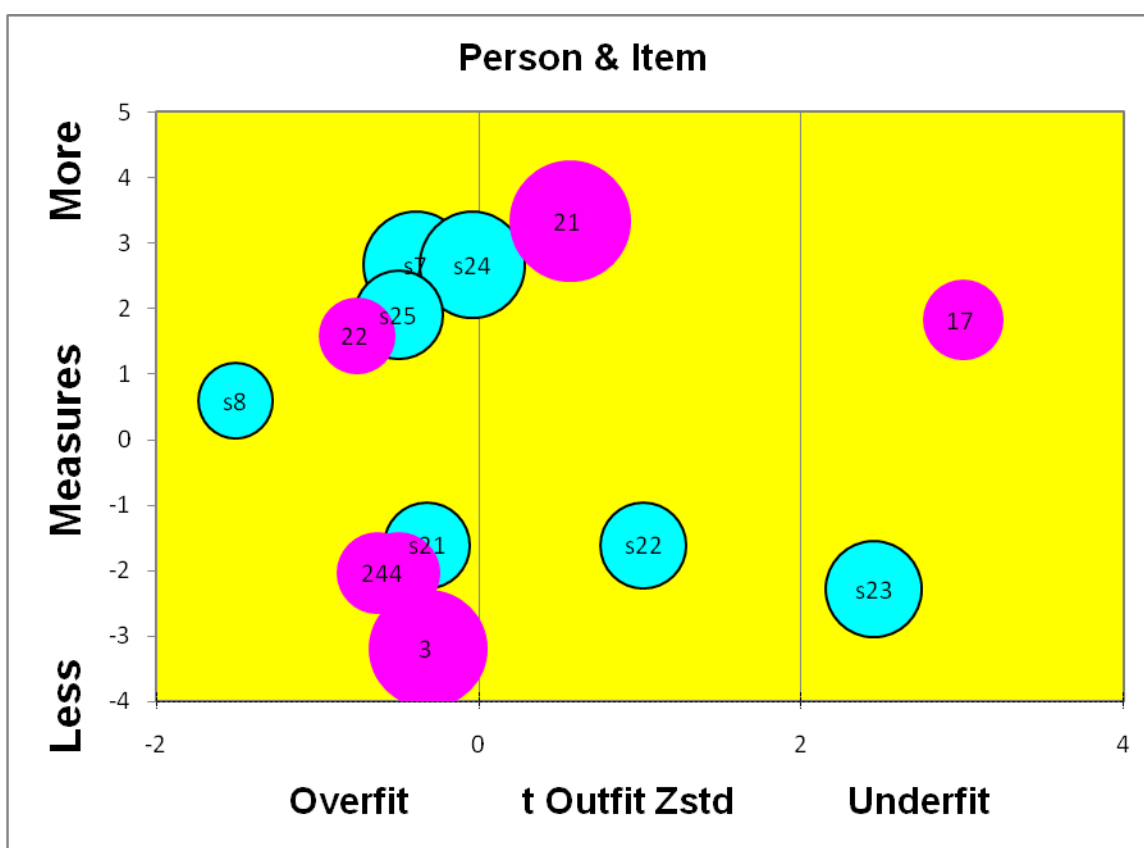
ENTRY	TOTAL	TOTAL		MODEL	INFIT	OUTFIT	PTMEASURE-A	EXACT MATCH					
NUMBER	SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	S.E.	MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD	CORR.	EXP.	OBS%	EXP%	Person
23	4	25	-2.28	.62	1.75	1.9	5.02	2.4	A-.14	.43	80.0	85.6	s23
19	7	25	-1.32	.53	1.63	2.1	2.41	1.9	B .11	.51	60.0	78.9	s19
1	12	25	-.10	.48	1.15	.7	2.16	2.4	C .39	.54	76.0	74.2	s1
18	10	25	-.56	.49	1.74	2.7	2.01	2.0	D .12	.54	56.0	76.0	s18
3	8	25	-1.06	.51	1.05	.3	1.71	1.3	E .42	.52	80.0	77.7	s3
10	13	25	.13	.48	.70	-1.4	.57	-1.2	e .71	.54	84.0	74.2	s10
7	22	25	2.67	.68	.67	-.7	.32	-.4	d .56	.37	92.0	89.2	s7
27	18	25	1.33	.52	.60	-1.9	.42	-1.0	c .70	.48	92.0	77.4	s27
5	12	25	-.10	.48	.59	-2.1	.48	-1.6	b .77	.54	92.0	74.2	s5
8	15	25	.59	.48	.56	-2.3	.44	-1.5	a .77	.53	92.0	74.4	s8
MEAN	12.5	25.0	.03	.52	.99	-.1	1.09	.0			78.8	77.9	
S.D.	5.0	.0	1.28	.05	.31	1.2	.91	1.1			8.8	4.1	

The majority of the INFIT values are within the acceptable range of 0.6 to 1.4 (Bond & Fox, 2007). Only s19 and s23 exceeded this value. INFIT values are more sensitive to responses on items that are roughly targeted at the examinee's ability level. Thus, s23, who got the easiest items wrong, triggered a mean-square value of 1.75. However, none of the examinees have an INFIT mean-square value of greater than 2.0 which would suggest the measurement is inaccurate. The majority of the OUTFIT values are also within the acceptable range of 0.6 to 1.4. However, there is great underfit in the OUTFIT values of some of the examinees, meaning their responses are too unpredictable. S23 has an OUTFIT mean-square value of 5.02. This is because he got the second hardest item correct. It can be assumed, since he got all of the easier items incorrect, that this was a guess. Nearly all the Z-Standardized values (ZSTD) are within the acceptable range of -2.0 to 2.0 (Bond & Fox, 2007).

The consequential aspect of validity “addresses the actual and potential consequences of test score use, especially in regard to sources of invalidity such as bias, fairness, and distributive justice (Wolfe & Smith, 2007, p.244). This is expounded on in the discussion on fairness.

Another useful tool for indicating the construct validity of the instrument is a bubble chart. The bubble chart shows how well the estimated measures for the examinees and the items fit the Rasch model. Figure 5 shows the bubble chart for the items and persons at both extremes.

Figure 5. *The Bubble Chart of persons and items*



The sizes of the circles show the accuracy of the measure along the latent variable. As previously mentioned, and confirmed by the bubble chart, nearly all of ZSTD values are within the acceptable range of -2.0 to 2.0. There is however major underfit for examines s23 and item 17, meaning that their outcomes are too unpredictable. The reason for s23's underfit has been mentioned previously. Item 17's underfit was due to the fact that it was the second hardest item on the test, and was answered correctly by only 1 of the top 6 students in terms of ability. However, the item was answered correctly by the student with the least ability. This caused the major underfit and the labeling of the item as unpredictable. Overall the data shows that the measurement was valid.

Fairness

There is no single meaning of fairness in testing, rather there are different aspects that need to be considered. The first of these is whether there was equal treatment of all the examinees with regard to the test conditions and other features of test administration. All of the students in the trial were given one hour to answer the questions. This was ample time for the students to ensure that they answered all of them. Other conditions of the test remained consistent for all the examinees. Another important aspect of test fairness is that the test is free from any kind of bias. The test should not advantage or disadvantage any group of examinees over another. The discriminating factor in the test should be the ability of the student. A fair test is one that produces comparably valid scores from person to person, group to group, and setting to setting (Willingham, 1998). There should be no bias amongst any subgroup. In the sample used to trial this test, all of the students came from the same school, and were all male. The only differentiating characteristic was their age. Half of the participants were 15 years old (grade 9), and the other half were 17 years old (grade 11). The question remains whether there was any bias towards one of these two groups. In order to try to prevent any bias, the vocabulary in the items was taken from grade 5 graded readers which are specifically written for second language learners. As a result, both sets of students should have been very familiar with the vocabulary. In order to determine whether the test, or any individual item, biased one group over another one looks at differential test functioning (DTF) and differential item functioning (DIF). Tables 6 and 7 show the item difficulties for grade 9 and 7 respectively.

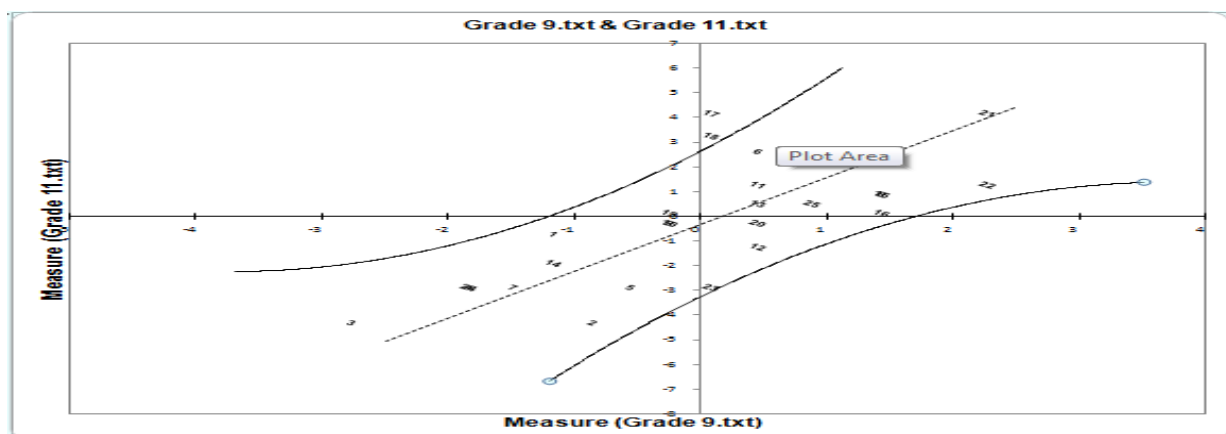
Table 6. *Item details for the grade 9 students*

ENTRY NUMBER	TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL COUNT	MEASURE	MODEL S.E.	INFI MNSQ	ZSTD	OUTFI MNSQ	ZSTD	PTMEASURE-A CORR.	EXP.	EXACT OBS%	MATCH EXP%	Item
1	9	15	-1.16	.56	.92	-.4	.84	-.5	.44	.33	60.0	65.6	1
2	8	15	-.85	.55	.67	-2.1	.63	-1.6	.72	.35	86.7	65.1	2
3	13	15	-2.76	.78	.76	-.3	.48	-.5	.52	.22	86.7	86.6	3
4	11	15	-1.83	.61	.92	-.2	.85	-.2	.38	.29	80.0	74.2	4
5	7	15	-.55	.55	.88	-.7	.84	-.6	.50	.36	73.3	65.3	5
6	4	15	.46	.63	1.23	.8	1.80	1.7	-.02	.36	80.0	76.4	6
7	10	15	-1.48	.58	.87	-.5	.83	-.3	.46	.32	73.3	68.6	7
8	2	15	1.44	.80	.77	-.3	.64	-.3	.54	.31	93.3	86.7	8
9	6	15	-.24	.57	.99	.0	.97	.0	.38	.36	73.3	66.7	9
10	6	15	-.24	.57	.82	-.9	.75	-.9	.57	.36	73.3	66.7	10
11	4	15	.46	.63	.74	-.8	.61	-.9	.66	.36	80.0	76.4	11
12	4	15	.46	.63	.93	-.1	1.36	.9	.34	.36	80.0	76.4	12
13	4	15	.46	.63	1.26	.9	1.20	.6	.10	.36	66.7	76.4	13
14	9	15	-1.16	.56	1.15	.8	1.08	.4	.19	.33	46.7	65.6	14
15	2	15	1.44	.80	1.23	.6	1.36	.7	.06	.31	80.0	86.7	15
16	2	15	1.44	.80	1.28	.7	1.42	.7	.01	.31	80.0	86.7	16
17	5	15	.09	.59	1.14	.6	1.37	1.1	.16	.36	66.7	70.7	17
18	5	15	.09	.59	1.36	1.4	1.42	1.2	-.04	.36	53.3	70.7	18
19	6	15	-.24	.57	1.22	1.1	1.20	.8	.13	.36	46.7	66.7	19
20	4	15	.46	.63	1.04	.2	1.03	.2	.31	.36	80.0	76.4	20
21	1	15	2.28	1.07	1.12	.4	.79	.2	.19	.25	93.3	93.2	21
22	1	15	2.28	1.07	1.15	.5	.96	.4	.12	.25	93.3	93.2	22
23	5	15	.09	.59	.83	-.6	.72	-.8	.58	.36	66.7	70.7	23
24	11	15	-1.83	.61	.85	-.5	.75	-.4	.47	.29	80.0	74.2	24
25	3	15	.89	.69	.92	-.1	.97	.1	.40	.34	86.7	81.8	25
MEAN	5.7	15.0	.00	.67	1.00	.0	.99	.1			75.2	75.5	
S.D.	3.3	.0	1.25	.14	.19	.8	.32	.8			12.9	8.8	

Table 7. *Item details for the grade 11 students*

ENTRY NUMBER	TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL COUNT	MEASURE	MODEL S.E.	INFIT MNSQ	INFIT ZSTD	OUTFIT MNSQ	OUTFIT ZSTD	PTMEASURE-A CORR.	EXP.	OBS%	EXACT MATCH EXP%	Item
1	11	15	- .75	.69	.83	- .4	.85	.1	.58	.51	86.7	80.5	1
2	15	15	-4.34	1.89	MINIMUM MEASURE				.00	.00	100.0	100.0	2
3	15	15	-4.34	1.89	MINIMUM MEASURE				.00	.00	100.0	100.0	3
4	14	15	-2.91	1.14	.49	- .6	.13	- .6	.57	.35	93.3	93.2	4
5	14	15	-2.91	1.14	1.58	.9	4.83	1.9	- .12	.35	93.3	93.2	5
6	3	15	2.59	.74	.65	- .8	.43	- .2	.63	.45	93.3	83.9	6
7	14	15	-2.91	1.14	1.49	.8	1.43	.7	.10	.35	93.3	93.2	7
8	7	15	.86	.62	1.40	1.5	3.08	2.7	.23	.53	60.0	73.5	8
9	10	15	- .31	.65	.89	- .2	.70	- .3	.60	.52	73.3	76.3	9
10	10	15	- .31	.65	.61	-1.4	.44	- .9	.74	.52	86.7	76.3	10
11	6	15	1.24	.63	.53	-1.9	.41	-1.0	.77	.52	100.0	74.0	11
12	12	15	-1.27	.76	1.11	.4	.88	.2	.45	.49	80.0	84.6	12
13	8	15	.48	.62	.74	-1.0	.59	- .7	.68	.53	86.7	73.5	13
14	13	15	-1.93	.88	.46	-1.0	.21	- .4	.69	.44	93.3	88.8	14
15	7	15	.86	.62	1.86	2.7	2.06	1.7	.07	.53	46.7	73.5	15
16	9	15	.10	.63	1.34	1.2	1.19	.5	.37	.53	60.0	74.2	16
17	1	15	4.13	1.10	1.30	.6	1.16	.6	.12	.30	93.3	93.2	17
18	2	15	3.22	.85	1.39	.9	.98	.5	.24	.39	86.7	86.5	18
19	9	15	.10	.63	.80	- .7	.66	- .5	.65	.53	86.7	74.2	19
20	10	15	- .31	.65	1.42	1.3	1.61	1.0	.28	.52	60.0	76.3	20
21	1	15	4.13	1.10	.75	- .1	.23	- .4	.44	.30	93.3	93.2	21
22	6	15	1.24	.63	.66	-1.3	.51	- .8	.71	.52	86.7	74.0	22
23	14	15	-2.91	1.14	.49	- .6	.13	- .6	.57	.35	93.3	93.2	23
24	14	15	-2.91	1.14	.49	- .6	.13	- .6	.57	.35	93.3	93.2	24
25	8	15	.48	.62	.84	- .6	.80	- .2	.61	.53	86.7	73.5	25
MEAN	9.3	15.0	- .35	.90	.96	.0	1.02	.1			83.8	82.4	
S.D.	4.3	.0	2.36	.36	.41	1.1	1.06	1.0			13.7	8.3	

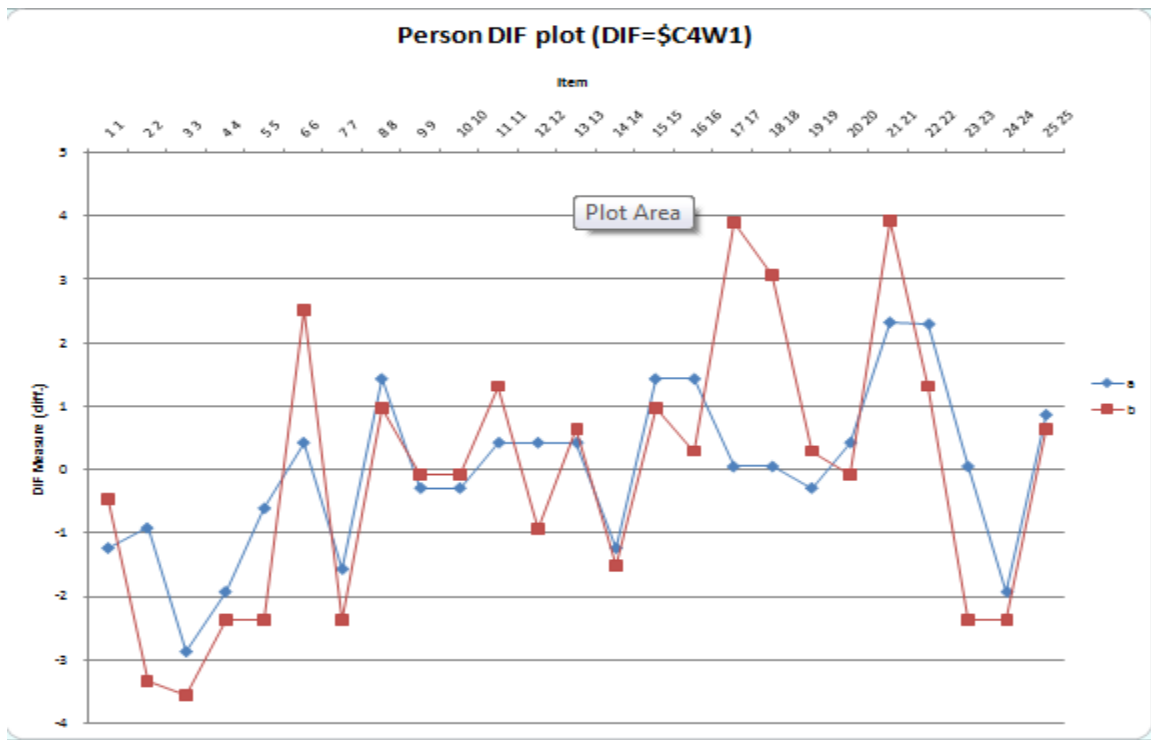
A comparison between the two age groups is made easier using a scatter plot as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. *Scatter Plot showing grade 9 and grade 11 results*

The scatter plot confirms that overall there was no bias in the test towards either of the two grades. However, items 17 and 18 were relatively more difficult for the grade 11 students. Both of these items have a high difficulty level on the test. With only a very small number of students getting the items correct it cannot be said that the items were biased. The DIF graph which is

shown in Figure 7 also shows that there was no bias in the test. Both groups performed very similarly on each item. This is with the exception of items 17 and 18. However, with the relatively small sample used to trial the test, and then even smaller number of examinees who answered the item correctly, no credible claim of bias can be made.

Figure 7. Person DIF plot



Conclusion

In conclusion, an analysis of the data shows that the test was mostly reliable, valid and fair. The items did test the construct, grammar competency. In general, the students needed more ability to get the items with higher difficulty correct. However, the item difficulty of each item does not match with what was expected from the construct map. This may be because the leveling of grammar items by the British Council and EQUALS is inaccurate. It may also be because certain items were not written well. Before such conclusions could be made, and the construct map altered, the test would need to be developed further. During this development, further items would need to be added for each grammar topic. Instead of having just one question on the present perfect continuous tense, the test would contain at least two. This would enrich the data for analysis. Moreover, the developed test could be given to a larger sample which includes females.

One possible reason why the item difficulties were not as expected is the fact that the first language of every student impacts upon their learning. As a result, there are certain grammar items which are particularly difficult. Grammatical structures which are familiar to the learner in his mother tongue are easier to grasp. However, those which are alien to the student may cause

great difficulty, even if the topic is considered easy. Two examples of this for Arabic speakers is the present continuous tense and the verb *to be*. In Arabic the structure for the present simple tense and the present continuous tense is the same. Moreover, the verb *to be* is omitted in the present simple tense. This is highlighted in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Grammar topics which cause specific difficulty for Arabic speakers

Arabic	Literal Translation	Meaning
أحمد يلعب كرة القدم	Ahmad plays football	Ahmad plays football Ahmad is playing football
أنا طالب في جامعة درهم	I student in Durham University	I <u>am</u> a student at Durham University.

In my experience teaching in the Middle East, learners whose first language is Arabic tend to find difficulty with the grammatical structures highlighted in Figure 8. Using the verb *to be* is placed at A1 level by the British Council and EQUALS. However, due to the lack of the structure in Arabic, learners may take more time to grasp its use. This may explain, for example, why item 1 had a higher difficulty than item 7. Item 7, which tests the past continuous tense, is familiar to the students in Arabic. However, item 1 uses a different preposition to the one they are familiar with. This is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Item 1 from the grammar test

1. I am going to Riyadh _____ Friday.

- a) on b) at c) in d) by

In English the preposition *on* is used with days. However in Arabic the preposition *في* is used, which translates as *in*. The item is likely to be easier for students who also use the preposition, *on*, in their mother tongue. To examine this possibility, a developed test should be given to English learners whose first language differs.

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Appendix 1- The grammar test

GRAMMAR QUIZ (60 minutes)	
Name	

Circle the correct answer for each item: a, b, c or d.

1. I am going to Riyadh _____ Friday.

- a) on b) at c) in d) by
2. Ahmad _____ late for class yesterday.
a) were b) is c) was d) are
3. Ali is tall and _____ hair is black.
a) our b) your c) her d) his
4. Jeddah is _____ than Madinah.
a) big b) more big c) bigger d) more bigger
5. Ibrahim _____ to eat rice and fish.
a) like b) liking c) likes d) to like
6. Which sentence is **NOT** correct?
a) They ran quickly. b) We worked hardly.
c) The boys slept heavily. d) He spoke loudly.
7. I _____ until 7 o'clock yesterday.
a) was working b) were work c) was work d) were working
8. The three _____ house was very nice.
a) brothers b) brother's c) brothers' d) brothers's
9. If you _____ online, you save a lot of money.
a) order b) ordered c) orders d) have ordered
10. He has _____ this program before.
a) sees b) see c) saw d) seen
11. Michael loves his car, _____?
a) isn't he b) doesn't he c) does he d) is he
12. If I had more money, I _____ that bag.
a) would buy b) will buy c) buy d) bought
13. When I got home, the children had already _____.
a) eating b) eat c) eaten d) ate
14. What _____ doing?
a) you have been b) have you been c) you been d) was you been

15. Omar _____ the bus.
a) can have missed b) can missed c) must has missed d) must have missed
16. By October, I will _____ English for five years.
a) be studying b) study c) have studying d) have been studying
17. I think the match _____ by the time we get home.
a) will have finished b) has finished c) will has finished d) will be finish
18. If he _____ your car, you should pay him.
a) had washed b) has washed c) would wash d) will have washed
19. We walked to the middle of the park, _____ we stopped to play football.
a) where b) that c) which d) who
20. My grandfather _____ at the airport.
a) was used to work b) was use to work c) use to work d) used to work
21. _____ such well-behaved children.
a) Never have I met b) Never I have met c) I never have met d) I have met never
22. In Ghana, a two-year-old British girl _____ with her parents after being freed by kidnappers in Southern Ghana.
a) has been reunited b) had reunited c) has reunited d) had been reunited
23. The Eiffel Tower _____ by millions of people this year.
a) has visited b) has been visited c) has been visiting d) was visiting
24. Which sentence is **NOT** correct?
a) Tomorrow, I will wash up the dishes. b) Yesterday, we ran of water out. c) Please turn on the light.
d) Please pick your toys up.
25. He _____ his mathematics test, if he'd really tried.
a) could pass b) could have passed c) could has passed d) could passed

THE END

Correlation between Cognitive Writing Strategies and Students' Writing Performance

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Abstract: This research explores the relationship between cognitive writing strategies and students' writing performance. The primary aim of this paper is to explore whether or not the two variables are interrelated. It also investigates how strong are the relationship between the two variables. The target observation was students at the moderate level. The sample was drawn systematically from population of 80 students at the English department Hasanuddin University 2008 - 2009 Academic year. The students were divided into 3 groups based on the results of their achievement test. The results indicated that 37 students included at the moderate level. Data were mainly obtained by means of achievement test where the students were asked to write about approximately 300 words in 60 minutes. The test was evaluated based on the five writing elements, assessed by two raters. Another way of obtaining data was through strategies questionnaire (10 Questions) and data were analyzed quantitatively using Kendall's tau-c formula. Qualitative analysis was also applied. The results of the quantitative analysis through their achievement test are not significant (0.298). Its contribution is 11.4%. In contrast, in relation to questionnaire, the result shows that the correlation is significant (0.000) and its contribution is 70.3%.

Keywords: cognitive writing strategies, writing performance, achievement test, strategies questionnaire, and moderate writers.

Introduction

Understanding information in a foreign language is a challenge for learners of English as a second/foreign language. Applying what they understand from the information in the written form is even more challenging. On the other hand, writing is an essential part of thinking and learning in educational context, particularly in light of 21st Century demands (e.g. Johannesen, 2001) and writing tasks are a “critical tool for intellectual and social development” (Bruning & Horn, 2000, p. 30). Therefore, students’ ability to present information and ideas through their writing has “an integral role in academic and professional success” (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, Latham, & Gentile, 1994, p. 25, quoted in Hamman, 2005).

Scholars define writing as a way for students in all content areas to make meaning for themselves (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) as well as to learn how to think and communicate in their particular domains (Herrington, 1985). For example, writing is an important means through which student are challenged to think more critically. As Bereiter & Scardamalia (1982), Berninger et al. (1992) find writing is cognitively demanding.

In line with Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982), De la Paz and Graham (2002) state that writing is definitely a demanding task because it requires the orchestration of a variety of cognitive resources. For developing writers it will be even more demanding as they have not yet mastered important writing processes, skills, and knowledge involved in writing strategies: planning and drafting and revising text.

Promoting human effectiveness at a task requires understanding of the strategies that can accomplish the task and how to develop such strategies among learners. Strategies development has deservedly received much study by cognitive psychologists, with educational psychologists doing much work to detail how cognitive strategies develop, and can be developed, to increase student performance with respect to important academic tasks (Pressley and Harris, 2001: 2).

What more are Cognitive writing strategies enable students to understand and produce language (1990: 37). The strategies can be used to improve any language skills. Therefore, Cooley (2008) in his research argues, to improve adolescents’ reading, writing, and thinking across content areas, they need a particular type of strategy instruction, which is known as cognitive strategy instruction, which holds great promise for improving adolescents’ reading, writing, and thinking across content areas. Writing strategies are defined as conscious decisions made by the writers to solve a writing problem (Wenden, 1991 and Riazi, 1997).

A number of research/studies related to cognitive writing strategies have been conducted by researchers/scholars and will be presented in the following discussion.

Research has shown that all students can benefit from instruction in learning strategies. Chamot and O’Malley (1994) work with second language learners reinforce the notion that students who learn to continuously monitor their own learning, and who have a store house of strategies to use when learning becomes difficult, far better than students who do not have such strategies (cited in Crandall, 2002). Conley (2008) argues that to improve adolescents’ reading, writing and thinking process across content areas, students need cognitive strategies cognitive strategies for adolescents needs to be conducted.

Most research on writing strategies focus on the differences of strategies used by low and high achievers. For example, Chien (2007) explores cognitive and meta-cognitive writing strategies in EFL student writers in relation to their achievement in L2 (English) writing. The researcher finds that two major differences were observed between the two groups. First, with regard to the planning, the percentages in the low achievers are about 1.5 times (9.7%) as high as the percentages in the high achievers. It is clear that the low achievers tend to engage more in the

planning process than the high achievers. This pattern may apply that the low achievers need to go back to do planning, while the high achievers do not have this need and could move on with the mental activities such as monitoring and evaluating. So, they can complete their writing task earlier and more effective.

Another scholar, Hoang (1999) also differentiates low and high achievers writers. His findings reveals that proficient (high achiever) learners use more writing strategies more effectively than the lower ones. From his research, Mu (1991) produces taxonomy of writing strategies which cover the four writing strategies and one of them is cognitive writing strategies which cover seven elements: generating ideas, revising, elaborating, clarification, retrieval, rehearsing, summarizing.

From the above findings, what needs to be further and urgently investigated is looking at English writing from cognitive writing strategies perspectives. More specifically, focuses on students whose cognitive writing strategies are in moderate level, as the above findings refer to high and low achiever only. In fact, it assumed that many EFL learners for example, in Indonesia fall in that category.

Therefore, this research attempts to explore and answers two main research questions: 1. How strong the correlation between cognitive writing strategies and students writing performance; 2. How big is the contribution of the strategies to the students' writing performance. The objective of the research is to explore the relationship and the contribution of the strategies to the writing performance of EFL learners. The target population in this research is students of English department Hasanuddin University as foreign language learners.

Material

Population is defined as all members of any well-defined class of people, events or objects (Ary, et al., 1979: 129). The population of the research consisted of students of the English Department who have passed Academic Writing subject in the 2008 -2009 academic year. This course is offered at the fifth semester. Before taking the course, all students are required to take two other writing subjects: Writing 1 and Writing 2. This is the reason for including them in this research as they are considered to have enough knowledge of English writing skills.

The number of students (population) who took the final test for the Academic Writing Subject in the 2008 – 2009 Academic Year was 116 students. For some reason, they were not all accessible in terms of their time at the moment the research was conducted; next; they were difficult to contact and the research had to start addition, some of them were at work. The number of students who could be accessed was 80, so they were the population of this current research.

The small group that is observed or a small portion of a population is called a sample (Ary et al., 1979: 129). The samples of this research were taken from the above population which consisted of 80 students. It is stated that selection of a sample is a very important step in conducting a research study as the “goodness” of the sample determines the generalization of the results (Gay, 1981). In order to get a representative sample for this research, the sample was drawn systematically with the following procedures:

1. The name list and their Academic Writing final test were taken from the department.
2. Achievement test was administered to all population (80 students) and evaluated following Brown & Bailey's rating scale (1984: 244 - 245), with two raters. Based on their test results, they were divided into three groups: Group 1 was those students whose achievement test ranged from 14 to 22 (5 students) and they are in the highest category; Group 2 ranged from 10 to 13 (72 students) and they were in the moderate category;

Group 3 ranged from 10 - 11 (21 students) and they were in low moderate, Group 4 ranged from 8 – 9 (3 students) fell into the lowest category.

3. To determine the number of sample drawn from the population, Ary, et al. (1979:135) states that there is no single rule that can be used to determine sample size. The best answer to the question of sample size is to use as large a sample as possible because a larger sample is much more likely to be representative of the population. Based on the above statement, 50% was considered representative of a total population of moderate group, so that 37 students were the sample of this research. In order to get representative sample of the 72 students, random sampling was applied. The way they were selected is as follows:
 - 3.1 The names of the 72 students were written in a small piece of paper individually, put them in a small can, and took one by one until the number was 37 students. Students. It is important to notice here that the students in “High” and “Low” level/category were only included at the beginning for the purpose of determining which students fell into the “Moderate” level. So, only students in the “Moderate” category were analyzed along this study.
 - 3.2 The 37 students were given questionnaire with 10 questions related to cognitive writing strategies.
 - 3.3 After they completed the questionnaire, they were interview using in-depth interview which consisted 7 main questions related to cognitive writing strategies to support the questionnaire.
4. This research was conducted at the English Department Faculty of Letters Hasanuddin University and it is located at Hasanuddin University Campus, Tamalanrea, Makassar, South Sulawesi. The reason for choosing the site was mainly because the subjects of the research are students at the department. Besides, I am a permanent teaching staff at the department and teach all writing courses (Writing 1, Writing 2, and Academic Writing) offered at the department. So that I know the site and the students' writing problems very well.
5. Prior to the implementation of the research, permission was requested from the Head of the English department. The permission was to conduct and involve the students directly in the research, to obtain and used necessary data, facilities used and the administrative staff employed during the research. Agreement from the head of the department and the students were obtained. The students then signed a “Letter of Agreement” to be actively participated in the research and also signed by the head of the department.

Method

Data gathered from the instruments (Achievement test and Questionnaire) were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. There are two stages and their own procedures in the implementation of these mix methods.

The way the data were analyzed quantitatively was by applying correlation formula Kendal Thau-c and the analysis used for qualitative data was descriptive method. The way it is used is by describing the process of facts and phenomena found in the research as the way they are (Gay, 1981: 153).

Quantitative Method

In this stage, Cross-sectional study as one kind of observational research was used. This means that only students who have passed Academic Writing Subject in the 2008 – 2009 Academic Year were included and they were students who have completed their fifth semester. This design was meant to study the dynamic and variables included in this present research. Besides, it could show the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. The independent variable in this current study was cognitive writing strategies. On the other hand, the dependent variable was the writing performance of the students. The independent variables and dependent variable were explored at the same time. The following explanation is the second stage of the implementation of the mix methods, that is qualitative method.

Qualitative Method

In the stage of qualitative method, the data obtained from the two instruments (Achievement Test and Questionnaire) for cognitive writing strategies were also analyzed and this was to complement data analyzed quantitatively, so that through analysis could be obtained.

Data for this research were directly collected from the students, assisted by two senior students. Three measurements were utilized: achievement test and questionnaire each instrument used was explained in details in the following section. Activities in the research were recorded, and note-taking.

Achievement Test

Achievement test is related directly to classroom lessons, units, or even a total curriculum. It is limited (Brown, 2004: p. 47.). It attempts to measure the mastery and proficiency of individuals in different areas of knowledge and it can be classified as standardized and teacher – or researcher-made (Ary, et al., 1979: 179). In this case, it was classified as researcher-made where the topic of the test was made by the researcher.

The test was conducted at the English Department. For this test, the subjects were asked to write about 300 words (about three paragraphs) and the topic was “Legislative Election in Indonesia (9th April 2009).” The topic was chosen based on the consideration that the legislative election was within the month this research was conducted. Besides, the students were directly involved in the election, so they could remember the event and have ideas in mind to write. The time allocated was 60 minutes as Oshima and Hogue (1999) suggest, twenty minutes per paragraph. The assessment of the test was based on 5 writing elements: Organization (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion); Logical development o ideas (Content); Grammar; spelling, and mechanics; Style and quality of expression, proposed by Brown & Bailey (2004: 244 -245) with some modification.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used to see whether or not the students applied cognitive writing strategies in their process of writing. The type of questionnaire used in this research was close-ended questions (taken from Setiyadi, 2006, p.81, with some modification), consisting of 10 questions covering seven essential cognitive writing strategies proposed by Mu 1999): generating ideas, revising, elaborating, clarification, retrieval, rehearsing, and summarizing; with five options using Likert' Scale.

Data Analysis

For analyzing quantitative data, SPSS Version 14 was applied and for qualitative data, descriptive analysis was used. Detailed explanation of each analysis is presented below.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis used in this research was statistical analysis applying SPSS for Windows Version 14, more specifically, using a test introduced by Kendall Thau-c (1983). This was to analyze the relationship between independent variable (cognitive) and dependent variable (writing performance). For sample more than 30, the distribution is closed to normal, so that the parameter used is Z standard value where the value of $\alpha = 0.05$ and the value ≥ 1.96 . The evaluation of relationship significance between variables is done through p value (≤ 0.05).

On the other hand, the size of correlation between the independent and dependent variable is evaluated by using Kendall Thau-c Index (ρ) which gives meaning to the size of ordinal (contribution) of independent variable toward their dependent variables. The evaluation of whether or not data distribution is normal in the sample, the data are evaluated through the result of approximate test of T score which resulted from Kendall thau-c test, where this estimation is based on the assumption that null hypothesis distributes normally in the population. Based on this consideration, all variables where their relationships are evaluated, should always follow the rules of normal distribution.

However, all data in this method used were first tabulated. The names of the students were kept confidentially; therefore, their names were converted to code number (1, 2, 3, and so on). The following is the explanation about the technique of analysis of each instrument for quantitative data.

Achievement Test

Achievement test was assessed based on the five (5) elements of writing rating scale proposed by Brown & Bailey's (1884). Each element scored from 1 – 5 and the score of each element was added up for further statistical analysis mentioned above.

The test result was used to group the students and there were three groups: Group 1 was students in the "High Category" whose test score ranged from 14 to 22 (5 students); Group 2 was students in the "Moderate Category (the focus of the research) whose test score ranged from 10 – 13 (37 students); and the last group, that is Group 3 were students who fell into "low category," whose score ranged from 8 – 9. Then the data were coded and tabulated for statistical analysis.

Questionnaire

Data gathered from questionnaire (ten close-ended questions) for cognitive writing strategies were grouped according to their choice of answers which were five options (1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3. Cannot Decide; 4 = Often; 5 = Always). This was to see which option was the most frequently chosen by the students. Then, the data were tabulated for statistical analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis

All data obtained from the quantitative analysis which could not be analyzed quantitatively, were analyzed qualitatively.

Findings

This research was conducted at the English Department Faculty of Letters Hasanuddin University. The collection of sample started from 16 April to 8 May, 2009. The observation unit (respondent) in this research was students of English department who have passed Academic Writing Subject in 2008 – 2009 Academic year. Whilst its unit of analysis was cognitive and meta-cognitive writing strategies as well as all dependent variables related to the writing strategies, in this research, only one dependent variable that is the students' writing performance.

After doing the checking of the results concerning the answers of all instruments used and other sample requirements, all students in the moderate category (37) in fact, fulfilled the requirements to be included in the data processing and analysis. The instruments used to collect data for the independent variable were achievement test and questionnaire.

From the results of data processing, between independent and dependent variables, the data then presented in both descriptive tables (without statistical testing) and analysis tables (with statistical testing). Based on the research objectives which would be achieved in this research, there is one major variable: Cognitive writing strategies which are presented in detail in the following section.

Variable of Cognitive Writing Strategies

Writing means translating one's ideas or concepts from our minds in the written form. The translation of ideas or concepts can be done by some alternatives, such as writing (written), speaking (oral), non-verbal communication (gesture, attitude, motive). In this research, translating ideas or concept from the minds are only directed specifically to the writing strategies, by considering that the mission as a teacher in language education, particularly in English education, writing and writing strategies are very crucial elements.

Besides, the problem which also occurred in the students' writing is writing strategies where these strategies according to Chien (2007) are the key approach to promote writing. The measurement parameters used in this case were two instruments: achievement test and questionnaire. Cognitive writing strategies is stated as the independent variable and the way it is measured is by using the above instruments.

After conducting the research, processing and analyzing the data systematically, the results were obtained and are presented in the tables below.

Achievement Test

It is a tool of measurements used in this research. This test was used for two purposes. One was to know the writing ability of the students; two, to group the students based on their test result, so that Moderate Achiever Writers could be obtained.

Table 1. *Distribution of Cognitive Writing Strategies Based on Achievement Test Results*

Cognitive Writing Strategies Obtained from Achievement Test	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Very Good	14	37.8
Good	21	56.8
Fair	2	5.6
Poor	0	0.0
Very Poor	0	0.0
Total	37	100.0

Table 1 indicates that cognitive writing strategies of the students obtained from the results of their achievement test vary from "Can't decide" (5.6%) to "Good" (56.8%), and "Always" (37.8%). None of the students is in the category of "Poor" and "Very Poor." The majority of the students are in the category of "Good" (56.8 %).

Questionnaire

It is another tool of measurement used in this research. The results are presented at the table below:

Table 2. Distribution of Cognitive Writing Strategies Obtained from Questionnaire

Cognitive Writing Strategies Obtained from Questionnaire	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Always	11	29.7
Often	18	48.6
Cannot Decide	8	2.6
Seldom	0	0.0
Never	0	0.0
Total	37	100.0

Looking at cognitive writing strategies of the students, table 2 provides information that their cognitive writing strategies vary from the lowest is in the category of "Can't decide (2.6%), Often (48.6%), and Always (29.7%). The majority of the students' cognitive writing strategies are in the "Often" category. The reality implies that whatever the instruments used to know or detect their use of cognitive writing strategies in their process of writing, the result will not be so much different.

If we look at the result of their achievement test analysis based on writing elements (Organization, Logical Development of Ideas, Grammar, Mechanics; and Styles & Quality of Expression). Table 5 below provides information on achievement test result which is related to the five writing elements as presented in the following table.

Table 3. Distribution of Achievement Test Result Based on Writing Elements

Writing Elements	Achievement Test Result										Total	
	Very good		Good		Fair		Poor		Very poor			
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
Organization (Introduction, Body, Conclusion)	0	0.0	23	62.2	13	35.1	1	2.7	0	0.0	37	100.0
Logical Development of Ideas (content)	0	0.0	27	73.0	10	27.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	100.0
Grammar	0	0.0	35	94.6	2	5.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	100.0
Mechanics	0	0.0	19	51.4	18	48.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	100.0
Styles & Quality of Expression	0	0.0	31	83.8	6	16.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	37	100.0

From the organization point of view in the writing process of the students, (Introduction, Body, Conclusion), 23 (62.2%) out of 37 observed students are in the "Good" category and 13 (35.1%) students are in the "Fair" category. 1 student (27%) is in "Poor" category. None of the students is in other categories like "Very good," and "Very poor." The same thing happens in the element of Logical Development of Ideas. In this case, the content is only distributed to two categories: "Good" 27 students (73.0%) and "Fair" 10 students (27%) with the highest percentage is in the category of "Good" (73.0%). Next, it also occurred in "Grammar" element which occupies the biggest number of students, 35 students (94.6%) are in "Good" category. The smallest number of students is in "Fair" category for their Grammar, 2 students (5.4%). Whereas, in "Mechanics" element, none of the students is in "Very Good," "Poor," "Very Poor" category. However, there are 19 students (51.4%) in "Good" category and 18 students (48.6%) for their "Mechanics" element. None of the students is in "Very Good," "Poor," and "Very Poor" category. Finally, the last element that is Style and Quality of Expression shows that 31 students (83.8%) are in "Good" category, 6 (16.2%) are in "Fair" category. In contrast, none of the students is in "Very Good," "Poor," and "Very Poor" category.

The Analysis of Variables Relationship.

The relationship between Independent variable (cognitive writing strategies) and dependent variable (writing performance) obtained from the two instruments (achievement test and questionnaire) was analyzed by applying Kendall Thau-c test (analysis). The analysis was used because this test was able to analyze the test result gradually. For example, Very Good to Very Poor or Always to Never. For sample more than 30 the distribution is closed to normal, so that the parameter used is Z standard value where the value of $\alpha = 0.05$ and the value ≥ 1 . The evaluation of relationship significance between variables is evaluated through p value (≤ 0.05). While the correlation between independent and dependent variable is evaluated by applying Kendall Thau-c Index (p) which gives meaning to the ordinal (contribution) of independent variable to dependent variable. The evaluation whether or not data distribution is normal in the sample the data are evaluated through the result of approximate test of T score which resulted from Kendall Thau-c test where this estimation is based on the assumption that null hypotheses distributed in the population. Based on this consideration all variables that the relationship will be evaluated should always follow the rule of normal distribution. The variables that the relationship will be evaluated are shown in the following table.

The Correlation between Cognitive Writing Strategies and Writing Performance Obtained from Achievement Test

Table 4. The Correlation between Cognitive Writing Strategies and Writing Performance Obtained From Achievement Test

Cognitive Writing Strategies Obtained from Achievement test	Writing Performance						Number		Statistical test result		
	Very good		Good		Fair				Kendall thau-c	Norm a-lity	Signif
	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%	0.114	1.041	0.298

Very Good	7	22.6	16	51.6	8	25.8	31	100.0			
Good	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	3	100.0			
Fair	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	100.0	3	100.0			
Total	8	21.6	18	48.6	11	29.7	37	100.0			

The 31 students who are included in "Very Good" category based on the students' ability of cognitive writing strategies, 7 of them (22.6%) are in "Very Good," 16 (51.6%) are "Good," and 8 students (25.8%) are in "Fair" category for their writing performance. Moreover, 3 students are in "Good" category for their cognitive writing strategies, 1 of them (33%) is in "Very Good" category, 2 (66.7%) are in "Good" category and none of them is in "Fair" category for their writing performance. Next, 3 students are in "Fair" category for their cognitive writing strategies, and all of them are in "Fair" category for their writing performance. None of the students falls in "Very Good" and "Good" category for their writing performance.

The result of the analysis shows that $\text{Thau-c}(\zeta) = 0.114 < \text{score of Z standard} = 1.96$ with significance level is 0.298. The rank of ordinal scale in the independent variable is evaluated by using Somers' d test (analysis).

The Correlation between Cognitive Writing Strategies and Writing Performance Obtained from Questionnaire

Table 5. Correlation between Cognitive Writing Strategies and Writing Performance Obtained from Questionnaire

Cognitive Writing Strategies Obtained from Questionnaire	Writing Performance						Number		Statistical test result		
	Very good		Good		Fair				Kendall thau-c	Normality	Signif
	n	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	0.703	7.041	0.000
Always	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0			
Often	6	28.6	14	66.7	1	4.8	21	100.0			
Cannot Decide	0	0.0	4	28.6	10	71.4	14	100.0			
Total	8	21.7	18	48.6	11	29.7	37	100.0			

The 2 students who are included in "Always" category based on the students' ability of cognitive writing strategies obtained from questionnaire are in "Very Good" category (the same scale) for their writing performance. None of the students in the category fall in "Good" and "Fair" category for their writing performance. Next, 21 students are in "Often" category, 6 (28.6%) are in "Very Good" category, 14 (66.7%) are in "Good" category, and 1 (4.8%) is in "Fair" category for their writing performance. Furthermore, 14 students are in "Cannot Decide" category for their cognitive writing strategies while 4 of them (28.6%) are in "Good" category, and 10 students (71.4%) are in "Fair" category for their writing performance. None of them is in "Very Good" category.

Actually, there are two more categories each: Seldom and never; and Poor and Very Poor; however, since no students under the categories (Zero) and for the purpose of practicality, they are omitted from the table.

The result of the analysis shows that Thau-c (ζ) = 0.703 > score of Z standard = 1.96 with significance level of 0.000. The rank of ordinal scale in the independent variable which is evaluated by using Somers' D test (analysis) seems to be symmetrical with level of significance is 0.000. This means that the rank of the scale of cognitive writing strategies variable and the results of writing performance are significantly correlated. The correlation between cognitive writing strategies obtained from questionnaire and writing performance of the students are evaluated by using Kendall Thau-c shows the result of Thau-c (ζ) = 7.041. This score implies that the contribution of cognitive writing strategies obtained from questionnaire to the students' writing performance is 70.3%.

Discussion

The findings of this current research indicate that cognitive writing strategies correlate with the students' writing performance, although their relationship is not all significant. This implies that there are other factors which also affect the writing performance of the students where in this research are not explored. For example, their linguistic knowledge, culture, etc. Mu's (2007) findings indicate that metacognitive and cognitive writing strategies mostly affect students' performance. In line with Mu's findings, this research also shows quantitatively, the correlation between writing strategies and the writing performance of the moderate achiever writers.

The findings indicate that the distribution of cognitive writing strategies obtained from the two instruments used (See tables 1 and 2) show that the highest level of cognitive writing strategies ability the students can achieve is in "Good" category. This means that whatever instruments used to measure their cognitive writing strategies the results will be more or less the same.

Next, in connection with the result of their achievement test which is evaluated based on the five elements of writing (Organization, Logical Development of ideas, Grammar, Mechanics, and Styles & Quality of Expression), it indicates that the majority of the students basically, have no problem with Grammar (See Table 4) although their level of Grammar ability is in "Good" category, not in the "Very Good" category. This is interesting because it proves that the students focus more on grammar rather than organization and content where in writing assessment, organization and content usually get higher score than Grammar. This further explains that the moderate achiever writers spent their time more on surface level rather than organization and content. Previous research findings indicate that low achiever (novice writer) satisfied with scratching the surface, like grammar and they do not try to examine a problem in depth (mhtml:file://G:/2009) such as organization and content. As comparison, high achievers pay attention more on organization and content. Although the example refers to low achievers, their way of dealing with writing is the same as the way the moderate achiever writers reacts in writing. Moderate achiever writers' writing is closer to the low achievers rather than to the high achievers.

Between the two instruments used to measure the correlation between cognitive writing strategies and their writing performance, questionnaire shows significant correlation with level of significance is 0.000 (significant), and the contribution of cognitive writing strategies to the writing performance of the students obtained from the results of the questionnaire is 70.3% (strong) (See Table 5) compared to the other instrument, that is achievement test. According to

Lemeshew (1987), the contribution ranged from 0 - 25 is weak; 25 – 50 is moderate; 50 – 75 is considered strong, and 75 - above is perfect. The correlation between cognitive writing strategies and writing performance obtained from the achievement test results is 0.298 (not significant) and the contribution of cognitive writing strategies obtained from the achievement test to the writing performance of the students is 11.4% (weak).

Although the correlation above is not significant, it does not mean that there is no correlation at all. There is correlation but does not reach the point to be considered significant. In order to state a variable has correlation, it is basically affected by three factors: measurement used; the person who does the measurement and the object being measured (Lemeshow, 1987). Based on the rule, it can be said that the insignificance and the weakness of the instruments is caused by the factor (s). This needs further research. This is the characteristic of quantitative method because it cannot dig further down since its orientation is population and provides one conclusion. In contrast, qualitative method is able to explore those problems. Therefore, in this research, qualitative method is also used. The findings which cannot be explained by qualitative method is explained qualitatively in the following section.

Theoretically, if one has good ability of cognitive writing strategies, his/her writing performance is normally good as well. However, the theory is not fully true. The theory might be applicable for first language learners of English (L1). There are eight students whose cognitive writing strategies are in "Very Good" category, however, their writing performance obtained from achievement test are in the "Fair" category. This deviates far from normal. Ideally, if their writing strategies are very good, their writing performance should be very good too. Qualitatively, this implies that they know the strategies but they cannot apply the strategies appropriately. This is based on what students say that *"We know the rules/strategies if we follow them we need more time to do our tasks."*

There is also one student whose cognitive writing strategies is in "Good" category but the student's writing performance obtained from the questionnaire is in the "Fair" category. It means that their relationship is not normal or asymmetrical. The theory might be applicable for first language learner of English, the finding like this cannot be analyzed quantitatively, however, it can be further analyzed through qualitative analysis. This is the benefit of doing triangulation. From the student's answers in the questionnaire the cause of the problem can be detected. The student says: *I seldom clarify problems occurred in my writing.* This implies that although we have the ability of the strategies but they are not employed consistently, the strategies will give negative contribution to our writing performance.

Furthermore, there are four students whose cognitive writing strategies are in "Can't Decide" category but their writing performance obtained from the questionnaire fall into "Good" category. This is not normal, in other words, it must be something wrong here. Ideally, they should also be in "Fair" category. The problem can be explored in the results of their questionnaire where their answers reflect their ability of cognitive writing strategies. Basically,, they say that: *I seldom clarify problems occurred in my writing but I often generate ideas (brainstorm) before I start writing.*

This shows that although their ability of cognitive writing strategies in "Fair" category, but actually, they have a little knowledge of the strategies and aware of the benefit, it affect their writing performance positively.

Conclusion

Although the two instruments used in the research, only questionnaire shows the correlation between cognitive writing strategies and the students writing performance is significantly correlated, however, it does not mean that the achievement test has no correlation. Actually, there is correlation but it does not reach level to be considered significant. Next, it is very obvious that cognitive writing strategies obtained from achievement test and questionnaire contribute to the students writing performance, although the contribution of the achievement test is weak. In contrast, questionnaire's contribution is strong. In addition, qualitatively, there are students who are (not) aware and inconsistently use the strategies and these affect their writing performance positively and negatively. Finally, it is recommended to explore other writing strategies, such as metacognitive, rhetoric, and social/affective writing strategies to get a broad view of our EFL learners' understanding and application of those strategies.

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The Arab translation students' hindrances in translating political culture from English into Arabic

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This study empirically investigates the hindrances that encounter the fourth year students of Translation when translating political terms and expressions from English into Arabic. To do so, 40 Yemeni students in the last year of graduation, whose ages ranged 22- 23 translate three authentic texts of seven political terms and expressions from English into Arabic. Their translations of political culture are analyzed and classified into institutions, terms and abbreviations. The students' percentage of errors reach 64% and the percentage of those who used the dictionary to solve the translation problem is 38%, which reveal that the student encountered considerable difficulty in translating such political expressions from English into Arabic. The students' errors in translating the components of political culture are classified into addition, omission, selection and avoidance, which might be resulted from students' insufficient knowledge of English political culture (i.e. declarative knowledge) and lack of training in translating political culture from English into Arabic (i.e. procedural knowledge).

Keywords: political culture, translation, errors, translation approaches

Introduction

Due to differences between the Arab and Western political systems, the cultural gap constitutes a problem either for professional translator or novice translators in rendering the source language (SL) text into the target language (TL). The cultural gaps are represented in differences in situations, concepts, ideas and behaviors between the SL community and the TL community. Schäffner(2001) argues that political texts, including political speeches, tend to be quite cultural bound, meaning that they tend to possess many cultural-specific references as for example references to history, important places or persons. These make the task of the translator complex as he needs to be bicultural as he is already bilingual. Not only that, he or she needs to be trained of how to render the culture-based texts into Arabic.

The main concern of this paper is to explore the difficulties faced by translator students when translating political expressions and terms from English into Arabic. To achieve this objective, the article first shows the scope of political culture and the problematicity of its translation. It then summarizes the major approaches that deal with translating political texts and accounts for the previous relevant studies on translating culture in general and political expressions and terms in particular. Besides, it rationalizes the methods used to investigate the research questions. Finally, it discusses the implications of the findings and suggests areas for further research.

The political cultural references come in the form of terms, expressions, abbreviations, names of government institutions or organizations. One of the major problems of translating political terminologies or expressions is comprehension due to the difference of the SL political situation from the TL situation. In case of solving the comprehension problem, the absence or lack of cultural equivalence in the TL constitutes problems to the translator in rendering the SL term into the TL. Clear examples of this case are shown in the text below.

Text 1

Britain has an upper new class: the super class which is built on old professions and institutions. Being British, they have solid base in tradition, whether in, Downing Street Oxbridge, the Inns of Court, the House of Lords or the City of London. (The Observer 21.9.97 cited in Olk, H.2002:174)

The terms 'Downing Street, Oxbridge, the Inns of the Court, the House of Lords are specific British political terms that may not be perceived by students due the lack of knowledge of English political culture. The student translator' lack of exposition to SL political culture creates comprehension problem for the translator. It is natural that the student translator do not know these terms. The problem is that the students translator don not know how to deal with such political terms. The translator should have declarative knowledge (i.e. knowing what) and procedural knowledge (i.e. knowing how) (Molina & Albir: 2002).

The first political sign 'Downing Street' refers to British government. The transliteration procedure may not be more appropriate since the term remains ambiguous to the TL reader. Therefore, the dynamic equivalent is more appropriate, i.e.' the British government' so that it can be clear to the TL reader. This can be applied to other political terms in the text above such as 'Oxbridge, White Hall, the Inns of Court, and the House of Lords, which stand for the great political and teaching institutions in Britain. Without such knowledge, the students cannot translate them adequately into the TL since they are specific English political terms. In spite of the development of communication technology, which makes the world like a small village, it cannot be relied on in understanding the culture of English. There is a necessity to expose

students of English to various types of authentic texts that reflect English culture such as politics and train them to translate such types of texts.

To sum up, the problem in translating the political terms above lie in the process of comprehension and production. The comprehension problems is ascribed to the students' lack of exposure to the TL culture and the production problems occurs because the students are not trained enough to translate such political terms.

Cultural Model

It is one of the best models to translate culture. It consists of two methods- semantic method and dynamic equivalence method that will be sketched below.

As for the semantic method, it is based on the theory of language, which defines meaning in terms of its cultural fields and contexts. According to this method, translating is describing and explaining the world view of one people to another. The proponents of this method believe that cultural gaps among languages are inevitable and are not always bridgeable. Ghazala (2004) comments on such a case, saying that culture is one of the most difficult topics in translation, however, it is not right to say that it is untranslatable. The translation practice all around the globe proves the translatability of alien and remote cultures and languages concerned.

In terms of translation teaching, teachers following this method concentrate on contrasts between various cultures, demonstrating to the students how different people conceptualize and view the world differently. The students are trained to attain the maximum degree of sensitivity to the culture-bound elements inherent in each lexical item (ibid).

The Dynamic equivalence method is defined by Nida (1964: 166) as "the closest natural equivalence to the source language message". As a student of Nida, Newmark (1981) develops this method and calls it 'communicative translation' due to its focus on creating a successful communication between the translator and his or her readership. Unlike semantic translation, the priority here is given to the TL readers over faithfulness to the SL.

Dynamic equivalence takes different forms such as alterations, paraphrasing, description, omission, borrowing with some added explanations of the foreign terms and substitution of different concepts and images. It is considered one of the most successful translation methods. However, it was criticized by some translation theorists for ignoring the SL culture. Bassnett-McGuire (1980) and Kornissarov (1991) argue:

Replacing one concept by another in translation is deceiving the TL reader by making him or her ignorant of the reality of the SL culture. It is an underestimation of his or her capability of understanding the SL culture. The fact that a concept does not exist in the culture of the TL reader does not at all mean that he or she is incapable of understanding it. (cited in Kashoob:85)

By way of illustration, they reject Nida's translation by replacing the Biblical expression 'to greet another with a kiss' by "to give a hearty handshake all around" when translated to people to whom the kiss would have a completely different meaning (ibid). As I see it, Bassnett-McGuire (1980) and Kornissarov (1991) have a point in their criticism of dynamic equivalence. The substitution of one term by another term since it does not exist in the TL is not an appropriate alternative in many cases because it makes the TL reader ignorant of the SL culture. In spite of that, the dynamic equivalence remains an efficient method in cases where

intelligibility cannot be attained. It is also crucial in translating taboos, political, religious, social, material elements that are not lexicalized in the TL

There are six studies devoted to translation problems from English into Arabic and vice versa, taking account of the cultural dimension in translation. It is noteworthy to mention these studies with their objectives and findings to show how they differ and relate to this study. They can be classified into empirical and theoretical studies. The works of Bahumaid(2010), Deeb (2005), Moharram (2004) and Mansouri (2004) are empirical studies that aim at developing the teaching situation of translation while Thawbteh (2006) and Kashoob (1995) are theoretical studies.

As for Bahumaid (2010), he investigates the level of post-graduate students' competence in translating culture specific expressions from English into Arabic. He finds that the low level of the students' performance in translating cultural expressions. He ascribed such low level to informants' inadequate knowledge of English culture, inappropriate use of dictionaries and inability to use translation procedures. Deeb (2005) aims at classifying the translation problems from English into Arabic in the context of a teaching situation. Among her findings, the main translation problems are micro-language problems and macro-text level problems. The micro-language problems are grammar, vocabulary and spelling. The macro-text level problems are rhetorical and stylistic devices, cohesion, register and style, background knowledge and culture. From her classification, it is clear that cultural translation problems come under textual problems. The researcher's main concern was to provide a taxonomy of translation problems rather than to go in depth in translation problems so that cultural translation problems were not given due considerations. Moharram (2004) studies the undergraduate students' error in translating general texts from Arabic into English. She uses texts of different topics from different sources such as magazines, newspapers, etc which students translate from Arabic into English. She finds that Yemeni students' errors are due to interference of the native language, range of vocabulary items and cultural differences in terms of concepts and values.

Mansouri's study (2004) is conducted on the third-year students of translation at Batna University in Algeria. It was on the importance of linguistic and cultural knowledge as prerequisites for translation. One of her main findings is that the linguistic and cultural competence is essential for translators, so translation training programme should take these dimensions into account. Besides, the prior linguistic competence leads to better learning of translation; this would be also true of cultural knowledge. Thus, culture should be taught as language taught in translation..

Thawbteh (2006) studies the translation of cultural signs from Arabic into English from a discourse perspective. The study works within Descriptive Translation studies; hence the study described the TT (target text) and compared it to the ST (source text) for potential shifts. Then, it measures and analyses those shifts. The data of the study comprise a collection of ten Arabic short stories. He reveals that the problematic areas in translating from Arabic into English are religion, politics, habits and customs due to their differences from Arabic to English.

Kashoob (1995) investigates the cultural translation problems with references to soft-sell advertisements. He shows how cultural differences between English and Arabic constitute problems for translators in rendering various elements of humour, irony, persuasion, taboos, conceptual sarcasm and cultural intertextuality, etc into Arabic.

Having introduced the problematicity of translating political expressions and terms, approaches to translating culture-based texts and the relevant studies, one can find that there is a need for extensive studies in what hinder students in the process of comprehension and

production so as to find solutions to tackle them. Diagnosing the students' problem is the first stage in the process of finding successful solution. Therefore the study aims to find out what hinder students in the process and production of culture-based texts, namely politics. The research questions that study attempts to empirically answer take the following form:

Do the fourth year students of translation have problems in translating politics-based texts from English into Arabic? If yes, what are these problems?

Methodology

The Participants

The participants of the study were native speakers of Arabic, enrolled in the undergraduate program of Translation in the Faculty of Arts, Ibb University, Yemen. They were in the fourth level of undergraduate translation program. In the first two years, the students had extensive courses in language skills. In the last two years, they had courses in Translation in addition to some modules in Linguistics and Literature. The students were classified as an upper intermediate level of English, based on their performance in placement test of translation administered by their department. The students scored in the placement test between 10-15 out of 20. It was expected that the students make a good use of courses in language skills in the first two levels and courses of Translation in the last two levels to practice translation. 40 students, representing half of the population, whose ages ranged between 22 and 23 are chosen randomly as the study sample. The participants were male and female students, selected randomly.

The test was administered to the students in the classroom. The students were given instructions of how to translate and what type of texts they are going to translate. They were given one hour and half to translate the five texts, expecting that each text will take eighteen minutes. The students were motivated to translate the texts. The participants who translated the texts were given a bonus -soft copies of translation books and papers. Besides, the teachers of the course gave them five mark bonus in the module of translation. The students were allowed to use dictionaries and other sources so as to see whether the students can use dictionaries and other sources to overcome the problems that encounter them in translating the texts.

As for Readability of texts, the texts readability was evaluated by applying the Lix (Schulz, 1981) Formula. The readability scale, as determined by the Lix formula, was, indicating that the texts were fairly easy, that match the students in the seventh grade whose age ranges between 13 and 17. That means that texts are readable and the structure of the sentences can be understood. However, the texts are cultural loaded, which aim at examining students' ability to comprehend the political culture- based texts and render them into their native language, which may make the Lix formula cannot account for.

The design of the test took account of the objectives of the study either in the selection of the texts and their length. The main criterion of selecting the texts to be translated by the students was that they exhibit as many varied problems of translating the political cultural references as possible. They were selected on the basis of the translation theorists' classifications of the problematic areas in translating culture such as Newmark (1981) and Baker (1992). The second criterion was that they were authentic texts since they best represent English political culture. Authentic texts were chosen from different sources such as electronic British newspapers,

namely Guardian and Sunday. Besides, presenting political terms and expressions in context is supposed to be of great help to the students translate adequately.

The test consisted of three texts that covered different types of political terms. The texts were short so that the respondents react positively to the translation test. It is composed of seven items that represented the types of cultural references; every item was given one grade. The full grade was seven. It was refereed by five professors in Applied Linguistics and Translation.

Dictionary Use

'The dictionary use' is used as a supplement to the translation test because the use of multiple measures gives a more reliable picture of second language learners' output. The students' writing of the symbol 'D' before the items or sections they looked up in a dictionary aimed at showing the difficulty the students encountered in the process of translation. They were concrete evidence about the difficulty of translating some items. They were analyzed quantitatively and verbally. It is an indirect way to elicit data from the students about the items and sections that hinder them while translating. This technique is expected to solve the problems of avoidance. Some students avoid translating the texts because of some difficult items or sections, so this technique frees the students from worry and then they start translating the task when they feel that there is no restriction on the use of different resources. It also denotes to what extent the use of dictionary is helpful in translating. It is important to mention that the translation task and the use of the dictionary are analysed together and individually.

Results

Political Culture

Due to the differences between the political system of the English society and the Arabic one, the students encountered problems in translating the political concepts. The students' problem in translating the political culture was attributed to the lack of background of such concepts. The literal translation of such concepts induced the students to deviate from their real sense. Although, the English political concepts have their functional equivalents into Arabic (Ghazala, 2008), most of the students could not render them into Arabic. The problematic areas in translating the political concepts can be classified into government institutions, abbreviations and titles. These are some elements of English political system that existed in the texts used in the study. There are of course other elements of the English political system that are not mentioned in the study. This classification is based on the texts used in the translation test. The students can use the dictionaries and other resources to overcome the comprehension problems but few students use them which show most of the students were not aware of the problematicity of the texts they translated.

Table. The Frequency of the Students' Errors in Translating Political Culture

2-	Political Culture				
N	Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage	Dictionary use

			of Errors		
1-	Institutions	Home office	33	0.825	17
		House of commons	12	0.30	20
		Shadow cabinet	33	0.825	20
		Conservative party	5	0.125	25
2-	Titles	Chancellor	32	0.80	20
		Shadow minister	36	0.90	10
3-	Abbreviations	MP	29	0.725	5
Total			180	0.642857	117 0.38

From the table above, the more problematic items to be translated by the students are 'shadow minister', 'home office', 'shadow cabinet' and 'chancellor' and 'MP'. In spite of the students' use of the dictionary, it was of little help for most students to translate them appropriately. The items 'home office', 'chancellor', 'shadow minister', and 'shadow cabinet' constituted problems for the students to translate into Arabic even if they looked them up in a dictionary as it is shown clearly in the table above. This was due to poor skills of using the dictionary. In this case of 'chancellor', the students had a problem of selecting the right equivalent. In the case of 'home office', 'shadow cabinet' and 'shadow minister', the students' main problem lay in their literal translation of such items or unjustified omission of the part of the concepts as in the case of omitting the classifier 'shadow' from the phrases 'shadow minister' and 'shadow cabinet', which induced the students to deviate from their real meanings. This reflects that the students did not have background of such political concepts. Besides, they did not know how to deal with translating the political concepts. This was attributed to the students' lack of skills of using the context and dictionary to render the SL items into the TL appropriately.

The fourth column shows that translating the political concepts was difficult for the students. The percentage of errors committed by the students was 64%. The percentage of correct translations was 36%. This percentage was attributed to the students' use of a dictionary as it has been shown in the table above. This implies that the students had severe problems in translating political concepts. As it has been mentioned in the literature review, translation problems are

what hinder the students in translating directly from the SL into the TL, e.g. dictionary use or result in error. In so doing, the students' use of the dictionary is concrete evidence for the problematicity of translating the political culture into Arabic. Twenty-five students used the dictionary in translating 'conservative party'. Twenty students used the dictionary in translating 'shadow cabinet' and 'chancellor'. However, many of them could not use the dictionary to solve translation problem as in the case of 'chancellor and 'shadow cabinet' because of the students' poor skills of using the dictionary on the one hand and the cultural load of SL items on the other hand.

In sum, translating the political culture remains difficult for the students since the percentage of the students' errors reached 64% of the whole items of the political culture. That is, the subjects committed 180 frequent errors and have 100 frequent correct answers in translating political culture. Besides, 38% of the students used the dictionary in translating the political concepts, which is concrete evidence for the students' severe problems in translating the political culture. This means that many of the students' correct translations are attributed to the use of the dictionary.

Use of the Dictionary

In the process of translation, the students used the dictionary to solve the translation problems. In spite of that, some of the students could not solve the translation problems. This reflected that the students could not use the dictionary well. Besides, they did not use the dictionary in the light of the context, which caused them to deviate from the SL meaning. The students should use the dictionary with an idea about the context in order to select the right meaning from the dictionary.

The number of the political concepts represented in the texts used in the translation test is seven. The students used the dictionary in translating all such items. About 50% of the students used the dictionary in translating 'House of commons, 'chancellor' and 'shadow cabinet'. This indicates that the students encountered difficulty in translating such items. However, the problems of translating such items remain because the students could not use the dictionary well to solve these problems as in the case of ' chancellor and 'shadow cabinet'.

Regarding 'conservative party' and 'home office', about 38% and 43% used the dictionary respectively to solve the translation problem. Many students solved the translation problem as in the case of ' House of Commons' and Conservative Party'. This might be attributed to the fact that they have only one meaning in the dictionary. However, more than 75% of the students could not solve the translation problem in translating 'chancellor', 'shadow cabinet', and home office'. This may be attributed to the multiple meanings they have as in the case of 'chancellor'. Besides, the students used the dictionary wrongly to search for 'home office' and 'shadow cabinet'- they looked them up in a dictionary not as whole units but as separated words. This induced the students to deviate from their real meanings.

The problematicity of translating political culture is attributed to these causes:

1. the students' lack of background of such concepts;
2. many of the political elements are not lexicalised in Arabic;
3. the students' lack of knowledge of translation strategies;
4. the SL items of political culture are more implicit;
5. the students' poor reading skills; and

6. inability to use the dictionary and context to recognize the meaning of such concepts

Types of Errors

Omission

It was one of the most common errors in translating the three English culture-based texts into Arabic. The students relied heavily on omission to solve the translation problem. Omission here means leaving parts of the whole items or sections to make the meaning acceptable or because of comprehension problems. The table below is divided into four groups- the items translated by the students, the frequency of errors, the error and the model of translation. It is clear that the students' use of the dictionary facilitate to some extent the students' task in translating the political concepts.

As for the political terms, the students committed errors of omission in translating 'chancellor', 'shadow minister', 'shadow cabinet' and 'MP'. They did this because of the lack of schemata of such terms. The students might not realize that these are specific concepts in the political system of the English society. Unlike the political culture, these terms are lexicalized into Arabic. To put it another way, their functional equivalents exist in Arabic. However, the students did not know how to deal with such items to solve their problematicity either in the process of comprehension or production into Arabic. The items 'shadow minister' and 'shadow cabinet' were translated as "وزير" and "مجلس الوزراء" respectively by about 70% of the students. The problem was that the students did not comprehend the meaning of such concepts and this was reflected in their translations. Besides, the students' use of omission indicates that they did not use omission properly. This means that they did not know the meaning of the item, so they omitted it, which is not a right procedure.

Table .2 The Students' Errors of Omission

	The item	The Error	Model of Translation
1.	Chancellor	وزير	وزير المالية
2.	Shadow minister	وزير	وزير الحزب المعارض
3.	Shadow cabinet	مجلس الوزراء	مجلس حكومة المعارضة
4.	MP	عضو	عضو البرلمان

Deviation

Deviation means that the students' translations did not have any relation with the SL meaning. Besides, the students' procedure in solving translation problem is not correct since it results in deviation from the SL meaning Table (3) shows the students' errors of deviation.

Table .3 Deviation

With respect to the political concepts, the students deviated from the meaning of the SL in two items 'home office' and 'House of Commons'. As for 'home office', it was translated literally as

No	Item	The Error	Model of Translation
.			
1.	Home office	الحكومة البريطانية-المكتب الوطني-المكتب الرئيس-المكتب العام	وزارة الداخلية
2.	House of Commons	وزارة الإعلام-استديو بيت الشائعات	مجلس العموم البريطاني

"الحكومة البريطانية" and by guessing as in the case of "المكتب العام", "المكتب الرئيس", "المكتب الوطني". These indicate the students' lack of background of such concepts.

Selection

The problem with these types of errors was the wrong selection of the TL items that resulted in ambiguity and distortion of the translated text. The problem that encountered the students in translating the cultural items is that some of them are not lexicalised into Arabic. The students' problem in translating such cultural items is that they did not know how to deal with such problems. That is, they did not know when to add, paraphrase and omit, etc.

Table .4 The Students' Errors of Selection

No	The item	The Errors	Model of Translation
1	Chancellor	المستشار- رئيس الوزراء رئيس جامعة	وزير المالية
2	Shadow cabinet	حكومة الظل	مجلس حكومة المعارضة
3	Shadow minister	وزير الظل	وزير الحزب المعارض

The students' prominent error in translating the political culture, namely, 'chancellor' was the incorrect selection of the TL items- "المستشار" and "رئيس الوزراء" and "رئيس جامعة" as an equivalent for 'chancellor'. These are possible meanings for translating the item 'chancellor'. However, in this context, it should be rendered as "وزير المالية". This indicates that students used the dictionary and selected one of the multiple meanings of this item without thinking of the context. Some students had problems in selecting the appropriate TL item that already exists in their minds. Furthermore, they could not select the right translation from the entries, list of meanings for one item. This shows that the students could not make a good use of the context because of poor reading skills as in the case of 'chancellor'. The other problems in errors of selection are the choice of TL items that are not clear for the TL readership and are not used in Arabic as in the case of 'shadow cabinet' and 'shadow minister'.

Avoidance

Avoidance means that the students leave the item or utterance without translation. It is an error that is difficult to analyze. The students did not allow us to see how their minds work. This type of errors shows that the students could not use a dictionary or guessing to translate the SL items into Arabic. The main problem that induced the students to leave items or sections without translation is non-existence of comprehension.

Table.5 The Students' Errors of Avoidance

No	Item	Model of Translation
1.	House of commons	مجلس العموم البريطاني-البرلمان
2.	Conservative party	حزب المحافظين
3.	MP	عضو البرلمان

Causes of Errors

With regard to the causes of errors, the findings of the relative severity of errors in different areas have a significant implication for watching students' performance and what can be read from their error behavior. For example, the high level of comprehension errors is an indication that the problem is more than mere lack of transfer skills; it is in fact a manifestation of limited knowledge of English and particularly culture in the first place. The main cause of the students' errors is that the students could not identify the problematic areas in the texts they are going to translate because of:

1. The students' lack of background of English political culture.
2. The students' lack of knowledge of translation strategies that enable them to deal with translation problems such as non-equivalence, i.e. some SL items are not lexicalized into Arabic
3. The students' poor reading skills.

All such findings entail teachers of translation, syllabus designers, material writers and students of translation to take account of such findings. This is the concern of the following sections.

Pedagogical Implications

This study generates some pedagogical implications for instructors and curricula designers. The components of political culture should be taken into consideration by syllabus designers and teachers of translation. It can be used as a model for representing the political cultural dimension in the syllabus design of translation courses in terms of the contents and activities of the syllabus. Besides, it can be used in writing the translation material in terms of determining the topics of the material and the choice of texts.

The texts used in the translation test can be used as representative examples for training the students to translate the cultural dimension. They can be used as useful exercises inside and outside the class. The list of the students' errors presented by the study can help the teachers of translation to write or choose translation materials bearing in mind such errors, which are expected to help the students of translation to avoid such errors in the process of translating the political cultural dimension from English into Arabic. The study suggests presenting the cultural

dimension in teaching translation systematically. This can be done through considering the classification of the political translation problems, the use of authentic texts in presenting the cultural translation problems since they best reflect English culture and the norms of language use because they are written by native speakers, who know their language and culture well. Then, the students can be trained to solve translation problems systematically through analyzing the SL texts so that they can identify the problematicity of translating the texts they encounter and hence solve their problematicity. Identifying the problematic areas in translating the texts is the first step towards the solution of their translation problems.

With regard to the teaching situation of translation, the process of change should take place. This can be done through the systematic teaching of translation modules, analysis of the students' needs, choice of experienced teachers particularly specialists in translation and re-evaluating the policy of translation programme by the principles of the program. They should re-think of the demands of the changes inside and outside the country. To be specific, the students' skills should be developed rather than knowledge about English and translation. Starting from level two. The most important thing is the nature of situations and the needs of the curriculum going to be implemented. When developing translation curricula, the theory should be an integrated with practice not combined as a separated items. In other words, curriculum objectives should worded in terms of skills and competence model as integrated scheme not as separate notions.

Regarding school teachers, they can use translation as a method of teaching English since it assures the clarity of some concepts and idioms for the students. Besides, teachers should encourage students to translate sentences rather than words since it develops students' thinking and understanding of the language.

Suggestions for Further Research

Since the study is limited in its scope to the political cultural problems that encounter the students of translation in translating the culture-based texts from English into Arabic, it cannot cover many topics that are of relevance to it. Therefore, I call researchers to investigate these study areas:

1. First, it would be enlightening if a further empirical research is carried out to investigate whether translating from Arabic into English would create parallel or different problems for both Arabic and native speakers of English.
2. It would be useful if the same study was conducted on post-graduate students of the translation to see whether the study will get the same results, which reflect the common problems and drawbacks of current translation programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
3. There is a need for empirical and theoretical studies of each type of political cultural translation problems such as abbreviation, terms and expressions, institutions and organization etc. which will be a useful contribution to English-Arabic translation in the teaching situation of translation at the academic and professional level.
4. It would be useful if there were extensive studies of students' strategies in translating political culture from English into Arabic, particularly in the process of translation.

A concluding Summary

Translating political culture is one of the problematic issues that encounters the foreign language students of English either in the process of comprehension or production into the TL. Such problematicity is due to the students' limited cultural knowledge of English since they learn it in a formal setting, i.e. inside the classroom. Besides, the students' problems in the process of production into the TL are attributed to unsystematic teaching of the translation modules in the

BA programme. Therefore, the task of English language programmes generally and translation programmes particularly is to compensate the students for such lack of knowledge of English culture. This requires translation programmes, English language teaching programmes and modules of translation to give the cultural dimension its value either in the contents of the courses or in the methods of teaching. Besides, the translation modules should be taught systematically, focusing on training the students to use translation strategies appropriately to solve translation problems.

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Appendix A
Translation Test

1. Text (1)

Fish rots from the head!!

Damian Green gave a brief on-camera interview after learning today that he would not be charged in relation to his involvement in the leaking of information from the Home Office. However, afterwards he gave a much fuller briefing to journalists in the House of Commons press gallery. (Guardian.Co.Uk. Thursday, April 16, 2009)

2. Text(2)

Members of the shadow cabinet have repaid a further £25,000 in response to demands from the Commons auditor, Sir Thomas Legg, the Conservative party said today. The sum represents the amount paid back by 13 shadow ministers in response to final letters recently sent by Legg which said how much money ought to be repaid by individual MPs. (The Guardian.Co.UK, Friday, December 18, 2009)

3. Text(3)

Under plans announced by the chancellor Gordon Brown in the 2002 budget, 16 sports are set to receive £60m over three years between them to improve facilities at clubs, with the first tranche of funding due in March (...) of the money has been earmarked for the four main sports - football, rugby, tennis and cricket, each of which will receive £9.4m. (The Guardian. Co. UK, Friday, January 2, 2004).

An Investigation of Top-down Listening Processing Skills Taught by EFL Teachers in Gaza Governmental High Schools

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Abstract

Top-down processing is needed for real world listening (Richard, 1990). This study aimed at investigating top-down listening processing skills included in *English for Palestine* 11 & 12 and used by Gaza high school EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers, besides exploring the problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills as perceived by Gaza high school EFL teachers and their supervisors. For fulfilling the study aims, the researcher utilized five instruments: two evaluation checklists, a closed-question questionnaire, an open-question questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. Participants were two EFL university instructors, four EFL school supervisors and 81 EFL teachers working in Gaza governmental high schools. Using frequencies means, standard deviations, percentages, and the rubrics put by Gillham (2000), the study concluded that *English for Palestine* 11 & 12 focused on no top-down listening skills other than listening for a gist and listening for supporting details. Furthermore, the open-question questionnaire data showed that the participants experienced problems when attempting to teach top-down listening skills (i.e., lack of students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence). Based on the study results, implications were offered.

Keywords: Top-down listening skills, EFL teachers, Gaza

Introduction

Listening is very essential for developing a second or a foreign language (Vandergrift, 2008; Wallace, 1998). Listening gives a foundation for all language aspects such as speaking (Brown, 2001), syntax and pronunciation (Cross, 1992). Moreover, through listening, people can gain large amounts of knowledge and information (Villegas, 2013), and therefore, it can help people participate and communicate effectively. Due to this importance, recent research has focused on L2/FL (Second language, foreign language) listening instruction. While some studies centered on L2/FL listening problems (e.g., Hamouda, 2013; Yahya, 2007), other studies investigated L2/FL listening strategies (e.g., Abdelhamid, 2012; Alili, 2009; Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Hasan, 2000).

Amongst the strategies emphasized by many L2/FL educators are top-down and bottom-up processing strategies (Orii-Akita, 2014; Al-Qaraghooly & Al-Bermani, 2010). While bottom-up processing focuses on listener's understanding based on analyzing sounds, words, clauses, and sentences, top-down processing refers to the use of background information in understanding a message, assigning things and places into categories, and in drawing inferences (Richards, 1990). Moreover, Brown (2011) states that top-down skills include making predictions about what students are listening to.

Taking into account top-down listening strategies and piaget's (1996/2000) stages of development, which suggest that abstract concepts, deductive reasoning, and logical analysis tend to appear in the age of 11-15 year olds (Lewis & Dahbany, 2008), it may be argued that EFL students between grades 6 and 12 in Palestine need to be trained to use top-down strategies. However, Hammad (2014a) reported that Gaza public preparatory school students tended to focus on bottom-up processing skills rather than top-down processing skills in their English reading classes. Moreover, through her experience as an academic supervisor of EFL pre-service teachers, the researcher had noticed that Gaza EFL teachers placed heavy emphasis on bottom-up strategies at the expense of top-down strategies in English classes, particularly English listening classes, at Gaza high schools (eleventh and twelfth grade, ages 17-18 years old). Given that very limited research has been conducted on the use of top-down listening processing strategies in Palestinian EFL context, it was necessary to approach this research area examining top-down listening processing skills included in English textbooks utilized in Gaza high schools and the problems Gaza high school teachers encountered in teaching such skills.

Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical framework related to the topic of the study, followed by a review for the related studies on L2/FL listening in general and bottom-up and top-down processing skills in particular.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework in this study discusses the definition of listening, bottom-up and top-down processing skills, and extensive and intensive listening including the stages of teaching the listening class.

Definition of 'listening'

While Oxford dictionaries (2014) define *listening* as being ready to hear something, Bordonaro (2014) notes that *listening* is more than hearing. In Bordonaro's view, *listening* is understanding, reacting, predicting, and acting on what is said. Additionally, Rost (2013) defines *listening* as a

mental process of decoding a message from spoken input. Verghese (1989) also views *listening* as decoding a message and comprehending it.

For the present study, *listening* is using linguistic knowledge and prior information to decode and understand a heard message. Additionally, good listeners should react to what is being said through a series of behaviors such as predicting, sequencing information or events, inferencing, summarizing, and suggesting.

Definition of 'Gaza Governmental High Schools'

Congruent with Palestinian Ministry of Education (2012), the term *Gaza Governmental High schools* in this study refers to the governmental schools which admit eleventh and twelfth graders in Gaza.

'English for Palestine 11 & 12'

English for Palestine 11 & 12 are the textbooks that were used in teaching English language to Palestinian eleventh and twelfth graders in the school year 2014-2015. While *English for Palestine 11* includes 12 units, *English for Palestine 12* is composed of 9 units. Each unit in both textbooks has 10 lessons, the fourth of which is a listening lesson, and each listening lesson should be delivered within one class period.

Top-down and bottom-up

Research indicates that there are two main models of the listening process: top-down and bottom-up models (e.g., Brown, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Peterson, 2001; Richards, 1990). Top-down model refers to the use of background information which helps in guessing and making predictions (Brown, 2001). It is higher level processing that is driven by the listener's comprehension of the context, the topic, the nature of the text, and the nature of the world (Peterson, 2001). Such processing includes drawing inferences, sequencing pictures and, events (Richards, 1990), finding main ideas, finding supporting details, and recognizing point of view (Peterson, 2001). According to Batova (2013), top-down processes enable students to extract meanings from messages, and enrich what they hear.

Bottom-up model, on the other hand, implies that listeners build understanding by starting with the smallest units of language such as individual sounds or phonemes. Then, listeners try to combine such sounds into words which make phrases, clauses, and sentences (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In other words, the listeners analyze the message they receive into successful levels of organization (i.e., sounds, words, phrases, and sentences) for the sake of comprehending the text message. Thus, bottom-up model is based on using phonological cues, lexical items, grammatical rules for identifying information (Richards, 1990). Examples of the bottom-up listening skills are discriminating between intonation contours, discriminating between phonemes, listening for morphological endings, recognizing syllable patterns and word stress, and recognizing words with reduced vowels and dropped syllables (Peterson, 2001).

Based on the above, it may be argued that both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies are effective in L2/FL listening instruction. While novice learners need to develop bottom-up skills, advanced learners should focus on top-down processing. In other words, once learners acquired adequate phonological, lexical, and syntactic knowledge and cultural backgrounds, emphasis should be placed on top-down listening skills. In this context, Vargas (2009) provides that learners need to practice bottom-up listening strategies from the beginning level classes as the foundation on which to build top-down listening strategies.

Intensive listening and extensive listening

According to many educators (e.g., Baruah, 2006; Kailani & Muqattash, 2008; Verghese, 1989), listening can be taught intensively and extensively. Intensive listening is concerned with training students to comprehend meaning and identify particular features of grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation (Baruah, 2006). This kind of listening is usually considered as a part of language teaching program (Verghese, 1989). It is carried out in the classroom, and controlled by the teacher (Kailani & Muqattash, 2008).

According to some educators (e.g., Gordon, 2007; Kan, 2010), FL/L2 listening class is best taught through three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. Pre-listening stage prepares students for listening tasks through activating prior background knowledge, discussing the title, and pre-teaching unfamiliar vocabulary. In the while-listening stage, teacher helps students get a detailed understanding of the text (Kan, 2010) through identifying specific information, answering detailed comprehension question, and dictation exercises. Post-listening activities help students apply the target language items included in the listening materials in context through role-plays and simulations (Gordon, 2007).

Considering the above literature on intensive listening, top-down processing skills, and bottom-up processing skills, it appears that it is through intensive listening classes, learners can practice both bottom-up strategies (i.e., recognizing unfamiliar language items, pronunciation, dictation exercises) and top-down strategies (i.e., predicting and inferencing based on getting a detailed understanding of the text). Additionally, Richards and Lockhart (1996) and Flowerdew and Miller (2005) view that developing both bottom-up and top-down processing can be achieved through and exposure to native speakers (i.e., broadcast and radio programs).

In extensive listening, it is not necessary to give detailed exercises of the listening materials since such type of listening is conducted for gathering information and enjoying stories, plays, and shows (Baruah, 2006). Extensive listening can be used for two purposes: representation of already known material in a new environment and exposing students to language items that are unfamiliar to them, but within their capacity (Broughton, Broughton, Brumfit, Pincas, & Wilde, 2003).

It is noteworthy that the present study focused on the listening activities included in *English for Palestine 11 & 12* and taught by Gaza high school EFL teachers (intensive listening activities) in the school year 2014-2015.

Previous Studies

A number of relevant studies have been conducted on L2/FL listening skills including top-down skills. For example, Abdalhamid (2012) examined listening comprehension skills of a sample of native speakers of Arabic in US. The study showed that advanced listeners used more top-down skills than intermediate listeners. In the same vein, Li and Renandya (2012) examined the approaches considered effective by Chinese EFL teachers in solving their students' problems with listening. The results indicated that the participants shared a preference for bottom up approach, assuring the importance of coping with fast speech and recognizing words in speech.

Related to the descriptive studies conducted on L2/FL listening comprehension, the two studies of Ghoneim (2013) and Yahya (2007) focused on the problems listeners encountered while listening. Ghoneim (2013) showed that unlike less proficient learners, advanced learners used top-down processing while listening. Moreover, Yahya (2007) investigated the obstacles Iraqi EFL university learners encountered while listening. The study reported that the

participants were unable to use prior information and background knowledge to guess the new words and expressions.

As for the experimental studies conducted in this area, the four studies of Al-Qaraghooly and Al-Bermani (2010), Orii-Akita (2014), Siegel and Siegel (2013), and Villegas (2013) centered on evaluating the effectiveness of top-down and bottom-up strategies in FL/L2 instruction. Al-Qaraghooly and Al-Bermani (2010) investigated the effectiveness of both top-down and bottom-up processing in developing Iraqi EFL college students listening comprehension. The study reported the both types of strategies were equally effective in developing listening comprehension. Moreover, Orii-Akita (2014) examined the effects of bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models on Japanese EFL university students' listening comprehension. The study indicated that interactive model was more effective than top-down and bottom-up models in EFL listening comprehension. Siegel and Siegel (2013) also investigated the effects of both top-down and bottom-up strategies on Japanese ESL students' listening comprehension, and the study showed that such strategies improved the participants' phoneme processing and sentence phrasing abilities. Villegas (2013) reported the impact of incorporating bottom-up and top-down strategies in listening comprehension tasks of pre-intermediate EFL students, and the study indicated that such impact was positive.

It is clear that none of the previous studies probed the problems teachers encountered in teaching top-down listening strategies in Palestinian EFL context. Thus, the present study attempted to examine top-down listening processing skills included in the English textbooks utilized in Gaza high schools and the problems Gaza high school EFL teachers encountered in teaching such strategies.

The present study considered the research methodologies employed in the previous studies. Indeed, such studies assisted in designing the study instruments and analyzing its data.

Questions of the Study:

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are top-down listening processing skills included in *English for Palestine* 11 & 12?
2. To what extent do EFL teachers of Gaza high schools enrich English classes with top-down listening processing skills?
3. How do EFL teachers of Gaza high schools perceive the problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills?
4. How do EFL supervisors of Gaza high schools perceive teachers' problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills?

Method

Participants

The participants were two EFL university instructors, 81 EFL teachers, and four EFL school supervisors. The two instructors were teaching ELT (English language teaching) courses at Gaza Universities: The first was a 8-year experience female teacher and the second was a 6-year experience male teacher. The 81 teachers were working in Gaza governmental high schools located in two areas: West of Gaza and East of Gaza. Gaza directorate included forty eight governmental high schools. Since stratified random sampling technique is utilized for getting a representative sample (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), 50% (twenty-four schools) in both

West of Gaza and East of Gaza were selected to participate in this study. The teachers were both males and females teaching the two grades of the high school stage (i.e., eleventh grade and twelfth grade). Additionally, four EFL school supervisors were selected from all supervisors working in West of Gaza and East of Gaza directorates (eight supervisors) to be interviewed in this study. All participants took part in the study voluntarily.

Data collection and analysis procedures

This study was conducted in the first semester of the school year 2014-2015, August. First, two experts working in Gaza universities were asked to examine top-down listening skills included in *English for Palestine*¹¹ &¹². They were asked to count the frequencies of the sub skills mentioned. Second, after getting the consent from the Palestinian Ministry of Education, the researcher asked all the teachers (81 female and male teachers) working in the twenty-four schools selected from all Gaza governmental high schools to respond to two questionnaires: A closed-question questionnaire and an open-question questionnaire. While all teachers completed the closed-question questionnaire, only 62 teachers responded to the open-question questionnaire. Third, to supplement the data gathered by the questionnaires, four EFL supervisors were interviewed.

As for analyzing the study data, first, the two researchers' responses to the two evaluation checklists were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The comparison of the researchers' responses revealed that they had a high degree of agreement and consistency (95%). Second, the closed question-questionnaire data were analyzed utilizing SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Means, standard deviations, and percentages were computed to determine the top-down listening skills taught by Gaza high school EFL teachers. Third, for analyzing the open-question questionnaire data, the researcher used the rubrics put by Gillham (2000): Looking through the participants' responses, highlighting substantive statements, forming categories, rethinking about the categories, and checking each response under the category heading. The researcher formed seven categories: lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence (i.e., vocabulary and knowledge), difference between EFL teachers' accents and English native speakers' accents, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, lack of in-service training programs, listening as a difficult skill, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials. To achieve the open-questionnaire data credibility, another researcher reviewed and coded the material and the two researchers agreed on 90% of the coded material.

As for analyzing the interviews data, the researcher employed the analysis steps put by Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2006). The interviews were transcribed, coded, and organized into five categories: lack of facilities, lack of teachers' exposure to English spoken discourses, lack of EFL listening assessment, lack of teachers' internal motivation for teaching, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials. The credibility of the data was achieved through asking another researcher to review and code it, and the two researchers agreed on 88% of the coded data.

Instruments

The data of this study were gathered by five instruments: two textbook evaluation checklists, a closed-question questionnaire, an open-question questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. It is noteworthy that the researcher checked the content validity of all instruments.

Two evaluation checklists

For Hartley (2005), textbook evaluation checklist is commonly used for evaluating school textbooks. Furthermore, Nation and Macalister (2010) view that the focus of evaluation checklist is on evaluation. After reviewing some relevant references (e.g., Brown, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Peterson, 2001; Richards, 1990; Villegas, 2013), the researcher designed two textbook evaluation checklists (Appendixes A, B). Two experts were asked to count the frequencies of the top-down listening skills included in *English for Palestine 11 & 12*.

A closed-question questionnaire

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), in closed question-questionnaire, a set of answers are presented to respondents. Reviewing some relevant references (e.g., Brown, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Peterson, 2001; Richards, 1990; Villegas, 2013), the researcher designed a 9-item questionnaire so as to determine the top-down listening skills Gaza high school EFL teachers taught. All the questionnaire items required multiple choice answers with a five-point likert scale: 1=always, 2=often, 3=sometimes, 4=occasionally, and 5=never (Appendix C). After checking the content validity and face validity of the questionnaire, the internal consistency reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha. The Alpha coefficient for the overall questionnaire (9 items) was at 0.73.

An open question questionnaire

Open-question questionnaire is used when the possible answer is not suggested where participants are allowed to express themselves freely (Foddy, 1993), and it is utilized where rich data is required (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). To identify the problems Gaza high school EFL teachers encountered when teaching top-down-listening skills, the researcher prepared an open question-questionnaire (Appendix D).

A semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews can help in gathering in-depth data through probing beyond the interview questions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006). To supplement the open-questionnaire data, the researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with four EFL supervisors. Based on some references (e.g., Batova, 2013; Hasan, 2000), the researcher designed the interview questions (Appendix E). Each interview took thirty minutes, and was recorded.

Results**Results of first Research Question**

To answer the first question "To what extent are top-down listening processing skills included in *English for Palestine 11 & 12*", two evaluation checklists were prepared. Two experts were asked to count the frequencies of top-down listening skills in *English for Palestine 11 & 12*. Table 1 shows the top-down listening skills mentioned in the first evaluation checklist and the frequency and percentage of each skill.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of top-down listening skills included in English for Palestine 12

Subskill	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
1.Listening for main ideas	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	9	26%
2.Listening for supporting details	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	4	3	1	24	68.5%
3.Predicting information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
4.Sequencing information or events	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Making suggestions	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	5.5%
6..Drawing inferences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7. Generating questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Summarizing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9. Recognizing a point of view	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	5	2	35	100

Table 1 shows that *English for Palestine 12* does not include any top-down listening skills other than 'listening for supporting details', 'listening for main ideas', and 'making suggestions'. As shown in the above table, 'listening for supporting details' got the highest score followed by 'listening for main ideas', and then 'making suggestions'. Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of top-down listening skills included in English for Palestine 11.

Table2. Frequencies and percentages of top-down listening skills included in English for Palestine 11

Subskill	Un it 1	Un it 2	Un it 3	Un it 4	Un it 5	Un it 6	Un it 7	Un it 8	Un it 9	Un it 10	Un it 11	Un it 12	Total Frequen cy	Total Percenta ge
1.Listening for main ideas	1	1	1	2	2	2	-	1	2	2	2	2	18	40%
2.Listening for supporting details	2	2	1	2	1	3	4	1	2	2	2	2	24	53.3%
3.making predictions	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.2%
4.Sequencing information or events	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.Drawing inferences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	-
6. Summarizing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.Making suggestions	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	4.5%
8.Generating questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9. .Recognizing a point of view	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3	3	2	4	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	45	100

Table 2 shows that the top-down listening skills included in *English for Palestine 11* are 'listening for main ideas', 'listening for supporting details', making predictions', 'making suggestions'. Where as 'listening for supporting details' got the highest score, 'making predictions' fell into the lowest.

It is clear that both *English for Palestine 11* and *English for Palestine 12* do not pay much attention to top-down listening processing skills. According to Vargas (2009), when moving from the beginning level classes, students need to practice top-down listening strategies since such strategies contribute to the students' comprehension of the texts. Batova (2013) also views that top-down processes enable students to extract meanings from messages, and enrich what they hear.

Results of Second Research Questions

For the second research question "To what extent do EFL teachers of Gaza high schools enrich English classes with top-down listening processing skills?" to be answered, the researcher utilized a closed-question questionnaire. Statistics were computed to determine the means, standard deviations and percentages of the questionnaire items. Following are the rubrics put by three researchers to determine the level of Gaza high school EFL teachers' teaching of top-down listening skills:

- Excellent: 90% and above
- Very good: 80%- 89.9%
- Good: 70%: 79.9%
- Poor : 60%- 69%
- Very poor: Less than 60%
-

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and percentages of the questionnaire items

No	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
1	Listening for main ideas.	4.50	0.60	90.0
2	Listening for supporting details.	4.33	0.61	86.5
3	Making predictions	2.14	0.69	42.8
4	Sequencing information or events	2.14	0.74	42.8
5	Recognizing appoint of view	2.08	0.83	41.5
6	Drawing inferences	1.64	0.80	32.8
7	Summarizing the text ideas	1.75	0.85	35.0
8	Making suggestions	2.21	0.94	44.3
9	Generating questions.	2.06	0.99	41.3
Total		2.54	0.44	50.8

Table 3 shows that the level of the participants' instruction of top-down listening strategies fell into the very poor level. The table also shows that the first item 'Listening for main ideas' fell into the excellent level; the second item 'Listening for supporting details' got the very good level; and the rest of the items fell the very poor level. This data indicates that the two skills most frequently emphasized by the participants were 'Listening for main ideas' and 'Listening for supporting details'. The obstacles hindering EFL teachers of Gaza high school from teaching top-down listening processing skills are reported below.

Results of Third Research Question

As shown by the open-question questionnaire data, all participants complained that they experienced problems when attempting to teach top-down listening skills. Such problems included lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence (i.e., vocabulary and knowledge), difference between EFL teachers' accents and English native speakers' accents, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, lack of in-service training programs, listening as a difficult skill, and inadequacy of time devoted to

teaching English listening materials. It was reported that while most participants (56 female and male teachers) did not focus on any listening exercises, they placed too much emphasis on vocabulary items and grammatical rules included in the listening materials.

Participant T. 11 (a 14-year experience female teacher): *I always centre on teaching only difficult vocabulary in listening classes, since the Ministry of Education final exams centre on such vocabulary. In fact, the final exams do not contain any listening exercises. Because our students study for nothing but exams, they neglect all listening sub skills including top-down skills.*

Participant T. 22 (a 10-year experience male teacher): *I devote only half of a class a week for teaching unfamiliar words in the listening materials. I don't pay attention to listening exercises since they are not included in the final exam.*

As seen by the above, most teachers tended to focus on some bottom-up strategies (i.e., pronunciation, spelling, and repetition) due to two main reasons: the emphasis Palestinian Ministry of Education placed on key vocabulary and structures in the final exams and the huge amounts of vocabulary items the teachers taught in English classes in general and English listening classes in particular. According to such teachers, the students did not need to focus on top-down strategies since the Ministry of Education final exams neglected them.

Moreover, all participants (62 male and female teachers) reported that students' poor linguistic competence hindered English listening comprehension. According to such teachers, the students could hardly understand the facts explicitly stated in the text, and consequently could not practice higher-level thinking activities.

Participant T. 5 (a 9-year experience female teacher): *For students to process top-down strategies, they need to be linguistically proficient. Unfortunately, our students' achievement level is very low. They were transferred from elementary school to high school with very low language abilities. This may be due to receiving huge amounts of key vocabulary and structures, the thing which precludes them from acquiring language appropriately.*

In addition to students' general lower language abilities, the students were reported to have problems with the English spoken discourses they listened to. According to a majority of the teachers (45 male and female teachers), students could not comprehend the accents of English native speakers which were, in their opinions, extremely different from most Gaza EFL teachers' accents.

Participant T. 1 (a 14-year experience female teacher): *Students are familiar with my accent which is totally different from the English native speakers' accents.*

Participant T. 25 (a 6-year experience male teacher): *My speech is different from that in the recording, that is why students find a difficulty in understanding the voice from the recording.*

A fourth problem was irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge. For some participants (28 male and female teachers), the contents of such materials might be a main source of listening comprehension problems since they were not related to students' previous information.

Participant T. 7 (a 11-year experience male teacher): *Listening materials are difficult to understand. For example, 'globalization', students do not know any thing about this term in Arabic, how, then, they are required to learn it in English, and go beyond what is explicit in the text?*

Participant T. 12 (a 7-year experience male teacher): *For example, banking, students have never experienced going to banks and having accounts, that is why they can not understand it well.*

A fifth problem was lack of in-service training programs. Some teachers (26 male and female teachers) in this study reported that they did not train the students to use top-down listening strategies, because they themselves could not use such skills. From their perspectives, they needed to get involved in proper training courses that could help them understand all listening processes and skills.

Participant T. 15 (a 19-year experience female teacher): *I, like some teachers, am not trained to practice such skills, and consequently I can not teach them to my students.*

Participant T. 50 (a 9-year experience male teacher): *I think that I should know how to teach my students top-down skills.*

Additionally, some teachers (18 female and male teachers) believed that listening was a difficult skill, and it was better to practice top-down strategies in reading classes than in listening classes. In their opinions, while in reading classes students can revisit the text several times, they might miss a lot of information and loose concentration during listening.

Participant T. 25 (a 14-year experience female teacher): *I think that skills of higher level of thinking should be handled in reading classes rather than listening classes, since in reading classes students usually have enough time to read the text several times.*

Related to the problems, the number of class periods devoted to teaching English textbooks in general and English listening materials (i.e., one class period a week for teaching listening) in particular was perceived by all teachers to be inadequate.

Participant T. 2 (a 10-year experience female teacher): *Indeed, English curricula are overcrowded of vocabulary items and grammatical rules, and I can hardly find time for teaching such language items.*

Participant T. 45 (a 16-year experience male teacher): *Give me enough time, I will teach my students all English listening sub skills.*

To sum-up, the open-question questionnaire data revealed that participants experienced problems in teaching top-down listening strategies. Such problems included lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence (i.e., vocabulary and knowledge), difference between EFL teachers' accents and English native speakers' accents, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, lack of in-service training programs, listening as a difficult skill, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials.

Results of Fourth Research Question

For answering the fourth research question "How do EFL supervisors of Gaza high schools perceive teachers' problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills?", the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with four EFL school supervisors. According to such supervisors, the problems that might preclude Gaza high school EFL teachers from teaching top-down-listening processing skills successfully included lack of facilities, lack of teachers' exposure to English spoken discourses, lack of EFL listening assessment, lack of teachers' internal motivation for teaching, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials.

As shown by the interviews, the main problem Gaza high school EFL teachers encountered when teaching listening processing skills including top-down skills was lack of facilities:

Participant T. 2 (a 9-year experience female supervisor): *I think that most teachers do not teach English listening sub skills including top-down skills, because they do not have the cassettes required for teaching English listening besides that the electricity in Gaza schools is sometimes unavailable.*

A second problem reported by two interviewees was lack of teachers' exposure to English spoken discourses. In the interviewees views, due to lack of teachers' practice of English listening, there was a difference between the teachers' speech and the voice from recordings.

Participant T. 1 (a 5-year experience male supervisor): *Our teachers do not practice any English listening outside classrooms. I know that they can hardly meet native speakers of English in Gaza, but at least they can develop their English listening through watching English TV shows and listening to radio programs. Due such lack of practice g, there is a difference between the teachers' speech and the voice from recording.*

Additionally, three supervisors reported that both teachers and students neglected English listening, because the final exams did not include any listening exercises. According to such supervisors, testing English listening needed time and effort, and they had neither audio-materials nor time for employing any listening tests.

Furthermore, two supervisors indicated that some teachers did not have any real desire for teaching in general. It was indicated that such teachers hated their specialization (i.e., English language teaching) and they were not interested in what they were trying to teach.

Participant T. 4 (a 8-year experience female supervisor): *Some EFL teachers have hated their specialization , i.e., English language teaching since they were university students. Such teachers sometimes expressed their dislike for their specialization through statements such as: "I hate teaching in general", "I specialized in ELT teaching just to have a job", I did not like any one from those taught us ELT courses in the university", this specialization is very boring" etc.*

A final problem reported by all interviewees was that most EFL Gaza high school teachers complained that the textbooks were overcrowded of vocabulary items and the number of class periods devoted to teaching such items was inadequate.

Participant T. 2 (a 9-year experience female supervisor): *Teachers always complain that they can not teach all items included in the textbooks. They spent much time on teaching such keywords at the expense of teaching English listening sub skills including top-down skills.*

In short, the semi-structured interviews data showed Gaza EFL high school teachers' problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills as perceived by their supervisors. Such problems included lack of facilities, lack of teachers' exposure to English spoken discourses, lack of EFL listening assessment, lack of teachers' internal motivation for teaching, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials.

Discussion and Implications

Results reported that *English for Palestine* 11 &12 neglected top-down listening skills. The evaluation checklists analyses in this study revealed that such materials focused on no top-down listening skills other than listening for a gist and listening for supporting details. According to Vargas (2009), when moving from the beginning level classes, students need to practice top-

down listening strategies since such strategies contribute to the students' comprehension of the texts. Batova (2013) also views that top-down processes enable students to extract meanings from messages, and enrich what they hear. Based on that, the study suggests that EFL textbook designers in Palestine should incorporate more top-down listening activities (i.e., predicting, sequencing events, generating questions, summarizing, drawing inferences, and making suggestions) in English materials, so as to improve students' listening comprehension.

Additionally, the open-question questionnaire data showed that the participants experienced problems when attempting to teach top-down listening skills. Such problems included lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, listening as a difficult skill, lack of in-service training programs, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials. The first problem teachers had was lack of teachers' and students' external motivation. It was reported that while Palestinian Ministry of Education final exams did not include any listening exercises, they placed too much emphasis on only vocabulary items and grammatical rules included in the listening materials. In fact, Palestinian EFL test designers need to considerably endorse listening exercises in the final exams so that eleventh and twelfth graders in Gaza high schools could value listening activities. In this context, Nichols and Dawson (2012) note that summative exams affect students' efforts and goals. Additionally, Murray (2011) provides that tests can pressure students in language learning.

A second problem reported by Gaza high school EFL supervisors was lack of teachers' internal motivation. It was indicated that some EFL teachers hated their specialization, i.e., English language teaching. In this context Kailani and Muquattash (1995) state that EFL teacher should be genially interested in what s/he is trying to teach, and enthusiast enough to deliver curricula successfully. Hence, EFL university instructors are advised to help EFL pre-service teachers enjoy English language teaching through using a variety of strategies, i.e., discussions, micro-teaching, role play, debates, and problem solving.

A third problem was students' deficient linguistic competence. According to most participants, students transferred from elementary school to high school with poor language abilities due to the huge amounts of key vocabulary and structures they received at all stages of English language acquisition. This result may go along with Hammad (2014b) that indicated that the EFL textbooks of the first three grades of elementary school were perceived by Palestinian teachers to include a large number of key vocabulary items and pronunciation practice. Similar to Hammad (2014b), the present study strongly recommends that Palestinian EFL textbook designers should decrease the number of the language items included in *English for Palestine* series.

Another important factor contributing to students' poor listening comprehension level was the difference between the teachers' speech and recording voice. A majority of the teachers provided that the students found a difficulty in understanding the recording materials, and therefore hardly grasp the explicit meaning of the text. As shown by the interviews, the reason why the students found a difference between the teachers' speech and the voice from recording was that such teachers did not have much exposure to English spoken discourses. For teachers and students in Gaza high schools to get familiar with English speakers' accents, they should practice listening to English TV shows and radio programs. According to Flowerdew and Miller (2005), exposure to broadcast and radio programs can develop listening comprehension. Furthermore, Richards and Lockhart (1996) view that it is through listening to native speakers, learners can acquire language successfully.

A fourth problem was irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background information. According to some teachers, such instructional materials were sources of listening comprehension problems, in that they did not centre on the students' use of existing knowledge. In this respect, Hasan (2000) views that learners can guess the meanings of a passage if the newly heard information is related to prior knowledge. Consequently, EFL textbook designers in Palestine are advised to consider students' background knowledge prior to preparing English listening materials.

A fifth problem was lack of in-service training programs. Some teachers in this study reported that they did not train the students to use top-down listening strategies, because they themselves could not use them. From their perspectives, they needed to get involved in proper training courses that could help them understand all listening processes and skills. This result may be in line with Al-Qaraghooly and Al-Bermani (2010) that concluded that Iraqi EFL teachers needed to take in-service training programs in listening comprehension processes. According to Griego Jones (2002) and Samuelson, Pawan, and Hung, (2012), in-service training programs are essential for teacher preparation. Thus, it is important for Gaza Ministry of Education supervisors to hold proper language training programs that could help in-service teachers become aware of update education trends in the world.

A sixth problem was the inadequacy of the time devoted to teaching English listening materials. It was revealed in this study that the number of class periods devoted to teaching English textbooks in general and English listening materials (i.e., one class period a week for teaching listening) in particular was perceived by all teachers to be inadequate. This finding may be in line with Ali (2010), Hammad (2014b), and Mahmoud (2007) that indicated that the number of class periods allocated for teaching *English for Palestine* series needed to be increased. Hence, it is essential for EFL textbook designers in Palestine either to decrease language items included in *English for Palestine* series or increase the number of class periods allocated for teaching such textbooks.

A seventh problem was that listening comprehension as a difficult task. According to some teachers, it was better to practice top-down strategies in reading classes than in listening classes. In their opinions, while in reading classes students can extract meanings through revisiting the text several times, they might lose concentration and miss a lot of information while listening. It may be argued here that the opinions of such teachers are advocated only in case of teaching primary and preparatory pupils where students should practice bottom-up skills and get exposed to English native speakers' accents. While novice learners need to develop bottom-up skills, advanced learners should focus on top-down processing. In other words, once learners acquired adequate phonological, lexical, and syntactic knowledge and cultural backgrounds, emphasis should be placed on top-down listening skills. In this context, Vargas (2009) provides that learners need to practice bottom-up listening strategies from the beginning level classes as the foundation on which to build top-down listening strategies. Batova (2013) also views that top-down processes enable students to extract meanings from messages, and enrich what they hear. It seems that due to the problems discussed above (i.e., lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, students' poor linguistic competence, difference between EFL teachers' accents and English native speakers' accents, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, lack of in-service training programs, listening as a difficult skill, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials) Gaza high school teachers tended to teach top-down skills in reading classes rather than listening classes.

Still a final problem reported by Gaza high school EFL supervisors was lack of facilities, i.e., lack of language laboratories, lack of audio-materials, and unavailability of electricity. Mohamadkhani, Farokhi, and Farokhi (2013) reported that audio files had positive effect on improving EFL listening comprehension. Thus, Palestinian Ministry of Education is strongly recommended to devote adequate funds to developing English listening.

Recommendations

In light of the above discussion, recommendations can be summarized as follows:

1. EFL textbook designers in Palestine should incorporate more top-down listening activities (i.e., predicting, sequencing events, generating questions, summarizing, drawing inferences, and making suggestions) in English materials.
2. Palestinian EFL test designers need to considerably endorse listening exercises in the final exams so that eleventh and twelfth graders in Gaza high schools could value listening activities.
3. EFL university instructors are advised to help EFL pre-service teachers enjoy English language teaching through using a variety of strategies, i.e., discussions, micro-teaching, role play, debates, and problem solving.
4. For teachers and students in Gaza high schools to get familiar with English speakers' accents, they should practice listening to English TV shows and radio programs.
5. EFL textbook designers in Palestine are advised to consider students' background knowledge prior to preparing English listening materials.
6. EFL textbook designers in Palestine are advised either to decrease language items included in *English for Palestine* series or increase the number of class periods allocated for teaching such textbooks.
7. Palestinian Ministry of Education is strongly recommended to devote adequate funds to developing EFL listening.
8. Gaza Ministry of Education EFL supervisors are advised to hold proper in-service teachers training programs in listening comprehension processes.

Conclusion

The study results showed that *English for Palestine* 11 & 12 neglected top-down listening skills. The evaluation checklists analyses in this study revealed that such materials focused on no top-down listening skills other than listening for a gist and listening for supporting details. Furthermore, the qualitative data revealed that Gaza high school EFL teachers experienced problems in teaching top-down listening strategies. Such problems included lack of facilities, lack of teachers' and students' external motivation, lack of teachers' internal motivation for teaching, students' poor linguistic competence (i.e., vocabulary and knowledge), difference between EFL teachers' accents and English native speakers' accents, irrelevance of the listening materials to students' background knowledge, lack of in-service training programs, listening as a difficult skill, and inadequacy of time devoted to teaching English listening materials.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: The evaluation checklist of top-down listening skills included in 'English for Palestine 12'

Subskill	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
1.Listening for main ideas												
2.Listening for supporting details												
3.Making predictions												
4.Sequencing information or events												
5. Making suggestions												
6..Drawing inferences												
7 Generating questions												
8. Summarizing												
9. Recognizing a point of view												
Total												

Appendix B: The evaluation checklist of top-down listening skills included in 'English for Palestine 11'

Subskill	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Unit 11	Unit 12	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
1.Listening for main ideas														

2.Listening for supporting details														
3.making predictions														
4.Sequencing information or events														
5.Drawing inferences														
6. Summarizing														
7.Making suggestions														
8.Generating questions														
9. .Recognizing a point of view														
Total														

Appendix C: The closed-question questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

You are kindly required to answer the questionnaire by ticking the answer you find more appropriate. Please, note that there is no right or wrong answer. The confidentiality of your answers is confirmed.

Statement	Always	Usually	Sometimes	rarely	Never
I train the students to:					
1. Listen for main ideas.					
2. Listen for supporting details.					
3. make predictions.					
4. Sequence information or events.					
5. Draw inferences.					
6. Summarize a text.					

7. Make suggestions.					
8. Generate questions.					
9. Recognize a point of view.					

What problems do you encounter in teaching top-down listening skills? (i.e., Students' deficient linguistic abilities, students' unfamiliarity with English native speakers accents)

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the entire width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

1. How do you perceive Gaza high school EFL teachers' problems of teaching top-down-listening processing skills?
 - a. Are Gaza high school EFL students trained to use top-down listening skills? If no, why?
 - b. Are audio-recordings and language laboratories available in Gaza high schools? If no, why?
 - c. Is the time devoted to teaching all listening skills included in *English for Palestine 11 & 12* adequate? If no, why?
 - d. Are Gaza high school EFL teachers not competent enough to teach top-down listening skills? If yes why?
 - e. Do Gaza high school EFL teachers design appropriate tests assessing all listening subskills? If no, why?

Problems with Speaking Activities in the Saudi EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This study is aimed at analysing the effectiveness of speaking practice exercises, as it is one of the most crucial and learning-oriented aspects in the language education field. The English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi sector was selected for this study, and all of the respondents were willing to provide their viewpoints in response to the questionnaires provided to them. The entire study was based on considering and acting upon the importance of speaking activities inside and outside the classroom. Results have shown that there are issues and needs associated with speaking activities: speaking tasks and speaking materials.

Keywords: Speaking activities, EFL classroom, EFL learning in Saudi Arabia speaking skills, language attitude

Introduction

The request for this study started with the following vital questions: What shape should my research take, and what area or areas of the theme should the study investigate? Simply put, the theme of choice, speaking, is an immensely complex and wide field to study. Indeed, as we observed, Saudi EFL learners and teachers appeared to experience all the problems that speech education experts have discovered and identified. Because those problems are all important and interrelated, it would be unrealistic to select one particular problem and investigate it in isolation from the others. To understand the nature and causes of the problems that Saudi EFL learners face, it is imperative that we first build a clear picture of the linguistic and cultural background of both the learners and the teachers, including their educational system and its supporting philosophy, the role language plays in their lives, and the teaching and learning environments. We also need to consider the teachers' skills, attitudes, and knowledge; the objectives of the syllabus, the textbooks and teaching materials in use; and the teaching methods and techniques. The list is undoubtedly long. The question becomes where to start. Given the restrictions placed on this research and the limitations of time and resources, we must decide which area of the problem should be studied and prioritized.

It is commonly believed that focusing on the teaching materials is most important, particularly regarding textbooks and texts in audio format. No other supplemental materials are used or usually seen in the language classroom. In fact, when examining the materials in question, many shortcomings were identified. The materials were not authentic, and did not focus on teaching the real-world language. The study found that some of the teaching materials might even de-motivate intrinsically motivated learners.

Because of the study, we now realize that there are problems in the teaching materials and teaching methods. With this new understanding, it was decided to investigate speaking activities in the Saudi language classroom. In doing this, researchers would be able to delve deeper into the attitudes and thinking of Saudi teachers and learners. This study would help develop a better understanding of the teaching environment. A plan was developed, and one of the first issues that the study had to address was that of research methods and techniques.

In the literature on social sciences, a distinction is often drawn between two major types of research, the quantitative and the qualitative. One of the main differences between the two types is that while the former tends to employ statistical data, grounds for statistical analysis in the latter are minimal. Furthermore, where quantitative methods are usually focused on collecting facts (Bell, 1999), qualitative methods are often described as "being more able to make sense of behavior and to understand (it) within its wider context" (De Vaus, 2002:5). Differences between the two approaches also exist in terms of sample size. The sample in quantitative research is usually large but is relatively small in qualitative research. Furthermore, different data collection techniques are often identified with the two approaches. On the one hand, questionnaires are frequently associated with quantitative research; on the other hand, the interview and observation techniques (among others) are usually employed to collect qualitative data. However, these differences do not necessarily suggest that the two approaches operate separately. Rather, it is often argued that more reliable outcomes can be gained when both methods are combined (Punch, 2004). Nevertheless, because this is a small-scale research project, this study has opted quantitative data, employing a short questionnaire as a means of collecting the necessary information.

Purpose of the Research

The present research aims to identify the speaking activities and tasks that dominate the Saudi EFL classroom. It also attempts to establish learners' proficiency levels and their attitude towards English and its speakers. In particular, learners in their final year of formal schooling are the targets of the study. These are 17- to 18-year-old females who have been learning English for the last six years of their lives. Only a few weeks after the present study had been conducted, those females left school to start a new life, most likely as employees, university students, or housewives. The choice of learners at such an advanced stage of formal learning is not without a reason. For, in the literature of language acquisition and L2 teaching, there appears to be a general agreement among researchers that (in normal conditions and situations) speaking skills develop slowly and emerge significantly later than listening skills (Krashen, 1981). This being so, and after six years of L2 instruction, the subjects of this study were expected to have developed an acceptable level of oral fluency. But is this really the case? The present study expects to provide the answer. Additionally, there is an explanation as to why male students have not been included in the study: in Saudi Arabia, coeducational policy is not observed. As such, it would be very difficult to conduct any valid and objective research on a group of male learners. Lack of mixed classrooms does not make this study possible for a female researcher. It is also extremely difficult to seek academic assistance from a male teacher in administering the study questionnaire because of cultural traditions.

Study Limitations

Research is often described as valid and reliable only when its findings can be generalized to a large population. However, for cultural reasons the findings of this survey cannot be generalized to include males of the same age and educational levels as those of the surveyed females. It may also be added that this is small-scale research, which means that the findings are probably too ambitious to be generalized to the entire population of upper-level, female, secondary students in Saudi Arabia.

Research Methodology

As stated above, this study is concerned with female Saudi EFL learners in their final year of formal schooling. Obviously, reaching out for every girl in all corners of the country is a difficult mission. As such, choosing a representative sample and a representative area becomes the only alternative.

The city of Al Medinah was chosen as the study's venue, and a list of secondary girls' schools was obtained. It was then decided that the questionnaire would be administered in three of the thirty girls' schools. Ministry of Education (ME) employers were contacted and were told of our intention to carry out the survey. In turn, the ME issued an authorization letter permitting the study; at the same time, they wrote to the head teachers of the three schools asking them to facilitate the mission and lend any support the survey needed. When we arrived for the field study during the early days of June 2013, we visited the schools and obtained a list of names of girls in Grade 3 of the secondary stage. In total, there were 432 young females divided almost equally between eleven sections or classes. Four students were selected randomly from each class to bring the total number of candidates to forty-four. Individuals in the population were selected using a table of random number. The selected study sample represented the population

though it was small. This small size was because of the constraints of the Saudi situation since government approval is required for any study.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of seventeen statements. The opening statement aimed at establishing whether or not students found classroom speaking activities interesting. Our expectation was that responses to this statement would enable us to build a clear picture of the learners' levels of motivation. Statements 2, 3, 4, and 5 were concerned with the nature of those activities. Our knowledge relating to the form and shape speaking tasks take enabled us to establish the type and level of interaction in the language classroom. Among other things, it would also provide an idea about the teaching methods and the kind of atmosphere that dominates the class. In statement 6, students were asked to answer the question whether or not they understood the tape-recorded material they were expected to take as models of speech. Teachers' attitudes towards the learners' mistakes was the subject of Statement 7. Statement 8 was concerned with assessing speaking skill, and Statement 9 was aimed at establishing whether or not students' speaking skills were assessed.

Statements 10, 11, 12, and 13 dealt with learners' attitudes and motivation to speak, as well as their feelings, aspirations and concerns. Statements 14, 15, 16, and 17 were intended to obtain information related to two key points: the level of importance learners attach to speaking English, and their attitudes towards English and its speakers. The questionnaire ends with two open questions. One is: When and why do you speak English in the classroom? And the other is: What topics would you like to talk about in the English language classroom?

In formulating the questionnaire, we were guided by insights gained from writings by prominent theorists in the field of language learning and acquisition and learners' motivation and attitude towards speaking English.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the field study, all participants were met with in person, where we explained the aim and importance of the study, presented each with a copy of the questionnaire, and assured them of anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix B). Participants were also given a telephone contact number in case they had any queries. They were asked to complete the questionnaires and return them in person within two days. Forty-three of the distributed questionnaires were completed and returned within the specified time limit. Upon initial inspection, we found that three of the returned questionnaires were invalid and, as such, were excluded from analysis. This brings the number of valid responses to forty (just over 90% of distributed questionnaires, which is considered an adequate response rate). Returned and valid questionnaires were then coded and entered into the computer for analysis using SPSS. To facilitate the discussion, descriptive statistics (particularly frequencies and percentages) were employed.

Study Findings

a) Speaking Activities

As seen from their responses to Statement 1, only nine respondents (22.5% of the study sample) were of the opinion that speaking activities were 'always' or 'often' interesting, and an equal number of participants stated that those activities were 'somewhat' appealing. Opinions of the remaining twenty respondents were divided equally between those who thought that speaking

activities were 'very rarely' interesting and those who found them 'totally boring'. To say the least, interest in learning activities generates a positive attitude, breeding enjoyment and satisfaction; it enhances one's morale and motivation, and it encourages individuals to apply more effort to the learning process (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Deci and Ryan, 1985). By contrast, a lack of interest can discourage learners from participating in the learning task, potentially resulting in boredom, stress and anxiety (Cazden, 1988; Bandura, 1997). If we agree with these views, we come to realize that the first finding of the present survey is already disturbing. Simply put, the majority of those surveyed showed very little interest or no interest at all in their language classroom speaking activities. More than that, as we shall see in the discussion below, some of those who took part in speaking activities were not actually driven by a genuine interest. As a matter of fact, there is doubt as to whether any real speaking activities take place in the Saudi language classroom. More about this point will be addressed in the course of the discussion. Meanwhile, let us see what the respondents talk about, when and how.

When participants were asked whether they practiced speaking in pairs, the majority answered in the affirmative. However, almost every other respondent (19 in number and 47.5% of the entire sample) reported that they 'sometimes' engage in pair-work; seven (17.5% of the sample) gave 'often' as an answer; and eight (20% of the sample) mentioned that the activity 'very rarely' takes place. However, for those who are not familiar with the Saudi teaching culture, these results may be somewhat confusing.

By 'pair-work', one might think that respondents mean a conversation between two individuals or a dialogue of some sort. Far from it, the term only means that two students are asked to enact a written dialogue or, in other words, read it aloud. Here, the reader may find it easy to make a counter-claim. For instance, he/she might ask this logical question: Is it not possible that the pair-speaking activity is an extension of the written dialogue or otherwise related to it, and not necessarily just reading it aloud? Indeed, had the answer to this question been a 'Yes', this study's researchers would have agreed that meaningful speaking activities take place in the Saudi EFL classroom. However, the answer is an emphatic 'No'. The responses to Statement 5 reveal that almost all respondents agreed that all speaking activities must conform to the contents of the written text. In other words, the pair-speaking activity only means that two students play roles as they read aloud or re-produce the text (dialogue) verbatim. Shifting back to Statement 2, we discover yet another surprise: 15% of the study sample (6 students) stated that they never perform pair-work activities. In other words, for some teachers, role-play and pair-work speaking activities are not known or are ignored.

If written dialogues are enacted (read aloud) by pairs of students as stated above, then it stands to reason students may also work in groups of three or more (depending on the number of individuals taking part in the written conversation or discussion). However, participants in this study indicated that this is not the case at all. As we see in their responses to Statement 3, almost all (39 in number, representing 97.5% of the sample) agreed that they 'never' practice speaking in groups. Closer examination of the written texts reveals that (scripted) exchanges in dialogues, discussions, or debates takes place only between two individuals. Given this, we must assume the respondent who replied that she 'very rarely' practices group speaking activities was referring to choral practice. We will now explain why.

To obtain more information on learners' attitudes and the nature of speaking activities in the classroom, respondents were asked to answer this question: When and why do you speak English

in the classroom? (See item number 18, Appendix B). Following is an inventory of their answers. Figures between brackets indicate the number of respondents who made the comment:

- I speak English when I answer the teacher's questions (40).
- I speak English when my teacher asks me to read (40).
- I speak English when I am asked to imitate the teacher or a classmate (37).
- I speak English to prove that I know the answer (14).
- I speak English to practice/learn the language (12).
- I speak English to please my teacher (9).
- I speak English because it is a good/beautiful language (5).
- I do not know why I speak English (4).

Respondents made other interesting comments as well. For example, three noted that their purpose for learning spoken English was to persuade their (Internet) friends to convert to Islam. Another two stated that promoting Saudi culture was the objective. One indicated that she wanted to practice English so that she could teach her grandmother the language. Nonetheless, respondents' comments were quite revealing, and they led us to at least two important and indisputable conclusions. One is that learning in the Saudi English language classroom is teacher-centered; it promotes rote learning and rehearsal. It does not allow for creativity, problem-solving or independent thinking. The other conclusion is that, contrary to the claim made by Saudi textbook writers and syllabus designers, speaking activities are far from being communicative or interactive. In fact, it would be unrealistic to describe rehearsal, imitation and reading aloud from the text as speaking activities. Rather, in agreement with Abbott (1981), such activities should be viewed as "speech training" and not real communication. Even when we do view them as a speech training exercise, that classification is problematic. As rightly noted by Al Mutawa and Kailani (1989), for Arab teachers and learners good speech means pronouncing every single letter and stressing every single word. To this, the study adds that skilled speakers usually talk (often from the text) very slowly and loudly.

b) Speaking Materials

It is rational to suggest that learners are expected to take their teacher's English and tape-recorded materials (which are an essential part of the syllabus) as a good example of speaking models. This begins with the teacher, whose role is to teach grammar and vocabulary, ask text-based questions, correct mistakes, and encourage recital and memorization. In terms of teaching conversational English, this teacher's skills do not give her much to offer. Shifting our attention back to tape-recorded materials and the issue of whether or not they were comprehensible (Statement 8), only two respondents (5% of the sample) reported that the recordings were 'always' comprehensible, and another six (15% of the sample) thought they 'often' understood the taped language. On the other hand, fifteen reported that they were 'sometimes' able to understand the recorded texts, and eleven (37.5% of the sample) indicated that understanding was a rarity. For the remaining 6 respondents (15% of the sample), tape-recorded materials were completely incomprehensible. Here, it is worth mentioning that the materials in question are the recordings of the written texts learners are working from in the classroom. In a sense, this gives learners the false impression that the spoken language is a written text read aloud. Here, the influence of Classical Arabic is probably clear; in most formal situations, speaking becomes reading a written text aloud.

Regarding the (speaking) teaching materials in the Saudi language classroom, we notice that these are not authentic and that they have been designed to teach grammar and pronunciation (even at an advanced stage of learning). On the question of grammar, many theorists now agree that language acquisition does not require tedious drills or the extensive use of conscious grammatical rules (Krashen, 1981). It has also been argued that knowledge of grammar is pointless unless it is accompanied by an understanding of culturally specific meanings (Breen, 1985; Byran and Morgan, 1994). Researchers have also noted that non-authentic materials fail to engage learners in real learning. Furthermore, the teaching materials that had been designed for our respondents were far from being enjoyable or interesting, failing to motivate learners (Peacock, 1997). In this connection, because Saudi society is extremely patriarchal, it is understandable that teaching materials would be biased towards males. For instance, in pre-recorded dialogues, the recorded speakers are male; in written dialogue, the exchanges take place between two males. It is also likely texts focus around largely male issues and interests such as football and adventure. It is unrealistic to expect those teaching materials and activities to arouse female learner's curiosity and interest. In fact, when our respondents were asked to state the topics they would be willing to talk about in the language classroom (item 19), their answers were as follows: family matters (38 responses); shopping (31); clothes, jewelry and shoes (30); food and cooking (27); films and actors (26); people and social problems (18); and other countries and cultures (14).

c) Attitude towards Mistakes

As seen in their responses to Statement 7, all participants reported that their teachers stopped and corrected them every time they made a mistake. This result is not surprising; as stated earlier in Saudi culture, mistakes are not tolerated and are considered a serious problem and a source of shame. This, in no doubt, explains why the majority of respondents stated that they would speak only if the teacher asked them to do so (item 18). Indeed, as speakers of L2, we all know very well that language learners make many mistakes; however, mistakes are a sign that one is learning (Chomsky, 1959; Selinker, 1972). We also know that error correction has little effect on language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). That said, this study does not suggest mistakes should be ignored; if learners received no correction at all, then they likely would not know they had made mistakes. On the contrary, my argument is that hypercorrection and negative attitudes towards mistakes can generate stress and leave learners with the impression that they are being branded as low achievers, potentially resulting in lowered self-esteem and confidence (Bandura, 1997; Ausubel, 1963), which could discourage them from participating in learning activities (Cazden, 1988). It is more important for teachers to be patient and tolerant while, at the same time, encouraging learners to learn from their mistakes.

d) Assessing Speaking Skills

Thirty-seven respondents (92.5%) stated that their speaking skills were never assessed, and only three indicated that assessment took place, though very rarely. This result raises an important question: when learners know that their efforts will not be rewarded, why do they make the effort to learn? This is precisely what the majority of respondents told us in their responses to Item 18. It is true that some respondents reported that they answered teachers' questions or read the text because they liked the language or wanted to learn it. However, given the discussion above, many learners are not actually engaged in real speaking, nor have they been introduced to it.

e) Place of Arabic

Occasional use of the native tongue in the EFL classroom is inevitable. Some would even argue "there is very seldom any harm in giving a meaning by translation" (Abbott, 1981:229). However, it does appear that in the Saudi EFL classroom Arabic has become the medium of instruction. In their responses to Statement 9, a total number of 32 respondents (80% of the sample) noted that they and their teachers use Arabic most of the time. This practice has far-reaching consequences. First, it means that learners are not given enough time to practice the target language. Second, it does not encourage learners to develop the skill of guessing or inferring the real meaning as they listen or read. On the contrary, it may only encourage them to become over- dependent on Arabic. On the question of translation and meaning in particular, it is worth making an important point.

In English, certain groups of words--synonyms--may share a general sense and can be used interchangeably in a limited number of contexts. However, linguists agree that the conceptual differences between those words make it more realistic to talk about "partial" and not "complete" synonymy, e.g. the words 'begin,' 'start,' and 'commence' are not entirely the same (Garins and Redman, 1986). However, the Arabic language poses a completely different situation: complete synonymy exists and synonymous words are abundant (Khurma, 1978). Furthermore, Arabic is marked by globality. For example, the synonyms 'hithaa' and 'niaal' may be used to refer to all types of footwear. In English, this is not the case. In other words, many English words do not have an equivalent in Arabic and when translated, they do not convey the real meaning at all. The point here is that with straight translation from English into Arabic, teachers are not doing their learners a favor.

Table 1. Speaking materials and activities. F = Frequency, P = Percentage.

Statement		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
1. English speaking activities in the classroom are interesting.	F	6	7	9	10	8	40
	P	15%	17.5%	22.5%	25%	20%	100%
2. In the classroom, we practice speaking in pairs.	F	2	9	20	6	3	40
	P	5%	22.5%	50%	15%	7.5%	100%
3. In the classroom, we practice speaking in groups.	F	0	1	2	4	33	40
	P	0.0 %	2.5%	5%	10%	82.5%	100%
4. In the classroom, I practice speaking with my teacher.	F	20	14	6	0	0	40
	P	50%	35%	15%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%
5. In the classroom, speaking activities must conform to the content of the written text.	F	29	8	3	0	0	40
	P	72.5%	20%	7.5%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%

6. Recorded texts are comprehensible.	F	2	6	13	15	4	40
	P	5%	15%	32.5%	37.5%	10%	100%
7. When I speak and make a mistake the teacher corrects me.	F	38	2	0	0	0	40
	P	95%	5%	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%
8. Examinations include a test for my speaking skill.	F	0	0	3	5	32	40
	P	0.0 %	0.0 %	7.5%	12.5%	80%	100%
9. The teacher/ students use Arabic in the classroom.	F	12	20	8	0	0	40
	P	30%	50%	20%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%

So far in the discussion, we have seen that learners rarely practice their English in the classroom. When they do, it is only to read a text or answer the teacher's questions, but otherwise do not engage in the activity because of any satisfaction that has been derived from learning and exploring, or because they find the activity interesting or enjoyable. The vast majority of our learners do not appear to be intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 1985). If this is in fact the case, it is not surprising that learners fail to achieve the minimal level of oral proficiency. In support of this claim, evidence comes from the learners themselves. For example, 73% of our sample (a total number of 29 respondents) admitted they found it difficult to express themselves in English. Furthermore, 15% (6 students) did not know whether or not they could express themselves in English, which is a clear indication that this latter group of learners has been ignored and marginalized to the extent that they were not given a chance to put their knowledge to the test (Statement 10). In the absence of intrinsic motivation, and in the presence of low self-esteem, such learners are left only with the hope of external help. This is precisely what 65% of those surveyed (26 respondents) told us (Statement 12). As regards the seven respondents who said they did not know whether or not they needed help and encouragement to improve their spoken English (17.5% of the sample), it is likely they have either given up or lost hope for help altogether. Unfortunately, it is unlikely teachers will be ready or able to provide help at all. Even worse, because speaking skills are not consistently assessed, there is no way we can reasonably expect learners to engage in the process of leaning (speaking) to obtain good grades. Also disturbing is the fact that learners do not receive support or encouragement from their teachers, but they also appear to have lost faith in their abilities. As many as 31 respondents (77.5% of the sample) reported that they feel embarrassment when they are asked to speak English (Statement 11); when we asked respondents whether they thought they would become fluent English speakers in the future (Statement 13), only nine gave a positive answer, which indicates they are highly motivated to learn. On the other hand, sixteen respondents (40% of the sample) appeared to be convinced that they would always be non-achievers and/or that English is not for them. It is also possible these students are satisfied with the little English they do know. As regards the remaining fifteen participants who gave the "Do not know" answer, it is possible that they have no clear plan for the future; unfortunately, it is likely that some of them will eventually join the ranks of those who have lost hope.

Table 2. Perceived competence and self-efficacy

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Do not Know	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
10. I find it difficult to express myself in English.	F	2	3	6	19	10	40
	P	5%	7.5%	15%	47.5%	25%	100%
11. I feel embarrassed when asked to speak English in the classroom.	F	4	5	0	20	11	40
	P	10%	12.5%	0.0 %	50%	27.5%	100%
12. I feel I need help and encouragement to improve my spoken English.	F	3	4	7	12	14	40
	P	7.5%	10%	17.5 %	30%	35%	100%
13. I am confident I will be a fluent speaker of English.	F	7	9	15	5	4	40
	P	17.5%	22.5%	37.5%	12.5%	10%	100%

The last four statements are designed to establish the level of importance learners have attached to English and to measure their attitudes towards English and its speakers. As regards the first point, a total number of 25 respondents (60% of the sample) indicated that English plays or will play a role in their lives (Statement 14). These students are motivated learners who have a reason or need to learn. On the other hand, 14 respondents (almost one third of the sample) indicated that learning the language was a waste of time. Given that these individuals likely lack intrinsic motivation and purpose for learning, it is probable that they will remain de-motivated, and their presence in the classroom is but a formality. A similar number of respondents (15 individuals or 37.5% of the sample) reported an overtly negative attitude towards English (Statement 14). Obviously, this group of respondents should include many, if not all, of those who thought that it was not important for them to speak English. However, we do not expect that segment of respondents to be motivated or seek enjoyment in speaking the language. On the other hand, 57% of the sample (23 respondents) has a positive attitude towards English; we expect these students to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Nevertheless, when the question of attitude towards English speakers was raised, we noticed a sharp increase in the number of those who provided a negative answer. In comparison to the 37.5% of respondents who reported a negative attitude towards the English language, 50% of respondents did not view speakers of the language favorably (Statement 16). Conversely, whereas 57.5% of the sample said they had a positive attitude towards the language, that rate drops down to 45% when it comes to attitudes towards its speakers. However, we still expect this latter group of respondents to be highly motivated and find it likely that many of them are currently seeking or will be seeking opportunities to improve their linguistic knowledge.

Table 3. Attitude towards English and speakers of English

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Do not	Agree	Strongly agree	Total

				Know			
14. I think it is important that I speak English.	F	4	10	1	14	11	40
	P	10%	22.5%	2.5%	35%	27.5%	100%
15. I have a positive attitude towards English.	F	7	8	2	12	11	40
	P	17.5%.	20% %	5%	30%	27.5%	100%
16. I have a positive attitude towards speakers of English.	F	8	12	2	11	7	40
	P	20%	30%	5% %	27.5% %	17.5%	100%

Conclusion

Over the last twenty years, in order to address these concerns new language courses were continually introduced into Saudi classrooms with the claim that the latest program was more communicative and more effective than the former. Yet the results have remained almost the same. Where have we failed? During the past year, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) course enabled educators to develop a better understanding of teaching situations, to identify the sources and causes of problems, and to draw an action plan for the future. The existing Saudi teaching culture can be blamed for problems with second-language acquisition (L2 acquisition) in the government schools.

Throughout this research, this study focused on only a portion of the problems related to speech, but there is more work to be done. Apart from reading the written text aloud and answering the teacher's questions, learners have not been given enough opportunity to practice the language. Such developments cover a wide range of issues, including the nature of the language, language behavior, L2 acquisition research, language models, the teaching methods and techniques, and assessments. Of particular interest is the area of reading; for example, for Arabic speakers, reading English is a long and painful process performed with little understanding. We will be researching this area in the near future.

About the Author

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The Translation of Tense and Aspect from English into Arabic by Moroccan Undergraduates: Difficulties and Solutions

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Abstract

The English tense and aspect systems have always been a problematic issue in translation, especially when a language as discrepant as Arabic is involved. Novice translators, as it is the case with university students, face difficulties in finding equivalent translations for tense and aspect either in Arabic or in English. More specifically, Moroccan learners not only find difficulty in translating the English present perfect- in both its simple and progressive reflexes- into Arabic, but they also fail to choose the correct equivalent English tense for the Arabic perfect and imperfect aspects. Building on some studies conducted mainly by Arab researchers (such as Bouras, 1999; Al-Fallay, 1999; Sekhri, 2009; Reishaan and Ja'far ,2008; Kechoud, 2010; Mansour, 2011; and Abu Joudeh et al, 2013) who dealt with almost the same issue, this study describes some of the errors made by Moroccan undergraduate students in the area of tense-aspect translation. To achieve this, 63 Moroccan undergraduate university students were tested. The test was analysed carefully and the results we have achieved so far justified our claims. This study also tries to provide an explanation for the problem, as well as suggest some solutions.

Keywords: Arabic, aspect, English, tense, translation

Introduction

The act of translating is not an easy process at all. It involves a variety of techniques and much awareness of a number of aspects on the part of the translator. Cultural background in the Target Language (TL), familiarity with native speakers' behaviours, mastery of both languages involved, familiarity with their syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse components are all elements the translator needs to take into account. Since grammatical constructions embody certain meaning, they should be translated carefully so as not to communicate a wrong aspect of the message, especially when both the Source Language (SL) and the (TL) are highly discrepant. In relation to this, Aziz and Muftah (2000: 90) say that "cross-cultural translation may constitute many problematic areas. This is true of translation between English, which represents part of the western culture, and Arabic, which belongs to the oriental culture."

Generally speaking, the kinds of errors made in translation by Moroccan undergraduate university students are due to several factors. However, tense and aspect seem to be the cause of many inaccuracies in translation papers. Differences in the linguistic form between Standard Arabic and English are the main factor in this respect. English and Arabic are totally different in their tense-aspect systems in terms of both number and meaning. English has twelve tenses which result from a combination between tense and aspect. Arabic, on the other hand, has only two aspects: the perfect and the imperfect. Moreover, the approaches these learners adopt in translating aspects seem to be inadequate due to the lack of awareness of how the system works in English in particular. Moreover, it can be deduced that the kind of errors made are due to some deficiencies in the learning and the teaching practices as well.

Based on these gaps, we have decided to investigate this area of research to show the problems that exist as well as to suggest some solutions.

Methodology

In an attempt to provide concrete examples of translation problems concerning this area of tense and aspect, a test was assigned to semester 2 students of the English department at the Faculty of Letters at Ibn Tofail University- Kenitra, Morocco during the academic year 2013-2014. 63 students, 24 males and 39 females aged between 18 and 27, were tested. The test is in the form of a number of items (separate sentences) to be translated either into English or into Arabic. Half of the students (32) worked on the Arabic translation and the other half (31) worked on the English translation. After collecting the test, it was subjected to statistical analysis through which we classified all students' errors together with the tenses used in each sentence separately in both the Arabic and English translation. Then, we compared the results to the answers/ tenses supposedly to be used. The objective behind adopting such method is to see to what extent Moroccan undergraduate students succeed in recognizing the target tense-aspect either in Arabic or in English. Moreover, it is an effective tool upon which we relied to detect the problem. Hence, all our analysis is built upon the results of this test.

The target population

Our target population is homogeneous in terms of linguistic, cultural and educational background. Firstly, these learners speak the same native language, Moroccan Arabic, and all of them come from the Gharb Chrada Bni Hssen region. Thus, they share the same culture. Secondly, these students have studied English for at least four years (the year in which the test was assigned is included). They are classified as B1 according to the common European reference levels. Moreover, they have already been exposed to a grammar course in semester 1 in

which they studied/ reviewed all the tenses and aspects of English. Generally speaking, these students have gone through the same formal educational system. In other words, before majoring in English at the university level, they have already studied Standard Arabic, as one of the subjects, in primary school, middle school, and high school for 12 years minimum. Thus, they have a mastery of this language.

The English studies program

As far as the English studies program is concerned, Ibn Tofail University students are exposed to different subject matters during the three years of the program. Translation is one of the courses students study during these three years. It comes under different names as students proceed from one semester to another. In semester 3, for instance, the course is called *Initiation to Translation*. In semester 4, it is called *Translation (Arabic-English-Arabic)*, and in semester 5 it is called *Advanced Multilingual Translation*. Only linguistic option students receive this course in semester 5. Objectives of the course differ from one semester to another. Taking the students' level into consideration, the objectives for the translation course in semester 3, for instance, come as follow:

- 1- To enable students make sense of the process of translation and motivation underlying the importance of translating
- 2- To introduce students to the nature of transition from source language to target language
- 3- To enable students know and deal with the different language and cultural elements involved in the process of translation
- 4- To make students aware of the major problems and challenges of translating words and texts
- 5- To train students to properly translate such culturally specific constructs as idiomatic expressions

(Adopted from the official course description)

The course also involves grammatical aspects of translating sentences. However, Our target population were given the test on translation not only because it is a course they will have, but also because translation is a method they tend to rely on at this level while dealing with English structures, especially in grammar course.

Data analysis

After collecting it, the data was subjected to statistical analysis. To start with, the English translation of the test requires the use of the tenses below with the frequency rates shown in table 1:

Table 1. English tenses whose use is required by the test along with their frequency

<i>Tense</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>%</i>
Present progressive	2	20 %
Present perfect	6	60 %
Present perfect progressive	2	20 %
Total	10	100%

Evidently, much focus is put on the present perfect (60 % of the answers). This tense is claimed (cf. the references cited above in the abstract) as being the most problematic tense for Arab learners in general. The answers of the test's population reflect this fact. The frequencies in table 2 show the kind of tenses students opted for.

Table 2. Frequency of the tenses used by students

<i>Tense</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>%</i>
Simple present	94	30,51 %
Present progressive	53	17,20 %
Present perfect	50	16,23 %
Present perfect progressive	17	5,51 %
Simple past	65	21,10 %
Past progressive	1	0,32 %
Wrong forms	23	7,46%
No answer	5	1,62 %
Total	308	100 %

This table shows that Moroccan students favour simple forms (the simple aspect) as it is manifested by their use of simple present (30,52%) and simple past (21,10%) which are not valid at all as answers. This, in fact, justifies Nabil's (2007, n.p) manifestations as far as intralingual errors are concerned. Nabil lists some errors that Arab learners make among which the use of simple structures instead of complex ones, the use of a structure where it does not apply, and the avoidance of difficult structures. In addition to this, the present perfect which is supposed to be used by (60%) out of the total answers was only used by (16,23%). The table also shows that students seem to be familiar with the use of the present progressive since (17,20%) out of (20%) of the answers were achieved. Surprisingly, the progressive seems to be problematic for these Moroccan learners when it is combined together with the perfect aspect as it is the case with the present perfect progressive. These students failed to associate both aspects together in their translation since only (5,51%) out of (20%) of the answers were provided. One can conclude that the present perfect is really a problem for Moroccan learners. As a result, they overuse the simple present tense. Moreover, these learners find it hard to both perceive and use in combination the progressive and the perfective aspects to come up with the present perfect progressive tense.

Translating into Arabic requires the use of the perfect and the imperfect; the only aspects that exist in this language. Answers, then, should come as follow:

Table 3. Frequency of aspects supposedly to be used in Arabic

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>%</i>
Perfect	4	40%
Imperfect	6	60%
Total	10	100 %

Again, the range of answers the students provided shows a number of problems. Table 4 illustrates students' answers.

Table 4. Frequency of students' answers in Arabic translation

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>f.</i>	<i>%</i>
Perfect	157	49,06 %
Imperfect	129	40,31 %
Other forms	19	5,93 %
Wrong forms	8	2,5 %
Wrong translation	3	0,93 %
No answer	4	1,25 %
Total	320	100 %

The data in table 4 reveals that students have generated a variety of answers and sometimes no answers at all for the forms they had. This fact proclaims that there is a real problem. Moroccan students struggle to come up with an equivalent translation to the English sentences- To illustrate, table 5 shows the kind of aspect students used to translate sentence 1.

1) I have been waiting for the bus since nine o'clock.

Table 5. Aspects used by students for sentence 1

Form	Perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/ +perfect	Imperfect	Other forms
N.	6	3	15	6
Total	9		15	6

Tackling such a sentence that uses both the perfect and the progressive aspects together is really difficult for Moroccan students to translate. Some of these students considered the sentence to be in the present tense. Thus, they have used the imperfect. Others considered it to be in the past tense. As a result, they have used either the bare perfect /i-ntadar-tu انتظرت / or the perfect preceded by the particle /qad لقد / or /la-qad لقد / as (/la-qad/i-ntadar-tu لقد انتظرت). Other students find this structure more complex. Thus, they have formulated some forms which do not fit the context at all. Examples of these forms are: /kuntu + the imperfect كنت أنتظر / or /la-qad+ kuntu+ the imperfect لقد كنت أنتظر /. To a lesser degree, sentence 2 reveals the same fact. See table 6.

2) I have been working here for some days now.

Table 6. Aspects used by students for sentence 2

Form	Perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/ +perfect	Imperfect	Other forms
N.	5	3	20	3
Total	8		20	3

If we compare the answers for sentence 2 and those for sentence 1, we notice that Moroccan students show more preference for the imperfect over the perfect form. This time, the adverbial 'now' plays a major role in influencing students' answers. Similarly, the English translation shows a preference for the use of simple present and present progressive. See table 7.

Table 7. English tenses used by students for sentence 2

Tense	Simple	Present	Present	Present	Simple	Wrong	No

	present	progressive	perfect	perfect progressive	past	forms	answer
N.	13	7	3	5	0	2	1

The Arabic imperfect is a source of mother tongue interference as it is evident from the students' choice of the English tense. Moroccan students tend to consider the imperfect as an equivalent to the English present simple or present progressive and the perfect as an equivalent to simple past.

Another striking fact is that Moroccan learners use both the Arabic perfect and imperfect as equivalents to the English present perfect. Following McCawley (1971), Comrie (1976), and Binnick (1991), the English present perfect can be seen within these four categories:

- 1) Universal perfect/ perfect of continuity. e.g., *I have known him since 1999.*
- 2) Experiential perfect. e.g., *I have visited Paris three times before.*
- 3) The perfect of result. e.g., *Sarah has done six exercises up to now.*
- 4) The perfect of recent past. e.g., *He has just gone out.*

The data gathered from the test reveals that Moroccan learners tend to use simple past in English and the perfect in Arabic to refer to experiential perfect, perfect of result, and perfect of recent past. However, to refer to universal perfect, they tend to use simple present in English and the imperfect in Arabic. Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11 illustrate this fact:

A) Perfect of result

- 3) Sarah has done six exercises up to now.

Table 8. Arabic aspects used by students for sentence 3

Form \	Perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/+perfect	imperfect	Other forms
N.	26	3	0	3
Total	29		0	3

B) Perfect of recent past

- 4) He has just gone out.

Table 9. Arabic aspects used by students for sentence 4

Form \	perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/+perfect	Imperfect	Other forms	Wrong forms	No answer
N.	6	24	0	0	1	1
Total	30		0	0	1	1

C) Experiential perfect

- 5) I have visited Paris three times before.

Table 10. Arabic aspects used by students for sentence 5

Form \	Perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/+perfect	Imperfect	Other forms	Wrong form	No answer
N.	16	15	0	0	1	0

Total	31	0	0	1	0

In all of these cases, students chose the perfect aspect. However, one should notice which form of the Arabic perfect is really used in translating these sentences into Arabic. In some cases the bare perfect is used more as in (sentence 3), in other cases the construction (/la-/qad/+ perfect) is used more as in (sentence 4), and in some other cases both bare perfect and (/la-/qad/+ perfect) are equally used as in (sentence 5). To what extent can we accept that all sentences describing perfect of result should be translated by using bare perfect, that all sentences *describing* recent past should be translated by the use of /la-/qad/ + perfect, and that sentences describing experiential perfect can be translated either by bare perfect or /la-/qad/ + perfect? In fact, this inconsistency of using (/la-/qad/ + perfect) hints that there is a problem. Moroccan students do not really know when to use only the bare perfect and when to precede it by the particle /la-/qad/. May be future research will provide more answers to this point.

D) Universal perfect/ or perfect of continuity

6) I have known him since 1999.

Table 11. The Arabic aspects used by students for sentence 6

Form	Perfect	/qad+perfect/ /la-qad/ +perfect	Imperfect	Other forms	Wrong form	No answer
N.	1	0	24	2	5	0
Total	1		24	2	5	0

Normally, most foreign English language learners find difficulty in distinguishing between the present perfect and simple past. Surprisingly, in the case of universal perfect, the translation into English reveals a confusion between the present perfect and simple present as it is shown by the table 12.

Table 12. The tenses used by students for the English translation of sentence 6

Tense	Simple present	Present progressive	Present perfect	Present perfect progressive	Simple past	Wrong forms	No answer
N.	15	0	14	0	2	0	0

This also justifies our claim that there is an interference of the Arabic imperfect into English. In fact, based on the test's analysis, one can say that the source of these problems is both interlingual and intralingual. We agree with Kohn (1986) who assumes that facing two different structures in two different languages result in interference (Abu-Joudeh et al (2013:46). Similarly, we totally agree with Mattar's (2001: 104) interpretation that students avoid using complex structures such as the present perfect because they are unable to "establish proper form-meaning / tense-aspect associations."

Possible solutions

Tense-aspect problems can be resolved by the means of a variety of measures and treatments. In fact, Sekhri (2009) suggests that the context is the key element upon which one should rely on to come up with an equivalent translation of the present perfect and that

translation should be oriented towards meaning. We argue that the matter involves more than this and that different components should be integrated to come up with an effective solution. Linguistic variation awareness, cultural awareness, the teaching practice, and the learning behaviour all play a major role here. Moroccan learners should be trained on the linguistic variations that exist among languages. In this respect, comparative studies should be given much importance to help students see the facets of difference between the SL and the TL. In addition to this, these learners need to develop culture awareness in language learning. That is to say, they should be familiar with native speakers of the TL and how this language is used in real life situations. Culture should always remain an essential component in translation. In stressing the role of culture in translation, Nida (1985) states,

One of the most important approaches to translation is the socio-semiotic or cultural approach which means that translation is not restricted to the meanings of sounds, words, grammar, and rhetoric but it goes beyond mere correspondences to cultural presuppositions and value systems which create a different world picture specific to every culture. P.121

In this regard, cultural studies are of great help in raising students' cultural awareness. The teaching practice should also be reviewed. For example, grammar teachers should step away from teaching grammatical items out of context and giving exhaustive explanations of the TL rules. As far as tense and aspect are concerned, teachers should focus more on teaching the meaning and function of these aspects using authentic materials. In this regard, Bouras (1999: 174) claims that instructors need "to look for the function of the verbs within the text rather than relying simply on decontextualized meanings." In turn, teachers of translation should highlight culture-based translations. In addition to that, Moroccan learners should be autonomous. In other words, they have to be active and responsible about what they learn. They should benefit from all means and ICT facilities they have nowadays so as to learn from authentic sources. In fact, the kinds of solutions suggested here require from every part to bear his or her responsibility if we really need to have a good language user and a good translator.

Conclusion

In this study an attempt has been made to investigate the translation errors that Moroccan learners make when they deal with tense and aspect. Some examples were provided to show the problem and our analyses have revealed several facts. Some explanations have been provided to help the reader has an idea about the sources of the problem and the approaches these learners adopt. The solutions suggested are not comprehensive but do state what we believe as highly essential and relevant to improving Moroccan learners' translations from English into Arabic.

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Students' Ability to Identify Different Tones and the Tonic Syllable in the English Intonation

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Abstract

This study aims at knowing the degree of students' knowledge concerning different tones and the tonic syllable in the intonation of English language. Moreover, if this knowledge could be improved through teaching students these different tones and the tonic syllable. Thus the objectives of this study are to determine to what extent students can identify various tones when hearing them, and also if they can identify the tonic syllable; moreover to show the statistical differences before studying intonation and after studying intonation. To achieve this aim the researcher selected a sample of 92 third year students at Sudan University of Science and Technology and conducted a pre-test to determine their standard before teaching them intonation then a post-test of 30 items of words and sentences was conducted. Statistical analysis of the students' performance showed the following: Regarding single words, students' understanding of the tone *fall* has improved and they became much better in identifying it. When considering the tone *rise* the students still face problem with it. When looking into the *fall-rise* and *rise-fall* tones, students confuse them together. Regarding the level of sentence it has been recognized that the students understanding of the tone *fall-rise* has improved but they still confuse the *rise* and the *fall* tones together. Regarding the tonic syllable the students in the post test have an inclination not to choose the structure words as a tonic syllable. Their understanding in this area has improved.

Keywords: Stress, tone, pitch, intonation

Students' Ability to Identify Different Tones and the Tonic Syllable in the English Intonation

Language is so an integral part of the human life and activities that one does not realize the enormous complexities that are involved in the language learning process until one tries actively to either teach a language other than one's own or tries to learn one. A human language is described as a 'system of systems' and these systems are: phonology, lexis, morphology, syntax, cohesion, and semantics. This study aims at knowing the degree of students understanding of intonation concerning the different tones and the tonic syllable. Moreover, whether teaching intonation to those students could help them better identify different tones when hearing them.

The significance of this study stems up from the importance of English language itself as a global language. Thus, it is important for the foreign language speaker to understand various tones when hearing them. Because intonation in any language serves many functions, so if the foreign language speaker doesn't know different tones implied in English language this may lead to misunderstanding.

The objectives of this paper are: To find out to what extent students (before studying intonation and after studying intonation) can distinguish various tones when hearing them? To find out whether the students can: a) Identify different tones on the level of words. b) Identify different tones on the level of sentences. c) Identify tonic syllable.

Literature review:

Tone: Tone refers to significant (i.e. meaningful, contrastive, phonemic) contrasts between words signaled by pitch differences. Tone may be lexical, as in Mandarin Chinese or grammatical tone, or as in many African languages. However, as with stress, there may also be non-pitch aspects of tone. Lexical tones are often related to durational, phonatory and vowel quality distinctions as well as frequency distinctions. (Soltani,2007:11).

Pitch: The pitch of the human voice is continuously variable. Nevertheless, phonologists often assert that any language uses only a small set of different patterns to control intonation-variation in pitch, whose primary acoustic correlation is fundamental frequency or f_0 . Intonation in English, for example, is said to behave this way. Similar claims have been made for numerous other languages. (Braun,2006:406)

English is termed a stress language, not a tone language, but intonation plays a great role in it. Many scholars have recognized the relationship between intonation form and function from very early times. Pike (1972, p. 56) mentioned the communicative importance of intonation by stating that "we often react more violently to the intonational meanings than to the lexical ones; if a man's tone of voice belies his words, we immediately assume that the intonation more faithfully reflects his true linguistic intentions." He tried to give more explanation by mentioning "If one says something insulting, but smiles in face and voice, the utterance may be a great compliment; but if one says something very complimentary, but with an intonation of contempt, the result is an insult." (Pike 1972, p. 56)

Another scholar comment on the communicative importance of intonation, describing changes in it as "the most efficient means of rendering prominent for a listener, those parts of an utterance on which the speaker wishes to concentrate attention". (Gimson, 1980, p. 264) The grammatical and attitudinal importance is also not neglected by the scholars. "Intonation is often important grammatically in distinguishing one type of sentence from another, it is important in signaling the attitude of the speaker in what he is saying." (Jackson, 1982, p.48)

The acknowledged importance of intonation in communication is quite obvious, but still there are many obstacles in the way of a clear-cut analysis of the relationship between the form and function of intonation, not to mention how to make the non-native speaker of English understand these functions.

L2 learners, who already use their L1 intonation as perhaps the most unconscious resource to communicate, might apply this language acquisition strategy to their L2 spoken discourse. (Best, 1995, p. 171–206) Their L1 intonation may work, then, as a source of hypothesis for their L2 intonation.

Children learn the rhythm of their L1 very early in life. By the time they reach the age of one, that rhythm is deeply familiar to them, and they will unconsciously apply it to any L2 that they learn. (Aoyama et al. 2007: 281–297). Their L1 intonation may work, then, as a source of hypothesis for their L2 intonation. This hypothesis would enable learners to perceive and convey basic speech functions in the target language. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Method

The descriptive method is used because is suitable for such kind of studies.

Subjects

The population of the study is the third year students at Sudan University of Science and Technology with total of 92 students sat to pre- and post receptive tests of intonation.

Procedure and Material

The researcher has conducted a pre-test to determine the standard of the students before being taught intonation, after teaching intonation to the group a post- test (the same test) was conducted to find out the newly acquired standard of the students, i.e. the degree of the progress they have achieved after studying intonation. The researcher consulted three books when it came to teaching intonation: Roach (2005, PP. 120-180) English Phonetics and Phonology, O'Connor (2007, PP.108-125) Better English Pronunciation, and Rogerson (2011, PP. 179-205) English Phonology and Pronunciation Teaching . The intonation has been taught for ten hours mainly from Roach (2005) and the students have listened to different tones. The test is composed of 30 items which students have to listen to and determine the right tone they hear. All 30 items were taken from Roach (2005, PP.120-180) (appendix A)English phonetics and phonology, even the model answer was derived from it. The first 10 items were words the students were asked to identify the different tones, the second 10 items were sentences the students were asked to identify the different tones, the last 10 items were sentences the students were asked to identify the tonic syllable. After a period of thirteen weeks the students sat to the same test after being taught intonation. Their intonation knowledge, as data, has been collected through results of marking the pre and post tests. Each test has been marked out of 30 to determine the scores of the students and how much they achieved in the two tests.

Frequency and percentages have been used to reflect the tones which cause problems to the students.

Validity and Reliability

For internal consistency reliability, for multiple item scales of this test, the researcher has computed the most commonly used type of internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's

coefficient alpha. (Nancy L. Leech et al, 2005:63) Number of items is 2, Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized Items is 0.437.

The correlation of each specific item with the sum/total of the other items in the scale is 0.437 this mean that the test is reliable.

The validity is 0.6, which mean the degree of the test validity is good.

Concerning the face validity; five scholars were consulted, concerning the intonation perceptive and their comments have been taken under consideration.

Result and discussion:

Students have been given a receptive test before being taught intonation, then they has been given the same test after being taught intonation, they listened to different words and sentences and asked to decide the correct answer. The following tables show the frequency(F) and percentage (%)of students' answers before studying intonation, it will be shown in the tables as (Pre), and the frequency (F)and percentage (%)of students answers after studying intonation it will be shown in the tables as (Post)

Students' identifications of different tones on the level of words:

In this question students have been asked to listen to each word and identify the tone they heard. (Appendix B)

Table. Identifying the tone "fall"

Tones	Pre-						Post.					
	Two		Five		Now		Two		Five		Now	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	32	34.8	20	21.7	18	19.6	49	53.3	40	43.5	35	38.0
Rise	38	41.3	23	25.0	11	12.0	30	32.6	29	31.5	27	29.3
Fall -rise	7	7.6	22	23.9	26	28.3	6	6.5	8	8.7	14	15.2
Rise - fall	15	16.3	27	29.3	37	40.2	7	7.6	15	16.3	16	17.4
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The correct tone for the words "Two", "five", and "now" is *fall* 34.8%, 21.7%, 19.6% consecutively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. However, the performance of the students improved more students got it right on the 'Post' that is 53.3%, 43.5%, 38% consecutively, this shows that more of them got a better understanding of this tone. For the word "two"41.3% of the

students have mistaken it with *rise* in the 'Pre' but the students performance improved and 32.6% of the students have mistaken it with *rise* in the 'Post'. For the word "five" also many students have mistaken it with *rise*, 25% in the 'Pre' and 31.5% in the post. For the word "Now" 40.2% of the students had mistaken it with *rise-fall* in the 'Pre', but the students performance got much better and only 17.4% of the students had mistaken it with *rise-fall* in the 'Post'. All this reveals that the students understanding of the tone *fall* has improved after being taught. But still many students mistaken *rise* with *fall* even after being taught intonation.

Table. 2 Identifying the tone "Rise"

Tones	Pre-						Post-					
	Three		Six		Us		Three		Six		Us	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	43	46.7	38	41.3	14	15.2	39	42.4	29	31.5	15	16.3
Rise	15	16.3	26	28.3	31	33.7	19	20.7	30	32.6	51	55.4
Fall - rise	13	14.1	14	15.2	14	15.2	25	27.2	21	22.8	13	14.1
Rise-fall	21	22.8	14	15.2	33	35.9	9	9.8	12	13.0	13	14.1
Total	92	100	92	100	92	100	92	100.0	92	100	92	100

The correct tone for the words "Three", "Six" and "us" is *rise* only 16.3%, 28.3%, 33.7% consecutively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. For the word "three" the performance of the students did not improve much in the 'Post' 20.7% got it right. 46.7% of the students have mistaken it with *fall* in the 'Pre' and 42.4% of the students have mistaken it with *fall* in the 'Post'. The performance of the students improved a little in the word "six" in the 'Post' 32.6% got it right, this shows that only few of them got a better understanding of this tone. 41.3% of the students have mistaken it with *fall* in the 'Pre', the performance of the students has improved in the 'Post' less students have mistaken it with *fall*; this is 31.5%, which is still a very high percentage. The correct tone for the word "us" is *rise* 33.7% of students got it right in the 'Pre'. For the word "us" the performance of the students improved a lot in the 'Post' 55.4% got it right. This reflects that students understanding of the tone *rise* improved just a little after being taught. But still many students have mistaken *fall* with *rise* even after being taught. Also there is no consistency in their understanding because for the word us many identified it better in the post.

Table.3 Identifying the tone “Fall-rise”

Tones	Pre-				Post-			
	One		You		One		You	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	27	29.3	23	25.0	16	17.4	5	5.4
Rise	43	46.7	16	17.4	29	31.5	13	14.1
Fall – rise	10	10.9	33	35.9	23	25.0	47	51.1
Rise – fall	12	13.0	20	21.7	24	26.1	27	29.3
Total	92	100	92	100.0	92	100.0	92	100.0

The correct tone for the word “One”, and “you” is *fall-rise* only 10.9%,35.9% respectively of the students got it right in the ‘Pre’. However, the performance of the students improved more students got it right on the ‘Post’ that is 25%, 51.1% respectively, this shows that some of them got a better understanding of this tone. The tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it with *fall-rise* in the ‘Pre’ is *fall*, this is 29.3%,25% respectively but the students performance improved and only 17.4%, 5.4% of the students have mistaken it with *fall* in the ‘Post’. For the word “One” many students have mistaken it with *rise* in both tests, in the Pre. 46.7%, and in the Post 31.5%. This shows that students mistaken *rise* with *rise-fall*. For the word “you” the tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it with *fall-rise* in the ‘Post’ is *rise-fall*, this is 29.3 this tone is closer to *fall-rise* than *fall*, this reflects that the students started to develop better understanding to tones as general.

Table.4 Identifying the tone of the word “Rise-fall”

Tones	Pre-				Post-			
	Four		More		Four		More	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	1	1.1	16	17.4	5	5.4	3	3.3
Rise	19	20.7	14	15.2	9	9.8	12	13.0
Fall – rise	37	40.2	23	25.0	38	41.3	37	40.2
Rise – fall	35	38.0	39	42.4	40	43.5	40	43.5
Total	92	100.0	92	100.0	92	100.0	92	100.0

The correct tone for the words “four” and “More” is *rise-fall* 38%, and 42.4% of students got it right in the ‘Pre’. The performance of the students improved a little in the ‘Post’ 43.5% (for both words) got it right, this shows that only few of them got a better understanding of this tone. 40.2%, 25% respectively of the students have mistaken it with *fall-rise* in the ‘Pre’ and 41.3%, 40.2% respectively of the students have mistaken it with *fall-rise* in the ‘Post’. This proves that many students mistaken *rise-fall* with *fall-rise* even after being taught intonation.

From all the above tables it is recognized that the students understanding of the tone *fall* has improved and they became much better in identifying it after being taught intonation. The right tone for words “two”, “five” and “now” is *fall* the percentages of the students who got it right in the ‘Post’ are: 53.3%, 34.5% and 38% consecutively, which reflect an improvement because in the ‘Pre’ the percentages for the same words are: 34.8%, 21.7% and 19.6%.

When considering the tone *rise* the students understanding of it improved, but not like the tone *fall* and many confuse it with the tone *fall*. The right tone for the words “three”, “six”, and “us” is *rise* the percentages of the students who got it right in the ‘Post’ are: 20.7%, 32.6% and 55.4% consecutively. The percentages of students who mixed it with *fall* are: 42.4%, 31.5% and 16.3% consecutively.

Regarding the *fall-rise* and *rise-fall* tones, it is clear that the students’ standard in recognizing them has improved after being taught intonation but still many students confuse them together. Before being exposed to the teaching material there was no consistency with the tones they confuse them with, but after having the knowledge of intonation most of them started to mix them together, and this could be a step towards the right direction. The right tone for the words “one” and “you” is *fall-rise* the percentages of the students who got it right in the ‘Post’ are: 25% and 51.1% respectively. The percentages of students who mixed it with *rise-fall* are: 26% and 29.3% respectively. The right tone for the words “four” and “more” is *rise-fall* the percentages of the students who got it right in the ‘Post’ are: 43.5% for both words. The percentages of students who mixed it with *fall-rise* are: 41.3% and 40.2% respectively.

Students’ identifications of different tones on the level of sentence:

In this question students have been asked to listen to each sentence and identify the tone they heard: In the table the sentences are numbered the 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. (Appendices)

Table.5 Identifying the tone “fall” in the sentences: 1st “Now here’s the weather forecast.” 2nd “A few years ago they were top.”

Tones	Pre-				Post-			
	1 st		2 nd		1 st		2 nd	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	52	56.5	13	14.1	65	70.7	30	32.6
Rise	18	19.6	65	70.7	16	17.4	49	53.3
Fall-rise	22	23.9	14	15.2	11	12.0	13	14.1
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The correct tone for the sentences 1st "Now here's the weather forecast.", 2nd "A few years ago they were top." is *fall* 56.5%, 14.1% respectively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot that is in the 'Post' 70.7% 32.6% respectively got it right, this reflects that many of them got a better understanding of this tone. The tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it with *fall* in the 'Pre' is *fall-rise*, for the 1st sentence, this is 23.9%, and *rise*, for the 2nd sentence this is 70.7%. The tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it with *fall* in the 'Post' is *rise*, this is 17.4%, 53.3% for the 1st and second sentences respectively. This reflects that their understanding of tones started to improve because a *fall-rise* tone has two components a fall and a rise, while *fall* and *rise* tones have one main component either falling or rising. But many students are still having difficulty in identifying this tone.

Table.6 Identifying the tone "fall": in the sentences; 3rd "We try to do our shopping in the market." 4th "But I never go there now."

Tones	pre-				Post-			
	3 rd		4 th		3 rd		4 th	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	12	13.0	27	29.3	34	37.0	33	35.9
Rise	50	54.3	40	43.5	36	39.1	38	41.3
Fall-rise	30	32.6	25	27.2	22	23.9	21	22.8
Total	92	100.0	92	100.0	92	100.	92	100.0

The correct tone for the sentences 3rd "We try to do our shopping in the market.", and 4th "But I never go there now." is *fall* only 13%, 29.3% respectively of the students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot in the 'Post' that is 37%, 35.9% got it right, this reflects that many of them got a better understanding of this tone. However, the tone which students have mistaken it with is *rise*, 39.1%, 41.3% respectively of the students in the 'Post' mistaken it with *rise* which nearly the same as the percentage of the students who got it right. But still this is better because 54.3%, 43.5% respectively mistaken it with *rise* in the pre. This shows the percentage of the students who got it wrong even after being taught intonation is higher than those who got it right.

Table.7 Identifying the tone "Rise" in the sentences: 5th "You didn't say anything about rates." 6th "Is there anything you wouldn't eat?"

Tones	Pre-		Post-	
	5 th	6 th	5 th	6 th

	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
Fall	25	27.2	60	65.2	15	16.3	48	52.2
Rise	27	29.3	19	20.7	48	52.2	32	34.8
Fall-rise	40	43.5	13	14.1	29	31.5	12	13.0
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The correct tone for the sentences 5th "You didn't say anything about rates.", and 6th "Is there anything you wouldn't eat?" is *rise* 29.3%, 20.7% respectively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot that is in the 'Post' 52.2%, and 34.8% respectively got it right. This reflects that many of them got a better understanding of this tone. For the 5th sentence the tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it with is *fall-rise* with 43.5% in the 'Pre' and 31.5% in the post. For the 6th sentence more students mistaken it with *fall*, the percentage is even higher than *rise* with 65.2% in the 'Pre' and 52.2% in the post. This shows that many students are still having difficulty in identifying it.

Table.8 Identifying the tone "Rise" in the sentences: 7th "Have you ever considered writing?" 8th "It wouldn't be difficult to find out."

Tones	Pre-				Post-			
	7 th		8 th		7 th		8 th	
	F.	%			F.	%		
Fall	44	47.8	37	40.2	42	45.7	27	29.3
Rise	24	26.1	36	39.1	33	35.9	37	40.2
Fall-rise	24	26.1	18	19.6	17	18.5	29	31.5
Total	92	100.0	92	100.0	92	100.	92	100.0

The correct tone for the sentences 7th "Have you ever considered writing?", and 8th "It wouldn't be difficult to find out." is *rise* 26.1%, 39.1% respectively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved, that is in the 'Post' 35.9%, 40.2% respectively got it right, this reflects that few of them got a better understanding of this tone. However, the tone which students have mistaken it with is *fall*, with 47.8%, 40.2% respectively in the 'Pre' and 45.7%, 29.3% respectively in the post. This shows the percentage of the students who got it wrong even after being taught intonation is still high.

Table.9 *Identifying the tone “Fall-rise” 9th “No one could say the cinema was dead.” 10th “That was what he claimed to be.”*

Tones	Pre-				Post-			
	9 th		10 th		9 th		10 th	
	F.	%			F.	%		
Fall	32	34.8	31	33.7	22	23.9	32	34.8
Rise	5	5.4	25	27.2	11	12.0	22	23.9
Fall-rise	55	59.8	36	39.1	59	64.1	38	41.3
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The correct tone for the sentences 9th “No one could say the cinema was dead.”, and 10th “That was what he claimed to be.” “That was what he claimed to be.” is *fall-rise* 59.8%, 39.1% respectively of students got it right in the ‘Pre’. The performance of the students improved a little that is in the ‘Post’ 64.1%, 41.3% respectively got it right, this reflects that few of them got a better understanding of this tone. However, the tone with the second higher percentage which students have mistaken it is *fall* with 34.8%, 33.7% respectively in the ‘Pre’ and 23.9%, 34.8% respectively in the post. This shows that the performance of the students becomes a little bit better but still many students are still having difficulty in identifying it.

From all the above tables it is recognized that the students understanding of the tone *fall-rise* has improved and they became much better in identifying it after being taught intonation. The right tones for sentences “No one could say the cinema was dead.”, and “That was what he claimed to be.” is *fall-rise* the percentages of the students who got it right in the ‘Post’ are: 64.1%, 41.3% respectively, which reflect an improvement because in the ‘Pre’ the percentages for the same sentences are: 59.8% and 39.1% respectively.

When considering the *rise* and the *fall* tones the students confuse them together even after being taught intonation.

Students' identifications of tonic syllable.

In this question the students have been asked to listen to different sentences and identify the tonic syllable. The following tables reflect whether the students have chosen the right focus word (referred to in the table as F. word) or a content word (referred to in the table as C. word) or a structure word, (referred to in the table as S. word). In the following tables the sentences are numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. (Appendices E&F)

Table.10 Identifying the tonic syllable in the last content word in the sentences 1st "We could go by bus." 2nd We could go from Manchester. 3rd Have you finished?

	Pre						Post					
	1 st		2 nd		3 rd		1 st		2 nd		3 rd	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
F. word	39	42.4	54	58.7	57	62.0	62	67.4	73	79.3	73	79.3
C. word	21	22.8	9	9.8	-	-	11	12.0	7	7.6	-	-
S. word	32	34.8	29	31.6	35	38.0	19	20.6	12	13.1	19	20.7
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The tonic syllable in each of the above sentences is on the last content word which happened to be the last word.

The tonic syllable for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd sentences is on **bus, Manchester, finished**. 42.4%, 58.7%, 62% consecutively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot and in the 'Post' 67.4%, 79.3%, 79.3% respectively got it right. 34.8%, 31.6%, 31.6% consecutively of the students put the tonic syllable on structure word that is **we, by, could, from, you, or have** in the 'Pre', this percentage has been reduced to 20.6%, 13%, 20.7% respectively in the 'Post'. These sentences reflect that the teaching of intonation raised the percentage of students understanding on recognizing the place of the tonic syllable. Moreover, after being taught they knew the difference between structure words and content words regarding intonation.

Table. 11 Identifying the tonic syllable in the last content word in the sentences 4th "The car was where I'd left it." 5th "How much is the biggest one." 6th "It was too cold."

	Pre						Post					
	4 th		5 th		6 th		4 th		5 th		6 th	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
F. word	17	18.5	47	51.1	45	48.9	42	45.7	69	75.0	65	70.7
C. word	50	54.3	14	15.2	41	44.6	37	40.2	5	5.4	23	25.0
S. word	25	27.2	31	33.7	6	6.5	13	14.1	18	19.6	4	4.3
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The tonic syllable for the sentences is on the last content word that is for 4th, 5th and 6th is on **left, biggest, cold respectively**. 18.5%, 51.1%, 48.9% consecutively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot and in the 'Post' 45.7%, 75%, 70.7% consecutively got it right. 27.2%, 33.7%, 6.5 consecutively of the students put the tonic syllable on structure words that is **the, was, I'd, it, much, is, one** in the 'Pre', this percent dropped to 14.1%, 19.6%, 4.3% consecutively in the 'Post'.

The above sentences reflect that the teaching of intonation raised the percentage of students understanding on recognizing the place of the tonic syllable. Even if the content word is not the last word in the sentence like in the 4th and 5th sentences, or when there is a content word close to the focus word and it could be the focus word as in the 6th sentence "too cold".

Table.12 Identifying the tonic syllable in a content word which is not at the end of a sentence : in the sentences 7th "Of course it is broken." 8th "I knew it would go wrong" 9th "Her it is."

	Pre-						Post-					
	7 th		8 th		9 th		7 th		8 th		9 th	
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%
F. word	40	43.5	40	43.5	61	66.3	65	70.7	55	59.8	77	83.7
C. word	23	25.0	39	42.4	-	-	20	21.7	28	30.4	-	-
S. word	29	31.5	13	14.1	31	33.7	7	7.6	9	9.8	15	16.3
Total	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.	92	100.

The tonic syllable in the above 7th, 8th sentences is not in the last content word which is the common place of the tonic syllable it is in another word which indicates that the speech is related to something before it. While in the 9th "Her it is." it is on the only content word which happened to be at the beginning of the sentence.

The tonic syllable for the sentences 7th, 8th, 9th is on **course, Knew, here** consecutively 43.5%, 43.5%, 66.3% consecutively of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot and in the 'Post' 70.7%, 59.8%, 83.7% consecutively got it right. 31.5%, 14.1%, 33.7 consecutively of the students put the tonic syllable on **of, it, is, I, or would** in the 'Pre', this percentage has been reduced to 7.6%, 9.8%, 16.5 consecutively in the 'Post'.

The above sentences reflect that the students' knowledge about structure words and content words has improved. Moreover they improved in their recognition of the tonic syllable even if it is not the last content word, or if the content word is not the last word.

Table. Identifying the tonic syllable in a structure word: in the sentences 10th "That was a loud noise."

Word	Pre		Post	
	Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
That	6	6.5	6	6.5
Was	11	12.0	39	42.4
A	5	5.4	0	0
Loud	41	44.6	36	39.1
Noise	30	32.6	10	10.9
Total	92	100.0	92	100.0

The tonic syllable for the 10th sentence is on **was** 12% of students got it right in the 'Pre'. The performance of the students improved a lot and in the 'Post' 42.4% got it right. 5.4% of the students put the tonic syllable on **A** in the 'Pre', this percentage becomes 0% in the 'Post', this reflects that the students' knowledge about structure words and content words has improved. However, this was a problematic sentence for the students because the tonic syllable is placed on a structured word that is **was**, this is why 39.1% of the students still placed it on **loud**. But still teaching of intonation raised the percentage of students understanding on recognizing the place of the tonic syllable even if it is not in a content word.

The percentages of students' performance have improved a lot this is reflected in the ten sentences. The percentages of the right answer of the ten sentences from 21-30 in the 'Pre' are: 42.4%, 43.5%, 18.5%, 51.1%, 43.5%, 48.9%, 66.3%, 12%, 58.7%, and 62% consecutively, while in the post the percentages are: 67.4%, 70.7%, 45.7%, 75%, 59.8%, 70.7%, 83.7%, 42.4%, 79.3%, and 79.3% consecutively, this reflects that the teaching of intonation raised the percentage of students understanding on recognizing the place of the tonic syllable.

Students have acquired new knowledge that structure words are usually de-emphasized to contrast with the focus words. They learnt the difference between content words and structure words regarding intonation, this knowledge has been reflected in their performance, thus in the post test they have an inclination not to choose the structure words as a tonic syllable. This is quite obvious in the second sentence, "of course it is broken" in the 'Pre' 21.7% of the students have chosen **of** as the tonic syllable, while in the 'Post' only 1.1% of the students have chosen **of**. Also the last sentence "have you finished" in the 'Pre' 25% of the students have chosen **have** as the tonic syllable, while in the 'Post' only 7.6% have chosen **have**.

Conclusion

Regarding single words after been taught intonation it has been recognized that the students understanding of the tone *fall* has improved and they became much better in identifying it. When considering the tone *rise* the students understanding of it improved, but not as much as

they did in their understanding of the tone *fall* and many confuse tone *rise* with the tone *fall*. When looking into the *fall-rise* and *rise-fall* tones, it is clear that the students' standard in recognizing them has improved. Before being exposed to the teaching material there was no consistency with the tones they confuse them with, but after having the knowledge of intonation most of them started to mix them together.

Regarding the level of sentence it has been recognized that the students understanding of the tone *fall-rise* has improved and they became much better in identifying it after being taught intonation. When considering the *rise* and the *fall* tones the students have mistaken them together even after being taught intonation.

Regarding the tonic syllable it is obvious that students have acquired new knowledge that structure words are usually de-emphasized to contrast with the focus words. They learnt the difference between content words and structure words regarding intonation, this knowledge has been reflected in their performance, thus in the post test they have an inclination not to choose the structure words as a tonic syllable.

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Appendices
Appendix A
 Perceptive test

The words and sentences of this test are taken from Roach 2005. Students are going to listen to these sentences from the CD attached with the book.

Listen carefully to each section; while you are listening try to answer the following questions:

Question one: Identify the tone you hear by choosing the appropriate tone:

Words/ tones	Fall	Rise	Fall-rise	Rise-fall
One				
Two				
Three				
Four				
Five				
Six				
Now				
You				
More				
Us				

Question two: Identify the tonic syllable in each of the following sentences by underling it:

1. We could go by bus.
2. Of course it's broken.
3. The car was where I'd left it.
4. How much is the biggest one.
5. I know it would go wrong.
6. It was too cold.
7. Here it is.
8. That was a loud noise.
9. We could go from Manchester.
10. Have you finished?

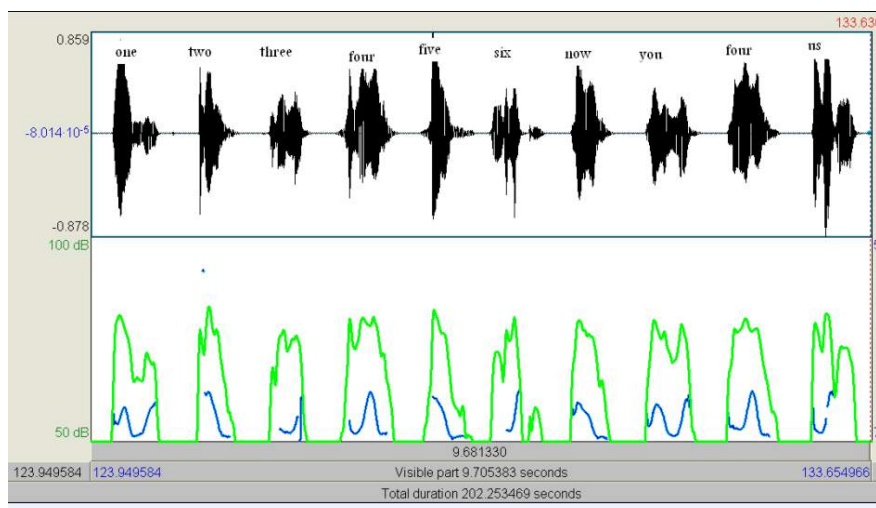
Question three: What are the tones of the underlined tonic syllables of each of the following sentences choose the right tone:

Sentence / tone	Fall	Rise	Rise-fall
Now here's the <u>weather</u> forecast.			
You didn't say anything about <u>rates</u> .			
A few years ago they were <u>top</u> .			
No one could say the cinema was <u>dead</u> .			
Is there <u>anything</u> you wouldn't eat.			
Have you ever considered <u>writing</u> ?			
That was what he <u>claimed</u> to be.			
We try to do our shopping in the <u>market</u> .			
But I <u>never</u> go there now.			

It wouldn't be difficult to find <u>out</u> .			

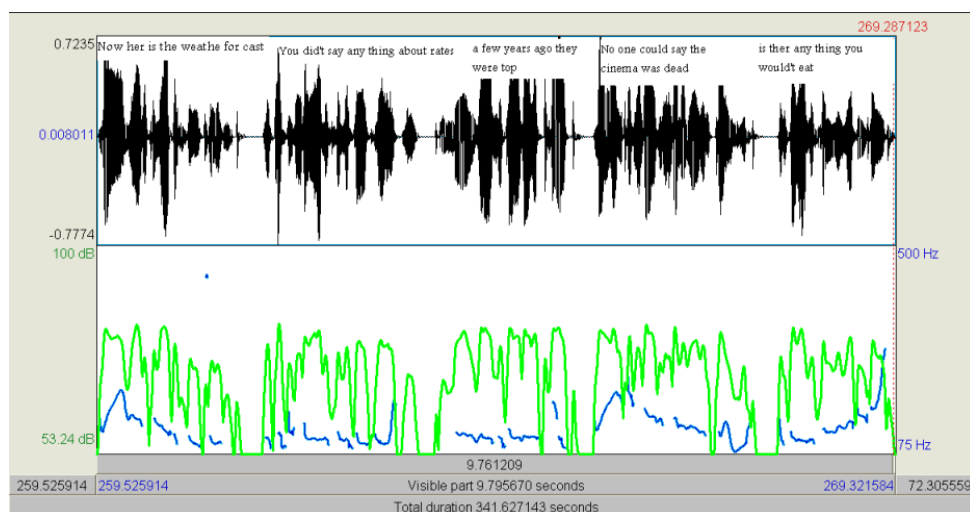
Appendix B

All words in the test



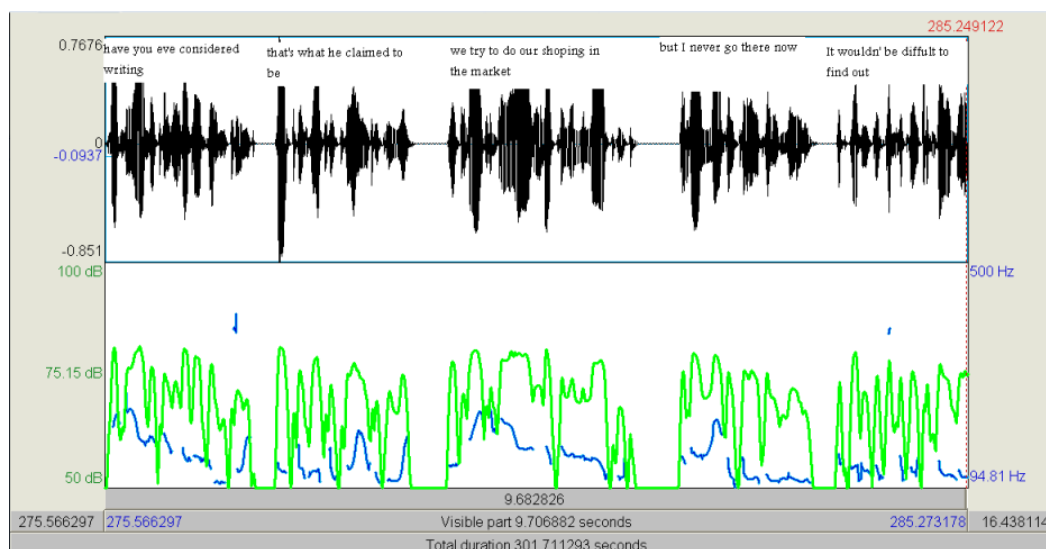
Appendix C

First five sentences in the test



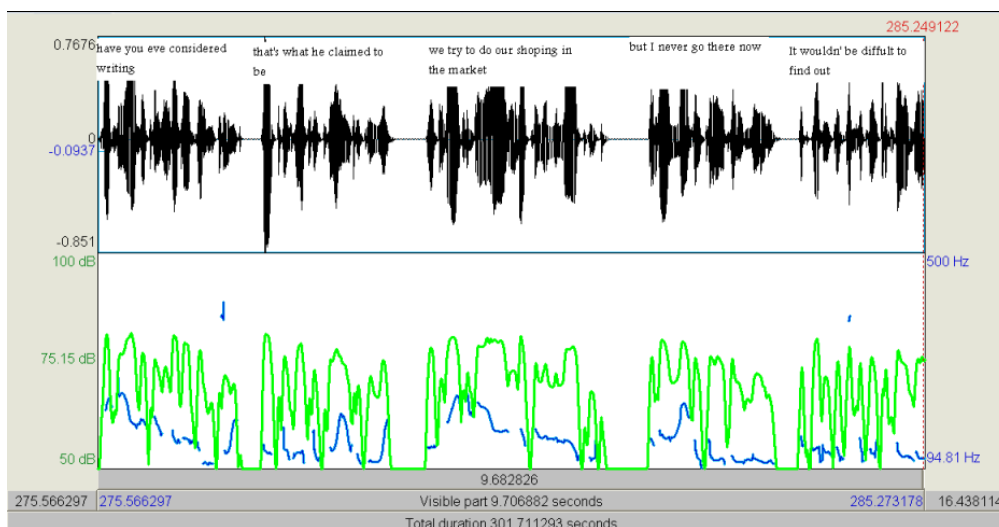
Appendix D

Second five sentences in the test



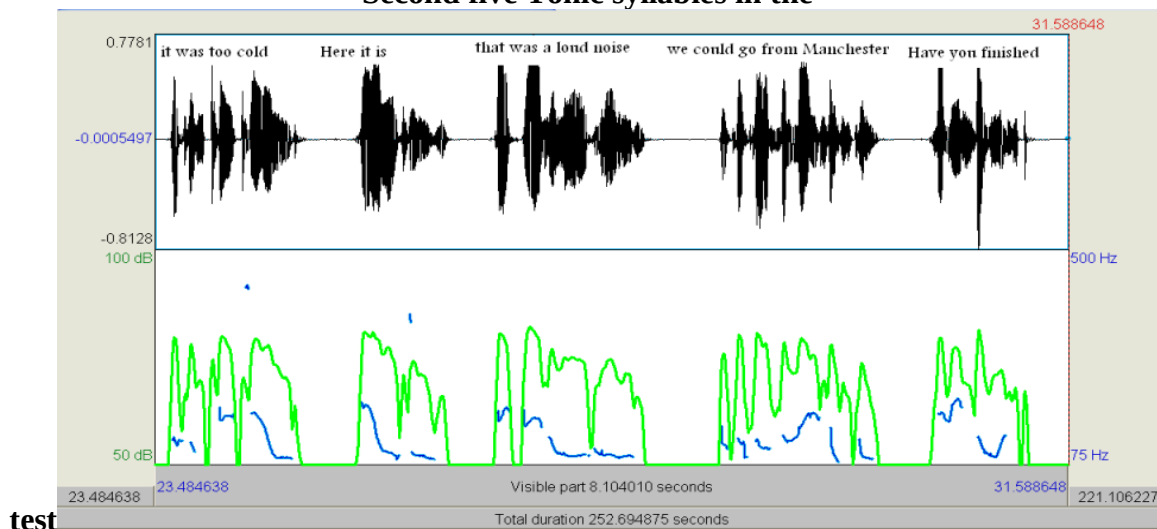
Appendix E

First five tonic syllables in the test



Appendix F

Second five Tonic syllables in the



Effective Teaching Strategies of Consecutive Interpreting to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract

We live in an age of increasing international communication where people from different backgrounds and cultures and who speak different languages find themselves coming together to discuss issues of all kinds; i.e. economic, political, legal cultural, technical, etc. Usually in intercontinental dialogue and cross-culture communications people belonging to different languages and cultures are brought together and these people are certainly anxious to communicate effectively and be fully and clearly understood by others. However, if they are not fully competent in the languages of communication; i.e. Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL), here emerges the importance of interpreters to facilitate communication between people who speak different languages and serve as a bridge between different cultures. As long as “Comparatively little research has been done on interpreting throughout history” (Phelan, 2001, p. 1) and due to my long experience in teaching and practicing consecutive interpreting for more than 30 years, my paper mainly aims to present some effective strategies in teaching consecutive interpreting so as to contribute to high standards of professionalism and quality of interpretation that are essential prerequisites for facilitating intercontinental dialogue and cross-culture communication. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the three basic stages involved in consecutive interpreting; i.e. understanding the message, analysis, and re-expression. The second part deals with the process of note-taking; i.e. difficulties, what to note, how to note, language of note taking, tools used in note taking, etc.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, effective teaching strategies of consecutive interpreting, basic stages and principles of interpreting, note-taking process and techniques.

Introduction

An interpreter is what we might call a ‘communication professional’. His role is to help people come together and understand one another. An interpreter is a communication bridge between people separated by culture as well as by language. He helps people to understand one another by providing explanations and information where requisite. In other words, he “... must bridge the cultural and conceptual gap separating the participants in a meeting.” (Jones, 2002, p.4) It must be taken into consideration that an interpreter is not only a translator but “an intercultural mediator” (Bassnet, 2005, p.4), as well. There is no doubt that the interpreting activity is highly diverse and once we consider the work of the interpreter, we should be “...aware of the multifarious nature of the activity” (Basil & Mason, 2001, p.1). Similar to translation, interpretation, whether consecutive or simultaneous, should be viewed “... as a communicative process which takes place within a social context” (Basil & Masson, 2002, p.3).

This paper adopts a practical approach to consecutive interpreting that mainly targets to present the effective strategies that should be followed in teaching consecutive interpreting to ensure at the end having highly professional and fully competent interpreters. However, this research is not going to discuss the relationship between independent variables, such as time pressures and complexity of text, and dependent variables; i.e. interpretation quality (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013).

As a starting point in the interpreting process, the interpreter should listen to the speech delivered by someone while taking notes. Whenever the speaker ends his speech, the interpreter’s role begins; i.e. he begins to deliver the speech in the target language. However, it should be noted that interpreting does not mean summing up the text, but it is complete rendering of the Source Text (ST) into the Target Text (TT). The consecutive interpreter must be highly efficient in dealing with any length of speech and in the meantime be very cautious that his interpretation must not take longer time than the original speech. As a rule of a thumb, it is highly recommended that “... [he] should aim at taking three-quarters of the time taken by the original” (Jones, 2002, p.5).

In addition to the knowledge of the languages, there are other skills involved in the interpreting process; that is to say “...memory, concentration and understanding” (Phelan, 2001, p. 9). Last to be said and not least that note-taking is a crucial factor in consecutive interpreting and interpreters should develop their own techniques.

The main focus in this paper is to present the basic stages and principles involved in consecutive interpreting, as well as, the note-taking process and techniques.

The Basic Stages and Principles of Consecutive Interpretation

Usually when anyone wants to express certain ideas, he must have them clear in his mind so as to express them clearly and effectively. In other words, if one wishes to re-express or reproduce someone’s ideas without repeating them word for word, then one must make a clear, structural analysis of them (Jones, 2002, p.11). The same thing applies to the interpreter who has to analyze and understand the individual ideas involved in the speakers speech. In addition, the more the interpreter is knowledgeable about the subject matter he is interpreting, the greater capacity he will have to retain the information and retrieve the original message.

In short, we can say that the three basic stages involved in consecutive interpreting are understanding, analyzing, and re-expressing or reproducing (Jones, 2002, p.11). Now we will discuss each of these stages in turn.

Stage One: Understanding

The ‘understanding’ that we focus on here is not of words but of ideas, for it is ideas that have to be interpreted. In other words, the interpreter “... should be concerned with meaning rather than exact equivalents for individual words” (Phelan, 2001.p.7).Undoubtedly, no one can understand ideas if he/she does not know the words the speaker is using to express them, or if the grammar and syntax of the speaker’s language is unfamiliar. ‘Not knowing words’, as we have said, should not be considered a serious problem as the interpreter has to understand ideas, not words. Moreover, it is perfectly possible to understand the speakers’ meaning without actually understanding every single word and expression they use, and without having to reproduce all of these terms and expressions in the interpretation. In other words, interpreting is possible without all the words and without changing the meaning.

However, there are occasions when a word is too important to ignore or skip. In this case, the interpreter has to deduce or guess its meaning from context.

In short, we can say that it is possible for the interpreters to work perfectly well without knowing in advance all the vocabulary used by the speakers. However, there are times when interpreters do not know a word or an expression and can neither avoid it nor deduce its meaning; i.e. they are facing a real problem. In such a case, the interpreters have to ask the speaker about the meaning. This is quite acceptable as any interpreter cannot be expected to be a walking multilingual dictionary and there are things which he certainly does not know.

When talking about understanding, we must stress that pure linguistic understanding; i.e. comprehension, although necessary, is not a sufficient condition for the interpreters to be able to re-express ideas efficiently in another language. Interpreters must be able to grasp the meaning in a less than a second, and must therefore listen constantly in an active, attentive way. This active, attentive listening has to be learned and acquired by the interpreters.

Moreover, depending on the context, on the speaker’s tone of voice and many other things, the interpreters may conclude that a certain idea is crucial or unimportant (Jones, 2002, p.14).

Stage Two: Analysis**1- Analysis of Speech Types**

The interpreter must be aware of the kind of speech being dealt with. Speeches may be of many different kinds. For example, if it is a logical argument then he has to know what a pro is and what is a con, and spot the turning points between them through links, such as but, however, on the other hand, etc. If it is a narration he has to follow chronological sequence and give due attention to dates and verb tenses, if is descriptive he has to decide what is the most important information that should be remembered and noted, and if it is totally rhetorical he has to be aware that the content details maybe irrelevant as the focus in this type of speech is mainly on style.

However, it should be noted that most speeches are hybrid and share characteristics from two or more speech types. In this context, it is worth mentioning to say that the interpreter must make no substantive addition to a speech

2- Identification of Main Ideas

In order to be able to interpret the speaker’s idea, an interpreter must know first all what is important in the speaker’s comments and what is secondary. In fact, secondary should not be misunderstood as meaning unimportant to the extent that such ideas need not be interpreted. In other words, it can be said that the ‘main idea’ implies a hierarchy of relative importance of

ideas. One or more ideas may be central to a proposition, whereas others may be ‘secondary’, but this does not mean that they are unimportant to the point where they do not need to be interpreted. They are ‘secondary’ but nonetheless they may in turn be more important than a third category, such as mere illustrations. However, a consecutive interpreter is entitled to abridge, but should need some element of illustration of what is essential and what is not; i.e. he should focus on main ideas rather than minute irrelevant details. Therefore, the interpreter, when analyzing a speech, must identify the main ideas. In addition, the interpreter has to reflect the tenor, the spirit, the underlying significance of a speaker’s comment, as well as, the literal sense. This can only be done if the ideas are given their relative importance in the interpretation.

3- *Analysis of Links*

The first key to understanding a speech is the identification of the main ideas; the second is the analysis of the links between those ideas. There are four basic types of links: logical consequence (e.g. consequently, as a result), logical cause (e.g. as, since, or due to), sequential ideas (e.g. ideas linked with little word and), and opposition (however, but). However, it should be noted that the interpreter should not fall into the trap of creating links artificially or creating a link where there is none in the original as this is considered a serious mistake. Nor should the interpreter abuse the word ‘and’. A series of sentences strung by and...and...and...is a poor style. Key words or links like ‘because’ and ‘therefore’, should not be omitted. In short it can be said that in the analysis the interpreter should concentrate on two key elements: the main ideas and the links between them.

4- *Memory*

During consecutive interpreting, the interpreter listens to a speech and then reproduces it in a different language. This means that the interpreter must be capable of recalling ideas. Some believe that if the interpreter takes notes adequately during the speech he should not need to depend upon memory. This is untrue as it is impossible for the interpreter to rely solely on good notes. The consecutive interpreter must train himself to make use of ‘short term memory’ to retain what has been just said and he should make use of ‘long term memory’ to put the information into context (Phelan, 2001, pp.4-5). In addition, the interpreter must order ideas in his brain so as to be able to recall them in a significant way. By focusing on the main ideas and links between these ideas, the interpreter will automatically be thinking of the speech in terms of its structure and this makes the speech easier to recall. In short, from a “telegraphic” recollection of the basic structure of the speech the interpreter is able to get out the information so as to provide a complete version of the original. The most important part of ‘memory’ is the ordering of ideas with a view to their recalling.

Stage Three: Re-expression

Having accomplished the processes of understanding and analyzing, the consecutive interpreters must start now to re-express or reproduce the speech they have heard. The interpreters’ role here is not to give an academically ‘perfect’ translation but to make sure that the speaker is understood by the audience. Interpreters must recognize, as well, that they are required to play the role of public speakers; i.e. they must establish eye contact with audience and speak up clearly. The importance of eye contact has to be stressed particularly that the consecutive interpreters will be working with the help of notes most of the time. They should avoid falling into the trap of looking at their notes all the time, either because they are deciphering vague signs

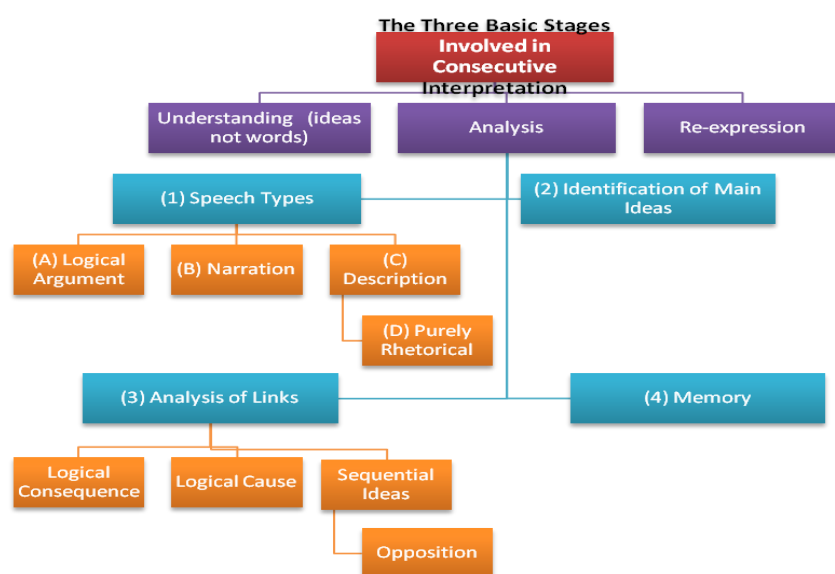
taken unclearly or they are thinking hard at the meaning of the notes. On the contrary, they should just glance down at their notes from time to time.

In addition, the consecutive interpreters are called upon to deliver the speech efficiently. They have to begin speaking practically as soon as the speaker has made it clear that he has finished. They should avoid speaking at a great speed; i.e. they should speak at a sustained, steady pace, without hesitation or unnecessary repetition. They need, as well, to be quite clear for the audience. They should be aware of the crucial role that their voices have in the process of interpreting as “a pleasant voice is an asset in an interpreter ... [and he] should not sound boring or bored (Phelan, 2001, p.7).

In general, the overall meaning of a speech may be brought out not just through the words used but also through the speaker's intonation and use of pauses. Thus, it is important for interpreters to pay attention to these things. In other words, just as sentences are separated by full stops on the written page, so sentences should be separated by the right use of voice in interpretation. In many languages this means dropping one's voice at the end of a sentence and then making a short pause. Then again, as paragraphs can be indicated by indents in writing, a new paragraph or section of speech may be indicated by a rather longer pause on the part of the interpreter. However, it should be noted that some interpreters ignore such obvious techniques and consequently their technically correct interpretations lose much as they are presented in a monotonous way.

Moreover, in rendering their interpretation, the interpreters have to be accurate and faithful to the speakers. They must be aware that literal word-for-word translation is not only undesirable, but it is often impossible. Figure (1) sums up the basic stages and principles involved in consecutive interpreting.

Figure 1. Basic stages and principles in consecutive interpreting.



Note-Taking Process in Consecutive Interpreting

Note-taking is central to consecutive interpreting. However, it should be noted that if the essential components of the consecutive interpreter's work; i.e. understanding, analyzing, and re-expressing, are not done correctly and adequately, then the best notes in the world will not make anyone a good interpreter. Notes are just an aid to enhance the work done on the basis of these three key components. In other words, notes taken "... should not be viewed as an end in themselves, but as means to an end" (Jones, 2002, p.39). They must be regarded as an aid to memory and not as a substitute for it.

The interpreter who focuses too much on his notes does not have the chance to pay the due attention to genuine understanding and analysis while listening to the speech. Thus, he makes serious errors and fails in rendering "...a coherent whole but rather a series of sentences that are reproduced automatically (Jones, 2002, p. 39).

Purpose of Note-Taking

The first and most obvious use of notes is to relieve memory. A speech may contain numbers, names, and lists etc., so if the interpreter devotes his intellectual energy to remembering them, this may distract him from the key task of listening attentively to what comes next. In other words, the interpreter needs not to burden his memory with such information; he can continue to focus on listening actively to the rest of the speech.

Notes should reflect the form of speech, making it clear to the interpreter what is important and what is unimportant, what is basic and what is secondary, how ideas are related or separated from one another (Jones, 2002, p. 40).

Practical Points for Note-Taking

Interpreters must be able to take their notes as quickly as possible and write upon something convenient to hold and easy to handle. We would recommend a stenographer's note-pad; roughly 15 cm by 20 cm. Loose sheets of paper should definitely be avoided, as they may become disordered. For any given speech, the interpreter should write on only the recto side of successive pages of the note-pad. It is too awkward to write on both sides; i.e. recto-verso, while taking notes, and if he does there is the risk that he might lose sight of the order in which the notes were taken. It is easier just to keep flipping the pages over always in the same direction. In the meantime, the interpreter should write with something reliable that flows quickly across the page; the best thing is probably still the good old-fashioned lead pencil.

The interpreter should be legible because he needs, as mentioned previously, to communicate through appropriate body language and eye contact with the audience or delegates. Therefore, the interpreter cannot afford to have notes that he has to decipher as he goes along. The meaning that the interpreter wishes to express should leap up at him from the page. This means that the interpreter should write in large characters. Furthermore, notes should be well spread out over the page so that the various elements can be clearly differentiated.

Difficulties Encountered in Note-Taking

Based on the researcher's long experience in consecutive interpreting for more than 30 years, the difficulties encountered in note-taking can be summed as follows:

- a. Timing of note-taking.
- b. Unit of input.
- c. Overall comprehension.

- d. Fragmentation of memory span.
- e. Mental space for meaning processing.

What to Note?

There is no doubt that the things to be noted are quite logically related to the analysis of the delivered speech. The first thing to be noted should be the main ideas that provide an outline of the speech. This, in fact, enables the interpreters "... to find in their notes the sequence of ideas constituting the speech. This [in turn] should help the interpreter reproduce the speech without faltering, moving swiftly from one idea to the next" (Jones, 2002, p. 41).

Similar to speech analysis, where one has to identify the links (e.g. therefore, since, etc.) and separation between ideas, these links and separations should appear in the notes.

This means that the interpreter's notes should give at least the main ideas of a speech with the links between those ideas. In addition, points of view, tenses of verbs, and modal verbs should also be noted. In order not to overburden memory, the interpreter should note numbers, dates, names and lists. However, it should be mentioned that the main thing that must be avoided, is trying to note everything down as an end in itself which may impede the interpreter's active listening to the original.

Note-Taking Tools

Links: Links should be noted systematically and this should be done accurately, quickly and efficiently. It is best to have some very short forms for all links. These short forms do not have to be symbols nor even abbreviations. There are a number of very short linking words in English which can be used. For example the word 'as' can be used for anything in the 'because' family; the word 'but' for all words and phrases of that family, including 'however' and 'on the other hand'; and the word 'so' for anything in the 'therefore' family. Alternatively, interpreters may use mathematical signs.

Tenses: The tenses that are most important to note are the present, the past and the future and. It is barely useful to differentiate in notes between different past tenses. Usually suffixes are used to indicate these three tenses. For example, the past tense and the past perfect tense can be indicated by adding the suffix (-ed), the suffix (-ll) for the future and the suffix (-ng) for progressive tense. This symbolic way enables the interpreter to immediately recognize the tense when reading back his notes.

Stress: Usually speakers tend to stress or emphasis particular points in their speech. In order to be able to render all shades of meaning, it is a good thing for the interpreter to note such emphasis. This can be done very simply through a system of underlining. For example, if something is said to be 'important' this can be indicated by using a single underlining, if it is said to be 'extremely important' this can be indicated by using double underlining, and if it is said to be 'fairly important' this can be indicated by using a squiggly line. In general, underlining tells us that something is important or serious.

Suffixes: As mentioned earlier, suffixes can be used to indicate tenses. Also they can be used for the comparatives and superlatives, such as (-er) or (-st). Similarly, suffixes can

be used to identify different parts of speech, such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs (e.g. ‘produces’, ‘production’, ‘productive’, etc.).

Parentheses []: Sometimes interpreters are aware of what the speaker has said and have fully registered it intellectually but do not have the time to note it down. They can indicate the existence of the point, which they did not note, by including a parenthesis in their notes.

Numbering: It almost goes without saying that interpreters can often make life easier for themselves by numbering points in their notes. However, if the speakers number in their actual speech, they should definitely follow their numbering. In such numbering, whether it comes directly from the speaker or whether it is the interpreters’ initiative, there may be not just points but also sub-points, and even sub-sub-points. In such cases, interpreters must take care to have a strict numbering system. If the main points are numbered with Arabic numerals, then sub –points must be noted by something else, letters or Roman numerals so as to avoid the risk of being extremely confused and confusing.

Abbreviations and symbols: The obvious advantage of abbreviations and symbols is that they help save time in taking notes, thus adding to the efficiency of note-taking. Moreover, by reducing an idea, which can be expressed by one word or a number of words, to a symbol, interpreters find it easier to escape the word-for-word translation. The symbol represents an idea, rather than the word or words. However, abbreviations and symbols are very much a personal affair. They are indispensable. Interpreters should be consistent when using abbreviations and symbols, i.e. they should avoid ambiguity by using the same symbol or abbreviation for two different meanings, such as using the abbreviation “diff” for two different words “difficult” and “different”. In addition, interpreters should avoid inventing symbols or abbreviations in the course of a speech. In brief, interpreters must draw on the widest possible range of signs.

Interpreters should use:

- a. Arrows are, in fact, useful tools in a graphic system of note-taking. Arrows of all possible forms and directions can be used. For example a rising arrow ↑ means increase (quantitatively) and improvement (qualitatively), whereas the falling arrow ↓ means the opposite. A horizontal arrow → means lead to etc.
- b. Mathematical Signs and Geometrical Shapes such as +, -, =, £, >, <, %, ^, ~, Δ, O and so on.
- c. Punctuation Marks such as ?, !, : etc.
- d. Schematic Drawings can be used, such as ☺ (happy, pleased), ♀ (female, woman, lady, girl), ♂ (male, man, boy), ♥ (love, wish, want, desire) etc.
- e. Miscellaneous Symbols are as follows: #, √, ∞, ≠, ", &, @ etc.

How to Note?

Notes should reflect the structure of a speech clearly so as to help the interpreters reproduce that structure in their interpretation. Based on the researcher’s experience in the field of consecutive interpreting, the following can be considered the most important tips that any interpreter should take into account:

1. Clearly separated and distinct notes are important for ease reading.
2. The beginning of each new idea should be clearly marked.
3. Notes must be taken in a concise and non-literary manner.
4. Taking notes vertically is easier to read than horizontally, because the vertical form offers a natural movement for one's eyes to move from left to right and from top to bottom of a page when reading.
5. A slant or a horizontal line (/) should be drawn after each complete sentence.
6. Clear separation should be made between different paragraphs or sections of a speech. This can be done, for example, by drawing a line across the entire width of the page or by drawing three short, vertical lines (///) in the left-hand margin before a new paragraph or section, to symbolize a paragraph indent.
7. The interpreter should write the things that come most quickly to his pen.
8. The interpreter should not look for equivalences while listening.
9. The interpreter should use the space available to portray hierarchy of ideas and place these relative to one another.
10. The structure of the page should be visible from 3 feet away.
11. The interpreter has to be sure that the color of the pen (pencil) that he uses stands clearly out against the paper.
12. The interpreter should number the pages if they are not bound.
13. The interpreter should cross out each passage in his notes as he completes reading it back.
14. The interpreter should glance at each section of his notes BEFORE speaking and then he should look up at his audience.

The Language of Note-Taking

Generally speaking, interpreters should not worry so much about the question of using source or target language for notes. However, 'slight preference' (Jones, 2002, p. 61) is given to target language because "...this approach saves time and effort when time comes to deliver the interpretation. This approach also helps the interpreter to make a conscious effort to move away from the structures and expressions of the source language" (Phelan, 2001, p.9). Nevertheless, on the ground both languages, the source and the target, can be combined at will. Interpreters may choose to note things in any way they want, just for reasons of convenience. In addition, the interpreters' notes will contain symbols and abbreviations.

How to Read Back Notes

The interpreters must train themselves and learn the art of glancing down at their notes to remind them of what they are to say next then delivering that part of the text while looking at the audience. The clearer the notes, both in content and layout, the easier this will be. And the clearer the ideas in the interpreters' mind the less is the glancing down at the notes. In figure (2) the whole process and tools of note-taking are summed up.

Figure2. Note-Taking Processes and Tools.

Conclusion

After this extensive review of the effective teaching strategies of consecutive interpretation; i.e. the basic stages and principles, as well as, the note-taking process and techniques; there are some recommendations that should be made.

Firstly, there is a strong need for systematic and in-depth training in note-taking. In other words, this should be assigned in the consecutive interpretation curriculum.

Secondly, due attention should be given to the listening comprehension courses before embarking on the study of consecutive interpretation.

Thirdly, on sight translation course should be a prerequisite for consecutive interpretation teaching and training.

Last to be said and not least, this paper is just the first step towards further studies in this field. In fact, a quantitative or qualitative research project can be designed to investigate the effect of multiple independent variables, such as time pressure and complexity of text, on the dependent variables, such as the quality of interpretation.

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The Effectiveness of Video vs. Written Text in English Comprehension and Acquisition of ESL Students

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Abstract

This paper reports an experimental study conducted to compare intermediate-level, English as a Second Language (ESL) students' overall comprehension when using video vs. written text as a learning tool. The ultimate goal of this study is to compare which of the two learning tools (video and written text) can further enhance the ability to comprehend L2 input in ESL students. The use of a book-based movie and the original book was to provide as much similar content as possible for both groups, yet in two different modes. Six Saudi students participated in this experiment where they were divided into two equal-numbered groups. Two phases were conducted due to concern that some individual differences of the participants (e.g., age and memory capacity) might have had a greater impact on the results of either group rather than the actual learning tools. The result of the two different learning tools: video and written text indicated that the use of a video was more effective for language comprehension than the use of a written text. Based on the answers of the given questions, the experimental group members, who viewed the movie segment, demonstrated higher levels of attentiveness than the reading group members.

Keywords: Comprehensive Input, English as a Second Language (ESL), Second Language acquisition, video-based activities.

Introduction

This report reports an experimental study conducted to compare intermediate-level, English as a Second Language (ESL) students' overall comprehension when using video vs. written text as a learning tool. The study is theoretically based on Krashen's (1981, 1985) "Comprehensible Input" theory in which he argued that second language learners must actually *get* sufficient "linguistic input" of the target language in order to "trigger" in their second language learning process. Although there are other crucial internal factors that play important roles in L2 acquisition, like the ability to decode and memorize linguistic particulars, L2 acquisition cannot take place without the L2 input as Krashen argued. Yet, there are many different teaching methods through which L2 input is conveyed. According to Baggett (1984), "it appears that when (audio and visual information are) presented together, each source provides additional and complementary information that retains some of the characteristics of the symbol system of origin." Thus, the study will address the following: Does watching a video enhance ESL learners' English language comprehension more than reading a text?

Two groups of ESL students, three in each, participated in this experiment consisting of two phases. During Phase (1), a segment of a movie was shown to one group while the second group was provided an excerpt from a book upon which the movie was based. Then, content-based questions were given to both groups in order to examine the effectiveness of each learning tool concerning the participants' English comprehension. In Phase (2), a different section of the movie and book were provided to the students, and the two groups exchanged positions; i.e., the viewing group in Phase (1) became the reading group in Phase (2). As in Phase (1), Phase (2) was concluded by presenting a set of content-based questions to each group. Two phases were conducted due to concern that some individual differences of the participants (e.g., age and memory capacity) might have had a greater impact on the results of either group rather than the actual learning tools.

Literature Review

Some studies have examined the benefits of using multimedia tools for teaching English as a second language. They surveyed ESL/EFL learners' individual perspectives on the use of multimedia in their personal learning processes. Generally speaking, ESL/EFL learners support the use of multimedia in their classrooms as many surveys have proven learners' positive attitudes toward the implementation of this kind of learning tool.

In their experimental study, McNulty and Lazarevic (2012) investigated the role of using video to improve L2 learners' pronunciation. The study used videos of different topics in the classroom as a component of ESL students' activities. In this experiment the learners watched a video about Influenza ways to potentially avoid its infection. In a role-playing activity, groups of three students were each assigned one of the avoidance methods and instructed to perform and videotape the procedure for the class to view later. The study found that the recording and viewing of the groups' videos significantly enhanced the participants' English pronunciation. Unfortunately, this study did not include clear evaluation criteria to demonstrate how pronunciation improvement was measured.

In another study, Seferoğlu's (2008) aim was to find the reflections of EFL students on integrating feature films in EFL oral communication classrooms. The students were required watch films and participate in graded activities related to the films. The Likert scale (from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree*) was utilized to collect the participants' opinions followed by a section for descriptive comments to be provided by these participants. Most students

indicated that using films was extremely helpful in improving their oral communication skills in English. In line with this study, Choi & Johnson (2005) also showed similar results as their experiment revealed that learners' had more positive attitude toward video-based lessons over text-based lessons in terms of information retention. The importance of their findings lies in the positive opinions of ESL learners toward the use of movies as a learning tool; however, the paper of Choi & Johnson (2005) also did not reveal any specific language skill(s) that the students considered improved by implementing videos as a learning tool. However, both studies are an opinion-based measurement and the dimension of a specific skill improvement was not empirically assessed.

South, Gabbitas, & Merrill (2008) discussed how video-based dramatic narratives compared to "small talk" (i.e., non-narrative) videos specifically designed for educational ESL settings could assist second language comprehension by increasing the amount of contextualized content to L2 learners. It also presents some potential benefits and areas of concern when implementing this model as a learning tool. Essentially, the study compares L2 learners' reactions to using non-narrative videos vs. narrative videos. Narrative videos were ultimately found to be more engaging than the "small-talk" videos. This study is somewhat different than the experiment to be presented in this paper, however, as the study of South et al., (2008) compares two distinct types of videos while the study presented in the following pages compares use of video vs. written text in improving L2 development.

In a similar study, the aim of Trinder's (2002) was to collect data on students' reactions to the integration of a multimedia CD-ROM into their Business English language program. The participants were 30 undergraduate non-native speakers of English students studying Business Administration in their fourth and final year in Australia. The data collected through reports written by these students on what language tasks they chose when using the program, observation of students' interaction with the program, and questionnaire to determine the end result of the study. During the observation process, some respondents said that they enjoyed working with the CD, but they doubted whether they learned anything new. On the questionnaire, only 50% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the video sequence was interesting. Unlike the opinion-oriented results of the above study, the experiment presented in the following pages focuses on skill achievement measurement.

Klassen & Milton (1999) also evaluated the usefulness of the use of multi-media in classroom. It was conducted at the City University of Hong Kong where the major component of the project was the development of an interactive multimedia CD-ROM of Business English program. Pre-test and post-test was used with both the experimental and control groups. Results of the experiment indicate that students who completed the syllabus in a multimedia-enhanced mode demonstrated significant improvement in listening skills when compared to students who completed the same syllabus in a traditional classroom mode. Though similarities exist between this study and the one to be presented in this report, there are significant differences. These differences include the educational setting, (i.e., EFL vs. ESL), and the areas to be measured, (i.e., movie vs. text and writing vs. listening).

These studies were conducted, in large part, to collect learners' opinions regarding the use of multi-media tools in the classroom. However, the comparison of overall comprehension acquired specifically after the use of a video vs. the use of a written text has yet to be examined. Rather than measuring speaking or writing skills in particular, this study is intended to reveal which learning tool, written text or film, further enhances English comprehension of nonnative, intermediate level ESL learners.

Research Method

This experiment aimed at measuring ESL learners' English comprehension when a movie vs. a written text is used. A book and a movie based on this book were used in this experiment. Two different 10-minute segments of the movie and their corresponding sections in the book were used to conduct this experiment. Two groups, each consisting of three ESL students, participated in the experiment. The use of a book-based movie and the original book was to provide as much similar content as possible for both groups, yet in two different modes. This is a crucially important aspect of the experiment, as the purpose is to examine *comprehension* from video vs. reading, rather than student' personal preferences.

Participants

Six Saudi Arabian, nonnative speakers of English participated in this experiment: four males and two females. They are all at the intermediate-level of English Proficiency, studying at the Center of English as a Second Language in the University of Arizona. Their ages ranged from 19 to 26 (Ali, 20, Manal, 23, Saeed, 26, Khalid, 25, Abdul, 19, Fatima 21), and their first language is Arabic. They were divided into two groups of three students. Group (H) is the experimental group (video mode), and Group (K) is the control group (reading mode). In Phase (1), Group (H) watched a 10-minute movie segment while Group (H) read the corresponding text in the book. During Phase (2), the groups switched modes.

Since the participants are all at the same level of English proficiency, some actions were taken in order to reduce the effect of different independent variables between the two groups to the greatest possible degree. Among these, as this experiment included only two female learners, each group included one female member. In addition to that, learners of similar age were divided between the two groups.

Materials

The materials used in this experiment include (1) a book titled "*Horton Hears a Who*" and (2) a movie of the same title and premise. As this book was intended primarily for a child audience, the selection of this particular movie and its book was deliberate, considering the level of difficulty and language, as well as the humorous nature of the selection. Clear pronunciation and easily understood content make this choice of movie and book well suited for intermediate, L2 learners of English. The humorous nature of the selection is important because it aids in participant motivation and engagement.

Based on the given content, each participant was given two different types of questions on one sheet. The first type of questions consisted of eight randomly-ordered occurrences from the story, and were then asked to arrange them in the order in which they occurred in the film and/or the book. The second type of questions consisted of six True/False statements based on the given content. Therefore, Each participant received a sheet containing the same 14 questions.

Procedures

This experiment took place over four consecutive days and four separate sessions. Each session lasted roughly 20 minutes each. Reliability and validity of this study were regarded with extreme care and considered highly important. After viewing about 30 seconds of the video by the video group, and reading about 2 lines of the text by the reading group, the participants were asked if they had viewed or read the material prior to this experiment. All participants stated that

they had not. Furthermore, in order to ensure participants did not access the book or movie outside of the experiment sessions, the title of the selection was hidden from participants.

Phase (1): The six participants were divided into two groups; Group (H), the experimental group, and Group (K), the control group. Each group consisted of three participants. Group (H) members were asked to watch the first selected 10-minute segment of the movie while Group (K) participants were provided and asked to read the respective passage from the book. Then, in order to measure comprehension, each participant was given a sheet of 14 questions, which included two types of questions. (See Appendix). Section (1) of the given question sheet consisted of six separate statements representing a different chronological sequence of the events than the actual chronological sequence of events in the watched or read content. The participants, based on their comprehension of the content, had to chronologically reorder these eight statements to correctly reorganize the content events as they were actually represented in both the movie segment and the given text. Section (2) contained eight True/False statements also based on the given content.

Phase (2): In order to ensure the reliability of the experiment, the Phase (1) procedure was repeated, however slightly modified. In this phase, the participants were provided different 10-minute segment of the movie and its corresponding passage of the book. Also different from Phase (1), the two groups switched modes. The experimental group in Phase (1) became the control group in Phase (2) and vice versa. Again, content-based questions were also given to each participant as in Phase (1).

Results

Phase (1) results:

Video Group (H) (Experimental group)	Ali	Manal	Saeed	Mean	Overall Percentage
<i>Number of Correct Answers out of 14</i>	10	10	9	9.6	80%
Reading Group (K) (Control group)	Khalid	Abdul	Fatima	Mean	Overall Percentage
<i>Number of Correct Answers out of 14</i>	8	7	6	7	58.3 %

Phase (2) results:

Video Group (K) (Experimental group)	Fatima	Abdul	Khalid	Mean	Overall Percentage
<i>Number of Correct Answers out of 14</i>	11	10	10	10.3	86.1%
Reading Group (H) (Control group)	Manal	Ali	Saeed	Mean	Overall Percentage
<i>Number of Correct Answers out of 14</i>	8	8	6	7.3	61.1%

In Phase (1) All the three members of group (H), the experimental group, outscored their group (K) counterparts. The data obviously indicates that when the video mode was used, the participants scored more correct points compared to the use of the reading mode. The experimental group's three members scored 10,10,9 correct answers of the total 14, while the

control group's members scored lower, with scores of 8,7,6 correct answers of the same 14 questions.

When comparing the two groups' mean scores, the video group outsourced the reading group with 9.7 to 7 with more than 30% gap between these scores. This is a clear indication that the use of videos as a learning tool leads to strengthened language development in L2, Saudi ESL learners. As mentioned earlier, the goal of conducting two phases was to ensure that the results would not be affected by the subjects' individual differences (e.g., age, time spent in the USA, gender, and working memory capacity...etc.). Thus, in Phase (2) each group took the position of the other with different sections of the same materials this time.

Again in Phase (2), the video group's members, Group (K) in this phase, also outsourced their counterparts in the reading group, with scores of 11,10,10 compared to those of the control group (8,8,6) scored by the control group. When comparing the scores of the two experimental groups in both phases, it is also noticed that the experimental group members in Phase (2) had better scores than that of the experimental group members in Phase (1). That is, in Phase (2), the experimental group, Group (K), mean score was (10.3) while in Phase (1) the experimental group, Group (H), mean score was (9.7). Also, when comparing the scores of both control groups in the two phases, it is noticed that Group (H) in Phase (2) mean score was (7.3), which is better than that of the control group, Group (K), in Phase (1), which was (7). This might be due to the fact that the participants had already watched or read parts of the content in the first phase and could expect some events or stories of the content. However, this factor did not change the overall results of the study. Regardless of this factor, those who watched the video consistently scored higher than those who read from the book.

Discussion

As the results indicated, the use of a video in a classroom enhanced the overall comprehension of the content compared to the use of a reading text. As for the specific question presented earlier in the report: Does watching a video enhance Saudi ESL learners' English language comprehension more than reading a text?

After looking at the answer sheets in both phases, it was obvious that watching a video was a causative factor that led the experimental group to consistently answer more correct answers than the reading group. Although understanding the accent of English native speakers is generally a major obstacle that most nonnative speakers of English face when verbally interacting with or listening to native speakers, the experimental group members managed to overcome this obstacle. This was due to some factors presented in the following explanation.

In addition to that, the video group members were more engaged with the given content since they were better able to capture specific details than the reading group as Section (2) answers indicated. One reason that might have contributed to this conclusion is the fact that these details presented in Section (2) were mostly taken from the final parts of the given content. Thus, watching the video kept these participants more engaged with the happening events. There is a high probability that the reading group had somewhat disengaged from the content near the end of the passage. These results speak loudly for advocating the use of more visual aids, specifically videos, when teaching English as a second language.

As this experiment shows, there is a consistency of results in both phases toward the use of video as part of L2 classroom. This is due to many different reasons, including:

(1) The Visual Aid Factor

As Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory summarized, the cognitive process of the human brain continues in relation to the processing of information resulting from interplay of both verbal and visual elements. Thus, the availability of the visual aid in the video mode likely played a significant role in enhancing these participants' overall performance. This is mainly due to the relationship between the language used in the video and the symmetrical and coherent correspondence of the visual aid. Such a relationship is not present in the reading passage. In other words, "pictures and sounds bridge the gap of unconnected themes, save spaces for learners' limited working memory and therefore speed up the process of learning." (Wang, 2012).

Although both groups tries to decode the given input to extract the required information, the use of a video provided language input accompanied by visual aids, which served as an advantage to the video group. This advantageous feature of video also played a great role in keeping the participants less distracted by potential obstacles such as unfamiliar phrases or words which might have hindered the reading participants from maintaining a necessary level of attention until the end of the material. This is another example of how stimulation of ESL students' visual memories aids significantly in the acquisition of English as a second language.

(2) The Delivery Mode of Input

Although both groups in this experiment were exposed to identical content and procedures in two different phases, the modes through which the L2 input was conveyed had different degrees and dimensions in keeping a learner's more engaged. As Spencer (1991) indicated:

There is now strong evidence that information is stored in two separate but inter-connected systems within the human organism: a verbal system and an image system. Media which involve bi-modal presentations, addressing both storage systems, will be more effective than uni-modal media, particularly when the tests are bi-modal. (p. 19-20)

Apparently the use of video exceeded the use of written text during this experiment. This is due to the fact that the use of visually-enhanced content could hit more "buttons" in a learner's brain. As the given questions included specific details, the participants had to be focusing on the content when watching the video or reading the text in order to give correct answers. This indicates that watching a video encouraged levels of strengthened student engagement with the content than can be achieved while reading. The data gathered from this experiment is undeniable evidence that the reading participants, to some extent, began to disengage when nearing the end of the reading. The decreasing frequency of correct answers regarding content found in the end of the passage strongly supports this finding. White et al. (2000) who presented different instructional advantages of video-based instruction over printed materials as videos contain visual aid accompanied with audio as well as contextual factors that can significantly enhance learners' comprehension.

(3) The Motivation Factor

Another factor, which explains the results of this experiment, is the role of motivation. Although the selection of the given content aimed at motivating the participants to enthusiastically participate in this experiment, it is apparent that watching the movie was generally more entertaining than reading the book. While this is an element potentially skewed

by personal preferences/individual differences among participants, correct answers were always more abundant in the video groups' results. Thus, whether consciously or subconsciously, the video participants managed to better maintain their attentiveness.

While great supporting evidence exists in the case for using video as a learning tool, there is no one mode of delivery that definitely works for all L2 learners. This is mainly due to the varying levels of motivation, abilities to decode information, and capacity of working memories in learners (Salville-Troike, 2012). When compared to other previous studies, particularly the ones in the literature review section, this experiment covered ESL learners' actual performance when using a video comparing it to the typical reading process in ESL classrooms. Unlike other studies, this study did not attempt to directly know ESL students' opinions of the use of videos in ESL classrooms. Rather, it attempted to understand the reasons why and how viewing videos are more beneficial for students. Of course, these results are not to encourage the removal of traditional methods of instruction, as reading and other similar methods are of obvious importance.

Conclusion

This experiment examined ESL learners' comprehension as the result of two different learning tools: video and written text. As shown in the results section that the use of a video was more effective for language comprehension than the use of a written text. Based on the answers of the given questions, the experimental group members, who viewed the movie segment, demonstrated higher levels of attentiveness than the reading group members. Again, this paper is in no way an attempt to encourage the replacement of reading classes with video viewing. Rather, it encourages implementing the use of more narrative-style videos with greater content instead of the commonly used "small-talk" genre of educational videos.

This study, however, does have some limitations. One such limitation is the fact that all participants were Saudi and their native language is Arabic. If this experiment had been conducted with participants of different or mixed groups of ESL learners, the results might have differed. That is, the results of this study cannot be overgeneralized to cover Chinese ESL learners, for example. Another limitation is that this experiment was exercised with only adult ESL learners. Including younger ESL learners to do this experiment could provide useful insights into the language learning process. Lastly, the experiment compared the viewing of videos to reading texts, but it did not compare any other types of language input like listening or interpersonal interaction is another limitation.

To study and experiment further, the same style experiment could be conducted to examine ESL learners' acquisition of new vocabulary—especially idioms. Also, this experiment method could be potentially beneficial in evaluating ESL learners' comprehension of L2 academic and scientific content, particularly with advanced-level learners. One last proposal for further experimentation and research is to employ this experimental structure to examine the results of video viewing in comparison to the listening of radio, tapes, and other recordings.

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Appendix**The questions given in Phase (1) and (2).****A. Chronologically reorder the statements according to the actual events:**

- 2) Horton talked back to the noise coming out of the speck saying: "You're safe now. Don't worry. I won't let you down."
- 4) The mayor of Who-ville introduced himself to Horton and thanked him for saving his town.
- 3) The Kangaroo confronted Horton and tried to make him look like a fool since Horton was trying to convince her that there are living people inside the speck.
- 5) Vlad the eagle took the flower from Horton and flew away with it in his beak.
- 6) Horton had picked and piled up 9005 flowers on his search for the flower with speck.
- 1) Horton heard a small noise when he was in the pool.

B. Check whether each statement is true or false:

- F Horton was drinking from the pool when he heard a noise coming out of the speck.
- T According to the story, that was the first time that Horton saw a speck that could cry out loud.
- F The speck was lying on the surface of the pool when Horton first noticed it.
- T Horton was not sure how many people live on that speck.
- F The monkeys convinced the Kangaroo that there are no living people on that speck after she initially believed Horton's story.
- T The news of Horton's speck quickly spread through the jungle and everybody knew about it.
- F Horton easily found the speck after Vlad the eagle took it from him.
- F From the very beginning Horton never thought, even for a second, of putting the speck down and leave it.

Phase (2)

A. Chronologically reorder the statements according to the actual events:

- 1) Horton suggested that everyone in Who-ville should participate in the "shouting!" and the mayor followed this suggestion and the "shouting" started.
- 4) The mayor called up through the howling mad hullabaloo: "Hey, Horton! How's this? Is our sound coming through?"
- 5) They don't hear a thing! Are you sure all your boys are doing their best? Are they ALL making noise? Are you sure every Who down in Who-ville is working.
- 3) People all over Who-ville started beating on metal stuff in order to make their sound heard.
- 2) The elephant smiled: "That was clear as a bell. You kangaroos surely heard that very well." "All I heard," snapped the big kangaroo, "was the breeze, and the faint sound of wind through the far distant trees.
- 6) And, just as he felt he as getting nowhere, and almost about to give up in despair, He suddenly burst through a door and that mayor discovered a very small kid named Jo-Jo who was standing, and bouncing a Yo-Yo and not making a sound.

B. Check whether each statement is true or false:

- F Horton picked four million flowers till he found the speck.
- F Horton suggested to help the Whos repaire their city by providing them with tiny papers.
- F Horton was going to be put in a cage and the speck was going to be drowned in the pool.
- T The Whos mayor called for a big gathering in order to shout, "We are here!"
- F Most people in Who-ville were not in fear of being destroyed.
- T Horton asked the Whos to cry loader as the Kongaroo's ears are not as big and sharp ashis ears.
- T Through the town rushed the mayor from the east to the west. But everyone seemed to be doing his best. Everyone seemed to be yapping or yipping! Everyone seemed to be beeping or bipping!
- F All Who-ville people died as the speck was destroyed at the end.

Exploring the Use of Through-Argumentation and Counter-Argumentation in Arabic-Speaking EFL Learners' Argumentative Essays

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Abstract

This paper examines the preferred patterns of argument development in argumentative essays written by a group of advanced Arabic-speaking learners of English as a foreign language. To this end, the text structure of 104 essays written by 52 Master students is analyzed building upon the model elaborated by Hatim (1990, 1991, 1997). The results show that the student writers, influenced by their native culture's writing conventions, follow predominantly the pattern of through-argumentation to construct their argument. On the other hand, some of their observed argumentative discourse deviant forms are not explicable in the light of transfer factors. The implication of the study is that multiple factors come into play when the discourse conventions of English argumentative writing are distorted in EFL learners' texts. We recommend that for the teaching of written argument to be efficient, lecturers adopt instruction in which exposure to the argumentative essay genre is highlighted while activating student writers' potentials of revision and self-editing.

Key words: Arabic-speaking EFL learners, argument development, argumentative essay, cross-cultural differences, writing difficulties

1. Introduction

Argumentation centrally entails the act of giving reasons to substantiate one's claims and to affect the others' opinions or actions. People embark on argumentation to resolve differences of opinions, (Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Snoeck Henkemans, 2002), a core constituent of human intellectual existence. Occurring pervasively in a wide range of contexts both in speech and in writing, argumentation is by far a highly complex type of discourse. When projected in academic writing, it is supposed to exhibit additional complications due to the intrinsic minutiae of the writing skill itself (Raimes, 1983). It gets even more sophisticated when writing in a foreign or a second language. In view of this, the skill of arguing compellingly in a written essay is held to be a cardinal criterion in the assessment of academic success for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), for it reflects students' potentials of critical thinking, rational synthesis of evidence and construction of arguable claims (Björk, 2003; Graff, 2003; Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, & McCann, 2011; Stirling, 2009; Mayberry, 2009; Oshima & Hogue, 2007). On these grounds, learners of EFL need to perceive the requisite of becoming skilled at developing written academic argument in various genres to be able to convince readers of the acceptability of their intellectual claims.

It is reported in the literature that argumentative essay writing constitutes a challenge for many linguistically adroit international EFL learners (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Ahmed, 1994; Bouchard, 1996; Hinkle, 2002; Kim, 1995; Lux, 1991; Zhu, 2001). When attempting to persuade in English writing, learners find it arduous to attain the anticipated outcomes. The difficulty is not due to linguistic competence deficiencies but rather to the discourse non-conformities existing between what they take as argumentation and what their English readerships expect it to be. Such disparities in argumentative discourse engender language failure that oftentimes leads to misinterpretation of the intended goals of the whole text. Learners compose texts which seem alien according to Western academic discourse conventions, complying with what Ostler (1987) designates as "foreign sounding essays".

In the present study, which is part of a doctoral research project, we aim at exploring the preferences of a group of Arabic-speaking EFL learners as to the use of through-argumentation or counter-argumentation patterns in developing their argument. The rationale is to check if the former, being a rhetorical feature of Arabic, underlies certain discourse-level difficulties that these learners confront when attempting to write convincingly in English essays. We believe that effective instruction of writing in EFL contexts ought to start from a lucid understanding of the factors engendering non-conventional discourse forms. To fathom the context of the study, a brief review of the relevant literature is provided.

2. Culture, Writing and Argumentation

The bounds between culture, writing and argumentation have long held the interest of researchers in various disciplines. In general, understanding cultural affiliations of language users has important implications for understanding their communicative tendencies (Di Stefano, Imon, Lee, & Di Stefano, 2005; Jaganathan & Kaur, 2003; Novinger, 2001). In writing, seen as a mode of communication, the expectations and beliefs that writers and readers possess about composition stem from their native culture (McCool, 2009). Indeed, cultures differ in "what is seen as logical, engaging, relevant, or well-organized in writing, what counts as proof, conciseness, and evidence" (Hyland, 2003, p. 45). These cultural preconceptions may obstruct effective writer/reader communication. The case of argumentation as a form of communication is no exception: One cannot achieve the ultimate goal of persuasion in argumentation if the

underpinning expectations are different between writers and readers. Indeed, argumentation is thought to be accomplished differently in various cultures (Aldrich, 2003; Hatch, 1992; Kamimura & Oi, 1998; Siegel, 1999; Uysal, 2012; Warnick & Manusov, 2000). Such discrepancies have far-reaching implications for EFL writing instruction. International students are faced with the challenge of abiding by a whole set of cultural conventions as regards English argumentative writing to meet the Western audiences' expectations and to obviate misinterpretation of their texts. Hinkel (1994) comments that cultural dissimilarities and notions related to writing can develop into obstacles in the acquisition of second language communication patterns, mainly when these notions pertain to purposes missing in the learner's culture such as precision in discourse, rationality of argument, and the need for reason-based substantiation of claims. Thus, the study of the inherent cultural disparities between languages in the practice of argumentation helps us understand the nature of certain problems that often arise in EFL composition classes. The cultural aspect of ESL and EFL writing problems constitutes the core component of contrastive rhetoric research. For the purposes of this study, an examination of contrastive rhetoric findings on Arabic argumentation is of relevance.

3. Argumentation in Arabic

Interest in the study of differences between Arabic and English rhetoric and the way they may interfere in writing English prose by ESL or EFL students are motivated by the growing concern with non-Western rhetorical traditions (Hinkle, 2002). Various contrastive rhetoric studies have identified rhetorical features that typify Arabic. More specifically, the study of the rhetorical features of argumentation in Arabic has been the subject of a relatively large body of contrastive rhetoric research. A number of traits are found to distinguish Arabic argumentative discourse in comparison with English.

It is found that Arabic argumentation is characterized by repetition. Al-Jubouri (1984), in this connection, states that Arabic argumentative discourse possesses a fixed system for replication identified at the morphological level, the word level and the chunk level. For him, at the chunk level, repetition is revealed through two chief processes: parallelism and paraphrase, the duplication of form and of substance respectively. Paraphrase plays a special role in persuasion. It is thought that when an argument is restated a number of times, this would create the desired effect on the recipient. "The ingredients of an argument are assembled in such a way that a situation, an action or an event is persistently re-examined, possibly from different directions, with the effect of intensifying the reality of the claims and thus achieving a forceful assertion" (Al-Jubouri, 1984, p. 111). In an empirical study on the comprehension of argumentative discourse, Kamel (2000) concurs that a purposeful repetitive style is found in Arabic at the semantic and the syntactic levels. Instead of presenting a counter-argument, the writer attempts to fix the argument into the reader's awareness by means of replicating it. Several researchers have attempted to clarify the effect of repetition on argumentation. Johnstone (1991) uses the term *rhetorical presence* to refer to the effect of argument repetition on the success in convincing another party of one's view. According to her, instead of attempting to convince by means of the Aristotelian syllogistic argument, which is an "alien" concept to Arabs, Arabic speakers resort to reiterate arguments. In her words: "An arguer presents truths by making them present in discourse: by repeating them, paraphrasing them, doubling them, calling attention to them" (p. 117). Most importantly, she suggests that presentation persuasion is most often employed in cultural settings "in which religion is central, settings in which truth is brought to light rather than created out of human rationality" (as cited in Feghali, 1997, p. 361). Ismail

(2010) intricately criticizes this explanation. Like Johnstone, Hatim (1997) holds that Arabic speakers argue via presentation, but he affirms Olster's (1987) and Sa'adeddin's (1989) claim that such an argumentative style is the result of using an aural mode of text development.

Another distinctive feature of argumentation in Arabic is identified at the superstructure level. Hatim (1990, 1991 and 1997) sets an important distinction to describe the patterns of argument development. In this respect, he coins the term *through-argumentation*, as opposed to *counter-argumentation*. Hatim (1990) clarifies:

Through argumentation advocates or condemns a given stance and makes no direct concession to belief entertained by an adversary. . . Counter-argumentation involves two protagonists confronting each other, an absent protagonist, who has his or her thesis cited to be evaluated and a present protagonist, performing the function of controlling the debate and steering the reader in a particular direction. (p. 136)

The formats that Hatim (1991) proposes for the representation of these two types of argumentative organization are shown in Figure 1. Both types may have an optional part called the tone-setter. The function of this unit in argumentative texts in general is to manage the situation in a manner that is propitious to the text producer's purposes. It is a marker of evaluative texture and often involves comparisons or judgments (Hatim & Mason, 1990).



Figure 1. The structure of argumentative texts.

Adapted from "The Pragmatics of Argumentation in Arabic: The Rise and Fall of a Text Type,"
by B. Hatim, 1991, *Text*, 11(2).

Hatim (1997) distinguishes between two variants of counter-argumentation. The first is the *balanced argument* where the text producer has the choice of indicating the contrastive shift between what may be viewed as a claim and a counter-claim either explicitly or implicitly. The second is the *lopsided*, or *the explicit concessive argument*, in which the counter-claim is anticipated by an overt concessive (e.g. *although*, *while*, *despite*, etc).

Hatim (1997) argues that the choice of argumentative pattern is deliberate. As far as Arabic and English are concerned, Hatim (1990) claims that Modern Standard Arabic prefers through-argumentation, which seems to be a kind of "loose logical connectivity" between one proposition and another, whereas in English the more explicit method of counter-argumentation is favoured. However, he argues that this preference is the outcome of the incompetent use of Arabic and of a number of extraneous factors, not of the Arabic language by itself. In more explicit terms, he mentions factors like solidarity, politeness and face-saving as chief influences on the Arabic style of argumentation. Abbadi (2006), working on the same model, examines argumentation in English and Arabic editorials, an acknowledged genre which aims principally at influencing public opinion. The results show that it is not only the textual structures of argumentation that differ but also the linguistic strategies. Kamel's (2000) study also affirms the absence of counterargument (rebuttal) in Arabic argumentative writing.

An additional area that was subject to scholarly interest in contrastive rhetoric is the use of metadiscourse in Arabic Argumentation. El-Seidi (2000) conducted a contrastive study on

Arabic and English. She underscores the use of validity markers, including the subcategories of hedges, emphatics and attitude markers. The findings of this study, while emphasizing the universality of the use of such devices, demonstrate that there is a noticeable variation in the frequency and the preferred forms. This work ends up with useful insights about the applications of the study in the field of second language writing.

Finally, research has shown that Arabic and English differ in argument evaluation. Hottel-Burkhart (2000) alludes to some features of Arabic argumentation in terms of the Aristotelian canons of rhetoric. One relevant illustration on Arabic ways of argumentation is provided. It is related to the canon of *invention*, which concerns the knowledge on which the discussion of a subject can be based. She holds that what counts as an argument is determined by rhetorical traditions across cultures and can even vary within the same tradition over time. Hottel-Burkhart cites an instance as regards the mutual assessment of two parties of each others' arguments in terms of distinct cultural values of what constitutes an argument. She alludes to Johnstone's (1986) analysis of renowned interview of the Ayatollah Khomeini by the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. The journalist offered factual justifications for her argument, following a Western logic, while Khomeini relied on a totally dissimilar style involving the use of Quranic verses and Hadith, a very forceful argument from Khomeini's viewpoint. In essence, this sort of miscommunication stems from cultural dissimilarities in the background building blocks of arguments themselves. Abu Rass (2011) holds that as far as Arabic is concerned, it is possible to admit that persuasion advocates tools which are strongly connected to religion, especially the use of allegories from Koran, the "word of God", the use of analogies and reference to the authority of Islam. In her words, "Supporting arguments in Arabic is done by quotations of verses from the Qur'an, the holy book, and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Ahadeeth) as well as citing of prominent leaders or Islamic scholars" (p. 207). Tuleja (2009), contrasting Arab and US American argumentation, stresses the firm connection between inspired language and religion in the Arab context. This is partly due to the place Arabic occupies in the performance of daily religious rituals for Muslims. Hinkel (2004), in this respect, comments that the construction and organization of discourse in various languages are deeply implanted in the culture, the history of rhetoric, and the socio-cultural frameworks which establish what is and what is not prized in text.

More features are identified by Kamel (2000) differentiating Arabic and English argumentation. She has shown that at the level of surface formats and logical markers, Arabic style is more explicit and cohesive than English style. Concerning topics, in Arabic topic sentences may not be explicit, and the typical English topic shifts, especially when presenting rebuttals in argumentation, are unusual and confusing for Arabic speakers. As for coherence and ellipsis, there is a manifest tendency to assert in Arabic. For example, it is possible to say what something is and then what it is not, violating the principle of presupposition used in English. At the relevance level, Arabic speakers do not have the same underlying background knowledge for the construction and interpretation of texts as English speakers, including knowledge of superstructures. Furthermore, fronting, as a way of structuring information, is used in Arabic as opposed to clefting, passive voice, and subordination in English. As regards the logic employed in Arabic Argumentation, Kamel (2000) demonstrates that Arabic uses coordination of ideas. Further, she argues that the concept of paragraph as a unit of thought and logic and the independence of text structure does not exist in Arabic. Finally, the ideational structure is characterized by the absence of nuclear hierarchical structure of ideas in paragraphs and texts.

Having reviewed the literature on cross-linguistic differences in writing and argumentation and on the rhetorical features of Arabic argumentation liable to be transferred to

the English essays of EFL learners, the present study was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. Do the argumentative essays written by advanced Arabic-speaking EFL learners show preference for through-argumentation in argument development?
2. Do the argumentative essays written by advanced Arabic-speaking EFL learners demonstrate non-conventional discourse features other than through-argumentation in argument development?

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 52 students registered at the Department of English for the academic year 2012-2013 at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla, Algeria. All of them, 41 female and 11 male, are Algerian first-year or second-year Master students, whose first language is Algerian dialectal Arabic and who had been learning English for more than ten years. The participants' age mean value is 24.34 years. All participants have first learned Standard Arabic (which was used as a means of instruction) from primary to secondary school, then French as a first foreign language starting from the third or fourth year of their education and finally English as a second foreign language starting from middle school.

4.2 Data Collection

To collect data, the researcher draws on a non-parametric, researcher-designed writing test intended to elicit argumentative essays from the student participants. The essays constitute the text corpus for this study. The test comprises a free writing task, which involves the production of two short argumentative essays on debatable topics (see Appendix A). The students were overtly instructed to project their argumentative texts in the form of an essay, whose length ranges between 200 and 400 words, the common length of short essays allotted to students, especially in examinations. A short introductory questionnaire aimed at eliciting background information on the subjects precedes the writing task. Before administering the test, the participants were notified one week in advance. The researcher met the classes separately and explained the writing task to the participants. The students received individual copies of the test. A two-week deadline was set to retrieve the copies. Only a number of the students responded to the test and returned the copies.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The essays are analyzed according to a three-stage procedure. In the preliminary stage, the collected essays were given codes to make their recognition possible. Each code appears in the form (A-B), in which A is a principal number referring to the participant (from 1 to 52) and B is a secondary number designating either the first essay or the second one for each participant (1 or 2). For example, the code (34-1) stands for the first essay of the 34th participant. Subsequently, the texts were subjected to identification and quantification of all the rhetorical patterns as regards argument development. The examination considers whether the participants opt for "counter-argumentation" or "through argumentation", that is, whether the writers support or denounce a given stance by making/ or not making a direct concession to the belief entertained by a potential adversary respectively. Spelling and lexico-grammatical inconsistencies are not taken into account. In operational terms, to identify the argumentative patterns that the participants opted for, the model developed by Hatim (1997) was followed. Table 1 summarises

the indicators of each pattern. In the last stage, the most prevalent patterns were signaled in proportion to the total measurements to determine the degree of cultural transfer in argumentative essays.

Table 1
Indicators of Argumentative Patterns

	Through-argumentation	Counter-argumentation	
		Balance format	Explicit Concessive format
1	(tone-setter)	1 (tone-setter)	1 (tone-setter)
2	↓Thesis to be argued through	2 Thesis cited to be opposed	2 Thesis cited to be opposed
3	↓Substantiation	3 ↓Opposition	3 ↓Opposition
4	↓Conclusion	4 ↓Substantiation (Explicit or implicit contrastive shift between claim and counter-claim/ explicit markers <i>but</i> , <i>however...</i>)	4 ↓Substantiation (Explicit concessive connection/ Explicit markers <i>although</i> , <i>while</i> , <i>despite...</i>)
		5 ↓Conclusion	5 ↓Conclusion

4.4 Results and Discussion

The analysis of argument patterns in the corpus yielded significant findings. Table 2 displays the ratios for each kind of arrangement. The results show that out of the total of 104 essays, 50% follow the through-argumentation pattern, 47.11%, the counter-argumentation pattern, while 2.88% do not track any clear form of argumentation.

Table 2
Argumentation Patterns

Pattern	Number of essays	Percentage
a. Counter-argumentation	49	47.11 %
b. Through-argumentation	52	50 %
c. Other	3	2.88 %
Total	104	100 %

On the other hand, the analysis of the essays developed by counter-argumentation, which is recommended in English writing, generated ample evidence of complications encountered by

the student writers to construct counter-argumentative essays. The observed inconsistencies undermine the text's layout. Table 3 summarises the main deviations from the Western model's conventions for writing a counter-argumentative essay.

Table 3
Problems in Writing Counter-argumentative Essay

	Problem	N° of essays	%
a.	Confusing argumentation and other text types	05	10.2 %
b.	Non-systematic placement of arguments and counter-arguments in the essay	27	55.1 %
c.	Advancing of counter-arguments without refutation: Complete separation between counter-arguments and arguments	16	32.65 %
d.	Presentation of gambit in the form of a rhetorical question	12	24.48 %
e.	Paragraph division (random distribution of details or lack of division in the body section)	13	26.53 %
f.	Superordinate informing move in the introduction	10	20.4 %
g.	Other	07	14.28 %

Such non-conventional patterns detected in the participants' counter-argumentative essays are explicated and illustrated below:

a. Confusing argumentation and other text types: Out of 49 counter-argumentative essays, 10.2 % display confusion of argumentation and other text types, such as narration and exposition. In some texts, lengthy narratives appear in the development section to establish the ground for advancing arguments. This form of story-telling is not included as evidence, a practice that is acknowledged in Western usage. Rather, it distorts the whole essay and causes the reader to lose track of the argumentative line. This practice appears in the first body paragraph of essay (3-1):

Algerian women worked together with men in the war against the French colonization. They took the burden of being both head of family and soldier to defend home. They were recruited just as men, planted bombs, and carried confidential papers to desired spots. They were tortured and humiliated to spare information on the secrets of the revolting squads. Their role was more important after the Algerian independence. Women were given the chance to work and take positions of responsibility. They worked side by side with men in fields which were men-restricted. Their efforts were appreciated during and after the French colonisation. But later they were treated differently. [Narrative moves] . . .

In other essays, although the writer attempts to advance arguments and counter-arguments to demonstrate two opposing views, the way pros and cons are presented makes the discussion a form of exposition in which causes are clarified, as shown in essay (50-1):

Women nowadays became an important members in the society and they have a higher positions in it. There are many causes that led them to take this positions.

Some women have encouraged to get such position like election. They encouraged by their families which give them supports and even purpose which may give to them. Also, the society has a big influence on the position of the women in the society because they look for power and authority which they always search for them simply, they defend their presentation in many fields to convey their existence in the society or in the family itself.

b. Non-systematic placement of arguments and counter-arguments: This appears in 55.1 % of the counter-argumentative essays. Not conforming to the convention of placing the arguments and their anticipated objections in the development paragraphs and to the systematic distribution of evidence and counter-evidence, this part of the corpus involves several types of distortions.

- Counter-arguments and refutation are positioned in the introduction before the presentation of the writer's stance in the thesis. The introduction of essay (4-2) illustrates this case:

In universities all over the world, the curriculum devised to students of English as a foreign language contains three basic modules; they are: literature, linguistics and civilisation. Many students, including me in my three first years, wonder of the usefulness of such modules. Students see that the above mentioned modules are unhelpful and useless for them since their target is to be able to produce and process the English language. They, however, find themselves using a language which is strange to both native speakers and other learners of English. In fact, this happens because these learners do not appreciate the background knowledge transmitted to them through those three modules about the way the English language is really used by its native speakers. (4-2)

- Detailed arguments are advanced in the introduction right after the standpoint. Then, more arguments appear in the development. This is detected in essay (10-1) below:

Nowadays, women are not just housekeeper but more than that, they have an important role and status in our society because they became to participate in various fields such as: elections. This last, it is a challenge that faced all women because of many reasons: women are able to achieve worse and better in their job even in politic, they can do many activities for example: making decision, interview, organizing and rule people . . . etc. Besides this, women as human being, rely on their emotion to attract and influence people to be productive. That's why, women have a great impact in our society.

- Counter-arguments and refutation appear in the conclusion after the affirmation of opinion. The conclusion of essay (4-1) illustrates this non-conventional practice:

At last, I do not want, as a Muslim, to leave the impression that I am against the woman. On the contrary, it is Islam that gave us, we women, the most appropriate place that we deserve. Islam does not consider the woman as an inferior creature compared with man, but it does differentiate what is more adequate for each, and hence that it is not helpful for women to take part in elections.

- Arguments are advanced for the first time in the conclusion. This is found in the concluding paragraph of essay (45-1):

As our prophet Muhamed (PBUH) said “a people ruled by a woman are cursed”
 As long as we are Muslims and putting all other claims aside, this is enough for us
 to get convinced that women have some roles to play in the society, but taking
 high positions in it is not one of them.

- Some counter-argumentative essays pursue mostly the through-argumentation pattern, with a brief or partial reference to adversary's views. In essay (49-1), the only instance of counter-argument appears in one contrastive expression, as shown in this extract:

. . . We know that the real place of woman is in her house, but we can not neglect
 her importante place in the development of our socity, cultural or educational.
 Therefore she should be encouraged to take some positions like participation in the
 elections.

c. Advancing of counter-arguments without refutation: In 32.65 % of the texts, counter-arguments are acknowledged or accommodated but without refutation. It is shown in standard writing coursebooks that refutation, or rebuttal, involves both anticipation of potential objections and arguing against them by building into the writer's arguments the reasons that invalidate the objection: the writer casts doubt on the opponent's reasons or questions the accuracy, relevancy, and sufficiency of the opponent's evidence (McWhorther, 2012). Such an approach permits writers to look at their arguments from the perspective of skeptics (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2010). In this section of the corpus, the writers do acknowledge the other side's position but with no attempt to logically connect their claims to those of the adversaries. Therefore, the text is structured as a pointless exposition of two drastically separated sides.

d. Presentation of gambit in the form of a rhetorical question: In 24.48 % of counter-argumentative essays, the gambit section of the introduction is only a replicate of the essay's question. Hyland (1990) explains that a gambit is marked by its eye-catching effect. In the argumentative essay genre, the utility of this move is to grab the reader's attention. It is usually formulated as a conflict-ridden statement or a dramatic illustration. In this section of the corpus, the writers do not formulate a striking lead-in for their essays; this obstructs the presentation of their stance and tone. The introductory paragraph of essay (7-1) demonstrates such a plain style:

Nowaday women take a important state in our society. We can find her in many
 work fields in Hospital, schools, a company, airport, and factories and other many
 places, so should women be encouraged to take such positions.

e. Thought division: Problems in paragraph division are recorded in 26.53 % of the totality of counter-argumentative essays. The middle of an essay conventionally comprises paragraphs that sustain the proposition expressed in thesis statement. By citing examples, explaining causes, offering reasons, or using other strategies in these paragraphs, the writer provides sufficient specific substantiation to convince the reader that the opinion is a judicious one. Important in the body section is that each paragraph presents and develops one main point in the discussion. Paragraph unity in English stipulates that paragraph topics do not overlap. Thus, generally a new body paragraph signals another main point in the discussion. It is observed, however, that the essays under focus exhibit no correlation between the thought units (the supporting ideas) and the paragraph divisions of the essay. The observed distortions involve (1) random distribution of details and hence failure to establish the boundaries of each argument or (2) lack of division in the body section.

f. Super-ordinate informing moves in the introduction: These moves are found in some counter-argumentative essays. Informing moves constitute an essential part of an argumentative essay's introduction. Hyland (1990) explains that a writer optionally makes use of background material to contextualise the topic. Definitions, classifications, descriptions, critiques or "straw man" arguments usually constitute this section. Standard writing textbooks urge writers of argumentative essays to provide their audiences with "a history of the situation" and to direct their attention to the importance of the points introduced at this level. It is recommended, however, that introductory sections of an English essay be short and to the point. In the corpus, 20.4 % of counter-argumentative essays start with a universal statement only globally related to the topic of the paper, similar to the findings of Ostler (1987). The following introductory paragraph of essay (48-2) illustrates this rhetorical tendency.

Studying foreign languages became of interest to many people nowadays, notably English language. In fact, mastering English, or any language, demands great efforts. Some university students prefer to have classes in linguistics, literature, and civilisation. Yet, others want to learn English for their special objective. So, what are the subjects that should be included in the English curriculum to meet students needs?

g. Other inconsistencies: Other minor non-conventional forms are recorded in 14.28 % of the counter-argumentative essays. The student writers commit miscellaneous deviations from the Western standard model. These include (1) writing two introductions, (2) a very long, circuitous introduction, (3) failure to establish writer stance, (4) unfocused or biased gambit, (5) offering resolutions in the body of the essay and (6) the absence of a conclusion. The following extracts illustrate some of such deviant patterns:

(Case 1) Unlike the last few decades, women nowadays hold high and crucial position in society. That is, many women rule their communities and present them in different occasions. So, where is our society in this scale of « development » and what its population think about this? **[introduction 1]**

Recently, in our society, many women participate in the election and wish to hold a crucial position. In fact, observing society's point of view, there are some people with giving women such position and there are other against such innovation. From my personal view, women should not be supported to wrk in such positions. Simply because there are hidden foreign goals behind encouraging women to demand such sensitive position. Surely, many women and will astonish from my view as a women. But it seem to me that I have build my understanding from a reasonable reasons. **[introduction 2]** (essay 31-1)

(Case 2) From the very beginnings of life on earth, men and women lived together as the two building blocks on which human existance depended. Their relationship was bound on the superiority of men over women. And this was the fact until the rise of civilization and religion which gave women more respect and power. Women were protected by the law and were given the right to speak for themselves and fight against anything that belittles their position in society. Today, they have the right to attend courts, to witness verdicts, and to participate in elections. But however independent and responsible women are today, they are always seen from the same angle. The context of the Algerian society is a clear

example of this situation. Women are called to participate in elections, to take important ruling positions in society but is it coming from fairness of men ? The present paper discusses in brief why women should not be encouraged to take such positions in the Algerian society. (essay 3-1)

(Case 3) Women nowadays became an important members in the society and they have a higher positions in it. There are many causes that led them to take this positions. **[introduction]**. . .To sum up, sociaty should respect our religion and fellow it especially in the difficult choises in our life. **[conclusion]** (essay 50-1)

(Case 4) Women's issues have been of seminal importance to many people today. These issues concern everyday life, say, working, participating in elections, and so on. The latter has rised a great challenge in the muslim worlds. From the Islamic viewpoint can women contribute in such critical positions? Does Islam give respect and dignity for women? For which purpose women were created? (essay 48-1)

4.5 Interpretations

The results could be interpreted as follows. Through-argumentation pattern, which is postulated to be predominant in Arabic speaking EFL learners' persuasive essays, appears in the largest proportion of essays (50 %). That is, the effect of Arabic rhetorical patterns is significant. Along with this tendency, the analysis of essays shows that, the use of counter-argumentation pattern is not altogether overlooked, as it appears in 47.11 % of the essays, which is not a minor rate. On these grounds, it is construed that anticipation and acknowledgement of the adversaries' positions in argumentation appears to be considered by student writers in argumentative essay development. This implies that the effect of the student writers' L1 (Arabic) is only moderate. The rhetorical tendencies are found not to be moulded solely by native culture's patterns; in fact, the student writers attempt to use an English-like approach to advance and support their claims. However, the participants do demonstrate multiple weaknesses in producing this pattern. On the other hand, the proportion of 2.88%, where the essays have no clear pattern, denotes that the student participants do not differentiate the major text types and their related organisational discourse features. These essays lack argumentative tone and structure: Firstly, the writers' positions as regards the controversial issue are not introduced either explicitly or implicitly. Secondly, the development explains a state of affairs by means of successive informing moves instead of attempting to convince an audience of the acceptability of some standpoint. Accordingly, the texts are expository in purpose and content. Overall, considering all proportions, it can be concluded that multiple factors are at work in the construction of argumentative essays by advanced EFL learners. The recorded rhetorical tendencies are for the most part non-native-like. The observed defects call into question the existing instruction as regards this genre and necessitate that adequate tutoring be supplied to reduce the effect of L1 culture and maximize the understanding and manoeuvring of English discourse conventions as regards writing counter-argumentative essays.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In researching the writing skill, it is argued that textual data constitute a practical source that reveals the recurrent features characterizing texts or the problems that writers encounter in

manipulating certain areas of discourse. Whether they are analyzed descriptively, analytically or critically, textual data represent a practical tool to fathoming linguistic properties of texts (Hyland, 2003). From a course designer's perspective, analysis of textual features can reflect the existing gap between English L1 writers' texts and that of specific groups of ESL or EFL learners of writing and can suggest points of emphasis in teaching content or even methodological choices (Hinkle, 2002). Taking the case of the Arabic-speaking advanced EFL learners involved in this study, the analysis of the recurrent rhetorical patterns in their argumentative essays has led the present researcher to extract some implications for teaching the specified academic writing genre to Arabic-speaking students.

As shown in the results section, traces of cultural influences of Arabic language were found at the rhetorical level in the students' argumentative essays. Areas in which the students showed preferences of native-like patterns include the use of through-argumentation as a general organizational pattern. Research in contrastive rhetoric in relation to ESL or EFL teaching recommends that to minimize the effects of L1 culture on non-native students' writings, first students be sensitized to the existing cross-cultural differences in writing. This can help them in foreseeing the challenges they may have when composing in English. The findings of research on Arabic/English dissimilar argumentative discourse organizational patterns should be made available to EFL learners through research symposia and workshops. On the other hand, when designing writing syllabi, the content should make room for students' extensive exposure to English authentic texts written by native professionals to affect the schematic knowledge learners have about this argumentative genre. For instance, students would grasp the advantage of including counter-arguments and refutation in essays to formulate rational and unbiased critical discussions. This would reduce the effects of the cultural environments in which they have been socialized and would make their attempt to convince a potential disagreeing reader in academic settings more successful. In sum, where students are found to opt for discourse properties pertaining to their native culture, instruction has to highlight L2 features through extensive exposure to new patterns to supplant existing ones. However, it should be emphasized here that this practice is not meant to eradicate the learners' cultural identities in composition. Rather, the students should be sensitized to the fact that such requirements are advocated in Western academic contexts, where readerships have different orientations and expectations, and that such requirements constitute standards according to which their writing is assessed.

On the other hand, the analysis of argumentative essays revealed that some of the detected non-conventional discourse features are not attributable to cultural factors. When the learners use counter-argumentation, a salient feature of English essays, to organize their essays, they are found to produce defective texts from a Western angle. These discourse problems are in essence the result of lack of proficiency in English writing. Such empirical evidence implies that in teaching argumentative writing, students should have ample chances of being explicitly led to manipulate the target areas of English argumentative essay writing, to practise, to draft and to revise their texts with the support of feedback on evolving writing skills.

The findings of the study require an instructional approach whose focal concern is to assist EFL learners in discerning the disparities in argumentation between Arabic and English rhetorical properties. Further, learner difficulties require that writing instruction should make room for practice as a tool to address proficiency lacunae. Given this situation and drawing on the model of teaching writing developed by Badger and White (2000), a methodology dubbed the "process-genre" approach is recommended in the present study, underlining both the cognitive and social aspects of the skill. In this hybrid approach, according to Badger and White

(2000), teachers, learners and texts interact to supply input for learning. The learner is actively engaged in processing structure of model texts, considering linguistic forms, reflection on situational factors, multi-stage composition of texts and evaluation of his/her own texts or those of peers. The teacher's role gradually changes from scaffolding to facilitating learning throughout the whole process. Texts constitute a core contributor to enhance learners' knowledge. Overall, the process-genre methodology is deemed to meet the needs of EFL learners, whose writing is subject to multiple influences, including culture, proficiency and instruction variables.

About the Author

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Appendix A: The Students' Writing Test

Dear participant,

This test is part of a linguistic study conducted in connection with a doctoral research. Its objective is to investigate the writings of postgraduate students. You are kindly requested to respond to the following writing tasks.

I. The participantes profile

1. Name (optional):		
2. Age:		
3. Gender:	M ()	F ()
4. Level of education		
5. Option	ESP ()	Lit ()
6. What is your first language?	-	
- What languages other than your first language do you speak and use before learning English?	-	
- What languages have you learnt at school before English?	-	
- At which level did you first start to learn English?	- Primary school () - Middle school () - High school () - University ()	
2. Number of years studying English at university	-	

II. Writing Tasks

Write *two* compositions about the issues below. Use the language forms and essay organisation that you think are the most appropriate to convey your message to the readers.

Issue 1:

Women have participated in elections as candidates and managed to take important ruling positions in society. Should women be encouraged to take such positions?

Issue 2:

The study of subjects like “literature”, “linguistics” and “civilisation” is useful to/ not needed by university students of English as a foreign language to help them learn this language better. State your position and defend it.

NB: The length of every composition should approximately be between 200 and 400 words.

Rites of Passage in an English Class: Auto-ethnography and Coming of Age stories in Cross-Cultural Contexts

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Abstract

This essay draws lessons from implementing a new Freshman English curriculum in a Middle Eastern university. Three inter-related areas of emphasis are outlined: 1). Universities as a rite of passage; 2). Auto-ethnographies as an effective means for students to reflect critically about and narrate their own coming-of-age process (or movement between worlds); 3). Stories from *Coming of Age around the World* were used to model relevant themes in the coming of age process, such as diversity and gender. These included stories from the Middle East and the Caribbean, such as "The Veil," "The Women's Swimming Pool," "Shoes for the Rest of My Life," and "Man-Self." Here I will concentrate on two stories in which gender roles and the rewriting of scripts are foregrounded ("Man-Self" and "Shoes for the Rest of My Life"). A subsequent paper will develop a comparative perspective on teaching two stories set in the Middle East ("The Veil" and "The Women's Swimming Pool").

Key Words: rites of passage, auto-ethnography, coming of age stories, Middle East, Freshman English

Prologue

This essay about implementing a new Freshman English curriculum at a Middle Eastern University draws on personal experience, as well as composition theory. The use of “I” in this essay is grounded in current scholarship about the utility of sometimes including personal experience, or defining positionality, especially in intercultural contexts where the researcher’s subject position unavoidably shapes the dynamics of the research.¹ This was certainly true in my case, as a North American tasked with teaching American English to Muslim students in a conservative kingdom, yet warned to excise all references to potentially controversial themes such as “freedom” which appear routinely in American culture.

When I began restructuring Freshman English at my university in the Persian Gulf region in Fall 2013, I had two different arguments in mind. In the U.S., debate about the role of literature in composition, and the value of the humanities in higher education, had been short-circuited. While teaching writing in the U.S. 2008-2012, I watched support for the cultural component of English writing courses evaporate. Part of this was a result of a political witch hunt: conservatives held it as an article of faith that Humanities and social science professors were conspiring to indoctrinate students.² Working with largely conservative students, I knew this notion was laughable. Still, students were worried about their job prospects, so they were opting for courses like Professional Communication or Technical Writing over literature and cultural studies courses.

The second debate, in the Middle East, was bipolar. There was a determined effort to Americanize higher education, yet many administrators—often Arab-Americans recruited from the U.S.—were terrified of offending local sensibilities. Humanities faculty were told to adhere to U.S. “benchmarks,” yet we were also pressured to strip culture from the curriculum. Administrators arrived in the Middle East already shaped by U.S. higher-ed culture wars. English, psychology, political science, and anthropology were under attack; only STEM subjects deserved funding.³ An animus towards the humanities and social sciences was strengthened by the conservative Middle Eastern context. Yet experience teaches language and critical thinking can’t be taught without culture. My students were learning English through American movies, YouTube, and social media. But their vocabulary had huge gaps, and they were emerging from a cultural context that repressed critical thinking. Most students could not write a coherent paragraph, faculty agreed. A consensus emerged between faculty and administrators: students needed so much work in basic vocabulary and reading skills that actual researched writing was going to have to be deferred.

I was tasked to redesign Freshman English, emphasizing basic reading and writing skills. That syllabus was implemented in the Spring of 2014. What follows is a reflection on my efforts to implement a curriculum for ESL students meant to spark critical thinking in cross-cultural contexts for multinational students soon to enter a global information economy.

PART ONE—University Life as a Rite of Passage

In the first week of the semester students were introduced to the idea that their time in the university is itself a rite of passage (Hanson 2013). When they take ownership of this concept, it comes alive for them, and they apply it to their first assignments--a personal narrative in the form of an auto-ethnography, and analyses of short coming of age stories.

Rites of passage are choreographed initiation rituals (Bell, 1997, p. 152) that mark *a transition from one stage of life to another* (Turner 1967; 1973). They can mark many sorts of transitions—

birth, the military, sorority rushes, marriage, and death—but the most common rites of passage are those which guide the transition from adolescence into adulthood. Such rites of passage into adulthood/ professional roles require changes for both the person and the social collective. Thus, such rites are an essential step or component for the growth—and indeed the rejuvenation or rebirth—of both individuals and communities (Van Gennep, 1909/1960).

At my Middle Eastern University, the “Vision” of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences provides legitimation for what I attempted in the revised Freshman English: *To create critical-minded, free-thinking students with the support of modern pedagogy and technology who will positively contribute to the workforce and a knowledge-based economy*. The rite of passage framework, followed by an auto-ethnography, provides a structured path for students to connect their own growth as critical thinkers with the transformations of a global information economy they will soon enter. This process begins with an outline of the three-part schema of a rite of passage, which to a degree separates students from their prior world, trains them in a new role or status, and then leads to a re-integration into larger social networks.

Rites of passage occur in *most* cultures. However, students in traditional Islamic cultures have had less chance to separate from mainstream society than perhaps in any other culture. One could say that their liminal phase has historically been truncated. However, young people in the Middle East are now achieving a greater degree of separation through travel and digital technologies. This means in practice that they are moving through a “digital liminality” virtually 24/7. That is the subject of a research project I am conducting in second semester English.

For now, I want to observe that the Middle Eastern context for teaching rites of passage is unique. One must define terms carefully. When an Instructor observes that rituals can be both secular and religious (Myerhoff, 1997), this may require elaboration for Muslim students. I point out that secular—often interpreted in a negative way in an Islamic context—does not mean anti-religious. It just means a *non-religious domain*--a reflection of the separation of church and state that most Westerners take for granted, but that is far from obvious in Islamic contexts.

Religious rituals include the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage), or Christian pilgrimages. Secular rituals can include everything from brushing teeth, to a graduation ceremony. Rites of Passage, one of the most important rituals, are important for university-age students. Here is the three-part typology proposed by Arthur Van Gennep was later popularized by British anthropologist Victor Turner (1969; 1973):

- 1) Separation (“cutting away” from the former self)
- 2) Transition (a *liminal* or threshold phase, re: the state of being between worlds).
- 3) Re-Incorporation (re-integration) – re-entering society with a new status.

An interesting question for discussion is: What happens without Rites of Passage? (Scott, 2012). Part of the answer is that the line between childhood and adulthood is blurred; “Child adults” act without regard for how their behaviour affects their community. Such perpetual adolescents take from society but do not give back support. One can see this phenomenon in the extended adolescence which consumer society seems to encourage. This led Joseph Campbell to remark:

Modern society has provided adolescents with NO rituals by which they become members of the tribe, of the community. All children need to be twice born, to learn to function rationally in the present world, leaving childhood behind. (Cohen, 1991, p. 45)

Students are asked to reflect on their own process of being “twice born,” through culture. This self-exploration is pursued through an auto-ethnography, through which students critically examine how cultures shape them. Scholars from Edward Tylor to Edward Hall to Raymond Williams have noted that cultures, as “complex wholes” (Tylor, 1871/1920, p. 1), or “a whole way of life” (Williams, 1958/2002, p. 93), are largely invisible belief systems. They are “an invisible structure of life” (Reynolds & Valentine, 2011, p. xvii), or as Hall (1990) put it, “underlying principles that shape our lives” (p. 3), molding us in a largely unconscious way.

The task of the auto-ethnography assignment is to make culture visible. I give students tools to consciously reflect on their relationship to the cultures which structure their way of thinking and living. As a noun, cultures are structures which house us, in which we move and have various sorts of interaction. But as a verb, culture *structures* us and the way we move and think. Put another way, our way of life is structured by culture, like the way water structures how a fish swims. We swim in underlying culture, unconsciously. The objective is to become conscious of how “in [culture] we live and move and have our being.”⁴

PART TWO—Auto-Ethnographies as a tool to teach post-process writing

Hanson (2013) argues that “we need a social and cultural conception of colleges and universities.” He quotes B.F. Skinner’s maxim: “*Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.*” That sense of education as molding is a perspective that is often forgotten, or never understood to begin with, by those who imagine that universities are factories to turn out technocrats. Whether we intend it or not, university life forms character. If we shortchange students on cultural literacy, and a sense of connectedness to those outside the bubble of their specialties, then they will likely carry those handicaps for life. Already, those who do the hiring for corporations lament that recent graduates lack the language skills to write a simple memo, or speak persuasively to a non-specialist audience.

Because character-formation is part of a university’s function, and because a socially situated sense of self is a cornerstone of character, Hanson suggests that students need to learn basic narrative skills. In other words, knowing how to tell a story should be a building block of the university experience—in written, oral, and arguably in visual forms. Thus, argues Hanson (2013): “To understand the change that students undergo, we need to solicit stories from them.”

This is not merely an idealistic perspective. When employers complain about the post-literacy of many graduates, they are telling us that students have lost the capacity to tell a story. After all, job interviews “are exercises in storytelling” (Hanson 2013). If we merely “supply the workforce with a corps of single-minded technocrats,” then the pragmatic skills of self-presentation, and construction of narrative (storytelling) will atrophy or remain stillborn.

Starting Freshman English students with a personal narrative not only makes good pedagogical sense (Barnawi, 2011), it is also an eminently practical skill. This skill has been sorely neglected, between students’ over-investment in their digital media,⁵ and an all-too-common conviction that all they need to succeed is technical information.

By week two, I have students engaged in the pre-writing activities necessary to begin imagining and drafting an auto-ethnography, and also exploring the story-telling techniques of other young people who have written coming-of age stories.

We start with a definition (my wording): “An auto-ethnography is one’s own life narrative, set in a socio-cultural context.” That is, you are writing a story about your relationship to culture. Understanding an auto-ethnography requires first defining Ethnography –i.e. research resulting in a narrative about the life-ways of a specific culture. Ethnography is “the study and

systematic recording of human cultures; *also*: a descriptive work produced from such research” (Websters). If an autobiography is writing one’s own biography, then in an auto-ethnography, you engage in a systematic study of your own cultures. “*Put yourself at the center of a narrative about culture*,” I remind students as the project evolves. It differs from an autobiography, because the story is about the inter-relationship between you and your socio-cultural context.

It’s an effort to achieve some critical distance from one’s experience, and to see it whole. Constructing a narrative in which they discuss how components of socio-cultural contexts have shaped them, students try to take the odds and ends of their lives, and weave them into a unified life story. The emphasis is on how they are situated in their socio-cultural contexts.

I begin introducing students to the concept of *rewriting scripts*. Writing an auto-ethnography is, to some degree, an effort to rewrite one’s life script. When you construct that narrative, you are deciding what parts of those socio-cultural contexts have worked for me, and what needs to be jettisoned. This means that you must *de-familiarize yourself*. The easiest way to explain this is a classic example: a fish knows only water, and takes it for granted. For the fish to see water more objectively, you have to take the fish out of water. Then you defamiliarize the relationship of fish to water. So students seek to defamiliarize the cultures which structure them. I get students started with an activity about group affiliations, with these instructions:

- 1) Make a list of several groups you are associated with (whether born into, or chosen).
- 2) For the two groups that you are most interested in, make a list of stereotypes and/or outstanding features commonly associated with these groups.
- 3) Write a separate list about those two groups listing the rituals, common practices, and artifacts (or objects) are associated with your group.

A follow-up activity also functions as pre-writing, and part of the defamiliarization process:

- 4) Interview someone outside of your group. Ask them the following questions:
 - A). What first comes to your mind when I say the name of my group?
 - B). What is something you have always wondered about members of my group?
 - C) To what extent have you spent significant time with members of my group?
 - D) Come up with your own questions to ask.⁶

After submitting typed versions of those pre-writing assignments, the next step is:

Write one 200-word paragraph in narrative form – a sustained analysis--about the implications of one of the lists you have written.

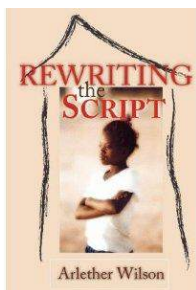
Through this de-familiarization process--envisioning socio-cultural contexts in which they are enmeshed--students learn a core idea of the “post-process” school of composition. This perspective insists that “writers and readers are always conditioned....by networks of social relations; and the goal of composition is in part about raising students’ awareness of their own discursive formations” (Fraiberg, 2002, p. 1). The process approach is valuable, yet there has been a tendency to treat the “product” approach as a straw man. (It may be appropriate in areas such as technical writing). But in Freshman English, writing an auto-ethnography is a useful way to move students towards post-process objectives such as imagining audiences, and mapping inter-relationships with socio-cultural networks.

As students give shape to narratives about their relationship to culture, we use two other analytical concepts. We review Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. Then we emphasize rewriting

scripts. I won't say much about Plato here, other than to note that the conclusions are timely: telling the truth can be dangerous. But all students can relate to the idea that since truth-telling is risky, it may be more effective to work with allegory, and humor. Nobody wants to be told that they are living in the dark. But they can be made to see a different light through humor, and allegory. These are ideas that are later explored in more detail through allegories such as "The Emperor's New Clothes," and through a close reading of Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

The notion of rewriting scripts can be framed as a variant of escaping mental slavery.

The idea of rewriting scripts comes from screenwriting/ playwriting. Actors follow roles defined by a script. Breaking away from a script—improvising--can lead to great art, but most often it is disruptive--seen as reflecting a lack of discipline or preparation on the part of the actress. The idea has been applied more broadly to psychology, interpersonal relations, or social settings. It has been popularized via "family script theory"--the notion that "it is never too late to re-write your life script -- the script that has been passed down for generations."⁷

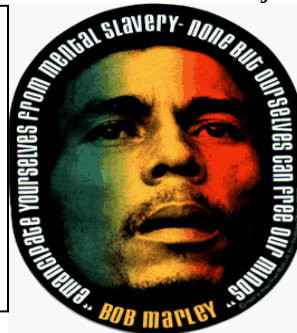


But most often, the idea is used as in Arlether Wilson's memoir, *Rewriting the Script*. Backgrounds of abuse or dysfunction have a *toxic afterlife*⁸; to escape repeating this pattern, there is a need to name the old script, and to create a new direction and a new ending to this narrative.

repeating this pattern, there is a need to name the old script, and to create a new direction and a new ending to this narrative.

Human beings all follow scripts: roles are passed on to us in various settings: from family, church, schools, politics, popular culture, etc. Most people remain largely unconscious of those scripts, but full development as a human being (or as a culture) requires becoming conscious of those scripts, and then deciding which ones work for us, and which ones must be jettisoned.

Those that are counterproductive or confining must be rewritten. This is the message of Bob Marley's famous line: "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery / none but ourselves can free our minds."



Sometimes these old scripts we attempt to rewrite are forms of "mental slavery," with a toxic afterlife. Students at first tend to think of an afterlife literally as life after death. But by discussing the afterlife of nuclear wastes, they grasp the concept that habits take on a life of their

own. This can be personal or cultural. Following Marley's lead, we could name toxic afterlives (mental slavery) which originate in slavery and colonialism: racism, mis-education, health issues (dis-ease resulting from improper diet), poverty ("destruction of the poor is in their poverty"), homelessness/fatherlessness; co-dependency; killing of prophets, war to war, etc.

PART THREE—Using "Coming of Age" stories as models for personal narratives

While students are still revising their auto-ethnographies, we discuss two mini-stories which bring to life several concerns which are typical in coming-of-age stories, specifically gender, diversity, and the rewriting of scripts.

The two stories are "Man-Self" by Oonya Kempadoo, and "Shoes for the Rest of My Life" by Guadalupe Dueñas, both from *Coming of Age around the World*. The title "Man-Self" is one that I have applied to an untitled excerpt from Kempadoo's novel *Buxton Spice*. Kempadoo grew up near the Caribbean coast of Guayana, and spent most of her life in the Caribbean—with stays in St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Grenada. The mixed-race status of her family and community will be familiar to anyone from the Caribbean or Latin American world. But it is the female narrator's fascination with masculinity which provides the unifying theme here.

I provide study guide questions that relate "Man-Self" to rites of passage, such as: "What does the concept of 'man-self' mean to the female narrator?" But I also ask a meta-narrative question: "What is the subtext in this story about the *socially constructed* nature of gender?" These provide openings to define socially constructed, and look at instances of man-self in the beginning of the story. The opening of the story has the pre-pubescent narrator comparing the man-self of brothers and friends, with the more threatening (but clearly also attractive)



'Moonlight Dreadlocks' by Andy Jefferson.



masculinity of "the hard black-black Rastas silhouetted in the streetlight" (p. 119).

Dreadlocks in moonlight, or in profile, is a widely circulated trope both in reggae music, and in the world of popular culture and advertisements, so I put iconic images on the screen.

With the visuals at hand, it is easy even for students who have not encountered Rastas to begin to grasp what the young narrator is observing, from the safety of an upstairs window:

They were slinky cats moving into the night, their bodies liquid, rolling on to one foot and then the other, cool. They held their man-self tighter inside them, coiled, ready to spring. I gauged how much of that cool I could really get right, practiced the walk. But all that really came off was the stance—legs apart, bounce-me-nuh look (p. 119).

The young tomboy practicing the wide-legged “don’t mess with me” stance of well-cool Rastas is ripe for comic effect. This becomes apparent when we are told that this girl studied local varieties of the man-self “All the nights”—such as the way the Rastas

...swung down the hand, grab the crotch, shift to the other leg. That stance was all I could honestly imitate. But I could do it anytime I wanted to, even in a dress, and feel my man-self standing like that (p. 120).

These stories encourage a dramaturgical approach to textual interpretation (Pettengill, 2010). That tomgirl in a dress, looking down on the silhouetted Rastas, and imitating their wide-legged, crotch-grabbing manselves, is comic. Yet the narrator gives no indication that she wants to shed her dress. She just wants to enjoy the liberties that young men enjoy. This is evident in that opening paragraph: the narrator’s sister Judy is a co-conspirator in trying on “man-selves,” while other sisters give her models of femininity (“Rachel and Sammy, with their eye-blinking selves”) against which she defines herself.

I could climb trees as high as any boy. Had corns across my palms from swinging on branches. Judy had a man-self too. Could climb good. She could hang on for longer with her strong arms and pull herself back up (p. 120).

Another study guide prompt is: “Describe several of the varieties of ‘man-self language’ and behavior that she finds attractive, or repulsive/repellant.” The narrator describes the man-self of some bigger men, such as a watchman nicknamed Night Helicopter, as “sloppy” and “puffed up.” Then there is a character named Look-Back who “had his man-self so covered up it was confusing” (p. 120). Look-Back took “small mincing steps...Bird movements, his long neck swiveling, his hands jerking everywhere when he talked, eyes darting” (p. 121). Here a comparative perspective is employed: “The Rastas had a different name for him. They called him ‘Anti-man’ and he’d scuttle past them fast...” (p. 121). Lest there are any doubts that the narrator is suffering gender troubles, the Rastas are there to police properly gendered behavior.

Along with admiring imitation, and some contempt, there is also envy. Her brother Yan is given many liberties unavailable to girls. She imagines that she can see Yan’s man-self better than he can, since it was “just beginning”: “It was wobbling around in his voice sometimes.” (“Wobbling” provides another opportunity for dramaturgy, along with the mincing steps of Look-Back). She says, in Caribbean-inflected English: “Dads...let him go to the cinema any time he wanted, by himself. We had to go with one’a *them*.... I began to hate Yan’s man-self but wanted to stick around him all the time to do the man-things with him” (p. 121).

Her relationship with Yan illuminates some “subtexts in this story about the *socially constructed* nature of gender.” There is a neighbor, the mechanic Mikey, who repairs their van while Yan translates. Aside from where the spanner goes, what else is he translating? Our tomgirl relates: “Yan took his time to teach me how it all went together” (p. 121). On a literal level, this refers to the engine, and the traditionally masculine domain of mechanics. But on a symbolic level, this has been worded in such a way as to suggest a doubled meaning. Masculinity is complicated. It has a lot of moving parts. The man-self may seem attractive, but it is not easy learning to be a man. Yan is also teaching her, metaphorically, lessons about how all the parts of someone’s man-self “went together.”

This subtext surfaces when our tomboy confesses: “I enjoyed my man-self with the boys. Bits of their man-selves soaked into me and I learnt then how to understand the man-self language” (p. 122). This became a theme in my class. My female students are segregated: they

sit behind smoked glass in a balcony. When a female student had to climb over the class to retrieve the quizzes that I had tossed up (and short-armed), a student observed that something of the “man-self had soaked into her.”

Another study guide prompt asks: “Why does she find in Sammy a version of the ‘she-self’ which she finds unattractive?” When Judy and the narrator climb trees—as good or better than the boys—and then play Dungs War “like one of the boys pelt it” (p. 120), Rachel and Sammy howl in protest. The latter girls have learned a different set of lessons about gender, and the different kinds of power that it can endow to practitioners. Sammy had “no man-self at all.” But she had other, more traditionally feminine attributes: she had “turned-up mouth and eyes that could blink good. She had a way that could make you give her anything she wanted” (p. 123). Sammy is learning feminine wiles to bend men to her will. But our tomboy, having soaked up the best of available man-selves, draws a different conclusion: “If that was what she-self was all about, I go keep my man-self till I old” (p. 123).

Before ending with a brief glimpse at the metaphorical language of “Shoes,” I want to pause to observe that these coming of age stories provide numerous means of getting students to think critically about their own incipient script-revisions. After teaching “Man-Self,” I discuss the concepts of subtexts and meta-narratives with students. I ask them: “*Can you locate a subtext in the narrative you are beginning to formulate about how your cultures have shaped you?*”

The biographical sketch of Guadalupe Dueñas (“Shoes for the Rest of my Life”) in *Coming of Age around the World* describes her as “the mistress of the metaphor.” Metaphors are figures of speech relating un-like objects (as in *drowning in money*). But students take ownership of such concepts more effectively when they see them illustrated in mediums they know—film, or music. A famous quote from Shakespeare serves well here:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
—William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2/7

Students understand the inter-relationship between metaphors, and masking or personas, very well. They readily acknowledge that they do not act the same at a mosque, as at a party. Every social setting requires a different script, or persona. All of us, to some degree, are “players” in life, performing different parts, in different contexts.

I encourage students to look beyond the literal, to an underlying metaphorical subtext. Three study guide questions are designed to help students unpack this metaphor: 1). The father gives his family an heirloom / inheritance. Explain why this provokes such fierce resistance on the part of his daughter. 2). What could “piles of little coffins reaching up to the sky” symbolize? (p. 293). 3). What is the story saying, symbolically, about the expectations of our parents?

This Mexican *Palm of the Hand* story⁹ shows that young people invariably try to deface the scripts of their parents, or other authorities. Giving a girl shoes for life is a cultural death sentence. They are *coffins* because these unfashionable shoes are ‘dead’ within their boxes, and also because they confine the girl within a deadening script. The story becomes a sort of black comedy in which the girl empathizes with barefoot Indian children, and dreams of getting run over by a truck so that her father “would have to atone for his sins” (p. 294).

To plan for a child so far ahead surely is sinful. The girl inventories the artifacts she uses to destroy the shoes—a list that is familiar to students, since they have compiled a list of artifacts

in their culture. But these artifacts constitute not so much the tools of a culture, as the “weapons of the weak” in an anti-cultural resistance.¹⁰ Her effort to lose, destroy, or give away the un-“reasonable-looking” shoes becomes “the overriding obsession that dominated my life” (p. 294). By the end, when she repeats a second time, “There’s just no end to it,” we may ask ourselves: Has she admitted defeat? Or does she find meaning in what is like a labor of Sisyphus?

The shoes, as parental scripts, are like a “tradition....transmitted from the past” which, Marx once wrote, “weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.” It may be an “unequal combat” (295) without end, but the sheer inventiveness of the narrator’s resistance is itself clear Evidence that the seeds of a new script have already begun to germinate.

Conclusion

Student response to the rite of passage and coming of age material was enthusiastic. Middle Eastern students were able to use this theory to make sense of their own liminality. They are spending a great deal of time *between worlds*—whether through travel, or digital devices—but are being given little guidance about how they will incorporate that knowledge when they re-integrate into a conservative society. The cross-cultural coming of age stories also helped students to understand basic challenges of their own transition into adult identities, such as the socially constructed and performed nature of gender roles. Thus, my female students take ownership of the notion of a “man-self” and repeated this idea in class, as a way of making sense of the manner in which they were now learning to become more at home in places and activities which had traditionally been reserved for men (such as speaking in class). Such curriculum, in my view, needs the support of administrators so that the students they produce will not be culturally and intellectually handicapped as they enter a global information economy.

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Gregory Stephens is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. Stephens has taught film, literature, and media/cultural studies at the University of South Florida (2010-12) the University of West Indies (2004-08), and the University of California. He is the author of *On Racial Frontiers: The New Culture of Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, and Bob Marley* (Cambridge UP, 1999). From 2013-2014 Stephens was an Assistant Professor of English at Alfaisal University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Publications drawing on experience in/study of the Middle East include “Recording the Rhythm of Change: A Rhetoric of Revolution in *The Square*,” *Bright Lights Film Journal* (May 2014). Currently, Stephens is finishing a book project: *Real Revolutionaries: Revisioning the Romance of Revolution in Literature and Film*.

Footnotes

¹ On use of the “I”: Ken Hyland, “Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse,” *Discourse Studies*, 7(2) (2005), 173–191; Kate McKinney Maddalena, “I need you to say ‘I’: Why First Person is Important in College Writing,” in *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, ed. Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky (Parlor Press, 2010), 180-190.

² Re attacks on the humanities, and “useless” disciplines, see Jeremy Wallace, “Rick Scott no fan of anthropology,” *Miami Herald-Tribune* (October 10, 2011). For an academic response see Scott Jaschik, “Florida GOP vs. Social Science,” *InsideHigherEd* (October 12, 2011). On the value of an anthropological perspective in assessing education, and specifically rites of passage as a framework for understanding the broader contribution of higher education, see Scott 2014.

³ The campaign by Florida Republicans was directed not only against the humanities, but against social science disciplines such as psychology and political science. Shannon Colavecchio, "Lawmakers stress need for higher ed but warn of cuts," *Tampa Bay Times* (Feb. 26, 2010). Then anthropology became a particular target.

⁴ In keeping with the view that scriptures are also a form of culture which often invisibly structure our thinking, I have adapted this from Acts 17:28.

⁵ Diane R. Dean and Arthur Levine, "Is There an App for That?" Autonomy and Dependency in Today's College Students," *HigherEdJobs* (November 11, 2013). Howard Gardner and Katie Davis, *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World* (Yale UP, 2013); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Basic Books, 2012. See Turkle's TED Talk "Connected, but Alone," or this profile: Jeffrey R. Young, "Programmed for Love: In a skeptical turn, the MIT ethnographer Sherry Turkle warns of the dangers of social technology," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Jan. 14, 2011). See also the still-timely essay by Nicholas Carr, Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet is doing to our brains, *The Atlantic* (July/August 2008).

⁶ Although I studied and conducted / wrote autoethnographies as a graduate student at the University of California-San Diego, many of the specific pre-writing activities I use now were adapted from Matt Hollrah, who designed an innovative Freshman Composition curriculum at the University of Central Oklahoma. I taught at UCO in the Fall of 2013.

⁷ Irene Watson, *The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference* (Plain View Press, 2005). Quoted in book synopsis at: <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4386504-the-sitting-swing>. See also Lilianne Desjardins, Nancy Oeklaus, and Irene Watson, *Rewriting Life Scripts: Transformational Recovery for Families of Addicts* (Life Scripts Press, 2010).

⁸ Uses of "toxic afterlives": Jeffrey Herf, "Hate Radio: The long, toxic afterlife of Nazi propaganda in the Arab world," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Nov. 22, 2009); Terence Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives: Crossing Cultures from Goethe to the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford UP, 2011); George R. Trumbull IV, "On Piracy and the Afterlives of Failed States," *Middle East Research & Information Project*, Vol. 40 #256 (Fall 2010); Jon Mooallem, "The Afterlife of Cellphones," *New York Times Magazine* (January 13, 2008).

⁹ Yasunari Kawabata, *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

¹⁰ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP, 1985).

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Towards Processing Arabic Minimal Syllable Automatically

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to try to treat the Arabic minimal syllable automatically, so as to use Arabic in the field of artificial intelligence. To this effect three technological tools are used; *Gold wave*, *SFS (Speech Filing System)*, and *Neural Net Works* to recognize automatically the minimal syllable located in first, mid, and final position of three Arabic words recorded by forty Algerian speakers of different age and sex. Eight experiments have been done in this work where the sounds have been recorded in Gold wave and treated in SFS and trained in NNW. The result show that The optimal neural net work is that of *non- ordered data* with one layer, five nodes and 150 steps because it has given an error rate of 0.0032. The findings suggest the application of this type of neural net works in all syllables and all languages too because the same principle can be used in all languages.

Key words: Arabic, minimal, syllable, Gold wave, SFS, Neural Net Works

Introduction

It is unreasonable to ignore the importance of rapid changes resulting from globalization whose octopus hand tries to cover both of micro and macro fields and technological process in particular, therefore should accept and cope with these changes so as to serve Arabic language, its community, and to solve problems such as human-machine communication. This paper treats how to process Arabic minimal syllable automatically, and there is no doubt that the motives behind this work are the sharp deficiencies of the Arabic language as far as computer sciences are concerned, and the problems that Arabic language faces nowadays with regard to globalization which tries to put it back in the black despite its large number of words, its users and its system in terms of flexibility and exactness. So English became the turbine engine of globalization, while Arabic loses its share in some Arabic countries and is even neglected by its speakers and researchers as well who do not endeavour to develop it as English researchers do. So, is this neglect due to its complicated system, or to other different reasons?

In this research we would justify that:

- Arabic is a flexible language
- Its limited number of vowels can help easily in automatic speech recognition

The main purpose of this experiment is to treat the Arabic minimal syllable automatically, so as to use Arabic in the field of artificial intelligence. In this account we try to identify limitations that point the way to this research relying upon the aforementioned technological tools as means of recognition.

A brief sketch of the outline can show two parts; a theoretical side and practical one. The theoretical side deals with speech recognition, intelligence, and neural net works. The practical side, however, contains syllable, types of syllables in Arabic, corpus, informants, syllable in question, automatic treatment, result and a conclusion.

1. Speech recognition

Speech recognition can be viewed as a communication problem between man and machine, that is, machine tries to recognize a word sequence pronounced by a speaker whose speech production process is very complicated and goes through some stages; the brain first generates the text which is composed of word strings, then goes to the acoustic process where converted into audible wave form (WuChou,A ,2009p.14) In other words, an analog signal is converted into an acoustic signal or digital one to get classified decisions, or a variable stimulus is transformed into a constant response. (Plomp.R, 2002 p.94)

Speech recognition is an inverse operation which starts from the speech wave form and ends in decoding a message. It is a mechanism able to decipher speech signal coming from the vocal tract or nasal cavity represented in a sequence of linguistic units found in the message that the speaker wants to transmit (Rabiner.L & Juang.B.H, 1993p.4).

The final goal of automatic speech recognition is communication between man and machine. The interaction has known many applications due to the rapid growth of devices and technological programmes (Peinado.A. M,2002p.1). Automatic speech recognition requires knowledge of many fields such as signal processing, acoustic phonetics, patterns recognition, communication, theory of information, and physiology.

2. Intelligence

No exact definition is found for the word intelligence, however some attempts were made to clarify the term. It is the ability to reason in relation to the solution of a new

problem (Gutman.R.D,2009p.55). There are a lot of types of intelligence which can be summarized into seven forms of knowledge; linguistic intelligence, mathematical and logical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, kinesthetic bodily intelligence, personal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. (Brown.D.H,2007p.100)

As for artificial intelligence, it can be said that it is the reproduction of all types of human intelligence in computational programmes (The Hutchinson Encyclopedia,1999). The goal of artificial intelligence is to simulate human intelligence. The idea came after having investigated tremendous fields such as medical field and noticed the work of the human body and the brain in particular, and understood the process of language therefore dealt with natural language processing.

2.1 Neural Net works

It is a challenge nowadays to understand the human brain's work. It is undoubtedly that the best way which can enable us to investigate data processing in the human brain mathematically and computationally is the modelisation of the neural net works. They can be defined as a mathematical system which contains processors similar to the brain's cells. They contain a set of nodes that gather input from different sources then send them to other nodes which in their turn resend them to other nodes. They can get very complex input and represent them in a very simple output. They contain three layers; input layer, output layer, and a hidden layer in between, where each processor is in contact with another one throughout synapses (The Hutchinson Encyclopedia, 1999). They represent many mathematical models of human brain's functions such as: comprehension, calculation and memorization. There are many different types of neural net works, however they have same four basic attributes summarized as: a set of processing units, a set of communication, a computing procedure, and a training procedure (Tebelskis.J, 1995 p.28).

3. Syllable

No definition is completely satisfactory for the term syllable, but any attempt at a definition should take into consideration that it is a prominence peak surrounded by a cluster of consonants, however sometimes syllable boundaries are put aside and the question whether some peaks such as / s/ in stop or in other words are not considered as syllables are to be avoided (San.D, 2008 p.36) . Another definition states that syllable is related to chest pulse but does not refer to syllable boundaries, more simply put Gimson notes that the double chest pulse does not seem clearly in the word *seeing* [si:m] and the pulse theory cannot decide whether the word *beer* [biə] contains two syllables in American pronunciation. This question generates some doubts on whether syllables are linguistic units or not. Chomsky, Halle, Steriade, Gimson, Belvins do not consider them as phonological units (Duanmu.S,2008) Despite all this, syllable appears clearly in some cases; for example people agree that the word Canada entails three syllables, in contrast the word America comprises four syllables (.Tebelskis.J,1995)

3.1 Syllable in Arabic

Syllable in Arabic always starts with a consonant and ends either with a vowel, called the open syllable, or with a consonant, called the close syllable. This means that the word in Arabic never starts with a consonant cluster, whatever the manner of consonant is. The following example is a good demonstration of the point. (*uktub*) is the imperative form of the verb "to write" and is impossible to say (*ktub*) because the Arabic phonological system rejects consonant cluster, so we

brought the **hamza** which stands for the vowel /u/. The same thing can be said for the Greek word (**platoon**) which has become (**Aflaton**) in Arabic and the French word (**franc**) which has changed into (**Ifrange**) (Henry.F, 2007p.43)

Generally speaking, the syllable is an association between a consonant/s and a vowel/s. Roman Jakobson defines the syllable as a group of structure which encompasses two associated phonemes whose degree of aperture is different; one of a smaller degree and the other of a bigger one. (Abdelouhab.H,1984p.27). Amber Crombie, however, argues that speech hinges upon breathing, and air exhaling is similar to pulsation; each muscle contraction resulting from the air pressure forms a chest pulse, and each chest pulse in its turn forms a syllable. The pattern of chest pulses is the basis of human language. (Mubark.H, 1997p.65)

A number of source said that the dividing speech into syllables goes back to the period where Arabic language was an oral language and relied only on the listening process to transfer literature and arts (Rumani, 1976p.60). Aljahid, one of the Arab grammarians, used the term syllabification which means segmentation of speech. He stated that the sound is a device of speech whose role is syllabification and connection (Aljahid, 2002p.79).

3.2 Structure of Arabic syllable

Syllable is a combination of a consonant and a vowel which goes on a par with the system of each language in forming its syllable structure. It relies upon the respiratory rhythm. The minimal syllable in Arabic is formed by one consonant followed by a short or a long vowel; this means that a sequence of two consecutive consonants is unacceptable except in case of pause.

The syllable in Arabic never starts with two consonants or a vowel, this is why syllables in all languages consist of vowels as centers preceded or followed by consonants in spite of the differences that exist between languages over the location of consonants, but in some cases syllables may be formed without a vowel .The Czech words are a good demonstration of the point:(**prno**, **vltava**) where these syllables consist of consonants only.

One third of the studied languages use consonants only to form syllables (Claude.H, 1997p.24) German and English are among those languages but Arabic is excluded from that since its phonological system rejects two consecutive consonants. The German word (**abend**) is pronounced /**abant**/ in careful speech, where as in connected speech is pronounced (**abnt**) or (**abmt**), likewise English words **bottle** and **button** are pronounced /**bntl**/,/**batn**/with the omission of schwa vowel and sometimes the syllabic consonant appears as a result. (Peter.R,1991 p.106)

3.3 Types of syllables

According to (Kaddour.A.M,1999), there are five types of syllables which are as follows: minimal syllable, closed long syllable, open long syllable, long syllable closed with a consonant, and long syllable closed with two consonants.

3.3.1 Minimal syllable, it consists of a consonant and a vowel. It is a meaningful linguistic unit, and consists in prepositions e.g. bi (by), fi (in), li (for)...etc.

3.3.2 Closed long syllable, it consists of a consonant, a vowel and a consonant.eg. *mithl* (like) min (from) bal(rather)

3.3.3 Open long syllable, it consists of a consonant and two vowels .e.g. *maa* and *haa*
Two forms related to the pause.

3.3.4 Long syllable closed with a consonant, it is made up of a consonant, two vowels, and a consonant e.g. *kaan* (was)

3.3.5 Long syllable closed with two consonants, it is composed of a consonant, a vowel, and two consonants e.g. *karb*, *fadl*.

4. Data base

Arabic language contains 28 consonants, and 6 vowels; 3 long vowels represented in three consonants *waw*, *ja* and *alif*, and 3 short vowels represented in three diacritic marks *fathat*, *dammāt* and *kasrat*. The list of consonants starts with the /ʔ/ sound known as **hamza** and ends with the /j/ sound. To get a simple unit one short vowel is added to a consonant e.g. (b+a), by contrast to get a complex unit many combinations are made as shown above in types of syllables. It should be noted that the data is tabulated below. As for the words selected for study, they are three words containing the minimal syllable/ **ʔa**/ located in first, mid and final position and were recorded by 40 speakers then segmented and as a result 120 syllables were obtained. Table 1 and table 2 may show this clearly

5. Syllable's Recognition Using Neural Net Works

In order to process sound, three fundamental phases should be taken into account; Pre-Treatment, Treatment and After-Treatment phases. In the Pre-Treatment phase, words are recorded (known as speech prior analysis) over a microphone, and then segmented into syllables to process the sound. It is the starting point which helps in automatic treatment. Then move to the next phase known as treatment phase where an analog signal is converted into a digital one in order to get the spectrum known as the identity card of the sound because it contains numerical values, that is, frequencies, amplitude, and periodicity. After that, we move to the final phase called after-treatment phase where characteristics of the signal are injected in the neural system as an input e.g. formant1, formant2, formant3, formant, periodicity, and amplitude, then try to train the system to make an association between input and output.

It should be noted that the process of recognition requires some symbols to codify data so as to be comprehended by the machine using neural net works. The code of this data is represented into letters and numbers. The letters used for code are: A, h, d, m, g and f. A represents the minimal syllable known as **hamza** in Arabic and a short vowel, the (**h**) stands for (*homme*), the (**d**) means (*debut*), that is, the beginning, the (**m**) means the medial syllable, and the (**g**) means *garçon*. While the letter f has two representations; one means final and the other means femme (woman). As for the numbers, they represent speakers. Tables 3 shows the words that were recorded by 40 informants of different sex and age; 10 men, 10 women, 10 boys, and 10 girls. Then segmented to have the minimal syllable referred to as **hamza** and the short vowel(a) located in first, mid and final position.

As indicated in Table 4 and 5, numerical values concerning referential and test samples are displayed for the process of recognition. We mean by referential sample input and output of minimal syllable located in first, mid and final position. Input encompasses numerical values of formants, amplitude and period, while output represents the recorded sounds. Training neural net works to recognize sounds requires three things; frequency of formants, amplitude and period which are put in the upper layer as nodes, then connected to a hidden layer which is connected to a lower layer that represents output.

Table1. Vowels

<i>Number</i>	<i>Arabic written form</i>	<i>Latin written form</i>	<i>phonetic transcription</i>
short vowels			
1	◌َ	DAMMA	u
2	◌ِ	FATHA	a
3	◌ِ	KASRA	I
Long vowels			
1	◌ُ	WAW	u:
2	◌ِ	ALIF	a:
3	◌ِ	YAE	i:

Table1 shows the types of vowels in Arabic, number of vowels, Arabic written form, Latin written form, and phonetic transcription as well. The first part of the table concerns the short vowels, while the second part regards the long vowels. The number of short vowels is three which are: *DAMMA*, *FATHA*, *KASRA*, and stand for the sound [u], [a], and [I] in English.

Table 2. Minimal syllables

<i>Number</i>	<i>Arabic written form</i>	<i>Latin written form</i>	<i>Phonetic transcription</i>
1	◌َ	a	/ʔa/
2	◌ِ	u	/ʔu/
3	◌ِ	I	/ʔI/

Table 2 displays three minimal syllables that contain a consonant known as *hamza* and a vowel represented in diacritic marks (َ). The three syllables are regarded as short vowels in English (a, u, i), but in Arabic as glottal stop and a vowel.

Table 3. Syllables

Word	Phonetic transcription	First syllable	Medial syllable	Final syllable
أمر	/ʔamara /	/ʔa/		
ثأر	/əaʔara/		/ʔa/	
قرأ	/qaraʔa/			/ʔa/

Table3 shows the three recorded words in Arabic, أمر, ثأر, and قرأ, that contain the minimal syllable /ʔa/ in first, mid, and final position, and their phonetic transcription as well. They are written in Arabic and transcribed according to the International Phonetic Association.

Table4.Referential samples

Sound	F1	F2	F3	F4	Amp	Per
Ahd1	658Hz	1076Hz	2668Hz	0Hz	0.1566dB	0.0001667
Ahm1	641Hz	1037Hz	1692Hz	2504Hz	0.2608dB	0.0001667
Ahf1	580Hz	928Hz	1621Hz	2633Hz	0.2602dB	0.0001667
Ahd2	775Hz	1882Hz	2152Hz	0Hz	0.1835dB	0.0001667
Ahm2	768hz	1202Hz	2231Hz	0Hz	0.0946dB	0.0001667
Ahf2	700Hz	1115Hz	2144Hz	0Hz	0.2168dB	0.0001667
Ahd3	683Hz	1038Hz	1359Hz	2269H z	0.1609dB	0.0001667
Ahm3	721Hz	1195	2480	0Hz	0.1600dB	0.0001667
Ahf3	801Hz	1098Hz	1986Hz	0Hz	0.2894dB	0.0001667

Ahd4	659Hz	1154Hz	2445Hz	0Hz	0.1632dB	0.0001667
Ahm4	625Hz	1025Hz	1649Hz	2489Hz	0.1912dB	0.0001667
Ahf4	640Hz	1069Hz	2660Hz	0Hz	0.1635dB	0.0001667
Ahd5	670Hz	1140Hz	2714Hz	0Hz	0.1306dB	0.0001667
Ahm5	698Hz	1204Hz	2640Hz	0Hz	0.1632dB	0.0001667
Ahf5	652Hz	1014Hz	2696Hz	0Hz	0.1628dB	0.0001667
Afd1	775Hz	1182Hz	2152Hz	0Hz	0.1840dB	0.0001667
Afm1	768Hz	1202Hz	2231Hz	0Hz	0.0949dB	0.0001667
Aff1	700Hz	1115Hz	2144Hz	0Hz	0.2194dB	0.0001667
Afd2	803Hz	999Hz	1649Hz	2541Hz	0.1245dB	0.0001667
Afm2	823Hz	1087Hz	1536Hz	2549Hz	0.1251dB	0.0001667
Aff2	898Hz	1387Hz	2340Hz	0Hz	0.1274dB	0.0001667
Afd3	792Hz	1132Hz	1534Hz	0Hz	0.0972dB	0.0001667
Afm3	896Hz	1525Hz	0Hz	0Hz	0.0972dB	0.0001667
Aff3	835Hz	1399Hz	0Hz	0Hz	0.1603dB	0.0001667
Afd4	717Hz	1058Hz	1454Hz	2520Hz	0.2603dB	0.0001667
Afm4	835Hz	1020Hz	1510Hz	2644Hz	0.1312dB	0.0001667
Aff4	796Hz	1065Hz	1339Hz	2645Hz	0.1953dB	0.0001667
Afd5	875Hz	1462Hz	2625Hz	0Hz	0.1962dB	0.0001667
Afm5	813Hz	1002Hz	1520Hz	2638Hz	0.1286dB	0.0001667
bAff5	871Hz	1419Hz	2571Hz	0Hz	0.2577dB	0.0001667
Agd1	683Hz	1038Hz	1359Hz	2269Hz	0.1600dB	0.0001667
Agm1	721Hz	1165Hz	2480Hz	0Hz	0.1603dB	0.0001667
Agf1	801Hz	1098Hz	1986Hz	0Hz	0.2899dB	0.0001667

Agd2	911H	1257Hz	2225Hz	0Hz	0.1563dB	0.0001667
Agm2	564Hz	1550Hz	2520Hz	0Hz	0.1872dB	0.0001667
Agf2	646Hz	918Hz	1255Hz	2180Hz	0.2214dB	0.0001667
Agd3	537Hz	1127Hz	1654Hz	2051Hz	0.1878dB	0.0001667
Agm3	541Hz	1032Hz	1658hz	1818Hz	0.1560dB	0.0001667
Agf3	653Hz	983Hz	1352Hz	2299Hz	0.2275dB	0.0001667
Agd4	853Hz	1096Hz	1584Hz	2411Hz	0.1953dB	0.0001667
Agm4	763Hz	1243Hz	1635Hz	2528Hz	0.1291dB	0.0001667
Agf4	785Hz	1215hz	1782Hz	2416Hz	0.2539dB	0.0001667
Agd5	688Hz	972Hz	1347Hz	2631Hz	0.1918dB	0.0001667
Agm5	660Hz	903Hz	1460Hz	2595Hz	0.1600dB	0.0001667
Agf5	743Hz	905Hz	1271Hz	2605Hz	0.1606dB	0.0001667

Table 4 deals with the characteristics of the sound such as formant1, formant2, formant3, formant4, period, and amplitude which are all injected in neural net works during the training phase except for period which is the same for all the sound, therefore is discarded. It worth mentioning that there are five formants with regard to speakers, however formant 5 is missing because there are no nasal neighbouring sounds in the aforementioned Arabic words. Formants are places of resonance that are classified from low to high and are larynx, pharynx, back part of the mouth, front part of the mouth, and nasals, and amplitude is the maximum movement away from the place of rest. (Connor.J.D.O,1973).The table also shows numerical values that concern the formants of the first group of speakers which consist of 20 participants and were asked to pronounce the syllable /ʔa/ which is regarded as a sound in acoustic phonetics. The numerical values mentioned in table 4 concern each participant pronouncing /ʔa/ in first, mid and final position of the word i.e., each speakers utters the syllable three times. This can be displayed according to the following symbols: A, h, d, m, g and f, where A represents the minimal syllable, (**h**) represents adult speakers (*homme*), (**d**) means (*debut*), that is, the beginning, (**m**) means syllable located in mid position, and (**g**) means *garçon*, where there are two groups; boys and girls. As for the letter f, it is used to represent two things; final position and female adult speaker (*femme*). Finally numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are used to represent speakers.

Table5. Test samples

Sound	F1	F2	F3	F4	Amp	Per
Ahd6	796Hz	1239Hz	2206Hz	0Hz	0.2603dB	0.0001667
Ahm6	733Hz	1213Hz	2627Hz	0Hz	0.1320dB	0.0001667
Ahf6	747Hz	1143Hz	2684Hz	0Hz	0.2278dB	0.0001667
Ahd7	714Hz	1075Hz	2028H	0Hz	0.1638dB	0.0001667
Ahm7	672Hz	1085Hz	2054Hz	0Hz	0.1652dB	0.0001667
Ahf7	565Hz	1552Hz	2505Hz	0Hz	0.2275dB	0.0001667
Ahd8	663Hz	1134Hz	2326Hz	0Hz	0.1641dB	0.0001667
Ahm8	602Hz	1037Hz	2374Hz	0Hz	0.1353dB	0.0001667
Ahf8	602Hz	1037Hz	2374Hz	0Hz	0.1359dB	0.0001667
Ahd9	670Hz	1068Hz	1750Hz	2641Hz	0.1600dB	0.0001667
Ahm9	661Hz	1088Hz	2543Hz	0Hz	0.0998dB	0.0001667
Ahf9	632Hz	976Hz	1689Hz	2634Hz	0.1312dB	0.0001667
Ahd10	714Hz	1209Hz	2474Hz	0Hz	0.1635dB	0.0001667
Ahm10	691Hz	1167Hz	2329Hz	0Hz	0.1910dB	0.0001667
Ahf10	642Hz	994Hz	1498Hz	2315Hz	0.1626dB	0.0001667
Afd6	466Hz	1210Hz	1659Hz	0Hz	0.1635dB	0.0001667
Afm6	502Hz	1217Hz	1681Hz	0Hz	0.2280dB	0.0001667
Aff6	661Hz	1030Hz	1580Hz	2477Hz	0.1970dB	0.0001667
Afd7	777Hz	1082Hz	1604Hz	2528Hz	0.0966dB	0.0001667
Afm7	946Hz	1581Hz	2692Hz	0Hz	0.1280dB	0.0001667
Aff7	687Hz	969Hz	1491Hz	2562Hz	0.1009dB	0.0001667
Afd8	691 Hz	971Hz	1387Hz	2475Hz	0.1280dB	0.0001667
Afm8	599Hz	880Hz	1448Hz	2815Hz	0.1632dB	0.0001667
Aff8	505Hz	1009Hz	1260Hz	2522Hz	0.1973dB	0.0001667

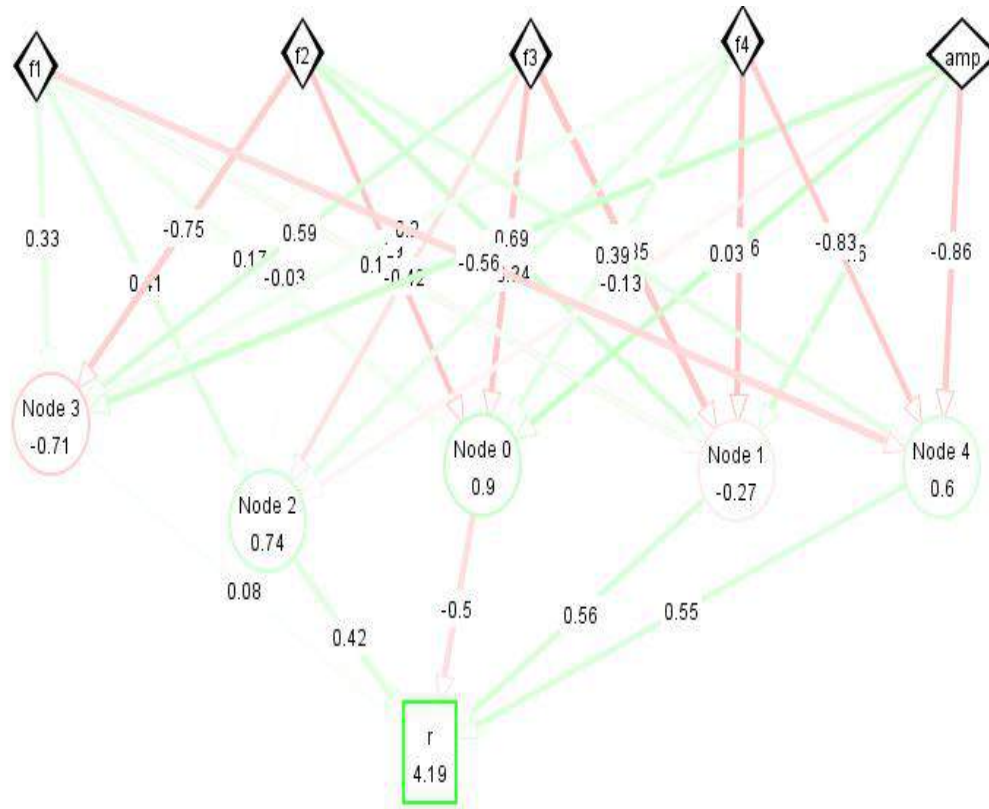
Afd9	815Hz	1053Hz	1540Hz	2601Hz	0.1956dB	0.0001667
Afm9	849Hz	1384Hz	2610Hz	0Hz	0.1312dB	0.0001667
Aff9	858Hz	1428Hz	2706Hz	0Hz	0.1629dB	0.0001667
Afd10	1020Hz	1461Hz	2366Hz	0Hz	0.1944dB	0.0001667
Afm10	1041Hz	1599Hz	0Hz	0Hz	0.1312dB	0.0001667
Aff10	752Hz	888Hz	1308Hz	2351Hz	0.2278dB	0.0001667
Agf6	791Hz	983Hz	1353Hz	2274Hz	0.2545dB	0.0001667
Agd7	795Hz	1184Hz	1601Hz	0Hz	0.2231dB	0.0001667
Agm7	565Hz	1552Hz	2505Hz	0Hz	0.2228dB	0.0001667
Agf7	634Hz	1015Hz	1547Hz	2295Hz	0.2545dB	0.0001667
Agd8	873Hz	1074Hz	1497Hz	2377Hz	0.1289dB	0.0001667
Agm8	896Hz	1240Hz	1595Hz	2428Hz	0.1956dB	0.0001667
Agf8	801Hz	1028Hz	1235Hz	2269Hz	0.1312dB	0.0001667
Agd9	565Hz	1552Hz	2505Hz	0Hz	0.1635dB	0.0001667
Agm9	925Hz	1538Hz	2373Hz	0Hz	0.1317dB	0.0001667
Agf9	776Hz	1205Hz	1979Hz	0Hz	0.1915dB	0.0001667
Agd10	947Hz	1318Hz	2645Hz	0Hz	0.2205dB	0.0001667
Agm10	918Hz	1434Hz	2684Hz	0Hz	0.1439dB	0.0001667
Agf10	581Hz	887Hz	1191Hz	2513Hz	0.1919Bd	0.0001667

Table 5 is concerned with 20 other participants pronouncing the syllable of the Arabic words mentioned above. It shows numerical values of four formants and amplitude of the sound (syllable). Symbols are also used to represent the syllable; located in first, mid, and final position, and are similar to those shown in previous chart, however numbers representing speakers are different because they represent another group of speakers which consists of 5men ,5women,five boys, and five girls.

Table6. Types of Neural net works

<i>NNW with ordered data</i>				
Number of NNW	Number of hidden layers	Number of nodes in hidden layer	Number of steps	Error rate
1	1	2	150	0.9783
2	1	3	150	0.9703
3	1	4	150	0.9791
4	1	5	150	0.9791
<i>NNW with non- ordered data</i>				
Number of NNW	Number of hidden layers	Number of nodes in hidden layer	Number of steps	Error rate
5	1	2	150	0.0074
6	1	3	150	0.0060
7	1	4	150	0.0047
8	1	5	150	0.0032

Table 6 displays the eight types of NNW used in our experiment; four types with ordered data, while other four with non-ordered data. The left column displays numbers of the NNW which are eight. The column where number 1 is repeated eight times indicates that the eight NNW contain one hidden layer, whereas column which contains numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 concerns the number of nodes of the hidden layer. The column where 150 appears eight times stands for the number of steps used in each attempt to get the result. Finally the last column shows the error rates of each experiment.

Figure1. Design of Neural Net Works

150 Steps .Error rate 0.0032

Figure 1 represents the design of the neural net work that consists of three layers; an input layer, an output layer and a hidden layer in between. The input layer contains five nodes where the first four nodes represent the place of resonance of the sounds known as formants in acoustic phonetics, while the last node represents the amplitude of the sound. The output layer contains only one node that concerns the result. As for the layer in between, it comprises five nodes called processors that deal with mathematical operations. It should be noted that the five nodes of the input layer are constant i.e., the input layer comprises five characteristics only; formant1 (F1) formant2 (F2) formant3 (F3) formant4 (F4), and amplitude (Amp), however numerical values of these characteristics (formants and amplitudes) are variable, because data base contains 40 speakers and three syllables i.e., 120 units (syllables) of five characteristics each, therefore 600 characteristics are injected in the programme of Neural Net work.

Data Analysis

Training the neural net works for syllable recognition have gone through many experiments represented in eight NNW as shown in table 6; four neural net works with ordered data, while four others with non ordered data. The reason behind these experiments is to demonstrate which one can bring better results; As for NNW with ordered data, they encompass neural net work number 1 which consists of one hidden layer, two nodes, 150 steps and the error rate is 0.9783, neural net work number 2 of one hidden layer of three nodes 150 steps and error rate of 0.9703. Neural network number 3 of hidden layer of four nodes, 150 steps and error rate 0.9791. Net work number four, however, of one hidden layer of five nodes, 150 steps and error rate of 0.9791.

As regard neural net works with non ordered data, they contain NNW number 5 which comprises one hidden layer of two nodes, 150 steps and error rate 0.0074, NNW6 with one hidden layer of three nodes, 150 steps and error rate 0.0060. NNW number 7 with one hidden layer of four nodes, 150 steps and error rate of 0.0047, and NNW number 8 with an error rate of 0.0032, one hidden layer five nodes and 150 steps. The optimal NNW is net work number 8 with one hidden layer five nodes and 150 steps and error rate of 0.0032. because it represents the appropriate net work chosen in our work as indicated in Figure 1

The overriding thing to mention is that results that are related to error rates show that neural net works with non-ordered data proved to be efficient compared to neural net works with ordered data, because they provide an error rate of 0.0032 which is a very satisfying rate according to specialists. Hidden layer with five nodes also proved to be significant, because error rate changes in neural net work number 5 with non -ordered data compared to neural net work number 4 of the same rank.

Conclusion

To wrap it up, this research was an attempt to recognize Arabic minimal syllables automatically. It hinges upon three technological tools; Gold Wave, SFS and Neural Net Works, for processing because it is a technical work. It dealt with speech recognition which was used as a platform for the research, then talked about intelligence, types of intelligence and, neural networks, and then moved to syllables because they are the core of the research., syllable in Arabic, the structure of syllable in Arabic and syllable's recognition using neural net works were presented afterwards since one type of Arabic syllables was processed. The goal of this paper was to treat Arabic minimal syllable, so as to use Arabic in the field of artificial intelligence. It was through a modest experimentation, where the three aforementioned technological tools were used hinging upon the stratified random sample represented in 120 samples after being recorded by 40 Algerian speakers who were first divided into four groups, then were chosen randomly with different age and gender. The optimal neural net work is that of non-ordered data base, it consists of one layer, five nodes and 150 steps, because it has given a satisfying error rate and worked better than that with ordered data, in addition the principle of automatic recognition of one syllable is the same for other syllables and same even for other languages though different in their phonological system. To conclude we may say that Arabic phonological system is flexible and can be used easily in the field of artificial intelligence because of its limited number of vowels which can help in doing many combinations with consonants. And as a suggestion, firstly we recommend the use of SFS in sound processing because it is better than MATLAB in the sense that MATLAB requires a special training from the part of researcher while SFS does not

and secondly, the application of NNW with one hidden layer of five nodes and with non ordered data, because it can provide a good result in speech recognition. Finally it can be said that despite the great effort devoted to this humble research, it is considered as a first step to recognize one type of Arabic syllables automatically called minimal syllable, however much work still needs to be done for automatic recognition of all the types of syllables to expand the knowledge base, so that computer specialists will be able to join them and convert Arabic speech into manuscript.

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Saadallah Wannous: From Existentialist to Activist

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Abstract

Like many of his contemporaries, Saadallah Wannous, a Syrian prominent playwright, demonstrated great appetite for politics, but whether this is a healthy appetite remains a topic for debate. Wannous was one of the major Arab playwrights who shook the conventional Arab theatrical ground off its feet. Most critics identify three stages of his work: the Existential poetic beginning, the progressive political middle-stage, and the self-questioning final-stage. For my paper, I discuss the first two stages as I look at *The Glass Café*, from the first stage and *The King's Elephant* from the second. The suffocating absurd sense of the first play that seems to advance the audience into an imminent ending collides with and complements the sense of political activism and the urgency to “do something” of the second. Thus for this paper, I track the existentialist and later the militant qualities in Wannous’ work both as a reflection of his own private philosophical growth and the general atmosphere of a crumbling Arab world of the time.

Keywords: Arabic drama, Arab theatre, Wannous, existentialist theatre, epic theatre

Saadallah Wannous: From Existentialist to Activist

To write about Saadallah Wannous in this particular time of Arab political and cultural life is a painful task. Not only did Saadallah Wannous' vision of Arab political and social reform fail, not only did his dream of an Arab theatrical renaissance plummet, but he himself was abandoned, lost to the Arabs and thus to the whole world.

Saadallah Wannous, famed Syrian playwright, director, and theorist, was born in the village of Haseen Albahr, Syria, in 1941. In 1959, he completed his undergraduate studies and headed to Egypt to study journalism at Cairo University. There he was exposed to the strongest theatrical movement in the Arab world at the time, mostly led by Egyptian dramatists and theorists. He immersed himself in the theatrical works of European and American playwrights which focused on existentialism and the absurd. Soon, he started writing his own plays in Arabic in the early 1960s, greatly impacted by existentialist writers such as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. The existentialist dogma thus marks the first phase of Wannous' theatrical journey, during which he wrote a number of short, one-act plays that subject the Arabic dilemmas of the sixties to the universal questions of that time.

Wannous' second phase was marked by an incident that represented a crossroad to almost all Arabs in the sixties. It was the defeat of 1967, known as the June War, which brought Wannous and his contemporaries back to more realistic grounds looking for answers that could ease the pain of that horrific defeat. Wannous, shattered and shocked, found solace in the works of Socialist theorists and playwrights such as Peter Weiss and Bertolt Brecht, thus committing his second phase as a playwright to the socialist approach, which took theatre to be an active battlefield rather than a passive elitist stage.

However, in the late seventies and throughout the eighties, Wannous fell silent. He felt a denial from the audience who only sought entertainment that helped them forget their agonizing reality, as did all serious dramatists of the time. Margaret Litvin (2011) states that by 1976 "Dismay spread through theatre communities in Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere in the Arab world. Many writers went into exile" (p. 141). She explains that although there were a number of factors that might have contributed to this decline such as lack of funding and immigration of writers, still "the lull in production points to playwrights' and directors' basic uncertainty about the purpose of drama. Veiled allegory and direct talk had each run their course, and political justice was no closer. Why should the rest not be silence" (p. 141). Thus, hurt and defeated on both the theatrical and political levels, Wannous thought it best if he said nothing. "His silence in the eighties," says Manal Swairjo (1996) "was another realistic endeavor, in which withdrawal was his defense against the increasing commercialization of theatre and television" (para. 24). This silence, Swairjo further explains, "was his way of facing defeat, not only in war but also in his project of politicization" (para. 12). Thus, with the collapse of the project theatre-politique, the third and last phase of Wannous' theatrical journey started. He came back to the literary Arabic scene in the early 1990s after thirteen years of reassessment and contemplation. Granted, he came back no less political, but also much more individualistic. Of this period Wannous, quoted by Swairjo, says

In the past, ... I used to think that personal suffering and the problems of the individual were issues of a superficial nature and that they should be avoided in writing. ... However I no longer think of the theatre hall and the audience while writing. This allowed me the freedom to borrow from the novel, the art of individual writing ... the role of the intellectual became less fanciful and more realistic in my eyes. This role which

I now believe to be no more than critical, is far more effective than indulging in daily political concerns or preaching packaged ideas and fancy slogans. (para. 13)

Certainly, during the last seventeen years of his career, Wannous succeeded in freeing himself from the audience's dominance, focusing more on the individual character. In his 2001 article on Wannous, Ali Alsouleman states that during the last phase of Wannous' career, his characters "became individual human beings, structured not only according to social reality or an ideological perspective, but to psychological, ontological, and sexual realities" (para. 7). In addition, Alsouleman asserts that the concept of truth "no longer equated reality" (para. 9). Truth became questionable and was "examined within social reality but according to the individual approach of each character" (Alsouleman, para. 9). These two principles of individualism and relative truth, Alsouleman further affirms, "form the principal motif in all (Wannous') plays of the 1990s" a motif that focused on the uncertainty of all previous certainties (para. 9). In this paper, I look at the first two phases of Wannous' theatrical writing (for the vast third is worthy of an independent study itself) discussing two of the most well-known plays from these periods: *The Glass Café* (1966) and *The King's Elephant* (1969), both one-act plays deliberately chosen in a close frame of time so as to show the quick but subtle shift in Wannous' dramatic approach, a shift that reflected the political trauma that befell the Arab intellectual of the time. For this purpose, I examine Wannous' plays through the basic theories of Jean Paul Sartre and Bertolt Brecht, trying to trace the existential and the social flavors in these plays mixed with that authentic Arabic cultural tang never lost in the playwright's work. Thus, this will be my attempt at tracking the existentialist and later the militant qualities in Wannous' work both as a reflection of his own private philosophical growth and the general atmosphere of a crumbling Arab world of the time.

Fatme Sharafeddine Hassan (1996) asserts that "despite his interest in and knowledge of Western literature, Wannous ... worked on producing a theatre that reflects the peculiar needs of an Arab audience" (para. 4). Thus to Wannous, a theatre is no luxury, it is a necessity, a pleasurable, informative necessity as well as a dangerous proactive one. At the early stage of his work, Wannous believed that theatre should be rooted in culture, answering to the needs of its particular audience. Toward the middle phase, Wannous was inclined to view theatre as a dynamic entity, always with soul, always with dogma. To this extent, Hassan quotes Wannous as the latter asserts that "no theatre should be without an ideology unless it does not want to be effective in society and it declines reaching the moment of deep interaction with the audience" (para. 4). In commemoration of Wannous' keynote speech celebrating the International Day of Theatre in 1996 (Wannous was the first Arab to be chosen for this mission), the staff of *Aljadid* Journal produced an article that presented parts of that speech: "theatre will remain the ideal forum in which man ponders his existential and historical condition. The characteristic that makes theatre a place unparalleled is that the audience breaks out of their wilderness in order to examine the human condition in a collective context." (para. 2). For the purpose of questioning the existential and historical conditions by means of a stage that is a "condition" of society as Wannous words it, he rooted his earlier work in Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy of what is and why "to write" or rather "to create" in general. This particular approach is strongly evident in Wannous' earlier work, as he journeyed to explore the existential meaning of his relationship, as human and writer, to the world.

In his article "What is Literature? Why Write?" Jean Paul Sartre (1949) states that "one of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in

relationship to the world” (p. 1200). This universal search is evident in Wannous’ *The Glass Café*, as the play ends with what seems to be an apocalyptic event in projection of the Arab dilemma of the time and its global effect. However, and despite this universal flavor of the play, the essentiality of the audience is evident to the reader. Wannous, in *The Glass Café* as in all of his earlier works, evokes the strong Sartrean vision of identifying and then establishing a relationship with one’s audience (a vision Wannous came to abandon later on) for according to Sartre, “it is we who have invented the laws by which we judge [creative work], it is our history, our love, our gaiety that we recognize in it” (p. 1200). The “we” Sartre speaks of refers to both writer and audience, as “[i]t is the joint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind” (p. 1202). Wannous wrote with universal approaches to a very specific audience, demanding attention and desiring change. It is as Sartre indicates: “to write is to make an appeal to the reader that he lead into objective existence the revelation which I have undertaken by means of language” (p. 1203). This was specifically the mission of Wannous at that stage: to appeal to the audience to bring into existence what he started on stage.

If one wants to “visualize” the idea of *The Glass Café*, one should look at Vincent Van Gogh’s *The Night Café*; the capturing of that painting’s quintessence in Wannous’ text is uncanny: the suffocation, the depression, and the sense of the end of the world. The play brings together a number of men in an Arabic coffee shop, as an original shop of the kind was usually an exclusive men’s gathering-place, with the focal point being the table of the two characters Jassem and Unsi. The play opens with a description of the café with walls that are “made of thick glass stained a light yellow, indicating age and neglect,” and another of the customers with “sameness in their faces; these faces seem to have undergone a slow change that has erased all individual differences and given everyone the same flat look.” Wannous further presses that description of the overpowered spirits of the men: “lost eyes behind eyelids without lashes add to the faces a dry expression, an emptiness. All these drooping features are pervaded by an air of profound forgetfulness and silent dissipation” (p. 413). Wannous hoped this sense of defeat would plead to the Arab reader’s own associations, “trapping” them, as Sartre puts it, into certain feelings. “Words are there like traps,” Sartre states,

to arouse our feelings and to reflect them towards us. Each word is a path of transcendence; it shapes our feelings, names them, and attributes them to an imaginary personage who takes it upon himself to live them for us and who has no other substance than these borrowed passions. (p. 1203)

Throughout the play, Jassem and Unsi play a game of backgammon, Jassem “is totally absorbed in the game” and Unsi “is obviously unable to concentrate” (p. 413). The two characters drift apart throughout the play, each into his own world: Jassem into the game and Unsi into his distractions, which are manifested on stage at the end with a seemingly apocalyptic event.

One year separated the greatest Arab defeat in history from the writing of this play. Fear and anticipation dominate the atmosphere of the play, with “hubbub,” described as “chaotic and dissonant,” resonating throughout the course of events, as if drumming the big catastrophic finale Wannous predicts and depicts at the end (p. 415). In a very Sartrean manner, Wannous tries to ignite the imagination of the spectator which has, Sartre asserts, “not only a regulating function, but a constitutive one. It does not play; it is called upon to recompose the beautiful object beyond the traces left by the artist” (p. 1204). Yes, the aim is to encourage the imagination to recompose

that “beautiful” object, and for an existentialist like Sartre, the paradox is evident, or is it? It might not be so, for Sartre sees beauty in the freedom granted by the act of writing and then the act of reading. “Reading is creation,” Sartre asserts, “my freedom does not only appear to itself as pure autonomy but as creative activity, that is, it is not limited to giving itself its own law but perceives itself as being constitutive of the object” (p. 1209). Thus, to Sartre, freedom seeks to “manifest itself”, leaving a creative work to be defined as “an imaginary presentation of the world” (p. 2011). Consequently, “there is no ‘gloomy literature,’ since, however dark maybe the colours in which one paints the world, one paints it only so that free men may feel their freedom as they face it” (p. 1211).

Wannous’ *The Glass Café* is not happy, but it is not gloomy either, it is very much an open text that invites interpretation and understanding both of which could lead to a painful realization, one that is willed, and thus one that is, in a Sartrean sense, beautiful. The conversation in the play is nonrepresentational and yet strongly confrontational. In brief reoccurring dialogues between the Waiter of the café and the Owner, Master Zaza, we are informed, in a number of ways, that the Waiter’s mother “finally blew up” (p. 416). Master Zaza’s initial reaction is “I despise blowing up and all the people who do it” (p. 416). However, this reply does not stop the Waiter from coming back to the subject over and over again: “yesterday she blew up. Her body was covered with boils, and her face was congested and ready to explode” (p. 416). And again:

Even now, Master Zaza, I can hear her voice, as she imitated the sewing machine – it was terrifying! She was crying – or maybe she was laughing – I’m not sure of anything – except that it was a weird, frightening voice. It reminded you of darkness, and nightmares, and spirits lurking in the shadows. (p. 425)

With the strong Sartrean sense of reader-liberation and existential private understating of the world, one dares not provide an interpretation of the incongruous dialogue. However, the political atmosphere of the 1960s provides itself as potential grounds for interpretation, introducing the Waiter’s mother as the past, the loaded history that keeps working its “sewing machine” only to inevitably blow up at the end, leaving essential questions lingering and unanswered.

These short eerie conversations interlace with others no less eerie themselves. Jassem and Unsi play a game of Backgammon that, from Unsi’s posture, seems to be one of life or death. In their opening conversation, we hear them speak of two men, Abu Fahmi and Khartabil Nahlawi, both dead now, after losing the game, Nahlawi to Abu Fahmi and then Abu Fahmi to Unsi himself. Unsi is fearful throughout, “he swallows his words and rolls the dice” as he is “continuing to play, mechanically, while worry becomes more evident in his gray eyes” (p. 415, 420). Jassem on the other hand is presented to be confident and even aggressive. In the middle of a heated discussion about the game, Unsi suddenly asks Jassem “How are things with your children Jassem?” to which Jassem gives a lengthy answer: “My children! I’m not the sort who worries about his children’s problems! I know the right way to deal with *them*. (Inflated.) Spare the rod and spoil the child. We mustn’t indulge them or they’ll drag us into endless problems and stupidities. I like things to be in order. That’s why I won’t tolerate any anarchy or deviation.” (p. 419). The obvious insinuation here is of the then current patriarchal dictatorships that governed Arab societies as subjects, children, unaware of their own good, imbeciles incapable of rational, responsible behavior. Unsi, anticipating a possible reaction, comments: “But – how do I explain this to you? (He hesitates.) Don’t they look at you with strange eyes sometimes? Eyes full of

unfathomable mystery?” (p. 420). To this Jassem asserts his authority: “When I enter the house, they need to feel the earth tremble under their feet. Who dares look me in the face?” (p. 420). Through Unsi and Jassem, Wannous creates sides on the question of authority. He “managed to grant his audience the chance to make moral judgments and openly take sides on issues even before leaving the theatre hall. Their participation was, thus, evaluative and critical, often turning the show into a small-scale social phenomenon” (Swairjo, para. 11). However, for the audience of *The Glass Café*, the situation is dire and the decision is one of life or death as is reflected in the game of backgammon Unsi and Jassem play. As the play progresses, the audience will feel the accumulating pressure to make a decision, viewing a catastrophic ending on the horizon of the drama.

So Wannous wants his audience to make a decision! But how? Sartre asserts that “what the writer requires of the reader is not the application of an abstract freedom but the gift of his whole person, with his passions, his prepossessions, his sympathies, his sexual temperament, and his scale of values” (p. 1206). It is in this inclusive sense of judgment that Wannous hopes his readers indulge. For this purpose, he offers them Unsi’s take on fatherhood:

He’s my son. It was a long time since I’d thought of him. That’s what’s so hard to bear. He was just absent, like a distant memory – like a wife – like the paint on the front door – but – (His voice trembles.) There he was in front of me, only a tile’s distance between us – he was breathing quite calmly – but in his eyes there was a pagan look – as though threatening me – no, not that – maybe reproaching me – no it wasn’t reproach – it was like a whipping – like poison. (p. 421)

The threatening image is intended and, a few lines later, intensified as Unsi informs Jassem that his son “grew – and grew . . . swelling and swelling” until he “concealed” him (p. 421). He remembers the two dead men; he references their bursting, which draws to our mind the bursting of the Waiter’s mother, closing up with a terrifying sentence “they just burst, with no warning” (p. 421). At this point, the audience discovers that they are in a death trap, and before they can emotionally react, Master Zaza “smashes his palm on the glass. His eyes sparkle, he lifts his hand and looks at it. The flea is squashed on a finger” (p. 422). At this moment, the action of the play accelerates, the motion has started; doom’s day is almost here. Immediately after the flea is crushed, “at a table in the middle of the café, a customer’s head falls on his shoulder, completely still” (p. 422). The other customers start shouting “Dead – dead – dead”, and except for that, there is “no reaction or change . . . on the customers’ faces. Their features are too deeply set to be moved at events” (p. 423). The only person reacting is Unsi, a reaction that will consequently lead to a similar fate. Had he chosen not to recognize the “event,” it would not then have essentially happened. After all, it is us, through our consciousness, according to Sartre, who create relation with and thus moral judgment toward the world around us. We bring the world to life as we experience it, otherwise, “earth will remain in its lethargy until other consciousness comes along to awaken it” (Sartre, p. 1200). Thus, Unsi, through his apprehension and fear, establishes a relationship with death, awakens a monster that only he, by willing ignorance of the situation and disregard of his emotions, can kill.

The disposability of the customers resonates like a curse. Right after the Customer’s death, the rest of the customers “all sit and return to their games. Even at the dead man’s table another man now occupies the empty chair, and the games continue” (p. 424). When the Waiter vocalizes the “incident” declaring “We’ve lost a customer, Master Zaza,” Zaza coldly replies

that “[p]lenty of customers have died and the shop’s still teeming with them” (p. 425). The authoritative voice of Zaza declaring the sheer disposability of the customers reflects the actual political scene of the Arab world at the time. Totalitarian regimes, under “fatherly” pretenses, were ruthlessly scolding the people, sometimes using the increasing fear toward the Israeli enemy and other times exploiting the hope for an Arab nationalistic union that would bring all together and sustain victory. To that end, the individual was replaceable and disposable all in the name of the great cause. At this point of the play, once the reader identifies with Unsi and recognizes his fears as not only common but very much legitimate, Unsi starts to lose the backgammon game.

Hassan talks about the cultural authenticity of Wannous’ theatre as ingrained in Arabism and thus very relevant to its intended audience. She asserts that Wannous “is known for his advice to fellow Arab playwrights to utilize their knowledge of the audience’s viewing habits while creating theatre” (para. 7). Every theatrical move Wannous creates, aims at effective change assumed by the audience, and for that purpose, says Hassan, “he focuses his attention on devising the best techniques that allow the audience to react to the events and the message” (para. 5). The backgammon game is part of the Arab recreational habits of the time. Every Arabic man plays it, everyone understands not only the rules of the game, but also the significance of these rules and the magnitude of the final result. The win is a celebration of the whole café, and the defeat is brilliant material for all to scoff and jeer, no hard feelings, it is just the public nature of the game. Wannous uses this familiarity of the game, making it a focal point in the play around which all the incidents revolve; the game is yet another “technique” that should help the audience “react to the events and the message” (Hassan, para. 5).

According to Sartre, a work of art is a “directed creation” that is an “absolute beginning.” Therefore, Sartre explains, this work of art is “brought about by the freedom of the reader, and by what is purest in that freedom. Thus, the writer appeals to the reader’s freedom to collaborate in the production of his work” (p. 1203). Wannous appeals to that sense of freedom in his readers to establish an atmosphere of the exact opposite: suffocation. When the Waiter asks Master Zaza “what day is it?” the question brings about an explosive answer, one that reveals Zaza’s imminent sense of danger, that of the freeing of the café’s customers. An intended paradox is revealed in Zaza’s answer that manifests itself between the readers’ sense of freedom and the customers’ eternal imprisonment as Zaza exclaims

What are you asking me? What do you mean by this insolence? What kind of obscenity is this? “What day is it” (Unsi takes notes and listens, pale-faced.) *Of!* I must keep quiet about this. You layabout, you criminal, I *thought* you were changing! First a suspicious word or two – then you come and ask me – no I won’t allow – I might tolerate a few stupidities – but I will *not* allow such silly questions to creep in among us. This treachery! You know very well what’s forbidden here. You know the rules of the job – and still you – no – don’t let me – (p. 427)

Zaza’s desire to imprison the customers in an everlasting game of backgammon is vindicated through a fatherly sense of protection, one that conforms to the attitude of the patriarchal Arab governments of the time. “That’s all we need” says Zaza, “to hang calendars on the walls and terrorize our customers with the ticking of clocks” (p. 427). Time, a daunting concept indeed to characters stripped of any power of will, becomes a trap in this play, a dimension that leads to nowhere. Wannous, in order to free his readers, traps his own characters, threatening the whole

concept of their existence as will be made clear through the terrifying ending of the play. Sartre states that

One cannot address oneself to freedom as such by means of constraint, fascination, or entreaties. There is only one way of attaining it: first, by recognizing it, then, by having confidence in it, and finally, by requiring of it an act, an act in its own name – that is, in the name of the confidence that one brings to it. (p. 1204)

Wannous treads the Sartrean path of attaining freedom as he creates recognition, attempts to conquer the audience's confidence and finally arouses not only their desire but also their dire need for it as an act.

This recognition comes about as Unsi starts to obsessively ask the question “what day is it?” Left without an answer, Unsi realizes the first sign of the end as “he sees a small pebble bang against the glass, quite softly.” As Jassem declares “well, I’ve beaten you,” Unsi declares “a stone fell on us, I saw it shudder the glass walls.” To this statement, Jassem moves away from Unsi to another spot leaving him “in the grip of terror, agitations and desperation.” Now another pebble falls and “Unsi is the only one who sees and hears it.” The Waiter tries to calm Unsi down as the latter exclaims “we can’t ignore what’s happening to us – someone’s belting us with rocks – and still no one moves a muscle.” Unsi asks the question of the source of danger that Wannous wants his audience to invite to the scene: “who are they? What do they want?” driving that audience to doubt all their preconceptions, as Unsi declares “everything we suppose to be fixed and certain could collapse and rot away” (p. 427-429). However, none of the café’s customers seem to realize the catastrophic incident. Even Jassem, to whose friendship Unsi appeals, demotes the event to the backgammon loss Unsi suffered. In a final long monologue, Unsi implores the customers:

we can’t let what we’ve built collapse on top of us . . . Oh God! Everything was so quiet - time passing peacefully – as if it wasn’t passing at all . . . We’ll die! We’ve died already – we *are* dead – look, friends! (The Glass cracks.) The walls are cracking! Get up for just one second – we must try – we must support each other . . . It’s stupid to go on as we are – won’t you come out of your apathy? Let’s do something, anything. (p. 430-431)

The café’s customers seem to be totally hypnotized as Unsi “runs about among them, repeating what he did with Jassem – turning each head toward the glass wall then releasing it . . . As he releases each head, it turns to its original position, frozen, frowning” (p. 431). Unsi realizes a crowd to be throwing the pebbles, his son among them. He calls on the Waiter’s attention to listen, the Waiter acknowledges the sounds that are “like seconds passing”. Finally we realize the violators: they are the violated, people who have exploded in the past, and their pebbles are nothing but the seconds passing. The ending of the play comes pregnant with an ending: Unsi is carried away through “the side door where the coffin disappeared”, crying words that “echo softly until the curtain falls” saying: “everything’s crumbling – it’s crumbling – it’s crumb -” (p. 432). Through these last words of Unsi, Wannous charges his audience, hoping to awaken them to their horrifying reality of collective impotence, to the slaughtering of the Arab awareness that takes place through plummeting people into the routine of their daily renderings. Wannous screams in his *Café* but to no avail, displaying a pessimistic view, which is often introduced in Wannous’ drama as a warning rather than a real surrender to the circumstances.

Alsouleman talks about Wannous’ perception of truth and the way he introduced it in the early stages of his writing:

In the pre-1980s phase, reality was based on certainty. This certainty controlled and characterized the two major dualities in the dramatic world, the duality of the ruler and the ruled and the duality of the stage and the audience. Wannous did not question the nature of this truth, but instead explored how it could be brought to the stage and presented to the audience in such a way that there was no doubt about it. (para. 8)

Wannous, in his *Glass Café*, seemed very certain of that duality, emphasizing the responsibility of the “ruled” equivalent in this context to that of the “audience.” This responsibility manifests itself in the freedom that should be sought after by the “ruled” and as such the “audience.” For according to Sartre, “the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject – freedom” (p. 1212). Wannous, early on in his career, desired that freedom as a subject of his writing, for, as Sartre words it, “the freedom of writing implies the freedom of the citizen. One does not write for slaves” (p. 1212). Wannous sensed the core connection between his freedom as a writer and his freedom as a citizen; this immensely politicized job obtains its power from the principle of the free citizen, while at the same time the citizen is free and freed only when this dangerous job is protected. To this end Sartre states

The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen. A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus, however you might have come to it, whatever the opinions you might have professed, literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are committed, willy-nilly. (p. 1212-1213)

The battle never seized for Wannous and he lived as an activist through his pen, totally convinced that the theatre can serve no better job than being a political arena in which ideas are shaped and from which change begins. For Wannous, a theatrical performance, Alsouleman states, “was a social and political event aimed to create a dialogue with the audience in order to increase its awareness of the political condition and the collective reality of the individual” (para. 6). This dialogue became meager for Wannous in the next phase of his theatrical career and life in general. A dialogue was not enough; an action has to stem from the performance, one that aims at real effective change.

In closing his keynote speech of the International Day of Theatre 1996, Wannous states “we are doomed by hope, and what takes place today cannot be the end of history” (*AlJadid* Staff, para. 7). Wannous was certainly “doomed with hope” all his life, the hope that transformed him and transferred him to the post 1967 phase. It was only hope that could have salvaged the spirits of those who continued to exert themselves after 1967, as they maintained their dreams of a true reformation of Arab regimes and an actual deliverance from the defeat of that wretched year. Wannous, like many Arab intellectuals of the time, was urged to move from the reserved sense of existentialism toward the more active sense of communism and socialism, pressed by the urgency of the political state of the time. Arab contemporaries of the time, particularly young nationalist men who saw in Jamal Abdunnassir a savior, maybe more a mystic redeemer, who was going to pull the Israeli knife out of their Arabic wounded dignity, felt that a transition was mandatory following what they felt was a horrendous defeat of 1967; for them it was time to renounce the existentialist Sartreian dark view that dominated the Arab academic and political scene for a more active and vigorous role, for a dynamic stand whereby they stop complaining about the absence of a solution and turn toward creating one.

Bertolt Brecht's concept of the Epic theatre came to perfectly answer Wannous' search of an active stage. Brecht (2004) explains that an epic theatre is one that leads to critical action, bringing the stage and its audience to life. It is a theatre that instructs, entertains, but most importantly, it is a theatre that invokes the flame of action. The spectator of an epic theatre, no longer a passive viewer who surrenders his emotions and thus his judgment to the characters of the play, is a real and effective participant. To this extent Brecht affirms:

The dramatic theatre's spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too – Just like me – It's only natural – It'll never change – The sufferings of this man appall me, because they are inescapable – That's great art; it all seems most obvious thing in the world – I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatre's spectator says: I'd never have thought it – That's not the way – That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The suffering of this man appall me, because they are unnecessary – That's great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh. (p. 920)

It is that unthinkable which Brecht wants to bring to the theatrical table, the sense of abhorrence that obliges the spectator to sarcastically deal with pain in an attempt to conquer it, thus the laugh at the weeping and the weep for the laughing. In the epic theatre, the spectator says "it's got to stop" thus constructing judgment and initiating action. To this end, Brecht invites a sense of estrangement to his stage. He insists on the importance of the alienation of both actor and spectator, for, actors should abstain from "going over wholly into their role, remaining detached from the character they were playing and clearly inviting criticism to him," and as such a spectator "was no longer in anyway allowed to submit to the experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play" (p. 920). Brecht believes that through inviting both actor and spectator to remain detached, the actor will become more inviting of the spectators' criticism and the spectator will be less partial on account of excess of emotions. "The production (of an epic theatre) took the subject-matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation," Brecht asserts, "the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up" (p. 920). Thus it is the force of habit, Brecht confirms, that slaughters the ability to understand and thus affect change. "What is 'natural' must have the force of what is startling" says Brecht, "this is the only way to expose the laws of cause and effect. People's activity must simultaneously be so and be capable of being different" (p. 290). It is that "startling" effect that Wannous sought out in the Brechtian theatre, an effect he hoped would awaken the defeated and shattered Arab masses of the late 1960s.

During these gruesome years, and with the triggering of "the Arab defeat of the 1967 war against Israel," Swairjo states, "political Arab theatre was borne" (para. 7). Indeed, the defeat of 1967 came to stab the Arab sense of nationalism in the heart; nevertheless, it "resulted in the creation of a new level of awareness among artists and intellectuals, particularly toward the government-controlled press and its infiltration of popular culture" (para. 7). To this effect, Litvin states that

The June War shifted the vocabulary and goals of Arab drama. Beyond the military humiliation at Israel's hands, many Syrian and Egyptian writers recorded their sense of outrage at the discovery that their own governments had lied to them. The lack of democratic openness was seen as a key reason for the Arab countries' dismal military

performance. Many recalled the extravagant assurances, long after the decisive battles had been lost, that victory was imminent . . . These governments neither wanted told the truth nor wanted to hear it. What was the point of sending them gently coded messages? (p. 117)

Thus, the Arabic press of the time was on trial; the media had participated in heightening the level of agony for the Arab masses as the radio of Cairo, the most respected among Arab media sources, continued to declare and assert the Arab's victory and the destruction of the Israeli army, particularly their air forces, over and over again. The news of the defeat-to-come hit hard, leaving the masses shattered and the intellectuals swarmed with feelings of betrayal and guilt: betrayal of the ideology and guilt toward the blind-sighted masses; they should have known better. As such, the political theatre was the answer for the intellectuals as well as the masses of the time. To this effect, Litvin explains that

the 1967 defeat fundamentally altered Arab conceptions of political theatre's role. A well-developed high culture was no longer enough to guarantee the world's respect—indeed, it began to look like an impediment. Psychological interiority was no help: what mattered was not to deserve agentive power, but to seize it. Disappointed in their regimes, dramatists stopped addressing subtly allegorical plays to the government; instead, they appealed directly to the audiences, trying to arouse them to participate in political life. (p. 114)

Thus, Wannous' attention shifted directly to the audience, toiling to activate their interest in a role bigger than that of the spectator. However, this whole shift in movement “could not but make use of the experiences of Western political dramatists,” only Wannous, as he dived into the project, never lost sight of his original audience and of the deeply rooted conventions of Arabic theatre (Swairjo, par. 70). In 1969, Wannous called for an Arab festival for Theater Arts in cooperation with a number of playwrights to be held in Damascus, introducing his “theatre of politicization,” as a substitute for the traditional “political theatre.” Swairjo explains that Wannous “intended theatre to play a more positive role in the process of social and political change. . . . Theatre was the battle he chose to fight at a time when conventional political and military wars were being lost” (para. 9). Wannous will live to see this project fail. He will, starting in the early 1980s, retreat from all public life with a broken heart for thirteen years before coming back with a new spirit and a new plan, only for death to take him away from reaching his impossible dream.

Wannous wrote his play *The King's Elephant* on the very same year of the festival's commencement. The play came as a shriek, a slap on the face, a harsh awakening for the masses, numbed in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat. At that time, Wannous, like many Arab intellectuals of the day, found refuge in the principles of Socialism. He soon took interest in the Socialist theories of Brecht and those of his epic theatre, though never losing sight of the distinctiveness of the Arabic theatre and its audience, resolving to “techniques of the early pioneers of Syrian theatre, such as Abu Khalil Alqabbani and Maroun An Naqash” (Swairjo, para. 16). Whereas the techniques and the many theatrical elements of Wannous were in essence Arabic, the ideological foundation was very much Brechtian. “From Brecht,” asserts Swairjo, “Wannous extracted for his own work two points: first, a well-defined mission for theatre that changes the world rather than simply explains it; and second, Brecht's vision of the role of history in determining fate” (para. 16). That desire for change which develops from the lessons of history is clearly evident in

Wannous' *The King's Elephant*. In his endeavor to set that change in motion, Wannous starts from a focal Brechtian principle: that of the alienated character. Through that sense of estrangement with which Wannous tries to saturate the play, the events of history, distant and not so very distant, become lucid, and once history is comprehensible, as per the Brechtian theory, an innate desire for change strongly surfaces, a desire that stems from anger, despondence, and a tremendous sense of dread. For this purpose, all of the male and female characters of *The King's Elephant* are numbered rather than named; intentionally robbing them of any individualistic sense. The characters speak in jumbled voices, and when they come to individual lines, they ejaculate words in a mechanical style. Every now and then, a unique sentence is uttered, but no sooner, the words are either covered or muttered over by the surrounding crowd, stripping them from any sense of coherence. The play starts with a lament of a grieving destitute crowd, coming from an alley "with tumbledown houses, miserable and covered with filth" (p. 434). The crowd exchanges condoling cliché sentences on the yet another death of one of their children under the feet of the king's elephant. When Man 4 sums up the news: "a beautiful little child, crushed by that huge elephant of the king's," Man 3 elaborates that this elephant "trumpeted the way he always does, then he charged, and the boys panicked and ran off in all directions. But al-Fahd's son tripped and fell, ... The elephant rushed up to him and trampled him" (p. 435). The crowd continues to ask for God's help and mercy as they relate the incidents. The conversation, short and fragmented at the beginning, starts to convey some substance as it advances. Man 5 admits: "the men were terrified. No one moved until the elephant had gone away" and Woman 3 asserts: "no one dares to speak" (p. 436). This sentence initiates a dangerous conversation led ironically by the women:

Woman 2: Your life isn't safe any more, or your livelihood either.

Woman 3: And no one dares say anything.

Man 3 & Man 5: Say something?

Man 4: The women are going off their heads.

Man 2 (shaking his head): As if you can say something, just like that.

Man 4: She doesn't know what she's asking.

Man 3: It's the King's elephant, woman! (p. 436-437)

This objection stemming from terror does nothing but further dilute that terror, leading to more criticism of the elephant:

Man 5: I've never seen a lot of elephants in my time. Every king's had one. But I've never seen an elephant so vicious and arrogant as this one.

Man 8: Every day brings some new misery. All brought by this elephant.

Man 3: Careful what you say.

Man 4 & man 5: It's the King's elephant.

Man 7: And the king loves his elephant.

Woman 3(sobbing): What about us? Don't we love our children? (p. 437-438)

This conversation brings the play to a new level of self-examination, as the characters tread on red lines and infringe upon the unspoken. It is at this point that the personal becomes political.

Tony Kushner (1997) discusses the idea of "the personal" as it is employed sometimes to blind the masses; he states:

Everything is personal; everything is political, we are trained to see the personal, the psychological (although our psychological understanding is usually pretty unsophisticated). We are less able to see the political; in life, as in art, much energy is

devoted toward blurring the political meaning of events, or even that events *have* a political meaning. (p. 22)

Much of that blurring Kushner speaks of occurs at the beginning of Wannous' play, as people ascribe the incident to other reasons such as the child being "unlucky" as described by Woman1, or on account of fate, an idea confirmed by Man 5, who upon hearing the character of a little girl, introduced as simply "Girl," objecting to putting a child in a large coffin, says: "there are coffins for old and young" (p. 536, 437). Furthermore, the incident at that stage is described as "a tragedy" (436) by Man 2, a description that, according to Kushner, undermines the crime, inviting tears instead of rage, the latter being the sensible reaction to a crime. Kushner states: "'tragic,' like 'natural,' is one of those rhetorical dead ends that stops the mind from reaching to the full awfulness and criminality of an event. The correct response to tragedy is tears, not rage" (p. 22). Wannous does not allow the tragic to take over, for very quickly and following the verbal demur above, ending with a comparison between the king's love for his elephant and the people's love for their children, the character of Zakaria makes its first appearance.

Zakaria is the only named character in the play. With his debut, the personal immediately shifts to the political. He addresses the people despite their "fear and alarm" with the personal in their life that is truly only political: "don't we have enough troubles already? Poverty, misery-" (p. 438). To that, the people start to account for all the misery in their lives:

Man 11: Injustice. Forced labor.

Man 2: God knows –

Zakaria: Disease.

Man 12: Hunger.

Zakaria: Taxes beyond what we even earn.

Man 5: God knows!

Man 7: You could go on for ever about the things we have to put up with.

Zakaria: And now, on top of everything, comes the elephant. (p. 438)

It becomes evident to the characters, at this point, that the systematic decline of their life is no coincidence as they start to relate certain "tragedies" to their origins as crimes. As a socialist, Wannous makes use of people's expressions of faith in the play to demonstrate their abandonment by God and thus their dire need to look after themselves. The many unanswered pleadings for God's mercy and forgiveness are also reminiscent of Wannous' existential approach which is made evident in Zakaria's conversation with the people:

Man 5: Patience is the gateway to salvation

Zakaria: But how much longer can we be patient?

Voices (mingled, one after the other): Until God sends us His mercy.

Zakaria: We'll be dead before that comes. We've had enough of poverty.

...

Voices: Lord forgive us! God's will be done. Eyes see what hands can't reach. Leave it to God, the most compassionate and merciful.

Zakaria: No! – It's past endurance now.

Man 3: Past endurance or not, what can we do?

Zakaria: Act. (p. 440)

Wannous' existentialist inclination is shown here through the lines of Zakaria, as he points out God's abandonment of people: "we'll be dead before that comes," highlighting the collaboration between the political and religious institutions in building up people's miseries. "It's past endurance now" declares Zakaria, announcing an alteration in Wannous' dramatic approach. It is

the last word in the above conversation, the word “act” that completes the shift of Wannous, the existentialist playwright, to the realm of Brechtian socialism.

In pointing out how the theatre “began to be instructive,” Brecht states that “oil, inflation, war, social struggles, the family, religion, wheat, the meat market, all became subjects for theatrical representation” (p. 920). However, theatre does not stop there, Brecht asserts, for “the theatre became an affair for philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished not just to explain the world but also to change it” (p. 920). Zakaria tries to engender that desire (or rather dire need) for change in the people. However, his approach, despite its boldness for the town’s people, can still seem a little awkward to the Western reader. Zakaria’s plan is to “go to the king together. We’ll tell him our grievances, about all the harm we’re suffering. We’ll beg him to stop his elephant harming us any more” (p. 440). This plan takes two things into consideration: first the fact that this is the town people’s first attempt at any objection, and second the Eastern view of the ruler as some sort of divinity that calls for a devout approach. Wannous does not make a martyr of Zakaria, but a possible Arabic hero, one who speaks the language of the masses and to whom they can relate. However, once an initial plan is set, people start to remember inflated stories about the elephant:

Man 3: They say when he leaves the palace, or goes back in, the royal band plays.

Man 9: Whatever he wants, he gets by right. Whatever he does, it has the force of law.

Man 5: The King nearly divorced his wife. Because she wasn’t nice enough to the elephant. (p. 441)

Zakaria tries to use logic to defuse these stories asserting that people are “blowing things out of proportion” and that the King’s servants who spread such stories only do so because “it’s part of their job” (p. 441). He also uses other hypotheses to ease people’s fears: “and who knows? Maybe the king doesn’t realize what his elephant’s doing to us” (p. 443). Wannous here points at a level of public apprehension that is mostly created by the many years of oppressive hegemony that leads to total public paralysis. He thus uses Zakaria to disrobe the myth that is an accumulation of centuries, demonstrating the Arabic battle of the time against the myth of that “elephant in the room” no one wants or is able to logically address.

The principle of morality is very evidently under interrogation in the play. Brecht states that “it is not only moral considerations that make hunger, cold and oppression hard to bear” (p. 922). According to him, the function of theatre is not merely “to arouse moral objections to such circumstances . . . but to discover means of their elimination” (p. 922). To Wannous, emerging with his fellow Arab intellectuals from the crushing defeat of 1967, the question was not merely of the moral but also of the rightful. These young intellectuals of the time sought not the mercy of the rulers, as was the earlier convention, but their own dignity as citizens which can only be realized in a just and liberal system. Through the character of Zakaria, we hear of the principle of the right of the citizen, of the finally vocalized desire for change, as well as of the need for collective effort. Throughout the rehearsal, people’s voices go in unison and then become inharmonious; reflecting the doubts and fears within a public that struggles to speak out. The plan is for Zakaria to shout “the elephant, lord of all time” (p. 446) and for the rest of the crowd to shout back one of the elephant’s crimes. This collective method of speaking, observant of the Socialist spectacle of the time, is the only way, Wannous seems to say, that can guarantee the public’s safety and success. However, the disarray of the town’s people foretells a gloomy ending, one that will come as a shock even to the broken and dispirited audience of the time.

The class distinction between the destitute public and their king is magnified as the crowd approaches the king’s palace. “Everyone is struck by a mounting sense of awe and fear,” says

Wannous in his stage directions, as the people's voices sing their own deprivation: "we'll soon have a sight of the splendid throne. It's making me weak at the knee. What a hall! My heart's pounding. Look at the carpets. The walls are glittering like sunlight" (p. 447-448). Zakaria, the Arabic hero, gives the people his final instructions: "we'll show we know how to behave in front of the king. Won't we? We must be totally courteous. We'll enter in perfect file, bow respectfully, then submit our complaint to the king" (p. 448). Through the words of his own hero, Wannous criticizes the Arabic revolutionary mentality, one that still hopes, out of fear, to find middle ground with its oppressive ruler. The progression of the incidents only testifies to Wannous' critique of the Arab insipid hero of the time. The "commons of the city," when permitted to see the King, become immediately motionless in their fear: "the faces freeze, and their fear turns to chilly silence. All the heads, including Zakaria's, are bowed. They stumble on, bowing as low as they can, unable to stand up straight again" (p. 448-449). Zakaria, after a period of silence releases his call "the elephant, lord of all time!" only to be answered with "tremulous" words (p. 449). Zakaria repeats his sentence, more steadily every time, only to be answered with the same fragmented words. The only person attempting to give a clear reply albeit "in a low voice" is the Girl who is stopped by her mother from finishing her sentence (p. 449). Zakaria "desperate now, turning to the bowed, panic-stricken bodies", repeats his call to no avail. As a consequence to this abandonment, he moves toward the king and "in a most skillful and accomplished fashion" he declares:

We love the elephant lord of all time. We love and cherish the elephant, sire, as you yourself do. When he walks in the city, our hearts fill with delight. We're happy indeed to see him – so much, sire, that life without him is unimaginable now. And yet, Your Majesty, we mark how the elephant, by reason of his loneliness, fails to receive his due share of happiness and joy. Loneliness is a wretched state, My Lord; and so we, your loyal and loving subjects, come to you today to beg that you will find the elephant a wife, a consort to relieve his loneliness – in the hope that, then, he may have scores, no hundreds, thousands, of offspring, to fill the entire city. (p. 450)

Zakaria's speech seems to deliver a punishment to the languid group as well as reveal the dangerous deficiency in the then-current notion of the hero. Zakaria was impulsive, naive in his expectations, and above all uncertain about his own goals; a portrait of a hero that was not uncommon within the active Arabic opposition of the time. To that effect, Litvin explains that although the 1967 defeat aroused the dramatists' calls for the public to participate in political life, it was Jamal Abdul-Nasser's death in September 1970 that "added a dark subtext to such calls" as his image as a hero who stood for liberalism and democracy was also dying; he lied to the public, and he resorted to the same oppressive methods he claimed to battle (p. 114). This decline of the beloved leader led the then twenty-eight year old Wannous and his fellow young writers to lose faith in the idea of a savior and to draw a dark ending to their heroes who surely cannot be superior to or meet a better fate than that of Nasser's. Zakaria is thus lost to his people as he is "rewarded with the post of Resident Companion to the elephant," an insinuation of the hero-defector that was manufactured by the oppressive authority and the apprehensive public of the time (p. 450). The play ends with a lit stage, as the actors line up before the audience abandoning their characters and speaking the following line:

Group: That was the story.

Actor 5: Which we acted.

Actor 3: In the hope we can all learn a lesson from it.

Actor 7: Do you know now why elephants exist?

Actor 3: Do you know now why elephants breed?

Actor 5: But this story of ours is only the start.

Actor 4: When elephants breed, a new story starts.

Group: A violent, bloody story, which one day we'll act for you. (p. 451)

The abandonment of the characters toward the end is an ultimate celebration of the Brechtian method of estrangement; one that frees the actors from the characters' fears, permitting them a more active role in the reformation movement. The closing is conventional, but not so much so to the audience of the early seventies. This audience was struggling with many elephants awaiting their departure from the theatre. There was a dire need for a reaching out to that audience, for a direct dialogue. The play is dark, like all of Wannous' work of the time; its only anticipated hope lies in its calling for an active role of the audience, one that can affect real change.

According to Brecht, the moral is not enough to determine right and wrong, for it is often subjective and can be used to further oppress rather than relief. The moral should be decided in accordance with people's needs and for the purpose of their well being, but this is not the whole story. The moral can only be effective if it helped identifying its opposite, the immoral, for the purpose of its elimination. Thus, to Brecht, the epic theatre can be moral for as long as it uses the concept not only for the realization of the immoral, not only for the objection to it, but also for the purpose of changing it. Kushner questions the source of cruelty in life. All the horrific stories, he inquires, do they "speak about the cruelty of life or about the cruelty of poverty and racism?" (p. 22). This question is Brechtian in nature, for it is one that deals with the source of the immoral and hints at the creators of that immorality as well. Wannous realized that very subjective nature of the immoral in his play, as the problems of the town's people were presented to be very intimate to their own circumstances. The universal message is, however, that whenever the immoral is identified, it must be changed.

Swairjo states that calling for "a comprehensive dialogue between individuals as well as between nations," Wannous sees "theatre as a starting point for launching such dialogue, which could grow to include all nations and cultures of the world" (para. 2). Throughout his theatrical journey, starting from the existential search, on to the more concrete social and communist matter-of-fact approach, all the way to the individualistic, more psychological methodology, Wannous never lost sight of his founding ideology, never overlooked his real purpose of change, never drifted away from the path of his much anticipated final destination, a destination that sorrowfully, he never reached. Wannous tried, during the last few years of his career to free his writing from the pure political, and in this he found a freedom he never experienced before. Wannous continued to have a dream, only he realized that he cannot and should not alter that dream for his audience; he had to write freely, he needed to involve the personal; history needed to take a back step, opening the way for the individual in him; in that sense, and only in that sense, did Wannous realize his dream and free himself.

The two plays included in this paper are chosen to represent a stream of thought that was running through Arab academia during the ten years before and after the war of 1967. It was a time of existential desperation followed by another of active militarism that was to be directed not only toward the foreign enemy but at the enemy within, the totalitarian regimes and governments. Wannous' message, first pessimistic and existential, later a bit more optimistic and active, was very simple, maybe even a bit naïve for the twenty-first century reader, but it was

nevertheless not so simple at its own time, nor so different. He wanted to affect change, to move from the passivity of the existential stance to the proactive position of the social stance as exhibited by his two plays. Wannous' work will always stand as a reminder of a more hopeful time, a time long gone with all its hopes and aspirations for any real change.

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Teachers' ICT Practices: A Case Study of a Moroccan EFL Teacher

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Abstract

The teaching community in Morocco is exposed to pedagogical challenges in the wave of new technologies despite the efforts and the important investments of GENIE program (Programme de Généralisation des Technologies d'Information et de Communication). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine ICT (Information Communication Technology) practices of a Moroccan EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher so as to find out about EFL teachers' ICT beliefs and practices in the classroom. This paper relies on two methodological procedures; structured interviews with EFL teachers and the ELT (English Language Teaching) supervisor and participant observation through a qualitative case study. The findings show that the Moroccan EFL teacher's ICT practices are disadvantaged by an existing dissonance between technological and pedagogical exploitation of teaching activities. Moreover, the article explains that despite the teacher's advanced ICT skills, technology was not used appropriately as it did not reinforce pedagogical planning of teaching activities. More than that, technology was favored over pedagogy as it was used for its own sake in many parts of the demonstration lesson. Therefore, this article concludes with some recommendations which refer to the need of teacher ICT training which should not only focus on the acquisition of ICT skills, but also on the pedagogical use of new technology. Besides, the availability of digital resources and training teachers in the use of these digital resources is another determinant factor for effective ICT integration in teaching.

Key Words: Information Communication Technology; English as a Foreign Language; English Language Teaching; pedagogy and technology

1. Introduction

1.1 The statement of the problem

Similar to many domains like engineering, commerce and science, education is also exposed to the impact of new information communication technologies. Information technology does not only provide a set of new technological practices to education, but it has also given rise to new pedagogical approaches to both teaching and learning. All over the world, many countries adhere to this technological revolution as it promises quality education. In Morocco, for instance, ICT integration in education is given a lot of importance through GENIE program which was launched in 2005. This program aims to integrate information technology in education and sets four different axes for this purpose: The development of infrastructure, content, training and the development of ICT best practices (GENIE program web site). These axes are meant to enable Moroccan teachers to use Information technology and integrate it in their teaching.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine ICT practices of a Moroccan EFL teacher in order to find out about EFL teachers' ICT beliefs and practices in the classroom.

1.3 The Rationale of the Study

ICT integration in education is not simply a new trend which alters the outward surface of educational practices. It is rather a new technological advancement which promises quality education. This explains the huge investments of many countries throughout the world in this domain. The kingdom of Morocco is among these countries as it has invested a huge budget for the development of an ICT national program (GENIE program). Obviously, EFL educational practices are part of the Moroccan educational scene which must be investigated due to the importance of learning foreign languages in Morocco especially English. Moreover, ICT integration in teaching can only be measured through teachers' ICT practices.

1.4 Research Questions

Undoubtedly, ICT integration in education targets the main actors of education, teachers, whose practices are essential for effective ICT integration in education. Therefore, this paper focuses on teachers' ICT practices in order to answer the following questions:

- 1- How do EFL teachers perceive ICT integration in education?
- 2- How is information technology integrated in an EFL classroom?

1.5 The Organization of the Study

This article consists of an introduction, four parts and a conclusion. The introduction sets the general background of the article, prepares for its main concern, introduces its rationale and presents the research questions. The first part is devoted to a review of literature which focuses on the impact of new technology on education in many countries all over the world especially in the Arab world. Then, the review also focuses on the new roles of both teachers and students. Later, it refers to the problematic of teacher ICT training. The second part describes research methodology. The third part is devoted to data analysis. The fourth part discusses the major findings, suggests some recommendations and presents some limitations. Finally, this paper ends with a conclusion.

2. Review of Literature

The first part reviews the literature related to the impact of new technology on education in different parts of the world especially in the Arab world. Then, it focuses on the shift in both teachers' and students' roles. The last part of the review is devoted to the problematic of training. Nowadays, new technology operates in different domains and ICT practices are undergoing a process of normalization. In education, Pelgrum (2001) explains that "the current belief is that ICT is not only the backbone of the information society, but also an important catalyst and tool for inducing educational reforms"(p. 163). In this respect, many countries in the Arab world like Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan are concerned with the technological revolution in education. In Syria, for example, "the global adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) has been the landmark of the educational scene for the last two decades" (Albirini, 2004, p. 4). As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, it is among the countries which give importance to the integration of ICT in education in general and especially in the teaching of English as a foreign language (Alkahtani, 2001). In Qatar, the supreme education council introduces technology in education so as to improve it. In 1989, the Ministry of Education in Qatar launched the Computer Technology Center (CTC) which focuses on teacher training and the use of computers in administrations of all public schools (Al Ammari, 2004). In Jordan, king Abdullah II encourages the development of ICT in an attempt to make Jordan the IT center in the Middle East and in 2003, the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) project was launched to improve the educational system and especially to prepare young learners for the knowledge society (Abuloum & Qablan, 2008).

Concerning the impact of technology on education, Elder and Etta (2005) argue that "many new technologies are interactive, making it easier to create environments in which students can learn by doing, receive feedback, and continually refine their understanding and build new knowledge" (p. 155). So, ICTs shapes education and offers new teaching and learning opportunities. "The fundamental aim is to give the learners the opportunity to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, information literate citizens, knowledge managers and, finally, team members who are proficient in collaborating with others" (Ibid, 2005, p.163). This explains that new technology assigns new roles to students whereby they have more independence and more freedom in their learning. Barnet (1993) explains that technology encourages learners' autonomy as it directs their attention to some metacognitive strategies like planning, attention direction, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, etc. Undoubtedly, the use of ICT in the classroom influences learners who become more motivated and more engaged in learning.

It is very important to note that ICT has great impact on teachers' roles and practices as well. Nowadays, teachers are challenged in terms of their technical ability, knowledge, and expertise (Levin and Wadmany, 2008) in order to alter the old approach to education and offer new opportunities and insights to the learner. Thus, the old approach to education which is teacher-centered moves towards a new approach which is student-centered. That is to say, technology determines new roles for both teachers and students in a way to minimize teachers' control and maximize students' manipulation and ease of use. With the use of technology, teachers have less power over teaching practices and turn into monitors and facilitators instead of possessors and regulators of knowledge. This does not deny the importance of teachers at all; teachers' role is as important as it used to be except that it takes another dimension within the new era of new technology.

On the other hand, the role of teachers refers to the importance of ICT teacher training which is often problematic. In Greece, for example, teachers still find difficulties with new technologies

especially because ICT training institutions in Greece do not provide effective ICT training for teachers (Kiridis, Drossos and Tsakiridou, 2006). Concerning the United Kingdom, Watson (2001) describes the ICT policy as unclear and dichotomous and asks the following questions: "Is IT a subject in its own right, with a conceptual knowledge and skill base; or is IT a tool to be used mainly for the learning of other subjects?" (p. 253). Hence, if an ICT policy lacks a precise vision, as it has just been mentioned, it is very difficult to design a well-structured teacher ICT training program. On the other hand, it is also argued that effective training should happen at the level of educational ideas more than technological ones (Watson, 2001). That is to say, importance should not only be given to the acquisition of ICT skills, but also to the acquisition of new learning and teaching pedagogies which must accompany the use of new technology. In this respect, Chitiyo and Harmon (2009) argue that "integrating technology in education is not just a matter of having the necessary infrastructure however. To be successful, technology integration plans must insure that faculty are prepared to use technology effectively" (p. 809). So, effective use of technology is related to both technical and pedagogical manipulation of ICT infrastructure. However, this is far from being achieved not only in the Arab world, but also in countries which are expected to be leaders in information technology in education. In Ireland, for example, "the predominant use of the technology lies within discrete informatics subjects which tend to focus on learning about the technology rather than learning with it" (p. 1094). Likewise, Watson (2001) claims that "after many years of national policies and investment in Information Technologies in the UK and elsewhere, technology is still an imposed and novel 'outsider' in the pedagogy of schools" (p. 251). He explains that "...ICT skills and seeking and downloading information dominates computer use" (p.258).

So, it can be noticed from the aforementioned experiences that ICT integration in education is usually limited to computer access, and/or learning computer skills. The Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES) conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) refers to computer access as "a necessary but not sufficient condition for ICT-use in learning and teaching" and explains that "the impact of ICT-use on students appears to be highly dependent on the pedagogical orientation that teachers adopt in regard to that use" (Law, Pelgrum and Plomp, 2006, p. 275). Thus, teacher ICT training must not only focus on the acquisition of ICT skills, but also on the development of appropriate pedagogies for effective ICT practices in the classroom.

This literature review highlights the importance of information technologies in education in many countries especially in the Arab world. Then, it explains that both teachers' and learners' roles are transformed given that new technology brings about new responsibilities and duties. Finally, the review refers to ICT teacher training as a problematic issue in many countries.

3. Methodology

This part describes the methodological strategy used in this paper. First, it describes the overall research design. Then, it informs about setting, participants and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

This paper relies on a qualitative research method which is a case study. The case study is a demonstration lesson which examines ICT practices of an EFL teacher. Yin (2003) refers to a descriptive case study as the one which describes phenomena and the real life context in which they occur. So, this paper's case study can be characterized as descriptive as it describes a teacher's ICT practices in an EFL classroom in which they occur. Since case study methodology

is known as a triangulated research strategy (Ibid, 1997) which “provides stronger substantiation of constructs and hypotheses” (Meyer, 2001, p. 336), this paper relies on multiple data collection procedures which are participant observation and structured interviews with teachers and the ELT supervisor who attended the demonstration lesson.

3.1.1 Case study

It is very important to mention that this paper's research questions are best determined using a qualitative case study which is used as a unit of analysis. The case study is a demonstration lesson of an EFL teacher who was asked by the supervisor of the English language in Ain Sebaa Hay Mohammadi delegation in Casablanca Morocco to introduce a lesson which integrates new technology. The teacher is an experienced EFL teacher who has been teaching the English language for more than twenty years. The teacher is also known for his manipulation of ICT tools. The lesson is reading comprehension along with grammar revision and the teacher relied on the reading comprehension lesson (Different but equal p. 86-87) on the assigned English textbook; *Ticket to English*; for second year baccalaureate level.

a- Participant observation

Since participant observation is considered to be the principal method of data collection in case studies (Johanson, 2007), I decided to conduct a participant observation especially that I was among the teachers who were invited to attend the demonstration lesson. The focus of my observation was on the pedagogical orientation of the teacher as well as on the methodological approach which accompanied the use of new technology.

b- Interviews

Meyer (2001) affirms that “Observation produces rigor when it is combined with other methods” (p.339). Therefore, another data collection procedure which is structured interviewing is used. Interviews were not conducted immediately after the demonstration lesson because time was needed to plan for a structured interview which was designed according to the content of the demonstration lesson. After a short period of time, teachers were contacted and each interview lasted about 15 minutes. It is very important to mention that the structured interview was in the form of a self-administered questionnaire (see the appendix) along with oral discussions. The self-administered questionnaire is used for more involvement and commitment from the part of teachers, in addition to the organization of data which was compared from one teacher to another. In the beginning of my interviews, I explained the importance of teachers' feedback to my research paper. Some teachers welcomed the initiative and accepted to answer my questions immediately. Some others were reluctant, but finally agreed to answer my questions. However, there were a few teachers who did not show any interest to my request and firmly refused to give any feedback. In total, I was able to interview 12 teachers and the supervisor. The interview contains ten questions and focuses heavily on closed questions which consist of four dichotomous (i.e. Yes or No) and six multiple choice questions. The closed questions are opted for since they “are easier to code, analyze and compare across surveys” (Martin, 2006, p. 6). Moreover, since the answers to some questions are expected, the questionnaire controls possible answers in multiple choice questions. Open questions are not directly included in the interview to avoid reluctance of teachers to answer my questions and guarantee the success of the interview. Instead, teachers are asked to justify their choices in dichotomous questions or provide other alternatives in multiple choice questions. This way, teachers are led to provide explanations and

express their opinions indirectly and willingly. This technique is opted for because of the importance of open questions which “can provide detailed responses in respondents’ own words, which may be a rich source of data” (Ibid, p. 6). The second cause is that some answers cannot be expected. So, it is the task of open questions to trigger a variety of possible answers to meet the aim of questions. It is also important to mention that all interviewees are asked the same questions and are asked to choose answers from the same set of alternatives.

3.2 Setting

The inspector of the English language in Ain Sebâa Hay Mohammadi delegation in Casablanca invited a number of EFL teachers to attend a demonstration lesson in El Baroudi high school in Ain Sebâa district. The teacher who volunteered to conduct the demonstration lesson did not use his usual classroom. Instead, he used the activity room which is habitually devoted by the school administration to official meetings, activities and demonstration lessons.

3.3 Participants

Many people were present in this demonstration lesson. First, the inspector of Ain Sebâa Hay Mohammadi delegation who organized it. Second, about 20 EFL teachers from the same delegation. Third, about 25 second year baccalaureate students.

3.4 Data analysis procedures

The questions of the interview are standardized so that comparable information is collected from each interviewee. Consequently, the data allows for comparison and its reliability increases. The analysis focuses on identifying, coding and categorizing patterns of the data to extract meanings and implications for the purpose of formulating a coherent narrative.

4- Findings

This part presents the results of data collection. Teachers’ interviews and the ELT supervisor’s interview are examined separately in order to suggest two different standpoints concerning ICT integration in an EFL classroom. Then, this part suggests some recommendations and concludes with some limitations.

4.1 Participant Observation

The circular entitled the use of ICT which the ELT supervisor sent to some EFL teachers in Ain Sebâa Hay Mohammadi delegation in order to attend a demonstration lesson attracted my attention as I was interested in the use of ICT in education in general and in ELT in particular. Therefore, I decided to attend this demonstration lesson with the intention of observing my colleague.

In the beginning of the demonstration lesson, the teacher projected his power point presentation and started with grammar revision which included several grammar lessons. The teacher used exercises of previous Moroccan national baccalaureate exams in which students were required to write appropriate forms of verbs and modals between brackets or to rewrite sentences as required. The teacher discussed each example with his students and made use of some animations in order to provide correct responses with a more interesting and dynamic effect. The fly in animations created an enjoyable atmosphere as they impressed both students and the audience. In addition, students were very motivated to discuss different alternatives, which were

later confirmed or denied by the fly in animations. However, the slides were condensed with different examples and students were not able to take notes of all correct responses. Later on, the teacher moved to the next slide which presented the first stage of the lesson which was the pre-reading activity. In this activity, the teacher asked his students to fill in a chart that he projected on a slide. Students had to fill in the chart with information about their foreign friend's name, age, nationality and hobby. Immediately after the correction of the first task, the teacher projected the reading passage on the next slide. While reading the text, the teacher highlighted certain passages which were essential to the understanding of the text. From time to time, the teacher used a digital dictionary to check meaning and pronunciation of some words in addition to the use of a geographical map to locate the Dominican Republic, a country which appeared in the text. Concerning questions of the while reading stage, the teacher asked his students to work in pairs in order to answer the reading comprehension questions in the textbook page 86. After the correction of the reading comprehension questions, the teacher moved to the last part of the lesson which was post-reading in which the teacher just repeated the same activity of the pre-reading stage. Again, he asked students to fill in a projected chart with information about their foreign friend. However, students were not able to finish the activity because of time constraints. In the 20 minutes allotted for the discussion of the demonstration lesson, teachers seemed to be very much impressed by the teacher's ICT skills. Some of them intervened to ask about some ICT skills like the insertion of the reading comprehension passage in the power point presentation. Very willingly, the teacher explained the steps he went through in order to insert the reading comprehension passage in the power point presentation. Then, one teacher intervened to question the use of technology in the pre-reading and the post-reading stages and referred to the absence of audio and/or video materials. Besides, this teacher also criticized the fact that the activities of both the pre-reading and the post-reading stages were the same. When the supervisor intervened, he referred to the fact that the teacher possessed the largest data base of EFL tests and activities. The teacher himself reinforced this and explained that he possessed a great number of digital dictionaries on his lap top. Because of time constraints again, the supervisor did not allow for further discussion and invited everybody for a coffee break.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Teachers' interviews

The first question of the interview aimed to gather the impression of teachers concerning the use of ICT in the whole demonstration lesson. Almost all teachers were impressed by the use of technology and the projection of the power point presentation except one teacher who was not excited about it. Concerning the second question, it focuses on the first part of the lesson which was grammar revision. The majority of teachers approved of the use of technology in grammar revision as it saved time and effort. Two other teachers preferred the use of handouts to make sure all students correct easily. Concerning the exploitation of technology in the pre-reading stage, three teachers disapproved of the pre-reading activity for the following reasons: First, the activity was only a repetition of what was mentioned in the textbook. Second, the activity was not suitable for second year baccalaureate students' level. Third, the pre-reading activity did not contain any sound and/or color. As far as the while-reading stage is concerned, the projection of the reading passage was described as useful and practical. Some teachers appreciated the way the teacher highlighted different paragraphs and words. Though, other teachers thought that the projection of the reading passage was unnecessary as it was available in students' textbooks. Moreover, one of the interviewed teachers suggested the use of other techniques instead of only

projecting the text. In the next question of the interview which was devoted to the while-reading passage, teachers agreed with all the advantages I provided them with in the interview. Concerning the last step of the lesson, the majority of teachers found that the post-reading activity was suitable. The next question of the interview focuses on the role of the teacher in the demonstration lesson. The majority of teachers believed that the responsibility of the teacher was facilitated and referred to several examples like the use of the digital dictionary and the geographical map. A few teachers, however, thought that technology did not facilitate the responsibility of the teacher who only got rid of the board. As far as the role of students is concerned, almost all teachers thought that students were motivated and engaged except one teacher who held a negative attitude; he believed that technology did not facilitate learning as it only impressed students. In the following question, all teachers described the teacher's ICT skills as excellent, good or very good. In the last question of the interview, almost all teachers expressed their interest in the use of technology in their teaching except one. In fact, it was always the same teacher who expressed a negative attitude towards the integration of technology in teaching.

4.2.3 The ELT supervisor's interview

The general impression of the supervisor concerning the use of technology in this demonstration lesson is positive. First, he appreciated the use of technology in grammar revision and argued that it motivated students and saved time. Besides, he was also satisfied with the use of technology in the pre-reading activity. Concerning the use of technology in the while-reading stage, he described it as effective and referred to the projection of the reading passage as useful to the audience but not to students as they all had their textbook. As far as the last part of the lesson is concerned, the supervisor described it as effective as it created a learner-centered environment in which all students participated in the activity. As for the role of the teacher and students, the supervisor affirmed that technology facilitated the responsibility of both the teacher while delivering the lesson and students in their learning process.

5. Discussion

This part discusses the findings of the qualitative research methodology, namely participant observation and the interviews with teachers and the supervisor. Then, it suggests some recommendations and concludes with some limitations.

5.1 Interpretation of key Findings

5.1.1 Participant Observation

I believe that the demonstration lesson was not presented in a coherent manner since it started with a grammar revision which lasted about twenty minutes knowing that the whole lesson was assigned sixty minutes. Students seemed to be very much interested in the grammar revision, but the teacher suddenly shifted their focus of attention to introduce a pre-reading activity. At this point, I was wondering about the use of the grammar revision for the reading comprehension lesson which was the main lesson. I thought that the teacher had probably the intention of introducing a new way of revising grammar using new technology.

By asking students to only fill in a projected chart with their friend's name, age, nationality and hobbies in the pre-reading activity, the teacher did not brainstorm the topic of culture shock nor did he activate or refine students' prior knowledge and interest in the topic of the reading passage which is culture shock. Students only exchanged information about their foreign friend and the

teacher did not elicit any information related to the content of the reading passage. In fact, this was a pedagogical problem which could not be solved by technology. In this case, technology was of no added value in the presence of pedagogical problems. Concerning the while-reading stage, the teacher made good use of technology because of the projection of the reading passage, the use of a digital dictionary and a geographical map. The projection of the reading passage increased students' concentration and allowed the audience to follow. Besides, the use of the digital dictionary facilitated the search of words and enabled students to listen to pronunciation of words. At this level, the learning approach was less teacher-centered because students did not rely solely on the teacher to provide meaning and/ or pronunciation of words. The teacher was no more the source of information. Instead, he was a monitor who guided his students in the use of the aforementioned leaning tool.

As for the post-reading stage, it was of no great importance as it did not develop or clarify any interpretations from the text. Instead, the teacher only repeated the activity of the pre-reading stage and did not even have time to finish it as he run short of time. The reason behind this problem of time management is the lengthy grammar revision in the beginning of the lesson. Besides, this activity was inappropriate for both the pre-reading and the post-reading stages as it lacked pedagogical orientations.

In the discussion phase, I was surprised by the reaction of teachers who were impressed by the use of technology. One teacher expressed his admiration concerning the use of technology in the revision stage. Another teacher expressed her appreciation as far as the projection of the reading passage is concerned. Similarly, another teacher intervened to admire the teacher's ICT skills. At this point, the supervisor intervened to reinforce these positive attitudes and referred to the fact that the teacher possessed the largest data base of EFL tests and activities. The teacher confirmed this and added that he also possessed many digital dictionaries on his lap top. I was personally wondering whether ICT integration in teaching was about the possession or the exploitation of digital content.

Later, one teacher intervened to criticize the use of ICT in this demonstration lesson. She explained that the teacher did not include any audio or video material and that the activity of the pre-reading and the post-reading stages were the same. The teacher did not respond to this remark especially that time allotted for the discussion was over. The supervisor ended the discussion and did not allow for more suggestions or remarks.

5.1.2 Teachers' Interviews

Throughout the interviews, it has been noticed that despite teachers' excitement concerning the use of technology in teaching, their attitudes are still held in reserve. For example, one of the interviewed teachers did not appreciate the use of technology in the demonstration lesson. This teacher's point of view can be related either to her attitude towards the use of information communication or to a personal view concerning the use of technology in this particular lesson. Furthermore, another teacher preferred the use of handouts instead of the projection to make sure all students correct easily. This teacher did not seem to trust the digital format even though technology gives the possibility to share the whole power point presentation with students, not only the grammar revision. However, other teachers thought that the use of technology was suitable or appropriate because the teacher did not have to make photocopies or copy the chart on the board. I personally believe that making photocopies is unnecessary and that copying the chart on the board is better and especially effortless. From a pedagogical perspective, the projected chart did not stimulate student's interest or prepare them for the discussion of the content of the

reading passage. Students only generated superficial information like their foreign friend's name, age, nationality and hobbies. I am surprised that no one of the interviewed teachers referred to this problematic. Concerning the level of the pre-reading activity, one of the teachers referred to the fact that the activity was not suitable for second year baccalaureate students. This is true since second year baccalaureate students are expected to take part in more advanced activities and discussions.

As far as the projection of the reading passage is concerned, one of the interviewed teachers suggested the use of other techniques instead of only projecting the text. However, I believe that the use of the digital dictionary and the geographical map made the while-reading stage more pedagogical than the pre-reading and the post-reading stages. Concerning the teachers' ICT skills, most teachers were impressed by them even if they did not totally agree with the teacher's pedagogical use of technology in all the steps of the reading comprehension lesson.

All in all, the interviews showed that teachers' perception and beliefs concerning ICT integration in teaching is still fuzzy as they are still not sure about the appropriate or pedagogical use of technology in teaching. In most questions, interviewed teachers seemed hesitant and confused about pedagogical and technical manipulation of teaching activities. Besides, some of them referred to the need of teacher ICT training.

It is very important to mention that Moroccan teachers are not the only ones who complain about lack of ICT teacher training. In Qatar, the findings of Al-Ammari (2004) indicate that "86% of the participants in his study asked for more computer training" (p.181). Moreover, lack of training is also considered to be an obstacle in EFL education in Saudi Arabia. The findings of Alkahtani (2005) "indicate that half of the respondents did not receive any CALL training from their universities or department" (p. 2). The above quotations refer to the urgent need that the teaching community places on computer training. So, teachers themselves are quite aware that ICT teacher training is the key determinant for effective ICT integration in education.

5.1.3 The ELT Supervisor's Interview

The interview with the ELT supervisor is an opportunity to present the view of an ELT supervisor concerning ICT integration in English Language Teaching. The supervisor's impression concerning the use of technology in this demonstration lesson is generally positive and did not refer to the appropriateness of some activities or to the pedagogical use of technology. As far as the post-reading activity is concerned, the supervisor described it as effective as it created a learner-centered environment in which all students participated in the activity. However, he did not refer to the fact that the activity was only a repetition of the pre-reading activity and that the teacher did not stimulate students' inquiry to recapitulate or discuss the content of the text. In addition, the supervisor did not refer to the problem of time management when the teacher did not complete the post-reading activity.

Concerning the supervisor's attitude towards the use of technology in teaching, the theme of this demonstration lesson already confirms the interest of the supervisor in this topic as he was the one who organized it. Accordingly, a supervisor's positive attitude is very important to stimulate teachers' interest in the use of new technology and encourage them to integrate it in their teaching. However, a supervisor's positive attitude is not enough as it must be accompanied with enough knowledge, practical skills and competences for effective supervision concerning pedagogical use of new technology.

5.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study and the implications arising from them, this article suggests some recommendations with reference to the case study.

It seems that ICT integration in teaching is a problematic issue in the sense that education is exposed to pedagogical challenges in the wave of new technologies. Both the pre-reading and the post-reading phases of this demonstration lesson refer to the insignificance of the use of technology in the absence of pedagogical considerations. If the pre-reading and the post-reading phases had been carefully and didactically planned, technology could have been used effectively. As an example, the teacher could have used a video or an interactive exercise to activate students' background knowledge or brainstorm the concept of culture shock in the pre-reading stage. As for the post-reading stage, the teacher could have introduced pictures of people of different races in order to discuss the content of the text and make connections with it. This way, the teacher could have manipulated both stages technically and pedagogically.

Besides, this demonstration lesson refers to the fact that the possession of ICT skills alone does not ensure effective ICT integration in teaching. While presenting the lesson, the teacher seemed to manipulate technology as he used his lap top as well as the data show effectively. He also exhibited some of his ICT skills in the power point presentation he prepared. However, the teacher only replaced traditional teaching materials (the board and handouts) with the projection of slides and the paper based form dictionary with the digital dictionary. I personally had the impression that the lesson was fashionable but not pedagogical.

Therefore, these types of ICT practices which sacrifice pedagogy for the sake of technology threaten teaching and learning practices. At the same time, they spoil traditional pedagogical teaching practices. These ICT practices are very likely to occur in the absence of a clear vision concerning ICT integration in education and especially when teachers are required to integrate ICT in their teaching after the acquisition of ICT skills only.

In this respect, the content of teacher ICT training should not only focus on the acquisition of ICT skills, but also on the pedagogical use of new technology. The availability of digital resources and training teachers in the use of these digital resources is another determinant factor for effective ICT integration in teaching.

5.3 Limitations

It can be noticed that the interviews with teachers as well as the ELT supervisor were not conducted immediately after the demonstration lesson. I admit that the immediacy between the demonstration lesson and the interviews would have facilitated the interviews with teachers especially that some of them did not accept to answer my questions. These teachers may have accepted if they had been asked for an interview immediately after the demonstration lesson. Unfortunately, this was not possible as I needed some time to reflect on the whole lesson and prepare for my structured interview.

6. Conclusion

This article investigates teacher's ICT practices through a demonstration lesson of an EFL teacher in order to draw attention to the challenge of ICT integration in teaching. This study reveals that the complexity of the issue is related to the existing misperception and indecisiveness between technological and pedagogical manipulation of teaching activities.

This article starts with a review of literature which focuses on the impact of new technology on education in many parts of the world especially in the Arab world. Then, the review highlights

the shift in the role of both teachers and students and explains that the learning approach to education is more student-centered and less teacher-centered. The last part of the review focuses on the problematic of teacher ICT training. As far as the methodological part is concerned, it relies on a case study of an EFL teacher along with participant observation and interviews with teachers as well as the ELT supervisor who attended the demonstration lesson. It has been found in the analysis that the use of technology was achieved at the expense of pedagogical planning since the teacher gave more importance to the use of technology than to pedagogical planning of teaching activities. Therefore, the recommendation part alludes to two examples of teaching activities which reconcile technological and pedagogical manipulation of teaching activities. In addition to this, the recommendation part also refers to the need for digital resources as well as to the training of teachers for effective use of these digital resources.

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Appendix

The structured interview

-Tick (✓) or answer the questions appropriately.

- How do you describe the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the demonstration lesson?
☐ Effective ☐ Beneficial ☐ of great concern ☐ insignificant ☐ irrelevant
☐ other, ...
- Was the use of technology effective in the first part of the lesson which was **grammar revision**?
☐ Yes, explain how?
☐ No, why?
- How was the exploitation of technology in **the pre-reading activity**?
☐ Effective ☐ Suitable ☐ Inappropriate ☐ Of no great concern
Please, explain your choice
- How did you find the projection of the reading passage?
☐ Effective ☐ Useful ☐ Inappropriate ☐ Of no added value
Please, explain your choice
- In your opinion, what was positive about the use of technology in **the while-reading phase**?
(If applicable, you can tick more than one choice.)
☐ The reading passage was available for all students.
☐ An electronic dictionary was used to check meaning and pronunciation.
☐ A geographical map was projected to locate the Dominican Republic.
☐ The power point presentation saved time and efforts.
☐ The power point presentation decreased Teacher talking Time (TTT).
☐ The possibility of sharing the power point presentation with all students.
Others, please specify
- How was the exploitation of technology in **the post-reading stage**?
☐ Effective ☐ Suitable ☐ Inappropriate ☐ Of no great concern
Please, explain your choice
- Did the use of technology facilitate the responsibility of the teacher while delivering the lesson?
☐ Yes, how?
☐ No, why?
- Did the use of technology facilitate the learning process for students?
☐ Yes, how?
☐ No, why?
- How did you find the teacher's ICT skills?
☐ Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ good ☐ Average ☐ Low
- Personally, are you interested in ICT integration in your teaching?
☐ Yes, why?
☐ No, why?

Thank you very much for your cooperation

A Socio-linguistic Study to Investigate the Factors Affecting L2 Oral Communication at Postgraduate Level in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the factors affecting oral communication in the target language i.e. English Language by the learners from various social classes in Pakistan. The various factors and reasons which affect their oral communication are attitudes, motivation and their socio-economic status. There are other factors too such as parental encouragement, teacher's role, teaching methodology, medium of instruction and most importantly anxiety – a fear of being ridiculed in front of teachers and the fellows. The sample of the study is the Postgraduate students of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. Considering the nature of the study, Gardner's socio-educational model is used as a theoretical framework. Moreover, a comparison is made between the results obtained on the basis of three social classes; lower, middle and upper class. The quantitative results of the study display a significant correlation between the scores of oral proficiency as measured by the Oral Proficiency Test and the factors under study. Whereas, the qualitative data reveals other factors like the role of parents and teachers, teaching methodology, medium of instruction and anxiety. This study has revealed that the Pakistani students belonging to any social class show a strong desire to use English Language due to its great utilitarian value and prestigious status as an international language. However, Gardner's notion of Integrative orientation seems to be inappropriate in Pakistani context for the results show that the lower class, despite of no chance of interaction with the L2 community, desires to integrate with English language community.

KeyWords: Attitude, Motivation, SES (Socio-economic status), SLL (Second language learning), Socio-linguistics

Introduction

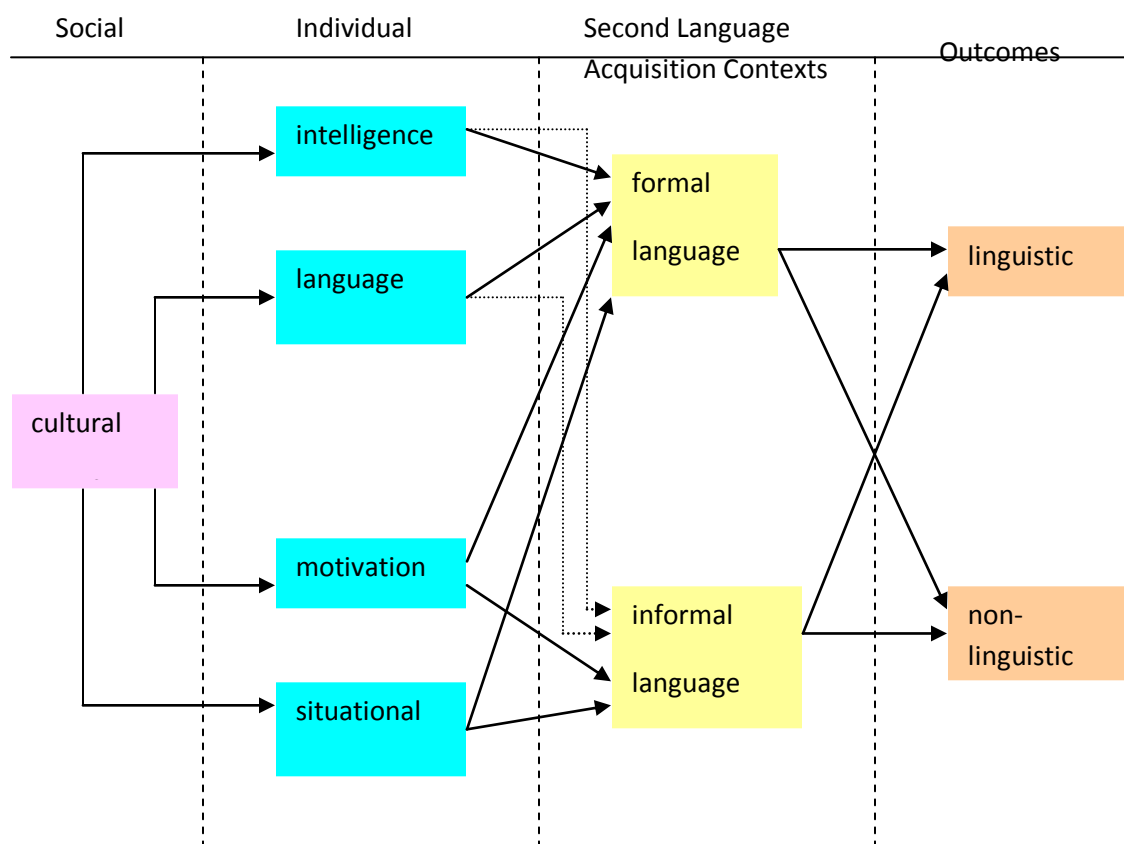
In Pakistan, it is generally observed that students' attitude and level of motivation to learn English language is shaped up according to their learning experiences at Urdu and English medium schools. After the initial development of such attitudes and degree of motivation they join colleges for their graduation where they can be motivated externally by their teacher and class room environment. As a result students go through the further development their attitudes, positive or negative, towards English language. For most of the students, communication in English remains a big hurdle. The possible reasons for their hampered communication are the cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They are only trained to pass English language paper by cramming written material.

After graduation the same students with low proficiency in English and less motivational intensity reach university. Due to the poor English learning experience at schools and colleges, these students feel difficulty in coping with the subjects at university level (Pathan et al, 2010). In addition some of them may develop unfavorable attitude towards English language and the language community on the basis of their previous experience i.e. low achievement in English language learning. Moreover, even the university curriculum does not include English as a compulsory part of formal education unless they opt for M.A English or other subjects like computer or business studies where medium of instruction is English. Even in these departments emphasis is not on the use of English as a medium of oral communication. The listening and speaking skills are totally neglected. Situation is little bit different in business studies where the high level command of written and oral communication is required. They are trained to improve the communication skills for a business or a management position. The students with low proficiency are likely to develop negative attitude towards English Language. Consequently, they are less motivated to learn and use English Language. Therefore, this study is designed:

- to discover the extent to which English language learning and its usage are affected by motivation and attitude.
- to assess the students' level of English language proficiency and exposure to it as measured by an oral proficiency test, in order to study the relationship between attitudes, motivation, second language learning on the basis of socio-economic status.
- to study the differences of attitudes and English language proficiency and usage of different group of students i.e. students from three social classes
- to discover as to what extent the students belonging to different social classes are integrative or instrumentally oriented towards learning English.

Literature Review

Language learning is a complex phenomenon affected by various external and internal factors. Gardner has presented the interaction of these factors in his Socio-Educational Model.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of second language acquisition

This model is also concerned with the role of the individual differences in second language acquisition. The model has its formal roots in Lambert's 'Social-Psychological Model. Socio-educational model focuses attention on four classes of variables, which are:

- Social milieu
- Individual differences
- Language Acquisition context
- Out-comes

The language acquisition process is viewed as involving a particular casual interplay of these four types of variables.

According to Gardner (1985), the cultural context plays a vital role in second language learning. As displayed in the model, both accepted beliefs and various individual differences directly influence the second language learning process. As stated by Gardner :

“For example, it is argued that the cultural belief is that it is very difficult to learn second language. The general level of achievement will be low and moreover, individual differences in achievement will be related to individual differences in intelligence, aptitude, motivation and anxiety.” (p146)

According to Gardner (1985), there are four different types of individual differences that influence achievement directly. They are explained in the following words:

- Intelligence: Intelligence is assumed to play a role because it determines how well or how quickly individual understands the nature of any learning task or any explanation provides.
- Language Aptitude: Though it is correlated with intelligence but can be defined as: 'A series of verbal and cognitive abilities, that would play a role in language learning'
- Motivation: It refers to the effort; want (desire) and effect associated with learning a second language and is seen as important in determining how actively the individual works to acquire language material.
- Situational Anxiety: It is associated with the language itself and it is viewed as important because it would have an inhibiting effect on the individual's performance, thus interfering with language acquisition.

As put forward by Gardner (1985):

"Once students enter into an informal context, their level of intelligence and aptitude will influence how much language material is learned, but since their effects are contingent upon the students entering the situations, they play secondary roles. These different roles lead to the prediction that whereas individual difference in all four attributes would be expected to relate to differences in achievement of skills developed exclusively in formal context, the relation of motivation and anxiety to achievement would be expected to be higher than those for intelligence and aptitude for skills developed exclusively in informal contexts." (p148)

Two outcomes can be seen as a result of experience of second language learning and they can occur differently depending upon experience in both contexts.

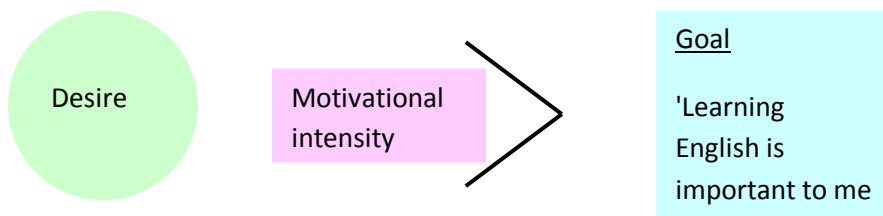
- Linguistic outcomes: These refer to second language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, grammar, pronunciation, fluency etc.
- Non-linguistic outcomes: These refer to attitudes, values etc. that develop from the experience.

Lambert (1955), Brown (2000), and Ellis (2001) believe that attitudes play important role in developing L2 proficiency. They have conducted researches on attitude to learn L2 in the same realm. They have found out that prior achievement in L2 proficiency shapes up learners' attitude to learn it. In this regard, the work of Gardner and Lambert has laid a foundation stone for a large body of research. According to Gardner (1985: p. 41), attitude to learn a second language is proved to be independent of intelligence.

"In comparison with those individuals with negative attitudes, those with positive ones would be more attentive in the learning situation, would take assessments more seriously, would find it more rewarding to simply experience the language, and thus achieve more."

Research studies have proved that motivation is the major factor in second language learning because it "determines human behavior by energizing it and giving it direction" (Dornyei, 1998). The term motivation in second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1985) as "referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". (p. 10)

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the concept of motivation as it is related to SLL Gardner (1985)



This concept suggests that motivation and attitudes play an important role in SLL by determining the extent to which learner puts his/her efforts to learn language. The learning situation i.e. teacher and the course, also affect motivation and attitude to the language.

The research studies related to L2 learning in Asian context (for instance, Lukmane 1972, Agnihoti, Khanna and Mukerjee 1982,1988, Sehgal 1993, Khana and Agnihotri 1984, Mansoor 1993, Ghani 2003, Pathan et al 2010 have displayed different results obtained by Gardner and Lambert. First, social variables such as schooling and exposure to the second language are proved to be more important than motivation and attitude. Second, instrumental motivation is found to be more significant in learning second language.

Another important notion discussed by Gardner (1985) is orientation which refers to “a class of reasons for learning a second language”, Gardner (1985: p. 54). Orientation is divided into two basic types:

1. Integrative Orientation
2. Instrumental Orientation

An integrative orientation refers to that class of reasons that suggest that the individual is learning second language in order to learn about, interact with or become closer with the second language community (Gardner 1985: p. 54). An integrative orientation simply means the learner is pursuing a second language for social and/or cultural purposes. It is characterized by learner's positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community. Integrative orientation has been shown to be strongly related to L2 achievement.

An instrumental orientation is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete for the study of a second language (Hudson 2000). With instrumental orientation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental orientation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired (Norris-Holt 2001) .

The number of studies has been conducted in Pakistan to examine the motivation in ESL setting. The results of these research studies display that instrumental motivation rank higher than the integrative reasons to learn English Language. The Pakistani ESL learners, regardless of the social group they belong to, are found to learn English language in order to get better jobs, travel

abroad or to be the part of English speaking community of the country (Pathan et al 2010, Rehman et al, 2014)

Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the factors which affect achievement in SLL. Social status or SES is not given much attention in many research studies conducted in this context. The present study is conducted in Pakistan where we can easily see class difference in our society. The economic status plays an important role in almost every field of life. So we cannot ignore role of SES in SLL in Pakistani context. “There is evidence of a relationship between social class and L2 achievement- children from middle-class homes regularly outperform those from lower and working class homes. There are also class related differences in learner’s attitudes” Ghani (2003:01).

Pakistani society consists of three social classes namely lower, middle and upper class. Upper class has advantage in every aspect of life. They enjoy all the luxuries including education. They send their children to prestigious English medium schools. They have more exposure to SL (English) as they travel to English speaking countries. Upper class parents speak English at home and at work place. So, the children from upper class have more opportunities to communicate in target language outside the classroom setting. On the other hand, children from lower class cannot avail such opportunities and therefore, have less exposure to the target language. The lower class parents cannot send their children to English medium schools and they are themselves semi-literate or illiterate. So, these children tend to achieve proficiency in English language, which shows strong association between SES and SL. The results obtained by the research study conducted by Ghani (2003) also show positive relationship between SES, medium of instruction and English proficiency.

Research Design and Methodology

Data for the present study was collected only from The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. The participants of the study were 120 boys and girls students of previous and final years of Master program. Forty participants were selected randomly from the Department of English, Management Sciences, and Political Science

Moreover, in order to investigate the relationship between oral proficiency and the socio-economic status of the learners, same participants were also divided on the basis of three social classes. The following table explains the distribution of participants on the basis of data collection:

Table 1. Distribution of Participants on the basis of SES

Social Class	No. of Participants
Lower Class (monthly income up to 15000 Rupees)	32
Middle Class (monthly income up to 50000 Rupees)	79
Upper Class (monthly income above 50000 Rupees)	09
Total Participants	120

The questionnaire used for the data collection was based on Attitude Motivation Battery in Gardner (1985) was used. The items were in Likert form with some modifications to suit the level and requirement of the research study. The questionnaire was administrated under the supervision of the researcher. The students were given necessary instructions to fill the questionnaire. Confidentiality regarding the information i.e. name, father’s profession etc. was

assured to the students. As the participants of the study were the students of post graduate classes, the questionnaire was given only in English language.

The most important part of this research study was to check the level of oral proficiency of the participants in order to correlate with the factors affecting their communication skills (spoken). For this purpose, TOEFL iBT speaking section was administered to evaluate English speaking proficiency of the students taking part in the study.

Findings and Discussion

The quantitative data was analysed through SPSS statistical analysis. The analysis shows the following results:

Table 2. Correlations between Oral Proficiency and External Factors on the Basis of Socio-Economic Status

Factors	Upper Class	Middle Class	Lower Class
Motivation	.740* .023 9	.882** .000 79	.920** .000 32
Attitude	.676* .045 9	.762** .000 79	.935** .000 32
Desire to learn English	.566 .112 9	.215 .057 79	.808** .000 32

• Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The data was analysed through the Pearson Product-Movement correlation coefficient formula to examine the correlation of oral proficiency as measured by Oral Proficiency Test and the variables under study. After analyzing the data, it appears that in the overall group a significant relationship is found between the oral proficiency and the social variables i.e. attitudes, motivation, and the socio-economic status of the learners. The comparative study between the data obtained from three social classes displays no significant difference in results which supports the previous studies dealing with second language learning (Gardner 1985, Lukmani 1972, Mansoor 1993 and Ghani 2003). The variation in findings is a result of many other reasons which will also be discussed later.

Socio-economic status has an overwhelming effect on English learning success in a country like Pakistan where society is clearly divided into three social classes i.e. upper, middle, and lower class (Ghani, 2003). The social status does affect the language learning and its use. But by the results obtained and analysed in the present study are little bit different from the results in previous studies.

Oral Proficiency

The socio-economic status of the students affected their English language learning and oral proficiency according to their respective social classes. The upper class students were expected to be more proficient speaker of English for they are the part of privileged class of the society. They enjoy the luxurious life including education in prestigious institutions, traveling abroad and integrating with native speakers of English. Therefore, they avail the maximum opportunities to learn and practice English language inside and outside the classroom setting. The analysis of the data collected in the present studies shows that the students from middle class outperformed the upper class by securing highest scores in the oral proficiency test.

This result is quite opposite to the findings obtained in the study conducted by Ghani (2003) where the upper class excelled the other two social classes namely middle and upper class. A strong relationship was found between second language learning and socio-economic status. Moreover, the findings of the present study prove that the middle class students strive to get some prestigious position in the society and therefore, have become the proficient speakers of English language

As far as lower class is concerned, the students achieved lowest scores in the proficiency test as compared to middle and upper class. This finding supports the results obtained in the study analyzing the relationship between socio-economic status and second language learning conducted by Ghani (2003).

Attitudes towards English

A significant correlation is found between the scores of oral proficiency and the attitudes. It is surprising to observe that despite of highly positive attitude the students from upper class were unable to perform better than middle class students in oral proficiency test. As discussed by Gardner (1985), the reasons, for this kind of relationship between attitudes towards the language and the achievement, can either be a dislike for the teacher or a feeling of in-appropriation about the context in which second language learning takes place, for example, classroom setting. The students from middle class with highest scores in oral proficiency test showed highly positive attitude towards English language and English language community. They were conscious of their social position and therefore wanted to improve their social status by achieving proficiency in English language.

Being the unprivileged social class of the society, lower class students gave the responses which were expected of them. The lack of opportunities to acquire education in renowned English medium schools led them to become lowest scorer in oral proficiency test. They were unable to communicate in English language as they and hence, no chance to practice or use the language in an informal setting.

Motivational Intensity and Desire to Learn English

The highly positive attitude of the middle class increased their motivation to learn English language. Though, their desire to learn the language is lower than the upper class, the difference is marginal. Similarly, the students from upper class showed the higher motivational intensity but have displayed the strongest desire to learn English language.

On the whole, the students from the lower class have remained the lowest scorers in all ratings. Their less positive attitude de-motivated them to learn English and hence, are unable to become the proficient speakers of English. They are also least concerned with the learning and the practicing of English language. That is why; they have not shown a strong desire to learn it.

Table 3. Correlations between Integrative and Instrumental Measures with Oral Proficiency on the Basis of Socio-Economic Status

Orientations	Upper Class	Middle Class	Lower Class
Instrumental	.797* .010 9	.683** .000 79	.826** .000 32
Integrative	.830** .006 9	.291** .009 79	.835** .000 32

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

When the Pearson Product-Movement coefficient formula was applied to examine the correlation of orientations and oral proficiency scores as measured by Oral Proficiency Test, it appears that a significant correlation (at 0.01 level) exists between oral proficiency scores and the orientations (instrumental and integrative) as scored by the students from lower, middle and upper class. As seen in table 4, in general, the integrative motivation ranks higher than the instrumental motivation. This response was expected from the students of upper class for they have more opportunities to travel abroad and integrate with English language community. Quite surprisingly, the lower class students preferred integrative reasons to learn English language. Their scores for instrumental motivation were lower than the integrative motivation. This is unusual because they are expected to get less chance to communicate or integrate with native speakers.

As far as middle class is concerned, the students desire English language for instrumental reasons like to pass exams, to get a good job or to cope with university classes. Their scores for instrumental motivation were lower than the integrative motivation.

Comparison of Data on the Basis of Three Social Classes

The following tables represent the instrumental and integrative reasons to learn English language on the basis of the results obtained from three social classes.

Table 4. Instrumental Reasons to Learn English Language

Degree of Instrumentality	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class
a. to get a job	33%	41%	25%
b. to cope with university classes	00%	03%	13%
c. to read advanced literature	08%	06%	00%
d. to travel abroad	08%	06%	10%
e. to communicate in it as it is working language of my future career	33%	40%	50%
f. to communicate in it as it is an official language of Pakistan	18%	04%	06%
g. to take Public Examinations	00%	00%	00%

Table 5. Integrative Reasons to Learn English Language

Degree of Integrativeness	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class
a. to have acquaintance with people in touch with the latest trends in the west	00%	10%	00%
b. think and behave like English speaking Pakistani	16%	12%	25%
c. to acquire news ideas and broadening one's outlook	35%	20%	19%
d. improve my social status	25%	50%	43%
a. to become friendly with English speaking people	08%	02%	13%
b. to get to know English people more better	08%	02%	00%
h. to visit UK some day	08%	02%	00%
c. to become more modern	00%	02%	00%

Qualitative Data

The most important feature of this part is the enthusiastic participation of the students. The responses given by the participants enabled the researcher to have better perception of the topic under study. The important points and suggestions given by the participants in interviews and discussion are summarized below:

- English is the language of science and technology, that's why only English language is essential for the progress of the country.
- It is the official language of Pakistan. So it is required in almost all the professions.
- One should be competent enough to speak English in order to keep in touch with the rest of the world. World has become global village, so communication should be done in the language which can be understood by everyone and English is the only language which can serve this purpose.
- Oral proficiency in English is required to get prestigious jobs.
- It has nothing to do with religion rather by learning English preaching of Islam in English speaking countries is possible.
- One can present the true picture of Islam in media and of course the language of media is English.
- Proficiency in English or speaking English does not mean adopting the norms, tradition and culture of the English.
- Teacher plays an important role in developing positive or negative attitudes of the students towards target language.
- Teachers should deliver lectures in English.
- Students should be encouraged to speak English in classroom.
- Discussions on various issues should be conducted in the classrooms so that the student can get chance to communicate in English Language.
- English should be made compulsory part of all the courses/ programs offered by the university.

- No efforts are done by the teachers to improve the oral proficiency of the students..
- The lectures are delivered in all the departments in Urdu language excluding Department of English.
- Special language classes should be arranged to facilitate the students where the only target should be the improvement of oral proficiency of the students' language learning.
- Equal language learning opportunities should be given to the students from all the social classes i.e. lower, middle and upper.
- Students can improve their proficiency by reading newspapers and magazines published in English language.
- Fear of humiliation in front of teachers and class fellows is one of the main reasons for the hampered communication of the students.
- Despite of high motivational intensity, students hesitate to speak in English because of the discouraging behaviour of peers.
- All the students cannot afford to attend language classes separately, therefore, they must be given the opportunity to learn and practice the language within their respective course/program.
- English language is required for both higher education and better future.
- It is an international language one has to be proficient speaker of English in order to travel abroad.
- English is the language of developed countries and therefore, is a key to progress.
- The fluent speaker of English is respected in society.
- It has become a status symbol even in middle class.

Recommendations of the Study

The results indicate that some of the variables have stronger impact on English language learning like, particularly in Pakistan, socio-economic status. In addition, the other reasons impeding the communication of students have also emerged as the by-products during the course of study. Some of the above mentioned causes may not be remedied like, it is not possible to change either the socio-economic status of the students or to arrange the parent-teacher meeting, like in schools, at this educational level in order to convince the parents to play an 'active role' (Gardner 1985) to encourage their children to learn English language. However some progress can be made by considering the following suggestions.

Communication Skills Courses

As indicated by the detailed analysis of the results, it is crystal clear that, in general, the university students have highly positive attitudes towards English language and English language community.

As the students work well when there are certain incentives for them, likewise, they learn for instrumental purposes, for example, securing high scores and good GPA. Such instrumental reasons motivate the learners and, thus lead them to develop positive attitude towards learning of language. Therefore, in the light of discussions with the participants of the study, it is strongly recommended that Communication Skills should be a credited course in all the programs offered by the university. This will enhance not only the verbal/spoken skills of the students but it will also enable the students to improve their written expression. The students will be trained for their future professional career as well. Even in those departments where the text books are in

language other than English language should offer Communication Skills course so that the students can pursue for higher studies.

Class Room Discussions

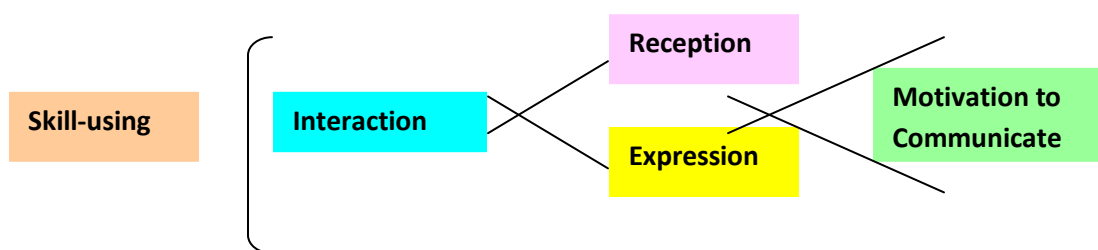
In the light of suggestions given by the participants, discussion on various issues should be conducted in the classroom so that the students may get chance to communicate in English language. According to Rivers (1996), 'all kinds of students can speak (and write) expressly when they have something to communicate that they themselves consider significant' (p. 111). Therefore the students should be given a chance to speak on issues/ topics related to everyday life preferably of their own interest. The ability to speak on familiar topics will bring a sense of achievement in students which will also increase the degree of motivation to learn English language.

Teacher's Role

English language teachers play an important role in developing positive or negative attitude of the students towards learning the language. It is the teacher who acts as a facilitator in the learning process. As reported by the students, no efforts are made by the teachers to improve their oral proficiency. In other words, there is no interaction between the teachers and the students. The importance of interaction between teacher and student is well explained by Jessa (2005: p. 390):

"Language learning is an individual achievement, an exploration of the capacities of the mind to make sense of the environment. This is the internal process of learning, comes as consequence of the interaction that takes place between the teacher and the learner."

Figure 3. Essential process in learning to communicate, Jessa (2005)



English language teacher should be an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Practitioner who should make the learners to practice the language in actual setting and prepare them for their future profession.

Professional Development of the Teachers through Conferences, Training Courses and Workshops

As mentioned above, teacher's role is very much important in making not only the students develop positive attitude towards learning the language but also the teachers who teach courses other than English language. Therefore, English language teachers need to be cognizant of recent trends in language teaching so that they may overcome their ingrained prejudices (Warsi 2004). As far as other teachers are concerned, there should be professional conferences and workshops conducted by the trained English language teachers.

This will only be possible when the English language teachers will be professionally trained and deeply grounded in linguistic theory and second language acquisition research (Warsi 2004). As argued by David Crystal (cited in Warsi 2004) that 'having a heart does not necessarily make one a successful cardiologist'. This analogy means that one cannot become a proficient second language teacher simply by getting Masters Degree until he/she is professionally trained and is aware of the recent trends of his/her field.

English Language Classes

As the results reveal, there is an urgent need of English language classes where students can develop proficiency in English language. It will give them an opportunity to practice their spoken English as they do not have such environment outside the classroom. 'If the learners are to master language as communication they must have practice in communication'. (Jesa, 2005) It is important to mention that the Department of English offers such classes for students who want to learn English language by developing their four skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, these courses are so costly that the learners who belong to middle and lower classes (as they are in majority) cannot afford to attend them as a separate course. Therefore they must be given the opportunity to learn and practice the language within their respective programs offered by the University.

Teaching Methodology

Casey (1992) has found out that 'there exists highly positive relationship between proficiency level in English language and methods of teaching' (cited in Jese 2005, p. 70). Choosing an appropriate teaching methodology is important for the teachers teaching university classes. A teacher can develop the interest among the students by using modern technology (like Multimedia, Over-head Projector etc.) for their lectures. This can be implied particularly in English language classes where English language may possibly be facilitated by using such audio- visual aids.

Medium of Instruction

Another important point discussed in previous chapter is the medium of instruction. As mentioned by the students, the lectures are delivered in Urdu, for example, in department of Business Administration, where the English language is used only for the technical terms. Therefore the students cannot get the opportunity to listen and speak English in the classroom. As a result, they have no desire to learn English language. Moreover, they can cope with the university classes without being proficient speakers of English language. Therefore, it is recommended that medium of instruction should be English throughout in the departments where the course books are totally in English language. However, this purpose can be achieved by introducing English language courses in such departments offering Masters in Languages other than English language; like Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Islamic Learning etc.

English Language Center

The results reveal that there is a dearth of opportunities to learn and practice spoken English in this area of Punjab, Pakistan. In other words, the students have the minimum exposure to English language. In addition, the students of middle and lower classes may not have a chance to meet or integrate with native speakers of English language. Therefore, the idea of English language

centre is suggested where the students may have ease of access. Such a centre can be established in coordination with British Council, American Consulates or other organizations dealing with English as Second Language in Pakistan.

The motive behind this centre would be the exposure to the English language which would develop the positive attitude and high motivational intensity among university students. Similarly the seminars and workshops on the importance of English as a second language can be organized in coordination with British council and American Consulates. This will give the opportunity to integrate either with the native speakers or English speaking Pakistani. This would certainly bring some positive change among the students regarding the importance English language.

Reducing Apprehension and Anxiety about Communication

One of the major factors impeding communication of the students is anxiety. As mentioned earlier, the students get afraid of making mistakes. They also wish not to be negatively evaluated by their teachers or peers. Some strategies may help to reduce such apprehension.

The students should be encouraged by the teachers to speak English language despite of the low proficiency of the students. It should be kept in a mind that 'the person who has substandard communication skills or who are either ethnically or culturally divergent might also develop communication apprehension' (Richmond, McCroskey 1985, p. 37). Therefore, the students may possibly be learning English either as a second or a third language. Hence, they should be tolerated for their mistakes. Once they start communicating in the class, the level of motivation will be increased. As a result, the students would be less anxious.

Fluency and Accuracy

The idea, that fluency is important than accuracy in the beginning of language learning, would help to reduce the anxiety of the students. As mentioned by Widdowson (1985), "we are not walking grammars" refers that before we make our students confused by developing accuracy in grammatical rules, it is important to make them fluent. Let them express themselves.

Conclusion

The overall results of the study clearly show that the Pakistani post-graduate students are aware of the importance of English language in order to cope with the demands of the modern era. However, their attitudes towards English language and their desire to learn seem to be directly proportional to the social class they belong to. As expected, attitude and motivation are the strong factors behind the attainment of English language proficiency. Moreover, as indicated in previous studies by Lukmani(1972) and Ghani(2003), schooling, parental encouragement and learning experiences have been proved to be the stronger factors in SLL.

As far as SES is concerned, a strong relationship has been found between L2 proficiency and the social class of the learners. Moreover, the findings of the study have revealed that the middle class students strive to get some prestigious position in the society and, therefore, have become the proficient speakers of English language. This is contrary to the study conducted in Pakistan by Ghani(2003) where the students from upper class outperformed the middle and lower class in English language learning.

The lower class, as expected, remained the low scorer on the scales of oral proficiency, attitude and motivation. However, quite surprisingly, the students from the lower class showed interest to integrate with the English language community despite of the fact that they have least possibility

to interact with L2 community. This puts a question mark on the validity of Gardner's notion of integrative orientation (2003) in Pakistani context where the learners with poor socio-economic background can barely get a chance to interact with English language community.

Suggestions for Future Study

The present study is aimed at investigating the variables (individual differences) and other factors affecting the second language learning, identified by Gardner and other linguists. However, only three variables i.e. attitudes, motivation, and socio-economic status have been included in the study. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the relationship between intelligence, language aptitude, anxiety and the second language learning as discussed by Gardner in his Socio-educational Model.

Further research is also needed to explore the process of second language learning with reference to the age, sex and other personality traits (like learning styles, introversion and extroversion) of the learners.

Another area to be studied in second language learning is the role of cultural beliefs and mother tongue of the learners. It is to be studied either the language learning is facilitated or hampered by the influence of culture and the mother tongue of the learner i.e. how the student's own cultural background relates to the background projected by the second language culture' (Cook, 2001).

Since the present study have focused the oral proficiency of the students, further research should be conducted to investigate the problems related to listening, reading and writing skills of the students.

As indicated by the results, the other reasons for low proficiency in English language are role of teachers, their teaching methodologies and lack of opportunities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct research studies focusing the issues mentioned above.

About the Author:

Misbah Rosheen khan has been associated with EFL/ESL teaching for more than nine years. Currently, she is working as an academic coordinator at English language Institute, King Abdul Aziz University. She received her MPhil degree in Applied Linguistics and her research interest lies in exploring the complex phenomenon of L2 learning. She is a passionate teacher and a researcher who believes in teacher empowerment and professional development through research which can be initiated from the classroom.

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The Integration of the New Technology at the Moroccan Universities

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Abstract:

Because the use of technology is widespread in numerous fields and domains, without doubt, it also carries great potential for educational use, specifically second and foreign language education. This paper therefore attempts to answer the following questions: 1) what is Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)? 2) What does CALL offer to university students? 3) Which role does the Internet play in the domain of English Language Learning (ELL)? 4) Have computer and internet been invented to serve the needs of teaching and learning English as a second foreign language? In order to understand how the inclusion of technological devices (Computer and Internet) plays a crucial role in ELL, this paper considers the extent to which these devices can be helpful for teaching purposes at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Meknes. Therefore, Results revealed that the computer and the internet have been invented to facilitate and improve the learning/teaching process which in turn invites the Moroccan government to integrate these technological devices at the university.

Keywords: CALL, computer, education, Internet, technology.

Introduction

Recent years have shown a boom of interest in using computers for foreign language teaching and learning. A decade ago, it was clear that the use of computers in the language classrooms was of concern only to a small number of specialists in western countries (Nazlı, 2005). However, with the advent of multimedia computing and the Internet, the role of computers in language instruction has now become an important issue confronting large numbers of language teachers throughout the world. This interest in education technologies has pushed applied linguists to look for applications of the computer in second and foreign language classrooms to improve the learning/teaching process and, particularly, to create an intimate authentic relationship between the learner and the target language.

Preliminaries

In the second half of the 20th century, education technologies were one of the most developed areas in the world. Computers, which have entered the school life in the late 1950s in developed countries, are still developing day by day throughout the world. Today, they have become more powerful, faster, easier to use, more convenient and cheaper, and they can process and store much more data, as well. Equipment such as hard disks, CD ROMs, laser disks and printers used with computers has also developed rapidly. Using these, a computer program can handle sound, pictures and video along with characters.

All around the world, people are learning with the aid of new technologies: children are playing complex video games, workers are interacting with simulations that put them in challenging situations, and students are taking courses at online high schools and colleges. New technologies create learning opportunities that challenge traditional schools and colleges. These new learning niches enable people of all ages to pursue learning on their own terms. People around the world are taking their education out of school into homes, libraries, Internet cafes, and workplaces, where they can decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn, and how they want to learn.

In attempting to adopt a new technology, be it a tape recorder, a VCR, a CD-ROM multimedia, or another network-based technology, Jones and Sato (1998) suggest that we consider the following questions: quoted in Richard and Renondya, (2002.p.361),

- Does the new technology facilitate the attainment of the course goal?
- Is it cost-effective? Do the benefits outweigh its cost?
- Are the teachers ready to work with the new technology? Is there any training required?
- Does it serve the needs of the teachers and students?
- Does it help teachers make more efficient of class time?

There are of course other questions one may wish to think about, but these are some of the most important questions that need to be addressed before we decide to integrate new technologies into the Moroccan Universities curriculums.

Defining CALL

CALL is a term used by teachers and students to describe the use of computers as part of a language course, (Nazlı, 2005). It is traditionally described as a means of 'presenting, reinforcing and testing' particular language items. The learner is first presented with a rule and some examples, and then answers a series of questions which test his/her knowledge of the rule and the computer gives appropriate feedback and awards a mark, which may be stored for later

inspection for the teacher. Jones and Fortescue (1987) indicate that “the traditional description of CALL is unfortunate and they present the computer as flexible classroom aid, which can be used by teachers and learners, in and out of class, in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes” (cited in Warschauer & Healey, 1998). However, work with the computer, as any other teaching aid, needs to be linked with ordinary classroom work and CALL lessons, like the other lessons, need to be planned carefully.

CALL refers, then, to the sets of instructions which need to be loaded into the computer for it to be able to work in the language classroom. It should be borne in mind that CALL does not refer to the use of a computer by a teacher to type out a worksheet or a class list or preparing his/her own teaching alone. Hardware, the first major component that is involved in the function of computers, refers to any computer equipment used, including the computer itself, the keyboard, screen (or the monitor), the disc-drive, and the printer. Software (computer programs) is the second component which refers to the sets of instructions a computer uses to manipulate data, such as a word- processing, (e.g., to write a letter), program or a video game

CALL and ELT: An overview

It is interesting to state that the use of computers in English Language Teaching dates back to the behaviouristic era- in the 1960s. The 1970s witnessed the evolution of CALL as a result of development in research related to the use of computers for linguistic purposes and for creating suitable language learning conditions. In America the computer based introductory courses in the 1960s were pioneering projects in CALL, and were referred to as computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) The 1980s have witnessed the spread of computers both in educational institutions and in people's homes. Since the beginning of the '80s computers have also found their way into many schools, and according to Nazlı, (2005), “CALL software has also become more readily available on the market”.

The emergence of inexpensive computer technology and mass storage media, including optical videodiscs and compact disks, has given instructional technologists better tools to work with. Compact disks are used to store large amounts of data, such as encyclopedias or motion pictures. In CALL centers with computers and software such as CD-ROM, CD-I, or videodiscs, a student who is interested in a particular topic can first scan an electronic encyclopedia, then view a film on the subject or look at related topics at the reach of a button. Thus, such learning centers present students with the advantages of reference materials and popularize computer-aided instruction. In the same vein, “the computer laboratory has become an integral component of foreign-language programs in most educational institutions” (Nazlı, 2005).

Overall, Computers have been used for language teaching for more than three decades. According to Warschauer and Healey (1998) the history of CALL can be divided into three stages: **behaviouristic CALL**, **communicative CALL** and **integrative CALL**. Each one of these phases corresponds to a certain pedagogical approach.

Behaviouristic CALL

It was formed in the late 1960s and used widely in the 1970s under the influence of Audio-lingual teaching method. In this stage of CALL, repetitive language drills, referred to as drill-and practice were used. The computer was seen as a mechanical tutor who never allowed students to work at an individual pace, which hindered motivation.

At this stage, behaviouristic CALL was first designed and implemented in the era of mainframe and the best-known tutorial system, PLATO, ran on its own special hardware.

According to Warschauer and Healey (1998), it included extensive drills, grammatical explanations and translation at various intervals.

Communicative CALL

The emergence of Communicative CALL in the 1970's and 1980's was a reaction to the behavioristic approach to language learning. This period was the time that behaviouristic approach to language teaching was being rejected at both theoretical and pedagogical level, and also personal computers were creating greater possibilities for individual work at school. Communicative CALL corresponded to cognitive theories which stressed that learning was a process of discovery, expression and development. Under the influence of Communicative Language Teaching defendants of communicative CALL argued that computer based activities should focus more on using forms. Software developed in this period included text reconstruction program and simulations. In communicative CALL, the focus was not so much on what students did with the computer, but rather what they did with each other while working at the computer.

Integrative CALL

The last stage of computer-assisted language learning is integrative CALL. "By the 1990s communicative CALL began to be criticized for using the computer in an ad hoc and disconnected fashion and using the computer made 'a greater contribution to marginal rather than central elements' of language learning" (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). New second language acquisition theories and socio-cognitive views influenced many teachers and lead them to use more social and learner-centered methods. This time, emphasis was put on language use in authentic social contexts. Integrative CALL seeks both to integrate the various skills of language learning (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) and to integrate technology more fully into language teaching (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). To this end the multimedia-networked computer provides a range of informational, communicative, and publishing tools that are potentially available to every student.

As a summary of what we have seen, so far, one can say that the computer has come to serve a variety of uses for language teaching. However, the effectiveness that CALL has been designed for is not in the computer itself but in how it is put to use. Hence, it is the role of the computer to help teachers minimize their task and thus reduce their number. Few teachers then manage to run the course of huge number of students thanks to the facilities that the machine offers, a consideration of the second section.

It should be pointed out that the computer is a human made tool which is incapable of action. That is, it has no inborn wisdom, no initiative and inherent ability to learn or to teach. It will perform, with remarkable speed, the instructions exactly given to it by a human user. Thus, the computer as in Nazlı's words (2005) is '**the servant of the user**' and it should not be forgotten that its role in teaching is solely a teaching aid. Consequently, it is dependent on the teacher in many ways: for example, it is unable to create educational materials without the teacher. All the linguistic material and instructions for its presentation must be specified by the teacher. It is the teacher who decides what degree of control the computer will have in his/her classes.

The Role of the Computer in Teaching

The computer can be situated in the classroom, in a special laboratory (CALL laboratory), in a specially designed area of a library or in any convenient location where the student, or small groups of students can work uninterruptedly (Warschauer and Healey, 1998). It can be used as the mainstay of a course, or back up, revision, reinforcement, extension, and so on. It may communicate with the student visually by displaying text, graphics or video images on a screen; it can also present sound in the form of speech, music or other audio-output. The most common means of communication with the computer is by clicking on icons with the mouse or by typing commands and responses at a keyboard (Nazlı, 2005). As a result, unique combinations of interactive and visual capabilities, computers have a beneficial effect on learner motivation.

To conclude this section, it should be pointed out that a computer, or any form of technology, is a learning tool and not a teacher. Computers enhance the learning environment, but they do not directly teach. Computers can *assist* teachers to better present or share information with their students.

Along this same vein, a computer by itself cannot manage the classroom nor do a paperwork. However, computers can certainly *assist* teachers with these professional duties. In fact, a single computer can significantly reduce the teachers' workload and help keep them and their students organized.

In fact, in using CALL research and practice suggest that, appropriately implemented, network-based technology can also contribute significantly to better develop the learning process of university students; a concern of the next section.

CALL and University Students

Most teachers of English would agree that their students need to practice using English outside the classroom if they are to increase their communicative competence, but "practice" can consist of many different types of English Language use. As a university student at Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Meknes, I have been fascinated to observe how and where most of the students (English department) choose to spend their time out of university. Their out-of-university experience was interesting because I wanted to note the extent to which it constituted the kind of English Language practice they have been thought would be beneficial. In particular, I used to notice the large number of those students who used public computers in cyber cafes at all hours of the day and all night specifically of the weekend.

Overall, it can be noticed that the computer and the Internet have become powerful and useful tools for enhancing students' learning experiences. As it can be observed, the fact that computers were involved, and the students' interaction using this technological device often requires their use of English, at least part of the time, meant that the English they used was in a way shaped by the technology.

In the light of what has been mentioned previously, Philip (1986) states that CALL '*offers a powerful self-access facility*' that is, it helps generate autonomous learners who will experience freedom of choice (qtd. in. Ravichandran, 2000). The tools that learners find in computers allow them to assume mastery of their own learning experience. Students can call up the programs held by computers whenever they want; besides, computers are sensitive to the learner's level of proficiency. Others have stated that it helps students 'strengthen their linguistic skills by positively affecting their learning attitude and by helping them build self-instruction strategies and promote their self-confidence' (Kuang-wu, 2000). In addition, it helps to create

independency from a single source of information. Although students can still use their books, they are given the chance to escape from canned knowledge and discover thousands of information sources. As a result, their education fulfils the need for interdisciplinary learning in a multicultural world.

Another useful technological aid that has significantly contributed to the educational domain and that has shown success in teaching English as a second or foreign language is the Video which is considered in the following section.

Video in ELT classroom

Video is at best defined as the selection and sequence of messages in an audio-visual context. It is a form of communication and it can be achieved without the help of language, since we often interact by gesture, eye contact and facial expression to convey a message. Video provides visual stimuli such as the environment and this can lead to generate prediction, speculation and a chance to activate background schemata when viewing a visual scene reenacted.

It can be argued that language found in videos could help non-native speakers understand stress patterns. Videos allow the learner to see body rhythm and speech rhythm in second language discourse through the use of authentic language and speed of speech in various situations. Videos allow contextual clues to be offered. In addition, video can stimulate and motivate student interest. The use of visuals overall can help learners predict information, infer ideas and analyze the world that is brought into the classroom via the use of video instruction. In a teaching or testing situation video can help enhance clarity and give meaning to auditory text; it can create a solid link between the materials being learned and the practical application of it in a testing situation; the video can act as a stimulus or catalyst to help integrate materials or aspects of the language; videos can help manipulate language and at the same time be open to a variety of interpretations; the video can offer a visual reinforcement of the target language and can lower anxiety when practicing the skill of listening. (Christine, 2000).

Another advantage that videos offer to ELT classroom is that, in Healey's words, "in the noncomputer realm of educational technology, video is an important tool in speaking improvement. When students can see themselves on videotape, spotting their own weaknesses is much easier. Watching video-tapes recorded different points during a semester or term gives learners a sense of progress, which is very helpful in language learning. Students who will make presentations in the scientific, business, or academic realm need to know how to look as well as sound good in presentation, and video offers them a full picture of what they do well and what they need to improve" (1999, p.116).

The teacher's role

The teacher plays a key role in the success or failure of any video used in the language classroom. With careful and systematic planning, video-based lessons can be highly stimulating, and provide a rich resource for language learning. Stempleski emphasizes the key role of the teacher in the use of video, saying that "it is the teacher, not the video, who can make any video-based lesson fruitful language learning experience. It is the teacher who chooses the video; designs tasks and activities that facilitates active learning; prepares students for previewing, viewing, and postviewing activities; raises students' awareness of certain language points; and integrates the video with other aspects of the curriculum" (qtd. in Richard and Renondya, 2002, p.362). For examples, television and video are so closely associated with leisure and

entertainment that many, if not some, students watching video in the classroom expect only to be entertained. In this context, teachers need to lead students to an appreciation of video as a valuable tool for language learning and help them to develop viewing skills which they can apply to their video and television viewing experiences outside the classroom.

The Internet and ELT

The Internet is a global network of networks through which computers communicate. It is an infrastructure consisting of computers, cables, wires, and other telecommunication devices plus the protocols to allow these computers to easily communicate with each other (Steven, 2006).

Over the past few years, the Internet has emerged as a prominent new technology. It has become a powerful technological tool that has pervaded all aspects of the educational, business, and economic sectors of our world. Regardless of one's familiarity with the Internet or not, one must be clear about the fact that we have entered a new information age and the Internet is here to stay (Singhal, 1997).

The Internet has introduced computer users to easy access of valuable information and a multitude of helpful resources. As availability grows every day, students have access to global information anytime, anyplace; they can even access the Internet on their telephones (Frei, Gammill, and Irons, 2007). It is therefore a powerful communicative tool which enables learners to communicate with native speakers in order to further literacy development for authentic purposes, enable language learners to compare students' perspectives on an issue, and allow them to practice specific skills such as negotiating, persuading, clarifying meaning, requesting information and engaging in true-life, authentic discussion (Singhal, 1997). In addition, students can develop important communication skills by using such tools as email, chat rooms, and weblogs.

Email

According to (Frei et al., 2007), Email has become an integral part of communication between teachers, students, parents, and administrators. It allows students to send questions, assignments, papers, and comments to teachers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Teachers can then reply to the students between classes, in the evenings, or even on weekends. Parents can also have the same type of access to teachers if they have questions or concerns about the progress of their child in school.

E-mail can encourage students to use computers in realistic, authentic situations in order to develop communicative and thinking skills; even timid and inhibited students can benefit from the meaningful interaction and communication e-mail makes possible". According to Gaer Susan (1999) e-mail projects

- give learners opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning
- give learners authentic tasks to perform
- expose learners to varied and creative language and encourage learners to produce it
- give learners enough time and feedback
- guide learners to attend mindfully to the learning process
- help learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal level of stress and anxiety
- support learner autonomy

- allow learners to participate cooperatively in the educational process, as in the following e-mail, written to an instructor while she was absent due to jury duty (p: 66,70):

Hello teacher. How are you? I think that you are vey busy with the Jury Dury. But I hope and you have a few minutes to read and answer my letter.

You know that is very difficult for me write a letter if you don't help me. I know that you won't be with me always thats why I have to practice.

The substitute is so pretty. She teaches very well. But you are our teacher and we miss you so much. We are studying very hard so don't worry about us.

Today we are going to have a test so " haga chantigos"

Before that I finish my letter. I want to know about the e-mail project. What happen with them?

I hope and see you soon!
Sincerity: LUCY GARCI SANDOVAL.

Note: from CALL Environment: Research, Practice, and Critical Issues, p: 70, by Gaer Susan, 1999. TESOL (1966)

As we can notice in this e-mail, Lucy is using conscious processes to analyze her progress and her needs. Even though part of the purpose of the e-mail message is to practice letter writing, as expressed in the second paragraph, the message is also filled with authentic chat (" We are studying very hard so don't worry about us") and contains a real request for information ("What happen with them"). Throughout, an authentic voice speaks to a real person and expects an authentic reply.

Chat Rooms

A chat room is a place on the Internet where everyone can have live conversations with multiple people at the same time. It is like having a conference call, except that we are typing on a keyboard rather than talking into a phone. Everyone who is in the chat room can see what we type.

Chat rooms are one of the most interactive areas on the Internet, and a favourite location for teachers and students to interact with their peers. There are different levels of supervision in chat rooms—some are open environments with no moderation, others have leaders who moderate the discussion, and still others have monitors who assess what people write before anyone else sees it. If individuals in the chat room misbehave, the monitors can warn them or bar them from further participation.

In the ESL and EFL domains, chat room has become one of the most powerful and useful means of instruction in many parts of the world, and some researchers (Frei et al., 2007) have pointed out some of its benefits and advantages. For teachers, a chat room is an excellent place to share ideas with colleagues. It is also a place where teachers can interact with their students and help them with homework questions. For students, a chat room can become an interactive classroom. They can meet up with an expert and discuss various topics that they are learning in school. It is also a place where ESL students can enhance their learning skills through the interaction with native speakers.

Weblogs

Another means through which ESL students can experience their abilities in learning is that of Web logs. Web logs are one of the most flexible and easy-to-use resources for Web publishing, which are easily created and easily edited. According to Steven (2006), a Web log, or blog, is a Web page made up of short, frequently updated posts, which are arranged chronologically like a journal (p:123). The content and purpose of blogs vary greatly, from Web links and commentary about other websites to news about a company, person, or idea. Blogs often take the form of a digital diary (Kennedy, 2003) but can contain photos, poetry, miniessays, project updates, and even fiction (qtd. in Steven, 2006).

Web logs are a powerful teaching and learning tool in the classroom because they offer students the advantage of writing and publishing for a real audience in a collaborative environment in which they can give and receive feedback. Such feedback can function as scaffolding, which helps students refine and transfer knowledge. In addition, Web logs provide a more sophisticated learning environment than discussion forums (Steven, 2006), which are shared by many participants. A blog gives individual students control over their own online content.

Data collection and analysis

Methodology

The questionnaire is the best suited method for our data collection. It is well appreciated by both undergraduate and postgraduate students; this makes it very successful and reliable. The primary concern behind this inquiry is both to examine to what extent students at the department of English become acquainted with the computer and the Internet and to know whether we can integrate these technological devices into the Moroccan curriculum as far as students' attitudes are concerned.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first includes three questions about the students' general background. The second consists of six questions about students' attitudes towards the new technology and its use in English Language Learning (ELL). Finally, the third section is composed of five questions, four questions about student's attitudes towards the Internet and its use in ELL and one question concerning the integration of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) into the Moroccan curriculum.

Respondents

Our sample is composed of a number of 50 undergraduate and postgraduate students who belong to the department of English at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Meknes. The objective behind this choice is to provide different views of students from different levels of study of the same language.

Concerning the social status, they are from both the lower and the middle class. Our motivation behind this investigation is to get an idea about students' daily interaction with the computer and the Internet. We eventually realized that most of the students use these devices most of the time either at home for those who have the ability to buy a computer or in cyber cafes for those whose social status is low.

Getting to know their general background, students are aged between twenty-one and thirty-four and are from both sexes, 50% are males and 50% are females as this is shown in the table below which provides general distribution of all students under study.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents

Student's general background	Respondents	Rate
Males	25	50%
Females	25	50%
Undergraduate Students	25	50%
Postgraduate Students	25	50%

Results and data analysis of the questionnaire***Attitudes towards the new technology and its use in ELT classroom***

The aim of this section is to present students' points of view towards the use of the new technology (computer) in the learning of English as a second foreign language.

Table 2. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
Do you use the computer?	Yes	50	100%
	No	0	0%

Table 3. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
How often do you use the computer per week?	Always	28	56%
	Often	10	20%
	Sometimes	9	18%
	Rarely	3	6%

Table 4. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
For what purposes do you	Storing information	43	86%
	Delivering a presentation in	30	60%

use the computer?	the classroom		
	Preparing for the exam	30	60%

The three tables reword the extent to which students are acquainted with the computer and its use. It should be realized that we are dealing with the analysis of the three tables because their results are interlinked. As results confirm, all informants (100%) are familiar with the use of computer. However, the rate of use varies according to their purposes and needs. Thus, 56% use this machine all the time. Most of these students are postgraduate who have computers at home because their academic level obliges them to be always in contact with the computer in order to store information given by the teacher, deliver presentations every week, or prepare for the exam. The rest of the respondents (undergraduate students) cannot afford a computer at home because the majority of them have a low economic status and because they are not in greater need of using the computer for academic purposes; thus, 20% of them use it often, 18% sometimes and 6% rarely.

Table 5. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
Do your teachers make use of the computer in the classroom?	Yes	31	62%
	No	19	38%

Table 6. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
How often do your teachers make use of the computer in the classroom?	Always	13	26%
	Often	6	12%
	Sometimes	8	16%
	Rarely	5	10%

Table 7. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
In your opinion, does the computer facilitate the attainment of course goal?	Yes	50	100%
	No	0	0%

The results confirm that teachers' familiarity with the use of the computer is still developing. An important rate (62%) shows that many teachers are making this technological device part of the course in their classrooms. Thus, 26% of teachers use the computer in the classroom all the time because it is agreed that this device facilitates the attainment of course goal as shown in the sixth table. On the other hand, other teachers are not completely relying on the computer since they see the attainment of course goal in using the old materials (chalk and board). Thus, 12% of them use it often, 16% sometimes and 10% rarely.

Table 8. Students' attitudes towards the use of computer

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
As a student of EFL, do you find that this technological device helps you in your learning process?	Yes	48	96%
	No	2	4%

The goal of this question is to detect whether the computer plays an important role in enhancing the learning process of students of English as a second foreign language.

Almost all students (96%) view that this technological device helps them benefit from the tasks and the facilities that it offers either inside or outside the classroom. Some students have stressed its importance in helping them to understand the course. Since video is so closely associated with leisure and entertainment, many students watching video in the classroom expect to be entertained. This is more beneficial; especially for those who suffer from the lack of constant interaction with native speakers, because during the lesson, students focus their eyes, ears, and minds on the video in ways that will increase both comprehension and recall and add to the satisfaction they gain from viewing. It is also agreed that the computer can work as an organiser in helping both teachers and students to gain time and then to get as much information as possible in a single session.

Moreover, using the computer outside the classroom provides students with interesting activities for constant practice to acquire the native-like-proficiency. These include watching videos, listening to music, checking the English dictionaries, and doing pronunciation exercises. Furthermore, students can be assisted to conduct research projects and become more knowledgeable through the facilities that the computer offers to get books and articles in electronic copies.

Attitudes towards the Internet and its use in English Language Learning (ELL)

The purpose of this section is to detect how the Internet plays an effective role in the learning of English as a second foreign language as far as students' attitudes are concerned.

Table 9. Students' attitudes towards the use of the internet

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
Do you use the Internet?	Yes	50	100%
	No	0	0%

Table 10. Students' attitudes towards the use of the internet

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
How often do you use the Internet	Always	28	56%
	Often	14	28%
	Sometimes	6	12%

	Rarely	2	4%

Table 11. Students' attitudes towards the use of the internet

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
What language(s) do you use?	Arabic	21	42%
	French	28	56%
	English	46	92%

As it is clear from table (9), all students (100%) are acquainted with the use of the Internet. It can also be noticed that the rate of use varies according to one's purpose and need. For example, postgraduate students use this device most of the time in order to be in contact with their teachers through the exchange of e-mails to keep pace with events related to their courses.

It is worth noting that the majority of students (92%) use English since, first, they belong to the department of English and, second, English is their second foreign Language. In addition, using English as a means of communication provides students with many opportunities to achieve a certain level of English language competency.

Table 12. Students' attitudes towards the use of the internet

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
For what reasons do you surf the Net?	Chatting	30	60%
	Listening to music	9	18%
	Looking for information	8	16%
	Exchanging emails	14	28%

Table 13. Students' attitudes towards the use of email

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
With whom do you chat and exchange emails?	Native speakers	29	58%
	Non-native speakers	21	42%

Table (12) shows that university students use the Internet for different purposes. The highest percentage of respondents use is for chatting (60%) and exchanging e-mails (28%). Most of these respondents chat and exchange e-mails with native speakers, which brings them a great chance for direct contact with different cultures.

Although the rest of respondents (42%) chat and exchange e-mails with non-native speakers, the Internet remains useful since it helps learners broaden their knowledge through looking for information especially those related to their courses.

Overall, it has been realized that the Internet is working in favor of ELL since the majority of students use English as a means of surfing the Net, specifically for the purposes illustrated in table 11.

Table 14. Students' attitudes towards the integration of EFL programs

The question	Answers	Respondents	Rate
Do you think that CALL should be integrated into EFL programs as much as possible in Moroccan faculties?	Yes	46	92%
	No	4	8%

The results confirm that learners are fed up with the present situation of the learning and teaching of English as a second foreign language. Some of them have stressed the importance of CALL in helping them to improve the four skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) and become active learners through the better environment that CALL offers to ELL classrooms. Others view that the use of CALL in ELL programmes is a must especially in a time where globalization is still sweeping the world market with technological products. For this reason, it is the role of the Ministry of National Education to implement CALL in Moroccan Faculties.

Finally, the evaluation of all the findings reveals that the majority of Moroccan students support the integration of the new technology (computer) into the curriculum.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown how the computer and the Internet play a significant role in learning of English as a second foreign language. It has also been attempted to consider the extent to which these devices could be helpful for university students especially those who belong to the department of English.

It has been made clear that the use of computer for teaching/ learning purposes is not nascent, but rather it has been found to date back to the behavioristic era. Hence, various multimedia programs have been developed to the extent that some of them have been integrated into the curriculum. In this context, we mentioned the emergence of the Internet as a powerful technological device which has significantly contributed to the educational domain and which has shown success in the teaching and learning of English as a second foreign language.

In the light of what has been said, the practical part which was an attempt to detect whether university students really benefit from the tasks and the facilities that the computer and the Internet offer to their learning process, And as far as students' attitudes are concerned, we eventually have been convinced that the Moroccan government needs to appreciate and integrate these technological devices at the university.

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Appendix Questionnaire

Could you please fill in this questionnaire? Thank you very much for your cooperation

Sex : male ____ female ____

Age : ____

Are you a Postgraduate student ? ____ or Undergraduate student ? ____

Attitudes towards the new technology and its use in ELT classroom.

1- Do you use the computer ?

2- How often do you use it per week ?
 Yes ____ No ____
 Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Rarely ____

3- For what purposes do you use the computer ?

____ Storing information

____ Delivering a presentation in the classroom

____ Preparing for the exam

If you use it for other purposes, please let us know

.....

4- do your teachers make use of the computer in the classroom ?

Yes ____ No ____

If your answer is « yes », how often do they make use of it?

Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Rarely ____

5- In your opinion, does the computer facilitate the attainment of your goal?

Yes ____ No ____

6- As a student of English as a second foreign language, do you find that this technological device helps you in your learning process ?

a) If « Yes » please explain how?

b) If « No » please explain why?

.....

Attitudes towards the Internet and its use in English Language Teaching (ELT)

1- Do you use the Internet ?

Yes ____ No ____

If you check « yes », how often ?

Always ____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Rarely ____

2- What language(s) do you use ?

Arabic ____ French ____ English ____

3- For what reasons do you surf the Net ?

____ Chatting

____ Listening to music

____ Looking for information

____ Exchanging e-mails

____ Other reasons

Could you please state those reasons?

.....

4- If you use the Internet for chatting and exchanging e-mails, do you chat and exchange e-mails with

____ Native speakers of the language you study ?

____ Non-native speakers of the language you study ?

5- Do you think that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) should be integrated into the second foreign language programmes as much as possible in Moroccan faculties ?

Yes ____ No ____

Will you please give reasons ?

.....

.....

Thank you for your time.

Reading, Speaking and Writing through Creative Resources: Comics in Second Language Teaching

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the intercultural and commutative potential of creative and literary materials such as comics, as a tool for English language teaching with a particular focus on cultural aspects and from a communicative approach. Firstly, the paper defines intercultural communicative competence, including different revisions of the term (Chen and Starosta, 1996; Byram, 1997; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Secondly, it examines comics' potential and their relationship with the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence from a theoretical point of view. Thirdly, it discusses about comics' potential in motivating teaching English as a Second Language, giving a well-detailed description of those materials. Apart from defining comics, it also makes reference to their components and characteristics that help to understand their importance in teaching English as a Second Language. Later, it makes some considerations for the methodological use of comics for reading, writing and speaking to correctly develop intercultural and communicative competence in intermediate English learners. Finally, it states some conclusions that show the value of these resources in the classroom.

Key words: Comics, Intercultural Competence, Reading, Speaking, Writing.

Introduction

Teaching English in a globalized context constantly needs changes and methodological innovations with the main objective of making language teaching not just the transmission of a group of expression that must be learnt and used, but a cultural vehicle, too. A good language command will give learners wider access to cultural or sociological contents; in that sense, we must consider the prominent role of materials and resources' selection with a cultural purpose.

Creative literary resources, such as poetry, drama or comics are more flexible and adaptable to real communicative contexts than other materials. These resources also allow teachers to improve learning and teaching second language because they are also more motivating and challenging for learners than grammar based materials. Comics, for instance, can prevent from language learning contexts where repetition or learning by heart becomes the only way to access the second language, since they make easier to bring creativity and communication into the classroom. Some recent studies (Cerezo, 2007; Criado and Sánchez, 2009) highlight that English Second Language lessons are not communicative yet, stating that "teacher's action in the classroom is not predominantly communicative in nature" (2009: 8). Besides, other current studies (Moirano, 2012; Lario de Oñate and Vázquez, 2013) make reference to the secondary role of culture in those lessons and suggest that teachers and institutions should "pay special attention to the issue of not leaving culture aside when teaching language." (Moirano, 2012: 73). Classroom resources, such as comics, create a new environment, allowing participation and giving teachers the possibility to develop intercultural and communicative competences in their students.

Comics are normally associated with fantastic stories that belong to fiction. However, there are lots of them with political or historical contents. White (1992) makes reference to the possibility of accessing historical or cultural facts in a particular country by using different materials.

Moreover, comics are also very powerful to foster communicative competence in our students. The main relationship between communicative competence acquisition and comics comes from comics' characteristics. Particularly, this relationship has to do with the association between image/drawings and text that establishes a connection between the meanings behind both. Comics are generally easy to read stories and their language is part of familiar or diary conversations. Besides, comics have an attractive context and offer the possibility to work with their different language extracts from a communicative approach. The written text is normally supported and implemented by the image, so that combination between text and image promotes further understanding. Furthermore, Starr points out that "comics provide authentic language learning opportunities [...] The dramatically reduced text of comics makes them manageable and language profitable" (Starr, 2004: 2).

In this article, I will explore the possibilities to work with comics from a communicative perspective that allows teachers to introduce cultural aspects in their lessons. I will focus on the different skills that can be developed by using comics: writing, speaking and reading. Therefore, the main aim is to present a valid didactic approach to design activities with a focus on these particular skills that can be applied to comics as essential creative materials in the development of intercultural communicative competence.

Intercultural communicative competence

Intercultural communicative competence is commonly considered as a synonym of communicative competence, but there is a particular ingredient in the former, that is the culture. Spitzberg (1989) states that the main difference between communicative competence and

intercultural communicative competence comes from the context in which both are developed. English language students are required to communicate effectively in English, but this ability to communicate must be shown at specific places, environments or in particular countries. That is the reason why the cultural component is needed and must be dominated by English language learners. Those places and countries possess particular cultural elements that influence the language and its use in terms of vocabulary, style or linguistics structures.

Collier (1989) adds that there are cultural elements that can be general to any cultural society, but there are also specific components that belong to particular societies, defining intercultural communicative competence as: “the mutual avowing or confirmation of the interacts’ cultural identities where both interacts engages in behaviour perceived to be appropriate and effective in advancing both cultural identities” (Collier, 1989: 25).

Some years later, Chen and Starosta (1996) carried out different research projects in the field of cultural elements and their influence on communication; they ended up in a model of intercultural communicative competence that involves most of the considerations made by previous authors. They divide this competence into three main abilities: affectivity (intercultural sensitivity), knowledge (intercultural conscience) and behaviour (intercultural ability).

Firstly, intercultural sensitivity, according to Chen and Starosta (1996), makes reference to the affective dimension, paying particular attention to the emotional nature of the competence. They focus on the ability to send and receive emotions using messages in the foreign language among speakers who do not belong to the same linguistic community. Some of the characteristics that are related to the affectivity and emotional competence are self-confidence, social behaviour or avoiding prejudging. All those characteristics can open the learner to the new culture and avoid the learners to look at the target culture and language as a strange or oblivious to them.

Secondly, the authors define intercultural conscience, considering that the English learner must have a previous knowledge of the communicative interactions that can take place among individuals in the target culture. Chen and Starosta (1996) point out two main characteristics: self-conscience and others’ cultural conscience. They consider important that the learner knows his roots and culture values, since the aforementioned allow him to look at similarities or differences with the target culture.

Finally, Chen and Starosta (1996) refer to intercultural ability, pointing out five characteristics in this ability: message coding, appropriate discourse, flexibility, interaction management and social abilities. Those are considered decisive to become competent from an intercultural perspective because they are related to non-verbal language and imply that the learner understands and shows ability to codify information in a particular context. Flexibility in intercultural contexts also has a prominent role, since speaking and interacting in a different cultural context with particular characteristics is often difficult for learners. As it will be discussed below in this article, creative materials such as comics can concede a previous knowledge of the target culture, since the language used is mostly oral and it can bring students closer to real conversational contexts through fictional stories and their oral expressions.

Intercultural communicative competence as an alternative to communicative competence has also been studied by Byram (1997) who states that it is “the ability to understand and establish a verbal relationship with people from other countries” (Byram, 1997: 5). Having this into account, this competence does not just look at the conversation with native speakers, but also to the learners’ ability to establish conversations in English with people from any country and understand their cultural behaviour as well as the linguistics aspects that might show cultural features.

In other words, Byram (1997) develops a framework to teach learners to communicate in a particular foreign context, not just with native speakers, but also with people from different origins and backgrounds. These studies are also the seed of other researcher such as McAllister and Irvine (2000) who consider the development of intercultural communicative competence fundamental to develop competent speakers in different cultural contexts.

The following figure shows the differences between communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence in terms of communication, objectives of language and teaching and appreciation of national /target culture:

Table 1. Intercultural communicative competence. Adapted from Byram (1997)

	Communicative Competence	Intercultural Communicative Competence
COMMUNICATION	Information exchange	Interaction to allow information exchange
ESL OBJECTIVE	Communication with a native speaker	Communication to provide intercultural relationships
TARGET CULTURE	Monolithic	In changing and evolving attitude, depending on different aesthetic and cultural sensitivities
CULTURAL CONTENTS	Contents and objectives	Attitudes, abilities and skills
LEARNING TO LEARN	Linguistically oriented. Self-learning	Linguistically and culturally oriented. Self-learning

It is important to highlight the concept of target culture that is shown in this model of intercultural communicative competence. It is not just perceived as a national culture, but the target culture is an evolving and changing culture that is constantly being developed by individuals. We must consider those factors when choosing or preparing materials, trying to choose those materials that offer a modern view of society and language.

Culture and Second Language

Some authors consider the differences between neutral English (Hill, 1986) and nuclear English (Quirk, 1981). Neutral English will make reference to a variety of English in which cultural references are not present: “which would serve as a universal medium of communication” (Saleemi, 1985: 16), that which Chew (1999) refers to as: “a worldview of English, which recognizes that it no longer belongs exclusively to its native speakers” (Chew, 1999: 43). Hasman states that “English is divesting itself of its political and cultural connotations as more

people realize that English is not the property of only a few countries. Instead, it is a vehicle that is used globally and will lead to more opportunities. It belongs to whoever uses it for whatever purpose or need” (Hasman, 2000: 28). Those authors consider that the international potential of English as a lingua franca has made cultural connotations disappear or decrease from its vocabulary and use.

However, we must consider if it is really possible for a language not to have reference to cultural elements or if it is possible for a language to show multitude of cultural aspects at the same time. Widdowson states that: “a language that stripped down to its bare essentials as a resource for impersonal reference is deprived at the same time of its potential for creativity and change, [such language] ceases to function a natural language” (Widdowson, 1982: 208). Such statement makes us think that it may not be possible to separate a language from its cultural roots and it is probably essential to work on cultural elements by inserting different materials in second language teaching.

Some documents recently developed by European education institutions such the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) also refer the importance of culture in the second language teaching and sociocultural and intercultural aspects that should be included when teaching:

to cope with the social and cultural dimensions of communicative behaviour, for example, by adhering to social conventions and cultural norms. Working in harness with our sociolinguistic competences, our pragmatic competences underpin our ability to use language appropriately to fulfil particular functions, for example, greeting, leave-taking, requesting, thanking...
(Little, 2012: 3)

The *Common European Framework of Reference* also includes *The European Portfolio*) that alludes to different initiatives that aim to comprise linguistic experiences of students belonging to European countries. The document includes a part devoted to cultural experiences related to their language learning.

The ELP comprises:

- a language passport, which summarizes the owner’s linguistic identity and his/her experience of learning and using languages other than the mother tongue;
 - a language biography, which supports the planning, monitoring and evaluation of language learning, and encourages reflection on the intercultural dimension of second/foreign language learning and use and on the language learning process;
 - a dossier, in which the owner keeps work in progress, evidence of developed second/foreign language skills, and certificates and other documents that attest learning achievement
- (Little, 2012: 13)

Then, culture teaching has a prominent role in language teaching from an European perspective and one of its main concerns is to search for new ways, tools and creative materials that allow teachers to bring cultural elements and communicative practices into the second language classroom.

The potential of comics

Comics are potential resources to introduce culture into the class and they are composed by different elements:

- a) Panels are the main part in comics and they are normally describing the main sequence. Panels can have different shapes depending on the story. Stafford (2010) makes reference to the relationship that is established between panels and speech acts, considering that every individual speech act with individual meaning (parole), it is accompanied by different instances of language (langue), so the meaning of the panel (parole) will depend on its position in a sequence where other instances of language (langue) are shown in the comic.
- b) Text balloons are bordered shape and contain a dialogue, usually with a tail that points to the speaker. As with panels, balloons appear in various shapes that characterize the mood of the characters.
- c) Thought balloons: They almost always have bumpy, cloudlike borders and tails that look like trails of bubbles. They emphasise the feelings and attitudes of the different characters and together with the text balloons help the reader to understand the story.
- d) Sound effects: Most sound effects are floating letters and sometimes they are an integral part of the imagery. They also include onomatopoeias such as: *Crash! Chug, chug, chung. Puff, puff, puff. Ding-dong, ding-dong!*
- e) Narrative boxes are usually rectangular shaped and they help in the construction of the story. Narrative boxes are commonly used to set the scene and concede a spatial and temporal setting into it.

Apart from the relationship that can be observed in the different elements that are involved in comics, there are other aspects that arise from the combination of images and texts. Van Leeuwen states that there is “a single, multi-layered, multimodal communicative act, whose illocutionary force comes about through the fusion of all the component, semiotic modalities: dress, grooming, facial expression, gaze or gesture” (Leeuwen, 2004: 7). Furthermore, Tsredanelis y Wong (2004) points out that, “many non-linguistic factors can affect the precise interpretation of meaning. Context, both linguistic and situational, can fill in the crucial details in sentences lacking explicitness” (Tserdanelis y Wong, 2004: 240).

Comics have the possibility to tell stories, past, present or future experiences or even fictional events, giving teachers the opportunity to work in different verbal tenses and using language in a real communicative context. Furthermore, comics can show daily habits, customs, ornaments and responses associated with an individual cultural reality. Hence, by an appropriate selection of comics that show cultural aspects, teachers can create their own materials to develop intercultural communicative aspects, particularly, through reading, writing or speaking activities. In the following part I will make some suggestions in the design of activities or sessions based on comics.

Reading from Comics

The value of comics as a tool in the classroom has been widely discussed in recent years. Their potential as a resource for reading is recognized by most educators as they promote literacy in the early years, but they are also appealing for young or adult readers. In the design of activities from comics, we must consider Grabe (2004) who points out that: “in academic contexts reading provides a major source of input for further students learning of both language and content information” (Grabe, 2004: 46). The following figure shows an example of reading from comics session template:

Table 2. Reading from comics. Adapted from Grabe y Stoller (2002)

I. Pre-reading	I. Introduce the main vocabulary using flashcards II. Predict the meaning in a particular strip III. Identify the main themes IV. Recycle previous knowledge that can be familiar to students
II. During reading	I. Explore the panels that might be difficult to understand II. Familiarize with new structures or vocabulary III. Help general understanding
III. Post-reading	I. Summarize II. Analyse and evaluate III. Classify IV. Confirm previous predictions

Nunan (1989) also proposes different steps to follow in the design of activities for reading that can be suitable and adapted to comics. The authors believe that activities should be designed following a progression and a controlled practice carried out by the teacher is essential. He states that: "comprehension based activities to controlled production activities and finally the ones which require the learner to engage in real communicative interaction" (1989: 118). So, the task design can be as follows: the learner to undertake activities which make progressively more demands upon them, moving from comprehension based activities to controlled production activities, and finally ones which require the learner to engage in real communicative interaction."

a) Comprehension and familiarization

In this first stage the teacher can show students images from the story and characters and ask the students general question, such as: *What topic might this story be about? What do we already know about this topic? Have we read any other books about this topic? Do we have any experience related to this topic? Where and when did we have the experience?* Other questions can be related to cultural aspects: *Where does the main character live? Is your home town similar to the one in this comic? Is there any character in the story you feel identify with? Why?* Besides, clothes or rooms that are shown in the comic can be also analysed in terms of cultural differences and similarities.

According to Nunan (1989), those general questions will serve the students to get closer to the story and understand it later in a proper way.

b) Production

This phase is useful to work on reading aloud, particularly, practising intonation, rhythm and pronunciation. The selection of the story is important in that phase, since we can choose a story with five to eight characters, so our students in group can practice it, reading in different roles. Drama will also be suitable in this phase. A first reading by the teacher or a previous listening will be adequate to avoid pronunciation mistakes.

c) Interaction

Interaction can be divided into three different short phases: simulation, discussion and problem solving. In the simulation phase, teachers can introduce unexpected events in the story and the student could contribute by saying how a particular character will behave after this unexpected event.

In the second part, discussion, students can talk in pairs or small groups, ask and answering questions, such as: *Where does the story take place? Who is the main character? Who is the villain? How do you know it? Who is the hero/heroine?* etc. Finally, in problem solving, teacher can ask the student about a new end for the story with new panels, narrative boxes and elements. Besides, new characterization of heroes or heroines in the story can promote creativity and adapt to the student cultural background and preferences.

Those didactic approaches to comics are based on the concept of *task continuity* (Nunan, 1989: 119) and they are mainly directed to work on reading, but they may introduce listening or speaking tasks, too in longer sessions. Drawing or painting from comics can be also considered at this point, but it will depend on the learners' pictorial abilities, material resources.

Writing from comics

As it has been described in reading, students need authentic materials to achieve a significant and valuable learning. Sometimes, intermediate level students find themselves unable to write or speak because of the lack of ideas or reason to carry out a conversation on the topics that teachers propose in the classroom. That lack of ideas can find comics as a source of motivation and ideas to write or speak about.

Comics are accessible to every student and they represent an intercultural dialogue source as Davis (1997) states. Their images are motivating and challenging as a theme for writing on characters, settings or to compare present events to the ones in the story. An example of a writing session from comics is described below:

Table 3. Writing from comics

1	Give some part of a well-known comic to your student: <i>Garfield</i> , <i>Peanut</i> , etc. You can also choose any comic with a focus on cultural aspects or draw your own comic. Historical events or cultural values may appear on it
2	Ask your students to describe personally and physically the characters in the story. Images can help in this description
3.	Ask your students to finish the story from the comic strips you gave them. If they know the end you can tell them to imagine a new ending or a better solution for the historical event depicted in the comic strip
4.	Share in groups the different versions of the story created by students
5.	Provide your students with a <i>feedback</i> of their descriptions and endings

Speaking from comics

Reading and writing are critical for learners' success, but speaking is the key to have access to everyday conversation and it is this skill that most students struggle with. Due to their oral component (conversation between characters), comics are a useful material to enhance students and foster their oral skills. Richards (2008) divides the teaching and practice of speaking in different phases: "talk as interaction, talk as transaction, talk as performance" (Richards, 2008: 159).

Talk as interaction makes reference to communicative contexts and situations that are created between students or between the teacher and the student and means that students are able to command themselves in an effective conversation: opening and closing a conversation, kidding, taking turns and make use of the appropriate style.

Talk as transaction is related to abilities that involve negotiation skills, such as describing, explaining, asking for information or reasoning your opinion. Finally, talk as performance mainly refers to monologues, where speaking is similar to writing and sequencing and choosing the right vocabulary is more important than communication in itself. Due to their orality and other characteristics, comics are essential to work on speaking in these three phases:

Table 4. *Interacting and negotiating from comics*

INTERACTION	I. Opening and closing conversation from a panel II. Choosing a theme for a comic strip III. Interacting in short conversations IV. Answering from a text balloon.
NEGOTIATION	I. Describing different setting in a comic II. Comparing different panels III. Showing agreement and disagreement with the characters IV. Making suggestions to the characters for future decisions

We can see in the figure above some of the techniques that can be used to prepare speaking activities from comics, paying particular attention to interaction and negotiation of meaning. Those themes can be adapted to different comics, such as *Garfield*, *Calvin and Hobbes* or *The Ultimates* by Marvel (2010). Furthermore, we can choose comics that focus on particular aspect that we want to work with our students or cultural themes.

Conclusions

This paper has studied the potential of comics, paying particular attention to their importance in teaching language and culture to develop reading, writing and speaking skills in intermediate learners. Firstly, it has presented and defined intercultural communicative competence. Then, it has alluded to the relationship between language and culture. Later, it has studied the potential of comics in language learning and teaching from a communicative perspective. It has also looked at some of their most important characteristics of comics that allow teachers to bring cultural elements and oral language into the classroom. Thirdly, it has made reference to reading, writing

and speaking from comics, so the use of those materials acquire a significant role in the ESL classroom. Finally, this article states some conclusion that lead the reader to consider the inclusion of comics as a resource in the English language classroom.

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The Effects of Form-Focused Instruction on the Learners' Accuracy of Written Production

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Abstract

A recent approach to second language (L2) instruction is integrating Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) in a L2 classroom. One way to achieve this is through incidental focus on form (FonF) which draws learners' attention to linguistic items as they arise. Focus on form has been theorized as benefitting to the L2 learners, but few empirical investigations have been done in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision in this regard. This study looked into the effects of FFI and tried to compare the two types of FFI (implicit and explicit) and further investigated which type of instruction helped to promote L2 language development. To carry out this research 'The Effects of Form-Focused Instruction on ESOL Learners' Accuracy of Written Production', 45 experienced teachers at various ESOL centers in the UK and 16 ESOL learners in Entry level 2 or B1/B2 level at the 'Skills for Life' Centre in Preston College, UK, who were as the experimental group of this study. The ESOL teachers' perception about the effectiveness of FFI in the L2 classroom was yielded through questionnaires and one to one interviews. The experimental study was conducted by individualized tests for the ESOL learners in which productive tests were designed to induce their progressive written production and time triangulated data. The results revealed that planned focus on forms (FonFs) is preferred and practiced by the ESOL teachers in their L2 classrooms and seen as beneficial. The results of the tests showed that learners were able to recall correctly or partially correctly the intended linguistic items. This suggests that explicit FFI may be of some benefit to the ESOL learners, particularly if they are encouraged to incorporate the targeted linguistic items into their own L2 production.

Key words: FFI, Explicit, implicit, written production, UK

1. Significance of the Study

A common way to talk about language is in terms of its grammar (Hulstijn, 2002). In fact, the most common conception of language is that it consists of a large set of lexical items and a set of rules. Moreover, grammar is often thought of as an “invisible central spine that holds everything else together” (Cook, 2001: 24) and an important component of L2 learning programmes. Ellis asserts that, “there is ample evidence to demonstrate that teaching grammar works” (2006:102). Grammar is perceived as a language system of communication allowing speakers/writers to make meaningful exchange. This meaningful exchange is “text that refers to any instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language” (Halliday, 2004:3).

A ‘communicative approach’ is taken to teach grammar in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) sector under this study which refers to the “provision of English language teaching for adult migrants” termed by Lang (2010:223). Though they are functionally and communicatively oriented; yet they are invariably based on so called pedagogical grammars (either overtly or covertly) and involve a structured approach to the presentation of the rules of grammar. Such Pedagogical techniques or Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) is referred to “Any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (Ellis, 2001:1). Focus on form is most frequently teacher-initiated, but it is also initiated by learners through questions and requests for explanation (Poole, 2005b).

1.2 Aims of the Investigation

This study originated from the researcher’s personal experience of teaching grammar with explicit instruction in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The study aims to investigate the teaching maxims of experienced ESOL teachers in the UK as to how they conduct FFI in their language classrooms and their rationale for doing so. Furthermore, the researcher attempts to examine which technique affects the linguistic accuracy of a group of ESOL learners’ written production following implicit FonF in comparison with another group receiving explicit FonFs at the same level of language proficiency.

Doughty & Williams defined Implicit and explicit instruction as: Implicit FonF: The aim is to attract learner attention and to avoid metalinguistic discussion, always minimising any interruption to the communication of the meaning. Whereas explicit teaching: The aim is to direct learner attention and to exploit pedagogical grammar in this regard. (1998:230). Hadley (2001) defines the term ‘proficiency’ as a learner’s general language ability in speaking, listening, reading and/or writing based on some kind of criteria. In other words, proficiency in L2 requires that the learners acquire a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions, which caters to fluency, and a rule-based competence consisting of knowledge of specific grammatical rules, which caters to complexity and accuracy (Skehan, 1998).

1.3 The Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions formulated for the purpose of this study are:

1.3.1 Research Question One

How do the ESOL teachers perceive the impact of implicit vs explicit instruction for the ESOL learners?

1.3.1.2 Research Question Two

To what extent does FFI improve the written production of ESOL learners at entry level 2/3 or intermediate level?

1.3.2 Hypotheses

1.3.2.1 Hypothesis One

Implicit FFI does not affect the linguistic accuracy of the ESOL learners' written production in comparison with explicit FFI.

1.3.2.2 Hypothesis Two

There are no significant differences between Explicit and Implicit FFI in terms of improving accuracy in written production of the ESOL learners.

1.3.3 Rationale for the Research Questions

This study originated from the researcher's personal beliefs about teaching explicitly in EFL classroom. One of the concerns as an EFL teacher was whether the language learners' written production should be corrected in terms of the non-targeted forms or not. The question then arises as to when to correct, how to correct and what to correct. Even by referring to the existing research there are some contradictory findings. The noteworthy point is that, considering the results of all these studies, one cannot see concluding results concerning FonF in particular. Regarding the comparative studies in terms of the effectiveness of Explicit and Implicit FonF the need could easily be felt to investigate the effects of implicit and explicit FFI and its effects on the written production of ESOL learners at entry level 2/3 or intermediate level.

2. Theoretical background

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of 'Form-Focused Instruction' on Second Language Learners (SLL); it would be significant to discuss at this point some theories/hypotheses which are in support to the concept of 'input' in the language development. Over the years, a number of the linguistic theories and the hypotheses have been evolved which highlights that how L1 and L2 are acquired/learned by the learners. Noam Chomsky describes language acquisition as the mental representation that is stored in a human's mind. He states that "... 'language acquisition device' that takes experience as 'input' and gives the language as an 'output'-an 'output' that is internally represented in the mind/brain" (Chomsky, 2000:4 cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:52). His Universal Grammar theory (UG) which he puts forward that all human beings inherit a universal set of principles that are invariant to all natural languages as well as parameters which are variant or help to illustrate differences between languages. He took into account was that, "for language acquisition is **linguistic competence**, or speaker-hearers' underlying knowledge of language. This is distinguished from **linguistic performance**, or speaker-hearers' actual use of language in specific instances" (Troike, 2006:56). UG has been significantly important for the SLA researchers to conduct studies on the basis of this theory and to find the correlation between the FLL and the SLL language development, and how learners use their linguistic knowledge to acquire/learn SLA. "However, as UG is a theory of natural languages claiming it plays no part in second language acquisition would mean claiming that second languages are not natural languages" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:77).

Other problem related to this linguistic theory is that it was only related to core grammar as well as ignoring the learner's psychological and social factors. This led to further exploration of the

significant elements of SLLs paving its way to the Interlanguage (IL) theory, coined by Selinker (1970's). The IL theory attempts to identify the stages of development that are dynamic (constantly evolving), for example omission and generalization as the learners become more proficient in the comprehension and production of their second language. However, Selinker argues that learners do not acquire their L2 fully and may maintain some features of L1 which is termed as 'IL continuum'. It leads to an overgeneralization of rules in a way that native speaker would not, for example "I goed home" to create past tense, this can lead to fossilization, that is unique to the learner. According to Mitchell & Myles, (2004:102) "Fossilisation refers to the fact that Second Language Learners unlike First Language Learners sometimes seem unable to get rid of non native like structures in the L2 despite abundant linguistic input over several years".

3.1 Input Hypothesis

Krashen's first input proposal led researcher to examine more closely the characters of input being made available to the L2 learners (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:166). In Krashen's hypothesis he claims that it is important for learners to receive comprehensive input for SLL to take place.

The hypothesis states that: "Humans acquire language in only one way-by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input' . . . We move from i , our current level, to $i+1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i+1$ " (Krashen, 1985; Cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:165).

The defining distinction between implicit acquisition was made by Krashen which states that, (subconscious process that all children use to acquire their L1 by natural interaction) and explicit learning of L2 (is a conscious process that results in knowing a language in a classroom experience) Furthermore, in his view, as the implicit and explicit knowledge are two distinct mental developments they are not interchangeable. This is termed as 'Interface position'. On the other hand, Ellis (2006) argues that the implicit knowledge is procedural and is held unconsciously as it can only be verbalized if made explicit (explicit knowledge is held consciously and consists of facts that speakers of a language have learned). Moreover, Ellis continues that: "there is plentiful evidence that explicit instruction is effective in promoting L2 learning".

Despite various criticisms, linguists Long and Swain extended their investigation based and inspired by Krashen's Input Hypothesis. These hypotheses "propose a more systematic approach to linking features of environmental language and learners' second language development" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:166), some of the aspects that were ignored in the Krashen's proposal.

3.2 Interaction Hypothesis

Long (1980) comments on the Krashen's hypothesis and said that, an attempt to capture the strengths of an analytical approach by stating that the speakers modify their speech in order to make input comprehensible. In this case the input is paraphrased in terms of the "conversational tactics such as repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and clarification requests" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:167), which are available for acquisition. Input which well targets to the particular developmental needs of an individual learner to resolve any communicative difficulties between the native speaker/non native speaker and not any conscious motive to teach grammar. However, the perspective put forward by Long was that such efforts should help the language development which in Krashen's, terms is that the learners receive $i+1$ following interaction. Long, (1997b) suggests that "particularly important is the negotiation of

meaning that occurs more or less predictably in certain interaction between learners and other speakers . . . and certain type of written texts, especially long" (cited in Doughty & William, 1998:22).

3.3 Output Hypothesis

Swain's Output Hypothesis was based on Vygotsky's theory which explains how the interaction contributes to the language learning (Lightbrown, 2000). Swain's conceptual hypothesis is "largely on the 'reflective' role of output" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:175). According to her, there is a need to focus not just on the input and the interaction, on learning production 'output' which signifies the relationship between the language use and the language learning in SLA. Ellis (1999) did some studies to find the link of output on the L2 development. He concludes that pushing learners to produce language may give rise to positive effects especially on the vocabulary. Hence, in regards to grammar teaching the benefits of 'pushed out' remain inconclusive (cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:175).

3.4 Focus on Form

It is evident from all the above mentioned theories/hypotheses that the learners pay attention to the language development in order to intake or absorb the knowledge of language use with the help of input and interaction. A learner is required to be made 'aware' of the error at some point and Schmidt (1990, 1994, 2001) labels 'awareness' as 'noticing' based on his own experience of learning L2 (Portuguese): despite getting input of language instructions for several months, he only started using 'form' once he started noticing them. To support the Schmidt's idea of Noticing, the researchers such as Philip investigated its relevance and his findings claimed that "In terms of understanding the process of SLA, these findings support the claim for interface between interaction, noticing and SLA . . ." (Philip, 2003:120; cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:185). However, the nature of noticing cannot be limited to the amount of formal instructions to which learners are exposed to (Lightbrown, 2000). The role of language instructions is to help learners move their current level of IL to the next level. L.White makes a discrete distinction between two types of instruction: FonFs, that is step-by-step explicit grammar instructions and FonF which is corrective feedback fully integrated into the ongoing communicative activities and therefore implicit (cited in Lightbrown, 2000). A number of studies have compared the effects of these pedagogical interventions which in result strongly support the inclusion of FonF in the CLT classrooms. In fact research by Norris and Ortega confirms that instructions which include FonF make a significant difference in learners' language development (cited in Lightbrown, 2000).

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Collection Procedures

The Data were collected from a variety of individuals and by using different methods/procedures. The main purpose of selecting these participants was that they had experience of the phenomenon under investigation here (i.e. experience of teaching/learning in the ESOL sector). This study will also provide comparison of two native teachers' Form-focused practices in the context of their own classrooms for the experimental study. The rationale for this selection was purposive: as Patton (1990) puts it, a strategy in which participants are included in

a study on the basis of their ability, as judged by the researcher, to provide information relevant to the central purpose of the research.

4.2 Institutional Setting

To accomplish this comparative study, the ESOL learners were from the language institute located in the 'Skills for Life' Centre, Preston College, UK. In this institute, there are a set of placement tests (prepared in-house) and also interviews that the ESOL learners are required to take before being placed in classes of various levels. ESOL is offered to people whose first language is not English. It is offered at 6 different levels from Pre-entry to Level 2. The classes take place within the college premises and in different locations within Preston city for learners' convenience and tutors is a mixture of native and non-native speakers of English.

4.3 The Participants

'Teachers and learners' refer to 'ESOL' teachers and learners.

The words 'student and 'learner' are interchangeable in this study.

4.4 ESOL Teachers for the Questionnaires

A total of forty-five responses were analysed for the quantitative study; the researcher's initial criteria for selecting the ESOL teachers from various educational centres were based on their years of experience, Education and willingness to participate. The teacher participants were from both genders and included; 10 males and 35 females among them 18 teachers had between 3 and 6 years and 27 teachers had more than 5 years of ESOL teaching experience at different proficiency levels.

4.5 ESOL Teachers for the Experimental Study

Two teachers with different levels of teaching experience agreed to participate in the study; both were native speakers of English and teachers at Preston College ESOL provision. The experimental studies participants were; Teacher 1 had more than 20 years of teaching experience in ESOL provision at Preston College and teacher 2 had more than 3 years of teaching experience. Following the ethical guideline, both teachers were approached and consent forms were signed after they showed willingness to participate.

4.6 ESOL Learners for the Experimental Study

The ESOL learners of two existing classes at Preston College and were existing students of the above mentioned teachers. The sample size was twenty-six; multilingual and mixed ethnic backgrounds such as Polish, Eastern European and others as a mix of Asian backgrounds. The ESOL learners were aged between 19-30 years approximately. There was no preference for male or female, as this is not a study of gender differences. The choice of size was based on a personal preference to what the researcher thought was achievable. The two ESOL classes taken under consideration for this study meet three times a week and every session lasted for 120 minutes. The proficiency level of learners was Entry level 2/3; CEFR independent user B1/B2 level. Borg and Gall (1979) emphasise that "The casual comparative and experimental methodologies require a sample of no fewer than fifteen" (cited in Cohen et al., 2007:93). Hence, the resultant sample was comprised of two classes which were further divided into groups 1 and group 2 of N=13 in each.

4.7 Procedure

Loewen (2005:367) suggests “with planned focus on form, it is possible to use a pre-test and post-test to measure gains in learners’ ability to use the targeted structure”. As shown in Table 1 Taking planned FonF approach the pre-test was the initial test administered to each group of ESOL learners and post-test were taken soon after each group received treatment. In applied linguistics most successful field of investigation has been L2 instructional effectiveness using experimental design (Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, Ortega and Iberri-Shea (2005) suggest that, “the researchers don’t take advantage of time series designs that can enhance the effectiveness of such studies” (ibid). To strength the ‘time series design’ and findings delayed post test was administered. In earlier studies there have been anecdotal opinions about the amount of time that should elapse between each test (i.e. from 1 month up to a year). So the researcher allowed a delayed period of 3 months (Long & Robinson, 1998) to gauge the effectiveness of FFI and that one of the research questions could be properly investigated. The tests were marked and scored according to the marking criteria of ESOL learners at entry level 2/3.

5. Summary of the Findings

One of the aims of this research was to elicit teachers’ perspectives and their adherence to the integration of FonF within communicatively oriented language teaching. Initially quantitative data were collected from 55 ESOL teachers in form of questionnaires in order to get the holistic view.

The results from the questionnaire showed that all ESOL teachers intervened and gave corrective feedback in form of clarifications and recast dyad explicitly or implicitly and recognise it valuable weightage for the acquisition L2 learners’ language competence. This means the interactional hypotheses proposed in SLA theories enhances language acquisition and validates that significance of negotiations with comprehensive input. A negotiation in this context means reformulating of the information which took place when the learners had difficulty in comprehending the instructions for their written productions which is vital in the overall L2 acquisition. Learners’ IL behaviour does not suddenly change when corrected; this does not weaken the importance of correction. Hence, evidence suggests that correction of errors should be only aimed at something which learners are actually capable of (Lightbrown, 2000). Various questions were raised in this study’s questionnaires, to find out how teachers believe that formal instructions helps learners’ to produce written work in L2 acquisition. Acquisition in this study sense “increased control over use of linguistic form” (Ellis, 2008:842).

As seen in Table 1, statistically high number of teachers’ favoured FFI. This supports the SLA theories/hypotheses of input and interaction put forward by linguistics Krashen and Long. Observations done on teachers proved evidence that explicit FFI help learners to stop making errors and even sustainable over long period of time (Lightbrown, 2000). 80% of teachers agreed, when teachers where asked if ‘some errors are susceptible to the teacher’s intervention, while others just resolve themselves over time and through exposure and practice’. This clarifies Lightbrown, (2000) argument that learners IL behavior does not suddenly change when corrected, yet still facilitates them to notice the difference between their L1 and L2.

The questionnaire had two sections: section one contains 8 questions and section two has 7 questions. Table 1 illustrate the results of section one of the questionnaire for ESOL teachers answering “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Not sure”, “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree”

Table 1. The results as a percentage rounded to the nearest decimal for following statements:

No.	Questions	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
1	Formal instruction helps learners to produce written work in correct grammatical language.	13%	29%	18%	33%	7%
2	In case of implicit or delayed error correction a student keeps making the same error.	31%	36%	9%	16%	9%
3	Students can improve their writing accuracy through frequent practice of grammatical structures.	13%	33%	11%	42%	0%
4	Some errors are susceptible to the teacher's intervention, while others just resolve themselves over time and through exposure and practice	33%	40%	13%	13%	0%
5	A typical measure of accuracy is Percentage of error-free clauses.	7%	44%	27%	22%	0%
6	Students learn grammar more successfully if it is presented within a Complete text in an activity.	44%	20%	22%	13%	0%
7	Form-focused correction helps students to improve their written Proficiency	13%	42%	31%	13%	0%
8	Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for students to improve their written proficiency.	16%	44%	20%	13%	7%

Moreover, to triangulate the findings and further support the hypotheses devised for this study, qualitative data from the 16 questionnaire's comments section were further categorised and analysed which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Some of the qualitative responses that draws attention to teacher's maxims for FFI:

An ESOL teacher commented on form-functions similarities between L1 and L2
"I think we need to remember that people attend to different things in second languages and also feel different things are useful in their learning, so it's sometimes difficult to generalise There's also the point that where L1 and L2 share grammatical or form-function similarities, then it may be easier to correct errors etc. An ESOL teacher supported the idea of FonFs".
An ESOL teacher supported the idea of FonFs
"All students are different and therefore some will find FonF more effective than FonFs and vice versa. Personally, I agree that FonFs is more effective (see Ellis), but that doesn't mean I wouldn't use both, and other, approaches in the classroom to teach grammar".
An ESOL teacher commented on implicit teaching
"Students' perceptions are important. If they think focus on form is the only way to learn a language then they will not realise they can learn just as well from implicit teaching. Most students will say they want 'more grammar' because they don't recognise they are learning grammar implicitly. A good ESOL teacher should do a mixture of both I think".

Measurement of effects on learning and durability of FFI

Common to all studies paradigm is the concern for accuracy and the important aspect this study looked into and was also highlighted in questionnaires such as 'A typical measure of accuracy is percentage of error-free clauses' for which 40% of teachers strongly agreed whereas 27% disagreed and remaining were not sure. "That is instruction is a said to have had an effect if learners demonstrate a statistically significant gain in accuracy over time" (Ellis, 2008:840).

Varieties of instruments are used such as pre-test and post-test as "... samples provide evidence of what the learners know about the language they are trying to learn. (the TL) If samples are collected at different points in time it may also be possible to find out how learners' knowledge gradually develops" (Ellis, 1997:4). The researcher believes there is a large scope for application in this study as "it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data form naturally occurring social situation" (Cohen et. al., 2007:396).

As shown in Table 3 below ESOL learners were observed as focus groups on the basis of 'test teach test' (TTT). They were pretested by the means of a receptive test and received treatment as teaching of that session, then will be given a delayed productive test. Scores were matched to find out the learning outcomes on the basis to measure learners' "... progress along a sequence of acquisition (i.e. movement from early stage of development in an attested sequence" (Sharwood Smith, 1985 cited in Ellis, 2008:840). The test was a free writing production conduct on 'eight' ESOL learners. Post test was done after delayed 3 months of duration to check the effects of FFI and its durability at times can have short term effects.

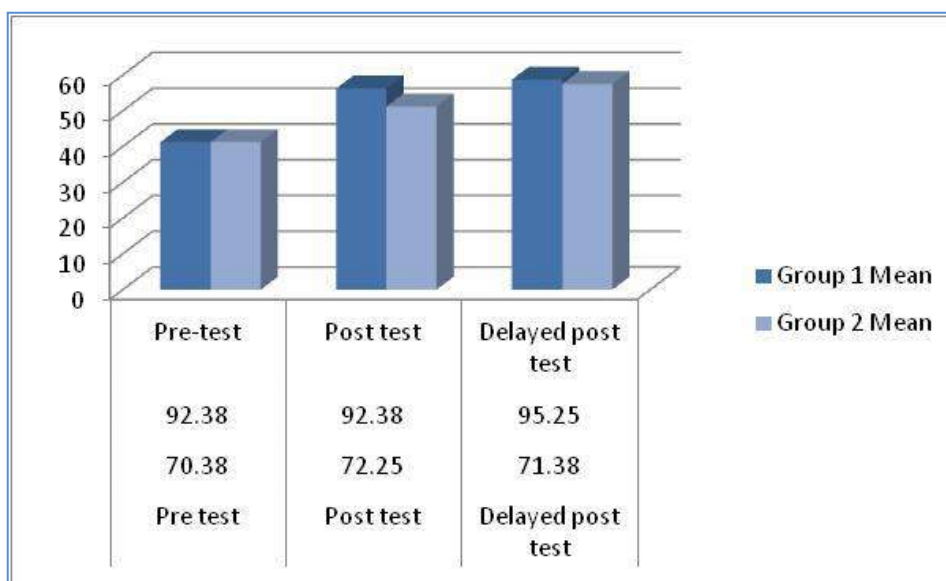
Table 3. Demonstrates the Experimental Study Design:

Groups	Treatment	Tasks types / tools	Time triangulation / 3 Test stages
Experimental group 1	Implicit FFI	T 1: Constrained constructed responses / gap fill task T 2: Free constructed response/ free writing	1.Pre-test 2.Post-test (soon after treatment session) 3. Delayed Post- test (after a period of 3 months)
Experimental group 2	Explicit FFI		

Two tools were purposely administered by the researcher to compare the ESOL learners' written production between receptive and productive tests. It was seen as important for the consistency of results to measure the effects of FFIs or the familiarised effect of the aimed grammar structure, hence the productive test enabled the detection of other grammar components although the complexity of sentences was not under consideration as the groups under study are at E2/E3 intermediate level. The quantitative data revealed interesting results (see table 4) which demonstrate the descriptive statistical analysis of the findings.

The study aims to measure the effect of FFI on the ESOL learner's written production. The gain scores of each group will be analysed between each test (for example: pre- test by post- test, post test by delayed post- test and so forth with the help of t-test; This "t" value tells how far away from 0, in terms of the number of standard errors, the observed difference between the two sample means and expansively evaluated by Sig. (2-tailed) indicated the level of significance of the t-value.

The Table 4 Illustrates means of Tool 1 and 2; group 1 and 2 at all three stages of test.



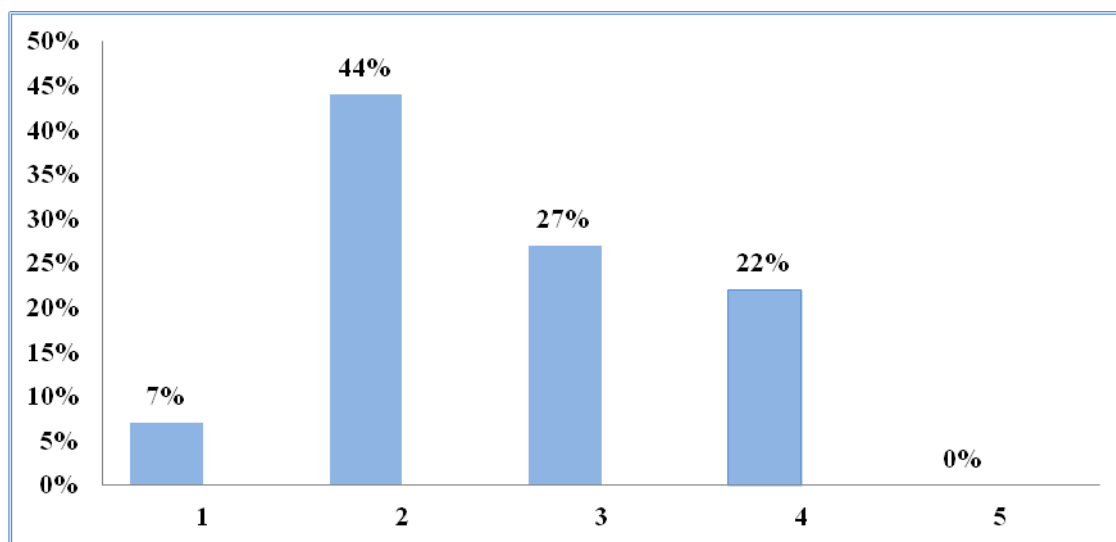
This led to conclude in this study that overall the effect of FFI was sustained by the learners. However, there is insufficient evidence in the literature supporting that the effects of FFI can be short lived. In this case Lightbrown (1992a) suggested “. . . when form-focused instruction is introduced in a way which is divorced from the communicative needs and activities of the student, only short-effects are obtained” (cited in Ellis, 2008:867). In other words, learners' subsequent and ongoing access to communicative activities in order to utilise their target language features even after the instruction has been stopped, has seen to be benefited from FFI. This concern has also been shown by one of the participants (ESOL teacher) of this study regarding aspects of FFI and commented by saying, “Students learn best when they, are given plenty of opportunities to learn in an interactive environment which is non-threatening. Nothing succeeds like success”.

Corrective feedback

White (1991) cited in Lightbrown, (2000) argued that “second language learners draw on features of L1 as well as input on L2” which was seen more problematic in multilingual classrooms. In this case they require negative evidence in the form of instruction or corrective feedback. “Negative feedback obtained in negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of SL development, at least for vocabulary, morphology and language-specific syntax, and essential for learning certain specifiable L1-L2 contrast” (Long, 1996:414 cited in Doughty & Williams, 1998:23). As part of my empirical investigation, I also wanted to consider what learners perception is for corrective feedback.

Moreover, a qualitative data from L2 learner's perception under this study stated that: “I find myself to be quite tolerant to learners' errors as they are part of natural development. Looking at my experience as a learner, I wasn't that keen on being corrected by the teacher in front of everyone, it made me feel anxious and most of the time I just refused to take part in whole-class debates just to avoid the bad feeling of being wrong”. This only shows that it is probably very important to find out learners attitudes towards error correction what enhances and facilitates learning in their opinion. Although, the perception is reality for individual learner, the credibility of the teacher and the instructional approach with regards to corrective feedback would be questioned by a learner whose expectations were not met (either consciously or unconsciously). Question 5 in the questionnaire was how teachers measure accuracy in order to give corrective feedback to the learners. This question was devised to answer research question two which sought to find out which teaching method of FFI is more effective for students. The results in Table 5 is by ranking the order of agreement to disagreement, it was an expected pattern of answers that demonstrated experienced teachers beliefs for the accuracy in work. Significantly higher number that is 44% of teachers agreed whereas 22% disagreed. However only 27% were not sure.

Table 5. Question 5 in the questionnaire was how teachers measure accuracy in order to give corrective feedback to the learners.



Conclusion and Summary of the Study

There are many factors that complicate FFI research and instruction effectiveness. Some possible influences of FFI are suggested by Spada & Lightbown in the TESOL quarterly as “FFI may be beneficial with features that are relatively simple to explain or illustrate” (2008:195). In this regard, Krashen introduces functionally and formally complex rules, the lack of the latter benefiting the learnability; however, DeKeyser argues that “it is hard to see how a rule could be formally simple if it is functionally complex, except in the very superficial sense that a rule can be regarded as formally simple if it involves nothing but presence versus absence of a single morpheme” (1998:44). DeKeyser further adds that complexity is also hard to define and not many researchers agree on some rules to be simple or complex. This interpretation seems to converge rather well with findings of this study. Not only might a structure difficulty affect the success of instruction, its subjective difficulty may do so as well. Subjective difficulty refers to the notion that L2 learners may differ in how complex they perceive a structure to be (DeKeyser, 2003).

Long (1991) was first to conceptualise the need to incorporate FFI into communicative language teaching with the term ‘focus on form’. Researchers in the input or interaction theories/hypotheses seem to accept in general terms that SLA must be the result of interaction between environmental stimuli, a learner internal language system, and some language specific learning capabilities. This study concluded from the above discussion of the findings that the ESOL teachers favoured and practice FFI and supported the importance of giving explicit instruction. However, the experimental study did benefit from FFI and its effects were not sustained over a period of time. Nicholas et. al. (2001) pointed out that, “those findings to date for negative feedback research are still somewhat inconclusive and difficult to interpret” (cited in Mitchell & Myles 2004:183). Mitchell and Myles state one increasingly recognised problem is that “we still know very little about how much attention learner’s pay to feedback they receive, or how they interpret it” (ibid). Ellis (1999) asserts that in regards to grammar teaching the benefits of ‘pushed out’ language remain inconclusive (cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004:175).

This study confirmed from the above literature findings: the widely held participants (ESOL teachers) gave input with negotiations/corrective feedback to linguistic errors in their classrooms. Qualitative data from a respondent evaluates (FFI)

"I think we need to remember that people attend to different things in second languages and also feel different things are useful in their learning, so it's sometimes difficult to generalise. There's also the point that where L1 and L2 share grammatical or form-function similarities, then it may be easier to correct errors etc".

This leads Leeman to conclude from one of his researches that:

"The findings are highly suggestive regarding the role of attention and salience in SLA...A logical interpretation is that enhancing the salience of certain forms led learners to attend to those forms....It seems that some interactional features, recast among them, can lead to greater development by highlighting specific forms in the input" (2003:57). All researchers in the input or interaction theories/hypotheses seem to accept in general terms that SLA must be the result of interaction between environmental stimuli, a learner internal language system, and some language specific learning capabilities. However, as Nicholas et. al. (2001) points out "those findings to date for negative feedback research are still somewhat inconclusive and difficult to interpret". One increasingly recognised problem is that "we still know very little about how much attention learners pay to feedback they receive, or how they interpret it" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:183). Another study which I found very interesting was conducted by Truscot (1999, cited in Ferris, 2004) who stated that corrective feedback on written work was completely ineffective and learners did not improve their writing even though they were provided with feedback. Doughty and Williams (1998) suggest no particular benefit of one type of instruction (explicit/implicit) over the other. They do point out that the classroom situation might direct a teacher to his/her choice of FonF, for instance proactive FonF might be useful if a teacher has a clear idea of common language problems in a class with the shared L1; the nature of noticing cannot be limited to the amount of formal instructions to which the learners are exposed to (Lightbown, 2000).

Limitations of the Study

As this study was on a small scale, the sample size was 26 and 16=8 in each group at the time for the experimental study and limited to written production. The results may have been significantly higher between the gained score if the number of the acquired sample were larger. As Borg and Gall (1979) emphasise that "The casual comparative and experimental methodologies require a sample of no fewer than fifteen" (cited in Cohen et al., 2007:93). The participants were ESOL learners at Entry level two or B1/B2. So the results cannot be generalized to other levels of language proficiency.

The participants of the experimental groups were members of both the genders; monolinguals belonging to different origins and adult learners over the age of 18. The results may vary with multilingual groups and learners below this age. This study was done on experienced NS teacher in UK due to purposive sample. Due to this fact NS and NNS teachers were not taken into account within or outside UK. Hence, their perception about FFI in communicative context cannot reflect to larger population of teachers.

Further Recommendations

Since this study was narrowed down in terms of its participants, structures in focus, techniques of focus on form, etc., it seems necessary to point out some further research to be done in this regard. Considering the fact that this study was limited to only two techniques of focus on form, (explicit and implicit FFI) it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with other techniques of FonF such as clarification request, comprehension check, etc. Moreover, more comprehensive

studies could be done to investigate the effect of more than two techniques at a time on language acquisition. Since the present study focused on only two structures in English, similar studies could examine the accuracy gains in terms of other structures in English or any other languages. Similar research could be done regarding oral production of other English structures. The need is felt to carry out similar experiments to investigate the long-term effects of focus on form through different techniques and strategies. Finally, this study could be replicated with learners at higher and lower levels of language proficiency.

Final Remark

There is high scope of replication of this study as there are a scarce number of studies done in the context of ESOL provision in UK, specifically looking into the effects of FFI. One of the participant ESOL teacher having 20 years of teaching experience felt that more studies should be conducted in ESOL to improve the teaching and learning experience. It is hoped that some contribution is made to the development of language teaching. Besides, it is believed that this study covered a narrow scope of focus on form issue, and other researchers/students are recommended to carry out related studies to push the frontiers of knowledge in this regard.

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Group Work in ESL: A Teacher's Perception and Application

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Abstract

With the advent of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, scholars have recognized the importance of classroom group work as a means of providing an authentic interactive setting suitable for language negotiation. Although some teachers embrace using group work in their classrooms, there are other teachers who are reluctant to use it. In this research, an interview was conducted with a teacher to obtain her beliefs on teaching a second language and on using group work before observing her practices in classroom. The aim is to study the relationship between her beliefs and practices in order to examine reasons of possible discrepancies between these two, as this helps in pointing out areas of professional improvement that the teacher needs. A qualitative analysis of the data reveals that the teacher's general learning beliefs are more consistent with her practices than with her group work beliefs. Possible reasons of discrepancies are discussed with recommendations for further research.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching; group work; teachers' beliefs; teachers' practices.*

Introduction

Although the methods of language teaching have been rapidly changing since the second half of the twentieth century, they primarily fall into two broad categories: the synthetic approach and the analytic approach. It was not until the late 1970s and the early 1980s that the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) got into use. This method calls for a shift in focus to linguistic fluency, without neglecting linguistic accuracy, by exploring the pedagogical aspects of the language via learners' interaction (Brown: 2007). Within this field, the need has arisen to use group work with learners to accomplish the communicative tasks of CLT. With the emergence of CLT, a considerable number of studies have come out examining the extent of the efficiency of classroom group work and the reservations about its practicality in the way that such studies have questioned how practical this approach is in promoting language learning.

Because teachers are the implementers of methodologies, their methodological beliefs and practices have become a parallel line of research inquiry. According to Phipps and Borg (2009), teachers' beliefs can be divided into core and peripheral. These beliefs can be influenced by several factors such their learning experience as students or their professional experience as teachers, which may result in a teaching practice that conflicts with teachers' beliefs (Phipps & Borg: 2009; Hill: 2010).

Literature Review***Group work and language learning***

Advocates of group work as a technique in second language learning capitalize on its significant role in individuals' second language (L2) acquisition. In their research, Long and Porter (1985) have found that in contrast with whole-class discussions, group work (1) provides an opportunity for individuals to practice a richer language in both the quantity and variety of language functions; (2) it helps the students who work in groups to achieve the same level of grammatical accuracy as when they speak with their teachers; and (3) it leads the students to negotiate meaning by spontaneously correcting their group members' lexical errors more than correcting their pronunciation or syntactic errors.

The aforementioned propositions are supported by empirical research findings. Ghaith and Yaghi (1998) found that the interaction of group work benefits students with low aptitude in acquiring L2 by receiving multiple and redundant input from their group mates, whereas their high-aptitude counterparts may have an opportunity to practice their output and develop their understanding during their explanations to others. In her study of the difference between group and pair work, Dobao (2012) statistically demonstrates the superiority of the language accuracy of a task completed by groups over another task completed by pairs. Other studies also show that students who work in groups to perform tasks receive higher scores on tests than students who work on the same tasks individually, and students in groups outperform individual workers in terms of their increase in comprehension and recall of task details (Gladwin IV & Stepp-Greany: 2008 & Kim: 2008). The effect of group work on oral language production is an important topic among researchers as well. For example, Dabao (2012) concluded that the quality of L2 oral production is emphasized by students involved in small groups, unlike students who work in pairs who tend to pay less attention to language-related problems. On the psychological level, it has been shown that students who work together in a group for a considerable amount of time develop a rapport with each other (Ewald: 2004).

Teachers' Reservations on the Use of Group Work

Yet, with so much potential, why do some ESL teachers tend to shy away from utilizing group work? The answer lies in several limitations or drawbacks related to group work that may prevent teachers from effectively integrating group work into their teaching practice. The primary concern is students' use of their first language (L1) during group work. However, recent findings suggest that L1 can be put to good use in second language learning (Brooks & Donato: 1994 & Swain & Lapkin: 2000). These empirical studies explore students' use of their L1 in L2 settings within a sociocultural framework and demonstrate that L1 serves important cognitive and social functions in group tasks, such as helping students understand the requirements or contents of tasks and enhancing interpersonal interaction. Moreover, students are intrinsically motivated to control their use of L1. Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), for example, have examined students' attitudes toward the use of L1 in ESL group activities and have, surprisingly, found that students are reluctant to use it even though they are allowed to do so. This behavior is attributed to the students' belief that using L1 would slow their process of accomplishing the group tasks and that they should use L2 as much as possible to improve it.

Another major reason for teachers to avoid using group work is the fact that the language errors that the students produce during their negotiation will be reinforced, as teachers may not be able to provide error corrections to each student during group activities (Brown: 2007). As mentioned above, there is enough solid research on this issue to reassure teachers that during group work, peer-correction or other types of correction could successfully serve as an efficient error treatment. Students are capable of adopting various error treatment strategies, as teachers do, and they can address apparent breakdowns in communication (Bruton & Samuda: 1980 & Long & Porter: 1985).

The choice of group work as a classroom technique should not be made on the basis of arbitrary decisions. Instead, it should address a number of vital points to ensure its success as a learning technique. This means that its use ought to be considered with reference to the following conditions:

- (1) Groups should be cohesive, which means creating a positive relationship among group members;
- (2) the different levels of students' proficiency or communication skills must be considered when forming groups in a way that facilitates reaching the goal of the group task (Chang: 2010 & Dornyei & Maldiriz: 1997);
- (3) smaller groups of three to five students perform better than larger groups (Blatchford et al.: 2003); and
- (4) the physical environment surrounding the group plays a large role in facilitating group work. Another condition that has a twofold benefit states that arranging seats in circles and involving students in personalizing their classrooms are two ways that contribute to creating a pleasant atmosphere for working in groups (Blatchford et al.: 2003 & Dornyei & Maldiriz: 1997).

Teachers' Role in Students' Group Work

Regarding the teachers' role in implementing group work, it is of a considerable significance as they play a large role in the success of group work. Dornyei and Maldiriz (1997) argue that the traditional authoritarian teacher is unsuitable for group development in an L2 classroom. Similarly, both Brown (2007) and Willis and Willis (2007) emphasize that a teacher should facilitate group work. Dornyei and Maldiriz (1997) add that a teacher's role is to build the right environment for learning and to support groups to address any evolving difficulties. Finally,

teachers can also provide students with training on interaction skills and strategies to cope with various types of communication breakdowns and achieve more effective communication for greater group work accomplishment (Bejarano et al.: 1997; Bruton & Samuda: 1980; Naughton: 2006).

Beliefs and practices in language teaching

In the literature on teachers' beliefs and practices, Fang (1996) states two significant ideas. The first is his *thesis of consistency*, which supports the view of how teachers' beliefs shape their teaching, and the second is the *thesis of inconsistency*, which identifies the discrepancies and difficulties that hinder the implications of beliefs (as cited in Hill, 2010, p. 32). In support of Fang's thesis of consistency, Wyatt (2010: 603) coins the term *teacher's self-efficacy* (TSE) for teachers' judgments of their teaching abilities and defines this term as teachers' "beliefs in their abilities to support learning in various tasks and content-specific cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social ways." He strongly believes that if teachers reflect frequently on their beliefs, consistency with their practice will be the result.

In contrast, Phipps and Borg (2009) find that teachers' general learning beliefs are more consistent with their practices compared with the divergence between their specific beliefs on teaching grammar and their practices of teaching it in class. They also find that these inconsistencies are primarily driven by three factors; (1) students' expectations, (2) students learning preferences, and (3) curriculum and classroom management concerns. Similarly, Hill (2010) divides the tensions into *internal tensions*, which exist in teachers' beliefs and their struggle to accomplish them, and *external tensions*, which result from administrative factors and curriculum-related issues.

In fact, these tensions have more complex roots than those mentioned by Phipps and Borg (2009) and Hill (2010). Borg (2003) attributes these tensions to teachers' past experiences as learners in schools and analyzes how their previous teaching practices unconsciously influence their own cognition of teaching beliefs. However, he states that any negative effect of such an influence could improve with teacher training and teaching experience. Hence, he finds the parallel relationship between teachers' training and experience, on one hand, and their classroom practices, on the other.

Research Question

Although there have been a number of valuable studies on teachers' beliefs and practices, only a few of these studies have investigated the beliefs and practices of a specific teaching technique, such as group work. Because general teaching and learning beliefs are the basis of specific beliefs, it is of interest to the researcher to propose the following question as the theme of inquiry:

- (a) What is the relationship between an experienced ESL teacher's beliefs and the classroom practices carried out by that teacher for teaching L2 and using group work as a learning technique?

Research Objective

This research aims to identify the connection between an experienced ESL teacher's beliefs about using group work in L2 learning on the one hand, and her practices of implementation inside the L2 classroom on the other hand, in order to determine the reasons for any possible discrepancies between the beliefs and the practices.

Significance of the Research

Exploring the tensions between teachers' beliefs and practices points out areas of improvements that are often not clear enough for most observers. Understanding and acknowledging the reasons behind these tensions also provide teacher training that is better constructed towards needed areas.

Limitations of the Study

This research has a few limitations that were unavoidable at the time of conducting the study. First, the short period of the study could only lead to basic results. Consequently, further precise results as well as a variety of themes would emerge if this study has extended to cover longer periods of observations of teacher's classroom practices. Another limitation is related to the one class of students, the subject of the carried out practices. A range of observation outcomes might appear if there were more than one class with different types of students to be observed. Finally, such studies that are focused on one or a few subjects generate results specific to the subjects of the study, thus presenting results that cannot be generalized.

Research Methods***Participants***

The major participant is an in-service teacher with a thirteen-year experience in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). The minor participants were the students in the class the teacher was currently teaching. There were sixteen students with a high-intermediate proficiency level. They were of similar age groups but had mixed L1 backgrounds. The researcher had little interaction with the students, but their dynamics were the subject of attention while conducting the research.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected via two methods: a semi-structured interview and pre- and post-class observations. After observing one class on October 1, 2012, the researcher made an appointment suitable to the teacher's schedule and conducted the interview in the teacher's office on Friday, November 16, 2012. Twenty questions were asked in semi-structured interview. The bulk of the questions asked specifically about the concepts behind the teacher's belief in group work and how to address the possible problems with group work. This interview lasted twenty-eight minutes and was followed by a class observation. The other questions were about the teacher's background and general beliefs in language teaching methodologies; these questions were asked after the class in a twenty-six minute interview. During the interview, the researcher asked some additional questions that were not originally included in the questionnaire to seek clarification on some of the teacher's answers. The interview was fully recorded via iPhone and transcribed via *ExpressScribe* for analysis and discussion.

The first class observation was oriented to the teacher's general teaching practice and focused on teaching vocabulary within group work. In the 90-minute class observation that followed the first interview, careful attention was paid to two foci: the teacher's practices and interaction with the groups and the groups' dynamics. Field notes was the method used for recording events in the classroom. Recording the class interaction was considered as a method, but then it was dismissed because of the difficulty of recording all the sounds in a large classroom and because of the stress it might provoke, which could lead to unnatural reactions. Additionally, the teacher encouraged the researcher to interact with the students while they

performed group work and to ask them questions. Only a few questions were directed to the students in order to keep the flow of group dynamics uninterrupted. These questions concerned with students' obvious behaviors, such as non-participation or the use of L1 based on the literature review on group work.

In the follow-up phase of the study, six questions were added to ask the teacher more about her general teaching beliefs as she reflected on them from the observed class. A fifteen-minute follow-up interview was conducted for this purpose on Friday, November 30, 2012.

As qualitative research, a deductive reasoning approach was adopted to analyze the data. This data analysis progressed through the following stages: (1) transcribing the interview, (2) writing notes, (3) organizing points into general and specific beliefs, (4) looking for their representatives or counter-representatives from the class observation, (5) interpreting data, and, finally, (6) drawing conclusions. Thus, the relationship between the teacher's beliefs and practices were initially categorized according to her beliefs: general beliefs about language teaching and specific beliefs about using group work in ESL classes. Within each category, we listed the consistencies between the beliefs and practices first, followed by the evident discrepancies.

Results

This research is concerned with discovering the relationship between an experienced ESL teacher's beliefs and her classroom practices, especially those pertaining to using group work as a learning technique. Analysis of this teacher's beliefs and practices revealed that most of her beliefs were parallel to her practices. Nonetheless, some instances of discrepancies were exposed. In this account, both consistencies and discrepancies are presented within two lines of analysis: general beliefs about language teaching and specific beliefs about the use of group work.

1. The teacher's general beliefs about language teaching

A) Approach to language teaching

Teacher's belief: The teacher believes that the best approach to L2 teaching is the authentic, pragmatic and functional use of language. On the contrary, overt attention to grammar is avoided in her teaching.

I want them to understand the function, not the terminology. I don't expect them to know that because that they are not here to learn the grammar. They are here to learn the language and how to use it.

Classroom practice: The topics taught in the observed classes manifested authentic themes related to students' life. This elevated the students' interest. As a result, the discussions in the class were eminently concerned with the correct usage of the commonly used phrases within that theme. As such, grammar rules were taught inductively.

B) Teaching methods

Teacher's belief: The teacher is obviously influenced by the lexical approach, as she emphasized the importance of lexical phrases, or collocations, which she believes would vastly enhance the students' fluency:

Another theory is about collocations. We expect our students to sound fluent, while they can only sound fluent if they know these collocations.

Classroom practice: This approach was evident in the first observation. Students had a task of preparing a card for each word from a given list. That card included the meaning of the word as

well as its collocations, and students in groups practiced giving these collocations in turn.

C) Error correction during students' interaction

Teacher's belief: Since the main aim of teaching L2 in her classroom is to teach her students methods of delivering their messages, the teacher believes that correcting errors while students are negotiating language is pointless.

Well, if there are some mistakes that I know will not impede communication, so people still understand, then I'll just let it fly.

Classroom practice: While the teacher was monitoring group discussions, she corrected many of the students' language errors, although these errors did not impede communication as evident from group interactions.

D) Roles of the teacher and the student

Teacher's belief: The teacher genuinely believes that she is a facilitator of language learning. She ensures that her students know about her role in order to introduce to them a concept that she highly esteems: students' autonomy.

I normally tell them that I'm here to facilitate. I tell them that I'm not here to teach English grammar because they are not English majors. I keep telling them that eighty percent of this is you, and I'm only here to help if you need help.

Classroom practice: These features were obvious in the teacher's practice. The two classes observed were highly communicative and consisted of various group work tasks and discussions. It is noteworthy that students were scaffolding and participating with high self-confidence while interacting within their groups in both observed classes.

2. The teacher's beliefs about using group work in the ESL classroom

A) Benefits of using group work in language teaching

Teacher's belief: The teacher is a proponent of using group work in the L2 classroom. A very significant outcome of group work interaction, according to her belief, is that it generates interactive language as the students are constantly negotiating meaning and providing feedback:

For learning a second language ... you need group work because you need to discuss what you learned with another person. Of course, you have to test it on another person just to make sure that you got it wrong... and I really like to put them in groups and just challenge each other in that way, so ... you know there is that feedback.

Classroom practice: The teacher's belief in the benefit of group work was clearly evident in the second class. For example, one student expressed something that was incomprehensible to his group mates, as shown by their facial expressions. As such, the group's confused facial expression were the immediate feedback that alerted the student to reconstruct his sentence into a more comprehensible expression. Moreover, this student followed up with a comprehension check question to obtain more feedback from his group mates in order to determine whether he was able to communicate his meaning.

B) Group work vs. individual practice

Teacher's belief: Another important reason behind the teacher's advocacy for group work is that it maximizes the opportunity for an individual student to practice language when class time or size restrains the teacher from affording this opportunity to each student.

Well... feedback is one and, of course, practice, is another one, especially when you have sixteen students in a group... well... I can only do one-on-one interaction. We have to rely on group work.

Classroom practice: It was noticeably observed that all of the sixteen students in the class had the opportunity to practice speaking in English to varying degrees while working in groups. This is an example of students' trial to speak.

C) Fundamentals of grouping students

Teacher's belief: According to the teacher, dividing the students into groups should not be done haphazardly. Alternatively, there are some factors that must be taken into consideration while forming the groups. One very essential factor is forming groups of diverse L1 backgrounds for the purpose of ensuring the maximum use of the target language:

I don't want them to have the same language in the same group because then ... there is always a temptation of switching to the first language.

Another essential factor of grouping students is to pre-assign groups and then switch the members frequently to prevent rigid seating patterns:

I have to make the groups beforehand. I normally ask my students at the beginning of the semester, and I do that probably twice, three times a week: "Can you please sit next to someone else?"... But, no, they don't want to. So then I just have to make them.

Additionally, taking students' personalities into consideration when grouping them is substantial for group harmony.

So then I have these three guys together, and you know, different first languages. It's really nice. It works out, but the first time I put them together in a group, they almost started fighting physically because it's, you know, different personalities... And the good thing is, everybody else in the class is working very well.

Classroom practice: The groups in the classrooms were counterbalanced in terms of L1 backgrounds and personalities, as observed by the researcher. Moreover, careful planning of grouping students was evident as the teacher wrote names of every group members on the board. Yet, no shuffling of group members was observed although several group work activities were carried out.

D) Group work activities

Teacher's belief: The teacher designs group work activities such that it integrates individual work and group work. During the interview, the teacher provided an example about the group work task in her listening and speaking skills class:

For instance, there was one presentation about social inequality, and I had many questions about what the speaker said, and they didn't see the questions before they were taking notes. So after they watched it as many times as they wanted—and as I said, that was the individual work—and then, when time was up, they were put together, and they shared the notes so they had to answer the questions together.

Classroom practice: In the class, the students were given time to work individually on a comparison between a home office and an office in the city. Then, they were grouped to share and exchange their opinions and come up with their own draft of a thesis.

E) Students' use of L1 during group work

Teacher's belief: The teacher acknowledges that students' use of their L1 facilitates second

language learning only in secondary or elementary schools. However, she is entirely opposed to students using their L1 during group interaction in her high intermediate level class, and even believes that they do not need to use it as they already have the language to convey their messages. In fact, she believes that using L1 by her particular students hinders their L2 learning. As such, she makes it a policy for the students to leave the class in case they used their L1:

The reason why I'm pushing L1 in secondary schools or elementary schools is to become a balanced bilingual. So, it's that level when you need it...there's no way that you need your first language, and this is a high level group... No, it hinders it, and on this level, you don't need L1.

Classroom practice: Shortly after the groups started collaborating on a grammar gap exercise, it was observed that the students began using their L1 as a means of explanation. At this point, the need aroused to question the students on their L1 use. They stated that they feel the need to use their L1 as a technique for better comprehension, though they acknowledged that it is *rude* to use it explicitly since they are in an English learning environment.

F) Teacher's role during group work

Teacher's belief: She strongly believes that her role as a facilitator should continue to facilitate group dynamics. Nevertheless, facilitation should be accomplished in a balanced manner in which her presence does not distract group dynamics:

We're there to facilitate and we want to make sure that they are on track... if they need correction, you step in, but you don't want to be hovering over students because then they are really not producing as much, or they are distracted because they are looking at you waiting for something to happen.

Classroom practice: Contrariwise, in the class observed, the teacher spent a large amount of time with one single group, leaving the other groups to their own work. Within this particular group, the teacher sat with the students to see their work and actively participated; she even dominated the discussion in this group. She also tended to correct all of the students' speech errors, which constantly interrupted the flow of the interaction

Table 1. The relationship between the teacher's beliefs and practices

Theme	Teacher's Belief	Teacher's Practice	Relationship
1. General beliefs about language teaching			
A) Approach to language teaching	Authentic, pragmatic and functional use of language. No overt attention to grammar.	Used authentic topics that led to teaching grammar inductively.	Consistent
B) Teaching methods	Focus on lexical phrases and collocations to attain fluency.	Employed an activity of collocations.	Consistent
C) Error correction during students' interaction	Pointless unless the errors hinder communication.	Many errors were corrected though they did not impede communication.	Inconsistent
D) Roles of the teacher and the student	A teacher should be a facilitator, while students should become autonomous learners.	Teacher facilitated classroom discussions, and the students were actively involved.	Consistent

2. Specific beliefs about group work			
<i>A) Benefits of using group work</i>	Group work is a great opportunity for language negotiation.	Groups negotiated and reconstructed meaning.	Consistent
<i>B) Group work vs. individual practice</i>	Individual students get further opportunity to practice the language when grouped.	Individuals participated within their groups with varied degrees.	Consistent to some extent
<i>C) Fundamentals of grouping students</i>	L1 background, students' personalities, planned grouping, and shuffling members.	Counterbalanced groups, though no shuffling observed.	Consistent to some extent
<i>D) Group work activities</i>	Activities should integrate both individual and group work.	Activities required the students to work individually before working in groups.	Consistent
<i>E) Students' use of L1 during group work</i>	It is prohibited since they do not need it.	Students used their L1 declaring that they sometimes need it.	Inconsistent
<i>F) Teacher's role during group work</i>	She should be a facilitator, monitoring all groups without being strongly present.	She was strongly present with one group, dominating the discussion.	Inconsistent

Discussion

The aim of this research was to identify the relationship between an ESL teacher's beliefs and practices. The beliefs were divided into general learning beliefs and specific beliefs related to the use of group work in the ESL classroom. The data was triangulated to identify this relationship. The overall results indicate that the teacher's beliefs were not always aligned with her practices, and this discrepancy was more evident in the context of group work.

Although the teacher acknowledged that she did not intend to ground her teaching practice on any specific approach, based on the interview and class observations, it can be concluded that her beliefs on second language learning and teaching techniques resonate with the central features of the Communicative Language Approach (CLT). In addition, the teacher implemented a significant amount of group work to create opportunities for genuine classroom interaction, which is consistent with what Ellis (2005) discusses: by creating opportunities to practice input and obtain feedback on the generated output, students naturally develop their grammatical and sociocultural linguistic systems while being pushed to interact with others without paying close attention to linguistic accuracy when acquiring the language.

However, the teacher's approach of developing communicative language competence involved teaching students aspects of communicative competence more than creating tasks for learners to engage in communication that led to learning, as in the case of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Group work was initiated by individual work, and the activities were staged to follow samples, produce language, and obtain feedback from peers. The purpose of initiating group work with individual work may be to ensure that all individuals are producing a linguistic output and to have them interact to provide corrective feedback that modifies their output. It was clear that students were interacting to express their ideas on the topic, and peers were asking for clarification on ideas and scaffolding each other. This process adheres to the principles of the

Interaction Hypothesis, to which Ellis (2005) refers. Ellis also stressed, within the framework of this hypothesis, the importance of having students express their ideas in interactions, just which the students did when they talked about their ideas within the group.

Additionally, the teacher explicitly clarified several times that her objective was for the students to attain fluency by understanding the function of the language and that she did not want them to focus on grammar because they will not become *grammarians*. She believed that grammar should be taught inductively rather than deductively, following one of the most important principles of instructed language learning: learners focus on form (Ellis, 2005).

The teacher's focus on learning through collocations is further proof that CLT is deeply rooted in her beliefs. The lexical approach, as explained by Brown (2007), is more concerned with building learners' language through words and word combinations. Although this approach is not very communicative, the teacher practiced an updated version of it by pushing her students to look for word collocations and practice them in groups instead of focusing on accumulating words. Nonetheless, it is significant that this approach is of little importance in learning L2 for communication, and its implementation in language production as a whole remains unclear (Brown, 2007).

Furthermore, although the teacher's beliefs showed that she followed a communicative language approach (particularly in the way she expressed her error correction methods), in practice, she was correcting students' errors immediately through recasting regardless of whether the errors impeded the students' meaning. This practice is more closely related to the rationale of the audiolingual method regarding the importance of correcting students' errors immediately to prevent their reinforcement. One reason for this discrepancy might be related to what Borg (2003) refers to as the influence of the teacher's past learning experiences and encounters with her teachers during her school years. I believe that the teacher's emphasis on correcting all errors was unconscious because it was deeply rooted in her cognition of addressing errors.

Brown (2007) states that autonomy is an important principle of *mastering a foreign language*, and it can be practiced by giving the students an opportunity to express themselves and to take initiative in class. By pushing her students to express their ideas and to give feedback to other group members and by guiding them to resources outside of the classroom, the teacher not only practiced her beliefs regarding learners' autonomy, but also expressed her belief that extensive L2 input was required for successful language learning (Ellis, 2005).

In practice, the strategic formation and maintenance of groups is directly related to the quality and quantity of group interaction. In this research, the teacher indicated her awareness of the importance of group-building and spent a great deal of time and effort to establish effective groups in her class. The teachers' methods provide practical instructional suggestions for facilitating group dynamics for ESL teachers. First, in ESL classes with varied L1 backgrounds, the teacher should always take the L1 into consideration by creating heterogeneous groups to achieve the maximum benefit of communicative practice, including give and take and the negotiation of meanings. Second, it is helpful to move students around regularly and to encourage them to interact with each other to prevent rigid seating patterns. Students naturally establish their desks as their "territories" and feel reluctant to adjust to new groups that could generate genuine interaction. Moreover, the inter-member relationship is particularly relevant to ESL teachers when forming effective groups. The teacher demonstrated a good example of successfully coping with the conflict between group members with different personalities when she put three active and dominant students in one group to form an interesting and competitive environment within the group. She did not panic when the three students were hostile to each

other initially; instead, she realized that this was a normal stage of group development that could lead to a subsequent increase in cooperation and cohesion in the group. This strategy turned out to be effective; the three students mediated and negotiated with each other to collaboratively achieve the group goals.

The students' inclination to use their L1 in class is considered as the main reason for teachers to avoid group work, as Brown (2007) stated. By strictly prohibiting the use of L1 in the class, the teacher practiced her belief that for high-intermediate students, the use of L1 as a scaffolding technique would hinder their L2 learning. However, the researcher's observations showed that the students actually risked punishment to use their L1 in scaffolding each other while working in groups, which is sufficient to prove that at least the students in this teacher's class found it helpful and necessary to use their L1 occasionally. The students also confirmed this fact during an interview with them in class. The teacher's belief on this issue was not shaped by research or training, as she expressed in the interview. Thus, exposure to some readings on this topic, for example, could convince her of the benefits of permitting the students to use their L1 within group work.

Additionally, although the teacher shared Brown's belief (2007) that the teacher's role during group work should be that of a facilitator and resource guide rather than an omnipresent controller, her practice in class indicated that she went beyond being a facilitator. She generally did a good job helping the students and instructing the group activities to keep the students on track, but she seemed more like a dominant participant in the group, such as joining one particular group, leading the conversation and correcting errors that did not impede the interaction. This behavior contradicts several group work *don'ts* that Brown (2007: 237) listed, such as "Don't spend an undue amount of time with one group; don't correct students' errors unless asked to do so; and don't assume a dominating or disruptive role while monitoring groups." This discrepancy might be the result of an external factor, as Hill (2010) indicates. The teacher believed that she should not interfere, but she also felt that she should have some control over group work. This tension resulted in unbalanced control and led the teacher to unconsciously target all of her control to one group.

Conclusion

Researching the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices has been encouraged by researchers as it reveals discrepancies that are hardly noticeable, and consequently discloses specific areas of improvement. Likewise, this study revealed some tensions between an experienced ESL teacher's beliefs and practices, especially those pertaining to the implementation of group work. In this particular study, the teacher may simply be unaware of the discrepancies between her beliefs and unparalleled practices, or she might feel the urge to change her practice within given circumstances inside the classroom. The greatest discrepancy was that of the teachers' belief as a facilitator of group work and her overt control over one group in the classroom observed. Such inclination may also be explained by the feeling of safety and effectiveness that the teacher was seeking and thought it could be achieved by establishing tighter control than when students are left to their own devices during group work. Yet, as suggested by many researchers, it is worth trying to maintain only a moderate degree of control and giving students more latitude to produce language and perform without too many interruptions during group work.

Finally, it should be noted that this study was primarily concerned with the relationship between a teacher's beliefs and practices that could be observed in one class period. The

observation extended to two classes but yielded the same results. This finding may be due to the observation of the same group of students performing similar activities. In addition, due to the teacher's tight schedule, the interview was divided into two sessions, before and after the second class was observed. For more findings, it would be better to conduct the interview prior to the observation, leaving enough time for the teacher to act naturally in the class without having to behave according to her comments in the previous interview. Therefore, it is highly recommended for future studies to extend the period of research for two main reasons: (1) to have ample space between the time of the interview and the time of observation, which would allow more natural practices on the part of the teacher; and (2) to get more valid and varied results concerning the relationship between the belief and the practices through multiple observations. More findings would be available if more observations of different student groups and skill classes were conducted. Likewise, more areas of improvement could be obtained and grouped into themes when such research shades light on the tensions discovered from studying teachers of different skills and expertise.

About the Author:

Ashjan Allhedan holds an MA in TESOL and a BA in English with a Teaching Diploma. Her work experience includes teaching English as a second language as well as a foreign language to young adults. Her research interests are related to teacher advocacy, multimodal teaching, and cognitive second language teaching.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

1. First interview questions

a) Background questions

1. How long have you been teaching English? What is your primary interest in this field?
2. Could you tell us about your educational background regarding TESOL or other related fields?
3. Have you been involved in any type of professional association? Which ones? What were your roles?
4. Could you describe the students and classes you have taught?
5. Have you ever been abroad as an ESL/EFL teacher? What was the experience like?
6. Have you ever studied a foreign language?
7. What makes you an English teacher? What do you find rewarding about being an English teacher?

b) General method questions

1. How do you define learning a language? What do you think best facilitates language learning?
2. Have you been given a set syllabus, lesson plans or other teaching materials? How would you approach them? If not, how would you design your lessons?

3. What is the goal that you have in mind for your students to reach? How do you organize your courses (around grammar structures or around language functions, situations, topics or something else)?
4. Can you describe your teaching methods? How do you characterize your teaching style? Have your methods and style changed over time?
5. What are the roles of the teacher and the students in your class? What do you expect your students to do?

c) Specific questions

1. We have noticed that you use group work in your classroom. Could you tell us how long have you been integrating group work activities in your teaching? Why do you use it as a technique for teaching?
2. To be more specific, how can group work facilitate language learning?
3. When do you use individual work, pair work, and group work? Why?
4. What types of tasks do you usually assign for group work? What factors do you usually take into consideration when designing group work?
5. How do you form groups in terms of number of group members, proficiency level, age, status, and first language?
6. How do you manage group work? What is the teacher's role while groups are working? What do you think about the fact that during group work, the teacher is no longer in control of the class, and it is difficult to monitor all groups?
7. Do you have any concerns or have you encountered difficulties when you conduct group work activities in your class? How do you address group work issues such as the following:
 - a) Students with higher proficiency or an active personality tend to dominate the group performance, whereas some silent and shy students are reluctant to participate.
 - b) Students who share the same L1 may use their L1 instead of English in the group activities.
 - c) Students may reinforce each other's errors during group talking because the teacher cannot provide corrections all the time.
8. How do you treat errors that appear within group discussions? What types of errors do you tend to correct/ignore?

2. Follow-up interview questions

1. What made you think of teaching English even though it is not your first language?
2. Describe your own experience in learning English. Do you find yourself teaching in a similar way to that of your teachers?
3. If you reflect on your teaching method in class, do you find yourself following the PPP?
4. We noticed that you begin the group work by having students work on their own first, so that it becomes a technique for providing feedback rather than accomplishing tasks. Can you comment on that?
5. You mentioned in the previous interview that you don't go exactly by the detailed syllabus; you have to focus on writing. Why? What do you think of changing the way a lesson is displayed in the book, such as starting from the middle or even changing the topics of the tasks to be more interesting?
6. What correction technique do you usually follow? Why?

Reflections on Reading Studies done by M.A Students at Al- University During 2006-2014

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper was to reflect upon the results of a pool of research done on reading education by the master's degree students (M.A) at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between the years of 200-20014. The paper surveyed twenty-nine theses done in this field. The findings indicated that the content of these studies varied between reading education alone and reading connection to other language skills with the majority of studies are focusing particularly on reading connection to vocabulary. Findings also indicated that female students conducted the majority of studies on reading. Where supervision is concerned, most supervisors were male professors. The paper explained the discrepancy of male -female authors and male -female supervisors. In the light of these findings, the researcher provided some recommendations to be considered in related future research in Saudi Arabia.

Key words: reflections, Reading, language skills

Introduction

In the present paper, the author is trying to reflect upon the research findings of the master's degree (M.A) students' studies on Reading skill in the English Language Department of College of Languages and Translation at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University between the years of 2006-2014. The researcher reviewed all the 29 studies in an attempt to highlight specific areas of the research done on reading by the master's degree students in linguistics.

Quantitative and qualitative descriptions were used to analyze the studies. The quantitative method was carried out to shed light on the content of the studies based on certain categories pertinent to the topic presented in the studies. Data on the gender of author and the supervisor of each study, the number of theses defended per year from 2006 to 2014 were also analyzed. The quantitative method was employed to provide reflections on the findings of these studies to show how Saudi researchers approached reading as an English language skill, and what implications for EFL learners and teachers were presented to benefit the Saudi educational institutions concerned in teaching English.

Literature Review

The research trend taken by the M.A students at Al-Imam University has given an ample focus to research on reading since the beginning of the M.A program in linguistics at College of Languages and Translation. This group of pioneering scholars has come to the realization of the importance of reading education in Saudi schools concerned in teaching English as a foreign language. More significantly, the Saudi M.A researchers have yielded support for their reading research from the international community of researches in the field of reading education. For example, Demiröz (2010) views reading is a complex activity as readers of a native language or a foreign language approach this particular skill as a process that involves cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and social processes. The Saudi M.A. students' research yields consolidation from Singhal (2001) and Demiröz (2008) who argue that the L2 readers employ different strategies that activate their prior knowledge about the reading text and connect their current information to reach desirable levels of reading comprehension.

Much of the research content reviewed in the present study gives an ample focus to reading strategies. Like Afflerbach et al. (2008), Saudi M.A. researchers Al-Twaijri (2007), Al-Eidi (2011), Al-Khaleefah (2011) and Ameer (2014) explored reading strategies attempted by the reader's efforts to understand and construct the target meaning of the text.

Similarly, Hosenfeld (1977) reveals in a study that successful readers employs specific strategies while reading; they "read in broad phrases, skip words that are seen unimportant, and has a positive self-concept about what to read and comprehend" (p. 120). In a same manner, the author of the current paper has found much of the content of the researcher done on reading education by the M.A students has given a lot of emphasis to reading strategies and their impact on reading comprehension (Al-Eid, 2011; Dawood, 2011; Al-Shammary, 2012; Al-Sanad, 2014). The Saudi M.A scholars, similar to Block (1986), have concluded that successful readers were more able to integrate different reading strategies than their peers who lacked strategies integration.

The content of studies presented in the current paper falls within the Saudi context of English education, Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) in (Alrabai, 2014), stated that "the Saudi government has reached the realization of the significance of English along with other language skills, among of which reading, in students success in communication and performance in other subject areas. Thus, they maintained, "the government has made English a mandatory subject in schools and universities regardless to the social, cultural and religious constrains" (p. 227).

The current study reflected on the reading research of Saudi M. Students, of which a significant part gave special emphasis to reading strategies employed by Saudi teachers in reading classrooms. The reviewed studies brought solid evidence that supports the international and Saudi research with the focus on the importance of reading to the success of students, and the significance of strategies enhanced by the reading teachers and employed effectively by the Saudi learners of English.

Methodology

The study aims at analyzing the content of the reading studies conducted by Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University M.A English major students during 2006-2014. Furthermore, the current paper attempts to explore the focus of each study content with regard to reading and its connection to other language skills. A special focus of this paper also aims to reflect on reading studies done by the M.A students with regard to gender of authors (male, female) and gender of the supervisors to give a statistical account to the number of studies and the nature of research done in this particular area of research during the indicated period.

Research Questions

More specifically the study attempted to answer the following two questions:

- To what extent did the studies vary in numbers with respect to authors, supervisors and manuscripts from year to year?
- To what extent did the studies vary in their content genres?

Material and sample

The material included all the studies conducted on reading by 29 M.A students enrolled in the M.A program of linguistics between 2006 and 2014 at College of Languages and Translation of Al- Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Data Collection

The researcher contacted the graduate office at College of Languages and Translation requesting them to provide him with an access to the research done by the linguistics M.A students at College of Languages and Translation since the very beginning of the M.A program in 2006. The purpose of the study was explained to office staff who were in charge of keeping the hard and soft copies of each study done in the program. The office staff, in their turn, forward the researcher's request to the College Dean who generously approved the release of all information needed to accomplish this research.

The M.A students' research in all areas of linguistics was fortunately saved into a soft copy at the graduate office in one file. The researcher was able to pull out all the research studies available in the graduate office's file.

The researcher went over all the research studies in the file manually and started to sort out the studies related to the purpose of the study, the reading studies. Through the manual process of search in soft copy, the researcher was able to pull out 24 studies related to reading research. To ensure that no study related to reading was missed, the researcher used Microsoft Office search command to find out if any study was left. It was turned out there were five more studies that were missed. The Microsoft search command was repeated several times until the researcher settled on 29 studies related to reading research.

The next step was to sort out the reading studies according to content, year of publication, author's gender and supervisor's gender.

Data Analysis

The researcher adopted a qualitative method to identify the content of the reading studies and to put them into categories as shown in the findings of the study in the next section. After categorizing the studies according to content, the researcher provided an overview for each study or a group of studies to find out if they share the same content, followed by the researcher reflections under a title called *hotspots*.

Descriptive statistics was used as an integral component of quantitative to provide an account for differences in the gender of authorship, gender of supervisor- ship and number of publications per year from 2006 to 2014

Findings

Quantitative Description Findings

This section provides statistical description to the target studies based on the following areas as shown in Table 1: types of content, author gender, supervisor gender, and number of studies defended per year.

Table 1. Content Analysis of Reading Studies

Content	N=29	Actual No. per category	Percentage
RDG	29	10	34.48
RDG& other Language skills	29	11	37.93
RDG and Attitudes	29	1	3.45
RDG other influential factors	29	3	10.34
RDG & TECH	29	4	13.79
Total			100.00
Author Gender	N=29		
Male Author	29	6	20.69
Female Author	29	23	79.31
Total			100.00
Supervisor Gender	N=29		
Male Supervisor	29	28	96.55
Female Supervisor	29	1	3.45
Total			100.00
Year of Publication	N=29		
2006	29	1	3.45
2007	29	2	6.90
2008	29	1	3.45
2009	29	0	0.00

2010	29	0	0.00
2011	29	13	44.83
2012	29	4	13.79
2013	29	3	10.34
2014	29	5	17.24
Total			100.00

As shown in Table (1), which provided quantitative analysis to the body of research, there were twenty-nine studies conducted on reading between the years 2006 and 2014. Ten studies (34.48%) were conducted on reading alone without connecting it to other languages skills. Eleven studies (37.97%) were about reading in connection with other languages arts, one study (3.45%) was on attitudes about reading, and three studies (10.34%) investigated influential factors affecting reading instruction such as braining storming techniques, using illustrations and integrating journalist texts. Finally, four studies (13.79%) were highlighting the relationship between technology and reading improvement.

Interestingly, among the eleven studies investigating reading connection to other language arts skills, there were eight of them about reading- vocabulary connection, one study was about reading- writing connection, one study was on reading -grammar connection, and finally one study connected reading to the communicative skill “speaking” (Table 2. Appendix A).

Among the 29 nine studies done during the period between 2006 and 2014, table 1 also indicated that there were 23 female master’s degree authors (79.31%), while there were six male master’s degree authors (20.69%). Contrary to this finding, the number of male professors supervising the students’ works was tremendously exceeding the female supervisors; there were 28 male supervisors (96.55%), while there was one female instructor (3.45%) who took the advisory task with one female M.A student.

The number of defended theses was varying from a year to another. Table 1 indicated there were thirteen theses accomplished in 2011 (44.83%), while there were no theses defended in 2009 and 2010, respectively. For the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 the number of defended theses was low and ranging between one or two studies per year.

The charts below provide a further presentation to the data shown in table 1:

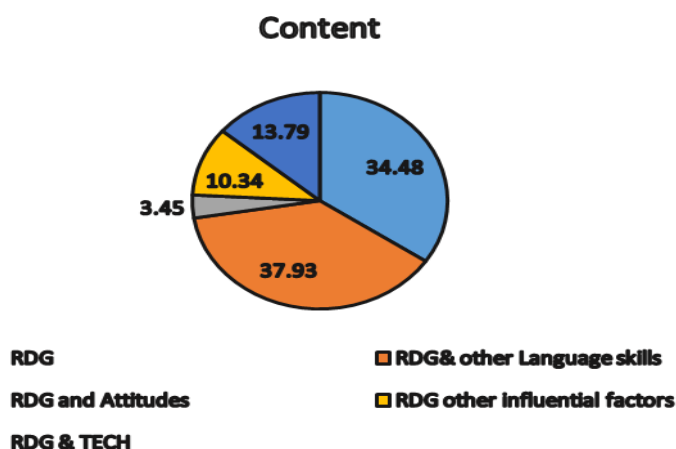


Figure 1. Content of Reading master’s degree Theses

The chart in figure 1 shows that the largest number of studies content is on reading and its connection to other languages arts (37.93%). The second largest number (34.48%) is the content related to reading and technology. Other content types receive the lowest portion on the chart.

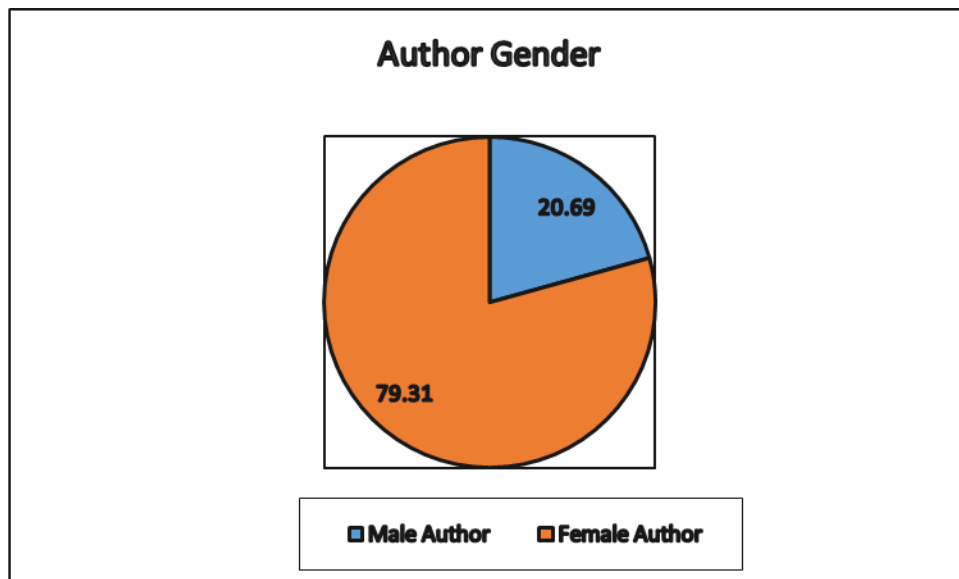


Figure 2. *Author Gender of master's degree Theses*

The chart in figure 2 shows that the largest number of female authors represents the largest portion of the chart (79.31), while male authors occupy the smallest number (20.69).

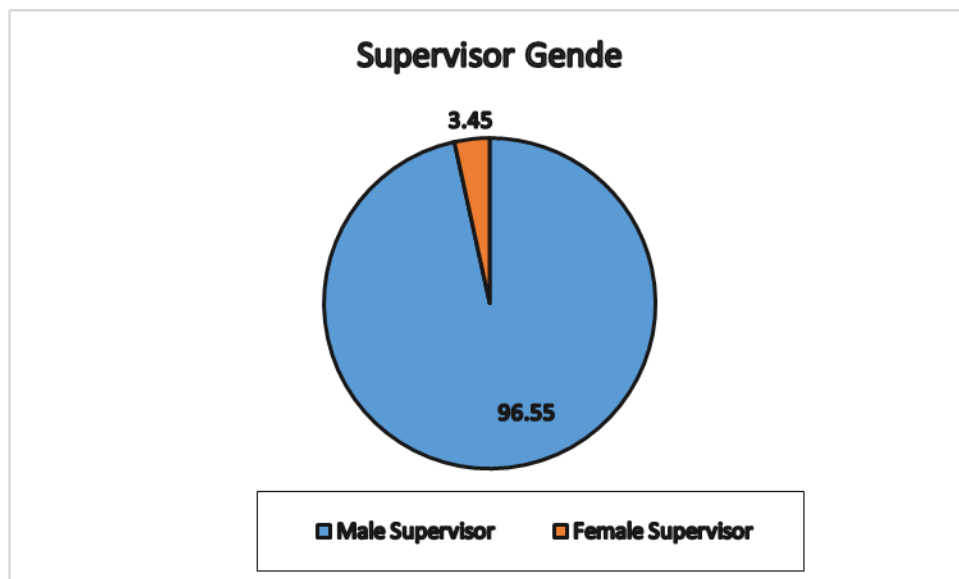


Figure 3. *Supervisor Gender of master's degree Theses*

The chart in figure 3 shows that the largest number of male supervisors represents the largest portion of the chart (96.55), while female supervisors have the smallest part (3.45).

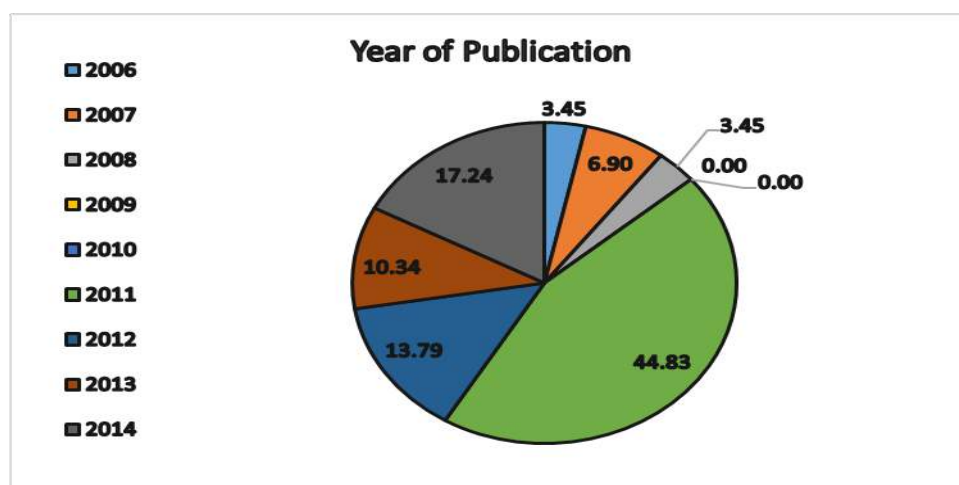


Figure 4. Number of M.A Theses Published per Year

The chart in Figure 4 shows that the largest number of reading theses was defended in 2011 (44.83%). The second largest number (17.24%) was defended in 2014. The third largest number of completed theses was in 2012 (13.79%). The other years received the lowest portion on the chart.

Findings of Qualitative content analysis

This section presents the finding of qualitative content analysis in tables 2, 3, and 4 by pointing out each study's author, title, subject's procedures and conclusions. The main purpose of this content analysis is to answer the second question "To what extent did the studies vary in their content genres?", and to indicated whether the studies content was focusing on reading solely or on its connection to other languages arts skills or/and to other subject matters.

Table 2. Studies done on reading alone without connecting it to other language skills

Author	Study title briefly	Study subjects	Study conclusions
1.Al-Twajri (2007)	The effectiveness of the text structure on EFL Saudi readers' ability to recall more information from the assigned reading texts	The participants were 30 Saudi female university students classified into successful and unsuccessful readers.	- Successful readers' superior recall was due to their use of text structure, which resulted in more recall from organized passages. - The researcher's main conclusion was that there was a high correlation between the tight high organization of the text and the increased reading ability of EFL Saudi learners.
2.Al-Ghamdi (2007)	The attitudes of EFL Saudi readers toward extensive reading	A group of first-year Saudi female students toward reading extensively.	- Participants had positive attitudes toward extensive reading when using simplified materials. - The study concluded that extensive reading helped the participants

			improve their L2 reading speed.
3.Al-Eidi (2011)	The impact of intensive and extensive reading on reading speed and comprehension	Fifty Saudi female freshmen students majoring in English at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University	- The study main conclusion was that extensive reading was found to be more efficient than intensive reading was.
4.Al-Jahlaan (2011)	The role of the zone of proximal development in developing EFL female learners' reading comprehension	Female participants who were put into an experimental and a control group took part in the study.	- The researcher's main conclusion was that the ZPD improved students' reading comprehension in the experimental group.
5.Al-Khaleefah (2011)	How eye tracking could enhance orthographic reading problems	A group of 23 students participated in the study.	- Eye tracking identified students' areas of weakness when reading English text resulting from L1 transfer of reading techniques.
6.Al-Mheidib (2012)	Improving the reading ability of EFL Saudi learners through pre-reading activities	A group of first-year English-major students attending Al-Imam University.	- The study main conclusion highlighted the advantages of pre-reading activities in increasing readers' schemata and comprehension of the target text.
7.Ameer (2014)	KWL-Plus as a Meta-Cognitive strategy to improve the reading skill	A group of college students majoring in English at Prince Nasser Secondary School.	The application of the K-W-L plus strategy was effective English reading classrooms of Saudi college students.
8.Al-Sweelim (2014)	Cognitive comprehension questions in two levels of Tapestry Reading Series	A group of first year students at English Language and Literature Department in AL-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.	- The conclusion was that the two textbooks had low representation of high-level comprehension questions.
9.Al-Shammary (2014)	The influence of schema theory on reading comprehension	A group of third year students at Ibn Khaldon High School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.	Schema theory proved effectiveness in improving students' reading comprehension.
10.Al-Rahmani (2014)	The influence of schema on EFL reading comprehension	A group of Saudi Secondary Stage Students in the city of Jeddah	Reading abilities of the Saudi students improved due to the use of schema as a reading strategy

Table (2) reveals that the content of the ten studies listed has given a prominent focus to reading comprehension without connecting reading to other languages arts skills. Interestingly, two studies out of the ten were conducted on the influence of schema theory on improving reading comprehension of Saudi high school students in the year 2014. However, the two studies locations and samples were different; Al-Shammary (2014) conducted his study on a group of high school students in Riyadh city, while Al-Rahmani

(2014) performed his study on a similar group of students in the city of Jeddah. The two cities are located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The findings in table two show that the two researchers almost attained the same results that schema theory was significantly influential on reading comprehension in a positive manner. The table also shows that all the ten studies have used specific materials or strategies that to improve reading comprehension. It is evident from the conclusions of the study that all the materials or strategies used affected reading comprehension to Saudi EFL students positively.

Table 3. Studies done on reading in connection with other languages arts

Author	Study title briefly& Subjects	Material and procedures	Study conclusions
1- Al-Ahmed (2006)	Title: The influence of content area reading on EFL writing performance Subjects: The participants of the study were level 2 female students majoring in English at Al-Imam University.	The subjects were place in two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was treated with an extensive content area reading material. The researcher collected the data by using three types of instruments: weekly writings, pre-and post-test, and a short survey.	- Contend area reading significantly affected Saudi EFL writers' performance. - Study participants showed positive attitudes toward integrating reading with writing in their composition classroom.
2- Al-Othmaan, (2008)	Title: Vocabulary Repertoire Enhancement and Reading Comprehension Improvement Subjects: Ten students studying in an intensive course at Al-Imam University participated in the study.	The subjects were randomly divided to an experimental and control groups. The experimental group underwent an independent intensive online vocabulary learning over 6 weeks. Tests and interviews were the main instruments for data collection besides note taking.	Findings demonstrated positive correlation between the development of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension due to the technique used.
3- Al-Fahad (2011)	Title: Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Outcomes Subjects: Nine students majoring in English at Al-Imam University were selected to answer a variety of interview questions	The participants were asked to answer two types of questions: some were related to background information, such as how much time they spend outside of class working on vocabulary activities, and others about their vocabulary learning strategies and reading habits.	Findings showed that the participants employed some shared vocabulary learning strategies that improved their reading comprehend level.
4- Al-Saloum, (2011)	Title: Effects of Extensive Reading on Vocabulary Knowledge	The subjects were placed in two groups: the first one (Experimental) was exposed to	The results showed experimental group made better gains on the reading

	and Reading Speed Subjects: One hundred twenty seven first-year Saudi female university students participated in the study.	an extensive reading approach, while the other one (control) was exposed to an intensive reading approach. Pre & post-tests were also used to collect the data.	speed post- tests than the control group did.
5- Al-Qahtani (2011)	Title: Learning EFL Vocabulary through Extensive Reading Subjects: Sixteen female freshmen university students responded to the study instrument.	The participants were asked to read three graded readers, every week and submit a summary of it as a follow-up activity. After the treatment, they took a post-test that was used first as a pretest in order to measure their progress on reading and vocabulary.	The findings showed that 14 out of the 16 participants scored higher on the post-test on both vocabulary and reading than on the pre-test. The conclusion was them made that the two skills are interrelated and help enhancement of each other reciprocally.
6- Al-Otaibi (2011)	Title: Acquiring Vocabulary through the Extensive Reading of Graded Readers Subjects: Fifty female students in a secondary school in Riyadh studying in the third grade were involved.	The subjects were assigned in two groups, an extensive reading group treated with a large amount of vocabulary through the extensive reading for two months, and a control group who did not receive any extensive reading. Two tests , a pre-test and a post-test were administered to measure the students' progress.	The findings showed significant differences of the participants' scores on the pre& posttests in favor of the experimental group.
7- Al-Awaad (2011)	Title: Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition through Reading Subjects: 56 female third grade intermediate students participated in this study.	The participants were assigned into two groups: a control group, and an experimental group. The experimental group participants were asked to read silently and with no teacher interference, while the control group was taught vocabulary in the conventional method.	The results of the tests revealed positive vocabulary acquisition and retention in favor of the experimental group due to the reading treatment.
8- Al-Adaghiri (2012)	Title: the effectiveness of reading on grammar mastery Subjects: Eighteen freshman female students signing in an English Diploma program at Princess Nora University	The participants were assigned into two groups: a control group, and an experimental group. Teachers assigned to the experimental group a reading material that highlighted hot- spot of grammatical issues, while the control group received no treatment	Students participating in the study showed positive attitudes toward integrating reading instruction into grammar education as reading improved their grammar performance.

9- Al-Shamaly (2012)	Title: The connection between teaching reading and building the students' communicative competence Subjects: Twenty freshman female students majoring in English participated in the study.	The researcher distributed the subjects in an experimental and control group. The participants in the experimental group received reading instruction in specific techniques that enhance communication. Whereas, students in the control group were taught reading in traditional classroom methods	Students improved their speaking and oral skills while practicing reading activities based on the communicative approach such discussing main ideas, expressing meanings extracted from the text, commenting on author's ideas and pointing out themes expressed in the text.
10- Al-Heidan (2013)	Title: The Effects of Morphology Awareness on Students' Reading Comprehension Skills Subjects: Fifty-eight first-grade female Saudi students in a secondary school participated in this study.	The subjects were in an experimental group who were taught with a morphemic analysis, while the control group attended their usual reading comprehension classes.	The results show a strong positive correlation between morphological awareness and the improvement of the students' Reading Comprehension skills in the post-assessment.
11- Al-Mahmoud (2013)	Title: The Impact of Task-based Reading on Enhancing Vocabulary Learning Subjects: The sample of the study consisted of 60 third intermediate Saudi female students at 15th school in Riyadh city.	Thirty students were for the experimental group and 30 for the control group. The researcher taught the experimental group using strategies based on the task-based approach. The control group received regular instruction which relied heavily on traditional methods of teaching	The results revealed improvement in vocabulary achievement on the posttest in favor of the experimental group. It was noted also that the experimental group showed positive reactions towards the reading tasks, classroom activities and homework assignments based on the task-based reading approach.

Table (3) showed there were eleven studies done on reading in connection with other language arts namely, reading with vocabulary, writing, grammar and communication (speaking). According to table (3), eight out of the eleven studies investigated reading and vocabulary connection (Al-Othmaan, 2008; Al-Fahad, 2011; Al-Saloum, 2011; Al-Qahtani, 2011; Al-Otaibi, 2011; Al-Awaad, 2011; Al-Heidan, 2013; Al-Mahmoud, 2013). The studies' participants ranged from the very last year of high school to freshmen university students. The studies used the experimental design where participants' distribution was in experiment and control groups, except for study 3, which used no treatment, but a questionnaire. For data collection, pre-posttest were administered prior to and post the treatment. The studies used intensive vocabulary programs or extensive reading programs to explore the effectiveness of the connection between the two skills on students' performance on both vocabulary acquisition and learning to read and comprehend. The results were significantly positive in favor of the treatment group- a fact that

reflects the strong connectivity between reading progress and the other language skills, mainly vocabulary.

Table 4. Studies done on reading and other subject matters

Author	Study title briefly& Subjects	Material and procedures	Study conclusions
1. Al-Rubei (2011)	Title: Exploring the Attitudes and Beliefs of KFU Female Students towards Reading Online Extensively Subjects: The participants were 30 females majoring in EFL at King Faisal University.	The study used a questionnaire accompanied by an interview.	The results indicated that EFL students at KFU had generally positive attitudes toward the use of electronic texts in reading online extensively at their free time.
2. Al-Eid (2011)	Title: EFL Teachers' Perspective Toward Using the Internet to Improve Students' Reading Skills at the Secondary Stage Subjects: Thirty EFL teachers were randomly selected from six private and public schools to participate in this study.	The researcher used a questionnaire as a tool to collect data about using the internet.	Teachers' responses to the questionnaire items indicated that the Internet could contribute significantly to developing Saudi EFL students' reading skills.
3. Dawood (2011)	Title: The Impact of Using MS-PowerPoint on Teaching Reading Comprehension for EFL; Saudi Secondary School Students Subjects: A group of EFL secondary school male students was used as participants in the study.	Three instruments were used; students' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire and post-test.	The results indicated The researcher stated that MS-PowerPoint is one of the rich software that provides teachers with many possibilities to create and present more interesting, interactive and effective reading classes.
4. Al-Shammary (2012)	Title: The Effects of Cooperative Learning through Social Networking Websites on Saudi EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Acquisition and Motivation to Read Subjects: Thirty-three	A pre-posttest design was used to measure the development in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and a pre-post treatment questionnaire to measure the learners' motivation to read.	The findings of the study revealed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition

	female students participated in the study during their first year in English college.		
5. Al-Sanad (2014)	Title: The Effect of Email Key-pal Project on the Enhancement of the Writing and Reading Skills of EFL Elementary School Children in Saudi Arabia Subjects: 10 pupils studying at a girls' school in Saudi Arabia participated in an email project with partners from a Muslim school in Canada.	The sample was pre- and post-tested on their reading and writing skills. Besides, a questionnaire and interviews were used with the study participants.	The results indicate that the Key-pal project helped the participating pupils improve their reading and writing skills significantly more than the pupils who did not participate over this term. In addition, the results from interviews and questionnaire indicated that the pupils enjoyed the project.
6. Al-Yahaya (2011)	Title: Hyphenation: Organizing News Headlines for Improved Comprehension. Does it Work? Subjects: A group of adult Saudi readers participated in the study.	The researcher examined the readers' understanding when reading unhyphenated prenominal modifiers in news headlines and compared it with their understanding of the same headlines that had been hyphenated.	The results indicated that hyphen usage in news headlines was essential to clarify ambiguous sentence structures and contributed to a better understanding of news headlines.
7. Al-Tureiqi (2011)	Title: The effect of using illustrations on the reading comprehension of EFL Saudi beginner students Subjects: Forty 7th grade students participated in the study.	Pre- and post-tests were used to collect data for the experimental and control group.	Data analysis showed that illustrations had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. Further, the students in the experimental group were highly motivated and active in the class while the control group students were acting normally.
8. Al-Sultan (2013)	Title: The impact of Using Brain-Based Learning on EFL students Reading Comprehension Subjects: The study sample consisted of female English major students studying in The Collage of Arts at King Faisal University in Al-Hassa,	Pre- and post-tests were used to collect data for the experimental and control group.	The findings of this study confirmed that the students who were taught reading comprehension using (BBL) achieved higher scores than the students who were taught by the traditional method.

Table (4) shows that the first five studies have attempted to explore the relationship between reading improvement and the integration of technology. The five scholars tried to explore the effectiveness of using the different technologies such power point and key-pal projects on EFL Saudi students' improvement in reading. Although the studies were conducted at different times, in different academic institutions, and with different school levels of participants ranging from five elementary graders, secondary graders, to university freshman students, they all had almost the same purpose and used similar instruments were used of data collection. Obviously, the one goal of these studies was how integrating technology into reading classes could effectively contribute to reading improvement of Saudi learners of English as a second language. Interestingly, the research instruments used by the four studies were either questionnaires if the study sample was schoolteachers or pre/post-tests & questionnaires if the sample was students.

The table also shows that study six attempts to explore the effect of journalistic texts represented in hyphenated news headlines on EFL Saudi-readers' comprehension. This study presents a new trend in teaching reading comprehension through integrating journalistic texts related to a particular structure of newspapers headlines. Reading news headlines may constitute a major obstacle that may place a challenge on the readers' comprehension. The researcher pointed out Hyphenated and unhyphenated headlines had a varying influence on participants' reading comprehension. Study number (7), according to the table above, examined the effect of using illustrations on EFL7th grade students' reading comprehension. The study indicated that the young readers scored better in reading in English classes and in other content area classes when receiving reading education with pictures and illustrations. Finally, the last study in the table examined the impact of brain-based learning (BBL) on reading comprehension. The researcher of this study concluded that using (BBL) strategy was superior to traditional methods of teaching reading comprehension as revealed in student's grades on the posttests.

Discussion

Discussion of Quantitative Description

The 29 reviewed studies on reading in this paper indicated that there were 23 female master's degree (M.A) authors (79.31%), while there were six male M.A authors (20.69%), see table (1). Contrary to this finding, the number of male professors supervising the students works was tremendously exceeding the female supervisors; There were 28 male supervisors (96.55%), while there was one female instructor (3.45%) taking the advisory task with one female M.A student.

The body of reading research investigated by the current study indicated that the highest percentages belonged to M.A female authors (79.31%), at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, while the male authors' percentages represented only (20.69%). The possible interpretation for these results is that, the Saudi male students pursue their graduate studies in an English native-speaking country such as the United States of America or the United Kingdom, through scholarship programs funded by the Saudi higher education authorities. Whereas, Saudi female students choose to pursue their graduate studies in local higher education Saudi

institutions. Up to the researcher knowledge, scholarship programs are equally open for male and female students. However, female students are likely more inclined to study locally. The explanation for this tendency is that the Saudi society belongs to a conservative culture where male students have more freedom to study in a foreign country, while female students go through society and cultural restrictions that lessen their opportunities to study abroad.

In contrast, the supervision of M.A theses was dominant by male instructors. (95.55), while the female supervision received a very low percentage (3.45%). Up to the knowledge of this paper author, Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University gives an equal opportunity to female-male supervision. However, the graduate school at the university places specific rules and regulations on M.A theses supervision such the r academic rank of the supervisor as an assistant professor, an associate professor or a full professor. Besides, other supervision requirements may exist such the number of research studies published by the supervisor. The English department at the university, for example, requires the thesis supervisor to publish at least two research studies within the field of the supervised work. Accordingly, the low participation of female supervision can be mainly attributed to the graduate school and the English department regulations.

The current study also showed the highest percentages of defended theses were during the years of 2011 (44.83%), 2014, (17.24%), 2012 (13.79%, and 2013 (10.34), respectively. Whilst, the years 2006 through 2010 received the lowest portion of defended M.A theses. The researcher of this current paper must note that the years of 2006-2010 were the M.A English program development years at the English department of the university. Therefore, the M.A English program did not attract big numbers of M.A students during these years. On the other hand, the years of 2011-2014 represent the maturity and the growth of the English M.A program at the English department. Consequently, these years experienced more enrollment of M.A students in the English program.

Discussion of Qualitative Description

The current study showed there was a high volume of reading studies done by Al-Imam University M.A students on EFL Saudi learners of English during the years of 2006-2014. The content related to reading and other languages arts was (37.93%), reading and technology was (34.48%), while the other content types receive the lowest percentages as explained earlier.

Obviously, this high research volume may reflect the scholars' awareness of the significance of reading instruction in enhancing EFL Saudi students' need to learn reading in connection to other language skills.

The high volume of studies done on reading by the A.M students at Al-Imam University, and the emphasis of such research given to reading instruction finds its justification from other scholars around the world. Pritchard and O'Hara (2008) indicated that EFL Spanish students learn reading strategies not only to help them in reading comprehension, but also to help them in learning other language arts and skills such as vocabulary and spelling. Anderson (1991) confirmed that successful students in reading comprehension and other language skills are those who apply reading strategies successfully in their academic life. Gooden, et.al (2007) consolidate the findings of the fore-mentioned researchers in that reading comprehension significantly improved students' performance in only in English, but in other school domains.

Erawati (2012) confirmed that reading along with its strategies and techniques affects students' competency not reading for comprehension, but contributes to read effectively in other content areas textbook. Fogarty (1994) suggested that reading education provides students with opportunities to apply a wide variance of metacognitive strategies that help them think about thinking in reading classrooms and other school subjects. Therefore, reading teachers should work toward guiding their students to become more strategic thinkers through teaching reading strategies to enhance their success in their real life. Hamdan, (2010) pointed out reading can create a successful community of learners in many aspects of daily life through learning read. However, the research studies conducted by the M.A students in the English program at Imam University have almost neglected reading in connection with some other areas of languages skills such as speaking, listening and spelling. The other language skills such as writing was existed in only one study (Al-Ahmed, 2006). This low representation can be attributed to either the student's -supervisor's research interest, or researchers' disorientation toward the importance of reading connection with the other language skills ignored in the volume of research presented in this paper. Consequently, the author of this paper recommends that M.A students at Imam University should conduct further studies on reading and its connection to other language skills. Researcher advisors, in a similar manner, should reinforce their students' tendency toward integration of reading with other language areas and skills.

About the Author:

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Appendix (A)

Table 2. Total Analysis for Dissertations' Content, Author Gender, Advisor Gender, and Year of Publication

	Title	Author	Supervisor	Year	Content	Auth. gender	Sup. Gender
1	Reading and Writing Connection: The Influence of Content-Area Reading on EFL Writing Performance	Lamda Al-Ahmed	Dr. Khalid Alshabaly	2006	RDGA, WRT	F	M
2	The Role of Text and Reader in Reading Expository Texts	Thilwa Al-Twajri	Dr. Ali Al-Rajhi	2007	RDG	F	M
3	Extensive Reading in Language Learning: Exploring the Attitudes of Saudi Female Students Using Simplified Texts	Alshah Al-Ghannam	Dr. Sami Al-Shawaf	2007	RDG	F	M
4	The Role of EFL Writers on Vocabulary Repetition Enhancement and Reading Comprehension Improvement	Amal Al-Othman	Dr. Sami Al-Shawaf	2008	VOCARDG	F	M
5	Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Reading Outcomes	Maha Al-Faisal	Dr. Muhammad Al-Ahdyth	2011	VOCARDG	F	M
6	The Effects of Extensive Reading on Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Speed among Saudi Female University Students	Munira Al-Ghannam	Dr. Faisal Al-Shawaf	2011	RDGA/VOC	F	M
7	The Impact of Using MS-PowerPoint on Teaching Reading Comprehension to the EFL Saudi Secondary School Students	Muhammad Dawood	Abd Al-Hamoud Alshawaf	2011	TSCHARDG	M	M
8	Stipulations: Coping with New Readings for Improved Comprehension, Does it Work?	Sahar Al-Yahya	Dr. Ahmed Alshayyan	2011	Method RDG	F	M
9	The Impact of Extensive and Intensive Reading on Reading Speed and Comprehension of Saudi Female College EFL Students	Moham Al-Bali	Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Shabaly	2011	RDG	F	M
10	The effect of Reading Material on the reading comprehension FEFL Saudi beginner students	Fahad Al-Tawaji	Dr. Nayel Al-Sha'a	2011	Extensiv RDG	M	M
11	Learning EFL Vocabulary through Extensive Reading	Fahad Al-Qubani	Dr. Rafiq Alsham	2011	VOCARDG	F	M
12	EFL Teachers' Perspectives Toward Using the Internet to Improve Students' Reading Skills at the Secondary Stage	Yousef Al-Bal	Dr. Rafiq Alsham	2011	TSCH and RDG	M	M
13	The Role of the Zone of Proximal Development in Developing EFL Female Learners' Reading Comprehension	Ashwaq Al-Sham	Dr. Rafiq Alsham	2011	RDG	F	M
14	Exploring the Attitudes and Beliefs of EFL Female Students towards Reading Online Sources only	Sarah Al-Faisal	Dr. Othman Al-Samir	2011	Attitudes & RDG	F	M
15	Acquiring Vocabulary through the Extensive Reading of Graded Readers	Fahd Al-Shab	Dr. Othman Al-Samir	2011	VOCARDG	F	M
16	Eye Tracking as a Tool to Investigate Orthographic Reading Problems	Khalid Al-Shawaf	Dr. Ali Al-Rajhi	2011	RDG	F	M
17	Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition through Reading	Sahar Al-Ahmed	Dr. Nayel Al-Sha'a	2011	VOCARDG	F	M
18	The Role of Reading in Facilitating EFL Learners' Grammar Mastery	Ashwaq Al-Ahdyth	Dr. Othman Al-Samir	2012	RDGA/GRM	F	M
19	The Effects of Cooperative Learning through Social Networking Websites on Saudi EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Acquisition and Motivation to Read	Moham Al-Shawaf	Dr. Muhammad Al-Ahdyth	2012	TSCHARDG	F	M
20	Acquiring Communicative Competence in the Reading Classroom	Munira Al-Ghannam	Dr. Rafiq Alsham	2012	RDGA/Communicative	F	M
21	Implementing Pre-Reading Activities in Teaching English	Hanan Al-Mohdith	Dr. Muhammad Al-Ahdyth	2012	RDG	F	M
22	The Effects of Morphology Awareness on Students' Reading Comprehension Skills in Saudi Female Secondary	Fahad Al-Sham	Dr. Khalid Alshab	2013	VOCARDG	F	F
23	The impact of Using Brain-Based Learning on EFL students Reading Comprehension	Hanan Al-Sham	Dr. Muhammad Al-Samir	2013	Brain Storming & RDG	F	M
24	The Impact of Task-based Reading on Enhancing Vocabulary Learning	Moham Al-Mohdith (M)	Dr. Ali Al-Rajhi	2013	RDGA/VOC	M	M
25	Using KWL-Plus as a Meta-Cognitive Strategy to Improve Reading and Writing Skills in Saudi Secondary School English Classrooms	Yousef Al-Sham	Dr. Muhammad Hamdan	2014	RDG	M	M
26	The Cognitive Levels of the Comprehension Questions in Tapestry Reading 1 and 2, Middle East Edition: A content Analysis	Lina Al-Shawaf	Dr. Hani Farhat	2014	RDG	F	M
27	The Effect of Small Group Project on the Enhancement of the Writing and Reading Skills of EFL Elementary School Children in Saudi Arabia	Moham Al-Samir	Dr. Othman Al-Samir	2014	TSCHARDG	F	M
28	The Role of Schema Theory in Improving Saudi EFL Students' Reading Comprehension	Amal Al-Shawaf	Dr. Rafiq Alsham	2014	RDG	F	M
29	Influence of Schema on EFL Reading Comprehension of Saudi Secondary Stage Students	Abdullah Al-Samir	Dr. Abdul-Aziz Alshab	2014	RDG	M	M

Guessing from Context: A Saudi EFL View

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Abstract

The present paper reviews and discusses a number of studies that have been conducted in the Saudi context tackling the issue of guessing from context. More specifically, factors affecting the process of guessing as well as issues related to training EFL learners on this skill are discussed. Furthermore, the current review considers a range of studies that investigated guessing from context with ESL/EFL learners. A much deeper scrutiny was dedicated to studies carried out in the Saudi EFL context. In addition, the implications of these studies for both emerging research tendencies and classroom practices are embarked upon, bearing in mind the scarcity of studies, especially on issue of training learners on this central skill to both reading comprehension and vocabulary intake increase.

Keywords: guessing, context, clues, vocabulary learning, incidental learning, strategy training.

Introduction

Since it has been considered part and parcel of language learning, vocabulary knowledge has drawn researchers' attention for carrying out studies that tap its different aspects and levels. In brief, there are eight aspects (types of knowledge) that L2 learners would know about a word if they want to master that word. According to Nation (2001) and Schmitt (2000), these aspects are: meaning, register, associations, written form, spoken form, grammatical form, collocations, and frequency. Schmitt (2000) argues that all these aspects are not necessarily learned at the same time or in a linear form. This is why vocabulary learning is incremental in nature. Additionally, these aspects show that mastering a word is not simple, in fact, it entails complex levels and processes. Therefore, L2 learners as well as teachers need to be aware of this inherent complexity. Contents, instruction and exercises need to pay attention to these different aspects in different ways and presentations. One of the important ways that help L2 learners get exposed to different aspects of a given word is context in both reading and listening (Nation, 2001). Cambridge Dictionary Online defines context as: "the text or speech that comes immediately before and after a particular phrase or piece of text and helps to explain its meaning". Therefore, context is an important tool for enhancing vocabulary learning and building up background knowledge. Indeed, Nation (2001) believes that employing guessing from context to learn vocabulary incidentally is the most important of all sources of vocabulary learning, which can be through different language activities that focus on meaning rather than form such as extensive reading, taking part in conversations, listening to stories, films, etc. In the Saudi EFL context, extensive reading seems to have positive effects on learners' vocabulary knowledge development (Al-Nujaidi, 2004; Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Al-Homoud & Alsalloum, 2012).

Factors affecting word guessability

Before discussing the factors that affect the guessing process of a word's meaning, it is important to know what the word *context* means, and what types of clues are available for L2 readers. Nation and Coady (1988: 102) believe that context can be divided into two broad sections: specific and general. For example, the morphological, structural, and discourse information available in the text provide a specific context within the text itself. On the other hand, the background knowledge about the reading text L2 readers bring can represent the general context. Moreover, Pictures, tables, diagrams, punctuation, etc. can be considered as a non-textual context that can facilitate the process of guessing the meaning of unknown words Hosenfield (1977). Consequently, both non-textual clues (content schemata) and textual clues (formal schemata) are remarkably important for reading comprehension (Al-Homoud, 2008).

Thus, the types of clues that can be of great value to the skill of guessing are as follows:

1. Textual clues which include local and global clues. Local clues refer to clues that are available in the *immediate* context of a word, whether before or after the unknown word(s) in the same sentence or even the same phrase (Al-Homoud, 2008.). Local clues, however, are not always helpful to understanding; readers may guess the word's meaning from a global clue rather than a local one (Alseweed, 2000). Global clues, in contrast, are clues that available in sentences other than the one including the immediate context (Al-Homoud, 2008).
2. Non-textual clues embrace a wide range of clues such as background knowledge, graphs, tables, figures, drawings, etc. Nonetheless, such clues may be confusing (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984). For example, readers may mistakenly interpret the

new meaning according to their content schema rather than to the context it appeared in (Laufer, 1997b). Some of these clues such as the pictorial ones are sometimes known in the literature as a "co-text", which while are related to the main text, may often, all the same, tend to possess an independent textual identity in their own right. Oxford (1990) divides clues into 'linguistic clues' (i.e. textual clues) and 'non-linguistic clues' (i.e. non-textual clues).

Teachers as well as materials-writers need to be aware of some factors that can affect the guessability of a word so as to make guessing more approachable. These factors are broadly taken from Schmitt (2000), Nation (2001), Al-Homoud (2008), and Nation and Webb (2011), as follows:

1. **Readers may guess a word's meaning better if adequate clues are available in the context.** In other words, guessing will be facilitated more if those clues are sufficiently available (Nation, 2001). Nonetheless, too many clues may inhibit L2 readers from stimulating a good deal of his/her cognitive processing (Mondria & Wit de Boer, 1991), which in turn does not help in recalling that word later (Al-Homoud, 2008). Furthermore, a word of caution is necessary here. Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987) and Nation and Webb (2011) state that so many studies do not use normal, natural reading texts where contexts may not be so carefully cared about. Therefore, teachers and program/syllabus designers are recommended to give special attention to reading textbooks that suit their students' levels of language proficiency.

2. Local clues may be of greater importance to guessing than global ones. Nation (2001: 243) refers to this as "proximity of relevant clues". That is, guessing may be more approachable if relevant clues are very near the new word. For example, Huckin and Bloch (1993: 161) found that their three subjects used local linguistic constituents (e.g. syntactic collocations) in making their guesses more frequent than the other types of clues involved in these studies, i.e. global text representations (e.g. structure, organization, etc.) and world knowledge. Hence, teachers are advised to pay special attention to local clues and try to raise the awareness of their students to this important factor. Nonetheless, Alseweed (2000) found that his Saudi subjects used global clues more frequently than the local ones in understanding the reading text.

3. **Guessing is prone to misidentification of an unknown word whether context clues are available or not (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984; Huckin and Bloch, 1993).** Bensoussan and Laufer (p. 20) refer to this as "confusion of synophone/synograph" where the former deals with words that have similar sounds to other words the reader already know; where the latter refers to words that share similar spelling with other words the reader knows, e.g. 'implication/application' and uniquely/unequally'. Furthermore, L2 readers may screw the meaning of the whole context to adhere to the new guessed word instead of trying to fit that word's meaning within that context (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984). Al-Homoud (2008) believes that this can be very perilous due to two issues: 1. this misidentification may lead to miscomprehension of the reading text, or at least that part of the text, and 2. the learner may believe that the new guessed meaning is the right one, and, therefore, he/she may use it incorrectly in other learning situations. Thus, teachers should warn their students about this serious problem.

4. **Guessing from context may be facilitated by cognates** (White, 1988). Cognates, words that have a common etymological origin, are believed to make the learning of a word easier. However, in so many cases they might be risky, especially false ones. For example, the French word *Le Chair* does not mean *chair* in English, rather it means *flesh* (Lawless, 2004).

5. **Background knowledge about the topic/concept may make guessing easier.** This is true since the background knowledge readers bring to the text (content schema) is of crucial importance to reading comprehension (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Consequently, learning a new label for a familiar notion ... will almost be easier than learning both a new notion and a new label (Nagy, *et al*, 1985). Moreover, teachers should take into account their students' different backgrounds through selecting a variety of reading materials and topics (Oxford, 1990). This is particularly important in ESP reading materials.

6. **Training students on 'when' as well as 'how' to guess the meaning of a word is of paramount importance.** Regarding *when* to guess a word meaning, Al-Homoud (2008) suggests that it may be useful to make learners aware that not *all* new words need to be guessed; they may also be trained on when to ignore (skip) a word if they think it is of slight importance to comprehension. Concerning *how* to guess, Clarke and Nation (1980) propose the following general stages:

Step 1. Identify the word's part of speech (i.e. noun, verb, etc.).

Step 2. Examine the immediate context. For example, if the new word is a noun, look for any adjective(s) before it, or the nearest verb to it (Schmitt, 2000, p. 154). This can help finding local clues.

Step 3. Connect the immediate context to other broader contexts for global clues that may stimulate your guessing. An example of these clues can be cause and effect, contrast, exemplification, etc. (Clarke and Nation, 1980).

Step 4. Guess the meaning of that word.

Step 5. Confirm that your guess is right through the following:

a) Does your guess have the same part of speech of the unknown word? If not, double-check your guess!

b) Exchange the unknown word with your guess. Does the sentence sound well? If not, there is a problem with your guess.

c) If the unknown word has prefixes or suffixes, break it down into its root. If the word's parts support your guess, then your guess is correct. If not, examine your guess again, but do not change it if you feel comfortable about it being in that context (Schmitt, 2000).

d) Check the word in the dictionary (Nation, 2001)

Likewise, Oxford (1990: 94) suggests some broad stages for promoting systematic guessing from context. These are ranked as follows: looking for global comprehension of the whole text, stimulating readers with some questions either before or during the reading task, promoting predictions of next events in the reading passage, and showing pictures that correspond to readers' guesses. Oxford stresses on the usefulness of teachers' feedback to the guesses made by their students. This is very crucial since it will help encouraging the right guesses and correcting the wrong ones (Al-Homoud, 2008). Moreover, teachers need to make their efforts to make their students independent with regard to these activities, especially in their own external reading.

Indeed, the skill of guessing seems to help L2 readers employ different processes to solve the problem of encountering unknown words such as referring to grammatical clues, examining the word's parts of speech, relating the meaning of the guessed word with a picture, referring to a dictionary, etc. The only one that does not belong so frequently to the skill of guessing is using the dictionary, thus, L2 readers should not refer to their dictionaries so much when using this skill, rather they should make it the last resort for discovering or confirming the word's meaning as mentioned earlier (Clarke & Nation, 1980; Nation, 2001).

As has been established earlier, guessing from context is time-consuming, and, as a result, it seems to interrupt the reading process. Nevertheless, readers employing guessing from context so frequently may reach the level of using this skill automatically as they become more trained and advanced in such a skill (Nation and Coady 1988). Additionally, readers may skip some of those steps when they become more proficiently comfortable with it (Schmitt, 2000).

7. Guessing a word from context does not necessarily involve remembering that word subsequently. For instance, Huckin and Bloch (1993) found that one of their subjects (Ran) correctly guessed and translated the word '*barrier*' in the first meeting. In the second encounter, however, he seemed not to identify it at all. This is probably attributable to the different contexts where the two instances of '*barrier*' appeared. Sometimes, *pregnant* contexts seem to easily help the reader guess the meaning, while poor ones, usually, do not (Al-Homoud, 2008).

Moreover, some contexts have more clues than others, which in turn make guessing more approachable or not. Some words, also, tend to be more guessable than others, i.e. the reader does not exert a good deal of his/her cognitive processing when guessing them, hence, he/she will probably soon fail to recall words (Schmitt, 2000). Nonetheless, teachers should not get disappointed with this. Every encounter with the word should enhance previous knowledge of that word with some extra information about it since vocabulary growth is incremental in nature

Do students need to be trained on successful guessing? Why?

Both previous and current research support the idea of training students on guessing from context since it has positive effects on students' vocabulary knowledge (Huckin and Jin, 1987; Kern, 1989; Fraser, 1999; Walters, 2004; 2006). For instance, Kern (1989) introduced reading strategy instruction to a university-level French class for the whole semester. The strategy instruction focused on word analysis, sentence analysis, discourse analysis, and guessing from context. The results showed positive effects on reading comprehension. In particular, the study found a positive effect on training the participants on guessing from context. Nevertheless, this was not statistically significant. Therefore, teachers as well as materials developers are encouraged to include training segments in their teaching/materials. However, teachers should also pay attention to some crucial issues about guessing from context before embarking on training their students. For example, Nation (2001) and Nation and Webb (2011) suggest the following ways for training:

1. help them use reading/listening materials that are suitable for their level
2. promote extensive reading/listening through providing comprehensible input
3. improve their reading fluency and comprehension
4. introduce training in guessing from context

Nation believes that teachers should adhere to this ranking as it is listed in order of importance. He clarifies that guessing from context is a sub-reading skill that depends heavily on reading skills. This echoes McKeown's (1985) statement that good guessers are good readers.

Teachers should be confident about the gains of spending time and effort on training students on successful guessing. They also need to convince students and other teachers about this. Nation (2001) suggests some practical justifications for training students on the strategy of guessing as follows:

- *It is applicable to both high- and low-frequency vocabulary.* Nonetheless, I believe that

high-frequency vocabulary needs to have direct and explicit attention by learners and teachers alike. Leaving this to guessing from context alone may not give appropriate results in terms of the number of words learned.

- *L1 learners learn most of their vocabulary through this strategy.* But does this apply openly to the L2 context? As discussed earlier, it seems that L1 learners are at firmer stands than L2 learners when it comes to contextual clues, language proficiency, and background knowledge. It is worth noting that, the role of L1 on L2 acquisition and the multiple factors influencing this role is currently being revived with interesting new ideas being uncovered or readdressed (the complexity of the L2 itself, the fact that both surface and deep/abstract features of L1 can influence L2 development, together with the fact that "transfer" can be a 'selective' process (Foley and Flynn, 2013).

Finally, Nation (2001: 262) affirms and strongly confirms that

In any list of vocabulary learning strategies, guessing from context would have to come at the top of the list. Although it has the disadvantages of being a form of incidental learning (and therefore being less certain) and of not always being successful (because of lack of clues), it is still the most important way that language users can increase their vocabulary. It deserves teaching time and learning time. A well planned vocabulary development programme gives spaced, repeated attention to this most important strategy.

Guessing from context

General EFL/ESL contexts

L2 learners need to be presented with words in context in order to enhance their vocabulary learning. Indeed, contextualized learning conditions seem to be more useful than decontextualized conditions as they are more likely to lead to a much deeper processing (Nation & Webb, 2011). Edwards (2009) affirms that learners need to see how the new item (a new word) works grammatically and the context will help make the item more memorable and aid retention. Nation (2001) and Nation and Meara (2002) deem that there are four main strategies that can be utilized by L2 learners in order to discover the meaning of new/uncertain words. These strategies are guessing from context clues, using word cards for intentional learning of words, using word parts, and dictionary use. These strategies are not exclusive, however. For example, Williams (1985), suggests some other strategies such as recognizing lexical familiarization and breaking down of nominal compounds. Furthermore, an L2 learner can get the meaning of an unknown word by consulting his/her peer students or their teacher. Among those four strategies, guessing from context seems to be a vital skill (Schmitt, 2000), if not the most important strategy (Nation, 1990; Nation, 2001), for discovering the meaning of unknown words.. Nation and Webb (2011: 77) affirm that some researchers dislike the term "guessing from context" and prefer other terms such as "inferring from context", "deriving word meaning from context", or "informed guessing from context" as the term "guessing from context" may entail a degree of unguided randomness. Whatever term we choose, guessing from context is not an easy task for L2 learners. This is why Nation and Coady (1988: 105-107) believe that guessing from context requires two important conditions:

1. adequate knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills
2. Useful activation of background knowledge

The vocabulary component of the first condition raises the issue of the portion of unknown words in a reading text. In other words, how many words do L2 readers need to know

in a certain context so that they can make successful, adequate guessing? Normally, beginners cannot make effective and sound guessing due to their low vocabulary knowledge. Not only that, written texts, unlike spoken texts, use more low frequent words (Schmitt, 2000) which means that L2 readers need to have a good mastery of vocabulary to be able to employ the skill of guessing (Cziko, 1978). Thus, what is the borderline of vocabulary for this skill to be properly implemented?

Liu Na and Nation (1985) and Laufer (1989) believe that readers need to know at least 95% of the text tokens (running words) to be able to make proper guessing. That is, on average, only one unknown word in every 20 words, or one word in every two lines (Nation, 2001). Hirsh and Nation (1992), Hu and Nation (2000), and Nation (2001) even believe that this estimate is still so heavy a load to make guessing; therefore, they suggest that the presence of an unknown word in every 50 to 100 words (i.e. 98-99%) is the best for a successful guessing. Carver (1992; 1994) goes even further to maintain that this estimate is not enough for making comprehension easier. In essence, the more vocabulary size L2 learners have, the more chances that they employ proper guessing are (Bengeleil & Paribakht, 2004). Consequently, Hu and Nation (2000) found an expected relationship between text coverage (i.e. number of words known in a given text) and reading comprehension; when text coverage increases, reading comprehension improves accordingly.

When we relate these findings to the spoken discourse of English, there are clear discrepancies between figures of text coverage. For example, Bonk (2000) found that participants knowing 80% of the running words in the study (i.e. the tested lexical words plus other content and function words) showed good comprehension. Participants below this figure showed poor comprehension. However, the majority of Bonk's participants had achieved good comprehension at 95% rate (Schmitt, 2008).

Larson and Schmitt (2009) found that 90% of discourse coverage resulted in adequate comprehension of about 50% of the idea units tested. However, a coverage figure of 95% showed better comprehension of more than two thirds of idea units. Larson and Schmitt suggest that knowing 800 word families (or about 1400 individual words) should enable L2 learners to reach the 90% coverage. However, reaching the 95% coverage requires no less than 2000 families (or about 4000 individual words). Nation (2006), on the other hand, believes that 3000 word families, in addition to knowing proper nouns, is the threshold for reaching a 95% coverage of English spoken discourse. Schmitt (2008) even claims that L2 learners would need about 6000-7000 families if a coverage of 98% is targeted. However, all these discrepancies are due to the fact that there is not enough evidence that solid and firm conclusions can be based on (Schmitt, 2008).

On the other hand, when relating to reading comprehension in general, early research suggests that knowing the most common 3000 words can be the threshold to enable an L2 reader to understand a reading text. For example, Laufer (1991; 1997b) strongly believes that the turning point for any reading comprehension to take place is 3,000 word families (or 5,000 lexical items).

Moreover, Hirsh and Nation (1992) found that a vocabulary size of 5000 words can be a very good start for learners to read novels written for teenage or younger readers of English natives. However, this vocabulary size can be a good basis for such reading because by one way or another the vocabulary in those novels is controlled. For example, these novels are designed for

non-adult readers, written on one topic, and, maybe written by the same writer (Nation, 2001). Reading novels, books, newspapers, etc., that tackle a continuous topic (referred to as *narrow reading*) can be easier for L2 readers with such a low vocabulary size of 3000 words (Hirsh and Nation, 1992; Schmitt, 2000). Hirsh and Nation (1992) found that knowing 2,600 words covers about 96% of those novels. In other words, there is only an unknown word in every 25 words (or one word in every two lines and a half). Narrow reading can be easier and more enjoyable because the vocabulary load is low and recycled throughout the different articles on the one same topic, not like reading different articles on unrelated topics (Hwang and Nation, 1989). As stated earlier, Hirsh and Nation (1992) and Nation (2001) consider the presence of unknown word in every twenty words (i.e. 95%) to be too difficult for L2 readers to make adequate guessing. Hence, they suggest that the coverage of 98-99% of a reading text (i.e. one unknown word in every 50-100 words) can make reading easier and more enjoyable, and guessing more applicable for L2 readers.

Nation (2001) believes that reading an academic text requires L2 readers to have a very good mastery of language proficiency. For example, Hu and Nation (2000) found that some of their subjects were able to comprehend the fiction texts in their study when they know about 95% of the running words in those texts, i.e. they know 19 words out of every 20 words. Most of their subjects could not have adequate comprehension at that percentage, however. At the coverage level of 98%, Hu and Nation believe that learners can have adequate understanding and enjoyable reading of fiction texts. Therefore, Nation and Coady (1988) believe that West's (1941) suggestion that the known words should not be less than 98% of the running words (i.e. no more than 2% of unknown words) is still applicable. This means, as mentioned before, that the reader would encounter an unknown word in every 50-100 words. Nation (2001) assumes that about 4000 word families should be known for adequate comprehension of academic texts. These word families, he believes, include the 2000 high-frequency general service list, the 570 words of the Academic Words List, and 1000 or more of specialized words, proper nouns, and low frequency words. Yet, recent research (Nation, 2006; Schmitt, 2008) suggests a far higher vocabulary size for comfortable reading. They suggest knowing 8000-9000 word families in order to be able to read authentic texts (i.e. novels and newspapers) in English.

Therefore, L2 novice learners, in principle, may not be able to fulfil the first condition of proper guessing since their proficiency level is extremely much lower than that. They need to employ deliberate, direct strategies to deal with new words such as dictionary use, studying words on word cards, etc. since guessing from context is an indirect, incidental skill of vocabulary learning that requires a fair level of language proficiency. Moreover, teachers cannot directly affect students' choice of using their own background knowledge and previous experience while reading. They can only raise the awareness of their students towards activating these important tools for comprehending reading texts.

In the light of the aforesaid discussion, it can be seen that guessing from context is not an easy task to be implemented since it requires a sufficient vocabulary size that covers more than 95% of a reading text. Moreover, some researchers argue that this skill seems to be a very slow process since the amount of unknown words presented to L2 learners is very small; therefore, this skill is not efficient for vocabulary learning (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984; Carter, 1987; Scherfer, 1993). Furthermore, some other researchers (e.g. Parry, 1993; Mondria and Wit de Boer, 1991) found that their subjects were able to guess the meanings of words in rich texts, but were not able to remember those words when tested later, a distinction that we should be aware

of. Proper guessing does not necessarily lead to vocabulary learning. Thus, Al-Homoud (2008) asserts, it is true that guessing the meaning of a word from context slowly increases vocabulary learning since that it is an *intensive* approach that needs a careful scrutiny for clues in the text, and that the number of words learned in a text (if guessed correctly) is very small. For example, Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) found that their subjects did not exploit the contextual clues available for them in the text; therefore, they believe, "Leaving the question of vocabulary learning to chance or to the students themselves is highly impractical" (p. 26). This can be true if students are told to exclusively use this strategy for enriching their vocabulary repertoire, and to ignore other useful strategies. Consequently, learners are not advised to rely solely on guessing from context in their vocabulary building. Rather, they need to complement this skill with other direct and indirect strategies for increasing their vocabulary size and knowledge, e.g. using the dictionary, word cards, word lists, etc. Moreover, the subjects in Bensoussan and Laufer's (1984) study were novice learners. As established earlier, guessing from context requires a good language proficiency (Cziko, 1987; Nation and Coady, 1988). Moreover, these students seemed not to be familiar with the reading topic since they were from different fields of specialties reading a topic on anthropology. As has been also discussed previously, research has found that topic familiarity is of a great importance to the skill of guessing. Furthermore, it seems that those subjects were not trained on how to guess the word's meaning from context. For example, some of them tried to twist the meaning of the whole context just to go along with the new guessed meaning. Similarly, with polysemous words, Bensoussan and Laufer state that some of their students failed to seek a meaning different from the one they already knew. Therefore, when reading such studies one needs to be careful about interpreting their results. "This may be partly due to poor design, but it is also the effect of the cumulative nature of such learning involving only small gains per meeting for most words" Nation (p. 236).

Therefore, it is important that both L2 teachers and learners know that guessing from context is incremental and, therefore, it needs time (Nation, 1990; 2001). Moreover, Nation (2001) believes that we should not look at guessing from context, which is incidental, as an opposition to the viewpoint that sees intentional, direct teaching is the best way for vocabulary learning. Rather, we should look at these views as being presented on a continuum where both direct teaching and indirect learning move according to students' needs and proficiency levels. Sokmen (1997: 239) also believes that the "pendulum has swung from direct teaching of vocabulary (the grammar translation method) to incidental (the communicative approach) and now, laudably, back to the middle: implicit and explicit learning".

Thus, Nation (2001: 238) draws our attention to three important issues when considering the small gains of vocabulary learning through guessing from context. These considerations are as follows:

1. Reading does not only increase vocabulary learning, but rather it increases some other skills and types of knowledge, e.g. grammatical patterns, text structures, and skipping. For example, through large amount of reading, L2 learners can meet other forms of the word *study*, e.g. *studied*, *studies*, and *studying* as well as some collocations that go with it, e.g. *brown study*, *case study*, *course of study*, *house of studies*, etc. (Merriam-Webster Online, 2004). Again, teachers should bear in mind the fact that vocabulary learning proceeds incrementally (Nagy, *et al.*, 1985).

2. L2 readers can greatly increase their vocabulary size if they do more reading. For example, Nagy (1997) states that an average student reads about one million words of text a year in his/her L1, and if this reader does not know about 2% of the running words, then this makes 20,000 new words per year. So, Nagy believes, if the reader learns 1 in 20, his/her annual gain will reach 1,000 words per year. This can be true with first-language readers since they use context clues more effectively than their second-language counterparts, at least till the latter have a quite fair level of L2 proficiency (Cziko, 1978). But with EFL learners, like Saudis, the number, might be much lower than 1,000 word per year since this large number of words need a very wide exposure to language which so many L2 environments lack. For example, Al-Nujaidi (2003) estimates that Saudi first-year university students have gained between 600-700 words during their six years of learning English. This means that they learn about 100 words or so per year (for more details see *Guessing and the Saudi EFL context* section below). More strikingly, Al-Nujaidi (2003) found that Saudi students majoring in English spend no more than 15 minutes a day reading outside their textbooks. This means that their exposure to the L2 is very poor. However, this problem can be overcome if we introduce the *extensive reading* approach to L2 learners.
3. Learners can increase their vocabulary size through direct attention to vocabulary. Reading activities such as consulting a dictionary should enable students to either confirm or reject their guesses. Also, letting students discuss their guesses with their peers can be of a great influence on students' way of evaluating their guesses. Moreover, through peer discussion weak guessers can benefit from good guessers' strategies.

Guessing and the Saudi EFL context

A very few number of studies have been carried out in the Saudi EFL environment regarding the skill of guessing from context. All of the studies I have seen discussed the skill of guessing as a one part of their body of research, which is typical. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no single study that tackles the issue of guessing from context exclusively and comprehensively in the Saudi context. It seems to me that the Saudi students' level of vocabulary size is remarkably low, and, maybe, some researchers think that there is no real need for investigating this skill before helping students establish a quite fair repertoire of vocabulary. For example, secondary graduates possess a vocabulary size of less than 1500 words (Al-Akloby 2001; Al-Bogami, 1996). More surprisingly, other studies have found that freshmen and sophomores majoring in English do not reach the threshold of 2000 – 3000 words, which, again, makes guessing quite difficult. For example, Al-Nujaidi (2003) conducted a study on 226 first-year university students (both males and females) from seven different institutions in Saudi Arabia. He found that the average number of words known by his students on the 2000 words level was 10 out of 30 (according to Schmitt's (2000) Vocabulary Levels Test). Thus, he estimated the average of his students' vocabulary size to be around 680 words. On the 3000 words level, his students' average size of vocabulary was between 445 and 680 words, which means that the majority of his participants scored about 4 or 5 words out of the 30 words of this section. On the academic words section, Al-Nujaidi's subjects seem to know about 3 or 4 words out of 30, on average. This is why it is not a surprise to know that these participants, on average, scored about 6 items out of 20 of the reading comprehension test. Consequently, we may predict

that those participants did not implement the skill of guessing properly, in case they had done it. The comprehension test in Al-Nujaidi's study concentrated on four main reading strategies as follows: a) scanning, b) skimming, c) guessing from context, and d) inferencing. The results showed that the means of the first two skills were on top (1.90 and 1.74, respectively). The remaining two strategies got the lowest means of (1.26 and 1.25, respectively). Contradictorily, Al-Nujaidi's participants reported high means of using some subskills of guessing from context. For example, using text features (e.g. tables) (non-textual clues) got the highest mean of all reported strategies (4.95) with a standard deviation of (1.22). Moreover, guessing meaning of unknown words and using context clues got (4.40 and 4.04, respectively). This shows us that Saudi students might be familiar with such concepts and strategies but did not receive enough training on how to effectively use them.

Another study that deals with the Saudi context is Mushait (2003). About 222 Saudi students from different university levels (i.e. 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, and 4th year) participated in this study. Mushait divided his subjects into three language-proficiency groups (low, middle, and high). In other words, the study did not depend on students' university level; rather, it depended on their performance on the study's tests (consisting of L2 reading test, L2 vocabulary test, L2 grammar test, and L1 reading test).

What relates to the current commentary is the students' scores on the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1983; 1990). On the 2000 word level (according to Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test), the low proficiency group students knew about 1081 words, the middle proficiency group students knew about 1541 words, and the high proficiency group knew about 1826 words. On the 3000 word level, the low proficiency group students approximately knew 320 words, the middle proficiency group students roughly knew 602 words, and the middle proficiency group students knew about 826 words. On the University Words List section, the low proficiency group knew about 163 words, the middle proficiency group students knew about 266 words and the high proficiency group students knew about 424 words. When we calculate all of these figures, we can get the total number of words known by each group, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Proficiency groups used in Mushait's (2003) study

Type of Proficiency Group	Total number of known words
Low Proficiency Group	1564 words
Middle Proficiency Group	2409 words
High Proficiency Group	3076 words

As can be noted from Table 1, the low proficiency group scored below the proposed 3000-word threshold (Laufer, 1997a, b). They could not even reach the other proposed threshold of 2000 words (Nation, 2001; Hirsh and Nation, 1993). As a result one can predict that these participants cannot make an adequate guessing due to their low proficiency level. Mushait gave an example to this through his subject *Musfer* who could rarely guess, and if he did, he guessed wrongly. Musfer scored below the passing score (60%) of his university reading course. He was able to score 17% only. Regarding his L2 vocabulary and grammar, he got 11 out of 90 and 28 out of 90, respectively. Because of such a low level of proficiency, Musfer could not, Mushait believes, transfer some of his L1 good reading strategies (including guessing). Musfer's L1

reading was quite well (ibid.). Thus, one can see that due to Musfer's low proficiency level (vocabulary knowledge being an important factor), he met so many unknown words causing him to use bottom-up reading strategies such as reading the unknown word letter by letter. With regards to the skill of guessing from context, Musfer failed to use it properly. Mushait puts it as follows: "Not much contextual guessing was used since he understood too little of the context to be able to guess from it" (p. 241).

A third study that discusses the skill of guessing from context in the Saudi EFL field is Alseweed's (2000). Alseweed included 19 students in his study. Eight of them were at a high proficiency level, where the proficiency level of the remaining 11 was low. Alseweed states that his students seem not to receive any kind of Word-Solving Strategies (WSS), either in their L1 or L2. His students were given text (A) prior to introducing them to WSS instruction. This text includes some underlined nonsense words to be guessed by the subjects. After that, 9 hours of teaching were allocated for teaching WSS, only 2 of these hours were dedicated for guessing from context. Syntactic and morphological ways of guessing were taught to those students.

After these 9 hours of teaching, Alseweed gave his students another text (B), which was similar to text (A) in terms of difficulty. Table (2) shows the students' progress in their guesses.

It can be seen how direct instruction affects the students' performance on strategy-use, although, in my opinion, two hours of direct instruction are still not enough. Moreover, it can be seen that the number of unsuccessful morphological guesses increased in Text (B). Alseweed believes that since this skill is quite new to his students, they could not grasp it fully. In my opinion, this is not the case; otherwise, this can be applicable to the contextual guessing, too. However, it seems reasonable to argue that, morphological guessing is more difficult than the contextual guessing, since it requires knowing a great deal of words as well as prefixes and suffixes, while the contextual guessing, generally, requires knowing the part of speech and other words around the word in question.

Table 2. Successful and unsuccessful guessing in Alseweed's (2000) study

Strategy type	WSS frequency use in Text A (pre- teaching)	WSS frequency use in Text B (post-teaching)	No. of cases used WSS in Text A (pre-teaching)	No. of cases used WSS in Text B (post-teaching)
Successful contextual guessing	17	29	11	12
Unsuccessful contextual guessing	18	19	10	10
Successful morphological guessing	4	11	3	8

Unsuccessful morphological guessing	5	12	4	9

Alhaisoni (2008) conducted a study on 244 Saudi university students and 128 high school students. Alhaisoni used three instruments in his study: Nation's receptive VLT, a questionnaire, and think-aloud protocols in order to investigate different types of information about dictionary use within the Saudi context. What is relevant here is what Alhaisoni has found about the use of guessing strategy. The results showed that the students reported employing the strategy of guessing meaning from context while reading, as the first one to be employed. This goes in hand with Schmitt's (1997) belief that guessing the meaning from context is a word-attack strategy that is widely-used by students, in general. In addition, Alhaisoni (2008) found that his students reported a significant tendency towards consulting their dictionaries, in case they could not guess the meaning of unknown words or if they were not very confident about their meaning.

Alqahtani (2005) reported similar tendency by his 495 participants. Alqahtani found a significant difference in using the strategy of guessing from context due to the level of English. Intermediate school as well high school pupils reported much less use of this strategy, while university students used it so frequently while reading.

Zaid (2009) based his study on only one research question: Which is more effective for the presentation of vocabulary for Arabic-speaking EFL learners: vocabulary presentation in context or in isolation? Zaid conducted his experiment on 34 level-3 students in the English Department, College of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, studying Vocabulary Building II textbook as part of their Level-3 syllabus. The participants were equally divided into two treatment groups: non-context word meanings condition and context word meaning condition. Sixty words were selected from the Vocabulary II course assigned for study at that semester. The Participants' English proficiency was gauged through their marks in the final exam of a previous course. Two treatments were given:

- o The non-context vocabulary mode: 60 words were randomly grouped into 12 sets of 5 words each. Each word was given through the following steps:
 - The word was presented with its definition, synonym, Arabic equivalent, and two example sentences.
 - The participants listened to the instructor saying the target words, and sometimes repeated them after the instructor.
 - The instructor covered the definitions and asked the participants to read each word and provide its definition.
 - The participants were asked to read definitions and provide the corresponding target words
 - The participants were asked to read each sentence and substitute the target word with a definition or a synonym
- o The context vocabulary mode:
 - The participants were trained on metacognitive strategy of inferencing following Jenkins, Matloc, & Slocum's (1989) SCANR strategy.
 - The instructor provided a new word on the board, read it loudly, and solicited its meaning from the participants through applying SCANR.

- The instructor provided another example sentence containing the target word, asked the participants to use SCANR, and requested them to match the meaning to both sentences.
- The instructor then provided the right meaning of the target word, and proceeded to the next word.

Zaid (2009) used two pre-tests. The first test was in the format of words-in-isolation (i.e. a list), in which students were requested to provide synonyms or definitions for the target words. The second test was words-in-context, in which the participants were required to also provide definitions and synonyms. Both test targeted 20 words. These words were one third of those used in the later training sessions. The words-in-isolation test was given first, followed by the words-in-context test. The two tests were administered 4 weeks later as post-test, covering the same 20 words but with different sentences and clauses, and a new MC format in order to reverse any possible effects of familiarity.

Zaid found that both treatments showed positive effects. No more solid results were reported. What was reported was the general positive effects of learning some vocabulary. But the researcher did not report which treatment revealed better gains, or whether the participants were more able to provide definitions or synonyms. It is no wonder since the study was based on one single research question.

Ahmad (2012) carried out a study on 20 community college students pursuing professional courses. The participants were elementary users of English and were 18-25 year olds. Ahmad mistakenly stated that his students were ESL, while they were EFL learners as they were learning English in Saudi Arabia. The participants were divided into two groups. Group A were exposed to an intentional learning condition, while group B were exposed to an incidental learning condition. Ahmad used Two versions of Standard Confirmation Test (SCT). The test contained words related to kitchen appliances, clothes, fruits and personality traits. It was based on synonyms, antonyms, and multiple choices. Conversely, no clear description of the tests: their levels, what is meant by incidental/intentional vocabulary were revealed. Ahmad's research besides lacks important pieces of information: no clear description of procedures, the research method followed was not stated either, no mention of any treatment between T1 and T2, and no research questions were stated. Therefore, no solid judgements can be traced from the article.

According to Ahmad, both groups took the SCT, as a pre-test, which included 50 items on vocabulary. One week later, group A took an intentional section of the SCT, while group B took the incidental section. The study reported that group B scored better than group A. However, it was not stated in what terms they scored better. About 50% of group B scored 80% of the test marks, while 10% of group A scored 80%. Ahmad's discussion was very thin and nothing solid can be followed. This might be due to the lack of stating any research questions. nevertheless, the results showed that 50% of group B were able to fill in the blanks with appropriate choices.

Pedagogical Implications

To sum up, a number of pedagogical implications are suggested below to fill some apparent gaps in teaching EFL reading in Saudi Arabia. These implications are speculated to inform and enhance vocabulary acquisition occurring through guessing from context.

1. Teachers and materials writers need to pay special attention to the types of words they are to include in their curricula based on the circumstances around them and the factors discussed earlier. However, the most frequent 2000 words seems to be of a high priority for inclusion.

2. It is vital that teachers become aware of the importance of their students' background knowledge as well as the way reading texts are organized. In fact, learners also need to learn about the role of that knowledge (schema), so they can capitalise on it to be able to activate all kinds of their available resources.
3. Teachers, course-designers, and educationalists, especially in Saudi Arabia, are advised to work hard on strategies that can increase students' vocabulary size to ensure more beneficial outcomes.
4. It is recommended that L2 learners get trained on how to be independent in their L2 learning. For example, they might be trained on how to make sound guessing, to read extensively, to use the dictionary, etc.
5. Guessing from context is not always accessible (Laufer, 1997b) or reliable (Kaivanpanah & Alavi, 2008). Therefore, teachers may find it useful to train their students on other compensating strategies, e.g. skipping, using the dictionary, etc.

Conclusion

The research carried out to investigate the effects of using guessing from context on vocabulary learning in Saudi Arabia is scarce. Additionally, only two studies have implemented training sessions on how and when to employ guessing, i.e. Alsweed (2000) and Zaid (2009). Additionally, some of the studies had major methodological flaws, for example, Ahmad (2012).

Indeed, the reported studies revealed that Saudi students' vocabulary repertoire is very low and this cannot help students guess properly. The studies showed that the threshold was not achieved by Saudi EFL learners. This should be a warning bell for educators, materials developers, and teachers to revisit the way English is introduced to pupils and students. Conversely, most of the studies reported were carried out in a time prior to the introduction of preparatory programs in the Saudi universities. The most recent is Alqahtani (2005). Therefore, further studies need to tackle the issue of vocabulary size of university students in Saudi Arabia and compare them to previous studies.

Training on using the strategy of guessing seems to have good impacts on learners. However, many EFL contexts, including Saudi Arabia, severely lack any kind of training on this important skill. At least, students need to be made aware of such an important skill that can benefit their language learning, especially vocabulary learning. It was seen how Alsweed (2000) and (Zaid, 2009) had positive results of employing proper guessing, nonetheless, extra exposure to training sessions on how and when to guess the meanings of new words may reveal much better and deeper learning of vocabulary. This is very crucial as the skill of guessing word's meaning from context seems to be an important word-attack strategy that learner retrieve to (Schmitt, 1997; Alhaisoni, 2008).

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