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[editor@asian-efl-journal.com](mailto:editor@asian-efl-journal.com)

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## **College English Classroom Instruction Design Based on English Key Competences in Ethnic Minority Regions in China**

**Dianping Liu**

*College of Foreign Languages*

*Yanbian University*

*977 Gongyuan Road, Yanji City, Jilin Province, China*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Dianping Liu** works as an associate professor at College of Foreign Languages, Yanbian University, China. She holds a master's degree in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. Her research interests are in the field of EFL teaching and intercultural communication. She can be reached at [liudianping@ybu.edu.cn](mailto:liudianping@ybu.edu.cn).

### **Abstract**

With the promotion of the new curriculum reform in China, enhancing students' key competences with the integration into all subjects including English becomes the focus. Against this background, the present study investigates the English classroom instruction design in ethnic minority regions based on the cultivation of students' English key competences. Content analysis and historical research design and methodology are used in the study. Firstly the concept, the current situation and the problems existing in the process of the cultivation of key competences are explored. Furthermore, how to cultivate students' thinking competence and the strategies to improve key competence-oriented English classroom instruction are put forward. It is concluded that English teaching instruction design based on key competences cultivation is the way to promote students' comprehensive development.

**Keywords:** *ethnic minority region, English classroom, instruction design, key competence*

### **Introduction**

The cultivation of key competences has become a hot topic in the course of curriculum

reform in recent years in China as the following three parts: digital competence, information and communication technology, media competence; learning and innovation, communication and collaboration, creation and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving competence; career and life competence, social and cross-cultural communication, flexibility and adaptability, responsibility, leadership, productivity, initiative and self-direction competence have been regarded as the key competences students should acquire in the 21 century (Huo & Hu, 2015). Accordingly, experts of different disciplines have put forward key competences suitable for the development in their own disciplines, in line with its characteristics and centering on the cultivation of students' key competences. Furthermore, cultural quality, thinking quality, language competence and learning competence are all included in the key competences of English subject in higher education. Against this background, university instructors should start exploring new classroom teaching design and its extension from adjusting instructors' own ideas on promoting the cultivation of students' English key competences. However, in discussions of key competences in Hu and Huo (2015) and elsewhere, the term "competence" is not used in the same way linguists use the term. Linguists distinguish between competence (all the language a person is capable of producing) versus performance (all the language a person actually produces). In this view, performance is the observable expression of a broader underlying competence, and linguists differ in their views on the origins of competence, with some, like Chomsky (1965) stressing that language competence is innate and domain-specific, while others allowing that varying degrees of competence are acquired and may stem from more general learning mechanisms (see, for example, O'Grady (2005); Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams (2011).

## **Literature Review**

### **The concept of key competences and English key competences**

#### ***Key competences***

In the Chinese dictionary, "competence" by definition refers to the ability or skills or 'practicing self-restraint' acquired by practicing and training. "Competence" can help people get some ability and further put it into a kind of value, temperament, personality and become the inner spiritual force at the same time through a long time training and knowledge accumulation. Competence goes directly to people's spiritual field, which is a more advanced existence than ability and knowledge. As early as 2005, "key competence" was proposed by the OECD and its meaning is relatively broad, covering students' attitudes, values, emotions as well as their abilities and knowledge in traditional fields of education. It can help people meet

the needs of social development and lifelong learning, and is closely related to people's all-round development and healthy growth. In fact, key competence issues are considered equally as the issues on what kind of people should be cultivated.

### ***English key competences***

According to the definition given by the General English Curriculum Standards (Exposure Draft, 2016), English key competences refers to the necessary competences and the essential quality that the students ascend and form gradually to adapt to the development of social and individual life in the corresponding period of English instruction. Briefly, cultural quality, thinking quality, language competence, learning competence are concluded. The acquisition of English key competence requires active integration of knowledge, skills and learning. In language practice, cultural understanding, thinking quality cultivation, structured knowledge building, correct values and outlook on life shaping are formed in solving and analyzing problems through thinking activities such as generalization, comparison, evaluation, perception, prediction, acquisition, innovation and analysis, which is also committed to promoting English key competence development and formation (Wu, 2018).

English teachers are instructors and researchers who guide and teach students' learning. At college, they should guide students to be active, independent, explicit and creative in their language learning practice from the aspects of the key points of language learning, the relationship between learners and language learning, and students' English thinking quality cultivating.

### **Language is the key to learning**

Learning a foreign language is not only to accumulate its knowledge, but also to grasp skills. In years of practice, many foreign teaching experts have repeatedly emphasized the differences between knowledge learning and language learning. English, as a foreign language consists of both language and cultural knowledge. Purposefulness and instrumentality are the characteristics of cultural knowledge in English-speaking countries. In short, students should also learn about such things as religion and festival cultures of English-speaking countries based on English language learning.

### **Learners and language learning**

Awareness of English language learning is closely related to practical activities. Learners need to know that they rely entirely on themselves to acquire specific basic academic ability, self-esteem, life skills, physical and artistic ability instead of relying on their teachers to teach them or establish a view of how to learn (Shao & Liu, 2017). At the same time, teachers should pay attention to the improvement of students' learning competence and the mastery of learning

methods. Learning how to think and learn is the the most important part that schools should teach.

### **Teachers' views of language**

Language view is the view of the function and the nature of language. Teaching language is the main task of language teachers. Teaching materials, teaching methods and teaching strategies are selected according to certain principles in the process of language teaching where teachers' view of language can be well reflected. Language view reflects teachers' understanding of language development, nature and function, so it is crucial to clarify the professional means and principles of language teaching. Functionalism, transformation-generation, structuralism and other traditional views of language provide certain theoretical guiding principles for English teaching and always have a direct or indirect impact on the content, method and purpose of language teaching. In general, different views of language will restrict the implementation and decision-making of language teaching and influence teachers' teaching philosophy. Because different theories study languages from a certain side or angle, teachers need to deal with and apply the reasonable elements of each view flexibly and selectively and carry out teaching creatively in order to obtain the formation and development of a certain view of language (Wu, 2018).

## **Current situation and problems of English key competences in China**

### **Current situation of English key competences**

In the context of globalization, talents in the future society need to have a global awareness, international understanding, intercultural communication ability, information technology competence and other competences closely related to foreign languages. Therefore, it is of great significance to realize the important role that the research on the key competence plays.

Although many English scholars and teachers in China have made some studies on the evaluation, methods, classroom teaching design, connotation, components, training approaches or strategies of English key competences, the depth and scale are still far from sufficiency. English has a value on both language education and moral character, social responsibility, mental abilities and emotional attitude promotion which set the basis of English key competences (Wang, 2018). In addition, the setting of the course purpose and target in the vision of English key competences needs to be grounded on English subject' humanistic, instrumental characteristics.

## **Current problems of English key competences in China**

### **The design of teaching strategies and objectives lacks effectiveness**

When setting teaching objectives, many teachers either give due consideration to the realization path of core objectives, assessment strategies, hierarchical setting, etc., or ignore the infiltration of effective method into students' subjective emotional value goals and learning quality, which result in the difficulty for foreign language instruction to truly enter into an efficient mode. Therefore, it is important to develop classroom teaching mode based on the key competence of the subject and moral education.

### **Traditional teaching philosophy still dominates English instruction**

In English classroom teaching, there are still lots of schools follow the traditional teaching philosophy which is reflected in its teaching content, style and pattern and has not fully aroused teachers' enthusiasm or emphasis on bilateral interaction in teaching activities as modern classroom instruction should do. However, the current curriculum is still dominated by teachers and students lack the space for cooperation and independent exploration in teaching activities.

### **Minority students' weak language ability**

The level of language ability of minority students relates to its regional development and reproduction. The lack of English ability of college students causes low employment rate in those regions. The ethnic minority areas own a low teaching level, serious quantity shortage of teachers. Their backward operating condition affects the minority students' language learning directly and indirectly, resulting in their low starting point, unsteady foundation and short of time in English learning. Generally, minority students English resources shortage caused their low English level, which causes a big flaw in their employment after graduation.

### **The conflict among ethnic culture, mainstream culture and foreign language culture**

For many ethnic minority students, learning English as their third language besides their mother tongue and Chinese is tough and the phenomenon of multi-language learning fatigue is quite common. For ethnic minority students, their national language is the teaching language from their primary school to senior high school education which means that they have to take both Chinese and foreign language into account while learning their mother tongue. Due to the particularity of their regional culture and the specialization of their language, their enthusiasm for learning English is not very strong. For minority adolescents, it is undoubtedly a big challenge to continue learning Chinese and English after a long time of learning their own national language due to the significant differences in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar and a large range of languages and complex knowledge points to master among these languages. At higher education stage, many students are tired of learning even give up directly,

which eventually make them fall behind in academic performance.

## **The cultivation of the thinking quality of minority students in English and methods of classroom teaching design**

### **The cultivation of thinking quality**

Thinking is the process in which people apply concepts, carry out reasoning and argumentation, form judgment and solve problems. From the point of view of language, to reach the highest potential content of language, the components of concatenated language need to be the most complete. In addition, English learning activities all involve advanced cognitive creation and general behavior imitation, which are extremely complex. Therefore, it is extremely important to fully rely on thinking to accumulate and develop students' language competence (Xu, 2017).

Learning any knowledge is a cognitive process. Facing with the content of textbooks, minority college students are more used to learning its vocabulary and grammar. One of the key tasks for a language teacher is to help students achieve the transformation and transfer of knowledge information by taking basic skills as the content and basic knowledge contained in the teaching. For example, when analyzing the structure of a long difficult sentence, it is necessary for students to make clear the processing and adjustment of words. Different ways of thinking directly affect the specific choice, as well as the means of expression and arrangement of word orders. For a long accurate sentence, teachers should not only offer a simple and superficial explanation of its language knowledge, but also show the thinking process of its analysis to the students. In other words, in the whole process of learning sentence formation, it is important to help minority students understand the thinking mode of British and American people and also establish students' own English thinking mode.

For example, in a case teaching, the teacher adopts the teaching method of explanatory understanding and provides students with general concepts which are convenient to prove the relationship between facts. That is to say, rules different from the teaching method limited at the memory level should be taught to students (Hong & Luiz et al, 2017). In this process, the teacher mainly plays the following roles: first, guide students to combine concepts, to make judgments, to analyze abstract synthesis analysis, to generalize, to reason and then to form a rational understanding from different aspects and perspectives. More importantly, after learning, facing and solving problems independently, students can establish and expand the conceptual system of thinking and corporate it into their own knowledge network. On the basis of the language that they have mastered, minority students can turn knowledge into ability, put

forward research questions and obtain perceptual cognitive understanding of the learning materials.

Thoughts and languages restrict and influence each other, and languages are the actual expression of thoughts. Learning a language will affect learners' language structure and style of speaking, promote the mutual development and improvement of learners' thinking skills and language levels.

People's personal thinking characteristics can reflect the characteristics and level of people in thinking, innovation and logic. Due to students' different living environments, knowledge levels, family backgrounds, and learning experiences, differences exist among students in terms of the quality of thinking (Yang & Tuo, 2012). Because students' thinking habits are the main part of learning, teachers need to apply multiple ways to inspire students to think actively, give full play to their leading role in the teaching process, express their views rationally and judge students' point of views objectively under various phenomena to promote the development of ethnic minority students' English communicative ability. Successful foreign language classroom teaching requires students to make good use of existing language materials and create more lively environment in class. Based on this, teachers should be committed to providing thinking and expressing activities in a variety of situations in class (Tang, 2016). Only by improving students' enthusiasm and interest in the involvement of activities, can students' English thinking quality be improved.

### **Language competence**

In the whole social context, language competence is the ability to understand and express meaning through listening, speaking, looking, reading and writing (Cheng & Zhao, 2016). College English as a foreign language subject, its language learning environment itself is extremely lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to make efforts to create a lively language atmosphere in classroom teaching and devote to cultivating minority students' English language sense and language awareness. Through learning, specific means of expression can be appreciated and identified to understand the meaning of written language, oral expression and their transmission. Through leaning, knowledge should be acquired in an active context that can realize effective interpersonal communication in the process (Qin, 2016).

For example, the teacher chooses the fairy tale movie "Alice in Wonderland" that students are interested in to develop students' language competence through in-class design and extra-curricular extension. First, read the novel. Students are recommended to read "Alice in Wonderland" after choosing the version suitable for their English proficiency. Through reading,

students can lay a foundation for the efficiency of the following classes, understand the general content of the novel, improve their language sense and reading ability and lay a foreshadowing for the subsequent writing. Second, watch the movie. After reading the novel, the teacher asks students to watch the English version of “Alice in Wonderland” in class. As a result of previous knowledge, students’ auditory function should not be limited to the visual side. Multiple organ stimulation can be selected to train students’ listening and improve their comprehensive ability. Third, learn the text. Based on the previous watching and understanding of the movie and the original works, students have had a very deep impression on the teaching content. Therefore, it will be more simple and easy for students to study relevant knowledge and to grasp the structure of the macro understanding in detail. Forth, play the role. After learning the content of this lesson, the teacher asks students to play the role, let students have immersive experience, participate positively into the role, consolidate and understand the knowledge of the text, strengthen students’ understanding of different roles again and achieve the purpose of application of knowledge. Fifth, write a composition. In the whole English teaching process, writing is crucial in expressing and checking student’ ability. Activities to strengthen the writing training for students should be based on students’ daily accumulation and their writing level. In daily teaching, students are required to complete a composition on a different topic every half month. Afterward, the teacher will help students give a full play to their imagination and write further. After writing, the teacher can let students evaluate each other, select excellent sentences and shortcomings to help each other improve through exploring and summarizing what they are learning together.

### **Learning competence**

Learning competence refers to the consciousness and competence that students have to make use of and adjust their learning strategies, to broaden their learning channels (High School English Curriculum Standards, Revised Version, Year 2016). The new curriculum reform emphasizes student-centered instruction in college English teaching. Such concepts and models have been deeply integrated into the curriculum, pointing out the direction for students’ English learning and bringing a new vision (Tang, 2015). However, the cultivation of learning competence is still insufficient in teaching practice. Based on this, in the whole learning process, the teachers themselves need to change their own ideas and thinking mode, highlight the subjective status of the minority students, help students set up clear targets through multi-channelled access and a variety of materials, cultivate students’ interest in learning English through internalizing teachers’ drive to self-consciousness to choose the appropriate methods

and strategies used in cultivating students' learning behavior eventually (Natividad & Batang, 2018).

### **Cultural awareness**

Cultural awareness refers to the recognition of excellent culture, the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the cultural accomplishment, behavioral orientation and knowledge quality of students in the context of globalization (Cheng, 2017). In the current English teaching materials, many contents belong to the cultural part, but due to the differences between China and the west in the way of thinking, values, customs, religious beliefs and other aspects, as well as different texts, backgrounds and histories, there is a significant gap between the two group of students. To learn a language, students need to understand cultural patterns and norms. Therefore, in the whole process of teaching, minority students should be immersed in the cultural atmosphere of other countries actively. Through reading literature and other means, as well as comparative forms of culture, students should be able to have a clear understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese culture and other countries' ones.

Taking learning Halloween, one foreign festival as an example, the teacher can assign students an assignment and let them collect basic information of Halloween and know about its basic content and habits before class. In class, teachers can arouse students' interest through watching the video "Halloween origin and legend "or listen to the song "This Is Halloween,Trick or Treat" to know about this festival's features like when it is celebrated every year, why it is known as "ghost festival". Based on the guidance, the teacher puts forward a series of questions about ghost festival in China to help students make a comparative analysis on the cultural differences so that students can learn about the differences among different customs and cultures, certain subject knowledge, and even the different national conditions of the two countries in the end. Through the knowledge extension beyond the textbook, the teacher can cultivate students' humanistic and intellectual qualities. In a word, through various forms of teaching material selection, the teacher lets students understand the connotation of cultures through comparing. It is also necessary to train students to treat excellent traditional culture correctly, form correct moral values, learn to discriminate and draw lessons from foreign cultures. As Malinee Prapinwong claimed, with the advanced technology, there are many more possibilities for integrating more appropriate, sustainable, and effective pedagogy for enhancing intercultural competence (Prapinwong, 2019).

## **Pedagogical implications**

Based on our study, the following teaching strategies should be practiced in EFL instruction.

### **The arrangement of the teaching process**

English classroom teaching design, based on the cultivation of key competence should consist of a series of teaching processes, so that students can use related vocabulary to answer questions, to read English texts through remembering the target vocabulary. In the whole process of teaching, the group discussion and cooperation can be applied to strengthen the training of English skills, to realize the improvement of English logical thinking and language competence, to facilitate the extraction of relevant vocabulary after reading. At the same time, students can be trained on how to skillfully apply vocabulary on the basis of familiarity with reading comprehension, so as to realize the language output. In the whole process of teaching, teachers should lead students to think about the article, express their own views, reflect on and evaluate their learning process and results, and devote themselves to improving their cultural character and learning competence (Li & Ma, et al, 2014).

### **The optimization of teaching methods**

The design of English classroom teaching should be open to all students, especially to cultivate their ability to receive, obtain and analyze information, as well as to express and think in English. However, for minority students, their English foundation is generally poor, so teachers need to try a variety of teaching methods to stimulate their interest in learning and improve their spirit of unity and cooperation through teamwork. For example, teachers can divide the college students into groups of 4 in each group and make sure that in each group there are one or two students whose English levels are higher to make up the disadvantage of other students' uneven English level in a class. Their responsibility is to lead and help other students to complete tasks assigned by the teacher. At the same time they can help check and submit their group members' homework. Teachers can also assign different learning tasks based on students' English levels. To present the information in the textbook is a necessary choice for students with poor foundation in English class. For students with better foundation, more teaching materials and more challenging tasks can be expanded. In addition, before class, the teacher can carefully prepare appropriate lead-in content and explore new teaching methods such as flipped class model, to promote students' learning attitude, curricular and extracurricular involvement (Muhammad & Muh, 2019).

### **The promotion of students' independent learning ability and scientific research ability**

It is very important to develop college students' potential to carry out the research on

English. Tasks can be designed to guide minority students to carry out a comparative study between English and Chinese, English and minority languages and cultures, as well as an in-depth study of English language and culture itself, such as the comparison between English and Chinese language, the comparison of certain idioms between English and minority nationalities, and the study of western social etiquette. In addition, tasks like taking an interview, taking an investigation or writing a summary report related to university campus life and social activities can also be carried out to promote students' ability to explore and write, expand and deepen their knowledge, and help students establish a better relationship between reality and book knowledge, cultivate their practical ability and innovative spirit, and constantly broaden their vision and ideas.

## **Conclusion**

In a word, college English teaching has the dual nature of humanity and instrument. As discussed in the former parts in this paper, the curriculum reform under the framework of English key competences should consist of the following four parts: cultural quality, learning competence, language competence and thinking quality so as to dedicate to the comprehensive development of students' potential, language strengthening, humanistic quality enhancement and preparation for the globalization.

However, the use of content analysis and historical research design and methodology (Springer, 2010) is a limitation of the study, future research into this topic should include mixed-methods designs as a means of better understanding teaching practices in college English classes in China.

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## **Attitudes of Saudi EFL Pre-service Teachers Towards Teaching as a Profession**

**Waleed B. Al Abiky**

*Foreign Languages Education, Department of Curriculum, and Instruction,  
College of Education, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Dr. Al Abiky** works as an Associate Professor of Foreign Languages Education at the College of Education in Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. He earned his Ph.D in Curriculum and Instruction from the College of Education at the University of Arkansas, US, in 2009. His dissertation won the best paper awards at the Cross-Cultural Conference held in Las Vegas in February 2009. He has already published eight papers in various scientific journals, translated 2 books from English and attended many national and international conferences. Email address: [wabiekie@qu.edu.sa](mailto:wabiekie@qu.edu.sa)

### **Abstract**

Teaching has no longer become an ordinary job; it is an interactive responsibility with many tasks to handle (Harris & Sass, 2010). Current research is clearly lacking the inquiry about pre-service attitudes towards teaching. The current study aims to investigate the attitudes of male Saudi pre-service EFL teachers towards teaching. Quantitative methods, namely surveys, were used. Fifty-three Saudi EFL pre-service teachers responded to the survey which its reliability coefficient alphas was .97. The finding of the study indicates that, 1) the majority of pre service English teachers, 40%, possessed moderate attitudes towards teaching, whereas only 24% showed positive attitudes with the mean score was 107.33 ( $sd = 13.98$ ); 2) there was statistically significant difference between respondents' attitudes towards teaching due to the variance of their undergraduate GPAs with alpha set at .05; 3) the factor analysis extracted the items into a five-factor solution accounting for 73.58% of the variance, and 4) society and its transferred experiences about teachers and teaching was found the most significant factor.

**Keywords:** *teaching as a profession, Saudi EFL, Pre-service teachers, and attitudes towards teaching.*

## **Introduction**

Teaching has no longer become an ordinary job; it is an interactive responsibility with many tasks to handle. For instance, teaching now requires more than just delivering the contents; it becomes larger and deeper than that such as understanding the educational policies, designing innovative lessons, developing effective assessment and working with parents to understand their child just to name a few tasks that teaching now requires (Tan, Chang & Teng, 2015).

However, "attitude" has been defined as "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects" (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005). Some recent research pointed out a problematic issue in which highly achieving students in general have now less desired attitudes to become prospect teachers or even consider teaching as an attractive profession (Harris & Sass, 2010); they are mostly looking after a well-paid, prestigious career which teaching in their views is not one of them (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). Moreover, with the era of competitiveness and standardized testing, self-concepts, beliefs, and values would definitely affect one's behaviors, attitudes and practices.

In Saudi Arabia, English language teachers' preparation programs have for long neglected the focus on teaching as a possible career that some of their graduates might choose after graduation. Instead, those preparation programs relied merely and heavily on what Shulman (1992) once called 'the twin demons lecturing and textbook'. Unfortunately, how much knowledge and words one could recall and remember is mostly the key to succeed in college and even become an EFL teacher, rather than how you teach what you know.

## **Study problem**

Research has well documented the fact that teachers have indeed a long-lasting impact on students' minds, attitudes and motivation. However, the educational model has for long neglected the strength and importance of pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards teaching (Dray & Thomas, 2010, Nietfeld & Enders, 2003). Moreover, the quality of teaching and learning are strongly affected by the pool from which the highly motivated teachers are chosen. In Saudi Arabia, students are by large accepted in academic majors leading to teaching as a profession based on their grades in high schools and other requirements rather than their competences and attitudes towards teaching.

Moreover, Saudi students' proficiency scores in English language tests are relatively low. In fact, their scores have been the lowest in comparison with their counterparts from other Middle Eastern regions. For instance, an analysis of TOEFL data, as a standardized English test, in the last five years would show the relatively low Saudi test takers' scores in many skills. In fact, in comparison with their counterparts from other Middle Eastern countries, Saudi test takers have mostly been in the last rank or close to it (Al Abiky, 2019) which are serious indicators for major problems in English teaching, practices and attitudes (Alrabai, 2016).

### **Significance of the study**

Teaching, in one side, has become an art where a teacher can shape students' minds and stretch their limits and abilities. However, teaching is now a serious responsible profession with increasing involvements and expectations. With the 2030 Saudi vision, the involvement of education and the expectations of teaching and learning outcomes are rapidly increasing and thus many evaluation procedures and policies have been enacted. Moreover, English teaching and learning in particular is becoming a significant partner in the national transformation programs in the Saudi 2030 vision.

Nevertheless, according to the EF English Proficiency Index in 2018, Saudi Arabia ranked number 83 out of 88 countries (EF EPI, 2018). This rank is considered a very low proficiency in English which evokes a further investigation especially for teaching and teachers of English.

### **Research Questions**

The current study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the total teaching scores of the Saudi male pre service EFL teachers at Qassim region?
- 2) Is there a statistically significant difference between the overall teaching scores based on pre-service EFL teachers' undergraduate GPAs?
- 3) What are the underling factors for the pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching? In other words, do the relationships exist among the factors impacting the pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching?

## Theoretical Background

The current study took the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by R. Lent, S. Brown and G. Hackett (1994) as the guide of the study. The SCCT, a relatively new theory, is based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and intended to explain a three interrelated aspects of career development: interest, choice, and career performance and success. The SCCT also incorporates some significant aspects such as culture, gender, values and life events and factors which would affect career development and choices. The following figure illustrates the interrelated factors

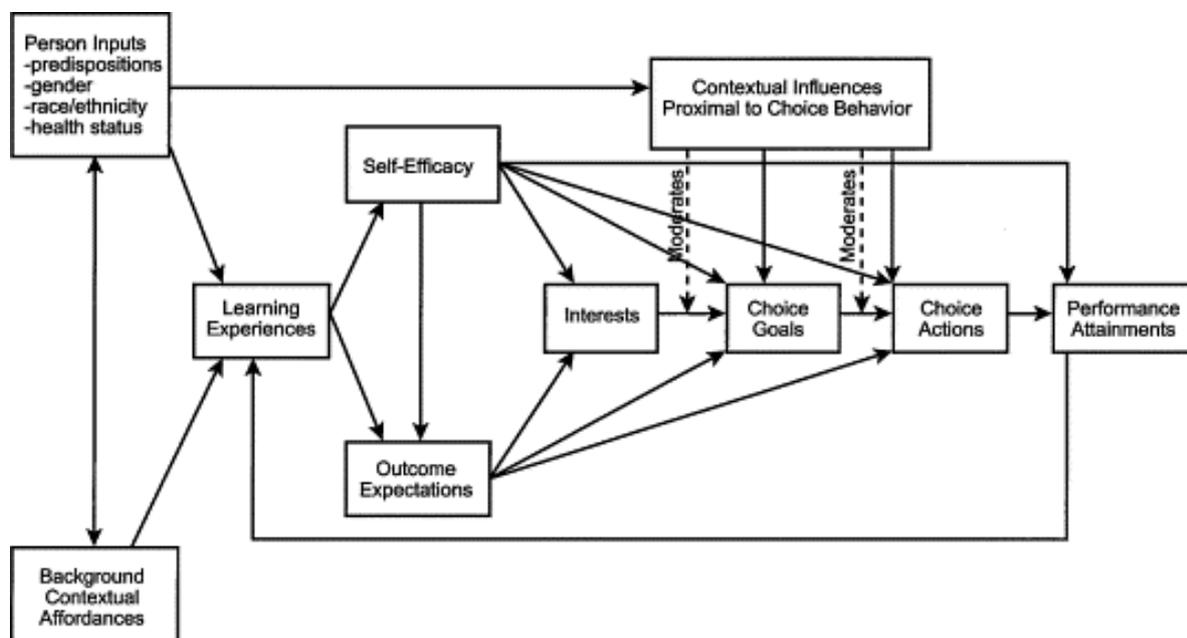


Figure (1) adopted from:

Social Cognitive Career Theory. Reprinted from Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45, R. W. Lent, S. D. Brown, & G. Hackett, "Toward a Unifying Social Cognitive Theory of Career and Academic Interest, Choice, and Performance," 79–122.

As illustrated in Figure (1), the SCCT framework hypothesizes that inputs of a person such as gender and personality trait and his/her background formulates the ultimate working experiences which affects two socio-cognitive mechanisms of a person: 1) self-efficacy beliefs, the beliefs in the innate ability of achieving, and 2) the outcome expectations. Subsequently, those two socio-cognitive factors would greatly and directly impact a person's career interests, choices, and performances. According to the SCCT, although the personal inputs and

background affordances are distal to interest construction, they indirectly affect career attitudes, choices, and performances by their influences on the learning experiences and socio-cognitive mechanisms.

The current study adopts the SCCT model in which the attitudes towards teaching are largely affected by the five-factor solution which are: the domains of personal inputs 'cognitive, affective, and psychological factors', self-efficacy, and social factors indicating the effects of the experiences gained and impacted by the society and family and friends.

## **Literature Review**

Research has well documented the fact that the appeal to choose teaching profession is rapidly declining at least over a decade ago (Ramsay, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Moreover, many newly graduate students perceive teaching as drawback careers which one would eventually switch to more well-paid and less stressful professions. In Breglio study (2006), for instance, when undergraduate students were asked about their views about the negative aspects of a teaching career, 62% mentioned the low payment and insufficient salaries.

Attracting and retaining high achieving teachers have been a challenge for many countries. McKinsey & Company (2010) found an alarming result that most high achieving and talented college students in their early years in college see teaching as 'unattractive profession'. Ninety-one percent of talented college students who graduated from high school with the top third of high school classes confessed the fact that they will not likely pursue a career in teaching (McKinsey & Company, 2010).

More importantly, teaching has nowadays become unattractive profession for highly achieved students. Auguste et la. (2010) study have found that few students, less than nine percent, of the 'top third' of their academic achievement expressed their interest in going into or practicing teaching (Auguste et la., 2010). Verešová & Malá (2016) investigated the attitudes toward school and learning (ATSL) among adolescents studying at secondary schools in the Slovak Republic and found that GPA was a statically significant factor in which higher GPA is associated with more positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Shulman (1992) warned from the obvious gap between classroom realities and the practices of teacher preparation in colleges and universities. She argued that teacher preparation mostly and heavily rely merely on lecturing and delivering content from the textbooks which she called “the twin demons of lecture and textbook” (p. 1). Depending merely on memorizing, knowledge tend to be mostly inert and hardly retrieved the situations that require its use.

Tamayo (2018) stated that the EFL teachers' attitudes and behaviors inside the classrooms are crucial for students' academic gains and learning process. Tamayo indicated that although EFL classrooms are complicated places, they are some of the determinant factors for students' future success and choices in lives as well as in colleges and universities.

Dray & Thomas (2010) expressed their concern about the common trend in teacher preparation programs in which the beliefs and attitudes of pre service teachers about teaching itself are mostly neglected or ignored. In fact, they feel that some teachers tend to fail in their teaching mission due to the fact that their beliefs and concerns have been uncovered.

Cruz (2013) acknowledged the fact that there are some current veteran teachers who have indeed poor attitudes towards teaching their own profession. In fact, Cruz argued that one major effects of such attitudes is the discouragement of high achieving students to become teachers or even pursuing a career in education.

Moreover, in their study about the potential performance impacts of the English high schools teachers in Papua, Indonesia, on students' learning progress and achievements, Rinantanti et. la (2018) found that the performance of English teachers in Papua were declining, and, as a result, there was no significant positive impacts of their performance on students' achievements. They, moreover, found that English teachers were lacking real lesson plans and meaningful activities, and if they had done so it was for administrative purposes only.

Recent studies have also focused on the rapid decline of teachers' career satisfaction. A recent survey done by MetLife, for instance, revealed a socking continuous decline in teacher career satisfaction where it has dropped 15 points in the last two years only. In fact, the level of satisfaction has now reached the lowest level in over 20 years. Moreover, the percentage of teachers who have clearly expressed their real intention that they would most likely to leave the profession has increased by 12 points to reach 29 percent (MetLife, 2012).

In a study, funded by the National Center on Education and the Economy in the US, on the perceptions and beliefs of the top achieving students at the University of Southern California and California Los Angeles on teaching professions, Breglio (2006) found that the most draw back reason regarding teaching was the salary and job payment. Almost 62% of the study's participants mentioned low salary and payment as the most obstacles of teaching as a life-long career. The majority of participant, almost 65%, on the other hand, reported that the social contribution and great impact of the life of others was the most positive aspects of teaching as a career (Breglio, 2006).

Moreover, Hall & Langton (2006) found that the negative perceptions about teaching exceeded the positive ones and most of the perceptions about teaching career came from the

transferred experiences from actual in-service teachers themselves who transferred their daily teaching problems such as dealing with bad students and/or parents.

Alrabai (2016), in his interesting study about the factors underlying the Saudi students' low achievement in English, listed English teachers and their instruction as a significant factor underlying the current low achievement of Saudi EFL learners. He considered students as passive due to the practice and instruction of their EFL teachers who make the learning environment merely teacher-centered which prevented or hindered students' progress in English acquisition.

Furthermore, Bain and Harris (2016) warned of the effectiveness of individuals' micro culture which influences perceptions, attitudes, values and behaviors. When applying English as a medium language of instruction in different culturally context or environment, it becomes more difficult and in need for more dedication and careful attitudes (Beril et al., 2018).

In addition, Guiherme (2002) explained that Life span's experience, age, gender are some of the micro-culture elements that affect our attitudes, choices and decisions. Like other micro-culture factors, such as age and gender, we usually behave, feel, think and perceive according to the micro-culture to which we belong. We sometimes do or do not do things or some activities just because of the age-group we belong to.

Moreover, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) presented a three-factor solution that provided a model to explain the relationships between attitudes towards teaching (TTT) and three main factors: beliefs, intentions, and actual behaviors. Wood (2000), on the other hand, presented another model of TTT which are: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Wood explained that cognitive includes perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions whereas affective includes the emotional experiences and responses to some facts and events. Behavioral factor presents that actual intentions and practices a person administer in the relation to the cognitive and affective domains.

## **Method**

To achieve the goals of the current study, Quantitative method was used in which an instrument was developed to measure the Saudi EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching. A total of 53 which were all the total Saudi males with Bachelor's degrees in English perusing their Educational Diploma at Qassim University- Onaizah, Saudi Arabia, in the academic year of 2017 to become prospect EFL teachers. Moreover, the study investigated the potential impact of respondents' undergraduate GPA on their teaching attitudes.

Data were obtained through the use of the questionnaire, a well-established research tool for gathering data and acquiring information (Bird, 2009; Bulmer, 2004). A questionnaire was developed and distributed to every individual participant. The survey consisted of two sections: 1) request for some demographic information such as their undergraduate GPAs and teaching experience, and, 2) response to (28) statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale indicating the degree to which a subject agreed or disagreed with each statement to measure their attitudes towards teaching.

In regard to the attitude scale, respondents were asked to choose a response, only a single response, for each of the (28) statements in the survey. They responded to each item by selecting a number from '1' to '5' in which 1= *Strongly Disagree*, 2=*Disagree*, 3= *No opinion*, 4= *Agree*, and 5= *Strongly Agree*. As a result, the possible scores on the attitude scale could only range from a low of '28' (if a subject selected number '1' for each item) to a high of '140' (if a subject selected '5' for each item). This study assumed that the higher the score was, the more positive attitude the subject had towards teaching.

The average score of a subject's responses was used to determine subjects' type of attitude. In other words, the average of the respondent's total score was the key to measure his attitude. An average score equals to or less than 100 was interpreted as having a low attitude towards teaching. The average scores between 100 -120 were interpreted as moderate teaching attitude. An average score above 120 was interpreted as a positive high teaching attitude. Having collected the quantitative data, subjects were divided into three groups regarding their teaching attitudes:

- A. Group one: subjects with positive attitudes were the subjects whose average scores were equals to 121 or greater.
- B. Group two: subjects with moderate teaching attitudes were the subjects with a mean score ranged between 100- 120.
- C. Group three: subjects with low teaching attitudes were the subjects whose mean score was equal to or less than 99.

As regards to the GPAs, at Qassim University, as in many other higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, the general overall cumulative GPA at the time of graduation could range as the following:

- 1- Excellent (A): if the cumulative GPA ranges between 4.50 up to 5.
- 2- Very Good (B): if the cumulative GPA is from 3.75 to less than 4.50
- 3- Good (C): from 2.75 to less than 3.75
- 4- Satisfactory (D): from 2.00 to less than 2.75

*Reliability and Validity:*

Validity refers to the degree to which a survey instrument actually measures the concept or phenomenon it is supposed to measure (Slavin, 1992). Content as well as construct validity of the instrument were assured and five independent experts were contacted to review the research instrument. Comments were offered and corrections were made.

The following table shows the internal consistency reliability, namely Cronbach coefficient alphas, was computed by SPSS for the attitudes towards teaching scale.

Table 1:

*The Reliability Coefficient Alpha for the attitudes towards teaching Scale*

Scale	N of item	Cronbach Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )
.97	28	Attitudes (TTT)

According to Nunnally (1978) guidelines and Crocker and Algina (1986), the reliability coefficients for the scale is considered high values for instrument reliability.

**Results**

The purpose of the present study was to assess the pre service EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching. Upon collecting the data, the results were analyzed using SPSS to assess subjects' attitudes towards teaching.

*Answer of the first question:*

The first question of the current study was about the overall teaching score of respondents. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation for respondents as a whole in the teaching scale.

Table 2:

*Mean and St. Deviation for Subjects' teaching scores*

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>MIN</i>	<i>MAX</i>
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Teaching	53	107.33	13.98	49	79	128
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Table 2 gives a description of central tendency of the data set. The sample as a whole showed a relatively high teaching scores; the respondents' mean score in regards to their teaching score was 107.33 ( $SD = 13.98$ ). Moreover, as the above table also shows, subjects' teaching scores ranged from a minimum score of (79) to the highest score of (128), while the 50 percentile is 106 which reflects a relatively moderate teaching score. Table 3 shows the respondents' scores in regards to their teaching scores in more details.

Table 3:

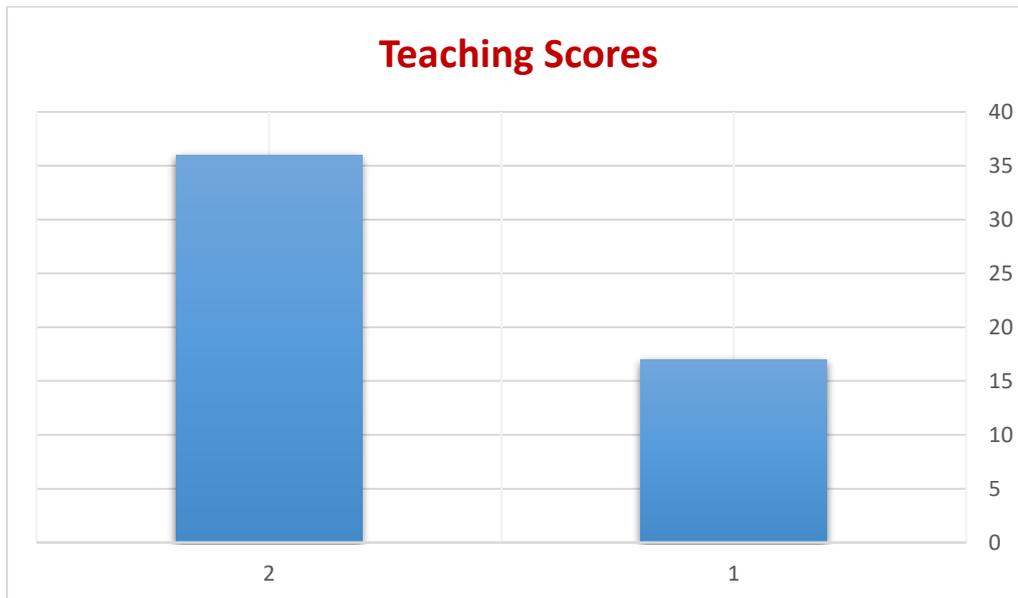
*Participants' Teaching Scores*

Source	N	%	<u>Rank</u>
$\geq 90$	7	13.2	5 <sup>th</sup>
91-100	10	18.9	3 <sup>rd</sup>
101-110	13	24.5	2 <sup>nd</sup>
111-119	8	15.1	4 <sup>th</sup>
$\leq 120$	15	28.3	1 <sup>st</sup>

Table 3 shows that the teaching score of more than 67% of participants came above the 100 whereas only 32% scored below 100 in teaching, which reflective a relatively low teaching scores. This result might be expected due to the variances of respondents' individual differences as some of them might still be hisitant about teaching as a life-long career. Figure 1 below shows the the differences between respondents' attitudes towards teaching in which '1' indicates  $\geq 100$ , and '2' indicating responses above 100.

**Figure 1**

**Respondents' Overall Group in regards to their attitudes towards teaching**



As the figure shows the majority of subjects (67%) scored above than 100 with the highest obtained score was (128). However, fifteen subjects only (28%) could score between 120-128 as the table 3 indicates. The remaining 72% scored lower than the 70 percentile, which reflect moderate or low attitudes. This is not indeed a satisfactory result in which only 28% of the subjects who with Bachelor's degree in English and pursuing a higher diploma in Education at Qassim University had shown a high level of positive attitudes towards teaching.

*Answer of the second question:*

The study's second question investigates the relationship between pre-service English teachers' attitudes towards teaching and their undergraduate cumulative grade point average (GPAs). The majority of participants had obtained their Bachelor degree in English or English & Translation from Qassim University where students could graduate with GPAs ranging from 2.00 up to 5 point scale which reflects D to A level. No one graduates with GPA less than 2.00.

The following table shows the undergraduate GPAs of the pre service English teachers participating in the study.

Table 4:

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristics	N	Percentage	Rank
GPA:	(n =53)		
> 2.75	9	16.9	4 <sup>th</sup>
2.75 to > 3.75	17	32.1	1 <sup>st</sup>
3.75 to > 4.50	16	30.2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
< 4.51	11	20.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Total	N = 53	100%	

As table 4 indicates that pre-service teachers were grouped into four groups based on their undergraduate GPAs ranging from the lower to the upper, D to A level. Moreover, participants were almost equally divided in regards to their undergraduate GPAs in which 51% of them had graduated with GPAs equal to or above than 3.75, whereas the remaining graduated with GPAs less than that. In addition, nearly 30% of the subjects obtained GPAs ranging from 3.75 - 4.5, which represents (B or B+) levels. The least number of participants, only (16%), falls into the (D) level. Table 3 shows the results of one-way ANOVA summary investigating the relationship between pre-service English teachers' attitudes towards teaching and their undergraduate GPAs.

Table 5:

*ANOVA Summary Investigating the Relationship between Subjects' GPA and their teaching attitudes*

Source	<u>Df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>
Model teaching	3	4284.93	1428.31	12.07	.000	.430
Within groups	48	5676.52	118.26			
Total	52	6089.53				

Note: N = 53 ( $p = .000$ );  $R^2$  adjusted = .39

The results were analyzed using one-way ANOVA with one between-subjects factor to determine whether there was a relationship between (a) pre-service teachers' undergraduate GPAs and (b) their scores on the attitudes towards teaching scale.

As the above table indicates, the statistical analysis revealed a significant treatment effect for subjects' GPAs, [ $F(3, 49) = 12.07$ ,  $MSN = 118.3$ ,  $p = .0001$ ]. This means that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-service EFL teachers in regards to their attitudes towards teaching. In other words, subjects' GPAs, the predictor variable, had some type of effect on the criterion variable, attitudes towards teaching in which higher subjects' GPA was associated with higher level of attitudes towards teaching.

As a result, the statistical null hypothesis,  $H_0$ , that in population, there was no statistically significant difference between subjects' GPA groups in regards to their scores on the attitudes towards teaching could be rejected, as it is shown in Table 3. In the ANOVA analysis, moreover,  $R^2$ , which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is accounted for by the independent variable, which was here the subjects' GPAs, was computed as .39. This indicates subjects' GPAs accounted for 39 % of the variance in the pre-service English teachers' attitudes towards teaching.

*Tukey Multiple Comparison test:*

Since there was statistically significant differences between subjects' scores on the attitudes towards teaching based on their undergraduate cumulative GPA, Tukey's HSD test was performed and reported in Table 6. However, only the significant results with alpha set at .05 or less were reported.

Table 6:

*Tukey's Test Comparing Between Subjects' Groups*

Comparison	Difference		95% confidence limits	
	Between means	Sig	Lower	Upper
1 - 2	-19.93	.001	- 32.34	-7.52*
1 - 3	-24.75	.000	-37.28	-12.22*
1 - 4	-28.11	.000	-41.56	-14.67*

Note.  $N = 53$

\*Tukey's test indicating a significant difference at  $p < .05$  level or less.

Table 6 indicates there was statistically significant results in Tukey's test. With alpha set at .05, the above table shows that subjects with a high GPA, (A) level, scored significantly higher on the dependent variable, the attitudes towards teaching, than did all subjects in the GPA levels lower than (A) groups, B, C, and D levels ( $p < .05$ ). With alpha set at .05, moreover, there was not a statistically significant difference between subjects in the other groups less than A. In other words, there were no significant differences between subjects with B, C, and D levels according to their undergraduate GPAs.

*Answer of the third question:*

To measure the factorial structure of the instrument regarding the attitudes towards teaching, all the 28 items were analyzed using the exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was  $KMO = .89$ , and Bartlett's test of sphericity  $X^2 = 2031.6, p < .001$ , indicating the quality of constructs and the correlation structure is adequate for factor analysis. Using the SPSS with the cut-off point at .40 and eigenvalues greater than 1, the factor analysis extracted the items into a five-factor solution as the best fit for the data accounting for 73.58% of the variance. The results of the analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 7:

*Rotated Component Matrix of the attitudes towards teaching (TTT).*

	Items	Factor				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I feel proud when others know that I am a teacher	.89				
2	I feel proud while teaching	.78				
3	I don't think that teaching is a good life-long career	.67		.42		
4	My teaching attitudes improve with time	.57				
5	I chose teaching because I was encouraged by people around me	.81				

6	People around me advised me to teach	.86	
7	I think I can easily manage the class	.78	
8	I think I can teach effectively	.74	
9	Teaching is above my potentials	.68	
10	I feel satisfied when I am teaching	.57	
11	Honestly, teaching is my preferred profession	.44	
12	If I have a chance, I will leave teaching	.80	
13	Society regards teaching with appreciation	.83	
14	I think the future of teaching is not good	.42	
15	If I have a choice, I won't choose teaching	.47	
16	Teaching is a profession that is respected by all	.41	
17	I am proud of my teaching profession	.40	
18	I am forced to teach	.84	
19	I wish I had not become a teacher	.61	
20	Teaching caused me sadness	.53	
21	I believe that teaching is rewarding	.74	
22	I feel I will love teaching more	.58	
23	I feel happy when I am teaching	.52	
24	Teachers are often respected by their students		.66
25	I think teaching has many problems	.75	
26	I think I won't have problem teaching		.67
27	When days pass, I love teaching more	.46	
28	I think society still respect teachers	.66	

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*Principal component analysis was used as the extraction method and varimax with Kaiser normalization was used as rotating method.*

Interestingly, the items yielded in five-factor solution as follows: 1) social '6 items', self-efficacy '5 items', cognitive '5 items', affective '7 items', and psychological '5 items'. Three of the factors obtained had the same structure as those found in Wood (2000) which are: *cognitive, affective, and psychological*. The two other factors are *social* factor and *self-efficacy*. The item number 3 'I don't think teaching is a good life-long career' seems a little problematic which showed double loading, one in the 'social' factor and the other with 'cognitive'. In Saudi context, this should be loaded with the social factor since many pre- service teachers had not yet experienced actual teaching and were most likely affected by the views, opinions, and experiences of others around them.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the current study align with the current world-wide trend in which teaching has become unattractive profession for many especially highly achieving students in which the attitudes towards teaching are rapidly declining, and it is now very important to uncover the beliefs and concerns of pre service teachers. This finding aligned with the findings of Ramsay (2000) and Richardson & Watt (2006) studies.

Moreover, teaching, as a national popular profession in Saudi Arabia, has some drawbacks and it is possible and rational to find some who had poor attitudes towards teaching among not only pre-service but even veterans. The finding of the study comes consistent with Hall & Langton's (2006) and Cruz's (2013) findings in which some teachers have indeed poor attitudes towards teaching. Such attitudes have and would have some bad effects on teaching process and, thus, needs to be revealed.

Undergraduate GPAs of respondent has been a statistically significant factor in which the higher it gets, the more positive attitudes towards teaching respondents' possess. This result is consistent with Verešová, & Malá (2016) study in which the attitudes towards school and learning increases as the GPA gets higher.

Moreover, attitudes towards teaching as a profession, like other professions, would be impacted by the life span of individuals and social and educational experiences. Individual differences would definitely also impact the attitudes towards teaching. The results of exploratory factor analysis test were consistent with Wood's (2000) meta-analysis which found a three-factor solution: cognitive, affective, and psychological.

## **Conclusion**

The current study reveals some implications and encourages some further investigations. Conducting cross-cultural similar study to investigate the interrelated factors affecting the attitudes to towards teaching would be a significant endeavor especially with the wide spread international tests and measures in various school core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, English, and Reading just to name some.

Furthermore, the convergent and divergent validity of the attitudes towards teaching instrument (TTT) would be an interesting validity study in which the instrument is administered to other sample form other culture and in different settings. How cross-cultural and personal traits affects the attitudes towards teaching as a profession renders a broad range of coherent experimental studies.

## **Pedagogical implications**

Teaching pedagogies and practices are affected by teachers' attitudes towards teaching as a profession. Moreover, their attitudes would ultimately affect students' gains and achievements in national and even international performances. As a result, teachers should be aware of the implications and consequences of their attitudes on not only their performance, but also on their students' gains and achievements. Schools' principals, steak holders, and policy makers should regularly assess the attitudes of teachers towards teaching as a career. Notifications should be made, and help and consultations should be offered for schools' interests.

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## **The Use of Language Practice Tests as a Consolidation Technique for Grammar and Vocabulary**

**Dr. Abdullah Ahmed Zughaibi**

*Faculty of Arts and Humanities*

*Jazan University, Saudi Arabia*

[azughaibi@jazanu.edu.sa](mailto:azughaibi@jazanu.edu.sa)

**Dr. Bakil Ali Alwalss**

*English Language Institute*

*Jazan University, Saudi Arabia*

[balwalss@jazanu.edu.sa](mailto:balwalss@jazanu.edu.sa)

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Dr. Abdullah Zughaibi** is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Department of Jazan University, KSA. Currently, he is the Dean of the English Language Institute (ELI). He has taught a number of courses in applied linguistics, including sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, advanced grammar and reading skills. Dr. Zughaibi graduated with MA and PhD from La Trobe University, Australia.

For correspondence: [azughaibi@jazanu.edu.sa](mailto:azughaibi@jazanu.edu.sa)

**Dr. Bakil Ali Alwalss** is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language Institute (ELI) of Jazan University, KSA. Currently, he is the Head of ELI Research Unit. He has taught a number of courses in applied linguistics, including morphology, advanced grammar, research methodology and reading skills. Dr. Alwalss obtained his MATEFL from Reading University, UK, and his PhD from JNU, Delhi, India. His interests are language program evaluation, and lexicography.

For correspondence: [balwalss@jazanu.edu.sa](mailto:balwalss@jazanu.edu.sa)

## **Abstract**

Of late, formative assessment, as a tool in language testing, has become more and more frequent. This not only encourages but necessitates foreign language learners to stay prepared for these recurring weekly tests and periodic quizzes. As a result, learners spend extra hours in revising and reviewing previously encountered language elements. In this research paper, it is hypothesised that the use of language tests in place of additional materials would impact positively the process of language achievement. For this, the researchers have used a well-conforming research design, though limited to grammar and vocabulary, involving level 1, first year English language students at Jazan University. The research design was based on language placement testing and home language test practice (experimental group), extra teaching hours (control group) and a neutral group which received neither. The findings of this research reinforce the role of testing in second language acquisition.

ANOVA and t-tests were used for statistical analyses. Results of the first placement test showed that all three groups were at the same level. After that, two groups received either additional extra teaching hours or additional materials in the form of language tests. Final analysis showed that there was no significant difference between both the additional material and the extra teaching hours,  $F(2,57) = 2.136, p = 0.128$ . Though the experimental group scored significantly in the second placement test ( $M = 41, SD = 13.36$ ) than did those of the control group ( $M = 33, SD = 9.31$ ),  $t(34) = -2.20, p = .035$ , it was not sufficient to conclude that additional material surpasses extra contact teaching hours.

***Keywords:** language achievement, practice tests, grammar, vocabulary*

## **Introduction**

It has now been established that improving foreign language skills is dependent on practice and frequent use of these skills, i.e. receptive and productive skills alike. In their epilogue, Leaver, Ehrman, & Shekhtman (2005) argue that language learners could reach “high levels of proficiency regardless of the method by which they were taught: grammar-based, audiolingual, communicative, or even individual mixes” (p. 235). Attaining proficiency requires practice, though other factors may vary in affecting such attainment. This practice requires a certain degree of language proficiency particularly grammar and vocabulary, where they are essentially necessary elements in any component of language learning. In a recent study, Umar, Budiarsa & Satyawati (2019) came to a conclusion that “sufficient vocabulary mastery is required to improve language skills” (p. 75).

Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor (2006) presented a model of communicative competence of five components: linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, strategic and intercultural. The discourse competence, as presented in a diagram of their model, lies in the center and encompasses the other four competencies. These four competencies are directly linked to discourse competence, where grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence) represent an important angle in the 'square'. The type of practice referred to in this present study is primarily focussed on grammar and vocabulary. A concise review of earlier 'communicative competence' models is found in Johnson (2004) and for a quick summary of grammatical competence, see (Sioco & De Vera, 2018).

Our study is limited to grammar and vocabulary because we need to rule out any other variables arising from other language skills, or other language competencies. Accordingly, this does not mean that we are applying, or examining the influence of, the earlier methods of second/foreign language studies which focussed on "grammar and vocabulary... in terms of language elements" (Littlewood, 2004, p. 503). To be specific, we are interested in language achievement and progress in terms of grammar and vocabulary within a specific time span rather than to investigate the possibility of using that progress in productivity outside the classroom. After all, there is no borderline made between grammar and vocabulary; the distinction remains "an arbitrary one" (Laufer & Nation, 2012, p. 173). Language achievement is defined here as the amount of language acquired during the time of the experiment and measured by a gain score (which is the difference between the first placement test and the second placement test). Let us clarify the idea of this paper in a general outline below.

Littlewood (2004) raises a number of interesting questions that may help to direct research in language learning, one being "To what extent is it helpful if teachers focus learners' attention explicitly on the forms of the language they are learning (e.g., on its grammar and vocabulary)?" (p. 512). In this study, we are teaching grammar and vocabulary through the provision of level-suitable language tests as a *practice* replacement for the 'traditional' supplementary materials or ESP in-house materials (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). It will be evident at a later stage of this research that such a 'technique', in our view, strengthens language learning consciousness, and thus enabling the students to be more analytic in their learning strategies. Our stance is similar to that of Broady and Dwyer (2008, p. 142) who assert that "explicit knowledge and understanding of grammar can facilitate implicit language acquisition". When the students select the correct/incorrect choice of the grammatical form (in a language test), they should be able to justify their choice, and therefore raising consciousness. Subsequently, if form is mastered, then its function should be practiced and learned in other

language context encounters, such as reading and listening. This style is a form of self-regulation (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003).

Furthermore, Adamson (2004) argues that although there are various language teaching methods, “no consensus has emerged, nor is likely to emerge, as to the “best” or “right” way to teach a language” (p. 604). If this view is taken in mind, then we are interested to consolidate language learning in a quite different way, which slightly differs from the common practice in language teaching. Tests are used for assessment; in our experiment they are used to substitute additional material. The common practice is that learners are presented with the language input, then they are involved in language practice, and finally they are evaluated by any means of formative assessment. For many foreign language teachers, it is common to divide the language lesson into three stages, whether real or hypothetical. These stages are presentation, practice, and production (PPP). For easy reference, it may be called, the 3-P teaching model (Gower & Walters, 1983; van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, van Os, & Janssen-van Dielen, 1984; Ur, 1991).

To sum up, we would like to study the effect of language test practice as an additional source of language input, where the learners question their choices to know the linguistic rules behind correct and incorrect choices. It is a home-practice activity, not a classroom one which is assumed to raise language awareness and enhance language achievement.

### **Scope and significance of the study**

Language components and skills are presented through various methods and approaches in curriculum design, where various factors are integrated (Nation & Macalister, 2010). These are influenced by the philosophy of viewing language teaching or language learning (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Normally an FL learner is formally presented with language input in language classroom. The material is carefully graded and designed, and is often based on a specific organizational structure, such as, grammatical, functional, situational, skill-based, or task-based (Breen, 1987a; Breen, 1987b; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Richards, 2001; Richards, 2013; White, 1988). As stated above, the language input is followed by practice and is concluded with some type of classroom assessment. The broad outline of this study is discussed below.

The course coverage (in English classrooms at Jazan University) is determined by whether the language objectives are achieved or not. Language teachers are given course distribution plans so as to ensure that around 18000 students receive equal ‘amount’ of language input. Moreover, these fresher students are engaged in meeting other university requirements, such as, Computer Skills and Study Skills as well as College requirements, such

as, Physics, Mathematics, and so on. This situation does not encourage the learners to devote extra time for English. However, the English Program at Jazan University has undergone new improvements in the last couple of years. For example, placement tests will soon be introduced to streamline students according to their language levels, and subsequently, selecting the appropriate course books according to group levels.

Assuming that a language course for the elementary level requires between 180 to 200 teaching hours (Cambridge University Press, CUP, 2013) in order to cover its main structures, functions and lexis, then previously acquired language items become a ‘burden’ on the language learners to activate because their focus is laid on the new ‘language input’. Learners are supposed to double their efforts and to work hard to activate earlier acquired language inputs, and subsequently, relating what they know to what they encounter (Hurd, Beaven & Ortega, 2001; White, 2008). We assume that these language items, which are different from learner to learner, are passive due to the long stoppage in studying English (the period separating secondary/higher school from the tertiary level). It is estimated to be around three months accompanied with lack of motivation. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, let us say that every 20-hour language tuition (formal classroom teaching) is assigned an hour of language test practice (meant for general practice). All this combined may justify why we are interested in examining *the effectiveness of a new technique in language teaching for activating this passive language through more testing practice*.

One way to achieve this is through appropriate-level standardised tests, where frequent structures and vocabulary are practiced through testing. It is recommended that frequent vocabulary be better taught at early stages (Nation & Meara, 2010; Nation & Waring, 1997). Through this kind of practice, learners have to revise their earlier ‘language learning’, and develop new strategies of learning, forcing them to learn new words as well. To ensure that the process follows such a path, students are given language tests (mostly MCQs) where they are supposed to provide simple explanations of their choices—be that choice correct or incorrect. When the students face difficulties in these situations, then the teacher explains the grammatical rules and the meanings of the vocabularies the week after. By doing so, language awareness and motivation are strongly built through both implicit and explicit learning (Ellis et al, 2009; Ortega, 2009). Deductive in its orientation, this technique will achieve the following:

- faster vocabulary building and activation (Furneauux, 1999, pp. 367-369),
- easier grammar consolidation (Ellis, 2002),

- motivation for learning new material (Ur 1991, p. 34),
- a technique of transferring learning strategies (Oxford, 2002),
- a new strategy in “self-regulation” learning (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 611),
- and hopefully raising language learning awareness.

### Research questions and hypotheses

It is assumed that learners who will receive 20 hours of testing practice over 10 weeks will perform better in grammar and vocabulary tests than their peers who do not receive extra language materials. The hypotheses are formulated for statistical purposes as:

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):  $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):  $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3$

These hypotheses are put in words as follows:

- a. The three groups show an acceptable language progress, and thus their means show no significant difference at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This is our Null hypothesis where neither materials nor time has a considerable role against each other.
- b. Either the experimental group or the second control group will score higher in the second test and/or the final examination due to the variable of either the additional material (i.e. practice tests) or the extra teaching hours. This is the alternative hypothesis where groups' means should show a significant difference at alpha probability level of 5% ( $p. = 0.05$ ).

The main questions that arise from these hypotheses are:

1. Does testing practice have a better effect than additional teaching hours? In other words, which group will perform better? Is it those students who receive additional language material or those who receive extra teaching hours?
2. How can we direct such research studies for further future explorations? In other words, what are the implications and applications in the field of language learning and research?
3. Can intensive testing practice be a component of additional materials (in the future)?

Answers to all these questions will be through placement tests and final exam results. Data will be treated statistically using ANOVA (one-way factor), t-tests (paired group), and Pearson  $r$  correlation. For this purpose, three groups were selected to undertake the study.

1. Experimental group – Engineering first level of 18 contact hours per week with additional language test practice.

2. First Control group – Engineering first level of 18 contact hours per week with no additional learning material or practice tests.
3. Second Control group – Medicine first level of 24 contact hours per week with no additional learning materials or practice tests. Note that this group contact hours are higher than the other two groups.

### **Literature review**

Since a number of relevant reviews are integrated through the body of the research above, it seems reasonable to start with clarifying some recurring terminologies in this paper. Practice is a vague term in teaching. The practice referred to in this study is a kind of language consolidation, and extra activities as a technique of recycling the language items. The notion here is not similar to that (practice) of Ellis, which is seen as a stage of the lesson with a number of characteristics (2002, p. 168). On the other hand, our use for the term ‘language awareness’ is similar, in many aspects, to Ellis’ ‘consciousness-raising’. Ellis (2002, p. 168) lists five different characteristics for consciousness-raising, one being that “Misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to *clarification* in the form of further data and description or explanation”. This can be achieved by practice through language tests.

This type of testing practice is believed to combine induction and deduction, and to involve both explicit and implicit learning. The question item presents the rule incomplete, with no certainty from the learners of the correct choice (deductive). When the learners use the clues of the question item, they try to elicit the correct choice (inductive). As DeKeyser (2003, p. 314) rightly argues about the relation between implicit and explicit learning to deduction and deduction, “When students are encouraged to find rules for themselves by studying examples in a text, learning is inductive and explicit”. In foreign language learning, deduction is going from the specific to the general (using rules to understand examples), and induction, on the other hand, is to go from the general to the specific, i.e. using examples to figure out rules (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005; Collins, 1998). Can this type of ‘encouragement’ be considered some sort of inculcating motivation into students’ learning? Incidentally, motivation in language *learning* is like ‘practice’ in language *teaching*; both are slightly vague. The motivation referred in this study is similar to the third component of Dornyei’s L2 learning experience, “which concerns situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success)” (Dornyei, 2010, p. 80). But why test practice as a consolidation technique?

One advantage of this kind of test practice is to experiment the introduction of a new technique in language learning or teaching. Again, not only is it a form of self-regulation, but it could be a new language learning style. According to Reid (1995, p. viii) (cited in Dornyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 108), learning styles refer to “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills”. Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) view learning styles as those “habitual patterns of perceiving, processing, or reacting to information” and define learning strategies as “the specific actions one takes and/or techniques one uses in order to learn” (p. 65). The question is: will this type of self-study (through test practice) strengthen intrinsic motivation? One direct way to measure this is through questionnaires and interviews. Another method is indirect in nature; that is, to find out the absence or presence of significant results and progress in language learning (through placement testing—as is the case in the present study).

Since this study focuses on investigating the use of tests as a tool for consolidating the learning of vocabulary and grammar, it is only appropriate to provide a brief argument in this regard. Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill and Pincas (2003, p. 35) argue that leaning a language is not “acquiring grammar and vocabulary and a reasonable pronunciation. It involves the competence to suit the language to the situation, the participant and the basic purpose”. But grammar and vocabulary are found across all the four language skills. In order to acquire them, and use them actively, it can pose a challenge to the learner/FL student, let alone the time devoted to reach an acceptable level of language proficiency. Our view is that of Saville-Troike (2006, p. 138) where “vocabulary (or lexicon) is the most important level of L2 knowledge for all learners to develop – whether they are aiming primarily for academic or interpersonal competence, or for a broader scope of communicative competence that spans the two”. Hunt and Beglar (2002) propose seven general principles of vocabulary teaching which they claim to cover the different approaches to teaching vocabulary. One of the general conclusions they make is their emphasis on teaching of vocabulary directly to the “learners who still need to learn the first 3,000 most common words” (Hunt & Beglar, 2002, p. 264).

It is true that vocabulary is important but most English words are grammaticalised, in which parts of word knowledge involves a number of components including its grammar. Therefore, words alone will not convey the intended meaning: we need to express causality, modality and reference (Swan, 2011). Teaching grammar is directly related to teaching vocabulary: the two are inter-related. However, Swan (2002, p. 151) argued against the teaching of too much grammar and concluded that “There are two good reasons for teaching carefully selected points of grammar”: comprehensibility and acceptability. Comprehensibility

deals with the selection of common structures which will make communication meaningful, whereas acceptability is concerned with adherence to the native speakers' norms.

For vocabulary learning, there is another advantage, and that is mastering spelling of English. Obasi (2018) discussed structural irregularities in English and concluded that "As one continues to read and reflect, one will become conversant with most of the irregular forms in the English language and attempt to use them appropriately" (p. 12). Another study showed that using reflection of selecting choices yielded better results with greater accuracy in English articles among advanced and intermediate Korean students (Lee, 2019).

### **Research design and methodology**

The present study is essentially experimental in its method of design, variables, and analysis. The focus was on the assessment of progress in language achievement through placement tests and language achievement final exam. These tools are simply used to measure such progress and thus analyse the effect of additional material versus extra teaching hours. In continuation of the description stated above, the following sections shed light on these tools and their participants. A 20-hour testing practice session (divided over 10 weeks, i.e. 2-hour testing practice per week) was assumed to consolidate most of the language level lexis and structures.

Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 303) defines a language level in testing as "a description of the degree of proficiency expected for a test taker to be placed in a certain position on a scale, such as "beginning", "intermediate", or "advanced"". The *level* of the intended tests was elementary and pre-intermediate, corresponding to A2 and B2 of CEFR classification (Council of Europe, 2011, 2018). The students were given three to four pages of elementary/pre-intermediate tests every week as extra assignments. This 'language testing practice' was assumed to help the students spare a few hours for studying English, and consequently, encouraging the learner to get answers for the question items.

### **Participants**

The participants were the first level male freshers at Jazan University, KSA. Their age ranged between 19 and 22 years. Their level of English was almost the same, i.e. elementary (or A2 CEFR Scale), though the Medicine group was supposed to be higher, but other factors played a role for admission (including the Secondary School GPA). The groups were as follows:

- Experimental group – 20 Engineering first level of 18 contact teaching hours per week with additional language test practice (Engineering Experimental).
- First Control group – 18 Engineering first level of 18 contact teaching hours per week with no additional learning material (Engineering Control).
- Second Control group – 20 Medicine first level of 24 contact teaching hours per week with no additional learning materials (medicine control).

### **Placement tests and final examinations**

The placement tests used were taken from photocopiable tests by Oxford University Press (OUP, 2005). The placement test contained the first 80 items, which should measure the *Elementary* and *Pre-Intermediate* levels. Our participants' level of English is known to be within this range. They were 'freshers' (1st level students) at Jazan University, KSA. Items were distributed among basic grammatical structures and simple frequent vocabulary up to the quite complex grammatical sentences as suitable for pre-intermediate level. The same test was used in the second placement test—but it was modified so as to retain exactly its level and structure. The researchers went through the test items and decided to retain its structure and level of difficulty in order to preserve its original validity, since the test is designed to measure the language proficiency (at the beginning of the experiment and its end). This is to ensure that the same groups receive the same treatment. To avoid any effect of previous exposure, some *slight* amendments were made, which were believed not to affect the validity of the original test, and as follows:

1. The question items were re-ordered.
2. The plural subjects with some question items were replaced with singular forms (and vice versa).
3. Distracters were re-arranged for some items.
4. Names and nationalities were replaced (with countries known to all participants to avoid the effect of background knowledge).

The final exams were administered at the end of the semester, nearly two weeks after our second placement test. Final exams were based on materials presented in the classroom (see *Textbooks* below) to serve two purposes: assessing achievement and measuring language progress. These final examinations were more or less equal in strength and level. Every test carried 60 items ranging from direct questions for reading and MCQ's for grammar. They covered all the language skills: grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, and reading (but not

speaking). These exams were prepared by an independent committee and were marked by other teachers who did not teach those groups (so as to eliminate the bias factor). The level of these tests was within the pre-intermediate scale (B1).

### **Textbooks**

The textbooks used for the groups of engineering were the first five units of the *Interaction Access Diamond Edition* of both reading/writing and listening/speaking (Hartmann, Mentel, & Motala, 2012; Thrush, Baldwin & Blass, 2012). Writing materials included selected chapters from Blanchard & Root (2010) *Ready to Write*, and grammar lessons were selected from chapters of Azar & Hagen (2005) *Basic English Grammar* (3rd edn.). For the Medicine group the whole book of Barton & Dupaquier (2015) *NorthStar 3* (reading/writing) and Solarazo & Schmidt (2015) *NorthStar 3* (listening/speaking) along with selected chapters from Azar & Hagen (2005) *Basic English Grammar* (3rd edition). The level of all these books was mainly pre-intermediate. Exceptions may apply to certain chapters of grammar and writing, which could be described as post-elementary. The overall contact teaching hours were officially planned to be 360 and 270 for Medicine and Engineering respectively. Note that Medicine received more contact teaching hours, i.e. 90.

### **Practice tests**

The additional materials, or language tests, were about 20 pages of practice tests that ranged between elementary and pre-intermediate levels. We term it *additional* since we are interested in investigating its effect as extra learning/teaching materials. Materials were taken from *Headway* elementary tests (White, 2006) and *Headway* pre-intermediate tests (White, 2003). Twenty-five pages focussing on grammar and vocabulary were selected, photocopied, and distributed: 15 pages from the elementary tests and 10 pages from the pre-intermediate level. They were given as homework assignments during the weekend (three pages from the elementary for the first five weeks, and two pages from the pre-intermediate for the rest five weeks). One hour was devoted to review the ‘tests’ the week following this ‘assignment’. This activity was meant to revise students’ answers, and was intended towards raising learning awareness. Not every question was reviewed due to the constraint of time available. Quick explanations were given as justifications to correct choices (deduction), and hinted at why the others were not appropriate, and so on. Admittedly, the time devoted for test practice in the class was less than planned in this study, but it was enough, to some extent, to test the hypotheses.

### **Analysis of variance (ANOVA one way single factor)**

ANOVA was performed on all the three tests. Firstly, it was intended to measure the difference, if any, among the three groups. The second ANOVA, which was the main parametric measure in this study, was to test the effect of the 10-week period (of either the practice tests or the additional teaching-contact hours which was calculated to be 90 hours) on the language achievement.

Conclusions were based on the following rule: If the F-critical value is higher than the F-ratio, the null hypothesis is accepted. Randolph & Myers (2013, p. 140) states that “If the F test is statistically significant, then the null hypothesis that all population means are equal is rejected.” Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is retained because the average between groups becomes smaller than within groups. For both ANOVA and t-tests, when the p-value becomes smaller than that of the set p-value (5%), the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Loewen and Plonsky, (2016, p. 3) state that the p-value is normally “compared to the alpha level to determine if a test result should be considered statistically significant”. This is due to the strong relationship between the values of F and t-test (Hinton, 2004). The third ANOVA was performed to test the significance of mean differences in the final exam results.

### **Independent and paired t-tests**

The three groups were selected randomly from other groups of the same level. They were labelled for easy reference as follows: Engineering Experimental was labelled as “*Engineering 1*”, Engineering Control as “*Engineering 2*”, and Medicine Control as merely “*Medicine*”. These labels are applied throughout the analysis. The t-test was used with the second placement test so as to test the significance of differences among means as opposed with the ‘base’ first placement test. This is important to find out the gain score and to measure the language achievement.

As indicated for ANOVA, when the p value is too small, the null hypothesis will be rejected. When the p value (ANOVA) or t-value (t-test) is less than or equal to 0.05 the researcher is at least 95% certain the relationship is significant (Dowdy, Weardon & Chilko, 2004; Randolph & Myers, 2013). In brief, ANOVA should tell us whether a difference existed among groups, and the t-test was concerned with which pair of groups has that difference (Soh, 2014, p. 31). Like ANOVA, t-tests are parametric, and they can be used to measure differences within different groups (independent). Another type can be used to compare the performance

of the same group on two different occasions or instances, i.e. paired (Loewen & Plonsky, 2016). Microsoft Excel was used for all types of statistical analyses and graphs (Abbott, 2011).

## Results and analysis

### Results of placement tests

The first placement test was administered at the beginning of the semester, more precisely in the end of the second week (a semester at Jazan University constitutes of 16 weeks). See Table 1 below. It was intended to create a starting point for the students' level of English. The raw scores are tabulated in the Appendix. The means of scores showed no significant difference at  $p < .05$  in terms of language levels, though Medicine was slightly weaker:  $F(2,57) = 1.19$ ,  $p = 0.0312$ . This indicated a clear homogeneity in language level for all the three groups. Therefore, any future language progress (by any group) in subsequent tests and exams should be significant, if not remarkable.

**Table 1: Summary of ANOVA: single factor for placement Test 1**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Engineering 1	20	628	31	182.46		
Engineering 2	18	591	33	225.68		
Medicine	20	542	27	34.41		
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F critical</i>
Between Groups	344	2	172.15	1.190	0.312	3.165
Within Groups	7957	55	144.67			
Total	8301	57				

Ten weeks later, the second placement test was conducted, after which Medicine received 240 language teaching hours against 180 teaching hours for Engineering groups (note that the difference in the contact teaching hours is 60 for the second placement test, but it is 90 in the final examination analysis). The experimental group (*Engineering 1*) received an additional material equivalent to 20 hour-tuition. This material (language MCQ tests) was presented as homework assignment and classroom revision sessions. All in all, it did not exceed 25 pages with an emphasis on vocabulary and grammar. Raw scores of the second placement test are tabulated in the Appendix. The second ANOVA results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of ANOVA: single factor for placement Test 2**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Engineering 1	20	815	41	178.41		
Engineering 2	18	690	38	212.00		
Medicine	20	655	33	86.72		
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F critical</i>
Between Groups	671	2	336	2.136	0.128	3.165
Within Groups	8642	55	157			
Total	9313	57				

Though these figures showed a progress for all groups, it was not significant at the alpha of 5%. Twenty students of *Engineering 1* had an average of 41 (SD = 13.36); eighteen students of *Engineering 2* had an average of 38 (SD = 14.56); and twenty students of *Medicine* had an average of 33 (SD = 9.31). The effect of both the additional material against the extra teaching hours, therefore, was not significant,  $F(2,57) = 2.136$ ,  $p = 0.128$ . The Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is not rejected. By the same token, the Alternative Hypothesis is not accepted due to the percentage increase of language achievement between the first and second placement tests. The reason beyond this is that we calculated the percentage difference for each group (see Table 3). The additional material (as language practice tests for the experimental group) scored higher percentage difference, but was not enough to make an increase where the Alternative hypothesis should be accepted.

**Table 3: Mean difference of the two placement tests**

	<i>Engineering 1</i>	<i>Engineering 2</i>	<i>Medicine</i>
Mean of Test 1	31	33	27
Mean of Test 2	41	38	33
Percentage Difference	30%	17%	21%

We performed three t-student tests for paired groups (within-groups design) on the gain scores of the first and second placement tests. Results showed the significance of this small progress (Table 4 below), which is presented above in percentages. The small t-values for Engineering 1 and Medicine were really small compared to the t-value for Engineering 2 (first control group). The effect of both the additional material and the extra hours was obvious; it

existed to some extent. However, surrounding factors, unknown exactly to us, may have played a role in these results. Factors such as motivation, time devoted for study, individual differences, and the like. Since we had six different t-test calculations, we opted to tabulate them (Table 4), for easier comparisons, rather than use the formulaic style of reporting such data.

**Table 4: Paired two sample t-test for Means between placement tests 1 and 2**

	<i>Engineering 1</i>	<i>Engineering 2</i>	<i>Medicine</i>
df	19	17	19
t Statistic	4.95	3.34	4.07
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00004	0.002	0.0003
t Critical one-tail	1.73	1.74	1.73
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0001	0.0039	0.0007
t Critical two-tail	2.09	2.11	2.09

Let us statistically compare the Experimental group with the second Control group (Medicine); that is practice tests versus extra teaching hours. Over a 10-week period, students received 25 pages of language test items on vocabulary and reading, participants of the experimental group (Engineering 1) scored significantly in the second placement test ( $M = 41$ ,  $SD = 13.36$ ) than did those in the second control group (Medicine), control group ( $M = 33$ ,  $SD = 9.31$ ),  $t(34) = -2.20$ ,  $p = .035$ . Though this small p-value favours the alternative hypothesis, the Bonferroni test correction proved it to be *false* ( $\alpha = .0167$ ). It is true that there is a difference among groups but it is not significant to conclude that either the additional materials or the extra teaching hours have the strong effect over the other groups. Results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: t-Test: two-sample independent groups**

	<i>Engineering 1 &amp; Medicine</i>	<i>Medicine &amp; Engineering 2</i>	<i>Engineering 1 &amp; Engineering 2</i>
df	34	28	35
t Stat	2.20	1.3909	0.5312
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0175	0.0876	0.2993
t Critical one-tail	1.6909	1.7011	1.6896
P(T<=t) two-tail	<b>0.035</b>	0.175	0.5986
t Critical two-tail	2.0322	2.0484	2.0301

### Final examination

The final examination at Jazan University is normally conducted after 15 weeks of intensive teaching. This means that the Medicine group received 360 hours (24 hours/week) of English teaching compared to 270 English teaching hours for Engineering groups (18 hours/week). Analysis of variance showed a significant difference in the groups means at  $p = 0.05$ :  $F(2,57) = 8.57, p = 0.0006$ . See table 6.

**Table 6: Summary of ANOVA: single factor for the final examination**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Averag</i>	<i>Varianc</i>		
		<i>m</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>		
Engineering 1	20	996	50	64.90		
Engineering 2	18	879	49	45.56		
Medicine	20	794	40	101.49		
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F critical</i>
Between Groups	1227	2	613.5	8.574	0.0006	3.165
Within Groups	3936	55	71.6			
Total	5163	57				

A number of questions arise here: is this difference resultant of latent and unknown variables such as the actual language level of the individual students? Or is it the effect of additional materials against extra teaching hours? These questions are paraphrased as: As the exam papers of both Medicine and Engineering are almost of the same level of difficulty, and Engineering groups scored higher than the Medicine group, then can we take randomly 50 final

exam results of Engineering students and 50 final exam results of Medicine and perform ANOVA? This last analysis will prove one of the following:

1. There is a significant difference at alpha 5%, then latent factors played a role since the experimental ‘variable’ is removed from analysis, thus ruling out the “additional material” factor, which is assumed to be the cause of this difference, i.e. average of 50 versus 40 (Table 6 above).
2. There is no significant difference at the 5% level, then we have to investigate the factors that influenced the differences as calculated in the ANOVA analysis above (Table 6 above).

This process was not conducted for this research paper, but it will be performed for a similar study on reading comprehension with more participants. However, in order to verify the follow-up analysis suggested above, we performed Pearson *r* correlations across the three different tests with the three different groups. Correlations between the second placement test (as the end point of ‘experimental teaching’) and the final examinations were not significant (see the Table 7 below). It does not tell the cause, but it showed that there was no relation between additional materials and the extra teaching hours. The higher correlation of the first control group may clearly point out to other individual factors.

**Table 7: Pearson *r* correlations among the three tests**

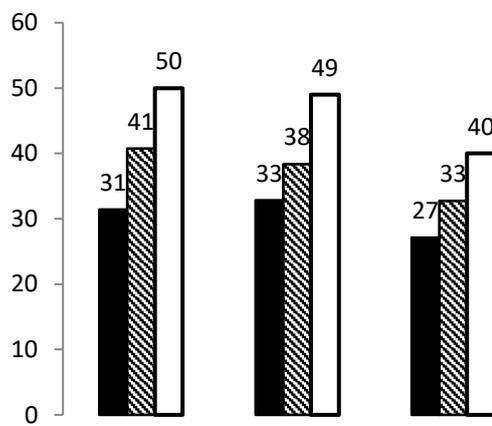
	Engineering 1		Engineering 2		Medicine	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
Test 2	0.80	---	0.89	---	0.76	---
Final	0.64	0.76	0.73	0.64	0.54	0.42

## Discussion

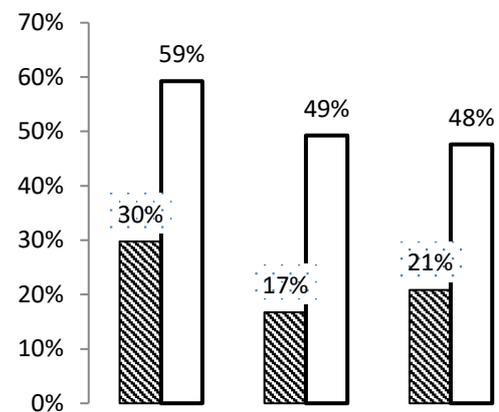
It was concluded at an earlier stage in the results above that the alternative hypothesis cannot be accepted due the large values of p-values ( $p > .05$ ) for both the ANOVA and the t-test analyses. One would argue that is logical to get this result for the following reasons: if you have extra teaching hours, you will have extra material to teach. That is absolutely true. At least we expected the Engineering experimental to score better than the Engineering control. Though there appeared to be a slight progress for the Engineering experimental, it was not enough to make a significant difference (see Graph 1 below). One reason might well be the

‘limited’ input of the additional material (language test practice) and the little guidance time offered during the experiment (10 hours at best). Another factor may be assumed to be the small number of the participants.

**Graph 1: Means of the three groups over 10 weeks (Test 2, shaded) and 15 weeks (final, white). Means of Test 1 are solid black**



**Graph 2: Calculated progress in percentages between Test 1 and Test 2 (shaded) and between Test 1 and the Final Exam (white)**



*Engineering 1 (1st group), Engineering 2 (middle), Medicine (third to the left).*

Graph 2 shows the language progress from the first placement test (as the base of 0%) and the second placement test and the final examination. This high percentage is informative, but it is not decisive because statistical analysis showed that there is no real significance. However, we may conclude that additional materials, if well-presented and selected, can have a better effect than extra teaching hours because they consolidate language from another perspective, i.e. real language practice.

## Conclusion

While concluding, we may well cite Broady and Dwyer (2008, p. 142) who assert that “Given the ‘problem’ of grammar, it is perhaps surprising that, compared with other areas of second language development, very little consideration has been given to learners’ strategies in this area”. Therefore, the recommendation is to redesign a similar study and investigate the strategies students use in both learning the grammatical items, and their strategies in selecting the grammatical items during grammar test taking. Finally, findings of this study would support

a syllabus that is “explicit and concrete” as teachers and students expressed their view in a recent study (Abhakorn, 2017, 182).

### **Pedagogical implication**

As stated earlier in the introduction that learning language requires practice, therefore, and in view of the results, it is evident that assigning language tests for home practice can consolidate this practice, particularly for grammar and vocabulary. The selection of published language tests—for classroom practice and home study—according to learners’ level, not only help them revise previously-learned language items, but they can be used to replace both extra teaching hours and extra teaching material.

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## Appendix

Scores obtained by participants in the three language tests

gp1= engineering group 1, 2= engineering group 2, 3= medicine group. Each row corresponds to an individual participants in that particular group.

<b>PLACEMENT TEST 1</b>		
<b>gp1</b>	<b>gp2</b>	<b>gp3</b>
64	20	23
22	34	20
24	20	22
43	63	18
24	36	28
27	24	28
21	71	35
23	41	42
19	17	25
22	30	26
28	19	19
28	36	26
31	24	26
20	28	25
39	23	30
40	31	29
24	49	25
21	25	27
63		35
45		33

<b>PLACEMENT TEST 2</b>		
<b>gp1</b>	<b>gp2</b>	<b>gp3</b>
64	35	26
37	33	20
31	28	37
53	77	24
26	47	27
58	22	44
23	72	42
21	45	42
41	28	24
38	38	26
24	29	19
37	35	25
44	33	32
33	40	25
50	28	35
47	30	38
40	37	37
32	33	34
68		48
48		50

<b>FINAL EXAMINATION</b>		
<b>gp1</b>	<b>gp2</b>	<b>gp3</b>
59	38	35
50	51	30
32	42	46
53	56	29
38	48	40
53	37	21
45	60	43
43	58	55
46	47	25
49	57	34
38	42	27
55	49	49
49	50	37
44	45	49
60	44	53
58	55	34
55	52	51
50	48	41
59		45
60		50



## **The Influence of L1 Congruency, L2 Exposure and Word Class on Collocation Learning: The Case of Arab Learners of English**

**Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs<sup>1</sup>, Mona Salem<sup>2</sup> & Jawaher Nasser Al-Haqbani<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1+3</sup> *Linguistics Department, College of Humanities, Prince Sultan University*

<sup>2</sup> *Translation Department, College of Humanities, Prince Sultan University*

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs** is an associate professor at the Linguistics Department, College of Humanities, Prince Sultan University, and the leader of the Applied Linguistics Research Lab.

**Mona Salem** is an assistant professor at the Translation Department, College of Humanities, Prince Sultan University, and an investigator at the Applied Linguistics Research Lab.

**Jawaher Alhaqbani** is a research assistant at the Applied Linguistics Research Lab, College of Humanities, Prince Sultan University.

### **Abstract**

The current study examines the influence of L1 congruency, L2 exposure and word class on the acquisition of L2 collocations. To this end, a cross-sectional study design involving 800 Arab learners of English at their first and last years of study in a private Saudi university where English is the medium of instruction completed form recognition and recall tasks including equal numbers of congruent (collocations with L1-L2 translation equivalents) and incongruent (L2-specific) collocations and equal numbers of verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations. T-test results showed a congruency effect in form recognition only for seniors whereas significantly higher scores were noted for incongruent collocations for all participants in form recall. The results also showed a clear advantage for verb + noun collocations across both tests and for the two groups of participants. As for the influence of L2 exposure, a significant advantage was observed for seniors over freshmen in form recognition, but no

statistical differences were found in form recall. The results are interpreted in light of relevant theoretical models and earlier studies. Pedagogical implications are proposed.

**Keywords:** *collocation; congruency; L2 exposure; word class; EFL*

## **Introduction**

A central component of L2 lexical knowledge is mastery of L2 collocations which can be defined as “a group of words that belong together either because they commonly occur together . . . , or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of the parts,” (Nation, 2001, p.317). The special significance of collocations (e.g., *impose sanctions* (verb + noun), *sun rise* (noun + verb), *consist of* (verb + preposition), *handsome man* (adjective + noun), etc.) reflects their highly frequent occurrence in natural language, their important role in enhancing learners’ L2 fluency and native-like use and their positive influence on understanding the meaning of polysemous words and the diverse connotations of words in context (El-Dakhs, 2015 (b) and Henriksen, 2013). Despite this significance, collocations are widely known as a main problematic area of vocabulary to L2 learners due to their arbitrary nature, unpredictable variation across languages and difficult identification in natural speech (Boers, Lindstromberg and Eyckmans (2014); El-Dakhs, 2015 (b); Howarth, 1998; Laufer & Waldman, 2011). L2 collocation learning and retention are also influenced by a variety of determinants, including word frequency, length and part of speech, L2 proficiency, exposure and vocabulary size, and L1 transfer (e.g., Fernández & Schmitt, 2015; Granger & Bestgen, 2014; Peters, 2016; Webb & Kagimoto, 2011).

The current study is motivated by the special difficulty of L2 collocation learning, particularly among Arab learners of English, the study target population. Several studies have highlighted that English collocations are significantly problematic for Arab learners at different levels of proficiency and within varied environments and learning contexts. In order to contribute to this area, the current study examines the role played by three potential determinants; namely, L1 influence, the word class of constituent words of collocations and L2 exposure. The L1 influence is examined through comparing the participants’ performance on form recognition and recall tests including congruent (collocations with L1-L2 translation equivalents) and incongruent (L2-specific) collocations, which is an approach infrequently used in studies on Arab learners of English. The choice of the word class (i.e., verb + noun versus adjective + noun) as a second determinant was due to mixed results in this area in earlier studies. As for L2 exposure, the current study compares the collocation knowledge of students

at two ends of university education where English is a medium of instruction. This context is extremely important in the Arab World and different non-English-speaking parts around the world as the provision of university education in English is dramatically increasing (see the literature review below for relevant evidence).

An important theoretical perspective to consider in the current study is Wray's (2002, 2008) that native speakers and non-native speakers process formulaic structures, including collocations, in fundamentally different ways. According to Wray (2002, 2008), native speakers process the meaning of chunks (e.g., *major catastrophe*) as a single unit without conscious attention to the meaning of the constituent words whereas non-native speakers adopt an analytic approach and attempt to understand the meaning of the chunks through the meaning of their component words. As a result, native speakers can produce chunks fluently while non-native speakers will have no memory of the chunk as a single unit and tend to produce a variety of plausible pairings of words. A number of studies have cast doubt on this perspective through showing the sensitivity of non-native speakers to collocational frequencies (Durrant, 2014; Fernández and Schmitt, 2015; Siyanova-Chanturia, Conklin and van Heuven, 2011; Wolter and Gyllstad, 2013), which indicates their non-analytic processing of chunks. Further research needs to assess Wray's (2002, 2008) perspective from other angles than collocational frequency, and this is an area the current study will contribute to.

Another important theoretical model to the current study is Kroll and Stewart's (1994) Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM) of the bilingual mental lexicon. The model postulates three memory representations for concepts, L1 lexicon and L2 lexicon with connections among them. Two levels of connections are proposed: one at the conceptual level (linking concepts to L1 and L2) and another at the lexical level (connecting L1 and L2 words). The model assumes strong connections between concepts and the L1 lexicon because the L1 lexicon includes a large number of words and is frequently used. As for the L2 lexicon, connections vary as per language proficiency. At early stages of L2 learning, the connections between the L2 lexicon and the conceptual level are relatively weak while the lexical connections between L2 words and their L1 equivalents are stronger in the direction of L2-to-L1. With increasing exposure to the L2, the connections between L2 lexicon and concepts strengthen and less reliance on L2-to-L1 lexical connections is observed in the processing of L2 words. In relation to the current study, this model predicts that congruent collocations will be more easily processed than incongruent collocations as the first rely on both conceptual and lexical connections. The model also predicts that the congruency effect will appear more strongly at earlier levels of learning. The current study will test these predictions.

After this brief introduction, this research article will provide an overview of earlier studies in relation to the current study. This will be followed by stating the research questions, describing the methodology adopted and presenting the results. Then, the results will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework for the current study and relevant literature, which will pave the way to propose a number of pedagogical implications and conclude the article.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review section surveys two types of studies for their direct relevance to the current study: (1) studies on determinants of L2 collocation learning and (2) studies on the knowledge of L2 collocations among Arab learners of English and the relevant factors influencing their learning. The current review thus does not cover studies on L2 collocation instruction whether in the Arab World (e.g., Abdellah, 2015; Alharbi, 2017; El-Dakhs, Amroun and Muhammad, 2018; El-Dakhs, Ambreen and Zaheer, 2019; Kamal, 2014) or in other parts of the world (e.g., Koosha & Jafarpour, 2006; Laufer & Girasi, 2008; Minaei & Rezaie, 2014; Pellicer-Sánchez, 2017; Szudarski, 2012; Szudarski & Carter, 2016; Zaabalawi and Gould, 2017).

### **Studies on Determinants of L2 Collocation Learning**

One of the recurrently proven determinants of L2 collocation learning is frequency of exposure or usage, at the collocation level and at the level of the composite words of the collocation. Durrant and Schmitt (2010) showed that increased repetitions of word combinations led to significant facilitation of collocation completion in a priming task. Webb, Newton and Chang (2013) indicated that the increase of frequency of exposure to word combinations up to 15 times in incidental acquisition led to significant vocabulary learning gains. Increased repetition of collocations also improved collocation learning in an explicit learning task in Peters (2014). Similar effects were found across different nationalities and language proficiency levels. For example, intermediate and advanced Japanese learners of English demonstrated sensitivity to both word-level and collocation-level frequency in Wolter and Yashamita (2017), and advanced Swedish learners of English showed high sensitivity to frequency effects in L2 collocations in Wolter and Gyllstad (2013). Similarly, the knowledge of L2 collocations among Spanish learners of English correlated moderately with corpus frequency in Fernández and Schmitt (2015) and frequency played a significant role in L2 collocation learning for Chinese learners of English at different levels of language proficiency in Cai (2017).

A number of studies have also highlighted a relationship between L2 collocation knowledge and L2 proficiency. For example, Kim (2005) showed a close relation between Korean university participants' collocation knowledge and their general language proficiency level as measured by TOEIC, and Korean high-school participants' collocation knowledge was significantly related to their language proficiency as measured by a national academic ability test in Kim and Cho (2010). Similar correlation between Iranian participants' language proficiency as measured by the Michigan Proficiency Test and collocation knowledge was found by Hatami (2015). A significant relation has also been found between collocation knowledge and writing proficiency. For instance, Lee (2015) showed that productive collocation knowledge was a strong predictor of writing proficiency. It was even a stronger predictor than productive vocabulary size and grammatical knowledge. Likewise, Chon and Shin (2009) found a strong correlation between the number of collocations participants produced in their essays and the raters' perceived writing proficiency, and the scores of the participants' online writing in Hsu (2007) positively correlated with the number of lexical collocations used in their writings.

The role L1 plays in acquiring L2 collocations has also been examined in a number of L1s. Using an online acceptability judgement task, Wolter and Yashamita (2017) found that intermediate and advanced Japanese learners of English processed congruent collocations significantly faster than English-only collocations. A similar influence of L1 was found through the same task among advanced Swedish learners of English in Wolter and Gyllstad (2013). In a phrase-acceptability judgement task, Korean (Lee, 2016) and Japanese (Yamashita and Jiang, 2010) EFL learners produced more errors and responded slower under the incongruent condition. The Japanese ESL learners (Yamashita and Jiang, 2010), however, did not show differences in reaction times for congruent versus incongruent collocations, but still made more errors with incongruent collocations. Similarly, no statistically significant differences of reaction times were noted between congruent and incongruent collocations in a self-paced reading task (Nishimura and Fukuta, 2014), but a delayed effect was detected with longer processing times for words following incongruent collocations. Incongruent collocations also proved more difficult to recall in Peters (2016). The congruency effect persisted in other off-line tasks (e.g., Dongjin, 2011; Hatami, 2015; Sadeghi, 2009) and corpus-based studies (e.g., Altenberg and Granger, 2001; Nesselhauf, 2003, 2004).

It has been generally concluded that incongruent collocations seem challenging to learn even for highly proficient learners (e.g., Lee, 2016; Yamashita and Jiang, 2010) due to the L1 influence. However, the underlying mechanisms for the congruency effect remain only partly

understood. Wolter and Gyllstad (2011, 2013) offer two potential explanations. First, the congruency effect may be interpreted in terms of automatic inter-lexical priming. When a learner encounters a L2 word, lexical connections to the L1 equivalents trigger typical L1 collocations which match L2 congruent collocations and thus facilitate their processing. In case of incongruent collocations, however, the L1 collocations will hinder processing as they need to be rejected before the right collocations in the L2 are activated. Second, collocations may be stored and processed as single units and get copied from the L1 lexicon to the L2 lexicon as ready-made chunks, again facilitating processing of congruent collocations. It must be noted though that a number of researchers (e.g., Lee, 2016; Yamashita and Jiang, 2010) assume that once incongruent collocations are noticed and stored in memory, they can be processed independently of L1. Additionally, a number of factors may modulate L1 influence including age and order of acquisition (e.g., Wolter and Yashamita, 2017).

The influence of L2 exposure on L2 collocation learning has also received great attention. However, the term “exposure” has been used with different meanings. For example, Yamashita and Jiang (2010) compared the collocation knowledge between Japanese ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners (second language learners practice the English language in their locale outside the language school while foreign language learners practice English only in the language school and use their L1 elsewhere) using a phrase-acceptability judgment. The ESL learners processed L2 collocations faster and produced fewer errors than EFL learners. ESL learners also showed smaller L1 influence. Fernández and Schmitt (2015) defined L2 exposure in terms of everyday engagement with L2. Examining the productive knowledge of Spanish learners of English, it was found that collocation knowledge correlated with everyday engagement with English outside the classroom (e.g., watching movies/TV, reading and social networking), and that everyday engagement was a stronger predictor of collocation knowledge than years of English study. Yet another definition for L2 exposure comes in connection with teaching methods. For instance, Gheisari and Yousofi (2016) compared the influence of explicit instruction versus implicit exposure on L2 collocation learning among Iranian pre-university students. Both approaches proved effective in a pre/post/delayed post multiple choice tests, with the explicit instruction group outperforming the implicit group in immediate and delayed retention. The current study defines L2 exposure in terms of more years of engagement in content-based instruction in an EFL context by comparing the collocation knowledge of freshmen and seniors in a university where English is the medium of instruction. This type of exposure can fall under incidental learning.

Another potential determinant, which is much less investigated, is the word class of constituent words of collocations. Peters (2016) investigated the influence of the collocates-node relationship on L2 collocation learning at the initial stage of form-meaning mapping among Dutch learners of English. The results of four online tasks showed that adjective + noun collocations were better recalled and recognized than (phrasal) verb + noun collocations. Similarly, Talakoob and Koosha (2017) examined whether the collocation knowledge of Iranian advanced learners of English differed in terms of the type of collocations. The learners' scores on three offline tests were significantly higher for verb + noun and verb + preposition collocations than for adjective + noun collocations. Along the same lines, Park (2003) investigated the lexical collocation use of Korean EFL college students at three levels of English language proficiency. The results identified adjectival and adverbial types of collocations as the most problematic for the three groups of learners whereas the least problematic types were the verbal and nominal types. It is worth noting that some researchers have also explored other potential determinants of L2 collocation learning, such as the word length of collocation constituents (e.g., Peters, 2016) and vocabulary size (e.g., Multu and Kaşlioğlu, 2016; Park, 2003), but the findings are not discussed in this section as they are not directly relevant to the current study.

### **Studies on L2 Collocation Learning in the Arab World**

A large number of studies in different parts of the Arab World have highlighted the poor collocation knowledge among Arab learners of English in terms of both the receptive and productive knowledge with the productive knowledge often lagging behind the receptive knowledge (e.g., Alsulayyi, 2015; Banboua, 2016; Brashi, 2009; Noor and Adubaib, 2011; Qureshi & Nurmukhamedov, 2018; Shamma, 2013). Some of these studies have also proposed potential sources for this poor knowledge through analysis of the participants' performance on the study tasks, including tasks of multiple choice, gap-filling and translation. Reference to the L1 influence was recurrent in most studies (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Miqdad, 2012; Alotaibi, 2014; Abu Naba'h and Al-Shara'h, 2011; Abdul Ridha and AlRiyali, 2011; Dukali, 2016; Farghal and AlHamly, 2007; Mahmoud, 2005; Zohra, 2015). Similarly, lack of awareness of the nature and restrictions of collocations was noted in a number of studies (e.g., Abdul Ridha and Al Riyali, 2011; Alotaibi, 2014; Abu Naba'h and Al-Shara'h, 2011; El-Dakhs, 2015 a; Zohra, 2015).

Other sources were also noted, but less frequently. For example, El-Dakhs (2015 a), Farghal and AlHamly (2007), Mahmoud (2005) and Zohra (2015) highlighted the potential role

of ineffective strategies (e.g., overgeneralization, misuse of synonyms, production of creative constructions, etc.) on the erroneous production of collocations. The positive influence of L2 exposure on enhancing Arab learners' collocation knowledge was also observed in a number of studies (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Alqarni, 2017; Alsakran, 2011; El-Mashharawi, 2008; Gaballa and Al-Khayri, 2014). L2 exposure was mainly used in terms of increased contact hours with natural English or living in an ESL versus EFL environment. Additionally, Miqdad (2012) and El Mashharawi (2008) pointed out to a potential gender difference in the favor of female participants.

The potential differentiated processing of collocations based on the word class of constituent words has also been addressed, but with mixed results. Alotaibi (2014) highlighted the special difficulty of adjective + noun and verb + noun/ pronoun/ preposition collocation patterns for Arab learners. Likewise, Abdul Ridha and Al-Riyahi (2011) pointed out a special difficulty for the collocation patterns of verb + noun, adjective + noun and noun + verb. Mixed results, however, emerged when different collocation patterns were compared. While Dukali (2016) and Farghal and AlHamly (2007) indicated that verbal collocations are more problematic than adjectival collocations, Miqdad (2012), El-Dakhs (2015 a) and Alsakran (2011) suggested significantly better learning of verbal than adjectival collocations.

Most studies on determinants of L2 collocation learning in the Arab World relied on the analysis of students' errors to identify potential sources of errors, including the influence of the first language. Few studies, however, manipulated the congruency of collocations as a better indicator of L1 influence. One of these studies is Miqdad (2012) who investigated the role of the L1 on the receptive and productive knowledge of collocations among Palestinian English majors through a productive test, a receptive test and a written interview. Statistical analysis was in favor of congruent collocations which were processed significantly better than incongruent ones, indicating a clear influence of L1. Another study, from which the current study is adopting its target collocations, is Zareva and Shehata (2015) who also devised receptive and productive tests including congruent and incongruent collocations to examine the effects of learning environment and native language on the collocation knowledge of advanced Arab learners of English at the university level. The results showed that L2 exposure plays an important role in collocation knowledge as ESL learners significantly outperformed EFL learners in both receptive and productive knowledge. A clear influence of L1 was also noted. Unexpectedly, however, the L1 influence was stronger among ESL than EFL learners.

The current study follows in the direction of Miqdad (2012) and Zareva and Shehata (2015) with its manipulation of the L1-L2 congruency of target collocations. However, the

current study constitutes an important addition to the literature in the Arab World for a number of reasons. First, the current study targets non-English majors, who constitute the majority of English language learners unlike a number of earlier studies which mainly focused on English majors (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Brashi, 2009; Miqdad, 2012; Zohra, 2015). Second, the current study employed a large sample of 800 participants with half the number completing the receptive and the other half the productive tests while other studies relied on relatively small numbers of participants (e.g., Abu Naba'h and Al-Shara'h, 2012; Alotaibi, 2014; Gaballa and Al-Khayri, 2014). Third, few studies have manipulated the congruency of target collocations as has been previously mentioned. Hence, further research in this area is needed. Fourth, earlier studies comparing the difficulty of verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations have led to mixed results as highlighted earlier (e.g., Alsakran, 2011; Dukali, 2016; El-Dakhs, 2015 a; Farghal and AlHamly, 2007). The current study aims to contribute to the debate. Fifth, no earlier studies in the Arab World have compared the collocation knowledge of the participants at the two ends of university education relying on content-based instruction. This is considered extremely important in the Arab World with the dramatic increase in higher education programs offered in English.

### **Research Questions**

The current study addresses three research questions:

1. What is the effect of word class on collocation learning?
2. What is the effect of L1 congruency on collocation learning?
3. What is the effect of increased L2 exposure on collocation learning?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants & Setting**

A total of 800 female undergraduates took part in the current study. All participants were native speakers of Arabic and were non-English majors as they were recruited from the Colleges of Business Administration, Computer and Information Sciences, Engineering and Law. All the participants were enrolled in the same Saudi private university where English is the medium of instruction. In order to ensure the students' readiness to study in English, applicants to the university join a preparatory English program based on a placement test before joining their majors. The program consists of three levels equivalent to A2, B1 and B2 as per the Common European Framework and offers students 20 hours of English language training per week for every level. Upon completing the preparatory program, the students join the

colleges of their preference and study their majors in English by a variety of Arabic and non-Arabic-speaking professors.

The current study was considering the amount of L2 exposure as a variable under investigation, the participants were recruited from two levels of academic study; namely, freshmen or first-year students and seniors or last-year students. In this context, seniors represented the groups with higher amount of L2 exposure as they had been studying in English for a much longer time. The freshmen students, of a total of 400, ranged in age between 19 and 21. Half of them completed the study gap-filling task (form recall) while the other half completed the multiple choice task (form recognition). Similarly, the seniors, who ranged in age between 22 and 25, were a total of 400 students and completed the two study tasks with equal numbers to the freshmen. The proficiency level of the participants was at B2 when completing the preparatory English program. Further development of their English command was due to their exposure to the English language during their university study years.

### **Collocation Selection**

The collocations used in the current study (see Appendix A) were adopted from Zareva and Shehata (2015). In their research article, Zareva and Shehata (2015) explain how they chose the target collocations. First, they extracted 315 collocations from a number of earlier studies. Second, they double-checked the collocation status of these word combinations in Co-Build English collocations on CD-Rom (1995) and Oxford Collocation Dictionary for Students of English (2003), which resulted in reducing the number of collocations to 86. Third, they selected 32 target collocations equally divided into verb + noun and adjective + noun and also into congruent and incongruent collocations for Arab learners of English through consulting a bilingual dictionary (Abu-Ssaydeh, 1995) and two native speakers of Arabic. Finally, the target items were validated with the use of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) which showed that the target items occur well above the random level of co-occurrence. Additionally, the target collocations were frequently used in the corpus with a Mutual Information (MI) score of 5.32 for verb + noun collocations and 7.02 for adjective + noun collocations, and a rate of occurrence of 4.7 times per million words for verb + noun collocations and 3.4 times per million words for adjective + noun collocations.

### **Instruments**

Two tests were prepared by the researchers for the study purpose. The first test was a gap-filling task to measure the learners' productive knowledge in terms of form recall (see

examples below). The test consisted of two sections: one for sixteen verb + noun and the other for sixteen adjective + noun collocations with each section targeting an equal number of congruent and incongruent collocations. Each target collocation was assessed through a separate test item that contained the noun parts of the collocations and required the participants to complete the verb or adjective parts. The sentences in the test items were made as restricted as possible to allow only one possible answer. To further ensure the production of the target collocations, the first letter of the missing verbs or adjectives was supplied. This productive test was validated by consulting 10 language instructors in the same institution who were familiar with the students' English language competence and recommended modifications to the tests were made. The productive test was completed by 200 freshmen and 200 seniors.

#### Gap-filling task - Examples

I don't want to g\_\_\_\_\_ weight, so I completely watch what I eat.

(Answer: gain – verb + noun collocation)

We might tell a w\_\_\_\_\_ lie when we don't want to hurt someone's feelings.

(Answer: white – adjective + noun collocation)

The second test was a multiple choice task that aimed at assessing the participants' form recognition (see examples below). The tests used the same sentences in the gap-filling task, but the first letters of the missing verbs or adjectives were removed. Every sentence was presented with four options for the verb and adjective parts, only one of which represented the correct answer. The same 10 instructors who reviewed the productive test also reviewed this receptive test and test modifications were made accordingly. The receptive test was completed by 200 freshmen and 200 seniors who are different than the students who completed the productive test.

#### Multiple Choice Task – Examples

I don't want to g\_\_\_\_\_ weight, so I completely watch what I eat.

- a. get                      b. earn                      c. take                      d. gain

(Answer: gain – verb + noun collocation)

We might tell a w\_\_\_\_\_ lie when we don't want to hurt someone's feelings.

- a. white                      b. pale                      c. fair                      d. clear

(Answer: white – adjective + noun collocation)

#### Data Collection

The collection of data was based on a clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Saudi private university. This was followed by seeking permission from course

instructors to allow the researchers to visit their classes for data collection. The students were given clear instructions about the study and the tasks they were requested to complete. Only those students who consented to participate completed the study tasks. It is worth noting that the students who completed the form-recall task were not the same students who did the form-recognition task for two reasons. First, the two study tasks targeted the same collocations, so it was not recommended for the same participants to complete the two tasks. Second, it was more practical to ask participants to complete only one task due to time restrictions within their study plans. It also worth mentioning that the scoring of the papers was completed and recorded by one of the researchers. Only one correct option was correct in the Multiple Choice Test. As for the gap-filling test, only the target collocation was considered. Minor spelling deviations that did not hinder the correct pronunciation of the missing verbs or adjectives were disregarded in the gap-filling task.

## Results

This section is divided into three subsections as per the study research questions.

### What is the effect of word class on L2 collocation learning?

Regarding the effect of word class, a number of T-test comparisons were made on the participants' performance with verb + noun versus adjective + noun collocations as shown in Tables (1) and (2). Interestingly, all comparisons were significantly in favor of verb + noun collocations across freshmen, seniors and the whole sample in form recognition and recall.

Table (1): T-test results for the effect of word class in form recognition

Group	Word Class	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Freshmen	Verb	.7772	.45564	13.533	.000
	Adjective	.6178	.48600		
Seniors	Verb	.8444	.36256	13.086	.000
	Adjective	.7100	.45383		
Overall	Verb	.8108	.41307	18.724	.000
	Adjective	.6639	.47241		

Table (2): T-test results for the effect of word class in form recall

Group	Word Class	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Freshmen	Verb	.8184	.38554	31.654	.000
	Adjective	.4656	.49889		

Seniors	Verb	.8181	.38580	29.646	.000
	Adjective	.4872	.49991		
Overall	Verb	.8183	.38564	43.342	.000
	Adjective	.4764	.49948		

### What is the effect of L1 congruency on collocation learning?

In order to examine the effect of L1 congruency on collocation learning, a number of T-test comparisons were made as shown in tables (3) and (4). In form recognition, the results did not show any significant differences in the processing of congruent versus incongruent collocations across the whole sample. The situation changed when the comparisons were made at the freshmen and the senior levels as the latter showed a significant congruency effect with more correct responses for congruent collocations. More significant differences were noted in the T-test comparisons of form recall as significantly higher scores were noted for incongruent over congruent collocations among freshmen, seniors and the whole sample.

Table (3): T-test results for the effect of congruency in form recognition

Group	Congruency	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Freshmen	Congruent	.6943	.49371	-.591	.554
	Incongruent	.7014	.45773		
Seniors	Congruent	.7920	.40593	3.130	.002
	Incongruent	.7593	.42758		
Overall	Congruent	.7431	.45456	1.603	.109
	Incongruent	.7303	.44382		

Table (4): T-test results for the effect of congruency in form recall

Group	Congruency	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Freshmen	Congruent	.6141	.48689	-4.674	.000
	Incongruent	.6700	.47029		
Seniors	Congruent	.6206	.48531	-5.393	.000
	Incongruent	.6847	.46471		
Overall	Congruent	.6173	.48607	-7.117	.000
	Incongruent	.6773	.46753		

### What is the effect of increased L2 exposure on collocation learning?

The T-test comparisons examining the effect of increased L2 exposure revealed opposite results in form recognition than form recall as shown in Tables (5) and (6). Whereas seniors performed significantly better than freshmen in form recognition across the whole sample and when verbs, adjectives, congruent collocations and incongruent collocations were considered separately, no significant differences were noted between freshmen and seniors in form recall.

Table (5): The effect of L2 exposure in form recognition

Category	Group	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Verbs	Freshmen	.7772	.45564	-6.527	.000
	Seniors	.8444	.36256		
Adjectives	Freshmen	.6178	.48600	-7.843	.000
	Seniors	.7100	.45383		
Congruent	Freshmen	.6943	.49371	-9.044	.000
	Seniors	.7920	.40593		
Incongruent	Freshmen	.7014	.45773	-4.981	.000
	Seniors	.7593	.42758		
Overall	Freshmen	.6975	.47772	-10.062	.000
	Seniors	.7772	.41617		

Table (6): The effect of L2 exposure in form recall

Category	Group	Mean	SD	T	Sig (2-tailed)
Verbs	Freshmen	.8184	.38554	.032	.974
	Seniors	.8181	.38580		
Adjectives	Freshmen	.4656	.49889	-1.727	.084
	Seniors	.4872	.49991		
Congruent	Freshmen	.6141	.48689	-.540	.589
	Seniors	.6206	.48531		
Incongruent	Freshmen	.6700	.47029	-1.257	.209
	Seniors	.6847	.46471		
Overall	Freshmen	.6420	.47944	-1.258	.208
	Seniors	.6527	.47616		

## Discussion

The current study examined the influence of word class, L1 congruency and L2 exposure on collocation learning among Arab learners of English in a foreign language context. T-test comparisons were made at different levels to examine the study independent variables. In terms of word class, the comparisons were made between the participants' correct responses to verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations in form recognition and recall tests. The results were completely in favor of verb + noun collocations as both freshmen and seniors produced significantly higher scores for verb + noun versus adjective + noun collocations. The results are in line with some earlier studies in the Arab world (e.g., Alsakran, 2011; El-Dakhs, 2015 a; Miqdad, 2012) and other parts of the world (e.g., Talakoob and Koosha, 2017; Park, 2003) which showed an advantage for verb + noun collocations. The results can be interpreted in light of the central role verbs play in English sentences (El-Dakhs, 2015 a). Learners may justifiably pay more attention to learning verbs than adjectives because the first represent a main constituent of the English sentence unlike the latter without which English sentences can still be grammatically correct. Additionally, the results may reflect a schooling system focusing on grammatical accuracy and, hence, giving primary importance to the use of verbs to produce correct English sentences over the use of adjectives for elaborative and enriched descriptions.

Regarding the effect of L1 congruency, only seniors showed a congruency advantage in form recognition. The congruency effect among seniors comes in line with a number of earlier studies (e.g., Lee, 2016; Miqdad, 2012; Wolter and Gyllstad, 2013; Wolter and Yashamita, 2017; Yashamita and Jiang, 2010) that revealed a clear L1 influence on L2 collocation recognition even at advanced levels of proficiency. The congruency effect in this case, similar to other studies, can be interpreted in terms of Wolter and Gyllstad's (2011, 2013) inter-lexical priming of collocations and/or the transfer of L1 collocations into the L2 lexicon as ready-made chunks. Similarity between the L1 and L2 collocations can thus facilitate and support collocation learning in case of congruent collocations. The mismatch between L1 and L2 collocations in case of incongruency, however, hinders collocation learning due the clash between the ready-made collocations transferred to the L2 lexicon and the correct L2 target collocations. Interestingly, however, freshmen did not show any significant differences in performance between congruent and incongruent collocations, which is an unexpected result considering the existing literature. This finding can be interpreted in terms of the particular study context. Freshmen are fresh graduates of the preparatory English program where learners receive 20 hours of English instruction per week. This instruction consistently draws learners' attention to their erroneous language use, including collocation errors. Such constant feedback

may have cautioned learners against reliance on L1 in collocation learning due to regular mismatches. Armed with this cautious perspective, freshmen displayed a doubtful attitude towards potential congruent collocations in the form recognition test.

Even more divergent than the existing literature came the results of the form recall test regarding the congruency effect. Unexpectedly, the participants' performance at the freshmen and senior levels came significantly better for incongruent than congruent collocations. In terms of collocation productive knowledge, hence, the participants found it easier to recall incongruent collocations. It seems that the participants stored the incongruent collocations as single units in memory and thus retrieved them as unified chunks independently of L1 (e.g., Lee, 2016; Yamashita and Jiang, 2010), which facilitated their recall. Congruent collocations though were not as easy to retrieve since learners knew that they could access them through lexical links. A number of factors may have helped modulate L1 influence for incongruent collocations in the current study including the relative high frequency of the target collocations and the participants' relatively high language proficiency (B2 is the exit level for the preparatory English program). It must be noted that this result does not lend support to Wray's (2002, 2008) perspective that non-native speakers process L2 collocations analytically as the participants seemed to recall incongruent collocations as chunks and produce them more fluently than congruent ones. This result, however, supports Hoey's (2005) suggestion that collocation acquisition by native and non-native speakers can follow a similar pattern based on the type and amount of input.

As for the influence of increased L2 exposure, seniors outperformed freshmen at all levels of comparison in form recognition. The result came in line with earlier studies emphasizing the positive role of L2 exposure on collocation learning, such as Fernández and Schmitt (2015), Yamashita and Jiang (2010) and Zareva and Shehata (2015). It must be noted though that the definition of L2 exposure in the current study is different than earlier research. While earlier studies defined increased L2 exposure in terms of living in an ESL versus EFL context (e.g. Yamashita and Jiang, 2010; Zareva and Shehata, 2015) and everyday engagement with L2 outside the classroom (e.g. Fernández and Schmitt, 2015), the current study defined increased L2 exposure in terms of spending more study years in an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction program of higher education. This superior performance of seniors also lends support to earlier studies showing positive effects for incidental learning of L2 collocations (e.g., Pellicer-Sánchez, 2017; Webb, Newton and Chang, 2013) since seniors did not receive explicit instruction on their English language after graduating from the preparatory English program. The result may also lend support to Krashen's (1993, 1989) Comprehensible Input

Hypothesis since the improved performance of learners came as a result of sustained L2 exposure within a comprehensible yet somehow challenging context. It must be noted though that the difference in error rates between freshmen (30.3%) and seniors (22.3%) in the form recognition test was only 8% despite the difference in study years. Hence, L2 collocation learning gains in this form of content-based instruction may not be as high as desired.

The picture changed dramatically in the form recall test as no significant differences were found between freshmen and seniors. Two factors may help interpret the result. First, the evident difficulty of productive over receptive vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Brashi, 2009; Noor and Adubaib, 2011; Shamma, 2013) may have led seniors to lose their advantage in form recall. Second, the nature of content-based instruction in non-English majors shifts more into input-based rather than output-based instruction since students experience less opportunities to speak/write than to practice reading/listening during lectures and home assignments. Additionally, students are often corrected for content, not form. Perhaps, learners will benefit if they experience more opportunities for production as supported by Swain's (1985) Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. They may also need further feedback on their language to enhance their accurate choice of collocates since negative evidence (information about what is not accurate) (White, 1991) could enhance their noticing (Schmidt, 1990) of target collocations. It must be noted though that this form of content-based instruction seems effective since the error rates of freshmen (35.8%) and seniors (34.8%) in form recall in the current study matched the error rates of ESL (34%) not EFL (69%) learners in Zareva and Shehata's (2015) although the two studies assessed the participants' knowledge of the same target collocations and that the current study was held in an EFL context. Two contributing factors to this result in addition to content-based instruction are the exit level of the preparatory English program (B2) and the relatively high number of non-Arabic speaking faculty members at the study context, which pushes learners to practice their English on campus.

The current study presents some challenges to Kroll and Stewart's (1994) Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM). The RHM predicts that congruent collocations will be easier to process than incongruent ones because the first relies on both conceptual and lexical mental connections. The model also predicts that this facilitation will be stronger at earlier stages of L2 learning when reliance on L2-L1 links is strong. The current study, however, casts doubt on this assumption as freshmen did not demonstrate any congruency effects while the effect was noted among seniors only in form recognition. What was even more contrary to the RHM's predictions is that incongruent collocations were better retrieved than congruent ones in form recall. The RHM may need to re-consider the effect of explicit instruction versus incidental

exposure on modulating the L1 influence. As explained earlier, the explicit language instruction at the preparatory year program may have urged freshmen to avoid reliance on L2-L1 connections in the case of collocations. Hence, language proficiency may not be the only factor that can modulate the L1 influence. Additionally, the model needs to consider that mismatches between L1 and L2 in the case of incongruent collocations may be more helpful to L2 learning than direct matches in the case of congruent collocations. Based on the results of the form recall task, it seems that recurrent mismatches may encourage learners to process incongruent collocations as single units and thus recall them easier while learners may adopt an analytic approach to the processing of congruent collocations, which hinders their learning.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The current study presents some pedagogical implications. First, sustained implicit exposure to L2 collocations through content-based instruction could improve learners' collocation knowledge, particularly at the receptive front. To maximize learning gains in this context, incidental exposure needs to be supplemented with more focus on language production (i.e., speaking/writing) and provision of corrective feedback to highlight acceptable versus unacceptable collocations. Second, explicit form-focused instruction coupled with continuous feedback may help raise learners' awareness of the mismatches between L1 and L2 collocations. Although this awareness may deprive learners from the aid they receive from L1 in the case of congruent collocations, the approach encourages learners to process collocations as single units, which facilitates their fluent production. This approach also helps learners avoid analyzing collocations into their constituents, which is not an effective strategy to the learning of formulaic language. Third, the current study highlights the importance of practicing the different patterns of collocations as per the word class of their constituents. Focus on specific patterns leads to poor performance on other equally important patterns to natural language use. Finally, L2 collocation instruction should place equal focus to the receptive and productive knowledge. Learners do not automatically transfer their receptive knowledge of collocations into production. They rather need further scaffolding to strengthen their productive knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

The current study aimed to examine the influence of L1 congruency, L2 exposure and word class on L2 collocation learning. Using form recognition and recall tests, and employing 800 participants, the study revealed that sustained exposure to English through content-based instruction can enhance L2 collocation learning at the receptive level. Incidental learning may

not be as helpful though for the collocation production knowledge due to lack of focus on comprehensible output (Swain, 1985) and negative evidence (White, 1991). The results also showed that congruent collocations may be recognized faster than incongruent ones. However, provision of explicit instruction and feedback on correct collocation use may caution learners from relying on potential L1-L2 collocation matches and encourage them to process collocations as single units, which is a much recommended approach. Additionally, the increased difficulty of productive knowledge may further undermine the congruency effect. Regarding word class, the current study showed that unbalanced instructional focus on L2 collocations may lead to stronger knowledge of some patterns at the expense of others.

The current study has important implications. Theoretically, the results do not lend support to Wray's (2002, 2008) perspective that non-native speakers process collocations analytically and, thus, cannot retrieve them easily for their fluent production. Participants in the current study produced incongruent collocations easier than congruent ones, which showed that they processed incongruent collocations holistically. This finding provided support to Hoey's (2005) viewpoint that native and nonnative speakers can process collocations similarly based on the type and quality of input. The current study also posed some challenges to Kroll and Stewart's (1994) RHM. The results call for a reconsideration for the role of L2 exposure as a potential modulating factor for L1 influence in addition to increased language proficiency. The study also calls for a reconsideration of the benefit of L1-L2 congruency on L2 collocation learning as approaching L2 collocation holistically is highly recommended. Practically, the current study presents important pedagogical implications. The results encourage supplementing content-based instruction with focus on production and provision of feedback to maximize collocation learning gains. The results also support efforts to train learners on holistic processing of collocations and place balanced instructional focus on different collocation patterns and on the receptive and productive collocation knowledge.

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**Appendix (A) – Adopted from Zareva & Shehata (2015)**

Congruent and incongruent collocations used in the multiple choice and gap-filling tasks.

Category	Congruent Collocations (L1-L2)	Incongruent Collocations (L2-only)
Verb-Noun Collocations	change one' mind	catch fire
	have an effect	do good
	make a difference	gain weight
	play a role	give birth
	spend time	keep an eye on
	take action	make a mistake
	take time	take advantage
	tell the truth	take place
Adjective-Noun Collocations	fine arts	black eye
	golden age	capital punishment
	last chance	fast food
	middle class	heavy rain
	old age	red tape
	political party	second thoughts
	public opinion	short cut
	white lie	soft drinks



## **Grammar Learning Strategies across Individual Differences and Their Relationship with Grammar Mastery**

**Junaidi Mistar**

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

**Alfan Zuhairi**

*Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia*

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Junaidi Mistar, Ph.D** is a professor at English Education Department, Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia. His research articles mainly about English learning strategies and classroom assessment have been published in Asian EFL Journal, Arab World English Journal, Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, Korea TESOL Journal, and TEFLIN Journal, Indonesia. Email: j.mistar@unisma.ac.id

**Dr. Alfan Zuhairi** is a senior lecturer at English Education Department, Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia. His research interest concerns mainly with language learning strategies and language attrition.

### **Abstract**

As studies investigating the role of individual differences in influencing the use of grammar learning strategies were hardly found, the present study was carried out. The purposes of the study were three-fold: (1) to identify a postteriori classification of grammar learning strategies, (2) to investigate how individual differences correlate with grammar learning strategy use, and (3) to figure out the interrelationship among the identified grammar learning strategy categories as well as their correlation with grammar mastery. As such, a correlation research design was employed with 280 English education department students from five universities in East Java, Indonesia as the subjects of the study. They were asked to complete a set of questionnaires to measure their grammar learning strategies, language aptitude,

personality traits, and attitude and motivation in learning English. In addition, a test of grammar was employed to measure their grammar mastery. A factor analysis applied to discern the types of grammar learning strategies resulted in the presence of six factors including directive cognitive strategies, social cognitive strategies, social affective strategies, directive metacognitive strategies, reflective metacognitive strategies, and social metacognitive strategies. Though it was found that the use of these six categories of grammar learning strategies was correlated to one another and that their use was correlated significantly with grammar mastery, only attitudinal and motivational attributes were found to associate with grammar learning strategy use, while language aptitude and personality were not. Implications of these findings were then discussed.

**Keywords:** *grammar learning strategies, learning motivation, language aptitude, personality trait*

## **Introduction**

Research in the area of second/foreign language learning strategies was initiated by studies on the secret of success of good language learners, resulting in the identification of strategies of good language learners (Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978; Rubin 1975; Stern, 1975). Further studies investigated the strategies of not only good language learners, but also less effective language learners. These studies produced classifications of learning strategies under certain categories, including cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies (Oxford, 1990). Once theoretically and empirically valid classifications of learning strategies were obtained, studies in this field of research began to mushroom, leading Skehan (1991) to characterize the period as one of an explosion activity.

In fact, in terms of the research focus, studies that dealt with language learning strategies may be classified into three general categories. The first are descriptive studies that investigate the use of learning strategies by certain groups of learners. Within this category are studies by Oxford and Ehrman (1995) in the United States, Lengkanawati (1997) and Kosasih (2019) in Indonesia, Lunt (2000) in Australia, and Wharton (2000) in Singapore, all of which reported that the learners were moderate users of learning strategies. In the case of reading strategies, Pascual (2019) reported that prospective ESL teachers in the Philippines used global strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies in reading at a high level. Meanwhile, in a study carried out among Malaysian ESL learners, Supian and Asraf (2019)

reported the presence of three categories of vocabulary learning strategies, including dictionary use, memory rehearsal, and activation strategies.

The second are studies that consider learning strategy as a predictor of other variables such as proficiency, learning achievement, or learning rate. This group of studies employ either correlation design or experimental design. Unfortunately, studies with correlation design resulted in inconclusive findings. Some of the studies brought about significant correlation between the use of learning strategies and English proficiency as reported by Dreyer and Oxford (1996) among African learners, Park (1997) among Korean learners, and Mistar (2001) among Indonesian learners. Other studies, on the contrary, reported that the two variables were not correlated significantly (Lengkanawati, 1997; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). A more surprising finding was even obtained by Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret (1997) who reported that the relationship between learning strategies and learning achievement was significantly negative. Studies with experimental designs, furthermore, suggest that students who receive instructional training in the use learning strategies learn more successfully than those who do not. Within this subcategory are studies by Thomson and Rubin (1996) who studied video comprehension, Song (1998) in reading skill instruction, and Mistar, Zuhairi, Parlindungan (2014) in writing skill instruction.

The third category are studies that treated learning strategies as criterion variables. In this category Oxford and Nyikos (1989) and Mistar (2001) reported that learning motivation was the single most powerful predictor of the use of language learning strategies. Other variables that have also been found to affect the use of learning strategies include cultural background (LoCastro, 1994; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985), target language setting either a foreign language or a second language (Green & Oxford, 1995; Wharton, 2000), learners' learning stage (Huda, 1998), gender (Kaylani, 1996; Mistar & Umamah, 2014), and language aptitude (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995), personality (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990). These studies agree with what Gillette (1987) claimed that learning strategies are symptoms of individual predispositions, which may be motivational, socio-cultural, or cognitive in nature.

Despite the fact that greater attention has been given to the study of foreign language learning strategies in general and of learning foreign language skills in particular since 1990s, studies of how the learners approach their task of learning the grammar of a foreign language have not been carried out much until recently. Pawlak (2009) describes that research of grammar learning strategies is still in its 'budding stage' (p. 45) since not much research has identified their categories as well as their effectiveness. Oxford, Lee and Park (2007) identified grammar learning strategies in relation with the learners' learning mode preferences. Two of

the reported strategies used by the students with explicit-inductive learning preference are *writing down structures on note cards to be thought of how they work* and *trying to apply a grammar rule in a meaningful context soon after it is discovered*. *Previewing the lesson to identify the key structures* and *paying attention to the rule that the teacher or the book provides* are two examples of strategies used by students with explicit-deductive learning orientation. Meanwhile, learners with meaning orientation reported using such strategies as *noticing structures that cause problems with meaning or communication* and *noticing structures that are repeated often in the text*.

Briewin, Naidu and Embi (2013) identified five most preferred strategies of learning grammar by students coming from China, Mongolia, Yemen, and Cambodia, including (1) using five senses to differentiate abstract and concrete nouns, (2) learning propositions through pictures, (3) writing or speaking out adjectives in the correct order using adjective chart, (4) underlining adverbs according to its usage in a passage, and (5) using formula to memorize conjunction. Chen (2016) proposed a better classification of grammar learning strategies into cognitive strategies such as *remembering grammar by generating recalled images* and *generalizing grammar rules*, metacognitive strategies such as *making plans for learning grammar* and *checking the outcomes of learning grammar*, affective strategies such as *having an active state of mind in grammar learning* and *having a feeling of assurance in grammar learning*, and social strategies such as *applying the learned rules in communication* and *exchanging feedback in a language activities*. Then, Abri, Seyabi, Humaidi and Hasan (2017) studied the intensity of use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies of learning grammar by Omani EFL learners and they concluded that the three categories of grammar learning strategies are employed considerably with metacognitive strategies being used the most intensively. Less intensive use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies of grammar learning was found among students of English as a foreign language in China (Zhou, 2017). Furthermore, Hashim, Yunus and Hashim (2018) reported their study in Malaysia and they found that to learn grammar students try to listen to other people's conversation on how they use the rules of grammar.

Further studies tried to discover the link between the use of grammar learning strategies and grammar learning achievement. Although Tilfarlioğlu and Yalçın's study (2005) failed to show the difference in the use of grammar learning strategies by successful and less successful learners, Zekrati (2017) reported a coefficient of .867 indicating a very high correlation between grammar learning strategies and grammar learning achievement and this correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. Using an experimental design Ghaemi and Jadidi (2017)

demonstrated the effectiveness of grammar learning strategy training when they reported that the students who received strategy-based grammar instruction performed significantly better than the students who did not receive such kind of grammar instruction.

While, there have been some studies exploring the use of grammar learning strategies, research on individual factors that potentially contribute to the use of grammar learning strategies is hardly found. Moreover, more evidence is still required to show the relationship between grammar learning strategies and grammar achievement. It is for these purposes that the present study was carried out. To be more explicit, the present study was intended to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What strategies do the learners use in learning the grammar of English?
2. What individual differences influence the use of English grammar learning strategies?
3. How is the interrelationship among the types of grammar learning strategies and how are they correlated with grammar mastery?

## **Research Method**

### ***Subjects of the Study***

As many as 300 students were targeted to participate in the present study. They were students of English education department from five higher education institutions in East Java, Indonesia. Three of them were universities under the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, while the other two were universities under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Two of them are public, while the other three are private. An equal number ( $n = 20$ ) were selected from students of years 2, 3, and 4 from each institution. However, 20 students were found not to complete all the required instrument so that the analyzed data were from 280 subjects, consisting of 186 females and 94 males. In terms of age, they were between 20 and 23 years old.

### ***Research Instrument***

#### ***Instrument for Measuring Language Aptitude***

Caroll and Sapon (1959) states that four traits are indicators of language aptitude: phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and rote learning ability. Based on this theory an instrument called Modern language Aptitude Test was devised to measure such traits. The instrument consists of five parts, including 1) Number Learning to measure "auditory alertness" as well as memory component of foreign language

aptitude, 2) Phonetic Script to assess the "sound-symbol association ability", 3) Spelling Clues to measure phonemic coding ability, 4) Words in Sentences to measure grammatical sensitivity, and 5) Paired Associates to measure ability in memorizing new words of a foreign language.

The test is originally designed and validated for native or near native speakers of English. Thus, it is not applicable to be used for Indonesian learners of English. Therefore, the Indonesian version as translated and validated by Mistar (2001) was used instead of the original one. In this case, only two parts, Words in Sentences and Paired Associates, were used for this study. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was .800 and when an analysis of the reliability index of each part was carried out, indexes .679 and .862 were obtained for Words in Sentences and Paired Associates respectively.

#### *Instrument for Measuring Personality Traits*

The Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) as devised by Eysenck and Eysenck (1964), was used for measuring personality traits. Originally the instrument measures extroversion denoted as E, emotional stability or neuroticism denoted as N, and lie scale denoted as L. Subjects having high scores on different scales reveal different personality characteristics. It was claimed that high E scorers are described to be extrovert and characterized as being sociable. Moreover, they like attending parties, have many friends, need to have people to talk to, and do not like reading or studying by themselves. Meanwhile, high N scorers are described as 'worriers'. They are anxious, worrying individuals, moody and frequently depressed. They are likely to sleep badly, and to suffer from various psychomatic disorders. Lastly, high L scorers are characterized as having a tendency to behave or speak in a way to hide the real feelings and thought. In this study, however, only scores on E and N scales were considered in the data analysis.

Originally, the instrument contains 57 items in total, comprising 24 items for E, 24 items for N, and 9 items for L. However, as some items of the N scale and L scale were found to be culturally bound, only 50 items were used consisting of 24 items assessing extroversion, 20 items assessing neuroticism, and 6 items assessing lie. However, only the data from E and N scales were analyzed in the present study. Moreover, as the instrument is originally in English, it is translated into Indonesian language to enhance its readability. The reliability estimate of the aggregate scale was found to be .529. When the reliability estimates were assessed separately for E and N scales, indexes .623 for E scale and .619 for N scale were obtained.

### *Instrument for Attitude/Motivation Attributes*

The instrument for measuring the attributes of attitudes/motivation in foreign language learning was the modified version of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner et al., 1997). As it was originally designed for Canadian learners of French, the items were modified in such a way that it was applicable for Indonesian learners of English (Mistar, 2001). This instrument measures nine attitudinal and motivational attributes, including attitude toward native speakers of English (8 items), attitudes toward learning English (10 items), desire to learn English (10 items), English class anxiety (10 items), English use anxiety (10 items), interest in foreign languages (10 items), instrumental orientation (4 items), integrative orientation (4 items), and motivational intensity (10 items), totalling 76 items. Except for the items of instrumental orientation and integrative orientation which are all positively keyed, a half of the items of the other seven attributes are positively keyed and the other half are negatively keyed. The reliability coefficient of the instrument in general was found to be .938. When the coefficient was calculated for each of the nine attributes, .621, .845, .712, .585, .830, .737, .498, .776, and .702 indexes were found respectively.

### *Instrument for Assessing Grammar Learning Strategies*

The questionnaire used for assessing grammar learning strategies in the present study was devised by referring to the available learning strategy questionnaires as developed by Oxford (1990), Sariçoban (n.d.) and Zekrati (2017). The questionnaire was developed based on an a priori classification of learning strategies of cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective categories. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) describes that cognitive strategies deal with information processing mechanism that the learners use in their learning such as *taking notes*, *analyzing details*, and *summarizing*. Metacognitive strategies concern with the learners' learning management such as *setting up learning targets*, *planning learning activities*, and *reflecting learning progress*. And, socio-affective strategies deal with affective state management in using the language for social interaction with other people.

The questionnaire consists of 40 strategy items. In its administration, the subjects were required to give a response to each statement by considering whether it was true of them or not. Five options were provided, never or almost never true of me, usually not true of me, sometimes true of me, usually true of me, always or almost always true of me. The reliability estimate of overall strategies was found to be .890.

### *Instrument for Assessing Grammar Mastery*

To assess the students' mastery of English grammar, a test of grammar was used. The test consists of 50 items in the form of incomplete sentences collected from TOEFL preparation guide (Goodman & Ince, 1981). In this test the students were provided with four alternative options and were required to choose the one best answer to complete each sentence. The reliability estimate of the test was found to be .717 suggesting that the data of the student's grammar mastery is highly reliable.

### *Data Analysis*

Two statistical analyses were used in the present study. The first one was Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to discern the factors of grammar learning strategies. Therefore, prior to the factor analysis, the factorability of the collected data was inspected using two criteria. They were (1) the Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant, and (2) the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) value should be at least .6 (Pallant, 2005). The resulting factors were then treated as learning strategy categories. Next, correlation analyses were utilized to find individual differences that contribute to the intensity of use of grammar learning strategies. Finally, another set of correlation analyses were employed to observe the interrelationship among the resulting strategy categories and their relationship with grammar mastery. These statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS Program Version 20.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Findings*

The findings of the present study are presented in the order of the research questions as follows.

#### *RQ1. What strategies do the learners use in learning the grammar of English?*

Prior to the factor analysis, an inspection of the data was undertaken to ensure that they could be factor analyzed. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test as presented in Table 1 provided evidence that the data were factor analyzable since the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin measure of sampling adequacy is .833, which is higher than .6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant ( $p < .000$ ) (Pallant, 2005).

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Okin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.833
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Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	3083.655
	df	780
	Sig.	.000

When the forty items of grammar learning strategies were factor analyzed using Principal Component Analysis, six factors were revealed and the distribution of strategy items that provide high loading to each factor is presented in a table of Rotated Component Matrix as appeared in Appendix 1. Factors 1 and 2 are cognitive in nature. Factor 1 get high loadings from twelve cognitive strategy items that relate directly with the learners' thinking processes such as *summarizing grammatical items, searching for grammatical patterns, thinking of relationship among grammatical items, memorizing grammatical items by imagining situations in which they are used, and attending to grammar when speaking, reading, and writing*. As such, the first category is named directive cognitive strategy. Factor 2 contains strategy items which are also cognitive in nature, but they are related with involving others in the learning process. Such strategies as *attending to the grammar of others' speeches, correcting others' grammar when conversing, looking for others to discuss grammatical items are within this category*. Therefore, it is called social cognitive strategy.

Factor 3 receive high loading from five strategy items which are related with affective state of the learners in using grammar. In this category are strategies of *noticing if anxious when using grammar, talking with others about feeling, improving confidence by asking others to correct grammar in writing and speaking*. Thus, this category is referred to as social affective strategy.

Table 2. Total Variance Explained by the Resulting Factors

Component/Factor	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1 Directive Cognitive Strategy	5.199	12.998	12.998
2 Social Cognitive Strategy	4.172	10.430	23.428
3 Social Affective Strategy	3.977	9.942	33.370
4 Directive Metacognitive Strategy	2.997	7.492	40.862
5 Reflective Metacognitive Strategy	2.388	5.970	46.832
6 Social Metacognitive Strategy	1.456	3.639	50.472

In addition, factors 4, 5, and 6 are metacognitive. Factor 4 obtain high loadings from strategies that deal with metacognitive awareness of the learners of what to do in learning grammar such as *planning learning schedule, reviewing lessons, self-rewarding, trying to understand grammar by finding similarities, and trying to get to meaning by attending to grammar*. Thus, this group strategy items is labelled as directive metacognitive strategy. Factor 5, moreover, obtain high loadings from items dealing with metacognitive awareness of what has been done. Such strategies as *setting up clear target in learning, thinking of the progress in learning grammar, relaxing when afraid of making mistakes, and using grammatical items already sure about* are within this category; therefore, they are categorized as reflective metacognitive strategies. Finally, factor 6 receive high loadings from items of metacognitive strategies that are related with practicing and using the grammar, including such strategies as *developing confidence in learning grammar by doing exercises with friends, noticing mistakes when using grammatical items and improving them accordingly, and self-convincing that mastery of grammar improves language skills*. This group of strategy items is called social metacognitive strategies.

All of the six strategy categories cumulatively explain 50.472% of variances of grammar learning strategies as depicted in Table 2. In this case, two strategy categories including directive cognitive strategy and social cognitive strategy explain grammar learning strategy variance more than 10% each. On the contrary, the other four strategy categories explain variance of grammar learning strategies less than 10% each with social affective strategy explains the most (9.942%) and social metacognitive strategy explains the least (3.639%).

#### *RQ2. What individual differences influence the use of grammar learning strategies?*

The statistical analysis using bivariate correlation analysis resulted in statistical findings as presented in Table 3. As the table shows, out of 13 individual differences, 8 variables contribute significantly to the use of strategies in learning grammar. Those are language aptitude particularly the ability in scrutinizing the function of words in sentence, attitude toward learning English, desire to learn English, English class anxiety, English use anxiety, interest in foreign languages, integrative orientation, and motivational intensity. Meanwhile, five factors were found not to correlate significantly with the overall use of learning strategies. These factors were paired associate ability, attitude toward native speakers of English, instrumental orientation, extroversion, and neuroticism.

Furthermore, when analyzed in terms of the contribution of these individual factors on the use of each type of strategies of learning grammar, the patterns are as follows. Aptitude and personality did not play significant roles in determining the use of grammar learning strategies. For the language aptitude variables, only words in sentence identification ability was found to contribute to the use of strategies 1 (directive metacognitive strategy), 2 (social cognitive strategy), and 6 (social metacognitive strategy), while paired associate ability did not correlate with the use of any type of strategies. Similarly, out of the two personality variables, neuroticism correlated negatively with the use of strategies 2 (social cognitive strategy) and 4 (directive metacognitive strategy). Meanwhile, extroversion did not correlate with any of the six strategy categories.

Table 3. The Correlation between Individual Differences and Grammar Learning Strategies

	GLS	DCS	SCS	SAS	DMS	RMS	SMS
WS	.193**	.203**	.202**	.040	.045	.136	.150*
PA	.056	.058	.088	.000	.040	.031	-.036
ANSE	.065	.155*	-.102	-.011	-.027	.188*	.188*
ALE	.156*	.253**	-.065	.006	.077	.273**	.297**
DLE	.206**	.264**	-.091	.028	.026	.229**	.310**
ECA	.272**	.296**	.279**	.038	.167*	.073	.218**
EUA	.357**	.396**	.213**	.115	.197**	.294**	.416**
IFL	.206**	.255**	-.002	.083	.099	.312**	.348**
InsO	.139	.178*	.011	.042	.096	.167*	.218**
IntO	.152*	.215**	-.038	.036	.077	.276**	.264**
MI	.186*	.226**	.082	.014	.068	.191*	.299**
EXT	.127	.129	.107	.007	.115	.073	.131
NEU	-.140	-.103	-.156*	-.085	-.173*	-.028	-.051

Legend: WS: Words in Sentence, PA: Paired Associate, ANSE: Attitude toward Native Speakers of English, ALE Attitude toward Learning English, ECA: English Class Anxiety, EUA: English Use Anxiety, IFL: Interest in Foreign Languages, InsO: Instrumental Orientation, IntO: Integrative Orientation, MI: Motivational Intensity, EXT: Extraversion, NEU: Neuroticism, GLS: Grammar Learning Strategies, DCS: Directive Cognitive Strategy, SCS: Social Cognitive Strategy, SAS: Social Affective Strategy, DMS: Directive

Metacognitive Strategy, RMS: Reflective Metacognitive Strategy, SMS: Social Metacognitive Strategy

Among attitudinal and motivational variables, English anxiety which include English class anxiety and English use anxiety correlated significantly with almost all types of learning strategies, except strategy 3 (social affective strategies) for English use anxiety and strategies 3 and 5 (reflective metacognitive strategy) for English class anxiety. Attitude toward learning English and desire to learn English correlated significantly with four categories of strategies, except strategies 3 (social affective strategy) and 4 (directive metacognitive strategy). Meanwhile, four factors including instrumental orientation, integrative orientation, attitude toward native speakers of English, and motivational intensity contributed to the use of strategies 1 (directive cognitive strategy), 5 (reflective metacognitive strategy), and 6 (social metacognitive strategy).

In summary, the use of grammar learning strategies was much influenced by attitudinal and motivational factors, while the contribution of aptitude and personality factors did not seem to be powerful.

*RQ3. How is the interrelationship among grammar learning strategies and how do they correlate with grammar mastery?*

Table 4 presents statistical findings related to interrelationship of the use of the six strategy categories and their relationship with grammar learning achievement. As the table shows, the coefficients of the inter-correlation among the six categories of grammar learning strategies are all significant at .01 level with the coefficient of the correlation between strategy 2 (social cognitive strategy) and strategy 5 (reflective metacognitive strategy) being the lowest ( $r = .293$ ) and the coefficient of the correlation between strategy 1 (directive cognitive strategy) and strategy 6 (social practical strategy) being the highest ( $r = .685$ ).

Table 4. The Interrelationship among GLS and GLA

	OGLS	DCS	SCS	SAS	DMS	RMS	SMS	GM
OGLS	1							
DCS	.230**	1						
SCS	.791**	.577**	1					
SAS	.680**	.459**	.467**	1				
DMS	.757**	.634**	.475**	.537**	1			

RMS	.629**	.548**	.293**	.364**	.491**	1	
SMS	.729**	.685**	.402**	.389**	.526**	.544**	1
GM	.202**	.230**	.092	.148*	.095	.142	.208**

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Legend: OGLS: Overall Grammar Learning Strategy, DCS: Directive Cognitive Strategy, SCS: Social Cognitive Strategy, SAS: Social Affective Strategy, DMS: Directive Metacognitive Strategy, RMS: Reflective Metacognitive Strategy, SMS: Social Metacognitive Strategy, GM: Grammar Mastery

Moreover, when the learning strategies were correlated with learning achievement, generally speaking the use of grammar learning strategies contributed significantly to learning achievement ( $r = .202$ ). However, when analyzed more specifically in terms of the correlation of each strategy types, it was found that only three strategies including strategies 1 (directive cognitive strategy), 3 (social affective strategy), and 6 (social metacognitive strategy) were correlated with grammar mastery with the coefficients being .230, .148, and .208 respectively.

## Discussion

The discussion explores the relative position of the findings of the present study compared with the findings of previous ones. In addition, implications of the findings for practical classroom teaching are also provided. As described earlier, the factor analysis revealed the presence of six factors, all of which explain 50.472% of variance of grammar learning strategies. This indicates that a half of variances of strategies in learning grammar has been measured in the present study. The six factors, which are then considered as strategy categories, include directive cognitive strategy, social cognitive strategy, social affective strategy, directive metacognitive strategy, reflective metacognitive strategy, and social metacognitive strategy. Further inspection of these six strategy categories results in three big categories, including cognitive strategies (directive and social), affective strategies, and metacognitive strategies (directive, reflective, and social). This finding is consistent with the traditional a priori classification of learning strategies, in which learning strategies are classified into cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Tilfarlioğlu & Yalçın, 2005).

The present study also reveals that the two cognitive strategies (directive cognitive strategy and social cognitive strategy) account for 23.428% of the grammar learning strategy variance. This implies that Indonesian learners of English rely on cognitive processes in their

learning of grammar. Therefore such strategies as *thinking of the relationship of the already learned grammar with the new one, summarizing the learned grammatical items, searching for patterns of English grammar, and memorizing the learned grammatical items by using them in sentences* are very much employed. This finding is in line with the finding of Zekrati (2017) among Iranian students of English as a foreign language. Therefore, despite the finding that metacognitive strategies training is found to be effective in improving the learners' grammar achievement (Ghaemi & Jadidi, 2017), trainings of the use of cognitive grammar learning strategies should also be pursued.

Moreover, the present study also found that attitudinal and motivational factors contribute significantly to the use of grammar learning strategy use. This finding highlights the role of attitude and motivation in second/foreign language learning as proposed by social psychologists. Gardner (1985, p. 56) states, "attitude and motivation are important because they determine the extent to which individuals will actively involve themselves in learning the language". Likewise, Schulz (1991) has acknowledged that the more motivated the students are, the more input they seek and the more communicative interactions they are willing to engage in.

The present study underscores the relationship of language aptitude and personality types of the learners with the use of grammar learning strategies. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies. Bialystok (1981) considered the effect of language aptitude on learning strategy choice is not as significant as that of attitude and learning motivation. Mistar (2001), moreover, reported that language aptitude and personality traits of the learners did not affect the use of overall English learning strategies. The insignificant effect of language aptitude and personality is consistent when analyzed in terms of their contribution to the use of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The insignificant relationship between personality types and grammar learning strategies may stand as an explanation of the inconsistent findings of research correlating personality and success in learning a second/foreign language. Whereas Rossier (1975) reported a significant correlation between extroversion and oral proficiency, Naiman et al. (1978) found no significant relationship between degrees of extraversion and second language proficiency. More surprisingly, Busch (1982) reported that extroversion correlated negatively with second language pronunciation.

Significant interrelationship among the six strategy categories was also revealed in the present study suggesting that an increase in the use of a particular grammar learning strategy tends to be associated with a similar increase in the use of the other five strategy categories.

This finding is consistent with the results of studies carried out by Oxford and Ehrman (1995), Park (1997), and Mistar (2001) and it has significant implication for strategy training. A training program which is designed to improve the use of one particular strategy type may result in the improvement of the use of the other strategy types.

Last but not least, the present study found that generally speaking the overall use of grammar learning strategies correlated positively with grammar achievement ( $r = .202, p < .01$ ). This means that the more intensively the students employ grammar learning strategies, the better their grammar achievement will tend to be. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies that correlated learning strategies and learning success such as Mistar, Zuhairi and Parlindungan (2014) in the case of strategies to learn writing skill and Mistar, Zuhairi and Umamah (2014) in that of strategies to learn speaking skill. This finding also agrees with Zekrati's study (2017) that reported an even much higher coefficient of the correlation between grammar learning strategies and grammar achievement ( $r = .867, p < .000$ ). Contrary to this finding, Gardner et al. (1997) surprisingly found that the correlation between learning strategies and learning achievement was negative. In the case of grammar learning, Pawlak (2009) also observed no significant correlation between grammar learning strategies and two grammar achievement, namely grammar course grades and final exam scores. In a similar vein, Abri et al. (2017) reported that there was no significant differences in the use of grammar learning strategies among proficient, average, and less proficient learners of English in Oman. The fact that the findings of studies that associate the use of grammar learning strategies and grammar achievement are not yet conclusive calls for more research on this area of concern. Thus, research involving different groups of learners with different learning stages should be highly appreciated.

Finally, the findings of the present study also carries out some practical implications for classroom teachers of English, particularly in the teaching of grammar. The finding that personality traits did not correlate significantly with the use of grammar learning strategies implies that it is no need for teachers of grammar to worry about their students' types of personality. Equal attention could be given to students irrespective of the types of their personality. Marginal correlation between language aptitude and grammar learning strategies also suggests that the teachers of grammar do not necessarily worry too much of their students' language aptitude. In terms of language aptitude, they need to consider the students' ability to identify the function of words in sentences, one indicator of language aptitude, as it is correlated significantly with grammar learning strategies. Moreover, the teachers should pay attention to the students' attitude and motivation as these variables are found to correlate significantly with

grammar learning strategies and the grammar learning strategies in turn affects grammar mastery. When the students develop a sense of positive attitude and strong learning motivation, their use of grammar learning strategies tends to increase, resulting in high achievement of grammar mastery. In short, in order to improve students' mastery of English grammar, training programs to increase students' awareness of learning strategies should be incorporated into the teacher's teaching-learning activities. In such training programs, the students' attitudinal and motivational factors should be on top priority of consideration.

## **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated the presence of six types of grammar learning strategies, including directive cognitive strategies, social cognitive strategies, social affective strategies, directive metacognitive strategies, reflective metacognitive strategies, and social metacognitive strategies. These six strategy categories are inter-correlated, in the sense that an increase in the use of one strategy brings out a similar increase in the use of the other strategies. Moreover, students' attitudinal and motivational attributes could better predict the use of these grammar learning strategies than did language aptitude and personality traits. Lastly, it is also found that good grammar mastery goes together with intensive use of learning strategies.

These findings brings about at least two pedagogical implications. One is that in order to encourage students to use grammar learning strategies intensively, their favorable attitudes and high learning motivation should be fostered in any ways. The other one is that strategy-based instruction of grammar may be implemented to train them to employ learning strategies effectively. As such, improvement in their use of grammar learning strategies can be expected and, in turn, ultimate mastery of grammar can be achieved.

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Appendix 1. Rotated Component Matrix

Strategy Item	Component/Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Paying attention to grammar when writing notes, messages, or letters	.829					
Paying attention to grammar when speaking	.736					
Memorizing grammatical items by imagining the situation in which they probably used	.728					
Summarizing the learned grammatical items	.705					
Searching for patterns of English grammar	.700					
Practicing using the learned grammar in speaking	.669					
Thinking of the relationship between the learned grammatical items and the new ones	.632					
Memorizing the learned grammatical items by using them in sentences	.578					
Paying attention to grammar when reading	.575					
Correcting grammatical items when noticing that they are used incorrectly	.572					
Trying to understand grammatical rules by analyzing the structures	.459					
Memorizing grammatical items by remembering its location in books	.540					
Looking for as much opportunities as possible to learn grammar		.747				
Practicing grammatical items with friends		.702				

Looking for as many ways as possible to learn grammar	.567
Searching for sentential meaning by analyzing the grammar	.562
Paying attention to grammar in dialogs when watching TV or films in English	.549
Correcting the grammar of others when conversing	.523
Paying attention to grammar of others' speeches	.480
Looking for other people to discuss grammar	.472
Using other grammatical patterns when in trouble with a grammatical rule	.460
Reducing anxiety by asking others who may know about grammatical items	.860
Talking with other about feeling in learning grammar	.820
Lowering anxiety by asking others to correct my grammar when speaking	.549
Improving confidence by asking others to correct grammar in my writings	.476
Noticing myself if anxious when using grammar	.471
Planning learning schedules in order to have more time to learn grammar	.760
Trying to understand grammatical items by finding similarities with Indonesian grammar	.722
Trying to understand meaning of others' utterances by attending to the grammar	.657
Self-rewarding when doing well in grammar learning	.570

Reviewing lessons from grammar classes	.562	
Encouraging self to speak English although afraid of making grammatical mistakes		.722
Relaxing when afraid of making mistakes in grammar use		.692
Setting up clear targets in learning grammar		.560
Using grammatical items I am sure about		.420
Thinking of progress in learning grammar		.317
Practicing the learned grammatical items in as many ways as possible		.642
Feeling more comfortable when the teacher explains grammatical rules		.599
Developing confidence in learning grammar by doing exercises with friends		.589
Convincing self that mastery of grammar improves language skills		.586

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## Perceptions and Understandings of Taiwanese Stakeholders about the CEFR

**Tammy Huei-Lien Hsu**

*Fu-Jen Catholic University, Taiwan*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Tammy Huei-Lien Hsu** is an assistant professor of English literature and language at Fu-Jen Catholic University. She has received a PhD degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. Her research interests include foreign language assessment, World Englishes, CEFR in non-European contexts, and ESP curriculum design. Her ORCID ID is <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4332-9589>. She can be reached at [089975@mail.fju.edu.tw](mailto:089975@mail.fju.edu.tw)

### **Abstract**

The impact that the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) brings to education in Asian countries is increasingly influential. In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education has set a university exit requirement for English language that is benchmarked to the B1 level of the CEFR. Despite the high-stake nature of this policy, in effort since 2002, little is known about the extent to which Taiwanese stakeholders perceive and understand this external framework. This study investigated Taiwanese stakeholders' understanding and perception of the CEFR along with the current practice of exit requirements for English language as shown on university websites. Nationwide random sampling surveys were administered online to 293 university English instructors and 2379 students, followed by online interviews with two groups of participants. Reviews of 108 universities' exit requirements for English language were further conducted. Descriptive statistics, cross-tab analysis and thematic analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings suggest that teachers generally expressed familiarity with the CEFR, particularly the six common reference levels. Nevertheless, teachers indicate reservations about applying the CEFR in university education for various reasons. Students, though mostly indicating having insufficient information about the CEFR, express interests in the framework that promotes communicative performance. They believe they will benefit from this internationally recognized framework in terms of their learning motivation and future job search if the CEFR is applied in English class. The review of university websites about the

English exit requirement indicates that the MOE's policy turns out to be a language test policy only, with very little emphasis on the CEFR. The implications for this study will be discussed for a practical use of the CEFR in contexts similar to Taiwan, including how classroom teachers could bring the CEFR elements to language class, particularly without funding support.

**Keywords:** *CEFR, communicative performance, Taiwan CEFR, learning motivation*

## **Introduction**

In Taiwan, the term, Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), increasingly appears on university websites with regard to an exit requirement for English language, as mandated by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2002) according to which university graduates should attain English proficiency equivalent to at least the B1 level of the CEFR. This requires students to sit for any English proficiency test with scores aligned to the CEFR, such as TOEFL and IELTS, as proof of fulfilling the exit requirement. Although the MOE does not explicitly recommend the adoption of the CEFR as a basis for teaching and learning in higher education in Taiwan, without any justification, the CEFR has been acknowledged by the MOE as a preferred English reference tool (Vongpumivitch, 2012), probably due to its influential role in worldwide education (Cheung, 2012). Although the educational system and geo-political situation of Taiwan differ from Europe, the above policy increasingly influences English education at the university level in Taiwan. Unlike nearby countries in East Asia where use of the CEFR is supported by government or modified according to the original framework procedures, as in the case of Japan (Tono & Negish, 2012), Thailand (Hiranburana et al., 2017), China (Jin, Wu, Alderson & Song, 2017), and Vietnam (Ngo, 2017), the CEFR in Taiwan has not come under political and pedagogical scrutiny. The most relevant CEFR project is the CEFR-General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) score alignment in the section of reading (Wu & Wu, 2010), listening (Brunfaut & Harding, 2014), writing (Knoch, 2016) and speaking (Green, Inoue & Nakatshuhara, 2017), with no systematic application of the CEFR in Taiwan. Referring to the CEFR-related research agenda, the English Teachers' Association of the Republic of China in 2016, invited international and local scholars specializing in CEFR to discuss the future of the CEFR in Taiwan (Chen, 2013; Hsu, 2017; Wu, 2013). Other studies, albeit under-explored, have investigated the impact of the MOE policy on English language learning and teaching in Taiwan (Pan, 2009). Local scholars recognize the CEFR as a "common yardstick of English language proficiency in the country [Taiwan]" (Wu, 2012, p.213), despite limited

understanding on the part of stakeholders, leading to resistance to and uncertainty of the effects the CEFR (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to investigate Taiwanese stakeholders' understanding and perception of the CEFR before its potential in English teaching and learning in Taiwan can be maximized. This agenda is in line with the modern validation framework (Kane, 2001; Messick, 1989) whereby validity evidence should be collected to support the use of a test or instrument beyond its original target population. Scholars cannot justify the use of and reference to the CEFR in higher education in Taiwan without Taiwan-based validity evidence.

### **CEFR in the Asian-Pacific context**

The CEFR has proven influential in promoting linguistic diversity, language learning, curriculum design, and language testing in Europe and beyond (Hulstijn, 2007; Jones & Saville, 2009). As Byram and Parmenter (2012) claim, “the fact that the CEFR is ‘international’ seems to be more significant than the fact that it is European” (p.259). Treating language as a tool for pursuing successful communication, the CEFR adopts an “action-oriented” approach that emphasizes the ability of a language learner to accomplish language tasks in specified contexts and conditions (CoE, 2001). The CEFR highlights five communicative activities: (listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing) at six proficiency levels: A1 and A2 (basic user), B1 and B2 (independent user) and C1 and C2 (proficient user). Each level has ‘can-do’ descriptors describing what a learner can do with a language regardless of context. This common basis facilitates easy interpretation of a language learner’s ability across languages (cf. to anticipate what a B1 level of a Chinese learner of English can achieve with the language when applying for a school in the US). While the CEFR helps to facilitate change in education policy or practice beyond Europe, issues of acceptance, resistance, unfamiliarity with the framework and how the CEFR is situated in relation to local or national policy are being raised (Byram & Parmenter, 2012), with different aspects prioritized beyond Europe.

In Japan, since 2008, language researchers have developed a new framework to reform English language teaching, called “CEFR-J” by adapting the CEFR (Tono & Negish, 2012). First, they wished to create their own language proficiency standards without being isolated from the CEFR. Second, the results of various surveys showed the benefits and needs for drastic reforms in English education in Japan by applying the CEFR. CEFR-J involves three development stages: preparation, revision and validation, with the CEFR adapted in two main ways. First, large-scale survey studies found that more than 80% of the Japanese learners fall

into the A1 and A2 level of the CEFR (Negishi, Takada & Tono, 2011). Therefore, the original CEFR levels were subdivided on A (A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, and A2.1, A2.2) and B levels (B1.1, B1.2, and B2.1, B2.2), and a Pre-A1 level was added to the CEFR-J framework. No change was made to the C1 and C2 levels. The other adaption is developing can-do descriptors for these subdivided levels to fit the Japanese context (Negishi, 2011 & Negishi *et al.*, 2011).

CEFR-J also developed accompanying resources including a handbook for teachers, a wordlist that covers target vocabulary for learners of Pre A1 to B2 levels, and the European Language Portfolio's (CoE, 2006), 'can-do' descriptor database, translated into Japanese to help teachers better understand what each CEFR-J level learners can do. An impact study conducted through "big data analysis" (Negishi & Tono, 2014) to identify the positive and negative comments about the framework, showed the limited impact of the CEFR-J at the current stage, with discussions mostly on "levels" and "branching".

Unlike the CEFR-J, China developed its own national framework of reference for English language education, "China Standards of English (CSE)" (Jin, Wu, Alderson & Song, 2017) because of the perceived inconsistency in the current educational system, including different English curricula at different learning stages and different assessment systems developed by different testing organizations. The authors argue that the structure of the CEFR, aiming for foreign language learning in the adult context in Europe, does not suit the needs of Chinese learners of English at all education stages and lacks concrete guidance for teaching and learning, consequently failing to serve China's need to link assessment and curriculum across different learning stages. The CSE aims to improve "consistencies and coherence of curricular requirements" (Jin, et al., 2017, par. 12), so that common terms and their meanings will reflect greater transparency of language educational policy in China. Challenges for developing the CSE occur at the macro- and micro- political level. The macro challenge includes resistance from educational policymakers if the curriculum at all learning stages aims for greater consistency. Micro challenges include resistance from stakeholders, including examination boards and practitioners, in facing change.

In Vietnam, similar to Taiwan's context, the CEFR is also used as English language exit benchmarks. Unlike Taiwan, where the CEFR affects only higher education, the CEFR in Vietnam affects primary to tertiary education levels. Students are required to reach A1, A2, and B1 when leaving primary, junior, and secondary high school, respectively (Nguyen & Hamid, 2015). Reports state that these requirements are overly ambitious and beyond the reach of many students due to teachers' poor English, lack of material resources, and dominant teaching methods that mainly emphasize grammar (Nguyen & Hamid, 2015). A language

framework called CEFR-V appropriate to the local context was made (Nguyen, HTM, Nguyen, HT, Nguyen, HV & Nguyen, TTT, 2016), with V standing for ‘Vietnamese.’ Similar to CEFR-J, the CEFR-V aims to set a platform for curriculum and course material design, with guidance in teaching and assessment.

In 2014, Thailand witnessed English teaching reform on various levels (MoE, 2014). Educators emphasized Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance teaching quality (Kanchai, 2019). The CEFR was introduced in connection with the CLT. The CEFR levels are used in Thailand for anticipated attainment at different stages of learning: A1 for primary school students, A2 for junior high school students and B1 for high school and vocational school. This application has been assisted by the British Council in Thailand, which supports teacher training that focuses on the CLT approach to enhance teaching quality. At the tertiary level, universities are required to develop their own framework or policies aligned with the CEFR; the learning outcomes of English language courses and curricula need to reflect the CEFR levels (Kanchai, 2019).

Similar to the CEFR-J, in which lower levels of the framework are necessary to reflect students’ proficiency level, a local version, Framework of Reference for English Language Education in Thailand (FRELE-TH) (Foley, 2019), has also been developed with 10-levels applied in the Thai educational system: A1, A1+, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, and no change on C1 and C2. Two scales were created to describe learners’ English proficiency levels, a global scale and illustrative scales (communicative activities, strategies, and language competence).

Finally, the CEFR in Taiwan is mostly used in assessment in higher education, as in the case of GEPT-CEFR alignment; it has not yet exerted visible influence on English teaching and learning, unlike in East Asian countries where it is applied in teaching, learning, and assessment. In compliance with Taiwan’s MOE policy on the English language exit benchmark in higher education (MOE, 2002), GEPT, developed by Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC), undertook alignment projects to map the four sections of the test to the CEFR. The LTTC registered with the Council of Europe to take part in the pilot project to relate language exams to the CEFR (Wu & Wu, 2010); an acceptable level of alignment was established, with the first four levels of the GEPT aligning to the A2 to C1 levels of the CEFR. Although the LTTC indicates that this link increases teachers’ and learners’ understanding of communicative language ability, further evidence is required to justify this claim.

To evaluate the potential of CEFR application in teaching and learning in higher education in Taiwan, a review of the dominant teaching approaches could reveal the extent to

which current dominant teaching practices deviate from the CEFR. English education has long put the major emphasis on exam-led teaching practice to satisfy schools' and parents' expectations in primary and secondary education. The assessment tends to measure students' memory skill, the lowest cognitive demand, and teachers may be incapable of applying the communicative- and learner-based teaching approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Students may only be exposed to communicative-based teaching (e.g. Communicative Language Teaching, CLT) starting at the university level (Chang, 2011). Shih (1999) analyzed a shift from form- to communication-based teaching, and emphasized language functions and learners' needs in university English classes. In addition, the communicative competence-based approach is also viewed as essential in technical colleges (Liu, 2005). Many universities offer courses focusing on integrated English skills or specific topics, including English for Specific Purpose (ESP) (Chen, 2010). Despite the efforts in curriculum design geared towards CLT, research has reported problems and resistance in EFL classrooms (Li, 1998; Yu, 2001). In an interview study with university faculty on implementing CLT in Taiwanese college English classrooms, four factors were reported: "teachers, students, the educational system, and suitability of CLT in the local context" (Chang & Goswami, 2010, p. 3). The findings suggest that the current CLT application seems promising, although the hindering factors may prevent CLT from full implementation. First, in comparison with western educational settings where CLT originated, Taiwanese students are less active participants, tending to wait for teachers to call on them before they speak up. Furthermore, the long-lasting educational values and practice in Taiwan impede CLT, including exam-oriented teaching tradition, large-sized classes and limited English teaching hours.

Despite the apparent increase in CLT teaching in English education at the university level in Taiwan, local scholars argue that a more rigid English curriculum plan is necessary to make CEFR relevant. Cheng (2012) suggested that among the four language domains of the CEFR (i.e. personal, public, education and occupational), the occupational domain should not be the major focus in class because Taiwan is an EFL country where immediate English use outside the classroom is limited. Cheung also expressed concerns that some essential communicative components, such as sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge, should be highlighted in teaching because they are not an "expected outcome of the learning process" (p.228), but a contributing component in shaping language capacity. Furthermore, the varying tasks that need to be performed require language learners to use strategies in order to understand and/or produce spoken or written texts. In other words, the CEFR does not specify language teaching methodology. Its action-oriented approach requires learners to utilize strategies drawing on

linguistic resources to perform communicative acts (Council of Europe, 2002, p. 9). All these features point to the tremendous efforts necessary for language teachers to familiarize themselves with the framework before any meaningful curriculum planning. As Cheung (2012) argues, “the training activities should pay special attention to the theoretical assumptions underlying the action-oriented approach because it is quite a foreign notion to many locally trained EFL teachers” (p. 230).

### **Research Questions**

Given the limited research investigating Taiwanese stakeholders’ understanding of the CEFR and its educational potential as a reference tool in English curriculum in higher education, this study seeks to explore and address the following questions:

RQ1: What are Taiwanese stakeholders’ understanding and perceptions of the CEFR?

RQ2: What are the potential issues and challenges for the application of the CEFR in English education in universities?

RQ3: What are the current practices of English exit requirements in relation to the CEFR, as seen on the university websites?

### **Methodology**

Guided by mixed methods design (Greene, 2007), this study comprises a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach into the research methodology to gather sufficient evidence for research questions. Multiple instruments were used in this study: an online teacher study, an online student survey, teacher interviews, student interviews, and document review. Descriptive statistics, cross-tab analysis and thematic analysis were employed for data analysis. All collected data were reviewed simultaneously in order to generate inferences and arrive inductive reasoning to the research questions.

### **Instruments and participants**

#### *Teacher’s and Student’s Surveys*

Two forms of online survey were created and delivered through SurveyMonkey software. Questions in the teacher’s and student’s surveys are identical for the purpose of comparison, except for one section in the teacher survey that asked teachers about teaching activity design related to the CEFR. The two surveys included three main categories: (1) respondents’ views of the current English exit requirement in relation to the CEFR, (2) respondents’ understandings and perceptions of the CEFR, and (3) teachers’ teaching activity design in relation to the CEFR.

(All further references to teachers and students refer to the survey respondents.) Prior to the main study, the survey questions were reviewed by a local scholar familiar with the CEFR and a language assessment expert, as well as a pilot study held with 35 students at the researcher's university. As a result, 32 questions in the teacher survey and 30 questions in the student survey were included in the main study. Both teacher's and student's surveys had five options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and not sure and were distributed through nationwide random sampling method. An invitation email that included the purpose of the study and a survey link was sent to 102 secretaries of language learning and teaching centers in different types of universities between 2013 and 2014; they, if agreed, forwarded the survey link to their full- and part-time English teachers and students. 293 teacher surveys with valid responses were returned, including private general universities (38.91%), national general universities (25.94%), private technical colleges (25.26%), and national technical colleges (9.9%). Most teachers hold a PhD degree (57.68%), the rest a Master's degree (41.64%), or bachelor's (0.68%). Their ranking includes lecturer (41.30%), assistant professor (25.94%), associate professor (25.26%), and full professor (7.51%); 48.79% specialize in applied linguistics, followed by western literature (20.30%), linguistics (9.7%), and others (21.21%). Cronbach's Alpha for the teacher survey is 0.85 and for student survey, 0.92.

The student survey was further posted on online forums popular among university students, such as D-card. A total of 2379 valid surveys were completed by 1614 females and 765 males; they included seniors (28.54%), sophomores (25.60%), junior (23.75%), and freshmen (22.11%). Similar to the teachers, most were from private general universities (50.48%), followed by national general universities (27.28%), private technical colleges (13.03%), and national technical colleges (9.21%). The majority (89.71%) indicated that their school or department set a benchmark test score for graduation. English remedial courses for those who failed to reach the benchmark score, are available in approximately 66% of the universities; 33.29% pointed out that their school designs its own English exit test. For data analysis, frequency counts, descriptive statistics, and cross-tab analyses were performed.

#### *Teacher's and Student's Interviews*

Teachers and students who agreed did follow-up interviews with the study researcher on online chatting software (e.g. Skype). They included 10 teachers and 10 students who reported having heard the term CEFR before. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes, and was audio-recorded. Each interviewee received a NTD \$500 7-11 gift card upon completion of the interview.

Interview questions mainly focused on the experience of interviewees in preparing for

the English exit requirement, their perception of the CEFR application in Taiwan universities, and in what ways the CEFR could maximize learning and teaching effectiveness. All interview transcripts were analyzed and six themes emerged. Next, following Schmidt (2004), different variants in each theme were identified. For example, regarding perception of the CEFR, three variants were identified: promising, resistant, and beneficial to the testing agency. Subsequently, the coding scheme was further revised to identify new categories and remove redundant variants. The researcher and an assistant again reviewed the transcripts. The inter-coder reliability was 0.92.

*Review of English language exit requirement*

To investigate MOE policy on the English exit requirement, a total of 108 university websites, including 55 general universities and 53 technical colleges, that state the English exit requirement were reviewed regarding whether the CEFR is mentioned, their English proficiency tests, minimum test scores, whether they are equivalent to the CEFR level as required by the university, and the source or unit that posted the English exit requirement. The English exit requirement is mostly located in foreign language teaching and learning centers (N=50, 46.73%), academic affairs offices (N=30, 28.04%), and general education centers (N=15, 14.02%). In some cases, individual departments issued their own minimum requirement. For data analysis, frequency count and descriptive statistics were computed for the following categories: universities that mention the CEFR term, a list of English proficiency tests recommended by each university, and the minimum test score mapped to the CEFR level.

**Findings**

RQ1: What are Taiwanese stakeholders’ understanding and perceptions of the CEFR?

Survey data

In general, teachers (71%, N=204) had better understanding of the CEFR than students (16.49%, N=371) (see Table 1). Teachers heard the term in conferences or workshops (28.82%), or through colleagues (26.51%) and journals (24.50%).

Table 1. Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of the CEFR

Survey question	Respondent		$\chi^2$
	Teacher (N=293)	Student (N=2379)	Sig. (2- sided)
	Agree Not sure	Agree Not sure	

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I have heard of the CEFR	71.00%	29.00%	16.49%	83.51%	.000
I know the MOE English exit requirement requires students to reach a B1 level of the CEFR.	64.62%	35.38%	37.43%	62.57%	.000
I know CEFR includes six common reference levels.	79.49%	20.51%	61.43%	38.57%	.001
I know CEFR includes a set of can-do statement.	65.13%	34.87%	30.29%	69.71%	.000
I know CEFR includes a self-assessment grid.	50.77%	49.23%	48.00%	52.00%	.000

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Note that “Disagree” is not listed.

Students heard the term from their teachers (36.00%), journals and newspaper articles (22.32%), and other sources (20.21%). Approximately 64.62% of teachers knew that the MOE English exit requirement requires students to reach at least the B1 level of the CEFR, versus 37.43% of the students. The six common reference levels of the CEFR appeared to be the most well-known to both groups: 79.49% of the teachers and 61.43% of students. For a set of can-do statements, 65.13% of the teachers and only 30.29% of students had reported to know what the statements are. The self-assessment grid was least familiar: 50.77% of the teachers and 52.00% of the students do not know what it is. A cross-tab analysis showed significant difference between both groups on all five questions.

Questions regarding perception of the CEFR mainly concerned with its usefulness in English teaching and learning in Taiwan universities (Table 2); 51.28% of the teachers and 52.52% of the students who heard of the CEFR agreed; 37.42% of the students were unsure. CEFR’s positive evaluation is due to its widespread use inside and outside Europe (teachers 96.65%; students 85.17%), the usefulness of the can-do statements to describe English proficiency level (teachers 91.92%; students 83.44%), and use of the CEFR for English

curriculum design (teachers 84.84%; students 92.41%). However, 45.21% of teachers reported that the English curriculum should be adapted to the CEFR to meet the MOE policy; 31.91% expressed

Table 2. Respondents' perception of the CEFR in English teaching and learning in Taiwan universities

Survey question	Respondents who had heard of CEFR			
	Teachers (N=204)		Students (N=371)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
CEFR is beneficial to English teaching and learning in Taiwan universities	51.28%	48.72%	52.52%	47.48%
It is because				
CEFR is widespread inside and outside Europe	96.65%	3.35%	85.17%	14.83%
CEFR's can-do statement is useful to describe learner's English proficiency level	91.92%	8.08%	83.44%	16.56%
CEFR is helpful for English curriculum design	84.84%	15.16%	92.41%	7.59%
English education in university should be adapted to the CEFR	45.21%	31.91%	57.70%	42.30%
CEFR should be altered to meet the learning and teachings needs in universities	44.68%	32.98%	55.74%	44.26%

Note that "agree" combines the percentage of agree and strongly agree. "Disagree" includes the percentage of disagree and strongly disagree

uncertainty. Students were more positive about the CEFR application: 57.70% said that their English curriculum should be CEFR driven. A similar response pattern was observed when the question asked if the CEFR should be altered to meet the learning and teaching needs in Taiwan universities (teachers, 44.68%; students, 55.74); Note that more than one third of teacher respondents (32.98%) expressed uncertainty.

**RQ2:** What are the potential issues and challenges for the application of the CEFR in English education in Taiwan universities?

Four themes emerged in the interview data, revealing issues and challenges if the CEFR is applied in universities: more promotion of the CEFR is needed, CEFR creates difficulty in teaching, CEFR increases students' learning motivation, and CEFR-based test scores benefit future employment. First, both groups indicated that the immediate issue of CEFR application in English education is Taiwan teachers' and students' limited understanding of the framework. Therefore, more promotion of the CEFR by means of conferences, scholarly talks and newspaper reports is necessary before further discussions about the framework is possible in the local context. Teachers expressed interest in learning more about the framework to keep abreast of recent developments and approaches for language teaching.

Teacher interviewee 1: "Even though most of the market-available ESL textbooks are labeled with the CEFR level, I do not really know what the CEFR is. I heard people talk about the CEFR, the A1, B1, and others, but that is all I know. I thought it is a new test before talking to you (*researcher*)."

The second theme that emerged is teachers' concerns about typical large English-size classes in Taiwan, which impedes individual student's participation. Given that the CEFR emphasizes performing language tasks, large-size classes offer limited opportunities for students to engage in language tasks, particularly speaking and writing skill. Teachers pointed out that it is even more difficult to train students' productive skills if the CEFR is applied in the curriculum as students, who predominantly learned reading and grammar before coming to university start to learn English communicative skills. In fact, most teachers expressed doubt about the extent to which the CEFR-based English curriculum is even possible in Taiwanese universities. Nevertheless, two teachers disagreed, particularly when it becomes a top-down MOE or university policy.

Teacher interviewee 33: “I think many teachers still do not know what the CEFR is, so it is understandable that they do not have relevant teaching activities. Teachers have teaching autonomy so we design what we think is appropriate and necessary for our students. Unless the CEFR-driven teaching activity is required by the university or MOE, I really do not think teachers will apply the CEFR in their large classes, not to mention designing CEFR-based teaching activity.”

Nevertheless, a top-down policy may not be effective enough to implement the CEFR-driven English curriculum due to the prevalent use of English remedial courses in many universities as an alternative to meeting the English exit requirement (Shih, 2012). Both teachers and students said that the top-down policy will not be effective if remedial English courses substitute for the exit requirement.

Student interviewee 6: “In my university, there is an English remedial class for those who cannot reach the required cut score. If you don’t want to spend too much money to take English tests again and again till you reach the cut score, you can choose to take a remedial course instead after you fail the test. Besides, the remedial course is much easier than TOEIC or TOEFL to fulfill the English graduation requirement.”

The third emerging theme relates to student interviewees’ positive attitude towards the CEFR when told of the CEFR’s action-oriented approach. They appreciate CEFR’s emphasis on communicative competency as the kind of skill they have long wanted to develop but were unable to satisfactorily achieve. They expressed that dominant English teaching approaches in Taiwan do not prepare them for global communication; if the CEFR becomes an international framework for learning, they not only want it applied in their English class, but would feel more motivated to learn English.

Student interviewee 36: “If the CEFR stresses a language learner’s ability to complete real life tasks, I think many students will like the CEFR because it can motivate our learning interests. I want to develop an ability to communicate with others in English; if the framework is about communicative skills, I will be motivated to learn English in the university.”

The last emerging theme, endorsed by both groups, is the benefit of English test scores converted to the CEFR level. The interviewees acknowledged the function of the English exit requirement because the CEFR-labeled test scores increase their future job qualifications, particularly for international job positions. They indicated that the CEFR's internationally recognized role helps students to present reliable evidence about their English proficiency, which pushes them to study English at university.

Student interviewee 90: "Whether you are looking for a job locally or in other countries, it adds to your qualification if you have a test score converted to the CEFR term."

It is important to note that two teacher interviewees commented that the role of the CEFR has nothing to do with English teaching or learning at the current stage.

Teacher interviewee 34: "We talk about the CEFR because it is simply a score conversion tool. . . For example, we say a textbook needs to be in the B1 level, and students' test results are A2 and B1.

Furthermore, teacher interviewees reported that although the CEFR-based score appears to be an incentive for studying English, others will benefit.

Teacher interviewee 71: "I don't think students will benefit from this English exit requirement because you cannot expect a student to improve his English skill simply by taking a test. However, it is clear that the testing agencies can make lots of money now. They are the apparent winners."

RQ3: What are the current practices of English exit requirements in relation to the CEFR, as seen on university websites?

The review was guided by whether or not the university website explicitly uses the term "CEFR, in the graduation benchmark, the required CEFR level to be reached, and English proficiency tests listed to satisfy the exit requirement.

Universities in general set a cut score for non-English majors to graduate; English departments tend to set higher thresholds. This section reports the review results for non-English majors. Of the 108 websites reviewed, only 32 (29.64%) use the term "CEFR" when describing their exit requirement. They include 16 regular universities (14.82%) and 16 technical colleges (14.82%). Furthermore, most websites did not state the MOE's

recommended cut score (i.e. B1 level of the CEFR). Instead, some changed the MOE's recommended cut scores to set a more harsh or lenient benchmark to their students, including a B2 (one national regular university), an A2 (five regular and 12 technical colleges), and an A1 (one technical college). Others give a range of required CEFR levels: A2-B1 (one regular and three technical colleges)..

Tests appearing on the websites to satisfy exit requirement include those developed by Educational Testing Service (e.g. TOEFL and TOEIC), by Cambridge English (e.g. IELTS, KET, PET, and FCE), and by the LTTC in Taiwan, including General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), Foreign Language Proficiency Test (FLPT) and College Student English Proficiency Test (CSEPT). Finally, General tests of English Language Proficiency (G-TELP), created by International Testing Service Center of San Diego State University also appear on website lists.

*Tests and cut-off scores*

Frequency of listed tests was also noted (Table 3). Overall, regardless of university type, the top four ranked most frequent tests are TOEIC ( $N=101$ , 18.00%), GEPT ( $N=91$ , 16.22%), IELTS ( $N=84$ , 14.97%), and TOEFL ( $N=76$ , 13.55%); most specify the cut score for each listed test, while a few that only indicate the minimum CEFR level (e.g. B2). The range of cut scores was also calculated.

For TOEIC, the cut scores set by the regular universities range from 350 ( $N=1$ ) to 880 ( $N=1$ ); technical colleges from 100 ( $N=2$ ) to 700 ( $N=2$ ). The majority fall within 550-600 ( $N=15$ ) for regular universities, and 225 ( $N=11$ ) for technical colleges. Furthermore, the cut scores for GEPT, which contains two stages of the test, differ greatly among the universities. Some only specify the minimum GEPT level (e.g. Intermediate) to be reached; others list the stage that students need to complete (e.g. stage one).

Table 3. Tests Listed in the English Exit Requirement

English proficiency test	Regular university		Technical college	
	National Score/number*	Private Score/number	National Score/number	Private Score/number
TOEIC	700 (4)	600 (3)	700 (1)	300 (16)
	600 (5)	500 (12)	550 (4)	225 (11)
	550 (12)	400 (7)	400 (3)	100 (2)
	480 (1)	350 (4)	300 (2)	

		225 (2)		
GEPT	High intermediate(1) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (10)	High intermediate 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (2)		
	Intermediate (1) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (7) 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage (4)	Intermediate (5) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (16) 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage (2)	Intermediate (1) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (10)	Intermediate 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage (1)
		Beginner (7) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (4)		Beginner (23) 1 <sup>st</sup> stage (4) 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage (1)
IELTS	6.5 (1)	5(2)	4.5 (1)	3.5 (2)
	6 (2)	4.5(2)	4 (3)	3 (20)
	5.5 (7)	4(8)	3.5 (3)	
	5 (2)	3.5(2)	3 (1)	
	4.5 (1)	3(6)		
	4 (8)			
TOEFL	90 (1)	70 (1)	70 (1)	30 (2)
	70 (3)	60 (4)	60 (1)	20 (20)
	60 (11)	50 (8)	50 (1)	
	50 (2)	40 (3)	40 (4)	
	40 (3)	30 (3)		
		20 (1)		

\*Number means the number of university websites that list English tests for exit requirement

Most regular universities require the first stage (reading and listening) of the GEPT intermediate level ( $N=16$ ). For technical colleges, the majority falls to GEPT beginner level ( $N=23$ ) without specifying which stage should be completed. Only a few regular universities ( $N=6$ ) and technical colleges ( $N=2$ ) require the second stage of the GEPT (speaking and writing). IELTS cut scores also range widely, from band 3 to 6.5. For regular universities, score band 4 ( $N=18$ ) is the most common cut score, followed by band 5.5 ( $N=8$ ). For technical

colleges, a dominant score band 3 ( $N=20$ ) was observed. TOEFL cut scores for regular universities ranging from 20 ( $N=20$ ) to 90 ( $N=1$ ), with the highest percentage cut score of 60 ( $N=12$ ). For technical colleges, the dominant cut score is 20 ( $N=20$ ), followed by a score of 40 ( $N=5$ ).

#### *Cut scores aligned to the stated CEFR levels?*

Regarding the cut scores of different listed tests, and each university's general statement about the minimum CEFR level that students need to reach, the cut scores are not necessarily equivalent to the required CEFR level. For example, a university may claim a B2 level as the minimum exit requirement, while the listed tests may allow a cut score equivalent to B1 (TOEFL score of 45). Only 24 technical colleges (15.79%) require cut scores equivalent to the CEFR B1 level, suggested by Taiwan's MOE. Most set a lower exit benchmark. For regular university, 113 regular universities (56.50%), following the MOE's suggestion, list all cut scores equivalent to at least the B1 level of the CEFR.

### **Summary and Discussion**

The CEFR began in Taiwan in 2002 with the MOE endorsement, as a benchmark of university graduates' performance in English. The understanding and perceptions of stakeholders in reference to the CEFR and its potential in English language education in higher education remain under-explored. This study includes multiple instruments to investigate stakeholders' perception and understanding of the framework. It has reviewed the current practice of required levels of achievement in English language learning as measured by the CEFR, and explored issues and challenges in using the CEFR as a reference tool for higher education in Taiwan. The findings suggest that, relatively speaking, Taiwanese teachers show a fairly good understanding of the CEFR's common reference levels and can-do statements; while students reveal a very limited understanding of the CEFR, they are generally more positive than teachers. Teachers express reservations about the application of the CEFR mainly because of their lack of full understanding of the CEFR-based teaching approach; current English teaching practice in Taiwan is not ideal for CEFR-relevant teaching activities. Most importantly, the use of the CEFR is not a top-down policy, which leads to no incentive for teachers to apply the new framework in their class. Finally, the review of university websites indicates that the MOE's policy has turned into a test policy only, with universities focusing only on whether students can reach the required cut scores. Statements about English exit requirement commonly fail to address the original MOE intent of the CEFR as a reference tool.

Overall, teachers' familiarity with the CEFR as shown in the survey requires caution.

When the survey elicited teachers' knowledge about the CEFR components, teachers showed most familiarity with the six common reference levels, followed by the can-do statements, but less familiarity with the self-assessment grid; their understanding of the CEFR may be limited to features that contribute to the success of the CEFR (e.g. reference level labels and reference level descriptors) (Figueras, 2012), without knowing much its core values (e.g. lifelong learning), principles or companion tools (e.g. European Language Portfolio). Teachers' familiarity with the common proficiency levels most likely derives from CEFR's common use as test score conversion tools and as labels in many ESL textbooks. However, like stakeholder's perception in other Asian countries, some mistake the CEFR for a new English proficiency test, indicating they have not kept up with state-of-art language framework. Students' limited understanding of the CEFR is in line with previous studies within and outside Europe. Although the CEFR is influential and widely applied in educational contexts worldwide, it appears foreign to stakeholders, particularly students who are mostly impacted by the CEFR or any educational reform or policy (Hai, 2018). Given that the CEFR is an abstract theoretical framework situated in Europe (North, 2009; O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011), Taiwan's MOE or local educational authorities need to introduce the CEFR and its recent development in nearby Asian countries to Taiwanese stakeholders affected by the MOE policy through workshops, in-service teacher training program, or conferences to increase stakeholders' understanding of the framework. Concrete teaching activities and examples can assist Taiwanese teachers to better understand how to apply the framework to guide teaching activity design, with meaningful discussions between stakeholders and scholars on the potential usefulness of the CEFR in Taiwan. Students can learn more about the CEFR framework from teachers to keep up with contemporary English learning approaches and common usage (e.g. B1) in describing English proficiency levels.

Taiwanese teachers generally express more conservative attitudes than students do about the university benefits that may result from the CEFR. For students, since the CEFR is a widely-used framework that emphasizes the ability to handle real-life language tasks, the CEFR increases students' motivation to learn English language and may turn "English" from a test-driven educational context to a useful communicative tool. Similar to previous literature (Byram & Parmenter, 2012), teachers have expressed doubts in bringing various CEFR-based teaching activities to English classes. Interview data reveal three aspects: teachers' lack of full understanding of the CEFR, typical large class sizes in Taiwan that make action-oriented teaching difficult, and CEFR functioning more like a test score conversion tool in Taiwan than a curriculum planning reference tool. If the CEFR is required in English curricula, teachers will

fear their loss of teaching autonomy due to an unfamiliar dominant teaching system (Negishi et al., 2011). The contrasting views between teachers and students point to factors for consideration when attempting to apply the CEFR in Taiwan or in similar educational contexts. First, according to cases in nearby Asian countries (e.g. CEFR-J in Japan, CSE in China), support by governmental grant helps to realize a successful CEFR-based curriculum. We suggest that the MOE or local education authorities provide grant support to scholars to systematically evaluate the extent to which the CEFR is necessary, and help to advance English learning, teaching, and assessment towards a more coherent system at different stages of educational development. Further research should also address the concerns that teachers have expressed herein because their perception of the CEFR use can help to determine the success of policy implementation. Second, the study findings show students' high interest in the CEFR, which may prove positive if English curriculum design is CEFR-driven. Future research should explore approaches to facilitate teaching activity design, particularly in classrooms with no funding support for teachers. Concrete examples, teaching methodology and resources available should be specified to guide teachers unfamiliar with the CEFR through the design process in order to make the class CEFR-relevant and manageable.

The university website review on English exit requirement shows university decision makers' lack of understanding of the CEFR's underlying rationale in the MOE's policy on proficiency tests, as the current stated requirement has little to do with the CEFR or the MOE's original intent. The review findings suggest that the MOE policy for university decision-makers is simply a test policy that schools advocate in providing a list of English tests from which students may choose, setting cut scores, and offering remedial courses as an alternative method to fulfill the requirement. Very little explains the CEFR and the B1 level, the benchmark. Therefore, the impact of the CEFR in Taiwan is only on the test-level as the policy focuses only on students' ability to pass a test rather than to use the English language. For universities who label the CEFR term, the required cut scores of listed tests are not necessarily aligned to their equivalent CEFR levels; university decision-makers are unclear of what cut scores mean, and thus set inconsistent cut scores while stating that the exit requirement is equivalent to a certain CEFR level. Consequently, the exit requirement becomes inconsistent because some cut scores may be either above or below the stated minimum CEFR level. This may result from two reasons. First, despite the recent increase in empirical studies on CEFR-based English teaching activities by Taiwanese scholars (Chen, 2013; Hsu, 2017), discussions on the CEFR within Taiwan's academia is generally limited, and foreign to teachers, students and university administrators. The latter group therefore treats the English exit requirement merely as a new

test policy, creating more harm than good for English language education. Taiwan is still a rigid test-oriented environment. In the long term, a policy that demands repeated participation in tests does little to increase proficiency in English. Second, the actual practice of the English exit requirement varies among universities in terms of the tests and cut scores as universities may simply follow the practices of other universities. Consequently, this seemingly CEFR-driven policy in the end has nothing to do with the CEFR, and results in confusion. The website review has implications for implementing language testing policies. The inconsistency between cut scores and the CEFR level shows a need for university administrators and score-users to strengthen their assessment literacy to avoid misunderstanding of the CEFR framework (O'Loughlin, 2013); they need to be better informed of what the CEFR and common proficiency levels mean, as well as the concepts that guide test practice.

## **Conclusion**

As the first attempt to draw a large sample of Taiwanese university students and teachers and university websites stating English exit requirement, this study sought to explore Taiwanese stakeholders' understanding and perception of the CEFR and current practice of English exit requirement in relation to the CEFR. The findings show that university teachers generally have better understanding of the CEFR than students; yet, they reveal reservations about applying the CEFR in higher education context, which is in line with previous studies conducted outside Europe (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). Students, unsurprisingly, show limited understandings about the CEFR but see the CEFR promising and beneficial to English learning. The results also revealed that the current practice of English exit requirement among universities in Taiwan varies greatly; it is common that the statement about the CEFR as a reference tool for English performance, as recommended by Taiwan MOE, is not mentioned in English exit requirement. It can be inferred that university decision-makers treat English exit requirement as a test-only policy and are less concerned about students' English communicative ability in relation to the CEFR. As such, the application of the CEFR in Taiwan is at very preliminary stage, with stakeholders' limited understanding of the framework, leading to the current practice of English exit requirement deviating greatly from the MOE's original intent. The current practice therefore exerts negative impacts on Taiwanese students' learning when this policy has very little to do with the CEFR and re-inforces the test-oriented learning approach.

## **Pedagogical implication**

To enhance students' English abilities, the original intent of the English exit requirement, Taiwan's MOE or education authorities should consider how to turn the test-only-policy into a CEFR-informed English curriculum design because it is difficult for higher education to achieve the MOE's intended goal alone. Issues of CEFR-driven curriculum should be discussed in a holistic sense, the entire educational system as a whole. It is an unrealistic goal to expect a university graduate's English proficiency to reach the B1 level when s/he is not exposed to CEFR relevant instructions prior to university. If the adoption of the CEFR becomes necessary for strengthening students' communicative competency, local educational authorities or university administrators may consider the following two approaches to moving the CEFR forward, or linking Taiwan's English education to an internationally acknowledged framework. First, on the micro level, if the university language program introduces the CEFR to its English classes at the current stage, its curriculum should be carefully evaluated to examine the extent to which the CEFR core values deviate from the existing curriculum practice. Significant deviation may require a total overhaul (North & Jarosz, 2013) and draw resistance from teachers. However, if the dominant teaching approach is communication-based, as reviewed in the literature section, the CEFR-based English curriculum design should be wisely determined, particularly with English classes of 40 or more students and typically meeting only 36 hours a semester, when at least 180 are required to move to the next CEFR level (British Council, n.d.). The selection of language skills and teaching activities should focus only on a few that meet the teaching and learning needs to keep the CEFR application practical and manageable. For example, in a speaking class, teachers may focus on spoken interaction skills, and choose one CEFR-suggested activity only (e.g. "listening as a member of a live audience") to increase students' exposure to any lecture (e.g. TED talks) within a particular domain (e.g. public). Although this curriculum design only partially adapts the CEFR, the English class becomes CEFR-informed, a feasible approach. Learning tools, including European Language Portfolio (ELP), can be considered since local scholars have claimed that these enhance students' learning interests because it prepares them for a future job search (Hsu, 2017). Language teachers can thus encourage students to document their learning progress in the ELP for monitoring their learning progress and outcomes. Finally, on the macro level, Taiwan's MOE policymakers should consider and re-evaluate the need to apply the CEFR not merely at the university level, but in primary and secondary education, as in Japan (CEFR-J) and Thailand (FRELE-TH). Local educational authorities and educators from different learning stages should meet and evaluate how the CEFR can and should be used in different

learning stages to develop a more consistent curriculum plan. Future research should examine students' learning goals and needs, determine the most appropriate language skills and activities needed for each learning stage, and weigh whether a local learning framework driven by the CEFR, as in the case of China (CSE), is necessary for greater development and coherence in English teaching, learning, and assessment in Taiwan.

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## **A Psychodiscourse Analysis of Affective Aspects of Learning Experience: A Triangulated Mixed Design**

**Ahlam Alharbi**

*Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, KSA*

Students who are anxious, angry, or depressed do not learn  
Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence

### **Bio-profile:**

**Ahlam Alharbi** holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Monash University, Australia. Currently, she is an assistant professor at the Department of English at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. Her primary research interests are semantics, pragmatics, and the applications of critical discourse analysis within linguistic studies. Her other research interests relate to the area of TEFL.

### **Abstract**

Educational psychology research suggests that learning is an affective experience. Thus, this study is interested in exploring the holistic affective aspect of adult learners' educational/learning experience. In doing so, a triangulated method was employed, three tools were utilized, namely, (1) the Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R; Elliot & Murayama, 2008), (2) the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, and (3) the Martínez-Sierra's (2015) semi-structured interview. Quantitative analysis was utilized to examine the two surveys. Qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, was employed to examine the responses of the interview, employing the Russell's (1980, 2003) circumplex model of affect, to uncover the different ranges of emotions experienced by students. The participants were level eight students of the Department of English at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. The wellbeing scale showed that there is a positive

correlation between the number of years students spent at the department and their wellbeing. However, there is a negative correlation between students' GPAs and their wellbeing. In addition, the achievement goal scale showed that the majority of the students adopted the performance-avoidance goal approach, which might increase the level of stress. With reference to the content analysis results, students' most frequently expressed negative emotions are anxiety, tension, fear, pressure, fatigue, boredom. On the other hand, the positive emotions students experienced are confidence, interest, and satisfaction. Some of the negative activated emotions were partly a result of the faculty members' high expectations and high competition.

***Keywords:** Education psychology; Affective experience; Affective discourse; Emotional well-being; Russell's (2003) circumplex model of affect.*

## **Introduction**

Emotions are a vital aspect of everyday life and experience. One of the most critical experiences one goes through is the educational (or learning) experience. Undeniably, the educational experience of learners is a hybrid experience. That is, it is intellectual, social, and emotional. A multitude of factors can influence learners' academic achievements; however, emotion is one crucial overlooked and salient factor that can enhance and improve their achievements. Educational psychology research suggests that learning itself is an affective experience. Emotion can hinder or facilitate teaching and learning, and as Zull (2006, p. 7) argues, emotion "is the foundation of learning." Cognitive research has demonstrated that emotions and learning are interconnected (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). Indeed, emotion is one of the most inconspicuous and the least important aspects for academics. Such a topic is under-explored and neglected by educationalists and researchers alike (Schutz & Lanehart, 2002; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, and Perry, 2002; and Van Kleef, Homan & Cheshin, 2012). Chuah (2011, p. 24) admits, "by not exploring the role that emotion plays in learning and memory; our profession has fallen decades behind in devising useful instructional procedures that incorporate and enhance emotion." Fortunately, the past decade has witnessed evident interest in emotions and learning (e.g., Hall, Sampasivam, Muis, & Ranellucci, 2016; Pekrun & Linnenbrink Garcia, 2014; Hall

& Goetz, 2013; Gillies, 2011; Elliot & Pekrun 2007; Turner, Husman, & Schallert, 2002; Schutz & Davis, 2000).

Schutz and Lanehart (2002, p. 67) explain, “[i]n the 2000s, researchers interested in teaching, learning, and motivational transactions within the classroom context can no longer ignore emotional issues. Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process.” As emotions are subjective, they may hinder/facilitate students’ progression (Pekrun et al., 2002; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). Positive emotions can enhance and increase students’ academic achievement; on the other hand, negative emotions can disable and hinder students’ achievement (Pekrun, 1992; Kort et al., 2001). Meyer and Turner (2002, p. 107) posit that emotion is pivotal to motivation in classroom interactions. From an educational perspective, when the emotional needs of students are appropriately and effectively attended, the overall learning experience improves. Goleman, (1995, p. 78) argues, “[s]tudents who are anxious, angry, or depressed do not learn; people who are caught in these states do not take in information efficiently or deal with it well.” Studies also indicate that the emotions that students undergo and express in the classroom can be an indicator of students’ academic progress (Valiente, Swanson, and Eisenberg, 2012, p. 7). Besides, the emotional aspect of students’ learning experience is essential because it can affect memory (Kensinger, 2012, p. 241). As Sylwester (1994, p. 60) argues, emotion “drives attention, which drives learning, memory, and problem solving and almost everything else we do.” In a similar vein, Pekrun (2014, p. 6) believes, “[e]motions control the students’ attention, influence their motivation to learn, modify the choice of learning strategies, and affect their self-regulation of learning.” He also argues that students’ emotional well-being should be an educational goal that sought after, as “emotions are part of students’ identity, and they affect personality development, psychological health, and physical health” (Pekrun, 2014, p. 6).

Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 85) posit that the basic and the most universally accepted emotions or emotion modes are happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust. They argue that in the available research on cognitive (psycho)linguistics, emotions have three entities, i.e., the emotional experience, the emotional concept (the mental construct of the emotion itself), and the linguistic aspect. Kövecses (1990) views the linguistic aspect of emotion or emotional language from two perspectives, namely, expressive language and

descriptive language. Expressive language refers to the use of emotional words to describe someone's emotional state. On the other hand, descriptive language refers to the use of language that describes someone's emotional state. Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 89) state that the job of cognitive linguists and psychologists is to identify and categorize the emotional and affective vocabulary to reveal the emotional experience of the speaker. Hence, this study is interested in exploring the holistic emotional experience of level eight female students of the Department of English, the College of Arts, at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, by exploring their affective discourse (i.e. linguistic aspect), as a step toward building a framework for emotional well-being.

### **Emotion and Educational Experience**

King and Chen (2019, p. 279) acknowledge that in educational settings, both learners and teachers experience different kinds of positive and negative emotions. Dirks (2001, p. 63) states that emotions and feelings have a powerful role to play in adult learning experiences, as they can “impede or motivate learning.” Emotions are subjective; nevertheless, they have a significant impact on vital aspects of the educational and learning process as well as the performance of both the learners and the teachers (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). Studies on emotions “arising from an experience influence the content of their cognitions, motivations, and actions, as well as the way they act and process information.” (Boekaerts, 2007, p. 37). King and Chen (2019, p. 279) argue that emotions can stimulate attention and trigger the process of learning; hence, emotion has an equal impact on what is learned and retained. Hinton, Miyamoto, Della-Chesa (2008, p. 90) also state that intellectual development inherently involves emotional development, as the process of learning will be more successful and effective when stress and fear are minimized. In neurobiology research, Hinton, Miyamoto, and Della-Chesa (2008, p. 88) agree with Fischer, Immordino-Yang, and Waber (2007) in that the brain develops as a result of “a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience. . . [as] the brain's abilities are constructed over time.” Concerning the brain, Rose and Strangeman (2007) state that there are three main brain networks involved in learning, namely, the recognition network, strategic network, and affective network. Hence, the type of affective experience a learner has matters because it shapes the learner's cognitive processes.

Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, and Perry (2002) show that learners' experience is diverse with reference to positive and negative emotions; the most frequent emotions that were reported in their study were pride, hope, enjoyment, relief, anxiety, boredom, and shame. Boekaerts (2007, p. 38) argues that students in the classroom have two goals, i.e., improve their competence and preserve their well-being (self-image). Accordingly, students who have positive educational and learning experience, they "start activity in the mastery or growth pathway;" on the other hand, those who have negative educational and learning experiences "switch to the well-being route" (p. 38). Negative educational and learning experiences are associated with academic emotions such as anxiety, anger, boredom, and hopelessness, whereas positive experiences are related to achievement-related emotions such as hope and joy (Pekrun, 2000). Said and Weda (2018, p. 21) argue that anxiety "has become the most intriguing issue" in learning. "If people are anxious, uncomfortable, or fearful, they do not learn" (Perry, 2006, p. 26). High levels of stress disturb learning, whereas positive emotions encourage it; accordingly, in educational settings, the secure environment needs to be provided (McEwen & Sapolsky, 1995). In a related vein, Meyer and Turner's (2002) concluded that based studies on motivation and interactions between learners and teachers, emotions, motivation, and cognition are interconnected and inseparable. O'Regan (2003) also attempted to explore the emotional aspect of learning by investigating the lived experience of distance-mode learners. O'Regan's study showed that students experienced positive and negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, frustration, excitement, and pride.

### **Emotional Experience Model**

Stein and Levine's (1991) theoretical model assumes that the emotional experience of learning is central to the information being received by learners. When learners receive new information, it has low relevance with existing "schemas," thus, evokes and stimulates the central nervous system (CNS). This process, with a cognitive appraisal that the learners carry out, results in different emotional reactions ranging from anxiety to excitement. Accordingly, Stein and Levine (1991) advocate the learning happens with a sequence of emotions. To address this range of emotional states, a number of models have been proposed.

Russell and Barrett (1999) developed a model in which emotions can be put into two categories, i.e., core affect and prototypical emotional episode. Core affect is a “neurophysiological state consciously accessible as a simple primitive non-reflective feeling most evident in mood and emotion but always available to consciousness” (Russell & Barrett, 2009, p. 104). Core affect, as Russell and Barrett (1999, p. 806) define, refers to “the most elementary consciously accessible affective feelings” and their counterparts, such as pleasure vs. displeasure and tension vs. relaxation. It is a (free-floating) mood and not necessarily directed towards a specific object or person. However, it can be directed when it becomes a prototypical emotional episode. Its structure involves bipolar dimensions (valence and arousal). On the other hand, the prototypical emotional episode is a “complex process that unfolds over time, involves casually connected subevents (antecedent; appraisal; physiological, affective, and cognitive changes; behavioral response; self-categorization), has one perceived cause, and is rare” (p. 805). Similarly, Guerrero, Andersen, and Trost (1998, p. 5) argue that “affect refers to the general valence of an emotional state, whereas emotion refers to specific types or clusters of feelings that occur in response to particular events.”

This dimensional approach, as Posner, Russell, and Peterson (2005) explain, proposes that all core affects arise from two fundamental neurophysiological systems, i.e., valence, a pleasure–displeasure continuum (how negative or positive), and arousal or alertness (how calming or exciting). Each emotion can be viewed from a linear combination as varying degrees of both dimensions, namely, valence and arousal. Valence is defined by adjective pairs like happy-unhappy, pleased-annoyed, or satisfied-unsatisfied. “Pleasure, at the level of subjective experience, summarizes how well one is doing” (Russell & Barrett, 1999, p. 809). The arousal dimension, on the other hand, is identified through adjective pairs such as relaxed-excited or frenzied-sluggish. “Activation, at the level of subjective experience, refers to a sense of mobilization or energy” (Russell & Barrett, 1999, p. 809). Linnenbrink (2007, p. 108) explains that in educational settings, it is essential to differentiate between activation and valence, because, for instance, “activated unpleasant affect may lead to more intense engagement than deactivated unpleasant affect. Happiness (pleasant, neutral activation) may also lead to different patterns of learning and engagement than excitement (activated pleasant).”

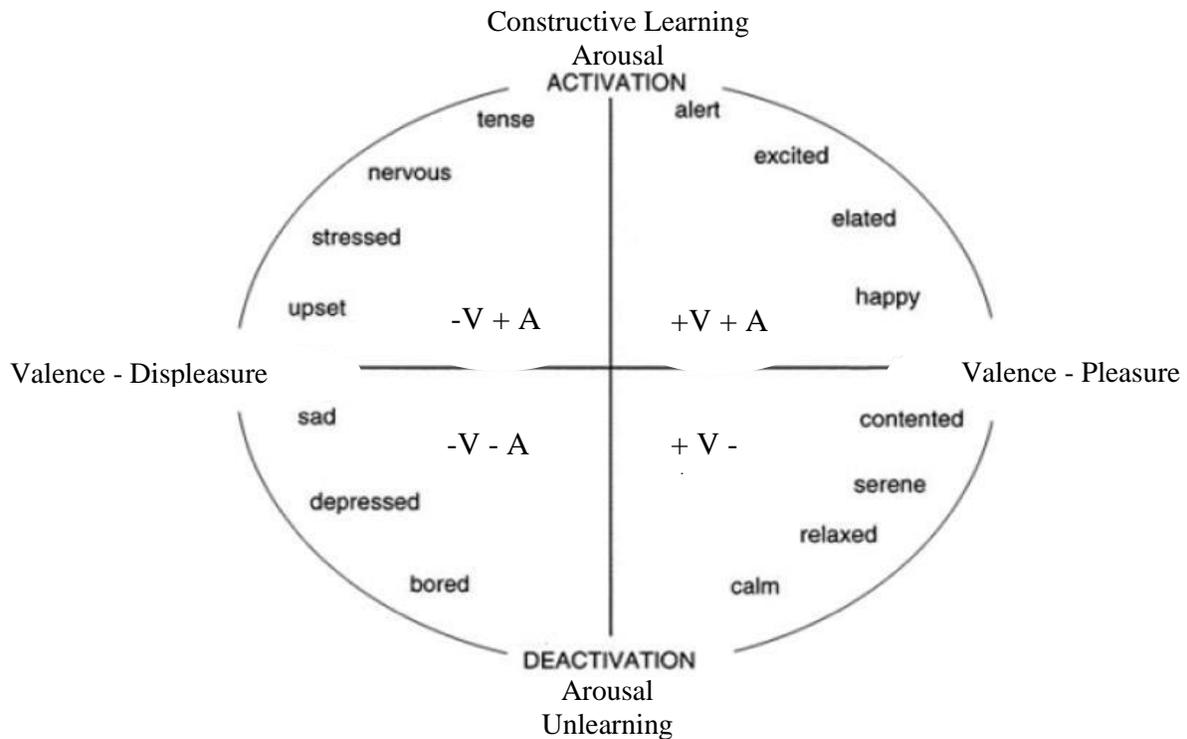


Fig. 1 Russell's (2003) Circumplex Model of Affect

### Methodology and Data

The available literature on emotions and education is mostly related to school students. Nevertheless, scholars such as Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne (2011) and Hagenauer and Volet (2014) underscored the importance of examining emotions in higher educational settings. By its very nature, as Naude, van den Bergh, and Kruger (2014, pp. 211-212) posit, young adult learners' learning experience is complex, which in turn involves "increased cognitive complexity and progressive neuro-biological maturation which leads to changes in thinking processes and the questioning of pre-existing knowledge." Quinlan (206, p. 101) indicates that emotion in higher education has been ignored. This might be due to the way educators view young/adult learners, as being independent and mature hence, they believe they can handle their emotions successfully. Accordingly, this study is interested in exploring the emotional experience of higher education learners. In doing so, the current study is interested in addressing the following questions:

1. How do these students evaluate their learning experience in terms of emotions?
2. What are the elements that encouraged, fostered, and enforced positive academic emotions as well as negative emotions?

## Instruments

Due to the complexity of emotions, this study employed a psychodiscourse analysis, i.e., a methodological triangulation design, which employs both quantitative surveys (the Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R; Elliot & Murayama, 2008) and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) (WEMWS) and qualitative research methods (content/ discourse analysis of the Martínez-Sierra's (2015) semi-structured interview) to evaluate students' emotional experiences. The Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R; Elliot & Murayama, 2008) (see Appendix 1) was administered to assess students' general academic achievement goal orientations and their correlation with their emotions and well-being. The result of the achievement goal scale led the researcher to develop a one question scale asking participants if their goal is to pass with high grade or to avoid failing the course. In addition, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (see appendix 2) is utilized to confirm their feelings by giving them a range of different feelings related to their educational context to select the most suitable one. This scale has hedonic-related items (i.e., happiness, joy, contentment) and eudaimonic-related items (i.e., psychological functioning, positive relationships with others, sense of purpose in life). This scale score is supposed to be between 14-70 (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008).

For the qualitative method, the Martínez-Sierra's (2015) (see Appendix 3) semi-structured interview was employed with some modifications to elicit students' emotional experience by asking them about their feelings, courses, and their educational experience in general. The interviews were analyzed employing psychodiscourse analysis. Russell's (1980, 2003) circumplex model of affect was utilized to examine the core affect in students' discourse. This model was selected because it is well known and has been employed in several studies (e.g., Loizou & Karageorghis 2011; Robinson & Baltrusaitis 2015, Remington, Fabrigar, & Visser 2000). Both *expressive* and *descriptive* lexical items were examined and assigned different emotions based on their locations on the two-dimensional model.

## Participants

The participants were selected randomly and voluntarily from level eight female students from the Department of English at the Colleges of Arts at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal. The Department of English offers a three-year B.A. program. These students were prospect graduates; hence, they were chosen to reveal the summative emotional aspect of their educational experience at the department. The number of students who took the surveys was (N=35) students. Nevertheless, the participants were reluctant to take the interview. Those who were willing to conduct the interview were (N=16) students. Some important information was requested in the surveys, namely, the number of years students spent in the department and their GPA. The following table presents a breakdown of the students.

Table 1. GPA of Participants

GPA	5.-4.75	4.50-4.00	3.50-3.00	2.50-2.00	1.50-1.00
Number of students	5	11	14	5	0
Percentage	14%	31%	40%	14%	0%

The majority of the participants have a GPA that ranges from 4.50-4.00 to 3.50-3.00; 14% has a GPA that is between 5.00-4.75, and 14% has a GPA that ranges between 2.50 to 2.00. Regarding the number of years students have been enrolled in the department, 69% of the participants have been enrolled for four years, and 14% have been in the department for five years and six years respectively. Last but not least, only 3% of the participant has been enrolled for three years.

Table 2. Years Spent in the Department

Number of Years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years
Number of students	1	24	5	5
Percentage	3%	69%	14%	14%

## Procedures

The two surveys were created online using Google Form and sent out to level 8 students. Their consent was taken and volunteer students were interviewed to uncover the affective aspect related to their educational experience. The interview was conducted in the

researcher's office individually. To allow the participants to express their emotions freely and provide them with a secure environment, the researcher chose to write their answers rather than recording them. Their names were never recorded or written anywhere. The students are given numbers rather than names. Content analysis was used to identify lexical items, which participants used to express their emotions.

## **Results and Analysis**

Below is an overview of participants' academic emotions. The results of the surveys are first presented first and then the content analysis of the interview is discussed.

### **Results of the Two Surveys**

The achievement goal scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale were employed to examine the students' wellbeing (self-image) and its correlation to their emotions and achievement goals. From the achievement goal scale (see Appendix 4), 80% of the students indicated that their goal is 'to avoid performing poorly compared to others,' 'to avoid performing worse than others,' and 'to avoid an incomplete understanding of my course materials.' As such, their goals were related to *performance avoid goals* and *mastery avoidance goals*. Those who stated that their goal is to do and perform better than other students are 25% (performance-approach goal), whereas 53% disagree with this statement. In addition, only 40% of the participants indicated that their goal is to completely master the material presented in my classes (mastery approach goal). More than 80% of the participants might be trying to avoid failing, rather than achieving high grades. The questionnaire was as follows: When you are enrolled in a course, do you try to obtain high marks or avoid failing the course? 60% of the participants indicated that they try to avoid failing, whereas 40% stated that they aim at obtaining high marks. This is consistent with the percentage of those who adopted the mastery approach goal.

With reference to the wellbeing scale (see Appendix 5), 32% of the participants indicated that (all of the time) they have been optimistic about the future, feeling good about themselves, and interested in new things. However, more than 30% of the participants indicated that they rarely feel relaxed, interested in other people in the department, feel close to other people in the department, or have some energy to spare.

Most importantly, 40% of the participants indicated that sometimes they could deal with problems well, make up their own mind about think, think clearly, or being cheerful or confident. The average score of the wellbeing scale is 46.6 (67%).

Table 3. Distribution of Participants and the Score obtained from The Wellbeing Scale

No	Scores (between 14-70)	Participants (25)
1	21	3 (9%)
2	30-38	14 (40%)
3	41-47	8 (23%)
4	50-57	5 (14%)
5	60-69	5 (14%)
Mean	46.6	35 (100%)

The total score obtained from the wellbeing score ranged from 21 to 69. The average wellbeing score is 46.6 (66%). In order to examine the correlation between the length of the year and the wellbeing of the students, the table below presents the average score of each length of the year:

Table 4. Correlation between Years and Score of Wellbeing

No	Length	Average score
1	3 years	61
2	4 years	55
3	5 years	50
4	6 years	43

Apparently, there is a positive correlation between the length of the year students spent in the department and their wellbeing. The more years students spent enrolled in the department, the lower their score is. However, the correlation between students' GPAs and their wellbeing showed a different patten.

Table 5. Correlation between GPA and Score of Wellbeing

No	GPA	Average score
1	5.00 - 4.75	57

2	4.50 - 4.00	48
3	3.50-3.00	49
4	2.50-2.00	52

From the table above, it is obvious that there is no positive correlation between students' GPA and their wellbeing score. However, the highest scores of wellbeing were obtained by those whose GPAs were between 5.00-4.75 and 2.50-2.00. The lowest score was obtained by those whose GPA ranged from 4.50 and 4.00. It might be due to the stress this group of students feel to keep their GPA between this range or to improve it. In terms of emotion, relevant statements from the WEMWS were aligned with Russell's (2003) circumplex Model of Affect (CMA), to uncover some of the emotional aspects of students' learning experience.

Table 6. The WEMWS Alignment with Russell's (2003) CMA

Dimensional Aspects	the Warwick-Edinburgh mental wellbeing Statements	Emotions
pleasant –activated	I've been feeling optimistic about the future	Optimistic
	I've been feeling interested in other people in the department	Interested
	I've been feeling confident	Confident
	I've been feeling good about myself	Confident
	I've been feeling useful	Confident
	I've been feeling cheerful	Happy
pleasant-deactivated	I've been feeling relaxed	Relaxed
	I've had energy to spare	Rested
	I've been feeling close to other people in the department	Comfortable
	I've been feeling cared about	Satisfied

By viewing the wellbeing scale from an emotional perspective, the researcher was able to locate students' emotions on Russell's (2003) model. Participants' responses were

grouped into two categories, namely, positive (all of the time and often) and negative (rarely and none of the time). The cases of 'some of the time' were discarded as they fall within the normal range.

Table 7. Participants' Emotions Based on the WEMWS Alignment with Russell's (2003)

CMA

Pleasant-Activated (high energy)			
Optimistic	Interested	Confident	Happy
52%	32%	27%	28%
Unpleasant-Deactivated (low energy)		Unpleasant-Activated (high energy)	
Pessimistic	Indifferent	Hesitant	Unhappy
28%	48%	13%	32%
Pleasant-Deactivated			
Relaxed	Rested	Comfortable	Satisfied
15%	16%	18%	22%
Unpleasant-Activated (high energy)		Unpleasant-Deactivated (low energy)	
Stressed	Tense	Uncomfortable	Dissatisfied
24%	26%	20%	14%

The table above shows three modes of feelings, namely, pleasant-activated, unpleasant-deactivated, pleasant-deactivated, and unpleasant-deactivated. In terms of activation, 52% of the participants are optimistic, whereas 28% are pessimistic. However, 48% are disinterested in people in the department and new things. In addition, 27% are confident, and 13% unconfident. Furthermore, 32% expressed unhappiness compared to 28% who are happy. With reference to deactivation, 24% of the participants are stressed, and only 15% are relaxed. Similarly, 16% expressed that they are tense compared to 16% who are rested. In terms of comfort, 20% are uncomfortable, whereas 18% are comfortable in the department. Yet, 22% of the participants are satisfied, and 14% are dissatisfied. These emotions are located in Figure 2 below. The number of negative and positive emotions are almost the same. Students are happy, optimistic, and confident. Having

negative emotions does not necessitate, not experiencing positive emotions. To validate these results, selected students were interviewed to discuss the affective aspects of their learning experience.

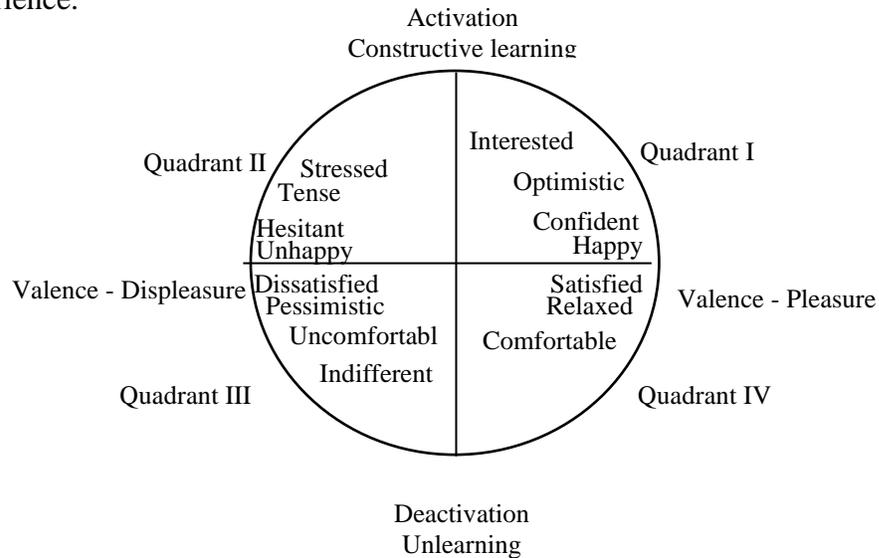


Fig. 2 Students' Emotions Based on WEMWS & Russell's (2003) CMA

### Content Analysis of the Semi-Structured Interview

Psychodiscourse analysis was employed to analyze the emotions of the participants by examining their emotionally loaded expressive and descriptive lexical items utilizing Russell's (2003) Model of Affect. Using the dimensions of valence and activation, the analysis distinguished between the activated and deactivated negative and positive emotions. Below is a breakdown of these emotions, including some illustrative examples. The different emotions were calculated and reported in the table below based on the different quadrants of the model of affect.

Table 8. Psychodiscourse Overview of Participants' Emotions

Types of emotions	Range of emotions	No.	%
Deactivated negative emotions	Exhaustion, tiresome, boredom, frustration, and disappointment	48	46%
Activated negative emotions	Anxiety, tense, fear, scared, stress, and pressure	28	27%

Activated positive emotions	Interest, confidence, pleasure, joy	24	23%
Deactivated positive emotions	Satisfaction	5	5%
Total		105	100%

The content analysis results in table 8 are consistent with the results obtained from the surveys as represented in Fig. 2 above. Participants' (de)activates negative emotions overweight the positive emotions. The most frequent deactivated negative emotion that the participants expressed using various lexical items are fatigue, exhaustion, and boredom. Some representative examples (1-6) (see Appendix 6) participants indicated that by level 8, which is the last level, they are tired and exhausted, which is a deactivated negative emotion. It should be noted that fatigue and exhaustion were connected again to high expectations, competition, and their attempts to meet these expectations and compete. Interestingly, participants expressed their feelings using one metaphor of war, i.e., 'you have to fight,' and 'I'm in a war and the winner is a loser.' One of the participants explained that she will pay a price from her health and sanity when she fights and competes. It should be noted that healthy balanced competition and expectations will offer students a chance to achieve and enjoy their achievement. One pivotal aspect that is missing in these participants' discourse is enjoyment, even when they achieve.

The other deactivated negative emotion is boredom. Examples (8-11) (see Appendix 6) expressed the other deactivated negative emotion, which is boredom. Many participants indicated that their courses are not exciting. They think they are boring and they themselves feel bored in classrooms. Such an emotion made it hard to study. Some of them indicated that they enjoy reading English but not their textbooks. Besides, some of them wanted to learn new things rather than repeating the same knowledge in a number of courses. As an expressive lexical item, the words 'boring,' 'boring,' and 'boredom' appeared in participants' discourse. Furthermore, participants used descriptive expressions such as 'killing,' 'lose me,' and 'having the radio on and confined in your place.' It seems that the lecturing method makes students bored.

Another deactivated negative emotions that are prevalent in participants' discourse is disappointment and frustration. In examples 12-18 (see Appendix 6), participants expressed frustration and disappointment; emotions that were mainly due to a number of factors such as their marks and when their hard work goes unnoticed. All participants used the expressive terms 'frustrating' and 'frustrated' to express their feelings. A similar word is 'disappointed' to express how they feel. However, some of the students used more descriptive negative expressions to comment on their frustrations. For example, 'a dark hole,' 'my hands tied,' and 'it burns and eats you from the inside.' One source of their frustration is described as 'between two hard places,' i.e., they have to study and pass; yet, they do not like to read their boring textbooks. Treating students based on their marks and seeking marks are also sources of frustration and disappointment. In addition, the pressure and high expectations made participants disappointed and frustrated. It is worth to note that the quadrant of the deactivated negative emotions is where learning ceased to happen.

The most prevalent activated negative emotions in the participants' discourse are anxiety, tension, and fear. In essence, tension and fear are symptoms of anxiety. From examples 19-26 (see Appendix 6), there some expressive lexical items as well as descriptive items to indicate that the participants are tense and anxious, especially during exams. They compared themselves to students from the other department, and they think they are the most stressed-out students. In example 8, the participant expressed this using a negatively charged metaphor comparing the Department of English to the curse of the college. Another descriptive item was expressed in example 7, in which the participant described anxiety as something that shakes her whole being and makes her sick. Apparently, anxiety, tension, and fear that participants are going through are a result of exams, high expectations, and high competition. It should be noted that some of the participants in the achievement goal scale showed that they adopted the avoidance goal approach; hence, they are avoiding not achieving or at least not failing. In addition, 60% of the participants that when they are enrolled in a course, they plan on passing rather than getting high marks. This may indicate that such an approach is adopted as a method of dealing with stress and anxiety.

The pressure was one of the salient emotions that can be found in participants' discourse. Much of this pressure was also due to (high) expectations of the teachers. From

examples (27-31) (see Appendix 6), participants believed that they are pressured for a number of reasons, among them is teachers' "sky-high expectations." Participants repeated the expressive lexical item 'pressure' but some of them used negative metaphors such as 'blur my vision,' 'I'm stuck in a corner,' 'a spoiler,' and 'something over your head.' A student indicated that such high expectations made the whole learning experience unhappy (see example 12). High expectations, according to the participants, increased competition among students, which in turn put a lot of pressure on them to meet these expectations. They clarified that they did not enjoy their achievement because they were just trying to meet these expectations. It should be noted that 'pressure' as an expressive lexical item appeared in all participants' discourse. With such feelings related to the quadrant of the activated negative emotions, constructive learning can happen, but negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and pressure should be dominant and should not spoil students' learning experience.

Although participants' affective learning experience has negative emotions, which is typical for learners to have some negative stages through their learning experience, participants indicated that they experienced three activated positive emotions, namely, confidence, interest, and indirectly gratefulness. In examples 32-36 (see Appendix 6), participants contributed these activated positive feelings mostly to the faculty members of the department, which in turn expresses their gratefulness (in)directly. Participants used the word 'confidence' as an expressive lexical item to demonstrate their emotions that they believed that the department built. As such, one of the participants used a descriptive expression comparing her confidence to a building that the department built block by block. On the other hand, participants who were aware of the department nature enjoyed these courses and found them very interesting and exciting. A participant, in example 32 who were struggling, stated that the challenges she faced built her self-confidence because she successfully came over them, and one her confidence was a result of her ability to speak in front of the whole class in English. Such emotions are among the many factors of constructive learning.

It has been noted that satisfaction, which is the only positive deactivated emotion, was expressed implicitly through participants' achievements, such as improving their communication skills, their self-confidence, and supportive members. From examples 37-

41 (see Appendix 6), participants believe that their learning experience, even though some believed, it was negative, was interesting, and they are grateful to everything the department offered them. Their gratefulness shows satisfaction with the quality of education the department offers them. The participants stated that they like department and they feel they belong there. One of the participants expressed her love for the department as the relationship between 'the abuser and the victim.' Some emotions such as pleasure and enjoyment were expressed but they were not among the most dominant emotions that participants shared.

Using the dimensions of valence (positive vs. negative) and activation, the content analysis revealed a number of emotions. The various emotions participants expressed in the interviews were placed in the different quadrants of Russell's model of affect (see Fig. 3 below). The diagram shows the analysis of the most salient emotions that appeared in participants' discourse and placed them in the different quadrants of the affective model. It is apparent that participants have more activated negative emotions than positive activated emotions that can lead to constructive learning. Similarly put, participants experience more deactivated negative emotions compared to deactivated positive emotions. Such feelings may hinder constructive learning and lead to the unlearning stage. It needs to be noted that usually, learning happens in the first and second quadrants. In the third quadrant, some participants decided to ignore these courses that made them go through these emotions and decided not to study these courses. This is one of the coping responses to negative emotions. Such responses that may look as if the participants are resisting these negative emotions may result in unlearning, which is a process that may lead to failure. Achieving a balanced affective experience that enables students to constructively learn is recommended.

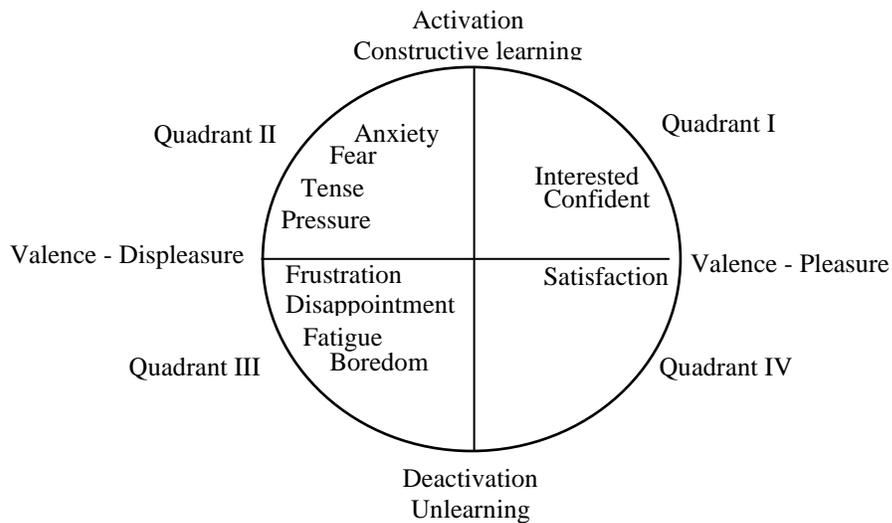


Fig. 3 Participants' Emotions Based on Russell's (2003) CMA

## Discussion

It should be established that this paper does not assume or advocate that students should not experience any negative emotions. On the contrary, negative emotions can be constructive and necessary for constructive learning. Students and learners are supposed to go through these various emotions during the learning process. As Wu (2011, p. 274) states, a number of studies suggested the benefits of “facilitative” anxiety in the process of learning, especially languages. Nevertheless, anxiety should not hinder the learning process or make it a negative experience. In general, to have a successful learning process, learners need to have more activated positive emotions than negative ones, especially negative deactivated emotions.

The results of this study revealed an overview of the participants' emotional aspects of their learning and educational experience, their wellbeing, and their achievement goal approaches. With reference to participants' wellbeing, Jarvela (2011) argues that students' wellbeing is very crucial to their achievement and learning process, as they are correlated positively. That is, positive wellbeing and positive feelings towards their environment will improve their academic achievement and enable them to cope with difficult times. The results of the present study suggested that there is a positive relationship between the

number of years participants spent in the department and their wellbeing. Differently put, there is no positive relationship between participants' GPAs and their wellbeing. However, it is safe to state that the higher the participants' GPAs are, the more inclined to score lower on the wellbeing scale. As noted earlier, this might be due to the stress to improve and keep their GPAs high during the years they are enrolled in the department. From the content analysis, it is now clear why participants with medium-high GPAs have lower wellbeing. This is due to the high competition, and the high expectations teachers have. One of the sources of anxiety was exams. Exams and tests have always been a source of fear in the educational environment. Test anxiety, in a narrow sense, focuses "on fear of failure" (Putwain, 2008, p. 1026). Participants' stress might be due to their achievement approach. That is, they embraced the performance-avoidance goals and mastery avoidance goals. This is consistent with the percentage (60%) of those who indicated that they want to pass. Such an attitude might be because participants are tired. Many expressed that at level 8, they feel exhausted because they have 'fighting' for the last three years (at least).

"Learning needs. . . is a cover term for all the factors connected to the process of learning like attitude, motivation, awareness, personality, learning styles and strategies, social background, etc." (Xiao, 2006, p. 75). Accordingly, the Department of English students' needs should be addressed in order to provide a healthy and safe learning environment. Students' wellbeing needs to be a priority and a goal because, as Delanty (2003) argues, education is one of the tools to prepare good citizens who are capable of successfully participating in their communities. Graduates with high levels of wellbeing are more likely to be successful family members, citizens, and employees. Moreover, the department needs to address the avoidance goal approach. Students need to have a balanced approach between mastery and avoidance. Avoidance approach may only increase anxiety and stress and decrease emotions related to optimism, happiness, and curiosity. Hence, it may discourage constructive learning.

One way of viewing the Affect model and learners' emotions that is proposed by Kort, Reilly, and Picard (2001), is that learners' emotions are not constant; they change during the learning process as they move through these four quadrants. In more detail, they believe that learners start with positive emotions constructing knowledge, and this is the stage where learners work with ease as they have not met any challenging issues. Once,

obstacles start showing up, they move to the negative emotion quadrant where learners may experience confusion, anger, or stress. If they fail in solving their learning challenges, learners may move to the third quadrant, where they experience frustration and fatigue. This third negative stage is where learning ceased to happen. Some learners move to the fourth positive quadrant and decide to discard the issue and stop learning.

Nevertheless, foreign language learners have a different cycle. That is, they start with the second stage, namely quadrant II, where they start facing obstacles and challenges and experiencing negative emotions from the very beginning, especially if they did not know the nature of the department from the very beginning. When these issues are solved, they move to quadrant I and then quadrant IV, where they enjoy positive emotions. On the contrary, if they fail to solve their problematic issues, they may move to quadrant III and experience negative emotions such as frustration, sadness, and fatigue. Some participants were imprisoned in quadrant II or quadrant III. However, some learners move to quadrant IV and decide to overlook these issues and decided to stop studying challenging courses, and passing became their goals. This is when learners quit learning. This hypothesis is consistent with the result of the wellbeing scale, where students with low GPAs exhibited higher levels of wellbeing compared to students with higher GPAs.

Blanchette and Richards (2010, p. 562) differentiate between integral and incidental affect. That is, incidental affect, i.e., an affective state (mood), is triggered by a broader context, past incidents, or a personality trait. Integral affect "is induced by the target materials that participants are processing in the task." From the content analysis, it is apparent that there are both types of affects, incidental, and integral. Nevertheless, most of the sources of stress that participants pointed out was integral. It is recommended that the Department of English create a safe environment for students to express themselves and address their anxiety issues. The students may not trust, allowing the department to know about how they feel and what they think of them or their method of teaching and encouragement. However, friendly members whom the students can trust might be appointment as counselors to address their issues and make their voices to be heard.

Linguistically speaking, participants expressed gratefulness and satisfaction, mostly indirectly and implicitly. On the other hand, the other activated positive and negative emotions, as well as deactivated negative emotions, were structured directly

employing expressive and descriptive lexical choices. This might be due to the dominance and strong impact these salient emotions have on their learning experience.

## **Conclusion**

Learning a second language is a long process, if not endless. It is not like any other experience, especially for young adult learners. Students' achievement and their learning process are influenced by the emotions they may experience while they are learning. Thus, the current study aimed at exploring the emotional aspects of the learning experience the Department of English at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University offered. As such, the research selected level 8 students who will graduate by the end of the term to obtain a summative overview of their affective experience. Pinker (1997, p. 41) explains that emotions are as complex as our physical organs; thus, a mix-method approach was employed to investigate it. Besides, the mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to obtain reliable findings and offer a clear understanding of the issue under examination. Students' wellbeing should be one of the goals of any learning and educational system. Negative activated emotions should be paid attention to and address their sources. On the other hand, positive activated emotions should be enforced and encouraged.

Pedagogically speaking, students' need to have a balanced affective experience. Positive emotions should be the focus to facilitate learning and academic achievement. That is, in order to activate constructive learning, students need to experienced both positive and negative emotions that are geared towards learning, not frustration. Thus, stress is constructive when it is followed by success or positive feelings; yet, it is destructive if it is not handled properly by both teachers and students. Students' emotional issues need to be the focus of schools and instructors equally. Recognizing and anticipating negative emotions allow instructors to assist students to engage better in the learning process, deal with these emotions, and overcome such emotional obstacles.

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## Appendices

### Appendix (1): Semi-structured interview questions

- 1) What feelings or emotions do you experience towards your courses? Why do you feel this?
- 2) What feelings or emotions do you experience in your classrooms? Why do you feel this?
- 3) What feelings or emotions do you experience just before your English class? And later? Why do you feel this?
- 4) What feelings or emotions do you experience when you are studying? And when do you do not study? Why do you feel this?
- 5) What feelings or emotions do you experience when you successfully work on an exercise or understand a lesson? And when you cannot? Why do you feel this?
- 6) What feelings or emotions do you experience in a good English class? And in a bad class? Why do you feel this?
- 7) What feelings or emotions do you experience when a teacher is explaining? Why do you feel this,
- 8) What feelings or emotions do you experience for a good teacher? And for a teacher, that is not good?
- 9) What feelings or emotions do you experience in a test? Why do you feel this?
- 11) How long do you stay on campus, GPA, how many friends do you have? What is your GPA? Do you communicate with your teachers?

**Appendix 2:**

**A well-being survey (The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)**

Scale - None of the time/Rarely/Some of the time/Often/All of the time

I've been feeling optimistic about the future

I've been feeling useful

I've been feeling relaxed

I've been feeling interested in other people in the department

I've had energy to spare

I've been dealing with problems well

I've been thinking clearly

I've been feeling good about myself

I've been feeling close to other people in the department

I've been feeling confident

I've been able to make up my own mind about things

I've been feeling loved

I've been feeling cared about

I've been interested in new things

I've been feeling cheerful

### **Appendix (3)**

#### Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (AGQ-R)

Elliot, A. J., & Murayama, K. (2008). On the measurement of achievement goals: Critique, illustration, and application. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100 (3), 613-628.

SCALE: 1-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

#### Mastery-approach goal items

1. My aim is to completely master the material presented in this class.
2. I am striving to understand the content as thoroughly as possible
3. My goal is to learn as much as possible.

#### Mastery-avoidance goal items

4. My aim is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.
5. My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn.
6. I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the course material.

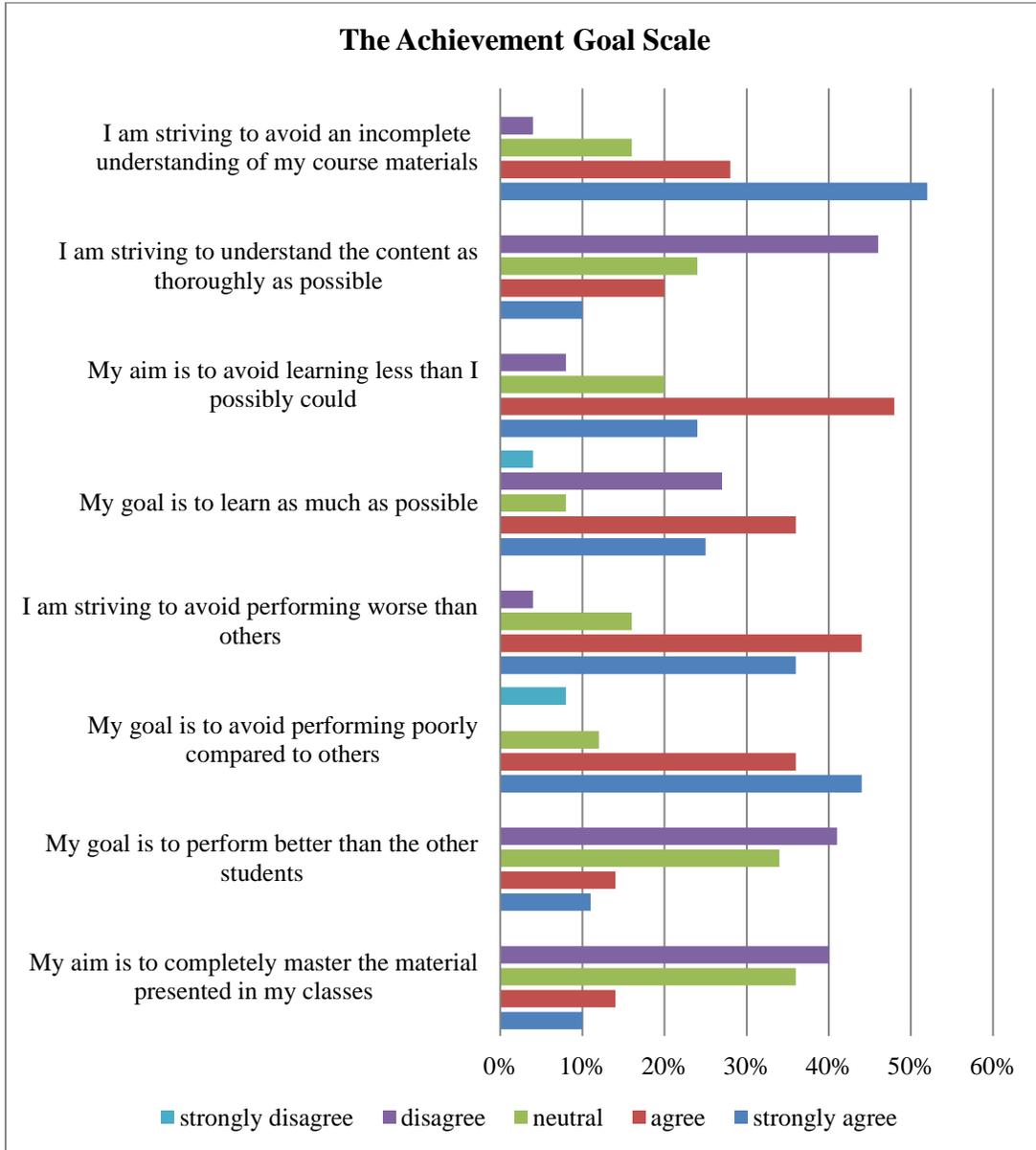
#### Performance-approach goal items

7. My aim is to perform well relative to other students.
8. My goal is to perform better than the other students.
9. I am striving to do well compared to other students.

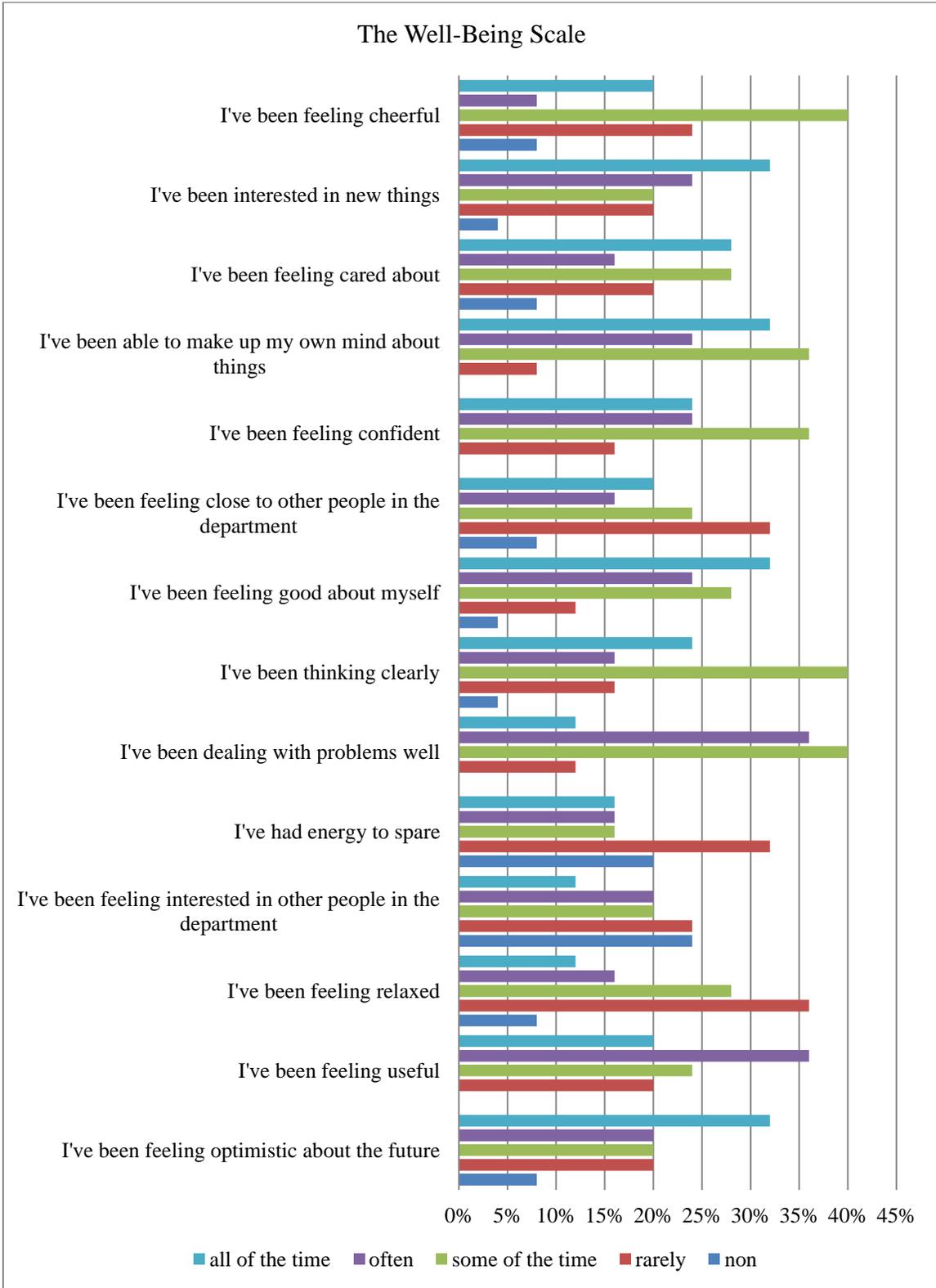
#### Performance-avoidance goal items

10. My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others.
11. I am striving to avoid performing worse than others.
12. My aim is to avoid doing worse than other students.

**Appendix (4)**



**Appendix (5)**



## Appendix (6)

1. I always feel exhausted and it is only the English students who are always tired and exhausted. The other students from the other department do not say that their courses make them feel tired. (student 8)
2. We have a lot of tasks and presentations, sometimes I don't know if we have so many or I'm just tired and it feels like I have so many things to do. Sometimes I feel like I can sleep for days, this how tired I feel. It is mental, not physical. (student 9)
3. Courses are boring because we are given too much information and I feel tired in class and bored . . . I always finish my classes, and I leave immediately. I have a few friends but I decide to leave. I feel tired and exhausted and prefer to go home and relax. (student 11)
4. Too much attention is negative, no off day, always on. I am tired and exhausted. I try sometimes to avoid some people in the department. (student 14)
5. By the 8<sup>th</sup> level, I feel so tired. I'm beaten. My enjoyments started going up and down, I guess it does when my marks go up and down. (student 15)
6. I want to achieve but you have to fight to be noticed, it is exhausting. I feel like I'm in a war and the winner is a loser because I know I will be tired and there is a price I will pay from my health and sanity. (student 16)
7. There is nothing exciting about our courses. I like English but I don't like our courses, they are boring. I like to read but I don't like to read our textbooks . . . I enjoy very few classes, the rest are boring and nothing new. Some teachers are interesting and that's why I find their classes interesting but when I go home to study, I can hardly get myself to open the book. I fall asleep this is how boring it is. (student 8)
8. The teachers are all great, they do their best, some are interesting people and they care and some are boring and they do not care. I guess this is normal. (student 9)
9. However, in some courses, I feel bored. They are boring because we are given too much information and I feel tired in such classes and bored. . . Some doctors are great, cultivated, but they lose me because they are boring as they talk the whole

- time in class nonstop, they do not ask or discuss anything. They are interesting and knowledgeable but they are boring because of their style. (student 11)
10. Some courses can be more interesting and challenging such as Discourse analysis. When I took this course I wanted to learn more but I was frustrated because it was boring. We are still discussing context. I have to admit that the department equipped me with skills but then they did not want me to use it such as critical thinking. (student 13)
  11. Setting for almost two hours listening is killing, what am I supposed to do? It's boring, it is like having the radio on for two hours just listening and being confined in your place and you can do nothing. That's why I busy myself with my phone, playing games or watching something interesting. I know I should not but it is very boring. (student 16)
  12. My experience becomes positive when I feel genuinely appreciated and my hard work recognized and does not go unnoticed, which can be quite frustrating. (student 3)
  13. And I want to pass and I would hate to fail any course. It is very frustrating. Sometimes I feel like I'm in a dark hole and cannot get out of it. I sought help but I know it depends on me. (student 8)
  14. I get really tense during classes. Courses are very difficult for me. A lot of theories and I don't know where these things are, why do we study them and how are we going to use them? It's frustrating. I feel like my hands tied. After class, I feel like someone sets me free. (student 10)
  15. I think a good teacher is the one who respects and cares about us and does not have high expectations and not to treat students based on their marks. It is frustrating. It burns and eats me from the inside. The department experience is interesting but tiring. (student 11)
  16. Members here do not appreciate students' effort and they don't encourage us, judge us based on our marks. Very frustrating. . . And I know they will treat me based on my marks and this increases my frustration and anxiety. . . It is frustrating because it is hard to get marks. (student 12)

17. Some courses can be more interesting and challenging such as Discourse analysis. When I took this course I wanted to learn more but I was frustrated because it was boring. (student 13)
18. I really feel stressed when attending my classes because of the teacher's sky-high expectations. Meeting their expectations rather than the outcomes of the courses is very stressful. I don't want to disappoint them. Their high expectations made studying very stressful. It is not encouraging, they are pressuring me. I am really disappointed and frustrated. (student 14)
19. Of course, when I understand the lesson I feel at ease and when it is complicated, which is 99% of the time, I get really tense because I am thinking of exams. I get a headache and my heart starts racing. (student 8)
20. Exams make me tense because I don't want to lose marks. (student 9)
21. I get really tense during classes. Courses are very difficult for me. A lot of theories and I don't know why we study them and how we are going to use them. It's frustrating. Actually, sometimes some teachers make you feel more anxious all the time, in the classroom, during exams, and after exams. Sometimes I just feel like running off and going somewhere far away just to take a break. (student 10)
22. Some difficult courses made me scared and terrified but I always tell myself I came a long way and I can do this. (student 11)
23. Competition among students is very high and this is very difficult to cope with. It is discouraging. And I know they will treat me based on my marks and this increases my frustration and anxiety. (student 12)
24. I really feel stressed when attending my classes because of teachers' sky-high expectations. Meeting their expectations rather than the outcomes of the courses is very stressful. I don't want to disappoint them. (student 14)
25. I guess negative feedback makes me sad, anxious, unconfident. It shakes my whole being badly, I feel sick in my stomach. Positive feedback makes me feel good. (student 15)
26. The students of the Department of English are the only students who are stressed out. It is like we are the curse of the College of Arts. (student 16)

27. My experience is negative mostly due to the insane amount of pressure that some instructors place on me that could sometimes blur my vision. . . .meeting certain expectations. (student 3)
28. Their high expectations made studying very stressful. It is not encouraging, they are pressuring me. . . . And I hate when they single me out with their high expectations because I feel pressured and stressed and other students feel discouraged. (student 14).
29. The pressure to do well is high and the expectation is very high and this puts a lot of pressure on me. I feel like I'm stuck in a corner and I have to meet their expectations. I cannot take a break. (student 6)
30. As I told you I feel I belong and I am content with myself and the department changed me a lot and improved my communication skills but I can safely say my learning experience was unhappy. Yes I was excited and interested and motivated. I am workaholic by nature but the high expectations are a spoiler. I can say my learning experience is unhappy as a result of these high expectations.. Some students may have liked it but I don't. (student 14)
31. High expectations increase unhealthy competition among students which leads to a lot of pressure on all of us. You feel there is something over your head and it is not healthy (student 16)
32. In general, I am more confident than before. The challenges, I mean the courses, I faced in the department built my confidence block by block and I am grateful to them. (student 15)
33. Just recently I started having these positive feelings. Arts of speech changed me. My self-confidence increased. I owe them this. Although when I used to present, I used to shake a lot and I had to set. . . I was so scared but at the end of the term, I changed. (student 15)
34. Some teachers are interesting and that's why I enjoy their classes. (student 8)
35. Sometimes some information seems interesting but there is nothing new, I guess. . . . The teachers are all great, they do their best, some are interesting people and they care. (student 9)

36. I am really interested in literature more than linguistics because it is a one-time experience. I am a reader and I am interested in reading literature. Literature courses are new and interesting. Unlike linguistics, it is everywhere and we do it every day, nothing is new about it. (student 13)
37. (satisfaction) All staff are trying as much as they can to make things better. (student 6)
38. (satisfaction) My college education experience was very rich and pleasing. In addition, it was exceptional, especially that I'm surrounded by supportive, passionate instructors and kind colleagues. Our department served us the best they could and I'm thankful. (student 7)
39. (satisfaction) The teachers are all great, they do their best, some are interesting people and they care. (student 9)
40. (satisfaction) I like my courses. I enjoyed translation, literature, and linguistics. There are no negative feelings towards the people. (student 11)
41. (satisfaction) I am really interested in literature more than linguistics because it is a one-time experience. I am a reader and I am interested in reading literature. Literature courses are new and interesting. Unlike linguistics, it is everywhere and we do it every day, nothing is new about it. (student 13)



**Teaching Stress-timed Rhythm of English at the Japanese Elementary School  
Level: Focusing on the Effects of Using Chants**

**Yuko Hakozaiki**

*Osaka Kyoiku University, Kashiwara, Osaka, Japan*

**Yuya Nakagawa**

*Mie University, Tsu, Mie, Japan*

**Bio-profiles:**

**Yuko Hakozaiki** is Professor in the Faculty of Education at Osaka Kyoiku University, Kashiwara, Osaka, Japan. She is currently engaged in teacher training at university. Her research interests include pronunciation instruction for beginning-level learners, and collaboration between primary and secondary schools in English language education. **Email:** [hakozaiki@cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp](mailto:hakozaiki@cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp)

**Yuya Nakagawa** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Mie University, Tsu, Japan. He specializes in Cognitive Linguistics, educational technology, and English language education. He has over 15 years experience in a variety of English teaching contexts, including junior and senior high schools, universities, cram schools, and companies.

**Abstract**

It is noted that suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation are notoriously challenging for educators to teach. The purpose of this study is to look at the effects of learning English stress-timed rhythm using chants with Japanese elementary school children as a study subject. The goal is to see which effects this technique has on overall intelligibility. Using a quantitative research design in experimental conditions, arranged as a controlled field-experiment, the cause-and-

effect factors of chants were used as a treatment on subjects to find any possible effects on intelligibility output thereafter. Using empirical procedures (gathered through voice-recording technology), this study made use of independent *t*-testing, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients, Gain Scores, Stepwise Multiple Regression and Tolerance Correlations to explore the dataset.

In this paper, ninety-one elementary school children were instructed on English pronunciation. Sentence stress was visualized to promote awareness and understanding of the differences between the syllable-timed rhythm of Japanese and the stress-timed rhythm of English throughout the student body involved. Three different types of methods were utilized: 1) English rhythm swaying, 2) reciting aloud with rhythm, and 3) reciting aloud with music. Pre and Post instruction, recordings of students' pronunciations were taken. Then, using a criteria compiled of measures of intelligibility, experienced native-level teachers of EFL evaluated the recorded data. The outcomes of the analysis suggest that explicit teaching of the prosodic features of pronunciation using chants has a significant effect on intelligibility. Even though sentence-level stress was focused in this study, there was a significant improvement in pronunciation skills and overall intelligibility was found to be effected more by segmental features when compared to sentence-level stress. This could be due to the fact that the young learners have a tendency to pay more attention to pronunciation than stress when they are asked to pronounce English phrases or sentences.

***Keywords:*** *chants, phonological instruction, segmental features, suprasegmental features, sentence-level stress, intelligibility*

## **Introduction**

English is regarded as one of the world's standard languages for communication. As a result, it carries a special status among all foreign languages in Japan, and it is targeted by the government as a priority for foreign language teaching. Teaching English is part of a strategy to globalize education, hence more and more emphasis is put on communication skills. There is currently an international attention on Japan's English educational policies because the country is hosting the international sporting

community in the 2020 Olympics. As such, there is a growing need for Japanese citizens with capabilities and intelligibility in L2 languages; especially English. There is an obvious shift in the usefulness of second language acquisition in education currently, and as Ellis (2007) maintains, “learners learn best when they have a clear social need for the L2.” The emphasis and reactionary policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) connote an urgency and need for L2 acquisition models to help address the increasing need for competent English users in Japan. While comprehensive curriculum has been developed to teach all four skills, one area that is missing is a model for teaching how to pronounce sentences with appropriate prosody for effective communication.

In 2013, MEXT released new curriculum guidelines for elementary schools, including the introduction of English as an official subject for the first time. The new guidelines will be implemented from the next academic year which begins in April 2020. English will start to be taught from the third grade once a week on an informal basis to “lay the foundation for communication skills.” Starting in the fifth grade, English will become an official subject that will be formally graded. The third and fourth graders are expected to become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of English and to learn its differences from the Japanese language” (MEXT, 2008, 2017). Teachers are expected to encourage students to become aware of the differences between the syllable-timed rhythm of Japanese and the stress-timed rhythm of English. In the fifth and sixth grades, the teachers must specifically deepen students’ understanding of the basic characteristics of English word stress, phrase stress, and sentence stress. Thus, it is more important than ever to offer a guide to proper pronunciation of stress at various levels.

Chanting is regarded as “a rhythmic reinforcement technique that is particularly suited to practicing the suprasegmental features of English” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p.298). The effects of using chants in Japanese elementary school is widely mentioned by MEXT and chants are included in almost every lesson in “*We can! 1*” and “*We can! 2*,” the textbooks distributed by MEXT to support the new curriculum. However, little study based on evidence with statistical analysis has been done to actually explore the effects of using chants. The main purpose of the present research

is to evaluate the levels of Japanese elementary school student's oral production in terms of segmental features, sentence-level stress, and intelligibility, to reveal the effectiveness of using chants, and to utilize the findings for improved pronunciation instruction.

Above all, this research aims to produce findings that can contribute to the instruction of pronunciation of prosodic elements of English using chants in order to foster effective communication in English by Japanese elementary students.

## **Theoretical Background**

### ***Intelligibility***

In foreign language pronunciation instruction, there have been two contrasting principles: the nativeness principle and the intelligibility principle. The nativeness principle “holds that it is both possible and desirable to achieve native-like pronunciation in a foreign language” while the intelligibility principle “holds that learners simply need to be understandable” (Levis, 2005, p. 370).

Levis (2005) observes that in the 1950s and 1960s when the audio-lingual teaching method developed by Fries et al. was the mainstream, English learners aimed for pronunciation close to that of the native speaker. Over the last 30 years, however, intelligibility has replaced the native speaker pronunciation as the appropriate goal in pronunciation teaching (Field, 2005). As Grant (2014) has stated, “pronunciation goals are now more realistic and achievable” and “[t]he majority of present-day teachers have abandoned the goal of perfect, native-like speech in favor of clear, fluent speech that is intelligible to the listener” (p. 4). She also states that “much more feasible and desirable than the goal of a native-like accent are the goals of improved intelligibility and comprehensibility” (p. 10).

In line with these studies, in this study we will adopt intelligibility as one of the primary evaluation criteria for assessing the English pronunciation by elementary school children.

What is intelligibility? According to Kenworthy (1987), intelligibility is “being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation.” On the other hand, Nelson (1982) contends that intelligibility means “apprehension of the message

intended by the speaker.”

In view of the international spread of English, Smith (1992) observes that speakers of different varieties of English are not necessarily intelligible to one another. He suggests that “understanding is not speaker- or listener-centered but is interactional between speaker and listener” and divides understanding into three categories: 1) intelligibility: word/utterance recognition; 2) comprehensibility: word/utterance meaning (locutionary force); and 3) interpretability: meaning behind word/utterance (illocutionary force) (p, 76).

In this paper, we will adopt the first category from Smith’s work that defines intelligibility because our study analyses children’s speech with emphases on the recognition of words and utterances rather than the understanding of the meaning of the utterances.

### ***Segmental and Suprasegmental Features***

Opinions are divided as to whether emphasis should be placed on learning segmental features (i.e. vowels and consonants) or suprasegmental features (i.e. stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) in teaching pronunciation. In Grant’s words, “when we consider what pronunciation entails, most of us think first of consonants and vowels.” She also states, “native speakers use suprasegmental features unconsciously” and “native-speaking teachers are seldom aware of speech features like English rhythm and intonation and how they impact meaning unless those concepts are explicitly pointed out” (Grant, 2014, pp. 13-14).

Suprasegmental features are said to play an important role in improving learners’ intelligibility and comprehensibility because they show what is important in a speaker’s message and convey the feeling of the speaker in communicating information (Hahn, 2004; Field, 2005; Zielinski, 2008).

Based on the fact that it has been reported that teaching suprasegmental features improves the intelligibility of English learners, Hahn (2004) examined native English speakers’ reactions to three versions of non-native speakers’ speech: with primary stress correctly placed, incorrectly placed, or missing entirely. It was shown that the error in primary stress led to negative evaluations by native speakers, which, in turn,

led to the conclusion that suprasegmental features should be emphasized in teaching pronunciation.

In his study of intelligibility, Field (2005) focused on a single prosodic element, lexical stress. He conducted an experiment in which native listeners and non-native listeners listened to speech in which lexical stress and vowel quality were intentionally manipulated; the result showed that errors in the word stress positions affected intelligibility.

Zielinski (2008), who conducted an experiment by letting three English native speakers listen to utterances of three native speakers of Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese, stated that the stress misallocation makes the utterances less intelligible.

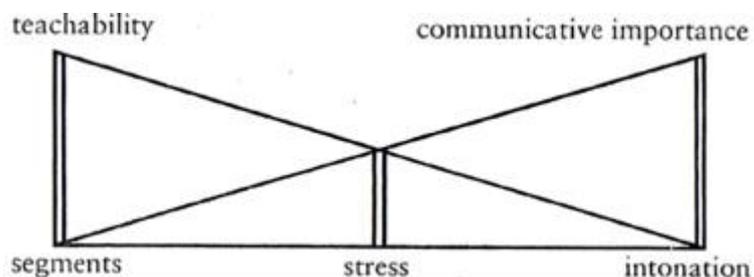
Fujimori et al. (2014) investigated whether Japanese ESL learners could acquire English prosodic focus marking and concluded that they could perceive, but not produce, prosodic focus marking due to the fact that the prosodic system of Japanese is transferred to English.

Based on the above-mentioned studies, the current study takes the approach that first priority should be placed on teaching suprasegmental features. Which suprasegmental features should be emphasized then?

It has been pointed out that suprasegmental features have the role of directing the listener's attention to important information during the flow of speech. In this regard, Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) state that intonation is important in discourse, but particularly difficult to teach. However, individual sound segments are relatively easy to teach, but relatively less important for communication. They conclude that word-stress, which is relatively easy to teach and directly contributes to communication, is the “most convenient focal point for any course in pronunciation” (p. 73).

**Figure 1**

*Communicative importance and teachability (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994)*



### ***Effects of Using Chants***

Many Japanese learners of English recognize the differences between the segmental features of Japanese and English. However, most are not aware of the differences in the suprasegmental features. Notably in Japanese, each syllable is pronounced almost equally regardless of high or low pitches. English stands in contrast to this. Content words, such as main verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, get stressed, and function words, such as articles, auxiliary verbs, pronouns and prepositions, do not get stressed. The stressed and non-stressed parts are repeated regularly at constant intervals and the stressed words are pronounced with more strength and longer in time than the unstressed words. Japanese is therefore often called a language with syllable-timed rhythm while English is a language with stress-timed rhythm. Thompson (2001) insists that English intonation and sentence-stress patterns have to be consciously learnt and practiced since Japanese does not have the equivalent of ‘weak’ forms of words. We believe that understanding the characteristics of English stress patterns will help elementary school learners to speak English with higher intelligibility.

Zielinski and Yates (2014) suggest instructors should approach pronunciation in a systematic way and urge teachers to integrate pronunciation instruction into every lesson. Brewster and Ellis (2002) state that “children love songs, rhymes and chants and their repetitive nature and rhythm make them an ideal vehicle for language learning” (p. 162). They also remark that suprasegmental features such as stress and rhythm can be practiced in a natural way using songs and chants. In the present study,

we hypothesize that chants are an effective way to develop students' sense of the stress-timed rhythm in English. The primary purpose of our study is to investigate the effects that chants have on the intelligibility of students' English language.

### ***Learning Style***

It should be noted that Natividad and Batang (2018) summarize that “a majority of lecturers and teachers are not aware of their students' learning styles.” Thus, illuminating a more specific definition of learning styles is important. Berman (1998) mentions learning styles as follows;

Our useful idea from NLP is that we take in information chiefly through the eye, ear and movement, and that we each have our own preferred learning style. As communicators we need to work to the varied strengths of our audience and as teachers we need to work to the varied strengths of our students, rather than get stuck in our own preferred style and impose this on others. The aim is not to put people into categories, which is to limit potential, but to teach multimodally and reach everyone in the group.

(Berman, 1998, p. 1)

This stance is in line with Ellis (2005), who also states that for L2 learning to be successful, “instruction [must be] matched to students' particular aptitude for learning.” In addition, Berman (1998) classifies the learner's learning style into three types: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual learners learn by looking at things, so they prefer that content is written on paper, they take notes during class, and benefit from visual teaching materials to facilitate learning. Auditory learners learn by listening to things, so they learn by listening to words and listening to music during class to help them learn. Kinesthetic learners learn through movement, such as playing games and role play, rather than sitting and studying throughout the whole class.

Presenting various ways in which kinesthetic reinforcement is built into the pronunciation teaching, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) claim that kinesthetic reinforcement is often neglected in traditional pronunciation classes. Guillen and Bermejo (2011) point out, “[l]earning English through music, movement and art

stimulated the learners' multiple intelligences and helped them develop visualization abilities and create a rich linguistic environment in which language was internalized" (p. 44).

In our experiment, we followed Berman and employed three distinct methods: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. For visual, we presented text; for auditory, we incorporated reading with music and rhythm; for kinesthetic, we had the learners sway to the rhythm of English. We present the experiment below.

### **Research Questions**

In this study, three research questions are put forward:

- 1) Does the teaching method of using chants show any significant effects on the improvement of the suprasegmental features of sentence-level stress usage among Japanese elementary school students?
- 2) Does the teaching method of using chants have a ripple effect on the improvement of Japanese elementary school students' English pronunciation of segmental features?
- 3) Are chants effective for Japanese elementary school students with regards to improving their intelligibility in English?

Regarding Research Question 1), we guess that chants based instruction helps students improve the suprasegmental features since it focuses on intonation, rhythm and stress. With reference to Research Question 2), we predict that the improvement of Japanese elementary school students' English pronunciation of segmental features can be found as well. There are two reasons for that. First, by using chants to teach sentence-level stress, it is thought that the distinction between stressed syllables and unstressed syllables clarify, which is thought to improve the pronunciation of individual words. Second, because Japanese has no stress, no distinction between the stressed vowels and unstressed vowels, some pay more attention to pronunciation which Japanese has the equivalent of, which leads to insights into functional outcomes. In particular for Research Question 3), we hypothesize that because of improving the suprasegmental features of sentence-level stress by chants in line with previous studies, their intelligibility in English will be greater.

## **Experiment**

### ***Participants***

The participants were 91 students aged 10 to 11 years old in the fifth grade at an elementary school in the Kansai region of Japan. Most students began learning English in “Foreign Language Activities,” an annual credited 35-hour course from April of the fifth grade.

### ***Study Design***

There were a total of 13 English classes in the semester from January 30th through March 13th, 2018. The students received instructions to read English sentences aloud during the first 10 minutes of a 45-minute class. The students had learned these sentences in earlier classes so they were familiar with them. The first and last recordings were the pre-test and post-test recordings of this experiment’s texts. The pre-test recordings were completed in the first week of the semester, and the post-test recordings were completed during the second to last class. Over the course of the semester, we conducted pronunciation training.

The instruction was divided into three parts: 1) syllable training, 2) sentence-level stress training, and 3) prosody reading training (Appendix 1).

“Milk” in Japanese has three syllables/morae, but in English, “milk” has only one syllable. During the syllable training, the students were asked to pronounce familiar words such as lemon, melon, milk, pink, dance, and lunch, and the music score of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” was presented with English and Japanese lyrics in order for the students to become aware of the differences between Japanese and English syllable structures.

For the sentence-level stress and prosody reading training, we utilized visual aids. The students were provided with sentences that had sentence-level stress marks and illustrations to indicate sentence stress and to promote awareness and understanding of English rhythm patterns. Finally, for the prosody reading, the students pronounced the sentences to the tempo and rhythm of music.

Relying on the findings of the learning styles of Berman (2011), three differentiating methods were employed: 1) swaying to the rhythm of English, 2) reading aloud to a

rhythm, and 3) reading aloud to music. In the first method, while reading aloud, the students moved their bodies according to the sentence stress pattern, indicated by stress dots above the sentence. In the second method, the students were asked to read aloud to the built-in keyboard rhythm pattern. In the third method, they read aloud to such music as “Little Brown Jug” or “Yankee Doodle.” Each line of the text was read on the first and second beats of each bar. A song with four beats is desirable because there are two beats before the next line of the sentence, so that they can read the text without rushing. In addition to that, if there are words before the first sentence stress, those words must be uttered in the previous bar, and there is no room for those words in a three-beat song. There is no fundamental difference in the students’ reading style between the second and third methods. The only difference is whether or not there is a melody, which might make the students concentrate more on the four-beat rhythm in the second method.

### ***Methodology***

The ontological design pattern of this paper is characterized by quantitative methods, chosen to enrich data-analysis objectively, realized as a controlled field-experiment whereby data collection was achieved through the use of technology and expert assessors. The employment of ZOOM H4n Pro Handy recordings allowed for rich data to be analysed by the multiple expert evaluators, with consistent sound-quality. Not only did the recordings allow evaluators to rewind, increase volume and pause recordings but they were easily shared via a digital cloud sphere; an important logistical consideration.

Ninety-one recordings were collected and two sets of text were used in the present study (Appendix 2). The English text of the pre-test is composed of English learned in the first and second semesters. English text learned in the third semester is added to the English text of the post-test, but it is not included in the evaluation.

In order to verify the effectiveness of the pronunciation teaching method employed for the experiment, the students’ pronunciations were recorded before and after the exercise and evaluations were carried out by three native speakers of English, who are all experienced teachers of English as a foreign language (see Table 1).

**Table 1***List of the Evaluators*

	Nationality	Sex	Occupation	Remarks
A	US	Male	Faculty at University in Japan	currently teaching English in a teacher-training course
B	Canada	Male	Graduate student in English education at an university in Japan	currently teaching English at an elementary school in Japan
C	Australia	Female	High school teacher of English, Japanese and history in Australia	taught at kindergarten for one year and high school for two years in Japan

The variables under study for the current analysis were segmental features, sentence-level stress, and overall intelligibility. Students' recordings were evaluated into three categories on a scale of 1-5, based on the "Evaluation Criteria" and the "Scale for Oral Reading Test" (see Tables 2 & 3).

**Table 2***Evaluation Criteria*

1	Segmental features	The pronunciation of individual sounds as good as sounds in connected speech
2	Sentence-level stress	The use of sentence-level stress
3	Overall intelligibility	A subjective composite of the above criteria, in terms of content intelligibility

**Table 3***Scale for Oral Reading Test*

Score	Segmental features	Sentence-level stress	Overall intelligibility
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5	All the words are correctly and clearly pronounced.	Sentence-level stress is correct and natural.	Little or no hesitation & an even, fluent tempo, with no impact on intelligibility.
4	A few words (1-2) are not correctly pronounced.	Sentence-level stress is occasionally unnatural.	Hesitations occur, and tempo will be slightly uneven, but this has little impact on intelligibility.
3	Several words (3-4) are not correctly pronounced.	Sentence-level stress is sometimes unnatural, but meaning is not affected.	Some pausing and hesitation, with some impact on intelligibility.
2	Many words are not correctly pronounced.	Sentence-level stress is often unnatural and obscures meaning.	Marked by long pauses which often impact intelligibility.
1	More than 7 words are not correctly pronounced.	Can produce some English sentence-level stress patterns, but mistakes obscure meaning.	Marked by slow speech with frequent long pauses; intelligibility is greatly affected.

## Results and Discussion

Reliability analysis was employed to identify the relationship among the scores (out of 5 points) for each item, made by three evaluators, so as to build confidence in the measures.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics and Item Total Statics Representing Evaluator Scores*

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	Scale Mean	Scale Variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Segmental (Pre-test)	Judge A	3.19	1.20	91	6.24	3.39	.68
	Judge B	3.40	1.07	91	6.03	4.12	.77
	Judge	2.85	1.04	91	6.58	4.20	.77

		C					
Stress (Pre-test)	Judge A	3.01	1.20	91	6.02	3.22	.59
	Judge B	3.12	1.11	91	5.91	4.01	.78
	Judge C	2.90	1.01	91	6.13	3.72	.56
Overall Intelligibility (Pre-test)	Judge A	3.43	1.18	91	7.13	3.32	.65
	Judge B	3.97	1.07	91	6.29	4.11	.79
	Judge C	3.16	1.05	91	7.40	4.02	.73
Segmental (Post-test)	Judge A	3.58	0.99	91	6.65	3.45	.84
	Judge B	3.10	1.09	91	7.13	3.43	.95
	Judge C	3.55	0.91	91	6.68	3.62	.81
Stress (Post-test)	Judge A	3.62	1.27	91	7.13	3.29	.70
	Judge B	3.43	1.00	91	7.32	5.22	.94
	Judge C	3.70	1.07	91	7.04	4.07	.71
Overall Intelligibility (Post-test)	Judge A	3.86	1.20	91	7.63	4.44	.76
	Judge B	3.80	1.22	91	7.68	5.18	.96
	Judge C	3.82	1.12	91	7.66	4.83	.79

Table 4 shows the means, standard deviations, and number of participants, plus the scale mean, scale variance and Cronbach's alpha if the item was deleted from the scores provided by the three evaluators.

**Table 5***The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Three Evaluators*

	Cronbach	No. of
	$\alpha$	Items
Segmental (Pre-test)	.81	3
Stress (Pre-test)	.74	3
Intelligibility (Pre-test)	.80	3
Segmental (Post-test)	.90	3
Stress (Post-test)	.86	3
Intelligibility (Post-test)	.89	3

Hereafter, we analyze our data through the exploration of the average scores from the participant evaluators' combined means for each item, because relatively high correlation coefficients were observed (see Table 5). The descriptive statistical results of segmental features, sentence-level stress, and overall intelligibility on the pre and post tests are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6***The Descriptive Statistics of Segmental, Stress, and Intelligibility on Pre-Post Tests*

		<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	Minim	Maxim	Skewn	Kurtosi
			<i>D</i>	um	um	ess	s
Segmental	Pre-test	3.	0.				
		1	9	1	5	-0.29	-0.48
		4	4				
	Post-test	3.	0.				
		4	9	1	5	-0.77	0.13
		1	1				
Stress	Pre-test	3.	0.				
		0	9	1	5	0.00	-0.61
		1	0				
	Post-test	3.	0.				
		5	9	1	5	-0.72	-0.37
		8	9				
Intelligibil	Pre-	3.	0.	1	5	-0.37	-0.73

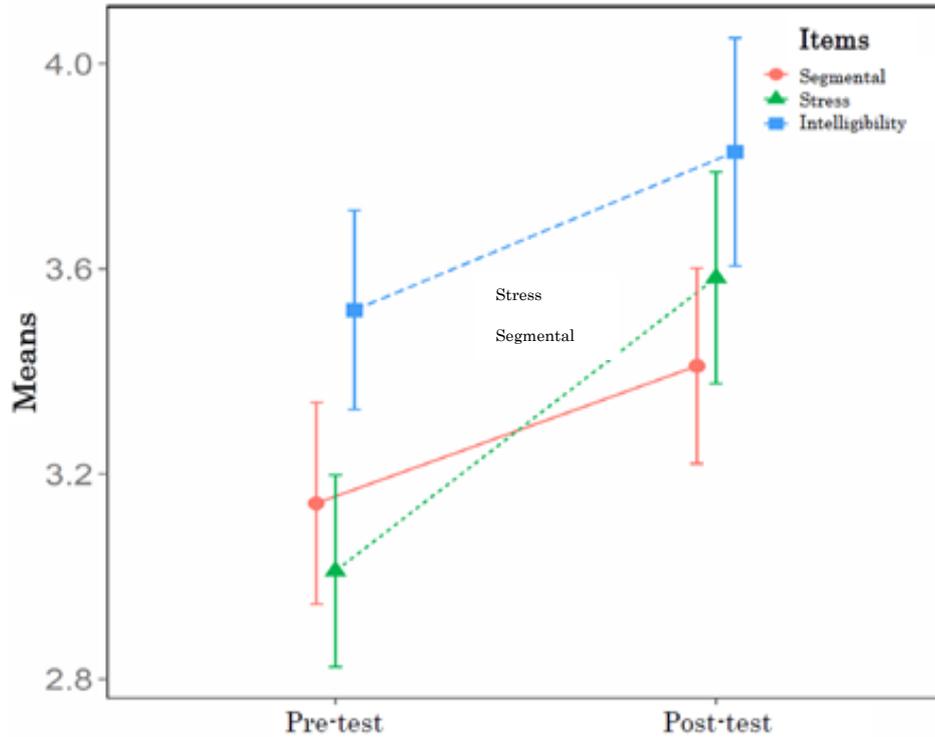
ity	test	5	9				
		2	3				
	Post-	3.	1.				
	test	8	0	1	5	-0.95	0.09
		3	7				

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A dependent *t* test was conducted in order to examine whether the means for each item at the pre and post points of testing resulted in significant differences or not. Results from the dependent *t* test indicated a significant difference between the pre and post tests for all of the items (segmental:  $t(90) = -3.35, p < .01, d = 0.29, 95\%CI[-.43, -.11]$ ; stress:  $t(90) = -6.23, p < .01, d = 0.60, 95\%CI[-.75, -.39]$ ; intelligibility:  $t(90) = -3.44, p < .01, d = 0.31, 95\%CI[-.49, -.13]$ ). Thus, the scores at the post-test juncture were found to be significantly higher than those at the pre-test juncture for each item.

**Figure 2**

*Mean scores of segmental, stress and intelligibility at pre-test and post-test*



*Note. The error bars attached to each item show 95% CI.*

The next detailed examination involved performing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey HSD post hoc tests for comparison between the aforementioned items, which was then used to determine if the gain scores for each item from the pre-test through to the post-test were significantly different or not. Here, gain is the mean difference (post-test minus pre-test). The descriptive statistical results of the gain scores for segmental features, sentence-level stress, and overall intelligibility spanning the pre and post tests are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7***The Descriptive Statistics of the Gain Scores for Segmental, Stress, and Intelligibility*

	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i> <i>D</i>	Minimu m	Maximu m	Skewnes s	Kurtosis
Segmental	0. 27	0. 76	-1.67	2.33	-0.11	0.24
Stress	0. 57	0. 88	-1.67	3.00	0.14	0.04
Intelligibilit y	0. 31	0. 85	-2.67	2.33	-0.55	1.10

The results indicate a main effect of the items ( $F(2, 270)$ ,  $MSE = .69$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ,  $1 - \beta = .66$ ). Tukey HSD post hoc tests revealed that there were no significant differences between segmental features and overall intelligibility, or sentence-level stress and overall intelligibility, whereas there was a significant difference between sentence-level stress and segmental features ( $MSE = .691$ , significance level at 5%). A multiple regression analysis was then applied to confirm the casual relationship between both segmental features and sentence-level stress with the item: overall intelligibility. Table 8 demonstrates correlations and tolerances.

**Table 8***Correlations Between Overall and Each Item and Tolerance*

	Correlation Coefficient			
	Intelligibility	Segmental	Stress	Tolerance
Intelligibility	—	.69	.58	
Segmental		—	.51	.74
Stress			—	.74

Through stepwise regression analysis, segmental features and sentence-level stress were entered as predictors at step 2. As seen in Table 9, the regression model was associated with  $R = .74$  ( $R_2 = .54$ ,  $R_{\text{adjusted}}^2 = .53$ ,  $F(2, 88) = 52.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Both segmental features and sentence-level stress were found to be statistically

significant predictors of overall intelligibility (segmental:  $B = .59, \beta = .53 (SE = .09), t = 6.34, p < .001$ ; Stress:  $B = .30, \beta = .31(SE = .08), t = 3.67, p < .001$ ).

**Table 9**  
*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Results*

	$B$	$SE$ $B$	95% CI	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$R^2$ (Adjusted $R^2$ )	$\Delta$ $R^2$
Step 1							.47 (.47)	
Segmental	.77	.09	[.60, .94]	.69*	8.93	< .001		
Step 2							.54 (.53)	.07*
Segmental	.59	.09	[.41, .78]	.53*	6.34	< .001		
Stress	.30	.08	[.14, .46]	.31*	3.67	< .001		

*Note.* Figures in brackets are 95% confidence intervals of  $B$ . \* $p < .001$

These two independent variables accounted for 54% of the dependent variables: overall intelligibility. Figure 2 displays a structural equation modeling (SEM), which was based on the multiple regression analysis.

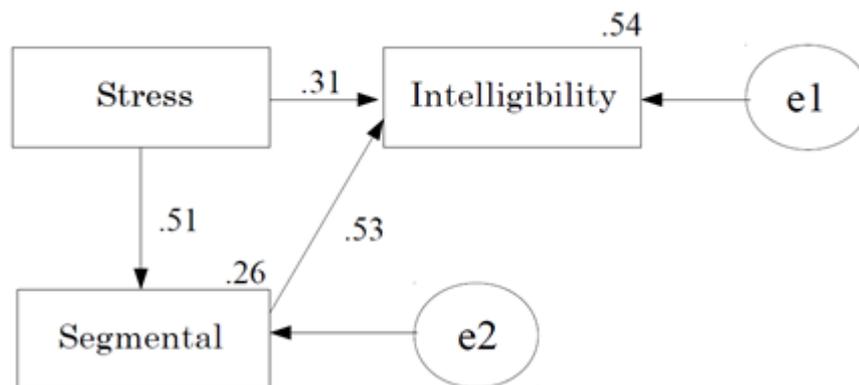


Figure 2. Model of contribution of stress and segmental to intelligibility

Note. Numbers on each path are standardized estimates. All paths are significant ( $p < .001$ )

The results showed a sufficient goodness of fit, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00. As Figure 2 above illustrates, segmental features were found to have the strongest impact on overall intelligibility in the model compared to sentence-level stress. Overall intelligibility had a factor loading of .53 on the factor of segmental features. The indirect effect of sentence-level stress on overall intelligibility mediated by segmental features was estimated at  $\beta = .27$ , which was smaller than the direct effect of sentence-level stress. The factor loading from segmental features to overall intelligibility is unexpectedly higher ( $\beta = .53$ ) than that from sentence-level stress to overall intelligibility ( $\beta = .31$ ). This means that sentence-level stress is not strongly related to overall intelligibility.

Based on the findings and results of the present research shown above, the following answers to the research questions were found:

- 1) With regards to the first Research Question, there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-tests for sentence-level stress. Therefore, our hypothesis was supported. Chants are thought to be effective at improving the suprasegmental features of English as argued by Celce-Murcia et al. (1996). The dependent  $t$  test showed the teaching method of using chants produces effects on the improvement of Japanese elementary school students' English sentence-level stress usage.
- 2) Taking the second Research Question into account, though the students in the current experiment received instruction focusing on such suprasegmental features as

stress, there was a significant improvement in pronunciation skills. This could be due to the fact that they have a tendency to pay more attention to pronunciation than stress when they are asked to pronounce English phrases or sentences. It can be presumed that this result is consistent with Masaki (2016) in that students believe “articulation” is more important for English pronunciation than “intonation” and “accent.” The authors also suggest that young ESL learners, who have not developed metacognition, cannot focus on the stress-timed rhythm of English easily since sentence stress in the Japanese language does not exist; where-as more familiar areas such as pronunciation appear to be a far greater influencing factor on students’ intelligibility output.

3) As for Research Question 3), chants helped participants improve their overall intelligibility. Even though sentence-level stress was focused in this study, as table 8 shows, overall intelligibility was found to be effected more by segmental features when compared to sentence-level stress. As Zielinski and Yates (2014) note, pronunciation difficulties affect intelligibility and learner’s confidence to speak. They point out that beginning-level learners feel that weak skills in pronunciation affect their ability to confidently interact with speakers in the target language. They also claim that beginning-level learners want to improve their pronunciation skills and they want their teachers to teach it. Moreover, significant improvements occurred in overall pronunciation skills which improved overall intelligibility. These improvements were in tandem with a focus on stress output. Since Japanese has no stress, there is no distinction between the stressed vowels and unstressed vowels. On the other hand, the contrast between the stressed and unstressed vowels is very clear in English. One syllable has major stress and the other is unstressed in words with two syllables, and one syllable requires major stress, while another syllable has minor stress, and the remaining syllables are unstressed in words with three or more syllables. We deduce that students show a tendency to pay more attention to the contrast between the stressed and unstressed vowels when directed to focus on improving sentence-level stress. According to the structural equation modeling (SEM), rather than directly improving intelligibility by practicing sentence stress, practicing sentence stress improved the pronunciation of segmental features and

consequently improved intelligibility. In other words, pronunciation resulted in a stronger correlation to intelligibility in combination with stress-level instruction, when compared to both features in isolation. This complex relationship between segmental output, suprasegmental output and overall intelligibility has emerged as an area of investigation requiring further research.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Summary***

For English speakers, sentence stress patterns play a significant role in intelligibility. If sentence stress patterns are incorrect, communication will be impeded. This is because sentence-level stress conveys the intentions of speakers. Drawing on previous literature as well as the findings of this study, we were able to identify specific positive effects of using chants. We began with the hypothesis that chants could improve sentence-level stress due to the Japanese language not having suprasegmental features such as stress. The study results supported this hypothesis. Moreover, we found improvements in another area of language learning, which is pronunciation.

Significant improvements occurred in overall pronunciation skills which improved overall intelligibility. These improvements were in tandem with a focus on stress output. Since Japanese has no stress, there is no distinction between the stressed vowels and unstressed vowels. On the other hand, the contrast between the stressed and unstressed vowels is very clear in English. One syllable has major stress and the other is unstressed in words with two syllables, and one syllable requires major stress, while another syllable has minor stress, and the remaining syllables are unstressed in words with three or more syllables. We deduce that students show a tendency to pay more attention to the contrast between the stressed and unstressed vowels when directed to focus on improving sentence-level stress. According to the structural equation modeling (SEM), rather than directly improving intelligibility by practicing sentence stress, practicing sentence stress improved the pronunciation of segmental features and consequently improved intelligibility. In other words, pronunciation resulted in a stronger correlation to intelligibility in combination with stress-level

instruction, when compared to both features in isolation. This complex relationship between segmental output, suprasegmental output and overall intelligibility has emerged as an area of investigation requiring further research.

### **Pedagogical Implication**

The present study shows that chants had significant benefits on the intelligibility of English by Japanese ESL learners. Traditionally, classroom instruction of pronunciation involved listening to English and repeating what was heard. Congruent with Natividad and Batang (2018), who stress that teachers “must be adept in various methods as well as addressing the learning styles of the students.” This paper showed that explicit teaching of the prosodic features of pronunciation using chants has a significant effect on intelligibility. As the English language becomes a formal subject at the elementary level in Japan, we believe that systematic instruction of pronunciation especially such suprasegmental features as sentence stress will significantly improve communication in English.

Under the current system, English is mainly instructed by homeroom teachers at elementary schools in Japan. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in fiscal 2018, only 5.9 percent of elementary school teachers are licensed to teach English. Many didn’t learn how to teach the subject because it wasn’t necessary to acquire their teaching licenses. It is definitely difficult to teach English pronunciation without having knowledge of English phonetics. On the other hand, elementary school teachers have music backgrounds because music skills are imposed in the elementary school teacher recruitment examination. When considering the current situation of English teachers of Japanese elementary schools, the results of this study, which reveal that explicit teaching of the sentence-level stress using chants seems to cause an improvement in pronunciation skills of Japanese elementary school students, can suggest a new possibility of pronunciation instruction.

We suggest that young ESL learners, who have not developed meta-cognition, cannot focus on the stress-timed rhythm of English easily since sentence stress in the Japanese language does not exist; where-as more familiar areas such as pronunciation

appear to be a far greater influencing factor on students' intelligibility output.

This raises questions about the function of stress-timed rhythm chants for Japanese elementary school children and its relationship with teaching suprasegmental features to young ESL learners. This paper offers a theory, worthy of further investigation, with a claim that when students focus on stress patterns, they pay closer attention to individual lexemes and thus acquire more intelligible vowels which compliment stress-skills and in combination, lead to a marked improvement in overall intelligibility.

### **Future Direction**

The present study shows that chants had significant utility over the short-term course of the instruction. A longer treatment could result in significant improvements in sentence-level stress and perhaps unintentionally, segmental features, both of which will lead to improvements in intelligibility.

For future research, the reproduction of segmental features and sentence-level stress should be evaluated using a more quantitative system of analysis, possibly giving percentage values to each correctly pronounced and/or stressed word.

A possible future direction could include research that explores this paper's unexpected outcome that students may pay more attention to pronunciation while reading. More insights are required to determine if chants were indeed the element that effectively improved elementary school students' intelligibility or if trends were affected more so, by the phenomenon of students focusing on reading with greater care as hypothesized.

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Text used for the prosody reading training

	• Hello.
	• My name is (名前).
	• I like apples.
	• Do you like apples?
	• I can play the piano.
	• Can you play the piano?
	• I don't like swimming.
	• How about you?
	• I like dogs.
	• What animals do you like?

## Appendix 2

### Text 1: Text for the pre-test

	Hello.
	My name is ( 自分の名前 ).
	I like apples. Do you like apples?
	I can play the piano. Can you play the piano?
	I don't like swimming. How about you?
	I like dogs. What animals do you like?

### Text 2: Text for the post-test

	Hello.		I want to go to Italy. Where do you want to go?
	I like apples. Do you like apples?		I play soccer. Do you play soccer?
	I can play the piano. Can you play the piano?		I like pink. What color do you like?
	I don't like swimming. How about you?		I study English on Thursday. Thank you for listening.
	I like dogs. What animals do you like? 		



## **The Effect of Scaffolded Think-Group-Share Learning on Students' Delayed Retention in EFL Classes of an Elementary School**

**Hee Jun Choi**

*Department of Education, Hongik University, Seoul, Korea*

**Octavia Mantik**

*Department of Education, Hongik University, Seoul, Korea*

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Hee Jun Choi** is a professor in the Department of Education at Hongik University, Seoul, Korea. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests focus on problem-based video instruction, the design of e-learning enriched interactive learning environments, teacher and program evaluation, transfer of learning, and educational uses of various technologies. Email: [hjchoi@hongik.ac.kr](mailto:hjchoi@hongik.ac.kr)

**Octavia Mantik** is a doctoral student in the Department of Education at Hongik University, Seoul, Korea. Her research interest is to devise the effective instructional methods in a variety of subject matters including English. Email: [octaviamantik@gmail.com](mailto:octaviamantik@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to empirically investigate whether Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning, which was devised as a cooperative learning method, can enhance delayed retention of elementary school students in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes and whether there is an interaction effect between gender and the types of cooperative learning method in terms of students' delayed retention. To achieve these purposes, Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning was compared with two other types of

cooperative learning methods (Group Investigation and Learning Together) in terms of delayed retention. This study employed a three between-group experimental design, and the quantitative data were analyzed using a two-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). According to the findings, delayed retention was statistically significantly better in the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share group than in the Group Investigation group and the Learning Together group; there was no significant interaction effect between gender and the three types of cooperative learning in students' delayed retention. This study implies that Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning in EFL classes of an elementary school could be the most effective cooperative learning method to enhance students' delayed retention. Future studies need to administer the treatments for much longer periods and include more various cooperative learning methods for more careful scrutiny.

**Keywords:** *cooperative learning, hard scaffolding, delayed retention, gender difference*

## **Introduction**

Cooperative learning, which induces students work together toward shared and common learning objectives for maximizing their learning outcomes, is one of the most popular instructional methods in a wide variety of instructional settings (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000). The massive interest in cooperative learning has led to a large body of empirical studies that mostly focus on determining the effectiveness of cooperative learning compared to competitive or individualistic learning (Johnson et al., 2000). Such research studies revealed that students who engaged in cooperative learning gained greater achievement compared to those in competitive or individualistic learning. Students who engaged in cooperative learning also showed high-level reasoning strategies more frequently (Larson, Dansereau, O'Donnell, Hythecker, Lambiotte, & Rocklin, 1985). They also showed higher scores on subsequent tests taken individually (Lambiotte, Dansereau, Rocklin, Fletcher, Hythecker, Larson, & O'Donnell, 1987).

Previous studies also found that after engaging in cooperative learning, students like their classmates better (Cooper, Johnson, Johnson, & Wilderson, 1980), have increased self-esteem (Slavin, 1983), have increased ability to be self-directed (Johnson, Johnson, Johnson, & Anderson, 1976), and increase their liking for the class in general (Kulik &

Kulik, 1979). According to Slavin (1995), cooperative learning is not only an instructional technique for increasing student achievement; it is also a way of creating a happy and pro-social environment in the classroom.

To sum up, cooperative learning has vast potential for promoting students' academic achievement in a variety of subject areas, in higher-level reasoning skills, in social and interpersonal skills, and in learning motivation when it is carefully designed and appropriately implemented (Ali, 2018; Cohen, Lotan, & Catanzarite, 1990; Hawkins, 2017; Jacobs & Goh, 2007; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005; Johnson et al., 2000; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva Iddings, 2006; Sharan & Rich, 1984; Sharan & Shaulov, 1990; Slavin, 1995, 2011). Due to these benefits of cooperative learning validated by many research studies, it has presumably been widely used as a major instructional method by a host of instructors in diverse instructional settings.

On the other hand, there are a wide variety of cooperative learning methods, such as Think-Pair-Share, Group Investigation, Learning Together & Alone, Student Teams-Achievement Divisions, Jigsaw Procedure, Teams-Games-Tournament, and so on, that are quite distinct from one method to another in terms of the major learning components and key procedures for execution. It seems clear that different cooperative learning methods have different effectiveness in any given instructional situation. However, it is difficult to find empirical studies investigating which cooperative learning methods are relatively more effective for certain target learners in particular subject areas.

In addition, the existing major cooperative learning methods might have some critical limitations in terms of their effectiveness. For this reason, Mantik and Choi (2017) recently developed Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning as a cooperative learning method to overcome the most problematic challenges that cooperative learning methods have in common, such as the problems of student passive participation, free-riding effect, and task difficulty. Accordingly, this study intended to empirically compare the effectiveness of major cooperative learning methods including Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes of an elementary school.

## **Literature Review**

This section gives a brief introduction and of, and outlines potential challenges of, the major cooperative learning methods. Think-Pair-Share, which was developed by Frank Lyman and colleagues in 1981, is a cooperative learning method that includes three sequential components (McTighe & Lyman, 1988): students think individually, talk with each other in pairs, and share their ideas with the larger group. Meanwhile, Group Investigation is a cooperative learning method where group members decide how to study a topic and then divide the task among themselves followed by compiling the information from each group member (Mitchell, Montgomery, Holder, & Stuart, 2008). In other words, Group Investigation involves task specialization in its procedure (Slavin, 1995). These two cooperative learning methods include individual activity in the procedures, which may lead to increased individual accountability.

However, there are potential challenges with these two cooperative learning methods. In Think-Pair-Share, the individual activity might not always lead to active participation by the students during pair discussion. In particular, if the task is too challenging for the students to work on individually, then it might lead to cognitive overload. However, if the task is too easy, then it might lead to boredom for the students. With Group Investigation, the potential challenge is that students might comprehend the material only in part, particularly if the other group members unable to explain their parts properly. This implies that incorporating individual activity in the cooperative learning procedure might not always guarantee an increased individual accountability. Based on analysis of these potential challenges, additional structure might be needed in integrating individual activity to ensure its effectiveness in promoting individual accountability.

Learning Together and Alone centers on the integrated use of cooperative and competitive learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1994). It uses three types of cooperative learning styles: formal cooperative learning, informal cooperative learning groups, and base groups. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) is a cooperative learning method where the students are assigned to heterogeneous teams and consists of five major components: class presentations, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores, and team recognition (Slavin, 1991, 1995). Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) uses academic games and tournaments where students compete as representatives of their teams with

members of other teams who are at similar level of academic performance. Like STAD, TGT is comprised of five major components: class presentations, teams, games, tournament, and team recognition (Slavin, 1991, 1995). In the Jigsaw method, the students are divided into groups and given a task that requires each group member to specialize in one aspect of a topic. Students then meet with members from other groups who are assigned with the same aspect and form an Expert group. After mastering the material, these experts then return to the Home group and teach the material to their group members (Slavin, 1991, 1995). These cooperative learning methods do not include individual activity in the procedures, which might hinder increase of individual accountability.

In particular, many empirical studies reported the problems related to cooperative learning such as free-riding students socializing during group activities and not working, dislike toward being dependent on peers, conflicts over different levels of ambition, and distrust toward peers (Finlay & Faulkner, 2005; Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Hassanien, 2007; Kelly & Fetherston, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & DaRos-Voseles, 2001; Waite & Davis, 2006). The free-riding effect is one important pitfall resulted from poorly constructed cooperative learning methods that must be avoided for cooperative learning to be success (Slavin, 1990). The free-riding effect, also known as social loafing, occurs when a group member does not perform, or does less work, when working in a group than when working alone. In other words, it happens when there is a lack of individual accountability because the topic is not clearly understood by each group member. Janssen et al. (2006) reported that the free-rider effect can be removed by appropriately using scaffolding. In the educational context, scaffolding means “support given by a teacher to a student when performing a task that the student might otherwise not be able to accomplish” (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010, p. 274). In other words, the heart of scaffolding is the temporary support provided by a teacher to help students, individually or collectively, accomplish more challenging and difficult tasks than what they can do by themselves (Graves, Watts, & Graves, 1994).

Saye and Brush (2002) classified scaffolding into two types: hard and soft scaffolding. Hard scaffolding refers to static supports that can be anticipated and planned in advance based on typical student difficulties with a task. Computer or paper-based

cognitive tools, such as worksheets, are examples of hard scaffolding (Belland, Glazewski, & Richardson, 2008). Worksheets here can be in the form of process worksheets, which provide cues or descriptions of the phases one should go through when solving a problem (van Merriënboer, 1997). While working on the learning tasks, students can consult the process worksheet and may use it to monitor their progress throughout the problem-solving process. On the other hand, soft scaffolding is dynamic and situational (Saye & Brush, 2002). In other words, soft scaffolding is dependent on human interactions and contexts. It requires teachers to continuously check on learners' understandings and provide timely support based on student responses. For example, when a learner faces difficulties, the teacher can prompt questions that will trigger the learner to think deeper about the task and suggest other sources to help the learner in the problem-solving process. This might imply that teachers need to be systematically trained to effectively capitalize on soft scaffolding in their classes. Consequently, it might be ineffective to use soft scaffolding in the classes without training the teachers who will use it.

Previous empirical studies indicated the positive impact of scaffolding on student achievement and attitudes (e.g., Hill, 1995; Huang, Wu, & Chen, 2012; Safadi & Rababah, 2012; Saye & Brush, 1999; Simons & Klein, 2007). The effectiveness of scaffolding was also proven in the EFL class situations. Ahangari, Hejazi, and Razmjou (2014) studied with 40 female EFL learners ages 12-15 and found that the experimental group that received scaffolding technique outperformed the learners in the control group that learned from the book without being supported in their writings. Attarzadeh (2011) investigated 180 Iranian EFL learners aged 15 to 20, and the result of his study revealed that effect of scaffolding was robust for reading comprehension. Chi (2007) also found that implementing scaffolding strategy effectively in EFL classes was helpful in improving students' reading comprehension.

Based on previous studies on cooperative learning and scaffolding, Mantik and Choi (2017) intended to remove the dilemma of the free-riding effect by including hard scaffold in the individual activity prior to group activity. The cooperative learning method that they devised for their empirical study was termed Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, which was based on Think-Pair-Share (one of the major cooperative learning methods). Previous

studies on the Think-Pair-Share method showed mixed findings; therefore, Mantik and Choi (2017) attempted to remove the problems in the implementation of Think-Pair-Share. In particular, they also attempted to remove the problems of student passive participation and task difficulty by modifying the procedure to be more effective based on suggestions from previous studies on cooperative learning and scaffolding. They (2017) found that Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning was more than other cooperative learning methods (i.e., Group Investigation and Learning Together) for enhancing learner satisfaction and comprehension in elementary school EFL classes.

The empirical study conducted by Mantik and Choi (2017) showed the most effective cooperative learning method for student satisfaction and comprehension in EFL classes for young children. However, it remains unclear which cooperative learning method is most effective for enhancing learner delayed retention, and whether there is an interaction effect between gender and the types of cooperative learning methods in terms of the dependent variable. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate whether or not Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning yields better delayed retention for young students in EFL classes by comparing the results from the dependent variable in Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning with those in two other types of cooperative learning methods. In addition, this study intended to examine whether there is an interaction effect between gender and the three cooperative learning methods in students' learning retention.

For the purposes of this study, the following questions were addressed:

1. Does learner delayed retention in Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning differ from those in Group Investigation and Learning Together learning?
2. Is there an interaction effect between gender and the three different types of cooperative learning in terms of students' delayed retention?

## **Methods**

### ***Population and Sample***

The target population of this study was elementary school students taking EFL classes in Indonesia. A teacher who teaches fifth grade English classes in an elementary school near Jakarta, Indonesia, indicated a willingness to participate in the study. Therefore, the

accessible population for this study was 102 fifth grade students who belonged to one of the three classes in the Indonesian elementary school. Of the 102 EFL students, 50 were male and 52 female. Each class was randomly assigned into one of the three different cooperative learning classes (i.e., Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, Group Investigation, and Learning Together). The numbers of the students in Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, Group Investigation, and Learning Together classes were 34, 35, and 33, respectively. Students who participated in Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning were the experimental group, students who participated in Group Investigation learning were the comparison group, and students who participated in Learning Together learning were the control group.

### ***Data Collection and Measures***

One veteran teacher (15 years' experience in teaching English for elementary school students) taught all students in the three groups. Just before the beginning of the semester, all students in the three groups took a pretest for the three lesson units that were supposed to be taught for six weeks, which is the experiment period. The English teacher gave a lecture to all students in the three groups in the week before the treatments were administered for each group, and the treatments were given in the second, fourth, and sixth weeks of the experiment period. The students in each group were tested for delayed retention of the content one month after the treatments were completed.

This study employed one pretest and one delayed retention test, which were designed to measure whether or not the students achieve the learning objectives of the three lesson units for which the treatments were administered. The delayed retention test consisted of 30 questions to measure students' long-term memory of the contents of the three lesson units to be taught during the experiment. The delayed retention test was divided into the two sections of multiple choice and short answer questions. The pretest used to measure students' prior knowledge was identical to the delayed retention test except for a change in the order of items and choices. Both the pretest and delayed retention test were divided into two sections: multiple choice and short answer questions. The tests were developed by the English teacher who participated in this study and were reviewed by two professors to check whether the content validity can be ensured.

### *Treatments*

Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning, the experimental treatment, consisted of three sequential steps (i.e., Scaffolded Think step, Group step, and Share step) as follows. The first step was the Scaffolded Think step. During this step, each group member worked on the scaffolding worksheet individually. This step was a pre-activity before the students worked together with other group members to answer the questions in the group task that would be given in the Group step. The worksheet, which functions to stimulate prior knowledge (i.e., bridging approach of scaffolding), was administered to help students to actively participate in the group activity. Therefore, the worksheet consisted of clues that may activate students' prior knowledge; exercise questions are structured so that students can build upon their knowledge sequentially in order to gradually manage the cognitive load. Solving complex tasks often requires high cognitive load, which, when left unmanaged, might lead to a state of cognitive overload in which learning is obstructed. The worksheet in this Scaffolded Think step was also a form of hard scaffolds, which was a tool that provided the students with a structure to enable certain skills that were needed to complete the group task in the following step. The second step was the Group step. After working on the scaffolding worksheet individually, students worked in their groups to complete the group task. The group task's difficulty level was designed to be complicated enough to encourage interaction within the group. Each group member was assigned a role to promote positive interdependence amongst group members. In this step, the teacher actively monitored groups to ensure that they consistently worked on the task and gave appropriate feedback when necessary. The third step was the Share step. In this last step, groups could share their answers to the questions in the group task with the rest of the class. The teacher and other groups could give their feedback after a group had presented its final product.

On the other hand, Group Investigation cooperative learning was administered to the comparison group, and Learning Together cooperative learning was administered to the control group. In Group Investigation cooperative learning, each group member had to divide the group task in order to complete the given separate task individually. Subsequently, groups synthesized the outputs that each group member individually

completed. At that time, they could have the opportunities to learn from each other. Learning Together cooperative learning that the control group experienced was identical as the Group and Share components of the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share cooperative learning. The students in the control group did not go through the Scaffolded Think step in which each student worked on the scaffolding worksheet individually.

### ***Data Analysis***

The quantitative data used to answer the first and second research question were analyzed using a two-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), which determines whether there is a statistically significant interaction effect between two independent variables (i.e., gender and the types of cooperative learning methods) in terms of a continuous dependent variable (i.e., students' delayed retention), after controlling for a continuous covariate (i.e., students' pretest scores) (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Then, this analysis was followed-up using simple main effects to determine the effect that the different groups (i.e., Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, Group Investigation, and Learning Together groups) had on the dependent variable (i.e., students' delayed retention), after controlling for the covariate (i.e., students' pretest scores).

### **Results**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics such as the means, adjusted means, and standard deviations of students' delayed retention by cooperative learning methods and student gender. The students who had experienced Scaffolded Think-Group-Share cooperative learning showed the highest adjusted mean scores in students' delayed retention in comparison with the students who had experienced Group Investigation in the comparison group and Learning Together in the control group. In addition, the adjusted mean scores of male students were similar to those of female students in the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share and Learning Together cooperative learning groups, while the adjusted mean scores of female students were higher than those of male students in the Group Investigation cooperative learning group.

#### **Table 1**

##### *Descriptive Statistics*

Cooperative Learning	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>Adj. M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Scaffolded Think-Group-Share (STGS)	Male	47.92	45.02	18.67	16
	Female	44.99	45.04	16.86	18
Group Investigation (GI)	Male	22.05	22.48	9.40	17
	Female	26.11	26.92	10.28	18
Learning Together (LT)	Male	20.66	21.98	11.24	17
	Female	19.34	20.13	7.27	16

*Note.* Grand mean = 30.22 (SD = 17.21), *n* = 102, Maximum high score = 100.

Table 2 indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant interaction effect between the types of cooperative learning (i.e., Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, Group Investigation, and Learning Together) and gender in terms of the dependent variable (i.e., students' delayed retention), after controlling for the covariate (i.e., students' pretest scores). In addition, it shows whether there was a significant difference in students' delayed retention between the three cooperative learning groups, after controlling for the students' pretest scores. According to Table 2, there was no statistically significant interaction effect between the types of cooperative learning and gender in the students' delayed retention, after controlling for students' pretest scores, while there was a statistically significant difference in the students' delayed retention between the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share group, the Group Investigation group, and the Learning Together group, after controlling for students' pretest scores.

**Table 2**

*ANCOVA Summary for Students' delayed Retention*

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Cooperative Learning (CL)	9787.80	2	4893.90	30.11***
Gender (G)	10.82	1	10.82	.07
Pretest	644.62	1	644.62	3.97*
CL x G	141.66	2	70.83	.44
Error	15442.43	95	162.55	

*Note.*  $R^2 = .48$ ,  $Adj. R^2 = .45$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3 indicates the contrast analysis results for the students' delayed retention by the cooperative learning methods. These comparisons were based on ANCOVA-adjusted means controlling for the students' pretest scores, and  $p$  values are adjusted using the Bonferroni method. As shown in Table 3, students who had experienced the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning showed significantly higher level of delayed retention than students who had experienced the Group Investigation learning and students who had experienced the Learning Together learning in the delayed retention test at the .001 level.

**Table 3**

*Comparisons of Mean Differences in Students' Delayed Retention*

Cooperative Learning Comparison		Estimated Mean Difference	Standard Error	Bonferroni Adjusted 95% CI
STGS	GI	20.64***	3.20	12.85, 28.43
	LT	23.97***	3.36	15.79, 32.16
GI	STGS	-20.64***	3.20	-28.43, -12.85
	LT	3.34	3.12	-4.26, 10.93
LT	STGS	-23.97***	3.36	-32.16, -15.79
	GI	-3.34	3.12	-10.93, 4.26

*Note.* STGS = Scaffolded Think-Group-Share, GI = Group Investigation, LT =Learning Together, \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to empirically investigate which cooperative learning method is most effective for enhancing learner delayed retention and whether there was an interaction effect between gender and the types of cooperative learning methods in learner delayed retention. To achieve this purpose, the results from students' delayed retention in the Scaffolded Think-Group-Share cooperative learning group were compared with those in Group Investigation cooperative learning and Learning Together cooperative learning groups, and it was examined whether there was an interaction effect between gender and the three types of cooperative learning in students' delayed retention.

The result of this study shows that Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning is a more effective cooperative learning method than Group Investigation and Learning Together for enhancing learner delayed retention in EFL classes of an elementary school. This result might be confirmed by the results of previous studies. Some researchers found that a cooperative learning approach is more effective than the conventional method of teaching in terms of retention of knowledge (Abu & Flowers, 1997; Chianson, Kurumeh, & Obida, 2010; Toklucu & Tay, 2016; Tran, 2014). In addition, some empirical studies revealed that the effect of scaffolding technique on learners' academic achievement were significantly positive in a collaborative or problem-based learning situation, which is very similar to a cooperative learning situation (Huang et al., 2012; Simons & Klein, 2007). Consequently, these findings of previous studies imply that a cooperative learning method combined with hard scaffolding, Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning, can have great potential for enhancing students' delayed retention in EFL classes.

On the other hand, there was no statistically significant interaction effect between gender and the three types of cooperative learning (i.e., Scaffolded Think-Group-Share learning, Group Investigation learning, and Learning Together learning) in learner delayed retention. This result of the current study is supported by the findings of the previous empirical studies that there were no gender differences in students' academic achievement in cooperative learning situations (Achor, Wude, & Duguryil, 2013; Roger, Murray, & Cummings, 2007; Gupta, Jain, & Pasrija, 2014). However, gender-related effects of cooperative learning methods on the dependent variable might have been significant if this study had administered for long periods enough and included more cooperative learning methods. Accordingly, future studies might need to investigate an interaction effect between gender and the types of cooperative learning by administering the treatments for much longer periods and including more various cooperative learning methods, so that the knowledge base related to gender-related effects of cooperative learning approaches can be fortified.

The following are the pedagogical implications deriving from the findings of this study. Cooperative learning should consist of three sequential steps (i.e., Scaffolded Think step, Group step, and Share step) in order to maximize its effectiveness in EFL classes of an elementary school. The first step is the Scaffolded Think step. During this

step, each group member needs to work on the scaffolding worksheet individually before the students work together with other group members. This step should be designed to help students to activate their prior knowledge and build upon their knowledge sequentially in order to gradually manage the cognitive load. The next step is the Group step. In this step, students need to collaboratively work in their groups to complete the group task. The group task's difficulty level should be designed to be complicated enough to encourage interaction within the group. Each group member should be assigned a role to promote positive interdependence amongst group members, and the teacher should actively monitor groups to ensure that they consistently work on the task. The last step is the Share step. In this step, groups need to share their answers to the questions in the group task with the rest of the class. The teacher and other groups should actively give their feedback on the final products.

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## **Captioned Slideshows in Improving Speaking Skills of Students at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam**

**Nguyen Thu Hanh**

*Military Science Academy, Vietnam*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Nguyen Thu Hanh** is currently working as a lecturer of English at Military Science Academy, Vietnam and as a Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Military Foreign Language Studies. She got her doctorate degree at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her research interests include Systemic Functional Linguistics, discourse analysis, and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Her research experience is reflected in the publication of a series of journal articles on linguistic studies and EFL teaching.

### **Abstract**

Many studies were carried out to investigate the benefits of communicative activities in improving students' language learning but there has been inadequate research into the effectiveness of captioned slideshows on this process, especially in the educational context of Vietnam. Therefore, the current study aimed to assess the practice of teaching English speaking skills with the employment of captioned slideshows (CS) for non-English major students at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam. To conduct this study, descriptive design with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used. Questionnaires, semi-structured interview, and English speaking tests adapted from Cambridge KET speaking tests were the data-collection instruments for the study. The data from speaking tests and close-ended survey questions were analyzed by frequency counting and percentage quantitatively, whereas qualitative data analysis was used to analyze open-ended survey questions and semi-structured interviews. The

findings of the current study clearly revealed that the CS employment in English speaking activities significantly contributed to both the improvement of the research students' speaking skills and their self-confidence at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam. The development of students' speaking performance could be seen from the progress in the students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language use. In addition, as their self-confidence was gradually built up, the students enjoyed performing in front of the class. These achievements were believed to derive from the benefits and the effectiveness of using CS as a teaching aid in English speaking lessons.

**Keywords:** *captioned, competence, self-confidence, slideshow, speaking skills*

## **Introduction**

Learning English becomes more and more essential in the context of globalization. It is essential to consider mastering English beside the mother tongue in order to be able to succeed in life and career. To master English (or any language), speaking is one of the most important and essential skills that must be practiced to communicate well. Rapid growth of science and technology has offered a better pattern to discover new teaching approaches. With the increase of more sophisticated multimedia technology, there is renewed interest in the complementary relationship of visual and auditory channels in speaking activities (Borras & Lafayette, 1994; Danan, 2004; Markham, 1999, Maulina & Basri, 2019). According to Borras & Lafayette, (1994), digital materials for foreign language learning can provide a more realistic picture of the new language and culture in the classroom. They tend to be visual, interactive and reiterative.

Having been teaching English for many years at a college where students' major is not English, the researcher sees that being afraid of making mistakes, vocabulary shortage, mispronunciation and inadequate practice time are the main reasons for the weakness of the students' speaking English. How to improve English speaking skills for students becomes the researcher's constant concern. Therefore, she decided to carry out a research on using captioned slideshows to improve speaking skills for the non-English majored students at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam.

There are two aims of the study, namely (1) examining the non-English majored students' attitudes toward the use of captioned slideshows (CS) in teaching and learning English speaking skills; and (2) researching to what extent these students' English speaking skills can be enhanced through the use of CS in speaking activities. The result of this study is expected to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning English at College of Foreign Languages in general, teaching English speaking skills in particular.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview of speaking skills**

#### ***Definitions of speaking skills***

Speaking skills is an important part of everyday interaction and most often the first impression of a person is based on his/her ability to speak fluently and comprehensively. Having the same idea, Jones (1989) mentions that speaking is the active use of language to express meaning so that other people can make sense of them. This point is strengthened by Kayi (2006) who claims that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. Thornbury (2001) states that speaking is interactive and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turns. It also typically takes place in real time, with little time for detailed planning. In terms of language teaching and learning, speaking is considered as one of the four important language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) to practice and master. In this light, Nunan (2003, p.48) puts it that "speaking is a productive oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning". To sum up, it is undeniable that speaking is a key to communication. By considering what good speakers do, what speaking tasks can be used in class, and what specific needs students report, teachers can help students improve their speaking and overall oral competency.

#### ***Criteria of good English speaking skills***

There are some aspects that need to be acquired by students to have good English speaking skills. Those are: (1) pronunciation, the way a certain sound or sounds are

produced, which covers the way for speakers to produce clear language when they speak (Jones, 1989); (2) fluency, the ability to speak quickly and automatically, the ability to keep the conversation going naturally when speaking spontaneously (Chaney & Burke, 1998). It implies that a fluent speaker is a person who can use the language quickly and automatically in conversation; (3) accuracy and vocabulary - a speaker is said to be accurate if he/she produces clear, articulate, grammatically and phonologically correct language (Brown, 2001). In short, speaking activities focusing on accuracy aim at elimination of mistakes and at correctness of utterance not only in term of grammar, but also vocabulary and proper pronunciation.

### ***Difficulties in speaking lessons***

According to Ur (1996), there are many factors that cause difficulties in speaking lessons, namely *Inhibition* – students are afraid of making mistakes, fearful of being criticized, or simply shy; *Nothing to say* – students do not know and how to express themselves; *Poor engagement* – only one stronger student can talk at a time because of the tendency of better students to dominate while weaker students speak very little or nothing; *Mother tongue influence* – students tend to use mother tongue in discussion because it is easier and students feel more confident if they are speaking their mother tongue. Sharing the same point, Brown (2001) states that one of the major obstacles students have to overcome in learning to speak is the anxiety generated over the risks of blurting things out that are wrong, stupid or incomprehensible. He also states that the greatest difficulties that students encounter in attempts to speak are not the multiplicity of sounds, words, phrases, or discourse forms that characterize any language, but rather the interactive nature of most communication. In addition, researchers point out that there are many other factors causing difficulties in speaking English among students of English as a foreign language. These factors may be related to students themselves, the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the teaching and learning environment (Brown & Yule, 1983; Jones, 1989; Kayi, 2006).

### **Using captioned slideshows in teaching English speaking skills**

According to Oxford Dictionary, slideshow is a presentation supplemented by or based on a series of projected images or photographic slides normally with the same topic. When they are captioned, it means that the caption will be added on each picture. As one form of audiovisual materials, captioned slideshows are powerful pedagogical tools that are known to benefit English teaching process in general and English speaking skills in particular (Borras & Lafayette, 1994; Danan, 2004; Garza, 1991; Markham, 1999, Maulina & Basri, 2019). First, when captioned slideshows are employed in speaking lessons, students do not just hear language, they see it too. This greatly promotes comprehension. Also, these slideshows with captions can stimulate and motivate students to become more observant and eager to express themselves (Danan, 2004). Another advantage of using CS is that they may also serve to increase language comprehension by facilitating additional cognitive processes, such as greater depth of spoken-word processing (Bird and Williams, 2002). CS is a learning tool which accelerates the acquisition of communication and literacy skills. In fact, they stimulate word recognition and increase vocabulary, by providing visual, audio and textual information to the students (Bird & Williams, 2002; Menggo & Padmadewi, 2019). However, using CS may become problematic sometimes (Huang & Eskey, 2000). One of its drawbacks is that photos in the slideshows cannot depict motion as videos clips/ films do. As a result, students may feel bored easily if the content is not interesting enough or often repetitive. Sometimes the captions are not clear enough so students cannot see them properly, which causes difficulties in getting information or misunderstanding. Finally, selecting photos and inserting captions are difficult tasks that require lots of energy and effort from teachers.

In summary, the above-mentioned review on the use of CS demonstrates the benefits that this method can bring to encourage student's motivation and improve students' English speaking ability. Hopefully, this kind of method also promotes English speaking skills of students at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research design**

The approach of this study is action research which would provide a practical way for the researcher to discover some of the complexities of the teaching process and thereby to improve the quality of their students' learning. Koshy (2005) defines action research as an enquiry undertaken with rigour and understanding so the emerging evidence-based outcomes will then contribute to the researching practitioner's continuing professional development. According to Bassey (1998, p.93), action research is "an inquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate and then to change, in order to improve some educational practice". Action research approach was chosen in the current study due to the following reasons: firstly, the research is carried out in the real English teaching so teacher/researcher can draw up a plan to solve any potential issue, implement and evaluate the effects of her solutions on her students' learning (Hopkins, 2003). Secondly, it is collaborative between teachers and students. Teachers doing action research participate and collaborate, examine their knowledge and the ways they interpret themselves and their actions (Herbert, 1993). Thirdly, action research aims at changing things as cited in Nunan (1999).

### **Research participants**

This study was conducted at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam. In order to serve the purposes of the study and to facilitate data collection and analysis, a class of 32 non-English majored students from 19 to 22 years old was chosen to join the research. These students did not have the same level of English language proficiency, ranging from beginner to pre-intermediate levels, because some of them had learnt English for 7 - 10 years at secondary and high schools while some others did for only three years. They could do grammatical exercises quite well but they could not speak English fluently. At the time of research administration, their English was assumed to be at Elementary level. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous, which means that participation or non-participation would not affect the student's academic grades.

## **Research procedure**

This study follows four steps as the adjustments of Gerald Susman's Action Research Model (1983). These are *identifying problems*, *planning the action*, *taking the action*, and *reflecting the action*.

### ***Identifying problems***

Witnessing the students' poor performance in English communicating, their reluctant involvement in English speaking lessons and the low results of speaking tests, the researcher decided to teach speaking skills with CS in one of her own classes. The effects of employing CS then were critically analysed and evaluated to see somehow positive in motivating the students to be engaged in speaking activities during English speaking lessons.

### ***Planning the action***

In this stage, the researcher made a preparation for the action which covered the tasks of choosing teaching materials, designing captioned slideshows and setting the evaluation criteria.

*Selecting teaching materials:* The teaching materials used in this study were mainly developed from a textbook named *New English File- Elementary* (2014) which consists of nine units. Because the text book was considered quite difficult in comparison with the students' average level and the time for study was so short, only eight units were selected while some simple and minor parts were left as homework, including exercises in Supplementary book.

*Designing captioned slideshows:* All of the slideshows were based on the contents of the selected units. In detail, 8 familiar and interesting topics such as family, hometown, hobbies, daily routine... were chosen. Then a collection of photos which suit each topic were gathered, from 8 to 12 photos for each slideshow. The final step was to insert the captions into each photo, which would help the students to understand the meaning of each photo and the whole story more easily. Each slideshow would last for about one and a half minute.

*Setting the evaluation criteria:* According to the language proficiency framework issued by Ministry of Education and Training, these students are supposed to obtain English at A2 level which is equal to Cambridge KET level. Therefore, an adapted KET

speaking test was used to evaluate the students' speaking performance before and after the CS application. The students' speaking levels were based on the scores ranging from 0 (the lowest) to 100 (the highest). Since most of the selected students themselves felt not good at speaking or not confident enough when communicating in English, the action was considered successful when: 1) 60% of the students reached at least the level *good* of speaking qualification for each language element when they performed their conversation in front of the class, and 2) 60% of the students fulfilled the first of three indicators of high self-confidence when they involve in the learning process as well as when they perform the conversation.

### ***Taking the action***

The action implementation lasted eight weeks and was adjusted with the English class schedule at College of Foreign Languages. During the action process, the researcher acted as both a practitioner conducting the teaching in the class, and an observer observing the students' speaking performance. At the first stage, her role was more dominant, gathering all possible materials, presenting new language, equipping the students with new structures and vocabulary, drilling new forms, and correcting oral mistakes. At the second stage or during the time of CS employment, the emphasis was on the students' input. They were given chances to watch several short CS, work in pairs, read the instructions and work out what they were asked to do. During this time, the researcher also conducted classroom observation which focused on the following elements: the students' active participation in the learning process; their speaking performance in front of the class; and their ability to interact with and give feedback to other peers. The students' performance was checked and evaluated through the analytical scoring rubric in which the criteria were selected based on the frame of Cambridge KET rating scales.

### ***Reflecting the action***

As soon as the data were obtained they were cautiously analyzed. The results of the analysis were consulted with the criteria of success. The reflection was done at the end of action research cycle. The decision to continue the action in the next cycle was done when the criteria of success was not fulfilled.

## **Data collection procedure and analysis**

### ***Data collection instruments***

*Survey questionnaires:* there are two set of questionnaires for students: one was done before the action implementation and one after the implementation. Each consisted of several open-ended and close-ended questions written in Vietnamese so that the students would be able to freely and easily express their opinions, which made their answers as objective as possible. The pre-questionnaire attempted to uncover the students' opinions on their speaking lessons and English speaking skills, the factors affecting their speaking competence. The post-questionnaire was designed to find out the students' attitudes towards the application of CS in improving their speaking skills and what they benefited from this teaching method.

*Semi-structured interviews:* A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted to disclose student's fundamental attitudes to the CS deployment in English speaking classes. Another aim of the interviews was to develop the researcher's understanding of some of the students' questionnaire responses, and also to ask further questions about their experience of learning English speaking skills with CS. Furthermore, this qualitative element contributed to broaden the scope of investigation and enhance opportunities to interpret the effectiveness of CS application in speaking classes at College of Foreign Languages. The interview questions were pre-determined.

*Pre-test and post-test:* The tests were adapted from KET speaking test to be suitable to the students' expected level of English. The speaking pre-test was carried out to note down the speaking level of the students before the CS implementation in speaking lessons. The speaking post-test which was administered right after the action research cycle finished aimed to find out to what extent the using of CS affect the students' English speaking skills.

### ***Data collection procedure and analysis***

This action research happened during eight weeks of the second semester of 2018-2019 academic year. In the first stage, before the research project actually took place, the research purposes were explained to the research students. A questionnaire (pre-questionnaire) was distributed to them to find out their learning habits of English speaking skills as well as their attitudes to speaking lessons and a speaking pre-test

was administered to check their current speaking ability. Then the teaching process with CS was conducted in English speaking lessons of the chosen class. During this action period, eight captioned slideshows with different topics selected from *New English File* textbook were implemented.

When the whole process of teaching English speaking skills with CS was completed, all 32 research students were invited to do another questionnaire (post-questionnaire) which focused on their attitudes toward and benefits of the CS employment in speaking lessons. In order to check whether this application positively affected the students' improvement on speaking skills, a post-test of speaking skills was carried out. Then, 10 students were randomly called for semi-structured interviews and each interview would last about 15 minutes.

The result collected from the students' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were descriptively and critically analyzed to mainly find out the students' attitudes towards of the CS employment in speaking lessons while data from speaking pre-post tests were chiefly used to examine the hypothesis on whether CS could improve the students' speaking skills through the comparison of the mean scores of the tests.

## Findings and Discussion

### Findings from the questionnaires

#### *The pre- questionnaire:*

As above mentioned, the pre-questionnaire tried to uncover the students' attitudes towards their speaking lessons and English speaking skills, the factors affecting their speaking competence, and their expectations to achieve better English speaking skills. Below are all detailed questions.

Table 1: Students' evaluation of the English speaking activities in the classroom

Question 1:	Very difficult	Difficult	Normal	Easy	Very easy
How do you feel of the English speaking activities in the classroom?	17 (53.2%)	9 (28.2%)	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.3%)	0

As can be seen from Table 1 that only four students (12.5%) agreed that English speaking activities were neither difficult nor easy and two students (6.3%) felt confident to speak English in class. None of them believed that English speaking was very easy. In contrast, most students found English speaking activities difficult. In fact, 17 students (53.2%) said that English speaking activities in class were very difficult and 9 students (28.2%) also agreed that speaking activities were difficult.

The data collected from question 2 studying students' anxiety is presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Students' evaluation on their anxiety in English speaking lessons

Question 2:	Very nervous	Nervous	Normal	A little nervous	Not at all
Do you feel nervous when you speak English in the class?	16 (50%)	10 (31.2%)	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.3%)	0

Table 2 above showed that there were a big number of students suffering from anxiety. Considerably, 50% of the students became very nervous when they had to speak English in front of the class. 31.2% of them believed that they got nervous during speaking lessons, which prevented them from actively taking part into English speaking activities. This finding could be useful information for all teachers of English, especially the teachers teaching speaking skills. They need to identify anxious students, silent students and any elements of the classroom environment which can help to reduce level of students' anxiety in speaking English skills.

Regarding the causes of the students' low level of participation in the English speaking activities (Question 3), the results are presented below.

Table 3: Factors causing students' low participation in speaking activities

Reasons	Number	Percent
A. Lack of vocabulary	29	89.9%
B. Wrong pronunciation	27	83.7%
C. Nothing to say	26	80.6%
D. Being afraid of making mistakes	30	93%
E. No chance to speak	25	77.5%
F. Being shy	23	71.3%
G. No regular speaking practice	24	74.4%

H. Boring activities	28	86.8%
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It can be seen from Table 3 that there were many reasons causing the students' low participation in English speaking activities during class hours. Being afraid of making mistakes was considered by 93% of the research students as one of reasons that prevented them from speaking English in the class. Another reason for their low level of participation in speaking activities was that they lacked vocabulary to express their ideas, which was indicated by twenty-nine students (89.9%). In addition, twenty-seven students (83.7%) often mispronounced some of English words. Twenty eight students (86.8%) did not speak English often in the class. Twenty three students (71.3%) was shy when speaking English before the class. 80.6% of the students answered that they had nothing to say when being asked while 77.5% students did not have chance to speak in class because one student could speak at a time in a given speaking activity.

When being asked "What makes you interested in learning English speaking skills?" (Question 4), 46.8% students stated they enjoyed exciting activities and many of them (31.3%) paid much attention to interesting topics. 15.6% out of them thought that good teaching methods would interest them a lot in learning English speaking skills. The above three factors play an important role not only in learning but also in teaching because they create good learning atmosphere in the class, make students feel excited, eager and confident to join in class. Students also named some other factors that might encourage them to take an active part in English speaking activities such as their classmates' supports, teachers' effective feedback delivery, and also the adequate time allowance for these activities.

In conclusion, the findings from the pre-questionnaire showed that though the students were quite aware of the importance of English speaking skills, there were many factors which imposed negative effects on their learning process in general and on their participation in speaking activities in particular. Therefore, the teachers should investigate some techniques to create a low-anxiety language learning environment as well as help their students overcome the difficulties in English speaking practice.

***The post-questionnaire:***

With the question "How do you feel about speaking activities using CS?", most of students (86%) liked learning English with the help of CS because CS helped them

work in pairs or in groups effectively. 9% of the students were unsure whether they liked or disliked the activities with CS. Only 5% of the students confessed they did not like the employment of CS in English speaking activities because they felt being distracted by the slides.

Relating to the benefits of the CS employment in English speaking activities, most of students (93,7%) believed the use of CS in speaking activities made English easier for them to learn. Only one student (3.1%) could not decide either on “agree” or “disagree” with this question and only one student (3.1%) expressed negative feelings with the use of CS in English speaking activities.

With the question “What are your own changes after taking part in the English speaking activities using CS?”, many students preferred using CS when participating in English speaking activities and they could work better to perform confidently in front of the class (see Table 4). In particular, 87.5% of the students answered they were motivated to listen and speak English more than before. The CS might attract them and make them excited in learning. When evaluating their own speaking competence improvement, 84.4% of the students strongly agreed that they made a progress in English speaking skills. They volunteered to practice speaking when teacher gave questions. Only 12.5% were unsure about their improvement and just 3.1% thought that they did not get any progresses in speaking skills. 81.2% of students claimed that they were confident enough to act in groups even though they could make a good oral presentation in front of the class, which was contradicted with the previous comment that the students were always afraid of speaking before other classmates. Almost every student (93.7%) admitted that they could work better when using CS in learning English, particularly their vocabulary was enriched after they took an active part in all the English speaking activities with CS.

Table 4: Students’ own changes after using CS in speaking activities

<b>Changes</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
A. I am more motivated to speak English.	3.1%	9.4%	87.5%
B. I have made progresses in English speaking.	3.1%	12.5%	84.4%
C. I am confident enough to speak English in groups or in front of the class.	9.4%	9.4%	81.2%

D. My pronunciation is much better.	6.3%	15.5%	78.2%
E. My vocabulary has been enlarged.	0%	6.3%	93.7%
F. I can make longer English sentences.	9.4%	21.8%	68.8%
G. CS help me speak English more fluently.	15.5%	12.5%	72.9%

To sum up, the findings from the post-questionnaire for the students again provide us with one part of the evidences to believe that teachers can change the current situation of English speaking lessons at College of Foreign Languages by effectively applying new techniques in teaching English in general as well as using CS in teaching English speaking skills in particular to motivate students' participation more in English learning process.

### Findings from the pre- and post- tests

As mentioned previously, administering the pre- and post- tests the researcher wanted to know whether there were different scores between the students before and after taught with CS.

In the Pre-test, the students sat in a speaking test in the similar format of Cambridge KET test. The highest score in pre-test was 8.5 and the lowest score was 4.5. After the CS application in speaking lessons, the students were given a post test. The highest score in post-test was 95 and the lowest score was 55. The data of the students' pre-test and post-test were then arranged in the form of frequency and percentages through score's criteria as in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Students' speaking ability before and after CS implementation

Grade	Criteria of score	Frequency (f)		Percentage (p)	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
A - Excellent	91-100	-	2	-	6.3%
B - Very Good	81-90	2	8	6.3%	25%
C - Good	71-80	5	17	15.7%	53.1%
D - Average	61-70	11	4	34.4%	12.5%
E - Poor	41-60	14	1	43.6%	3.1
F - Very Poor	0-40	-	-	-	-
		$\Sigma$ 32	$\Sigma$ 100%	$\Sigma$ 32	$\Sigma$ 100%

The researcher used statistical test with paired sample t-test stated by SPSS 20.00 to convince of pre-test and post-test of the effectiveness of using CS on the students' English speaking achievement. The descriptive statistic of tests showed that the means

score of the pre-test was 63.22 while the means score of the post-test was 77.06 as illustrated in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretest	63.22	32	11.187	1.978
	posttest	77.06	32	9.510	1.681

Table 7 of paired sample correlation below showed that the large correlation between samples, the numeral of both correlation was 0.573 and numeral significance was 0.001.

Table 7: Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	pretest & posttest	32	.573	.001

Table 8: Paired Sample Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
air 1	pretest - posttest	-13.844	9.679	1.711	-17.333	-10.354	8.091	31	.000

Table 8 above showed the result of analysis using T-test. The mean pre-test and post-test was 13.844, standard deviation was 9.679, mean standard error was 1.711. The lower different was -17.33 while the upper different was -10.35. The result test  $t = (-8.091)$  with  $df$  31 and significance 0.000.

In short, there was differences on Paired Sample Statistic that the mean before the CS employment is 63.22, and after the CS employment was 76.06, which proves that the mean before being taught with CS was lower than after being taught with CS. Thus, it can be concluded that CS had positive effects on the students' English speaking performance and with the CS supports the students could communicate in English more fluently and accurately.

### **Findings from the semi-structured interview**

During the interviews, several students admitted (although rather reluctantly) that they preferred the employment of CS in English speaking activities. They claimed that CS usually made them feel safe to discuss the topics or supported them with ideas to talk about (S04, S10). As a result, they became more confident enough to speak English in front of their classmates. They were willing to take an active part in English speaking activities with CS because CS helped them link the topic with their knowledge. One student said “*I like it [speaking activity with CS] when it is easier and I know the topic but I don't like it when I have to prepare a lot for the activity*” (S09). This finding is significant because it stimulates further creativity in lesson plan as a way to initiate student engagement in English lessons.

The students also reported an improvement in their language skills, typically speaking skills. Seven students ‘agreed’ that English activities with CS helped to improve their speaking during class discussion – one of them said “*[I] communicate with both classmates and [my] teacher more*”(S05). Additionally, most of the students believed that CS speaking activities allowed them to feel more confident about asking or answering questions in class discussions. They said that CS made them interested in learning English speaking and urged them to join speaking activities enthusiastically (S02, S03). Moreover, CS developed their ideas, stimulated their imagination, improved their cooperation, and enabled them to link vocabulary with the topic (S04, S09).

Overall, the students reported a development in their communicative engagement during speaking activities in class. Due to their developed interest in the lively slideshows with captions and the wealth of knowledge shared, the students were able to engage more frequently in their English speaking lessons and with greater confidence. Their involvement in English speaking activities also established a sense of pride in their written and their verbal work.

In sum, from the problems of speaking skills and their causes, the solutions that would be implemented were determined. The main solution was implementing CS with several supporting solutions such as conducting pronunciation drills, guiding vocabulary practices, using classroom English, and encouraging role-plays. CS were used not only to attract the students’ attention, but also to help the students learn the vocabulary and

generate visualization of what they would learn. Consequently, the students became more motivated and confident to speak English. Through the data analysis, it is notable that most students had preference in the use of CS in English speaking activities which was believed to make English easier for them to learn. They confirmed that CS interested and motivated them in speaking and that CS made them confident and safe during speaking activities so they were gradually eager and willing to speak English. This can be seen as the success of this action research project.

## **Discussion**

The focus of this research is using CS to encourage the students to participate more in English speaking activities. The general findings showed that CS successfully improved the students' speaking skills. The clearer explanation can be seen as follows.

First, the students' vocabulary and pronunciation skills were improved as they always did pronunciation drills and vocabulary practices every meeting, typically when they practiced speaking with the prompts and support of CS. The use of CS enriched the students' vocabulary because the students remembered new words and expressions more easily since they saw and heard these words while watching CS. Their English production slowly showed improvement. Although they still made mispronunciation and used Vietnamese, they used English more often than before the CS action was implemented.

Second, the students were more confident and less nervous when they spoke English. They were excited and seemed to enjoy the speaking tasks after the employment of CS in speaking activities because the CS were colorful and the speaking activities were communicative and enjoyable. They laughed at some pairs who made dramatic gestures, and eye contacts when presenting before the class. They seemed relaxed and enjoyable during the speaking performance. The classroom atmosphere was more alive and the teaching and learning processes were more interesting. In addition, the students were no longer afraid of making mistakes and they even felt more secure when they could express their ideas and opinions with a range of vocabulary obtained from the CS.

Third, the students' involvement in classroom's speaking activities increased. The students were more active and engaged when they practiced speaking skills with the

support from the given CS. Many students felt extremely exposed to English and volunteered to speak in front of the whole class. In fact, their English production increased because they were given more vocabulary and more conversation practices.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study clearly showed that the CS employment in English speaking classes had significantly contributed to both the improvement of the students' speaking skills and their self-confidence. The development of students' speaking performance could be seen from the progress in the students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and language use. Another finding indicated that the students enjoyed performing in front of the class. This enhancement in the students' self-confidence might derive from some benefits or the significance of using CS as a teaching aid in speaking lessons. Therefore, it can be concluded that the employment of CS successfully improved speaking skills of the students at College of Foreign Languages and boost their willingness to participate in English speaking activities as it met the evaluation criteria of success mentioned in section 3.3.

## **Conclusion**

### **Recapitulation**

This study focused on using captioned slideshows (CS) in teaching speaking skills for the students at College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam. Accordingly, a number of concepts most relevant to the topic were presented such as the meanings and components of speaking skills, the description of captioned slideshows, and the relationship of captioned slideshows and teaching English speaking skills. From the analysis of the pre- and post-questionnaire, interviews with the students, and the evaluation of pre- and post-tests, it is proven that English speaking skills of the non-English major students at College of Foreign Languages have upgraded. This result has answered the research question that the use of CS in teaching and learning English speaking skills is quite effective. Moreover, this teaching strategy got good responses from the students and they enjoyed speaking lessons with CS activities because they could express their ideas, they advanced to interact in English with their classmates. Several students even claimed that they had overcome their fear of speaking because they had quite much time devoted only to speaking in the target language. To short, employing CS in speaking lessons is really an

effective teaching technique which should be widely encouraged and exploited in teaching and learning English speaking skills.

### **Pedagogical implication**

The results of the study partly showed that the students' limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, low motivation and the inappropriate material were the obstacles to their speaking ability. These barriers were considerably minimized with the CS implication in teaching and learning speaking; therefore, several pedagogical implications are proposed as follows:

Firstly, it was proved that the use of captioned slideshows had positive impact on students' speaking, which could be implied that captioned slideshows could be taken into account as a referentially effective technique to enable students to improve their speaking ability in specific, boost their confidence, obtain motivation of speaking, and get eagerness for communication in speaking sessions. The principle of conducting this activity is that teachers ought to make thoughtful preparations in advance. If teachers desire to handle the lessons with captioned slideshows successfully, they should devote their time and energy to choosing suitable types of pictures at home, inserting meaningful captions so that the themes of teaching can be covered totally and effectively. It will be time-consuming and energy-consuming, but the benefits it brings us can be considered a well-off compensation. Secondly, captioned slideshow techniques lead the chance to the students to discuss and analyze with their teachers or together and practice English inside classroom with teachers' control. Therefore, teachers' role is to adapt the technique which encourages more students' participation and provides students with various opportunities for communicative interaction and language use. What is more, captions can help students to establish a systematic link between written words and spoken ones. In addition to this, students often need assistance in learning content-relevant vocabulary and with captions they see both the terminology (written words) and the visual image. Hence, the teacher should provide some common vocabulary used in the slides and also give students drilling to proper pronunciation. Thirdly, the density of the slides and the length of the slideshows are important for students, which may influence students' interests in learning speaking so teachers should be concerned about the proper timing for implementing this technique.

Finally, for the students, the most important thing to deal with is that they should be made aware of the benefits of communicative activities in general and captioned slideshows in particular. Once they consider studying languages for communication, they will have motivation to use the target language instead of mother tongue. In addition, students should realize that it is them who should be responsible for their English learning. Instead of being passive in the class, they are expected to join all the activities conducted by teachers voluntarily and actively. In short, captioned picture videos themselves cannot work effectively but it takes time and requires effort of teachers as well as students for stable effectiveness to be reached.

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## **Monolingual Policies and Plurilingual Practices in English Language Classrooms: Addressing Shared Guilt and Threats**

**Tayyaba Tamim**

*School of Education, Lahore University of Management Sciences*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Dr Tayyaba Tamim** is currently an Associate Professor at the School of Education Lahore University of Management Sciences. Dr Tamim has led several funded research projects with national and international partners, including those with USAID, British council and the World Bank. She has also published and presented research papers at several national and international forums. She is interested in the broad area of inclusive education within which she explores issues of second language education, language policy, sociopolitics of linguistic choices and second language teacher education. Dr Tamim has her PhD from University of Cambridge as a fully funded RECOUP scholar and MPhil RSLE (Research in Second Language Education Across Cultures) also from Cambridge UK as a British Council Chevening scholar. In addition, she also has an MA ELT from Kinnaird College for Women University and MA English from the University of Punjab, Pakistan.

### **Abstract**

While evidence piles up in favour of plurilingual and translingual practices to support second language learning in classrooms, institutional policies remain grounded in monolingual ideologies, across several contexts in Asia. Within these competing knowledge claims, this paper based on the findings of a qualitative, ethno-cognitive multi-case study, explores English language teaching /learning experiences of three teachers and eight learners in a university setting in Pakistan. Data was collected with a combination of stimulated recall and ethnographic interviews, key informant interviews,

documentary analysis and participant observation. Findings revealed that the contradiction between plurilingual practices in classrooms and monolingual ideal of English language classes upheld by institutions triggered feelings of guilt and threat experienced not only by teachers and learners but also rippled through the administration. The paper argues that these feelings can only compound the anxiety associated with L2 classrooms, negatively affecting the learning of English as a second language. It is suggested that the role of learners' linguistic repertoire in L2 teaching and learning needs to be discussed not only in teacher education programmes but also made explicit within institutions and clearly articulated within classrooms.

**Keywords:** *Plurilingual practices; monolingual policies; English teaching and learning; guilt; threat; learners' L1*

## **Introduction**

The paradigmatic shift from the stance in 1570s that 'the way into the new language was always through student's own first language' to ruling out its use in L2 classrooms around 1800s (Cook, 2002, p. 32 in Brook-Lewis, 2009) has been spectacular. Reinforced by work on contrastive analysis and the concept of negative transfer of the first language/s (L1) in second language learning (L2) processes (Lado, 1957; Selinker, 1972), the dismissal of learners' L1 from L2 classrooms gained further credibility under the influence of behaviourism, as second language learning came to be viewed as new habit formation, which required unlearning the old habit of L1 use (Skinner, 1957). Under western colonialism, the hegemonic ideal of a native speaker, pushed the agenda of exclusive use of target language in L2 classrooms, though it stemmed only from the colonizers own unfamiliarity with local languages (Lin, 2013; Cook, 2002). This was supported by teaching methods (for example, the audiolingual, direct and communicative language teaching etc) and publication of teaching materials that considered learners' own linguistic repertoire or first language/s (L1) only as a problem to dismissed any role of the learners' linguistic repertoire in L2 classrooms (Cook, 2002; 2010).

Plurilingual and translingual practices in second/ foreign language (L2) classrooms challenge the rigid separation of languages from each other and reject the

conceptualization of a bilingual as equivalent to two monolinguals; rather these practices emphasize that languages are fluid, each supporting the other, as learners draw upon all their linguistic resources to communicate and learn (Lin, 2013; Pennycook, 2010; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Cummins, 2007; Pennycook, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Lin, 2013; Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). This is an acknowledgement of the facilitative role of learners' existing linguistic repertoire or first language/s (L1) in second or foreign language learning (L2) supported by a large body of sociolinguistic research on code/mixing/ code switching in second language classrooms (Atkinson, 1987; Kerr, 2019; Kerr, 2017; Chyani, Courcy & Barnett, 2018; Ma, 2019). Seen as a critical part of learners' sociocultural and socio-historical experience (Kramsch, 1998), the linguistic repertoire of the learners, referred here as L1, has been understood as a natural mechanism of reliance in the learning of another language, referred here as L2 (Ellis, 1999; Taylor, 1975; Wode, 1980; Cook, 2001). This is also explainable by the 'general principles of transfer of knowledge,' which emphasizes that one can only process new knowledge with the help of existing knowledge structures (Leontiev, 1970 quoted in Marton, 1981, p.149). Although, it is accepted that the existing language structures will be transferred to some extent into the other being learnt (Odlin, 1996; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Kerr, 2016), this transfer is not only considered natural as in plurilingualism, as no one has access to the entire language (Lin, 2013) but it may be used as a resource to draw comparisons and talk about languages, as suggested by language awareness pedagogy (Hawkins, 2001). Research in code switching has shown that the use of L1 perform several important pedagogical and sociocultural functions (Cahyani, Courcy & Barnett 2018; Ma, 2019) which enable teachers to not only tackle the major difficulty of teaching L2 adult learners with only basic proficiency in the language (Alharbi, 2019), but to teach all learners (Kerr, 2019; Kerr, 2017).

Several studies have explored the role of L1 from the perspective of teachers and learners and found that teachers' intuitive or deliberate use of L1 was useful in multiple ways, including reduction of cognitive load and learner anxiety, developing rapport, increasing comprehension and engagement, learning of vocabulary, grammar and much more in both school and tertiary contexts (Romero & Parrino, 1994; Anton & Di Camilla, 1999; Edstrom, 2006; Chimbutane, 2013; Hu & Bodo, 2009; Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009;

Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Schwartz & Asli, 2014; Auerbach, 1993; Tang, 2000; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Bruen & Kelly, 2017). While, research evidence piles up in favour of L1 use in L2 classrooms augmented by pedagogical approaches, for example, language awareness and translanguaging, and the concepts of plurilingualism, flexible bilingualism, (Jones & Ghuman, 1995; Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 1999, 2001, 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Deller, 2003; Kerr, 2019; James, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Lin, 2013; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013; Willans, 2013; Conteh, 2018; Kerr, 2017), tensions remain and those who advocate for exclusive use of target language in classrooms have by far been more influential (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019).

Hence, several educational institutions commonly take a firm stance on exclusive use of the target language in classrooms across several contexts in Asia (Cook 2001, 2002, 2003; Cook, 2010; Promondou, 2000; Kerr, 2016). Notwithstanding this policy, non-native bilingual teachers and learners often find themselves using their shared first language (L1) in foreign or second language (L2) classrooms (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Howatt & Widdowson 2004; Tang, 2000; Ma, 2019; Chimbutane, 2013; Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Hu & Bodomo, 2009; Conteh, 2018; Cahyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018; Kerr, 2019). Hence, the use of L1 in L2 classrooms remains the ‘skeleton in the closet,’ (Prodomou, 2000) that jumps out every now and then, causing confusion and frustration for teachers and learners who may intuitively rely on L1 for teaching and learning L2, while otherwise, adhering to western methodologies, using teaching materials and working within institutions that all forbid its use (Cook, 2002; Yuwono, 2005, Dardjowidjojo, 2000; Yuwono & Harbon, 2010; Kerr, 2017; Chimbutane, 2013; Ma, 2019). The teachers not following a given policy are often labeled as ‘incompetent,’ or ‘lazy’ or ‘resistant to change’ (Wang, 2008). sense of guilt on the part of the teachers when they use L1 (Macaro, 2001; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2002; Burden, 2001). Hall and Cook (2013) report the phenomenon across 111 countries from their survey. Teachers even reported feeling uncomfortable in articulating the need of L1 in L2 classrooms (Edstrom, 2006). Copland & Neokleous, (2010) also found that L2 teachers often under reported or ‘differently report[ed]’ their use of L1 in classroom and even contradicted their practices by using but arguing for limiting the use of L1. However, this paradox of using but dismissing the need of L1 has not been explored at length. In addition, while

the guilt felt by L2 teachers has been briefly covered, learners' perspective has been largely missing in these studies.

This paper contributes to the current literature in three different ways: First, it explores perceptions of plurilingual practices teachers and learners in L2 classrooms, within institutional policy context that strictly adhere to monolingualism and emphasizes exclusive target language use in classrooms. Second, it extends discussions on teachers' guilt and claims that this is not unique to teachers but is also traceable in students and even within administration. Third, it discussed the shared social threats perceived by teachers, learners and administration in the use of L1, emerging from intersubjective understandings of the sociocultural dynamics of power and privilege inherent in the linguistic hierarchy of the given context. The paper argues that this may increase the anxiety associated with L2 classrooms for both teachers and learning adversely affecting the teaching and learning of the second language. The generalizability of the findings is limited due to its qualitative design, however, it provides in depth insights (Flick, 2018) into how the wider sociocultural prejudices play into L2 classrooms and affect teachers and learners, a situation that may be similar to other postcolonial Asian contexts. The paper is divided into six sections. The next section gives an overview of the context. The following sections: 3, 4 and 5 present the methodology of the study, findings and discussion respectively before the argument is concluded in the final section.

### **Context of the study**

Pakistan is richly multilingual with more than 25 regional languages, a national language, Urdu, and an official one, English, from its colonial past. Urdu is widely used as a medium of cross-regional communication in urban areas (Author, 2014). Here, it often finds its way into homes and is learnt informally and also formally in schools. It is also the medium of instruction in government sector schools. Urdu was the only language in the rich linguistic repertoire of the learners that was being used in English classrooms in this context. The paper does not bring into discussion regional languages in this context because the shared language between teachers and learners who belonged to different ethnicities was Urdu and not a regional language. English is taught as second language in schools and universities, though for some it may actually be a foreign language given its

limited exposure to those from low socioeconomic classes. In private schools and higher education institutions more, often than not, it is also the medium of instruction. It is referred to as second language (L2), at times, in this paper, notwithstanding the aforementioned difference.

Like other postcolonial countries English in Pakistan is considered highly important for upward socioeconomic mobility (Haider & Fang, 2019). Being the main language of the higher education, and of almost all government/ non- government businesses and of higher judiciary, it becomes a route to well paid jobs and as such has unrivalled significance in the country. Although, English is taught in all school systems and also at tertiary level, proficiency in English remains the distinctive marker and prerogative of the elite who can afford to study in high fee English medium schools (author, 2014). Low fee private and government sector schools (that charge no fee at all) , achieve little in terms of teaching English. Poor English language proficiency of teachers, obsolete curricula, low socioeconomic background of students, little exposure to English at homes, and more often than not, uneducated parents, only come together to construct a recipe for failure in the teaching/ learning of English language (Manan, 2018). The social privilege and advantage for the elite is then reproduced both in the linguistic hierarchy and the limited access to the more valued English language.

In elite private educational institutions, Urdu is often officially banned from L2 classrooms. At school level, punishments or fines are meted out to discourage the use of Urdu in classrooms and to purge it from the campus. However, practically, many teachers and learners use Urdu in English language classrooms for one reason or the other. This seems to simulate the wider sociocultural context, where despite the official status of English and its use in written documentation and formal situations, it is Urdu or at times a regional language that remains the most common mode of communication. Unlike the high fee private schools, the low-fee private and government schools, openly rely on the use of Urdu in English language classrooms because of the poor English language proficiency of learners and also at times teachers who may also come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hence, low proficiency in English language becomes a marker of class-based disadvantage.

The study was undertaken at a nursing school in a highly reputed international medical university in Pakistan. At this school, where the students typically came from underprivileged backgrounds, L2 teaching /learning was highly emphasized and extremely problematic. The nearly 450 nursing students enrolled in different programmes, required English not only for coping with their academics but also for all official documentation and written communication at the hospital, where they also worked simultaneously. Their English language proficiency was, hence, critically important yet quite poor at this level. The university maintained an implicit but strong policy of not using Urdu in English language classrooms, though unofficially Urdu was being used. In contrast to the students the teachers were from upper middle class or elite backgrounds and highly proficient in English.

### **Methodology**

This ethno-cognitive multiple case study design was guided by Wood's (1996) framework for studying teachers' decision making. The ethnographic strain in the study encouraged an emphasis on intersubjective understandings of teachers and learners in the given culture and insights into the role of Urdu in English language teaching and learning from the perspective of lived in realities of those involved (Flick, 2018; Mihas, 2019; Pole & Morrison, 2003). Hence, participants and their perceptions were not seen as ahistorical but situated in socio-historical cultural contexts within which personal meanings were socially constructed. The study moves from ethnographic into cognitive domain to understand the individual mental processes and personal constructs as they relied on Urdu or dismissed it in the teaching and learning of English. The instrumental case study model (Stake, 1995) allowed the study to explore a particular aspect of teaching practice by incorporating typical cases and considering participants as bearers of important knowledge. Each participant was taken as a case and exploratory methods were used to highlight the unique complexity of each case (Yin, 2004; Yin, 2017).

The methods used for this qualitative study were: individual interviews (a combination of stimulated recall and ethnographic style); key informant interviews with administration; unstructured classroom observations; participant observation; field notes and documentary analysis.

Three unstructured observations were carried out with the researcher taking notes on different aspects of the class, especially the use of language teachers and learners. These classes were also audio taped for two hours each, the length of a class frame. The main aim of the observation was to understand classroom dynamics and build a repertoire of shared moments to stimulate recall during the interviews later on so that a concrete link could be built between the articulated perception and experience.

Interviews with teachers and learners were held individually and were between 60 – 80 minutes in duration. The language used by the researcher was Urdu to ensure that participants may feel comfortable talking about the use of Urdu. Eventually, all the interviews with teachers and learners were bilingual. These semi-structured interviews were a combination of ethnographic style and stimulated recall method. As such these generated three kinds of discourse: one related to specific aspects of the classroom experiences; the other related to previous and other current experiences; and the third aspect was generalized assumptions not related to any specific time (Woods, 1996)

The assumption in these interviews was that ‘A belief articulated in the context of a “story” about concrete events, behaviours and plans, is more likely to be grounded in actual behaviour’ (Woods, 1996, p. 27); hence, a dependable source of data. Grounded in narratives of the present and the past and their evaluation by the participants, the interviews were also expected to provide a unique insight into the sources that influenced and shaped the perceptions of the participants.

The assumption in stimulated recall strain was based on information processing approach that a visual/aural prompt could lead to operating of the mental processes at the time of the event, which could be studied through introspective and retrospective methods of verbal reports (Gass & Mackey, 2000). With possibility of flexible application (DiPardo, 1994), stimulated recalls enable ‘vividness and accuracy’ that can be highly reliable and valid if the interview is conducted within a short time (48 hrs) Bloom, 1954 in Mackey, Gass & McDonough, 2000) Although the technique is not without its critics, it has helped to understand the way L2 knowledge ‘is acquired, organized, and used’ by learners (Mackey, Gass & McDonough, 2000, p. 21).

The interviews were held either on the same day after the class or the day next. All the interviews were carefully planned to give some loose structure for comparability

across cases, while keeping them open ended to allow participants to explore their diverse experiences. The main dimensions explored in the interviews are displayed in table 3.1

**Table: 3.1 Interview Protocol Dimensions**

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Learners</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic details</li> <li>• Previous education</li> <li>• Language learning experience</li> <li>• Professional training experiences</li> <li>• Language teaching experience (previous)</li> <li>• Language teaching experience (current: general and specific to the given class)</li> <li>• Institutional expectations: through hypothetical situation</li> <li>• General perceptions about the role of Urdu in English teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic details</li> <li>• Previous education</li> <li>• Language learning experience( previous)</li> <li>• Language learning experience (current: general and specific to the audio recorded class)</li> <li>• Brief oral protocol about how they usually processed English texts. In addition a topic was given to write about and later the learners described the use of Urdu if any.</li> <li>• General perceptions about the role of Urdu in English language learning.</li> </ul>

During the discussion of current experiences of language teaching/ learning, excerpts from class audio recording were played (2-3 minutes at a time) and questions asked about the relevance of Urdu. During this time handouts from their own class were also placed before the participants to stimulate recall.

Key informant interviews were held with administration, Dean and Directors for an understanding of institutional place for Urdu. While policy documents, lesson plans and detailed field notes also enabled triangulation of interview data, giving an understanding of the context, within which the teachers and learners were located.

Participant observation attempts to discover the cultural knowledge people use to ‘organize their behaviour and interpret their experience’ (Spradley, 1980, p. 31; ). The assumption is that culture is a solution to certain issues and to understand culture it is important to understand what issues are being addressed and comprehend relationships as they appear meaningful to the people (Spradley, 1980). Detailed field notes from observations, both within and outside the class, helped to capture the essence of participant observation (Flick, 2018; Mihas, 2019).

The researcher was able to bring this perspective to the research by being a member of the culture and a faculty member at the university for almost two and a half years. The researcher had been teaching and coordinating English language courses offered in the given context. In this capacity the researcher was capable of understanding and interpreting meanings from the participants’ perspective, within their cultural context. However, the possibility of personal bias and over familiarity is realized (Mihás, 2019). An attempt was made to address the issue by: firstly, consciously overcoming ‘selective inattentiveness’, and developing ‘explicit awareness’ of field experience from an ‘insider’ as well as ‘outsider’ perspective (Spradley, 1980, pp. 54-55); secondly, by acknowledging the social role of the researcher and maintaining transparency in procedures; thirdly, being aware of these threats would have helped in minimizing them in addition to the researcher’s absence of a year from the given context.

### ***The participants***

The three English language teachers were non-native bilingual women from a high socioeconomic background, with Urdu as their L1. However, they were also familiar with at least one more regional language. All of them had undertaken English language teacher training and had a wide experience (10-30 years) of teaching English as a second or foreign language in tertiary settings. At the given time, they were engaged in teaching English language courses in a number of programmes, including a 3-yr Diploma programme, offered at the school of nursing at an international medical university. The eight learner participants were from their nursing diploma programme: three students each from year I and year III, and two were from year II.

The students were all bilingual females between 18-25 yrs of age belonging to different regions of Pakistan and like their teachers they had Urdu as their L1, though they also knew at least one more regional language. Besides this common denominator among the learner participants, the other was their low socioeconomic status and poor English language proficiency. In addition, all of them had the prior exposure of 8-12 years of formal English language learning at school and college level. They represented typical students in their classes in terms of L2 proficiency level in this context.

### ***Data analysis***

Each interview was transcribed word by word in the language it was conducted. The analysis can be divided in two broad phases, although it remained iterative to the end. Each individual interview was coded in detail, keeping in mind the link between the question asked and the positioning of the response in surrounding discourse. Language use and organization of arguments helped to construct the ‘parameters that shape the lives of people’ (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 310). This involved a complex process of going through the transcripts, tracing recurring patterns, delineating text organization and content; contextualizing the repertoire, segregating variant responses and looking for ‘consistency within/between interviews’ (ibid. p.209) and also by focusing on the different kinds of terms used and the possibility of meanings and nature of emerging relationships (Flick, 2018; Mihas, 2019).

Later, in the second phase, data across the interviews was analyzed for cross cutting themes using detailed multiple matrices This facilitated identification of ‘dimensions of contrast and similarity among different groups,’ highlighting certain ‘cultural themes’ (Spradley, 1980, p. 148), for example, guilt, threat, denial and conflict in the use of L1.

The findings discussed in this paper are limited to some common themes arising across the cases, following an inductive process of analysis (Mihas, 2019). The main data used here are the interviews, while other sources of data have also been subtly included. Differences across cases are only discussed if relevant to the focus of the paper, which remains presentation of the common themes of guilt and threat. The names of the participants have not been used to maintain confidentiality.

### **Acceptance of facilitative role of Urdu in English teaching and learning**

All the participants unanimously felt that Urdu was an important mediating tool for the teaching and learning of English. The teachers considered Urdu an indispensable way to explain difficult concepts and assist learners to relate things to their background. They felt that the use of Urdu increased learner involvement, enhanced understanding and assisted in developing rapport with them. Teacher A commented on the need of Urdu, ‘I realized that the language that I would need to explain those grammar points would be more difficult for them to understand than just telling them [in Urdu] this is what it means.’ Teacher C also explained, referring to a specific moment in her class when she restricted her students to speak only in English, the responses were:

Hardly any because they were scared to communicate, they couldn’t communicate with me so the kind of responses I was getting were very structured. It was like what’s the word for it ...what’s the term for [...] but when I wanted to deviate from that and I ask them their opinion, they would not respond because I was not encouraging them to speak in Urdu (Source Interview: Teacher C Yr II).

Teacher B explained that she used Urdu ‘to bring some light touch to the class,’ while Teacher C justified use because:

I also want to know if...they have understood something or not and I do not want to hamper it [their learning] only because they cannot express themselves in English. But I sometimes ...well not very strictly... but light heartedly keep reminding the students that we are trying to practice English and therefore they should speak English (Source: Interview Teacher C).

Teacher A and C also referred to their previous job experience, where they were not familiar with the Urdu of their learners. While Teacher C just got by, Teacher A felt she had to learn the Urdu of her learners language to make her teaching effective.

The learners also narrated how they used Urdu to draw comparisons with English grammar and vocabulary. Six of the eight learners suggested that the use of Urdu was also a face saving strategy that helped to ease stress and anxiety in English classrooms and regain confidence. Everyone suggested reliance on Urdu when engaged in group work:

We begin talking in English but when we cant understand something or when we can't say what we want to say in English, I ask in Urdu... What does this mean or this is what I wanted to say ... or how do I say this in English\?  
(Source: Interview Learner B (Yr III).

Learner G explained:

If Urdu is not used at all then it will be very difficult for us, we will not be able to explain the point that we want to make...will not be able to ask the question that we want to ask... we will have to keep thinking what to say... how to say...if it is correct (Source Interview Learner G, Yr I).

Learner D explained why she relied on Urdu:

Because we at the moment translate in Urdu...this is what the sentence is saying ...then we come at word level...if the meaning is not clear we proceed at sentence level and that is how we interlink ...guessing this is what the meaning of the word is. So I tried to understand the word in Urdu and then write in English (Source: interview Learner D, Yr II).

The bilingual interviews and recalls from the classroom activities confirmed the reported bilingualism of these learners' thinking process. The observed classrooms also provided evidence of the use of Urdu by learners to discuss L2 information. However, this use of Urdu in English classrooms was admitted by all participants with reluctance and was marked by a sense of guilt and threat.

### ***Guilt and Denial in the use of L1***

The guilt and even denial in the use of L1, evident in the discourse, was common to everyone. Although the teachers explained in detail why they allowed the use of Urdu in classroom and how it helped in teaching and learning, when asked directly if Urdu use helped English learning, the prompt reply was:

I am not really sure, but what I believe is that the teachers shouldn't adhere to English rigidly because sometimes it ... becomes impossible to put yourself across because the students are unable to understand you (Source: Interview, Teacher C)

The lurking guilt surfaces as soon as Teacher A relates a positive experience of using Urdu. She emphasized her resolve to respond to learners' needs. Yet, she ends up admitting 'I would be afraid to use Urdu ... I would be afraid of my own understanding of it ...we are doing it just for our children but still feeling guilty about it.' Her initial confidence melts away as she listens to the audio recording of the class and torn by concern, comments 'I have used more Urdu than I probably would have normally.'

It is worth noticing that the use of Urdu is hardly ever referred to with positive connotations. Even when its need in the class is explained, this explanation is overshadowed by a sense of compulsion and self-doubt. Teacher C commented, 'I do not completely disallow Urdu' because 'I do not want to hinder their [learners'] understanding.' Teacher A said 'the use of Urdu is by 'default' when one is confronted with a situation where the only logical way to maximize understanding of the learners is to use their Urdu.' Teacher B also commented, 'One is 'compelled' to use Urdu with low proficiency learners to make things easier for them.' It is almost as if the teachers were trying to confess guilt and exonerate themselves of a wrong they had committed by using Urdu, rather than advocating its use. 'But come on if I don't allow them [the use of Urdu] at that point, I hinder the motivation or their willingness to participate,' Teacher A justified. This was capped with the classic doubt 'I don't know how far it is right or wrong, as if not knowing the law could be an excuse for breaking it.'

This guilt was also expressed by Teacher C, who after reporting heightened learner involvement in group work with the use of Urdu, hastily added ‘but if you remind them, they try to speak English.’ The facilitative role of Urdu was then discussed as if it ‘happened accidentally,’ though it helped, with emphasis on how they tried to repress it rather than acknowledging its contribution.

The ‘guilt’ felt by teachers appeared to be refracted in learners in three different forms. Firstly they denied using Urdu, despite clear reliance on it. Learner C (Yr III), described her English class asserting that neither the teacher nor students spoke in Urdu. When the class tape was played and she could hear herself speaking in Urdu in a group task, she argued that ‘this was just out of habit [...] I don’t need to’ and then added that she used Urdu for her friends to explain the task to them. Later, towards the end of the interview I asked her about the effect of my presence in the class in terms of language. She blurted out:

‘[Earlier] We were thinking that someone is there observing, so we were trying to speak in English but at some point in time we were thinking “that’s ok if Miss is here so what. We can speak in Urdu.” (Source: Interview Learner C, Yr III).

Learner E (Yr III) was conspicuous in denying any role of Urdu in English language learning. This seemed to be peculiar because of her heavy reliance on Urdu in the interview. Earlier, she had also explained that she relied a lot on the bilingual dictionary in her bag. Like others, she had also explained, how it helped when the teacher said something in English and then translated it in Urdu. ‘If you [the teacher] speak[s] in English and translate[s], next time she speaks the same sentence we could remember that this is what the sentence means.’ In contrast, when asked if she used Urdu in English language learning she replied:

Learner E: I cannot say exactly... previously... if I tell you about now, I remember that I don’t... I don’t remember it now

I: You don’t remember?

Learner E: Yeah I don't remember. I... but I might have...I cannot say that when I began learning on my own, I never used Urdu to understand I ... think I have (Source: Interview Learner E, Yr III).

Secondly, learners typically shied away from explicitly endorsing the use of L1 despite clearly admitting the facilitative role of Urdu in self-reports of working through L2 assignments, using Urdu extensively in interviews and emerging evidence from class observation. When Learner F (Yr II) was asked how she would feel if the teacher did not use any Urdu in class, she replied timidly, 'It would be very difficult for us to say what we want to,' only to argue later, 'Urdu should not be allowed at all.' Only two of eight learners explicitly said that Urdu was important to participate in class, while all others demanded that strict checks should be placed over the use of Urdu in classroom. Even these two learners insisted that Urdu should be used minimally. Learner E explained:

Only if teacher feels what she was trying to deliver is not at all accepted by students [then] some Urdu words...like some phrases which can to help students might be used [because]it is more harm in using Urdu than needed.' (Source: Interview, Learner E Yr I).

It is ironical that Learner G after strongly advocating exclusive use of English language in class, towards the end of the interview, when asked for suggestions, almost like a confession ridden with guilt, says quietly 'I want to give this feedback that Urdu should be used.'

Thirdly, despite their reliance on Urdu, learners viewed it so unfavourably that they endorsed physical punishments meted out to them in school and argued for punitive measures to be in place in their current classes. Two of the learners who were the strongest advocates of exclusive use of English, were the ones who narrated suffering humiliation for speaking in Urdu in class. Learner B remembered that in grade seven, she was dragged from her class [grade 7) and shut in the washroom for fifteen minutes for speaking in Urdu. Later her parents were called She reminisced, 'it was horrible ...

very shameful.’ In contrast to the emotional trauma, instead of denouncing the act as it seemed she almost would, she whispered under her breath ‘whenever I meet her [the teacher] I remember how she really helped, how important is English in life.’ Acceptance of punishment as legitimate, can be seen as an admission of guilt, arising from an understanding that using L1 was a wrongful act.

The role of Urdu for establishing rapport in the class was the only thing that the teachers and learners readily acknowledged and reported with least sense of ‘guilt,’ and the learners seemed to understand and ‘excuse’ her. Learner H commented ‘she has to use Urdu because class is so tired.’ Hence, the use of Urdu here was not being accepted as integral to learning English but as an aside, a lapse a break from the regime of learning to relax.

### ***Threat in the use of Urdu***

This guilt in the use of Urdu is understandable, if seen against a sense of existential social threat mutually perceived by teachers and learners. This seemed to emerge from their intersubjective understanding of the linguistic hierarchy, the symbolic value attached to English and the negative connotations accompanying the use of Urdu, despite the latter being a national language and the language of common communication across communities and within homes, especially in urban contexts. The use of Urdu in English teaching/ learning setting was often seen here as a sign of very poor proficiency in English, which in turn could be taken for poor educational background, low socioeconomic background and even low intelligence.

The previous language learning and teaching experiences of all the teachers in private educational institutions were remarkably similar in terms of discouraging Urdu in English language classrooms to the extent of using punishments/ fines for the purpose. Teacher A remembered both the emphasis on exclusive use of English in her convent schooling and her previous work place. English language teacher’s use of Urdu would set off others gossiping, as if it were an offence, she reminisced. Teacher C also remembered that in her old job, speaking in Urdu for the English language teacher ‘was a bad thing [...] one could even lose one’s job,’ she explained. When asked to think hypothetically about the response of the Dean, if she steps into a classroom and finds an English language

teacher using Urdu in class, the replies were spontaneous and quite similar to what Teacher C gave, 'that she [the teacher] is not very proficient [in English]... professionally not capable and that she was not doing her job well.' The threat of being considered professionally incompetent was quite real in the given context, where poor English language proficiency of teachers was a real issue. Hence, despite acknowledging the need for Urdu, one of the teachers reported to actively avoid Urdu in her class, much to the problem of her participant students as it turned out.

Nevertheless, Teacher A explained that she felt 'compelled' to use Urdu because of the low proficiency of English language learners, since they were from underprivileged backgrounds, 'if they had the means they would go to English medium schools,' she guessed. Teacher B felt that the poor English language proficiency of these students, despite years of learning at school, was indicative poor intelligence. In their class, she argued, the 'more intelligent' ones would have been able to learn English.

Learners also shared similar language based biases. Learner E also reminisced that her previous English teacher might have been using Urdu because 'the level of students was lower.' While Learner F agreed that those with 'a different level, those from Urdu medium [schools]' would need Urdu, she commented that perhaps 'the teacher also did not know English,' alluding to the commonly held assumption in the given context, where teachers, a product of the same system, themselves had low English language proficiency. When the learners were asked if they would ask a question in Urdu from the teacher if the Dean was there to observe, the learners replied in negative. Learner C said, 'I will hold my question until the class ends.' It was also common for respondents to depersonalize the need for Urdu. Learner C explained 'for those who have studied from Urdu medium...conversation in Urdu would be needed.' Later she hesitantly admitted to her own need for Urdu use by her teacher, complaining that the teacher used 'difficult language and it was hard to understand.' This theme of threat countered by denial was very strong and ran through all learner responses, in different degrees.

For learners, however, the threat had a dual layer because they felt judged both by peers and teachers. They felt threatened to use Urdu in class because they might be looked down upon as 'lower,' explained, Learner H. Learner G also said, 'I would dare not speak in class if I do not know how to say it in English but I will go to the teacher after the class

is over to ask a question' because 'people laugh and pass comments.' Learner C also explained. The threat of ridicule was real and shifted with the context. Speaking in English outside the class also posed a threat of ridicule, 'If we try to speak in English outside people pass comments...you are trying to be smart... look at her she has newly learnt to speak in English,' explained Learner A. It seemed to be a situation where learners found it difficult to use their Urdu in English language class because of its negative connotations, while also feeling threatened as they tried to cross over to English language, leaving the security of L1. In the space between Urdu and English language knowledge there seemed to be a chasm of anxiety, guilt and threat that had to be crossed over, gaining poignancy every time L1 is used.

At institutional level, also, this social threat was perceptible in the response of the Dean. When asked about the role of the first language in learning, she emphasized 'one cannot negate...neglect or...forget the role of Urdu in teaching and learning here,' giving insights into processes that were eerily close to how the teachers and the learners had described. However, when asked what would she think if she observed an English language teacher use Urdu in her class, 'I will not tolerate it,' she responded without a blink and added 'after all we are an English medium institution.' Here, too in the tension between the need of L1 and the stiff stance to avoid it because of the perceived threat to the prestige and elite status of the institution.

## **Discussion**

The findings endorse the value of plurilingual practices in second language classrooms as suggested in the use of L1 in previous research because of the multiple functions it performed because of the multiple functions it performed (Willis, 1981; Schweers, 1999; Burden, 2001; Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Chyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018; Kim & Petraki, 2009; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013; Willans; 2013; Schwartz & Asli, 2014; Lin, 2013; Ma, 2019; Hall & Cook, 2013; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 1999; 2002; Atkinson, 1987; Kerr, 2019; Kerr, 2016; Lin, 2013). Hence, the use of Urdu helped teachers to cope with not only one of the 'high-level difficulties' of teaching English as second or foreign language to adult learners with basic proficiency in the target language at tertiary level, identified by Alharbi (2019), but also facilitated the teaching of all

learners (Kerr, 2017). Apart from other benefits, Urdu seemed to support learners' metacognitive strategies, an important factor in learning (Syaifullah, 2019). In this context, learners and teachers appear as actively constructing and engaging in the teaching and learning of English language using the mediational tool of Urdu.

These results, however, do not endorse other findings which emphasize that the teachers deviate from implementing institutional policy, the exclusive use of English in English language classrooms, in this case because they were 'lazy,' or 'resistant to change' or lacked 'the capacity to work in conformity with institutional policy' (Smit, 2005 in Wang, 2008, p. 2). Neither did the teachers here seem to sideline the institutional policy because of their prior beliefs (Sillane, et. al, 2002 in Wang, 2008); rather they went against their prior beliefs to respond to the pragmatic needs of learners in this context (Wang, 2008; Copland & Neokleous, 2010). The teachers were actually trained to use and dismiss other languages in classrooms, yet they used their agency to understand learners' needs and facilitated their learning allowing the use of Urdu in their classrooms. This was despite discerning the threat to their professional selves that the use of L1 entailed.

While confirming results of studies that reveal teachers' experience of guilt as they use of L1 in L2 classrooms (Prodromou, 2000; Auerbach, 1993; Macaro, 2001; Burden, 2001; Hall & Cook, 2013; Kerr, 2019; Cianflone, 2009), and contradiction in their articulated perceptions and practices (Copland & Neokleous, 2010; Kerr, 2019), the current findings go beyond, to highlight that this experience was not unique to L2 teachers but also shared by learners in their classrooms, and the sense of anxiety and social threat felt by them was also discernable in the university administration. The intersubjectively held biases and attitudes towards languages, in the wider sociocultural context, i.e. the social privileges attached to the use of English and threats associated with the use of Urdu in formal contexts were reflected in the microcosm of classrooms, and was dreaded by learners, teachers and the administration alike.

The results also highlight a complex matrix of attitude towards Urdu and English in this context. An implicit positive attitude is perceptible towards Urdu, because of its affiliation with family, community, and national identity and primary knowledge construction. This is in contrast with the explicit or articulated attitude that is dismissive of Urdu because of its lower relative power in the wider context, and negative

connotations attached to it in educational and professional settings, which gain poignancy in English language teaching/ learning situation. The attitude emerges towards English, however, is less contradictory, which is seen as the language of privilege, power, and socioeconomic mobility, strongly supported within and outside institutions. Somewhere in middle- the expected crossing, however, one could discern a chasm of guilt and threat, becoming real with every use of Urdu in English language classrooms. One could argue that this stemmed from a feeling of regression into a lower prestige group, every time Urdu was used, threatening the educated identities of teachers and learners and the reputation of institutions.

Languages then appear not as ahistorical but laden with connotations of unequal power embedded in specific sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts, so do are language choices. Not ignoring these power dimensions in our discussion of plurilingual and translingual practices can lead to addressing the sense of guilt and threat. The rejection of Urdu in English language classrooms, a language which the learners and teachers are familiar with, associate with friends and family, use in everyday contexts, identify as a national language but find damaging to their self-image within educational institution, is bound to create a dilemma which may have far reaching implications for learners' identity, infesting them with a sense of shame (Tamim, 2014 a). The alienation from Urdu emphasized by leading educational institutions also implicitly educates the elite to despise and devalue not only Urdu but also those who speak it, reinforcing colonial prejudices. The institutional punishments for the use of Urdu, in this case may be seen as a 'political tactic' for disciplining the learners into 'conformity' (Foucault, 1984). Through these regimes of disciplining institutions seek to 'compare, differentiate and hierarchize homogenize and exclude the disadvantaged (ibid. p. 196); reproducing the given hierarchies.

## **Conclusion**

This paper contributes to the current literature by highlighting that although the value of plurilingual and translingual practices in the teaching and learning of English as a second language is clear, the use of L1 is accompanied by feelings of guilt and threat experienced not only by teachers but also shared learners and to some extent by

administration. The study highlights that the wider sociocultural and sociohistorical biases played out in the microcosm of classrooms have implications not only for teaching and learning of English as a second language but also for the reproduction of the given social hierarchies.

Three recommendations can be made based on these findings: a) the second language teacher education programmes must challenge monolingual policies of educational institutions, by giving more space to discussion of plurilingual and translingual practices, as well as language awareness pedagogical approaches; b) the teachers should be especially encouraged to critically evaluate their choices, take informed decisions, rather than follow counter intuitive prescriptive methodologies; c) it is also important to also take into account the political dimension of language choices in teacher education programmes when thinking about the role of L1 in L2 classrooms; d) the issue also needs to be taken up for discussion in educational institutions at policy level, while simultaneously opening it up for learners in classrooms so as to dispel the sense of guilt, threat and anxiety in the use of L1; hence facilitating the learning of target language.

The study has implications for teaching and learning of second language in classrooms. The findings suggest that despite growing evidence of the facilitative role of plurilingual and translingual practices in teaching and learning of second language, these may not be fully utilized in contexts where institutions insist on strictly following monolingual policies. Notwithstanding the value of these practices, evident in the unofficial use of Urdu in this context, the sense of guilt and threat they may trigger in teachers and learners, as evident here, may blind one to their benefit, and instead add to the anxiety related to second language classrooms, reported elsewhere in research, negatively impacting teaching and learning processes. It is important, then, to confront the emotional distress that may accompany the use of other languages in second language classrooms, trace their source and challenge monolingual institutional policies.

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## **Academic Writing Challenges: Comparing Non-native and Native English-Speaking Students in UK Universities**

**Nada Alkhatib**

*English Language Department, College of Arts,  
Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University,  
P.O. Box 1982 Dammam 31441, Saudi Arabia*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Nada Alkhatib** is an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL in the English language department at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University-IAFU (formerly known University of Dammam) in Saudi Arabia. She obtained her MA and Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and TESOL from the School of Education at the University of Essex, UK.

### **Abstract**

Unlike their native-speaking counterparts, all non-native English-speaking students entering United Kingdom universities are required to meet the English language entry conditions stipulated by academic schools and departments. However, it has been reported that although many international students have achieved the minimum required score in the standardized English tests that were requisites for admission to universities, they often struggle to cope with the disciplinary-specific writing demands of their academic programmes. Using a qualitative approach, and drawing on data from interviews with 10 postgraduate students and 92 survey postgraduate student respondents, this study attempts to explore to what extent this is happening and identify what kind of academic writing challenges and difficulties native and non-native students may encounter in their degree studies. Interestingly, the findings inform that both native and

non-native students often faced similar challenges in many cases. The study provides some implications for UK universities to help students survive in their academic studies.

**Keywords:** *Academic writing, Language challenges, Native- and non-native speakers, Postgraduate students*

## **Introduction**

The internationalization of higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) and the global spread of English have led to a rapid growth in the number of international students who pursue postgraduate degrees (Fenton-Smith and Humphreys, 2017). Recent research has shown that these non-native English-speaking students (NNSs) face many challenges including cultural, psychological, sociological and linguistic ones (Alfehaid, 2017; Belcher, 1994; Braine, 2002; Brown and Holloway, 2008). In regard to the linguistic challenges, academic writing is often the major concern (Alfehaid, 2018; Evans and Green, 2007; Kamler and Thomson, 2014). This, of course, does not mean that Native-speaking students (NSs) do not experience difficulties or challenges while writing (Alfehaid, 2019; Hyland, 2016) because, as argued by Ferguson et al. (2011:42), "academic writing, or academic literacy, is not part of the Native speaker's inheritance". Hyland (2016) points out that academic writing develops with experience and practice regardless of the Native-non-Native distinction. Investigating this developmental experience and the challenges associated with it seems to be noteworthy.

There has been little research that explores the academic writing challenges encountered by NNSs in comparison to those of NSs. This comparison not only helps us in understanding how these challenges differ from each other but also in developing group-specific and context-focused academic support programs. In order to carry out such a comparison, the current study explores NNSs' and NSs' experiences and challenges with academic writing during their postgraduate studies in different disciplines in UK universities.

## **Literature Review**

For the purpose of the current study, Ma's and Qin's definition of academic writing is used: "...is a kind of source writing task that can be used for academic communication, including a thesis, dissertation, library research paper, position paper, conference paper, course paper, laboratory report, project report, book review, research proposal, grant proposal, response to readings, reflective journal, summary writing, etc." (Ma and Qin, 2017: 216). As students, NS or NNS, progress in their academic studies at university, they are expected to elaborate on longer essays, reports and relevant academic writings. For successfully written submissions, both native student writers (those who grow up speaking English as the first language) and non-native student writers (those who acquire English as an additional language after the establishment of the first language (Zhao, 2017) must develop the appropriate type of academic discourse competence which is both essential and challenging for all postgraduate students. They are expected to submit their course assignments and research reports as stated by the principles of scientific research and required by their academic departments. Such writings are generally expected to include not only convincing evidence, but also logical analyses and presentation of supporting ideas such as providing specific examples, doing statistics, asking questions, providing quotations and arguments, commenting on social or economic crises and giving opinions. Furthermore, they need to become familiar with the disciplinary norms and conventions for a variety of academic genres ranging from summaries and syntheses through essays to dissertations, dissertations and journal articles (Wette and Furneaux, 2018). Research findings indicate that the required style of postgraduate writing in almost every area of academic study poses mental, emotional and social challenges for both NS and NNS students.

However, differences in terms of academic writing between NNS students and their NS counterparts at a certain level of proficiency do exist, though of different nature, but are bound mostly to surface language (Trenkic and Warmington, 2019). Such differences in types of difficulty are often determined by the nature of discipline and the stage of academic writing. Generally, NNS students have significantly smaller vocabulary, slower in language processing, less able to fully understand what is read, and less able to summarize what they read in writing (Casanave, 2008; Zhao, 2017). This lack in language and literacy skills

renders the likelihood of difficulties in terms of academic writing greater; and accounts for students ending up with less access to rhetorical, pragmatic, and other sociolinguistic means to express themselves appropriately and establish positive relationships with peers and professors (Chang and Kanno, 2010). Academically, this will also impact their ability to compete with NS peers in the context where almost all learning outcomes are assessed in writing.

NNS postgraduate students' academic writing difficulties and their possible underlying causes – which account for much of their inability to keep pace with the required tempo of progress achieved by their counterpart NS writers – were investigated by several researchers (e.g. Chang and Kanno, 2010; Zhao, 2017; Wette and Furneaux, 2018). According to the previous research studies, the views of NNS student writers from different disciplines and home countries point out the existence of a gap between the standard of work at home and what is required at the graduate level. Large amounts of required writing and insufficient familiarity with English academic vocabulary and discourse were listed among the major underlying causes of the gap. Among the other causes reported by students are insufficient instruction in academic writing; assessment through examinations (with little or no feedback); different-style writing that employs concise sentences and explicit signposting of text organization (being more formal and less personal than in their home countries); and little experience of source-based writing as required by their graduate studies.

The findings of research on emotional and social aspects of the transition to graduate study (Wette and Furneaux, 2018) give insight into another type of challenge for NNS student writers. Immediately after their arrival in the host country, most NNS students undergo a great acculturative stress which impacts their “tutorial participation, oral presentations, and communication with supervisors” (Zhang and Mi, 2010: 372). This stress is often fostered by personal factors such as proficiency in English, preparedness, cultural distance between home and host countries, and availability of social and academic support.

For NNS students in general, how to handle and in the meantime appropriately adjust and cope with academic writing, especially when the pedagogical shift involves a new language and culture are issues of deep concern. Difficulty writing with targeted attention, complying with existing norms (Zhao, 2017), and familiarizing with genre

conventions which include “awkward and difficult-to-process syntax” account for much of their academic unpreparedness and unsuccessful efforts to cope with the requisites of their academic writing course assignments. It is a real challenge, for example, to use some conjunctions appropriately, and use ‘time’ to show the chronological sequence of events (ibid.).

Another challenge and a key requirement for postgraduate writing tasks is: how to effectively integrate information from sources into one’s own text and provide the source citation as required (Neumann et al., 2019). Most NNS students rely on sources to acknowledge the origin of information rather than engage with the source in a more logical and systematic manner. The most common forms of source use by NNS writers are verbatim copying and paraphrasing. They tend to copy from the source text without citing it and paraphrase without changing the meaning (ibid.). This tendency may underpin their frequent attempts to seek outside assistance when doing researches and other course assignments. Many of them would have their manuscripts proofread and edited through a professional editing service of spelling mistakes, grammar, verb tense, and sentence order to bring their written work up to the required standard demanded by their respective colleges (Zhao, 2017).

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that NNSs and NSs vary in their level of linguistic performance and in the nature of challenges, yet there is something in common between them: having problems writing i.e. lack of academic writing ability in terms of writing postgraduate research papers (Casanave and Hubbard, 1992). This lack of academic writing ability among NNSs and NSs academic writers does exist mostly due to their “insufficient control of the language, muddled thinking, and inexperience with writing in general and with scholarly genre in particular” Zhao (2017: 48). In their study, Casanave and Hubbard (1992: 34), conclude that “students in general have problems writing, but surface language problems - grammatical accuracy, spelling, use of articles, prepositions, and tense - distinguish NNSs from NSs and persist for ESL writers even at very advanced proficiency levels”. Another challenge for both types of academic writers lies in that they are mostly unfamiliar with the technical aspects of research papers in general and, therefore, unprepared to bring their academic writings up to the aspired level conceived by their department tutors or teachers.

There is a state of unpreparedness among academic student writers in general and NNS writers in particular. For NS students, being unprepared denotes unfamiliarity with the required academic style and all its requisites. For NNS students, being unprepared means that they cannot write academically well and, consequently, cannot successfully develop second language “culture-specific (written) discourse competence – the literary skill of a new culture”, (Zhang and Mi 2010: 385). Reasons behind such lack of preparedness among NNS writers have been investigated by several studies (Wette and Furneaux, 2018; Zhang and Mi, 2010) which involved experiences of East Asian students entering English-medium universities. One of the reasons of unpreparedness was found to be the impact of students’ experiences with the language during their previous studies on their everyday performance in the context of language usage. The studies highlight the fact that “instruction in home countries had focused on sentence-level grammar, vocabulary and translation” (Wette and Furneaux, 2018: 187). Zhang and Mi (2010: 383) explain that English language teaching in China focuses greatly on language knowledge (grammar and vocabulary through textbook material and grammar exercises), rather than language skills, which confined the progress of learners to a great extent.

In certain cases, being a native speaker does not grant NS academic writers too much advantage over their experienced NNS counterparts since the general composing processes in mother tongue and second language patterns are basically similar and academic writing is quite distinctive from the language they are familiar with as they grow up. Advanced NNS academic writers may prove even better than novice NS writers compared with genre/discipline knowledge and writer experience. Even though the NS writers’ lexical choices of explicit conjunctions are more diversified than NNS graduate student writers, and they do not show inappropriate use of informal conjunctions in the formal context like the NNS often do, yet they are on par with NNS postgraduate writers in that they use explicit conjunctions quantitatively (Zhao, 2017). The findings of previous research studies assert that in academic writing what matters most is experience and expertise rather than being a native or non-native (Zhao, 2017).

However, in the case when both types of postgraduate writers lack academic writing experience and knowledge, which are more essential to the success of academic writing (Zhao, (2017), being a native speaker does give NS writers certain advantage over NNS

student writers. The differences between the two types of writers will show clearly in their “linguistic proficiencies and culture-specific discourse competence” such as: rhetorical conventions (ways of presenting ideas and developing arguments), cultural schemata (whether one transforms, extends or reproduces knowledge), and writing perspectives or expectations (whether it is the writers’ or the reader’s responsibility to make sense of the text) (Zhang and Mi, 2010: 385).

Almost all previous research has been dedicated to the investigation of academic writing problems facing both Bachelor and Doctoral NS and NNS academic writers whereas, quite surprisingly, almost nothing tangible has been devoted to studies addressing problems facing their equally-important postgraduate counterparts, i.e. the Master’s level academic writers. Indeed, one would wonder why exploring the problem area experienced by NS and NNS Master’s degree academic writers – as a focal area of investigation in the scope of writing for academic purposes – has been left so “understudied” to the point of ignoring. Hence comes the incentive behind the idea of the current study: to fathom the entire area of writing problems of NS and NNS Master’s degree students, address associated issues – such as writing requirements – and provide an overview from the perspective of postgraduates. This study is intended to explore the views and perceptions of a number of student writers at the Master’s Degree level, through extensive investigatory questionnaire and interviews with NNS students, their counterpart NS students from a variety of disciplines including Health, Engineering, Science, Humanities and Education. The study sheds light on the challenges distinguishing Master’s level academic writers from their Bachelor and Doctoral counterparts, such as time constraint; being confined to a limited period of time, generally between 10 to 12 months (in the UK) compared with 4 and 3 years for Bachelor and Doctoral students respectively, which is an advantage for Bachelor and Doctoral academic writers over their Master’s Degree counterparts. The four-year time span provides both NS and NNS students with enough time to adjust to the new academic environment and allows them an opportunity to become more familiar with the writing style required by their disciplines. Furthermore, it relieves NNS students of undergoing a potential acculturative stress.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative study collected data from open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to achieve its main objective which focused on identifying the academic writing challenges encountered by both native and non-native postgraduate students in UK universities, and to what extent these challenges differ from each other. Using a secure external survey website, an online questionnaire was developed to reach the highest number of student respondents. The follow up semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of questionnaire student respondents who expressed their agreement to be interviewed in the questionnaire response.

### ***Instruments and Participants***

#### ***Online Open-ended Questionnaire***

The survey instrument used for this study was compiled from related previous studies (mainly from Alfehaid, 2017). This survey was piloted for the purpose of validation. Based on the piloting study, some questions and words were rewritten. The survey consisted of open-ended questions. A key benefit of this approach was that it did not place any limits on the type of difficulties that students could raise. This is in contrast to closed questions which restrict the type of difficulties that students may pinpoint. Participants for the questionnaires were selected using a combination of homogenous criterion and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2012). The study was interested in participants who had either completed their master studies and obtained their degrees, or were in the process of doing so within a UK university. The researcher initially located a few master students within a number of UK universities who met the criteria and asked them to forward the open-ended survey to their classmates and colleagues.

The participants were given the on-line questionnaire in English. It began by asking for the participant's name, gender, degree, field of study, and the university at which the participant was enrolled including their department name. It then asked for details about any major challenges or difficulties and problems they have encountered when writing their course or modules assignments, essays, reports or Master dissertations in English language. Further, it asked to whether they were willing to be interviewed to talk about their overall writing experience during their master study.

In total, the on-line questionnaire reached over 350 postgraduate students at different UK universities between January and March 2019. The questionnaire was completed by 65 NNSs (from different nationalities: Chinese, Japanese, Saudi, Kuwaiti, Malaysian, Indian, Pakistani, Turkish) and 27 NSs (British and American). All the participants were studying (or fulfilled) master programmes in different disciplines (Health, Science, Engineering, Education, History and health).

### ***Semi-structured Interviews***

The semi-structured interview schedule focused on the challenges reported in the on-line questionnaire which are associated with academic writing works presented to fulfill the master degree. It also probed students about the most challenging part or aspect while they write their academic works. In total, 6 NNSs and 4 NSs agreed to be interviewed. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed manually.

### **Findings and Discussion**

After the data was collected, the open-ended survey and the transcribed semi-structured interviews were analyzed by the researcher using traditional content analysis. According to Neuman (2014: 49), content analysis helps discover features of large amounts of data that might be not previously known. This means that the researcher needs to classify the data from both the survey and the interviews into themes. The emergent themes that came out of the collected data are then presented and discussed. The challenges or difficulties were classified and categorized in order of their importance.

### ***Questionnaire Data***

Based on the responses of the NNSs and NSs with respect to the question raised in the questionnaire about any major challenges ever encountered when writing their academic works assignments, students have brought about these difficulties and problems listed in the table below.

**Table 1: Major challenges encountered by NNS and NS students when writing academic works**

Challenges	Frequency (NNSs)	Frequency (NSs)
Language Use	11	4
Coherence and cohesion	26	9
Structuring arguments	12	8
Presenting points of view (or voice)	8	5
Criticality	9	6
Using sources: paraphrasing & Summarizing	10	4
Grammar and structure: verb ending (tense), articles, phrasal verbs, etc.	18	2
Word choice (vocabulary)	6	2
Selecting Academic Topics	3	1
Spelling Styles of AmrE and BrE	1	1

As shown in the table above, most challenges NNSs and NSs encountered were in coherence and cohesion, i.e. students found it difficult to work on the unity of the topic they were asked to write about, and so their ideas seem not connected at the idea and sentence level. While analyzing the responses of the NNS students, it turned out that 26 of 65 encountered difficulty in dealing with their ideas to be connected. In contrast, only 9 NSs did encounter challenges in the area of coherence and cohesion.

NNS20 says: “*when I write essays, I always need to focus both on how to construct the content of the text in combination with the use of the language...*” Another NNS12 says: “*sometimes it’s hard to express my thoughts clearly in English making the entire essay not comprehensive*”. One more NNS50 adds: “*I don’t know how to express the idea correctly, or don’t know how to make sense of one thing*”. Another NNS07, for example, discussed his challenge and difficulty regarding coherence and cohesion: “*sometimes I find it difficult expressing my thoughts in an academic way. Coherence and cohesion is [sic] also a problem in my writing*”. These examples clearly state that the NNS students suffer from being unable to work on producing coherent as well as cohesive writing. This

probably hinders them from getting forward in their writing assignments and/or dissertations. This finding is consistent with those of Yang and Sun (2012) which indicate that many NNSs are unable to use cohesive devices properly in their academic writing.

Some NSs and NNs encountered difficulties in the academic writing style due to their inexperience in writing long academic essays during their undergraduate studies. These students, of course, had this difficulty of different perspectives. NS12 explained that he had not written any essays before coming to his graduate study whereas NS20 never learned to write in academic style and use academic language. Another NS06 has clearly pointed out to this area of challenge or difficulty due to quite a lot of suffering from writers' block. This has represented the struggling with writing. This student says: *"I suffer from writers' block quite a lot and therefore I struggle with writing. I am also a perfectionist and so I am constantly writing and then deleting as I am not happy with the way I have phrased things"*. NNS09 considers the writing style as the biggest of all challenges because there was no need to practice writing in the undergraduate level. This student notes: *"the biggest for me was the new style of writing expected by teachers. Whereas in my undergraduate studies examples did not need to be analyzed as much, the masters expect more from you"*. It could be suggested that these challenges and difficulties NNSs and NSs encountered are due to the less exposure of writing assignments while they were in their undergraduate studies. Fairbanks and Dias (2016: 140) assert that "we still see little explicit teaching of writing at the graduate level" for not only NNSs but also NSs. This, in turn, leads to a lack appropriate academic writing experience that enabled them for their further graduate studies. This supports the conclusion of Zhao (2017:55): "academic writing experience and genre and disciplinary knowledge of writing is more essential to the success of academic writing than the status of being a native speaker". That is, there are not real differences between NNSs and NSs when it comes to the experience of academic writing. To be successful academic writers, both NNSs and NSs should have enough experience and knowledge in the required academic writing demands and conventions of their disciplines in their masters' programmes. The implication here is that they all need similar training in these conventions. Also, it seems impossible to be competent in academic writing in a very short time like that of the master programmes in the UK.

The table above shows that another kind of challenge NNS students encountered in academic writing has to do with grammar and structure. Out of 65 NNSs, eighteen (18) students still have this problem. But they did not bring about what grammar areas represented this difficulty except for one NNS56, who directly considered the phrasal verbs as major challenges: “*phrasal verbs were my major challenges*”. It is obvious that the problems of NNSs concerning academic writing were found in all levels of writing abilities resulting in simple grammar such as subject-verb agreement and sentence structure. According to Uzuner (2008: 255), grammatical errors in NNSs writing often “impede their essential merit”. One NNS36 from Italy thinks that they do structuring in Italian differently and syntax and grammar sometimes seem difficult to them. This student says: “*mainly about structuring, as in Italian we do it differently, we are not linear as English are. Obviously, syntax and grammar are sometimes difficult difficulty*”. On the other hand, NSs never showed any problems regarding this area of difficulty since they have brought about linguistic competence and performance as mentioned by some NSs. Linguistic competence comes natural to native speakers and they do not have to study explicit grammatical rules at an early age as NNSs do at school. Grammatical mistakes would be different from those the NNS make. Moreover, none of the 27 NS responded to have any problems with the grammar of English. This supports the argument of Habibie (2019: 41) that NSs “experience less struggle in sentence level and grammatical aspect of academic writing”.

In regard to expressing their views and voice as one challenge they encountered, eight NNSs were found to have this issue while writing their assignments and course works. This challenge seemed to vary between the ways they can clearly express the complicated concepts they were asked to use. The difficulty does exist when trying to express one’s thoughts, arguments, and ideas readily and effectively in a particular way. They also pointed out that constructing form and content still represents to them one of the major challenges. Linking ideas seemed to be a different form of this challenge that NNSs found it misleading and finally distracted from what they were intending to do, and so irrelevant ideas most likely occurred. NNS02 observes: “*when I write essays, I always need to focus both on how to construct the content of the text in combination with the use of the language. When I write, in many times, when constructing an argument, I*

*sometimes will be distracted by thinking too much about the use of the language of the text. And I feel tired sometimes having to focus on both content construction and language use at the same time when I have a lot of writing work to do*". One NS08 refers to this as a style of articulation, i.e. how to express ideas and arguments clearly and effectively in the academic writing: *"it isn't always clear how the level between undergraduate English writing and masters English writing is defined. What the assignment requires is clear, but the style of articulation isn't always and more sessions on how to write academic English would be beneficial to all"*. These findings suggest that both NNSs and NSs experienced similar problems with the development of ideas and constructing valid academic arguments. This may be because "general composing process patterns seem to be largely similar in L1 [first language] and L2 [second language]" (Hyland, 2003: 36).

Others reported that they did not have real chances to do enough practice on the criticality due to time allotted for this task as one NNS44 says: *"criticism is one of my major challenges and the short period of time"*. Another NNS23 has clearly expressed about criticality in regard to being unable to build upon critical writing and being unable to develop good related literature with good critical thinking. This has been clearly referred to as follows: *"I was basically criticized for not writing critically enough. I was found to be mainly reporting what was going on in the field and encouraged to not take what journal and book authors write without questioning. The chronological development of my literature review needed changing as well as the tendency to state the main idea of each paragraph in the end. Finally, my final written pieces were often over-worded, and so evaluated as longwinded"*. Kamler and Thomson (2014: 42) observe that "many are intimidated and sometimes paralysed by the prospect of being critical of (esteemed and elevated) scholars who are senior, more powerful and acknowledged experts in their fields". It is obvious that being critical needs practice and confidence.

The questionnaire data also indicated that both NNSs and NSs, who should have been supposed to be acquainted with writing research paper, they encounter many difficulties in dealing with reference conventions. One NNS50 lists this as the first issue: *"1. Don't know how to integrate the references into the essay..."*. Another NNS35 notes: *"the APA referencing style was the most challenging as I have never used it before and still cannot comprehend it fully by reading books and websites."* One NS03 says: *"I have*

*found getting to grips with referencing the most difficult. Incorporating references within the assignment in different ways was difficult at first’.*

Due to the difficulty of paraphrasing and making use of resources, one would get tempted to be redundant and interfered by L1. One NNS27 regards this as a great challenge when saying: *“it is harder to paraphrase from sources. Additionally, I have to think longer about not only what to write, but also how to write it. I realized that I am using certain phrases/structures all over again, making my writing more repetitive compared to how I would do it in my native language. It just seems more effortful”.* Another NNS35 states that paraphrasing is found to represent some difficulty when supporting her writing with other researchers’ ideas despite the sense of being satisfied with her academic writing.

The above examples indicate that most of the NNS and NS postgraduate students lack the knowledge of reference style formats and they seem that they do not have such confidence in how to cite the references. This is exactly consistent with the findings of Neumann et al. (2019) that paraphrasing and citing source information in an appropriate way are major challenges facing students in academic writing.

Another difficulty NNSs faced was the “word choice (vocabulary)” that also takes different forms of problem by different students. It was observed that some students lacked the academic lexis and these did not have a sufficient vocabulary store to use while writing their academic works. This is in line with the findings of Zhao (2017) which indicate that lexical knowledge is considered a challenge for NNSs. The following responses present some of these challenges:

*“I’d say that I always find it difficult when it comes to academic writing. I personally get familiar with the spoken language more than the written one.*

*Also, I rarely have the academic vocabulary chunks” (NNS55);*

*“I feel I do not have enough vocabulary to express what I want to express in a rich way” (NNS33);*

*“The major challenge is the word choice. It can be difficult to select whether a word is academic or not. Then I tended to write very long sentences which made it difficult for the reader” (NNS11).*

In contrast, one NS28 reports that the nature of the academic language requires precision for correct choice of words: “*nature of academic language and its precision. Structuring essays to conform to word count whilst maintaining precise English*”. Another NS17 admits: “*I often express ideas poorly, use vocabulary inaccurately*”. This seems to be expected since, as is the case with NNSs, NSs “rarely receive help with academic writing during their university careers” (Hyland, 2009:85). In addition, NSs are not a homogenous group which share similar competence in language skills required by academic writing (Hyland, 2015).

The questionnaire data clearly indicates that the challenges that face both groups (NNSs and NSs) are similar in many cases such as appropriate use of in-text referencing, precision of expression, cohesion and coherence, lack of critical argument. However, compared to NNSs, NSs have been found to experience less challenge in lexical knowledge and grammatical aspects of academic writing.

### ***Interview Data***

Generally speaking, interviews with the NNS respondents emphasized that the challenges and difficulties encountered were not different from those found in the questionnaire data.

NNS05 interviewee reported that his main academic writing challenges were related to structuring, coherent argument, presenting one’s own point of views, paraphrasing, transition and linking of ideas, and grammar. This student said that he could do presentation more accurately in speaking than in writing. His teachers fed back him that they could understand what he was thinking about but it turned to him that he could not produce the written work exactly the same done in speaking. He comments: “*so, first is structuring, coherent argument. And the next one is presenting your own point of view, I have to explain, this doesn’t mean I can’t present my own point of view... I can’t present it very accurately... the next one would be paraphrasing, yes, it’s a big problem*”. NNS02 interviewee also thought that structuring sentences remained one’s own difficulty that finally slowed down any progress towards structuring the paragraph which in turn would not aid to the final draft of the essay writing. According to him, this caused some difficulty

to have the content go well with good sentence and paragraph structure. He also pointed to the lack of time required ending up all phases of the writing process. Being redundant and repetitive represented the greatest challenge when using similar words in almost every sentence in the essay: *“the most challenging thing is probably sometimes I would think I'm being too repetitive. Using similar words in almost every sentence... So that's my worry”*.

Comparatively, the interviews with the four NSs revealed mixed perspectives regarding different challenges or difficulties encountered while writing their academic works. NS01 stressed on the necessity to find the gap in the literature while researching in order to be able for doing well-written projects. This also requires students to read a lot of research to help getting to appropriate articles. Then, they need to sort out them for having good information extraction. In addition, students will have to work on what so-called the critical aspect of writing, i.e. criticality. Criticality represents the way the researcher confidently and judgmentally refuses or agrees with others' conclusions based on good reasons with a line of balance. This seems quite difficult to most students to deal with. Another point raised in the interview with one NS03 was the linking research literature to the discussion that would come later in the thesis or the dissertation and this would make what-so-called an hourglass: *“my analysis was okay, it's just that the critical part.. criticality of writing up the literature review and then linking it back to the discussion, because obviously, it's like a hourglass”*. This supports the findings of Todd et al. (2006) which show that students often struggle to be analytical and critical in their written work.

NS02 interviewee referred to another type of difficulty which has to do with the thesis statement because he thought that “he was not brought up to do that.” In other words, this interviewee talked about a number of difficulties in addition to what mentioned above. He encountered problems to deal with research methods, vocabulary selection, bias, referencing system, using the reporting verbs for clarifying ideas, and voice of expression: *“I do have to worry about choice of vocabulary and making the style less personal sometimes, because that doesn't occur to me, first referencing has been one of the hardest issues for me..”*. These findings generally support what was expressed in the questionnaire data.

NS03 interviewee had a problem in the flow process of writing to make sure the writing could make sense to the reader when it seems coherent. Coherence is supposed to work on arranging the ideas to make it possible for others to get the gist of the whole writing. She mentioned: “*making flow so each point follows on nicely from the next it can be quite challenging. Making sure that your arguments make sense and are coherent because sometimes you think you put it down on paper and you think I know what it means*”. In support of this, Todd et al. (2006) found that the common problems encountered by students in relation to the actual writing of dissertation are coherence and structure. Again, these findings generally support what was expressed in the questionnaire data.

NS04 interviewee summed up the difficulties encountered through three main categories. These were question understanding for the interest of hypothesis formulation, resources finding, and forming one’s own views. Understanding the question would help the writer to get more precise, and so good formulation of hypothesis would take place. Resources would also help in finding “grips with evidential material”. Forming one’s own view would be considered the biggest problem. Strong views would lead to good work. As reported in previous research studies, (e.g. Isik-Tas, 2018), novice writers have difficulty manipulating the linguistic resources to construct a point of view in their writing.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, this paper has extended our understating of the academic writing challenges experienced by NNS and NS postgraduate students in different academic departments at some UK universities. Many of the challenges experienced by NNSs were also seen among NSs due to the lack of experience in academic writing. That is, this study greatly supports the conclusion made by Zhao, (2017: 47) that “writer experience overweighs their native-speaker status in academic writing”.

Though the current study provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges that students face in their writing, it also has some limitations. First, the study focuses on self-reported methods (interviews and surveys) which obtain abstract data that lacks concrete contextual details which are important in understanding students' actual challenges.

Future research should adopt practice-based research text analysis of students' writing (to get a clearer picture for these challenges that students may encounter). In addition, the challenges presented in this study are common for all subjects as they relate to difficulties in writing in general. Future research needs to focus on writing challenges in specific disciplinary subjects (e.g. Science, Math, Law etc.). Also, further studies should ask students' tutors and teachers about their observations of academic writing challenges facing students.

To end with implications, it could be argued that academic writing for postgraduate studies is a complex and multifaceted process which requires initial preparation and previous experience to cope with the conventions of academic departments in UK higher education. Therefore, the suggestion is to extend UK master's programmes to more than one year to give both NSs and NNSs a longer period to be familiar with the challenging demands of academic writing in UK universities (Harwood and Petric, 2017). Also, UK universities need to create an academic atmosphere that does not promote direct or indirect academic writing competitiveness between NNSs and NSs.

Moreover, in light of the major findings reported above, some pedagogical implications are presented here. First, the provision of academic writing support needs to be intensive and in the form of regular workshops, sessions and consultations across academic departments and disciplines (Wette and Furneaux, 2018). These supporting workshops and consultations need to focus on developing NS and NNS students' abilities in the challenging and demanding areas identified above including critical and analytical skills, organization of ideas, using cohesive and coherent devices, word choice, grammar and referencing skills. Second, and perhaps most importantly, both NS and NNS students need to be trained and given the opportunity to begin their writing with a personal stance which helps them “to define more clearly for themselves their relationship with the material, with other scholars' judgments on it and with their readers” (Cadman, 1997:11). Third, instructors, tutors and supervisors need to be diligently aware of the challenges students experience in academic writing. In other words, they should provide constructive mentoring that include “directing student attention to distinctive features of academic writing ...and instruction based on students' actual writing issues, rather than lumping them under the two umbrella groups of native and non-native writers” (Zhao, 2017: 56).

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## **Teacher Agency and Localisation of English Language Teaching in Indonesia**

**Yuni Budi Lestari**

*English Department, Mataram University, Indonesia*

### **Bio-profile:**

**Yuni Budi Lestari** is a lecturer at English Department of School Education, the University of Mataram, Indonesia. She earned her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Sydney, Australia in 2004. She is now doing her PhD in Education (TESOL) at School of Education, the University of Queensland. Her research interests include Language Planning and Policy, SLA, and English Curriculum and Material Development. She may be contacted at [lestariyuni2006@gmail.com](mailto:lestariyuni2006@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Indonesian education policy has recommended that English teachers integrate local texts into English language teaching. This localisation policy has received both theoretical and empirical support because local culture provides language learners with familiar content knowledge that serves as a foundation for language learning. However, it is not known how the localisation policy is being enacted by English teachers in English language classrooms, particularly in rural areas of Indonesia given the lack of learning resources and teaching models available to guide English teachers to use localised materials. Based on data obtained from ethnographic classroom observations in a rural Indonesian school in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, this paper will analyse teachers' responses to the national education policy which is mediated by the conditions of the school and the community. The analysis leads to problematising the concept of "local" in relation to the "local" texts, as there are interactions between multiple dimensions of localness including nationally-local, provincially-local and locally-local.

The paper will illustrate how teachers used these different “locals” in strategic ways to respond to the national policy, in the form of dedication, accommodation, or resistance.

**Keywords:** *teacher agency, localisation policy, local texts*

## **Introduction**

The need to integrate local texts in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms in Indonesia has been suggested in the National Act of Education No. 20/2003 that the aim of Indonesian national education is to develop a sense of national and cultural identity in order to smarten the life of the people covering spiritual, moral, knowledge and skill dimensions. The need for the integration of local texts into ELT classroom is also emphasised in the ministerial regulation no. 68/2013 about the basic framework and structure of curriculum at Junior high school levels. It proposes cultural heritage should be learned through observation, listening and reading cultural materials to develop students’ ability to think rationally and gain academic excellence (Kemendiknas, 2013). Local cultural text integration in ELT has also been reiterated so strongly in policy documents at operational levels (see Lestari, Y. B forthcoming) that the students need to use for the attainment of expected learning outcomes covering spiritual, moral, knowledge and skill dimensions (Yusra & Lestari, 2018).

This localisation policy with regard to English has received both theoretical and empirical supports. A sociocultural theory highlights the rationale for building on local culture in ELT practices important for students’ second language development. Moll (2013; 2015), building on Vigotskian theory, for example, refers to local knowledge as “funds of knowledge”, while Bourdieu (1991) refers to it as ‘habitus’. This knowledge includes experiences, among others, “in farming, construction, gardening, household maintenance, or entrepreneurial activities” (Moll, 2015, p. 114) acquired through socialization in their family and communities. If this local knowledge is brought to EFL classes, the students, at least, do not have to learn from the scratch, i.e. learning the language and contents at the same time. As students work on this content knowledge in learning, what they only need to do next is learning the target language through which they can talk about this content. In fact, some studies (e.g. Fredericks, 2007; Luke, 2012)

have reported that the use of local culture-related learning materials considerably contributed to students' greater enthusiasm in learning English.

As the Indonesia's new curriculum strongly recommends local culture integration into English language teaching, this curriculum would facilitate EFL learning. Its achievement, however, will depend on teachers' ability and experience in addition to the availability of learning materials and facilities. While these teaching-related aspects have been identified as some of the causes of learning English problems in Indonesia (Lamb and Coleman, 2008; Yusra, 2015), government has spent over IDR 2.49 trillion for infrastructure, teacher training, teaching videos, electronic books for both teachers and students, and printed books with government fixed price in relation to the introduction of Indonesia's 2013 curriculum (Kompas, 2013/02/11). This suggests that the problems with regard to poor teaching quality, limited access to English textbooks and materials, and other facility-related matters have to a great extent been dealt with.

But, in practice, the new curriculum, as Khadijah, Chairperson of the Advisory Council of the United Federation of Indonesian Teachers, said, has been strongly criticized due to its slow distribution of government published textbooks as the core learning materials to schools, low quality of the textbooks and limited amount of time given for teachers to have practical teaching training (Kompas, 2014/01/02). Moreover, the reduced time English lesson in junior high schools (4 hours/week) and senior high schools (2 hours/week) under the 2013 curriculum offers more challenges to parents, students and schools. Parents and schools have to provide financial and educational assistance to students with out-of-school-hour services for private English courses and more extracurricular English practices. As Hamid et al (2009) have rightly predicted, these actions are motivated by the belief that English is the main means through which individuals can benefit from global economy. This implies that only learners with English rich environment will have more opportunities to participate in global market. In other words, students in rural areas usually characterized with disadvantaged socio-economic background and poor English language learning resources would be excluded direct or indirectly from global economy.

Such inequalities, however, have apparently been addressed by the strong recommendation of using local texts in teaching English. Greater access for rural students

to learn English could possibly be achieved considering the fact that local texts such as stories, procedural texts and cultural practices are readily available in the students' environment. However, none of those materials, if any, are available in English language. They are written or spoken in local language or the students' mother tongue, so teachers would translate them first into English if they are to be used as English language learning materials. Moreover, instructional strategies for using such learning materials are yet available to guide English classroom teachers, thereby calling for individual teacher's agency to make the students engaged in English language learning.

Although in the end the policy may be justified in the nation's needs, priorities and interests, it is not clear how this policy is being enacted. Information from local school conditions is therefore necessary for successful education policy implementation. So far, as far I am concerned, there are limited studies, if any, on this issue. The present study will fill the gap by (1) identifying local cultural texts used by English teachers in Indonesian rural schools (2) examining the way the teachers use the local texts as strategic responses to the localisation policy.

### **Teacher Agency in ELT Practices**

Teacher agency in ELT practices like any other disciplined practices is situated and interactively emergent in nature. However, the practice of agency by the teachers, as Ollerhead and Burns (2013) have argued, depends on the socio-cultural and professional backgrounds of the ELT teachers and the culture of the institution where they are in. For the enactment of the agency, the ELT teachers should have strong beliefs in themselves that they have the personal capacity and previous trainings and experiences in overcoming situations at hand. When teachers believe that they have the necessary capacities to enact agentive roles, they will passionately look for options in their repertoire to solve the problems at hand. Renshaw (2016) has convincingly argued that teachers, and students, enact agency when they believe that they have knowledge, skills, required personal characteristics and ownership of the institution.

In literature, teacher agency in ELT practices has been widely discussed at micro levels as if it does not exist at macro levels. Baldauf (2006: 148-9), for example, has noted that language and language teaching policies are mostly undertaken by the government

through its authoritative bodies which can exercise agency at macro level in the form of regulations, rules and policy statements. The authoritative bodies consist of only people who have, as Zhao and Baldauf (2012: 6) have suggested, *expertise* (i.e. mostly linguists, applied linguists, language enthusiasts), *influence* (i.e. scholars, distinguished writers, priests, business leaders, and celebrities) and *power* (i.e. national leaders). Several studies (e.g. Ali's (2013), Zakarias's (2013) have reported the limited agency that teachers can play at macro level planning of language. This limited agency particularly results in limited contributions of language teachers to ELT policy planning. Hamid and Nguyen (2016: 36) labelled the practice as "policy dumping" implying that teachers are imposed to implement the macro policy at micro level language classrooms regardless resources and means to implement it. In Indonesia teachers through their representatives are actually involved in language planning, their contribution to the policy, however, is rather limited as their real time teaching experience has never been essential parts of the theory-based language policies. The teachers, therefore, need to exercise their agency at micro language classrooms by responding to the policy according to their local situations.

There are numerous relevant studies on teacher agency at micro level of ELT classrooms. Ng and Boucher-Yip (2017), and Harris (2017) have investigated how language teachers in various settings are committed to transforming language education polices to students. Other studies (see Glasgow, 2015; Nguyen and Bui, 2016; Ramanathan, 2005) have reviewed policy enactment by teachers by resisting the imposed policy through accommodating fully students' voices and cultural norms and practices. In Indonesia EFL context a study by Prastiwi (2013) has shown that teachers use local folklore as a strategic response to Indonesia education policy on educating students with Indonesian cultural values.

Ali and Hamid's (2016) framework on three agentic strategies in ELT practices (i.e. *Dedication*, *Accommodation* and *Resistance*) is therefore very relevant and useful to be used in investigating how teachers respond to ELT policy. *Dedication* is when teachers as transformative professionals (see Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and socio-political agents (see Alhamdan et al, 2014) devotedly adopting the policy, assisting students to obtain the expected learning outcomes (see Lin, 1999). *Resistance* is rejection of policy by teachers. *Accommodation* is when the teachers partly adopting the policy to suit students' situations

and conditions at hand. The present study employed this framework to explicate LPP situations in Indonesia, particularly on how teachers integrate local texts as a strategic response to the national ELT policy.

In Indonesian contexts, teachers has been granted teaching autonomy since the implementation of the 2006 school-based curriculum in which local cultural-related learning materials and strategies are to be taught in ELT classrooms. The introduction of the 2013 curriculum, however, has slightly taken away the autonomy by imposing teachers to use materials in the nationally published textbooks with fixed teaching procedures known as 5 M (i.e. observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and networking). The 2016 version of the 2013 curriculum, however, has returned the autonomy and granted teachers partial and tentative freedom to enact the policy creatively in accordance with the situations at hand. Limited accessibility to the imposed textbooks and low students' motivation and English proficiency are mostly likely the factors motivating teachers to partly implement the policy.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This article is based on ethnographic classroom observations of teachers teaching English at a government junior high school in a rural area in West Lombok Indonesia. Ethnographic approach is the most suitable option to investigate policy enactment in local setting, according to Hammersley (1990a, p. 598), by making a lot of direct and focused observations of classroom interactions in the research site in order to provide a thick description of the process and the systems that produce them. The ethnography of Language Planning and Policy (LPP) approach in classroom as developed by McCarty (2015), Hornberger (2009) and Hornberger & Johnson (2007) was adopted to observe how teachers use local texts and cultural practices as strategic responses to the ELT policy in a real time classroom practice.

### **Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at a government junior high school, one of the government schools located in a remote area in West Lombok. Though it is close to the internationally

famous beach where the students' access to English is expected to be high, being located at the foot of a mountain provides good reasons for the community to stay away from the culturally undesirable life in the tourism-center beach. The school is also located within a Moslem community which holds strong tradition and Islamic values preventing the school from being close to the cosmopolitan lifestyle. Being a government school, the school has to implement the national policy. Unlike schools in the city center of Mataram which is usually crowded with more than 40 students each class, the school had only limited number of students with 20, 31 and 32 students of respectively year 7, 8 and 9 and there were only one class of students for each grade. This is as Lamb's (2012) claim that small class sizes in rural areas are due to students' low motivation to learn.

There were only two English teachers, one male (Mr. Rh) and one female (Mrs.Hs), at the school and they were purposively selected as the participants of the study. Mr.Rh taught students of grade 7, while Mrs. Hs taught those at grade 8 and 9. They graduated and earned their BA in English education from the local university and they have more than 10 year teaching experience. Born locally and being local persons, they were required to explain the rationales for the choice of learning materials and activities over many others. For ethical reasons, the identities of the schools and the teachers remain anonymous and pseudo names are provided for further reference in data analysis and discussion.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from video-recordings and ethnographic notes of real-time teaching practices as well as various teaching-related documents that the teachers had used in the teaching process. Seven sessions (around 45 hours of lesson) at each class were observed and recorded. Five (5) teacher-made lesson plans from each grade in which the goals, steps and materials of learning were explicitly provided were collected. Altogether, 15 lesson plans were able to be collected. The lesson plans and the learning materials mostly came in electronic forms and historical information about the data was obtained through informal face-to-face conversational interviews to the teachers. A total of 45 hour video recordings, 15 lesson plans and the learning materials accompanying them constituted the corpus of data for the study.

## **Data Analysis**

Lesson plans, materials and activities as well as textbooks as documents were analysed using Bowen's (2009) document analysis. This involves selection of policy themes, sampling of learning materials and activities to analyse, coding relevant information, tabulating data, checking and rechecking validity and reliability, cross-tabulating information, and reporting results. Content analysis was also used to analyse the data from the transcribed video and interview recordings on how the teachers use local texts and cultural practices. The data will also be analysed at two levels. At macro level, the general overview of the teacher roles was examined in instructional sense, while at micro level the teachers' responses to the national ELT policy were analysed. At macro level of analysis, the recorded observations of classroom practices were examined by following Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING dimensions which has been integrated into analysis of policy enactment in classrooms by LPP scholars such as Hornberger (2015) and McCarty (2015). The results of the analysis of these dimensions were then linked with teacher agency at micro level. At micro level, teacher agency was analysed through identifying in the transcribed data evidence of teachers exercising agency, classifying the evidence following Ali and Hamid's (2016) categories of agentive strategies (i.e. dedication, resistance and accommodation), describing the categories by providing definition and examples for each category, and explaining by providing a rationale for the use of certain strategies.

## **Finding and Discussion**

Instead of relying on the materials and activities in imposed textbooks, the observed teachers used their own materials and activities that they have developed individually or collaboratively with other teachers in the local teachers' network. According to the teachers, the textbook contents were far beyond the grasp of the students at the researched school which mostly made the students get bored with the lessons and this appeared to bring problems to the students. The teachers' adaptation of the texts and the materials in the textbooks was their response to the problems. They did this by integrating local cultural materials into their actual lessons. In so doing they motivated the students while at the same time accommodating the content of the nationally recommended textbooks

content as part of the ELT policy. The nature of local texts used in the real-time language classrooms and how teachers used them as strategic responses to the national policy highlighting the need for spiritual, moral, knowledge and skill dimension in learning is presented below.

### **The Nature of Local Cultural Texts**

Surveying the lesson plans and the observed lessons, I was able to identify the use of local cultural texts in the local ELT classrooms. While Prastiwi (2013) identified local cultural texts as the nationally local texts, my study could further categorised local cultural texts into nationally- local, provincially local and locally local cultural texts. Nationally local texts cover different types of texts with contexts outside West Nusa Tenggara, provincially local texts representing cultures of groups of people residing in West Nusa Tenggara that is the people on Lombok Island (i.e. Sasak Culture) and Sumbawa island (i.e. Sumbawa and Mbojo cultures). Locally-local texts include the ones containing the students' immediate local culture. As shown in table 1, locally local texts comprises 42.02% of all the texts, which is the highest percentage, followed by the internationally texts with 21.01% and the nationally texts 20.17%.

Table 1. Types of texts as learning materials

<b>No</b>	<b>Types of Texts</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1.	Local		
	Nationally-Local	24	25.53
	Provincially-Local	20	21.28
	Locally-Local	50	53,19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

Note, however, text here is defined as comprising reading texts and sentences and words associated with them. From the observed lessons the nationally- local texts are mostly used as reading texts either for reading comprehension, for analysis of the generic structure and linguistic features of the texts or for information gap activities. Info-gap activities were activities to learn integrated language skills as the teachers or one student

read a complete reading text and for other students to listen to in order to complete the incomplete reading text provided for them.

However, as shown in the table 2 below, none of the uses of the nationally-local text, however, was intended for speaking and writing activities. The nationally local texts observed in the lessons were *Roro Jongrang* (i.e. for year 7) and *The Crying Stone* (i.e. for year 9), a famous folklore respectively from Central Java and Sumatra. *Making Lamb Sate* was a procedure text representing the culture of the Madura people for year 8.

Table 2. Use of Nationally Local Texts in ELT Practices

No	Teaching points	F	%
1	Grammar	8	33.33
2	Vocabulary	6	25
3	Reading Texts and Comprehension	5	20.83
4	Integrated Language Skills	3	12.5
5	Model Reading Text for Analysis	2	8.33
6	Independent Speaking Skill	0	0
7	Independent Writing Skill	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>	

Provincially-local texts constituting 21.28% of classroom activities appeared in the lessons which were unavailable in the nationally-published textbook. As shown in table 3 below, these types of texts were used for *integrated language skill*, *independent speaking skills*, *reading texts and comprehension* and *model texts for analysis*.

Table 3. Use of Provincially Local Texts in ELT Practices

No	Teaching Points	F	%
1	Integrated Language Skills	8	40.00
2	Independent Speaking Skill	7	35.00
3	Reading Texts and Comprehension	3	15.00

4	Model Text for Analysis	2	10.00
5	Grammar	0	0.00
6	Vocabulary	0	0.00
7	Independent Writing Skill	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	

The provincially-local texts were found in the observed lessons in the forms of a procedure text of how to make *plecing*, a spicy water dish made from Lombok island (Year 7) and how to and how to plant eggplants, important ingredients for ‘beberuq’, another local dish (Year 7) 4), a narrative text about a local legend called ‘Princess Mandalika’ (Year 8), a recount monolog about student’s experience in the local cultural event called ‘bau nyale” [Worm Catching Festival], and a descriptive text about the current governor of West Nusa Tenggara (Year 9). Unlike the nationally-local texts which was not intended for developing students’ independent speaking skills, the provincially local texts were used for this purpose. An example for this can be seen in a follow up activity after “Princes Mandalika” reading comprehension activity. In follow up activity the students were individually assigned to prepare a monologue recount about their experience in “Bau Nyale”, a local festival of catching worms as reincarnated forms of Princess Mandalika. Provincially local texts however were not found to be used to teach specific grammar and vocabulary while nationally local texts were used to teach these language points.

Locally local texts were found as many as 50 instances in the observed lessons which can be seen in table 4. They covers different forms of materials in different forms: Narrative texts about the history of the village (e.g. *the History of Tato*, *the Legend of Sail Stone*, and *the History of Nangklok Cave*), procedure texts of, for example, how to make *Cincao* cocktail (i.e. local iced fruit cocktail) and *Sate Pusut* (i.e. beef coconut satay), recount texts (e.g. retelling experience in the village Cat-Bathing Ceremony), and descriptive texts (e.g. describing family members and local leaders).

Table 4. The Use of Locally Local Texts in ELT Practices

No	Teaching Points	F	%
1	Integrated Language Skills	20	40.00
2	Reading Texts and Comprehension	9	18.00
3	Vocabulary	7	14.00
4	Independent Writing Skill	7	14.00
5	Independent Speaking Skill	3	6.00
6	Model Text For Analysis	2	4.00
7	Grammar	2	4.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	

Locally local texts appeared to be used to teach the most number of purposes in compared to the nationally and the provincially local texts. The locally local texts were observed to be used for seven teaching points: integrated language skills, reading texts and comprehension, vocabulary, Independent writing skills, independent speaking skill, model text for analysis and grammar. While locally local texts were used in similar steps of teaching language points, skills, and textual analysis with the nationally and provincially local texts, the use of the former appeared to bring more enthusiasms for the students. This was seen, for example, when they read the texts and translated them before the teachers asked them to do so. They also look highly motivated when assigned independently with the locally local procedural texts, showing off their skill in front of the class and such behaviour did not appear when other types of texts were used. This is important because independent production of language is the final expected learning outcome, and freer language production like this has hardly been achieved in traditional Indonesian ELT approach. One possible explanation for this positive outcome is probably because the students had been familiar with the content of the texts and thus the language learning has been simplified (Moll, 2015).

As the types of local texts and how they were used as pedagogical tools in the local ELT classrooms have been described, let us discuss the teachers' strategies in integrating the local texts as local response to the nationally-dumped educational policies.

### **Teacher Strategies in Integration of Local Texts**

Indonesian ELT policy (i.e. Ministerial Regulations No 20 to 24 Year 2016) does not actually specify what texts to use in every day teaching episode. They are free to choose whatever texts to choose as far as they have assigned dimensions in attitudes (i.e. spiritual and moral attitudes), in knowledge (i.e. text types, generic structure, social functions, relevant linguistic features) and skills (i.e. oral and written texts production). However, the 2013 curriculum has come with it nationally imposed textbooks which on the one hand have relieved teachers from tasks of designing lesson plans and materials but other hand have enforced teachers to use nationally-local texts. As the 2013 curriculum is part of policy document, teachers' using the nationally local materials as presented in the textbooks was identified as dedication strategies. Accommodation strategies were identified when teachers used the provincially-local texts as a way of accommodating the students' need at local level to the expectation of national level. The use of locally-local texts therefore could be seen as teachers' resisting the hegemony of the national texts in their classes. Below is how teachers in the corpus had used the texts a means of exercising agency is analysed.

#### **Dedication Strategies in Local texts**

Teachers' dedication strategies referring to teachers' devotedly adoption of the policy (Ali and Hamid, 2016) in the observed classrooms were identified when nationally-local texts were used to teach nationally-imposed attitude, knowledge and skills particularly at Year 7. As seen in Extract 1, the teacher (Mr.Rh) was observed to use a nationally local recount text of a Balinese village on the island of Sumatra (i.e. *Kampung Bali*, Stepping More, Firmansyah Diyata, 2005, Bogor: Regina, p. 142). Assigning the students to read the text, the teacher also discussed with the students moral values implied from the text such as cleanliness, discipline and mutual cooperation. As guided in the textbook, the students were given a task to write their personal experiences of visiting "a tourism village". In this way, the teacher dedicated to the national imposition of teaching skills on producing written language, even though the students eventually negotiated the possibility of writing their own village due to no experiences of visiting such a tourism village.

### **Extract 1: The Balinese Village (TO 7.1 LN 234-243)**

- (1) Ningsih: When I was a child I lived in a small village.
- (2) Teacher: Ya, Bagus. Lanjut. Oke, sudah semua ya. Tolong yang masih ngadat-ngadat membacanya  
*Yes. Good. Go on. OK. Are you all done? Please, those with unsmooth reading*
- (3) yang pak guru perbaiki tadi tolong belajar lagi. Nah sekarang tolong bikin pak Guru  
*That I corrected just now please learn more. And now please make me*
- (4) yang seperti ini kalimatnya karangan yang bernuansa kampung wisata. Bisa misalnya  
*texts with sentences like these talking about a tourism village. You can for example*
- (5) tentang kampung T#n#h E#be#. Bahasa Indonesia dulu, bahasa Indonesia dulu baru  
*write about Slippery Land. In Indonesian first. Indonesian first then*
- (6) nanti pak Guru mengarahkan pake Bahasa Inggris supaya kalian bisa mengarah. Nah  
*I will assist you to use English so that they can write in English. OK*
- (7) misalnya eeee, T#n#h E#be#, kebanyakan orang yang ada di sana hidupnya rukun,  
*for example about Slippery Land, most people there live in peace*
- (8) damai dengan kampung sebelah. Di sana orang-orang bergotong royong membersihkan,  
*in peace with neighboring villages. There people work together to clean*
- (9) ya, selokan, seperti itu. Satu paragraph aja. Kampung T#n#h E#be# aja bilang atau  
*Yes, schools. Just like that. Only one paragraph. Just write "Kampung T#n#h E#be#"*
- (10) kampung Lendang Bajur.  
*The village of Lendang Bajur*
- (11) Selomita: kampung ite aja Pak  
Why not our village, sir?

It was also a common practice for the teacher to use nationally-local texts to convey knowledge in vocabulary, grammar, generic structure, and social function. Extract 2 showed that the teacher (Mrs. Hs) used a folklore from island of Sumatra, *Malin Kundang* to teach relevant verbs, adjectives and the simple past tense before she worked with the students identifying the generic structure of narrative texts (i.e. orientation, complication and re-orientation) in the model text.

### **Extract 2: The Balinese Village (TO 9.1 LN 288-299)**

- (1) Teacher: Generic structurenya adalah (looking at her note and back to the board)  
*the generic structure is*
- (2) Students: rientation
- (3) Teacher: ada (writing on the board) orientationnya/*there is orientation*

- (4) Students: orientation  
(5) Teacher: terus apa? /*Then what?*  
(6) Students: complication  
(7) Teacher: (writing on the board) comp...  
(8) Students: complication  
(9) Teacher: .....lication  
(10) Students: complication  
(11) Teacher: terus? /*Then?*  
(12) Students: re-orientation

Though according to the teacher the students were not ready for real linguistic analysis, she encouraged students to mention the generic structure. She further explained that this was actually intended to get students memorize the structure and getting more prepared for the national examination questions than for actual language production. In fact, the students' real language production was questionable due to their insufficient linguistic capacity.

### **Accommodation Strategies in Local Texts**

As Kumaravadivelu (2003), Alhamdan et al (2014), and Lin (1999) had shown, teachers need to accommodate the student conditions and the classroom situations when deciding which strategies to use in ELT classrooms to help students obtain their ultimate goals of learning. Accommodation strategies employed by the teachers can be found in the corpus when they created local contexts for students' learning vocabulary, grammar, reading aloud and collaborative analysis of Sasak-based model texts, and collaborative construction of oral or written Sasak-based texts. As the students in rural areas are known to have low motivation and linguistic skills the teachers' use of local contexts was to accommodate the students' conditions and the achievement of the national expectation. For example, as in Extract 3, the teachers used the local contexts, local knowledge and local language to accommodate the students' inability to express ideas in the target language.

### Extract 3: Prompting for Expression

- (1) Teacher: iya, new student
- (2) Students: new student
- (3) Teacher: Kalian bisa nanya pake Bahasa Inggris. Perkenalan dulu  
*You can ask him in English. Personal introduction first ....*
- (4) *(The new student was shy and teacher convinced him)*
- (5) Teacher: sekarang nanya (gesturing to the students to ask)/*Now, ask!*
- (6) Students: what is your name?
- (7) Teacher: siapa namanya, tanya, my name is... /*What is his name, ask, my name is ....*
- (8) New Student: name is ..... (the student was ashamed)
- (9) New student: endak bisa bu/*I can't Mom*
- (10) Teacher: belajar (tapping on his shoulder). Ayo coba, my name is.../*Let us try*
- (11) New student: name is
- (12) Students: h@h@h@ (laughters)
- (13) Teacher: sssst, stop, jangan nertawain temannya (clapping her hands to attract noisy students' attention)/stop. Don't laugh at your friend
- (14) Teacher: my name is...
- (15) New Student: my name [nama] is....
- (16) Teacher: siapa namamu? /*what is your name?*
- (17) New student: Herman Maulana, Bu.
- (18) Teacher: Oh Herman Maulana, Jadinya, *My name is Herman Maulana*
- (19) New Student: *My name is Herman Maulana*
- (20) Teacher: Bagus, Good.

Teachers' accommodating nationally-dumped ELT policy with the students' condition and local cultures can also be seen in when locally-known texts were used for collaborative analysis of the generic structure of the texts. Extract 4 showed that after asking one student (Ayu) told a story of Princess Mandalika, the teacher (Mrs. Hatysam), using leading questions, asked the students to collectively and collaboratively analyse the generic structure of the text. In this way the more able learners can help the less able one with their learning.

#### Extract 4: Princess Mandalika (TO 9.4. LN89-120)

- (1) Teacher and students: (giving applause to Ayu as she finished telling the story).
- (2) Teacher: That's good ya. Thank you, Ayu. Nah itu tadi temennya sudah menceritakan tentang  
*OK that was your friend telling you a story about*
- (3) Puteri Mandalika ya? Ingat structure text narrative ya? Apa aja?  
*Princess Mandalika? Remember the generic structure of narrative texts? What are they?*
- (4) Students: Orientation, complication, resolution and reorientation.
- (5) Teacher: Iya. Kalau Orientationnya tadi yang bagian mana ya? Ditemukan dimana?  
*Yes. So, where was the orientation, at which section? Where (did you) find them?*
- (6) Students [Arya, Saputra, Herdiyanti, Ayu]: Di paragraph pertama/*at the first paragraph.*
- (7) Teacher: Di paragraph pertama, dia menceritakan apa di sana?  
*At first paragraph? What did she talk about?*
- (8) Students [Saputra, Munawir, Arya]: Tentang kerajaan/*about a kingdom*
- (9) Teacher: Terus apalagi? /*and then what?*
- (10) Munawir: Ayahnya dan putrinya Putri Mandalika/*her father and Princess Mandalika*
- (11) Teacher: Oke. Terus structure yang kedua tentang?/*OK, then the second structure?*
- (12) Ayu: Complication
- (13) Students [Arya, Munawir Saputra]: Complication
- (14) Teacher: Apa Complication? /*What is complication?*
- (15) Students: Masalah yang dihadapi dalam cerita tadi apa? /*the problem faced in the story*
- (16) Arya: Puteri Mandalika.../*Princess Mandalika*
- (17) Herdiyanti: Puteri Mandalika diperebutkan/*Princess Mandalika's love was seized*
- (18) Teacher: Ya, diperebutkan oleh Pangeran, Terus apa? /  
*Yes, seized by many princes. Then she became what?*
- (19) Munawir: Jadi Nyale/*she became sea worm*
- (20) Saputra: Jadi Puteri Nyale/*she became a sea worm princess*
- (21) Teacher: Ya, yang kedua setelah konflik apa? /*yes, the second after complication, what?*
- (22) Students: Resolution
- (23) Teacher: Apa resolutuin itu?/*what is resolution?*
- (24) Students: Cara mengatasi masalah/*the way to resolve problems*
- (25) Teacher: Mengatasi masalah. Bagaimana cara mengatasi masalah di cerita itu?  
*Resolving the problem. How did she resolve the problem in the story?*

- (26) Arya: Dia lompat/*she jumped*
- (27) Munawir: Lompat ke sungai/*she jumped to the river*
- (28) Saputra: ke Laut/*to the sea*
- (29) Teacher: Iya dia lompat ke air laut terus menjadi? /*she jumped to the sea and she became a ....?*
- (30) Students: Nyale/*sea worm*
- (31) Teacher: Nyale atau bahasa sininya? /*a sea worm in local language here?*
- (32) Dani: Cacing/*worm*

Finally, the form of the teachers' accommodation strategy was seen as they assigned the students for collaborative construction of oral or written local texts while the national curriculum expected individual oral or written language production. The teachers did so to build the students' confidence for the language production necessary for later independent production. As shown in Extract 5, the teacher (line 1) asked a pair of students to perform a dialogue in front of the class. This task was given after she provided enough time for students to collaboratively get prepared for the dialogue at their desk. A pair of students Yanto and Guntur were asked to come to the front to practice the learned dialogue on planting eggplants.

**Extract 5: Dialogue (TO 8.2. LN87-98)**

- (1) Teacher: Kalau sudah selesai ya maju. Ayo maju ke depan sekarang.  
*If you are done with the practice, come onto the front now*
- (2) Yanto: Ayok maeh/Oke, let's go (happily coming to the front with his partner, Guntur)
- (3) Guntur: Hi, Nila
- (4) Yanto: Hi, Andi
- (5) Guntur: What are you doing?
- (6) Yanto: Well, I'm planting eggplants now. Can you help me with the spade over there?
- (7) Guntur: Yes, of course.
- (8) Teacher: Ayo Tepuk tangan, Bagus-bagus/*let us give a big applause. Good. Good.*
- (10) Students: (clapping their hand to praise Yanto and Guntur).
- (12) Teacher: Ayok siapa lagi?/*Come on. Who else?*

In line (2), Yanto and Guntur felt very confident with their practice and enthusiastically went to the front to show off what they had got to the class (line 3 to 7). This pair work classroom dialogue performance might not be seen as a big thing for more

able students in town, but for rural students such a performance was considered a significant achievement and the teacher's supervision on the students' collaborative pre-practicing it had brought them some confidence and enthusiasm. The same thing was also found with written texts where students were allowed to ask each other and their teachers for correction before submitting them to the teachers or presenting them in the classroom.

### **Resistance Strategies in Local Texts**

Resistance strategies could be defined as teachers' rejecting to implement the imposed policy (Ali and Hamid, 2016). Teachers' resistance strategies were observable in the way the teachers presented vocabulary and grammar and in the texts dominantly used in teaching. Vocabulary and grammar were elicited from the students using prompts based on the students' immediate contexts (e.g. things and activities around their classroom, the school and the community). The examples of words or sentences unrelated to the contexts were limited. The examples were then drilled to the students through word or sentence translation drill where the translation was from English into the Indonesian or Sasak language or vice versa. Drilling was also conducted as part of reading activity where the students were individually or in chorus read the texts aloud in reading drills before answering the reading comprehension questions. Such drills was motivated by the need to enhance the students' learning motivation and understanding the contents of the texts. Students' comprehension of the texts was also ensured through classical translation of the texts. To make sure if the students had understood the taught lesson, the teachers used students' language. The teachers' use of drilling technique, reading aloud, extensive translation and locally local vocabulary, grammar and reading texts is discouraged by the national curriculum. Besides, using them was outdated since the communicative language teaching method was nationally approved to guide the English language teaching in Indonesia, including in rural areas. The teachers' reuse of the so-called outdated techniques and the locally local texts, therefore, represents their resistance to the nationally-imposed curriculum and textbooks. Despite the resistance, the teachers implemented teaching materials and techniques practical and suitable for their students, reflecting practicality and possibility dimensions of English language teaching in local

contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Extract 6 below described how teacher-made locally local contexts were used for vocabulary and grammar presentation and translation drills.

### **Extract 6: Translation Drills**

- (1) Teacher: Ayo, waktunya belajar, saatnya bukunya dikeluarkan. He, contoh kata sifat, kalau kita  
*Let us, time to learn, time to take out your books. Hi, examples of adjectives. If we*
- (2) bilang “Bagus”?/say “good”?
- (3) Students: Good
- (4) Teacher: Jelek?/bad?
- (5) Students: Bad
- (6) Teacher: Pinter?/smart
- (7) Students: Clever (showing her thumb up)
- (8) Teacher: kalau kebalikannya (showing her thumb down)/the opposite?
- (9) Students: Stupid
- (10) Teacher: kalau besar (showing her thumb indicating “big”)/if it is “big”?
- (11) Students: Big

Besides using drill and word or sentence translation to present vocabulary and grammar, the teachers also dominantly used locally-local texts. This type of texts is dominantly used in this local setting. Before introducing the texts, the teachers usually started by contrasting international or nationally-local texts that the students might have already known before. This lead-in activities would have made the students mentally ready to learn and built their sense of cultural identity as well as their pride of their culture. In fact, being introduced the locally-local texts, the students looked enthusiastic for and actively engaged in discussing the contents and doing the comprehension questions before the teachers asked them to do so. As can be seen in Extract 7, after drilling a reading text describing Nangklok cave and helping students with translating the texts, the teacher asked them to do the comprehension questions. The students, however, had already done the task when translating the text (line 1), as a result, they, including the quietest student in the class, Jihad (line 15), asked for the chance to write their answers on the classroom white board. To have such classroom learning engagement was quite uncommon for students in rural areas known to have low motivation and insufficient

English language capacity. This, therefore, has shown that the use of locally-local texts enhanced students' motivation to participate in learning.

**Extract 7: Reading Comprehension (TO 9.2. LN108-124)**

- (1) Students: Sudah kita kerjain Bu sambil diskusi mentranslatekan bacaan tadi.
- (2) Teacher: Pinteer. Cepet ya?. Kalo gitu, ayok siapa yang mau maju ke depan tulis jawabannya di papan tulis.
- (3) papan tulis.
- (4) Students: (All students, except Nada and Sajili i, raised their hands up and said, "Saya Bu)
- (5) Arya: Aku nomer telu Bu
- (6) Herdiyanti: Aku nomer telu
- (7) Saputra: (coming to the WB writing his answer for number one "story").
- (8) Herdiyanti: Saya nomer tiga ya Bu?
- (9) Teacher: Iya, mana mana boleh.
- (10) Piana: (coming to the WB writing her answer for number two "season").
- (11) Herdiyanti: (coming to the WB writing her answer for number three "drink").
- (12) Dedik and Ahmad: (rushing to the WB to be the first to write the answer for number four).
- (13) Dedik: (writing his answer for number four "cried")
- (14) Arya: (writing hisr answer for number five "meditation").
- (15) Jihad: Saya maeh coba yang nomer enam ya Bu?
- (16) Teacher: Boleh, silahkan
- (17) Jihad: (writing his answer for number six "passed by").

Though unusual and not recommended by the national curriculum and textbooks, making use of locally-local texts that the students have been familiar with in their language and culture was the most effective way to help the students learn. Even though this practice could be seen as resistance to the nationally-dumbed policy, the teachers always made an attempt to accommodate the local students' learning needs and the national expectations of learning outcome. As a result, no wonder if they oftentimes reminded the students to compare the locally-local texts with the international or nationally-local texts allowing the students to be able to find the universal similarities among these types of texts in terms of generic structure, linguistic features and social functions.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the nature of local texts that teachers in local ELT classrooms used and how they used the texts as a response to the national education policy given the conditions of the community, the school, the teachers and the students. It had identified various types of local texts used in the textbooks, lesson plans, observed lessons and how they have been employed as a means of teacher's exercising agency. Three different types of local texts had been identified: Nationally-local, provincially local and locally-local texts. While the nationally-approved textbooks dominantly contained nationally-local texts, locally-local texts were mostly used in the teachers-made lesson plan and the observed lessons. The chapter had also illustrated how the nationally-local texts had been used as dedication strategies in educating the learners with attitude, knowledge and skills. The use of the provincially-local texts was for accommodating the students' learning needs and the national learning expectations. This was done by contextualizing vocabulary and grammatical points, using the provincially-local texts for reading comprehension and collaborative analysis of generic structures of the texts, and for collaborative construction of oral or written texts. The use of locally-local texts represented teachers' resistance to the use of nationally-local texts as the national curriculum and textbooks recommended. This was conducted by introducing locally-local contexts for vocabulary, grammar and texts. The use of locally-local texts was the best option to enhance motivation of the rural students to actively participate in learning English. Though the locally-local texts were dominantly used, which indicated teachers' resistance strategy, the study has shown that the teachers devotedly implemented the Indonesian education policy in local ELT practice by educating the students with spiritual and moral values and by motivating them to learn English.

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## **Faculty Development Needs of EFL Instructors in a Foundation Year Program**

**Philline M. Deraney**

*Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia*

**Amani K. Hamdan Alghamdi**

*Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia*

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Philline M. Deraney, PhD** works as a faculty developer and Vice Dean for Quality at the Deanship of Academic Development, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. She has taught in higher and adult education the US, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include teaching and learning in higher education, faculty development, and ESL/EFL education.

**Amani K. Hamdan Alghamdi, PhD** is an award-winning scholar and Professor at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Amani is widely-published and well-known in the field of education in Saudi Arabia and abroad. Her research interest is multifaceted includes education and curricula in Saudi Arabia, analytical and critical thinking and their infusion in the teaching, online education and cultural manifestation, higher education, narrative research, critical multicultural education.

### **Abstract**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) requires both content knowledge and active learning teaching strategies that can advance language learners' proficiency.

Effective language teaching in the foundation year has become a priority and necessity as Saudi Arabian (SA) higher education institutions seek international recognition and advancement. Consequently, faculty professional development is growing in acceptance and practice in the region. This qualitative study aimed to identify the faculty development (FD) needs of EFL instructors teaching in the foundation year at a public university through a thematic analysis of peer observations of teaching (POT) (N=45) and semi-structured interviews (n=6) collected over a period of two years. Triangulated observation, field note, and interview data were coded and analyzed for emerging categories and patterns resulting in three themes: 1) *instructional strengths* including apparent knowledge of EFL and presentation skills, 2) *instructional concerns* of teaching strategies, lesson planning, classroom organization and management, and organized learning environment, and 3) perceived *POT procedure concerns*. Recommendations for EFL instructors' faculty development focus on active, student-centered teaching, guided planning and improved POT procedures, including feedback and subsequent peer observations. Such faculty development initiatives are essential for improving foundation year EFL teaching practice.

**Keywords:** *English as a Foreign Language (EFL), faculty development, Saudi Arabia, higher education, peer observation of teaching (POT)*

## **Introduction**

Globalization has created an intense demand for English language skills in the Saudi Arabian context (Al-Saraj 2014; Liton, 2013). The Saudi higher education system has followed suit with a pronounced effort for students to learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in majors related to health, engineering, and administrative and computer sciences (Alshahrani, 2016; Khan, 2019). As higher education institutions strive for international recognition through accreditation, quality language teaching has become a major goal and necessity. As a result, in the last decade, faculty development (FD), focused on improved teaching and consequently improved student outcomes (Haras, Taylor, Sorcinelli, & Hoene, 2017), has grown in cultural acceptance and practice in the Persian Gulf region. However, there is a lack of research on faculty development

focused on EFL teaching and learning practice within the Middle East region, including Saudi Arabia (Shukri, 2014). Observation of faculty members of any sort in the region has historically focused on performance evaluation rather than actual development (Al-Ghamdi & Tight, 2013). To address this lacuna, both in research and faculty development, this study investigated the development needs of EFL instructors teaching in a foundation program in a large public university in Saudi Arabia.

Higher education transitional or foundation (first-year) programs are gaining popularity around the world (Sanders & Daly, 2013). Along with English, foundation programs in this context also offer courses in mathematics, natural sciences, computer, study skills, communication skills, and related foundation courses mostly taught in the English language. Liton (2013) believed that well-designed EFL foundation courses lead to more English-competent Saudi graduates and better assurances that the nation “can advance in education, science and technology” (p. 31).

Most research on EFL instruction in the Saudi context relative to peer observation has focused on the concept as an accepted and worthwhile FD approach rather than on actual findings of the classroom 'happenings' or teaching. Furthermore, research on instructional needs is often based on student or faculty surveys or achieved program outcomes rather than observations of actual classroom dynamics. Exploring the latter can directly enrich FD offerings and observational processes in general. This study specifically aims to investigate the central research question: *What are the main faculty development needs of EFL instructors teaching in a Saudi foundational year program?*

## **Literature Review**

Two bodies of literature were reviewed relative to this topic: (a) active learning in EFL and (b) the use of peer observation to discern what instructors actually 'do' and what they 'should do' to effectively teach EFL in a Saudi university foundation program.

### ***Active Learning in EFL***

Teaching EFL requires not only knowledge and language proficiency but effective, active instructional strategies rooted in a strong pedagogical foundation that can advance tertiary learners along a steep learning curve. Bonwell and Eison (1991) defined active learning strategies "as instructional activities involving students in doing things

and thinking about what they are doing"(p. iii). This approach "has long been an integral part of TESOL/EFL training and overall pedagogy" (Alves, 2015, p. 1). As a prominent feature in EFL instruction, an active classroom makes students responsible for their learning leading to increased proficiency and fluency in the English language (Alves, 2015). Students do most of the work with educators scaffolding and supporting learners' engagement with the subject content and processes (Silberman, 1996).

Generally speaking, qualified higher education faculty members have some knowledge of EFL teaching methods. However, their focus, for a variety of reasons, is often on content rather than active learning of the language. Instructors might not understand or be inclined to use constructive and varied EFL active teaching strategies in the course of everyday instruction (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). This pedagogical risk may also exist in Saudi higher education institutions, but there is a lack of comprehensive research to substantiate this assertion (Shukri, 2014).

Several factors influence educators' choices in teaching approaches, methodologies, and strategies. These factors may include their educational background (Thomas & Pedersen, 2003), subject-specific knowledge (Even & Tirosh, 1995), and their understanding of specific instructional and pedagogical practices developed through experience (Jafar & Rahman, 2019; Guskey, 2002). Liton (2013) who studied EFL teachers' perceptions of Saudi foundation year programs reported that 80% of instructors thought the EFL course *should* be more active or task-based. In fact, Liton asserts that, "English here in the Kingdom just like the majority of countries in Asia is treated as a subject for study rather than as a living language to be spoken in daily conversation" (p. 20). The author suggested that this approach to teaching EFL not only affects the course content but influences instructors' teaching methodologies and practice. Further, Bada (2015) reasoned that "in order to promote student learning it is necessary to create learning environments that directly expose the learner to the material being studied...therefore, any constructivist learning environment must provide the opportunity for active learning" (p. 67).

However, Silberman (1996) cautioned that despite its efficacy and effectiveness (Alves, 2015), many educators (not just EFL educators) tend to limit active learning thereby reflecting a short-lived (if ever) commitment to this pedagogical strategy. Despite

being frustrated with students' performance, instructors still do not regularly use active learning practices due to (a) lack of knowledge on this approach, (b) concern over time, (c) loss of classroom 'power' and, most significantly, (d) their assumption that “mature learners don't require heightened activity ... to learn effectively” (Silberman, 1996, p. x). Avoiding active instruction becomes an issue in tertiary EFL education because gaining language skills and learning content requires teaching strategies that provide students with authentic moments to practice, use, and engage with the language (Alves, 2015; Smith & Strong, 2009).

### ***Peer Observation of Teaching in the Saudi Context***

One way to help instructors engage with active learning is peer observation of teaching (POT), which has become prominent in EFL faculty development. POT often involves a collaborative, nonjudgmental process as a means of improving teacher efficacy and competence (Albaiz, 2016; Bailey-McHale & Moore, 2011; Shousha, 2015; York St. John University, 2018).

Most POT scenarios involve three points of contact: (a) introduction to the process and people involved, (b) actual observation, and (c) post-observation debrief and feedback (Shousha, 2015, York St. John University, 2018). Bell and Mladenovic (2008) reported that just by engaging in the exercise of peer observation, most instructors in their study planned to change their future practice. Further, Richards and Farrell (2005) found that peer "observation can also narrow the gap between one's imagined view of teaching and what actually occurs in the classroom" (p. 94). With insights into the reality of their teaching through feedback and follow-up observations, POT can increase instructors' confidence, enhance collegiality and improve their practice.

Albaiz (2016) provided evidence that quality EFL teaching in Saudi higher education can be supported using the POT strategy. Ali (2012) addressed attitudes toward peer observation and recommended the establishment of such an initiative at Taif University. Similar to Albaiz's (2016) study, the primary impetus for the Taif initiative was to raise teaching quality in an EFL setting and align POT with other teaching improvement strategies. Ali (2012) reported that many participants initially criticized the notion of observation by peers because observation in the Saudi context is frequently

associated with judgment, evaluation, and assessment. That said, he noted that participation in POT resulted in a strengthened commitment by instructors to both become more proficient and improve their own observation skills.

Similarly, Shousha (2015) reported on 13 respondents' reflections and perspectives with respect to guiding the POT program executed within the English Language Institute (ELI) at the main campus of King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Jeddah, SA. The study focused on whether and to what degree taking part in POT made a difference to the instructors in terms of developing professionally. The results showed advantages of peer observation such as improved self-confidence, self-reflection, and development of new teaching strategies, but they also emphasized that training was needed in peer-observation skills.

Shousha (2015) also discussed obstacles that hindered EFL instructors' participation in POT including time constraints, busy workloads and paper work. Similarly, Shah and Al Harthi (2014) conducted semi-structured interviews with five EFL educators at a Saudi university who shared their lived encounters with POT. Their analysis revealed themes related to feeling threatened, not trusted, being watched and judged. Participants expressed the need for clear participation in the process, lack of trust between observation participants (observer-observee), observers' apparent subjective approach toward the evaluation criteria and lack of observation competence, utilization of observation as a means of monitoring faculty, and the common element of threat associated with observations.

These studies with EFL instructors and POT within the Saudi context consistently affirmed the benefits of the POT approach in concert with legitimate concerns. Fortunately, upon acknowledging the results of POT-focused initiatives, most institutions and practitioners changed their practice or became more open to the benefits of peer observations. Researchers cautioned that educators were both skeptical and receptive, meaning their collaboration and acceptance of the concept are imperative.

## **Method**

A thematic approach was chosen to address the research question as qualitative inquiry is concerned with "process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the

primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). Through thematic analysis, researchers can analyze and report patterns within qualitative inquiry and produce insightful answers to research questions (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, multiple teaching experiences were observed, categorized and analyzed all with the fundamental purpose of discovering the happenings or events in an active EFL classroom in the foundation year.

### ***Study Site***

The research was conducted at an English Language Teaching (ELT) Department in a foundation year program between 2016-2018. The department teaches general academic English using four modes: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The English language program's primary focus is preparing students for English as the Medium of Instruction in the students' respective field of study. In this context, the English language is seen as an essential tool to aid students' understanding of content in their academic major. This Saudi higher education institution is separated by gender as is the cultural norm in the country. Class sizes ranged from 25-40 students and students are divided by areas of specialization or tracks (i.e. health, engineering, science, etc.). All data collection occurred on the female campus in a classroom setting.

The basic curriculum was standardized and paced weekly according to a semester calendar and coordinated with common exams, writings and other graded work at each level. The EFL textbook for the English program was developed specifically for Saudi Arabia. An important contextual note for this study is that daily lesson planning, teaching methods and strategies were not standardized by the department and varied according to individual instructors.

### ***Researchers' Role***

Because researchers "are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 214), an understanding of their role as both observer and interviewer further defines the study's context. Foremost, the peer observations were at the request of departmental leadership and were completed with the

consent of instructors. Because departmental leadership facilitated the peer observation procedures with all involved parties, a gatekeeper was not needed to gain participant access (Creswell, 2014). Both researchers were previous members of this EFL teaching community, known to the majority of instructors, and had no administrative role in overseeing or formally evaluating them. Nonetheless, it was important to build collegiality (Shousha, 2015) by having the researchers explain their role as a peer *not* an evaluator. The researchers were both observer and participant or *participant observer* (Creswell, 2014) with their main role being a peer observer. That said, the findings also reflect the researchers' role as participant as the data being analyzed were based on *their* observations and field notes.

### ***Participants***

The participants were 45 female EFL instructors working in the English language teaching department. The instructors had various educational backgrounds with accredited and reputable English-language teaching certifications, which are a requirement of the department (e.g., graduate degrees, Celta, TEFL Certificate). They came from diverse cultural backgrounds representing 10 different nationalities; 25 (55%) of the participants were from countries where English is the primary or official language. Less than a quarter (24%,  $n=11$ ) were from the region (L1 of Arabic). All participants taught in the foundation program for 16-22 hours per week.

After the peer observations, a small number of participants ( $n=6$ ) were interviewed as a form of triangulation and validation from 'expert' participants. Purposive sampling was used to select the interview participants (Merriam, 2009) to ensure that each major field of study or cluster and proficiency level was represented. Further, three of the six instructors were chosen purposively because they had both served several years in the program and been previously observed by the researchers. To ensure confidentiality, all participants received pseudonyms.

### ***Instruments***

Two main instruments were used to collect data. The first was the form used to facilitate the peer observations in the instructors' classrooms (see Table 1). This form was developed by the department based on the major areas of teaching in EFL, and the content

was validated by two experts in EFL. It was descriptive in ten areas with no numerical or categorical ranking or evaluation categories.

Table 1. Form Used During Peer Observations.

Area	Description
1. Subject Matter Knowledge	Demonstrates clear understanding and depth of subject matter
2. Organization of Lesson	Shares objectives, clear organization of lesson from beginning to end
3. Rapport	Motivating, enthusiastic, approachable; teacher-student relationship
4. Teaching Methods	Use of relevant teaching methods including variety and groupings
5. Delivery	Presentation skills including eye contact, vocal variety, use of language, etc.
6. Classroom Management	Time and classroom management including leadership role in the classroom
7. Inclusion (Sensitivity)	Includes and is sensitive to students' needs in creating a positive learning environment
8. Student Assistance	Assist students academically as needed
9. Professionalism	Apparent self-confidence, professionalism in appearance and behavior
10. Classroom logistics	Suitability of classroom, number of students, physical aspect of the

classroom that may affect the  
learning process

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The second instrument was a roster of 15 open-ended interview questions that focused on five main areas relevant to POT: (a) the instructor's general experience, (b) experience with peer observations, (c) perceived benefits and drawbacks of peer observations, (d) lessons learned from peer observations and (e) perceptions of the overall peer observation process. The questions were asked in the order of and based on the peer observation procedures in this context to ensure consistency and relevancy across all interviews.

### ***Data Collection***

Data collection involved researchers' in-person observations in the instructors' classrooms using the form in Table 1. Semi-structured interviews occurred with six participants. In total, over 100 pages of text (observations and researchers' overall comments) and data from approximately 50 hours of observations and interviews were collected for thematic analysis.

**Peer observations.** The department notified instructors (participants) of the purpose and period of peer observations and sent each instructor the observation instrument (see Table 1). During the observations, the researchers entered descriptions on the form when relevant for each criterion as well as prepared overall comments on the participant's instructional strengths, areas for improvement, and overall teaching effectiveness. After the 45 observations were completed, the two researchers conferred on their respective overall comments for each of the criterion and compiled an 'overall observation' profile for the entire sample frame. This initiative represents a quasi-form of inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2014), moving from individual summaries to collaborative agreement. Each participant was observed in the classroom once for this study; however, nine of the participants had been previously observed by one of the researchers, which was noted in the field notes.

**Interviews.** After the peer observations in the classrooms, separate 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants. Each researcher

interviewed three participants who then vetted their respective interview transcript (Maxwell, 1996).

**Field notes.** For each peer observation, the respective researcher (observer) took field notes pursuant to their reflections on what was seen and heard in the classroom (McGregor, 2018). These notes also included any short discussions with participants immediately before and after their respective observation and other relevant background information.

**Data triangulation and member checking.** The issues of researchers' bias and reflexivity were critically considered. This pertained to how their "role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretation" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). To minimize this impact and ensure confirmability and credible data (McGregor, 2018), the research design included (a) data triangulation or "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 93) (i.e., observations, interviews and field notes) and (b) member checking of interview transcripts to ensure accuracy in text and representation of participants' words and intended meaning (Maxwell, 1996).

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis began once data were collected from all three sources: observation forms, field notes, and interview transcripts. When the classroom observations were completed, the researchers began to combine and compare their respective written observations and field notes through discussion to identify consistencies and differences. As each of the 10 main areas for observation (see Table 1) was discussed for the entire sample frame, an overall generalization of what was observed in the classrooms began to form between the researchers.

The peer observations were then analyzed within and between observations. First, each of the observations in its entirety was initially open coded (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) as an individual observation. Second, each of the observations was then recoded in the 10 observation areas across all of the observations; codes were then revised and modified to build "abstractions" across participants (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). The combined data were then grouped into patterns and categories and checked with the overall strengths and areas

for improvement for both the individual participant and collectively (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Similarly, the interview transcripts were thematically analyzed, which involved coding and categorization.

Relationships and connections that emerged inductively from the observation, interview, and field note data (Maxwell, 1996; Creswell, 2014) shaped the final set of themes that emerged. Finally, the themes were cross-checked with the strengths and areas for improvement for each observation and the observations overall. The resultant themes and subthemes form a meaningful picture of what was observed in the classrooms regarding EFL instructional expertise and potential FD needs.

## Findings

Three clear themes emerged from the data analyses: 1) *instructional strengths* as EFL content knowledge and presentation skills/rapport with students; 2) *instructional concerns* of teaching strategies, lesson planning, classroom organization and learning environment; and 3) *peer observation procedure and feedback concerns* as perceived by the participants. The sub-themes, also identified in the findings, are ordered by prominence as supported by observations, field notes, and/or interview responses. Both descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and qualitative data (quotes from amalgamated peer observations and participants' interviews) were used to present the findings.

Table 2. Frequency of Themes and Subthemes.

<b>Theme 1: EFL Knowledge and Presentation</b>	
Instructors demonstrated strong breadth and depth of content knowledge, strong professional presentation skills, and supportive classroom rapport with students.	
<i>Subthemes</i>	Frequency
1.1 Sufficient breadth and depth of content knowledge	n=40
1.2 Professional presentation skills and strong rapport with students	n=38
<b>Theme 2: Instructional Planning Concerns</b>	
Lesson planning elements, teaching and learning strategies and overall learning environment were reported as instructional planning areas for improvement.	

<i>Subthemes</i>	
2.1 Lesson planning that was incomplete or lacked clear methods	n=34
2.2 Teaching and learning strategies that did not consistently reflect active learning or varied strategies	n=28
2.3 Learning environment concerns related to classroom organization and student engagement	n=28

### **Theme 3: Peer Observation Perceptions and Feedback**

Participants perceived that the observations could be stressful and lacked beneficial feedback for the instructors and their teaching.

<i>Subthemes</i>	
3.1 Peer observation procedures perceived as stressful, incomplete, or not transparent	n=16
3.2 Observation without feedback perceived as not sufficiently beneficial for instructional changes	n=12

### ***Theme 1: EFL Knowledge and Presentation***

Two instructional strengths were consistently observed and noted in the peer observations and interviews: (a) content knowledge and (b) presentation skills, and rapport with students (see Table 2).

**EFL Content knowledge.** The observations overwhelmingly (89%, n=40) reflected the depth and breadth of the instructors' content knowledge as a positive feature. As the most prominent theme, it was consistent across academic fields (e.g., health, engineering). To illustrate, the researchers' observed that Ms. F showed "excellent command of her subject matter which was cause/effect relationship in this case. She demonstrated depth of knowledge." Similarly, Ms. P "showed excellent command and mastery of the subject matter with discussion and explanation of argumentative/persuasive essays. She even discussed the nuance of the language at times which is highly effective for advanced students." Ms. A had "apparent language background and clearly elaborated on and discussed the past perfect grammar point." Ms.

W's strengths, as with the majority of participants, were "professionalism, presentation, knowledge, and rapport."

Interview data revealed that content knowledge is emphasized in the ELT department through various teaching aids and resources (e.g., instructional e-books, resource library). The department also holds numerous FD events (e.g., internal and international workshops) aimed at both improving content knowledge and encouraging memberships in national and regional TESOL organizations.

As further evidence of their strong content knowledge, observations revealed that some instructors drew on a variety of topics mentioned but not explicitly taught in the textbook. For example, instructors taught the difference between rhetorical styles, different parts of speech for vocabulary instruction, reading strategies and techniques, and collocation use.

**Professional Presentation Skills and Student Rapport.** Professional presentation skills and strong student rapport emerged as a positive and unified subtheme in the majority (85%, n=38) of peer observations. In the researchers' overall observation summaries, it was noted that the "teachers are dedicated; rapport, presentation, and professionalism were strong points observed in nearly every class."

As evident in the observations and field notes, instructors' rapport with their students emphasized warmth and approachability. Ms. W was characterized as "extremely pleasant and warm with her students creating a positive atmosphere." Ms. D and Ms. N were described as "warm and approachable with students" with Ms. D "willing to help in her one-on-one student meetings."

Being skilled at professional presentations was another instructional strength consistently observed. Ms. H. "has a strong, clear voice and proper enunciation. Excellent use of the English language. Excellent eye contact and overall presentation." The researchers noted similar comments for the majority of instructors with few issues related to language.

Ms. S., one of the most experienced instructors observed, and who was recommended as a possible mentor for the *other* instructors, "knew her students well, used humor, and gave feedback and invited questions and participation. It was obvious that she had a strong and positive rapport with her students [who] were fully engaged and

participating during the observation." It is noteworthy that Ms. S., similar to several of the instructors, had previously been observed by and received feedback from one of the researchers who used to be in the same department. As noted in the field notes for Ms. S. and the other previously-observed instructors, several concerns or areas for improvement noted in a prior observation have since become instructional strengths.

### ***Theme 2: Instructional Planning Concerns***

A second theme that emerged in the observations was aspects of instructional planning. Three separate but related subthemes emerged: (a) lesson planning, (b) teaching strategies and (c) learning environment organization and characteristics (see Table 2). The observation data consistently revealed that these subthemes reciprocally reflected each other. For example, if thorough lesson planning was noted, strategies and learning environment were also positive features. However, while these three elements were associated, they were not consistently positive overall.

***Lesson Planning.*** Elements of lesson planning formed the most prominent subtheme of instructional planning and an area for improvement in over three-quarters (78%, n=34) of their observations. Evidence for this subtheme came from several criteria on the observation form (see Table 1) including lesson organization, teaching methods, and assistance to students. The lesson planning subtheme relates to all organizational aspects of the lesson including organizational structure, agenda, obvious preparation, groupings, and formative assessment and feedback. Contextually, no formal lesson plan template or teaching methodology is followed by the department.

The most reoccurring elements of typical lesson plan that were *not* observed were (a) explicit intended learning outcomes or some sort of agenda with students, (b) planned teaching methods (other than using the textbook or specific points from the textbook), and (c) some form of formative closure. Overall observation comments included "Some teachers simply relied on oral explanation and the textbook as their primary teaching tools," "no obvious methods were used," "objectives were not apparent or shared," and "having a clear, written agenda and lesson closure will help organize the lesson."

It was further noted in the observations that games and activities were often included at the end of the class as "reviews only, not formative assessments" and "error

correction was not done." For example, while Ms. T used a popular educational application as a group closure activity, most of the groups did not answer several questions correctly without follow-up or corrections on the incorrect answers.

***Teaching and Learning Strategies.*** Although related to and an element of lesson planning, this topic emerged frequently in the data analyses as its own subtheme. The researchers mentioned teaching strategies at some level as an area for improvement in two thirds (62%, n=28) of the observations. For the purpose of this study, teaching and learning strategies included strategies or techniques to make learning *active*, engaged and meaningful. In the case of EFL, authentic moments to use language are imperative to learning and highlight the importance of teaching strategies.

Throughout the observations, the researchers entered general comments such as "more active teaching strategies are definitely recommended for improvement...more than just following the textbook, page by page, can be done." Several observations referred to "book used only" and "more teaching strategies needed." One instance mentioned that "most of the class was conducted while students were just sitting passively while the teacher was delivering information to students."

Although some instructors used a variety of teaching strategies, the majority used only the textbook content, or activities directly from the book with oral questions and answers. Other than the textbook, the whiteboard, Power Point, and e-book activities and explanations were the most commonly used teaching aids and strategies. The overall summary noted the following observation:

"Varied teaching methods and active learning strategies are areas that require more work, perhaps mentoring, with some classes not having the activity and engagement level that is conducive to and really necessary for language learning. More *active* strategies will also boost the enthusiasm and interaction level of students."

Aside from general overall observations, the observers also tendered several comments about teaching strategy recommendations for *specific* instructors. For Ms. A's class, the observer suggested that "the primary teaching aid was the textbook and the white board minimally." In Ms. H's class, "more active teaching strategies especially to

present information are recommended for improvement; use the board, role model examples, have students give written examples, etc." Ms. N was advised to "put more responsibility on the students during vocabulary presentation... activity that is highly student-centered will encourage more student interaction and better use of overall class time."

Although findings confirmed the general lack of variety in teaching and learning strategies, several instructors were mentioned as possible mentors in overall teaching strategies. For example, Ms. T was identified as an excellent mentor in planning and using effective teaching strategies. She "used an animated power point, asked students to put vocabulary in sentences, gave examples of different word forms, used context clues to help students, white board, oral explanation, the textbook, etc. Excellent strategy use."

Similarly, Ms. S was recommended as a peer mentor in student-centered teaching strategies and lesson planning:

"The students did full presentations of 15-20 minutes on the chapters explaining the vocabulary and the grammar points. The students presented with technology, offered vocab activities, used technology and pictures, color-coded games, etc. Further, the students participated in organized groups and actively took notes as needed."

***Learning Environment.*** Characteristics of the learning environment emerged as a complex subtheme of *instructional planning concerns*. Learning environment was mentioned in two thirds (62%,  $n=28$ ) of the observations and field notes as an area for improvement. Regarding faculty-student rapport and basic assistance to student questions, which are crucial elements of any active learning environment, the analysis revealed a positive, meaningful environment. However, in relation to classroom management, the field notes and observations revealed learning environment concerns around (a) the basic organization of the class (e.g., timings, settings) and (b) student on-task engagement (also related to planning and teaching strategies).

The most prevalent codes related to the organization of the learning environment were timing and overall classroom management conducive to learning. Further, consistent timing across groups and levels is important as standardization, including attendance, is

a primary focus of the foundation year. The observation summaries noted that "some classes are running 1 hour 30 minutes, some 1:40, and some 1:45. Also some instructors are beginning 8 a.m. classes at 8:15, 8:20 or close to 8:30." In other field notes, it was observed that "some students walked in 30 minutes late without a question or comment from the instructor" and "late students entered 10-20 minutes late, even 40 minutes late, without referring to the instructor." The issue of timing was prevalent across all academic specializations represented in the study.

Student attention to and engagement with the lesson was also noted in observations of the learning environment. For example, in Ms. B's class, "many students are busy with their mobile phones. Engage students who are sitting in the back and not participating." Similarly, several observations mentioned that "only a few students were engaged" and "only students in the front were participating." In another observation, "20+ students were doing something different than what the class was for." Several observations referred to students being "off-task" with their electronic devices.

The field and observation data and inter-researcher conversations consistently noted that classroom management was strongly related to student engagement in the lesson:

"Classroom management was observed as an issue for a number of teachers, one that had a negative impact on student engagement. Students came in and out of class without a word to or acknowledgement from the instructor, use of technology (phones, headphones) and other activities that were not part of the lesson, groups of students that were physically scattered throughout the classroom with no structure—all these issues of typical classroom management affected the overall student engagement in the lessons observed."

### ***Theme 3: Peer Observation Perceptions and Feedback***

The third theme pertaining to participants' perceptions of the peer observation process emerged from interview data (n=6) and the researchers' field notes, which included any short discussions with instructors immediately before and after the peer observations. Participants tended to perceive the peer observation procedure as

incomplete and, at times, stressful, without real feedback to benefit them in their teaching (see Table 2).

*Perceptions of Observations and Procedures.* Before the observations occurred, the department shared the purpose of the peer observations, the general timeframe for the observations, and the observation tool (see Table 1) with all instructors. Although the *general* procedures were communicated to participants, the exact day and time of respective observations was not announced and instructors could not choose their observer.

Several participants commented on this procedural protocol with mixed perceptions. Ms. J noted, "I was not informed of when the peer observer would come," a sentiment explicitly echoed by all six interview participants and several of the other observation participants as noted in the researchers' field notes. Regarding this sentiment, there were mixed perceptions from the interviewees with Ms. H stating, "I don't want to know. I would never change or add anything and I think it would stress [me] before the lesson."

However, Ms. J elaborated on that same point of anxiety, which was reflected in the majority of interviews, and the pressure to meet a standard:

"The anxiety is always there, no matter who you are and how many years of experience...there is a bar [that] you [the observers] set when you observe; it is expected that the lesson will be extraordinary, so you have to show more. Even if it was sudden, if it was announced, it is even better, but if it was not announced and you set a standard, you cannot go below that standard. Even in your [own] eyes, it is disqualified if you cannot live up to that expectation."

Ms. S summed up future advice for improvement of observation procedures, echoed in the comments made by the instructors before and after observations:

"Firstly, I would tell the observer to set up an optional consultation prior to the observation to address any potential questions. Secondly, to attach a form showing the observation criteria in the observation notification email [researcher's note: this *was* provided ahead of time]. Thirdly, to remain pleasant and professional during the observation, and finally to arrange a feedback session as soon as possible."

***Lack of peer observation feedback.*** Per directions from the department, neither pre nor post-observation meetings between the observers and instructors were held. According to the interview participants, this protocol was the norm for their previous observations as well. Ms. H stated, "because we don't get feedback, just look at the observer's face to see if she's happy or not." Another participant commented, "How do I feel about the observations? Neutral. Keep in mind these observations are not benefiting teachers because we don't get feedback." Ms. S said "the least beneficial part was when I did not get any feedback, because I did not know what they saw or judged on and what they understood of me."

## **Discussion and Implications**

### ***EFL Knowledge and Presentation Strengths***

The main strengths of the instructors were content knowledge, presentation skills, and overall student rapport. These strengths were evident in the data, which consistently showed strong breadth and depth of the instructors' content knowledge, apparent qualifications, and the seemingly positive effect of the department's FD efforts.

Furthermore, the observations recorded warm rapport, strong communication, and professional presentation skills. This finding is interesting on a contextual level as less than a quarter of the instructors (24%; n=11) in this study were from the region (L1 Arabic) and over half (56 %; n=25--L1 English) were from outside of the region (most of whom had limited to no proficiency in Arabic). This finding implies that some students may have initially experienced limited oral communication with their instructors. Although the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the instructors and students were beyond the scope of this study, the findings clearly indicate that strong content knowledge and warm rapport can minimize obvious cultural and communication barriers that may occur in a typical EFL context (Liton, 2013). This in turn suggests that FD for EFL foundation year instructors should include an orientation that links instructional skills and cultural challenges and acceptance to learning (Shukri, 2014).

### ***Lesson planning, teaching strategies, and learning environment***

Lesson planning, teaching strategies, and characteristics and organization of an effective learning environment were areas for development in over two-thirds (68%) of the overall observations. Teaching strategies and an organized learning environment were closely and reciprocally related (both were mentioned in 62% of the observations). If teaching strategies were recommended for development, an organized learning environment was also an area for improvement.

An *active*, student-centered classroom is essential for effective EFL learning (Alves, 2015; Silberman, 1996). Findings revealed that several instructors did not seem to know how to use active learning, which is a common issue for educators in general (Silberman, 1996). This was evident in the instructors' use of the textbook as the primary learning tool, lack of student feedback in general and, specifically, inaccurate answers, and the sometimes 'chaotic' moments when students were not engaged in the learning environment. The observation data consistently emphasized that instructors used the textbook as the main tool of instructional planning instead of student-centered activities. Further, lesson organization, in several cases, did not always provide authentic moments to engage with the English language (see Alves, 2015; Smith & Strong, 2009). Korthagen and Kessels (1999) reported similar findings in that instructors might not be inclined to use constructive and varied EFL teaching strategies in the course of everyday instruction. Instructors' concerns about time constraints and content coverage may have contributed to the minimal use of active learning strategies including important feedback and correction (Silberman, 1996).

To support active and student-centered learning, focused guidance, instructional models, and further faculty development could support instructional planning and strategies. In the context of this study, as previously mentioned, weekly content pacing and graded assessments are standardized within the language levels. However, lesson planning, over-arching methodologies and instructional strategies are not, which may have negatively affected instruction in some cases. Faculty members 'presented' the book content but were often seemingly unaware of alignment of the overall curriculum with appropriate teaching strategies. Instructors in this context, as in most foundation year programs in Saudi, come from a diverse range of cultural and pedagogical backgrounds;

therefore, the instructional approaches and experiences often vary widely. While individual pedagogical choices are important to meet the instructors' and students' needs, initial awareness and formal guidance on lesson planning and successful strategies that align with the content at each proficiency level and for each language mode and within this context would enhance instruction. As Siberman (1996) noted, instructors in general often focus on the content and are unaware of how to use or the consistent need for active learning strategies, especially for adults. To address this issue, initial pre or in-service FD should initially focus on the theories and key principles behind effective and active EFL lesson planning and instruction and the practice of the instruction itself. Further, shared files and strategies at each level and for each language mode will offer strong guidance. Improving instruction through development initiatives, such as focused workshops and peer-to-peer discussion forums, is promising because the EFL instructors in this study were observed to have strong subject-specific knowledge, a trait that supports the active instructional approach (Even & Tirosh, 1995).

Lesson planning was also mentioned as an area for improvement in the majority (78%, n=34) of observations. FD workshops need to provide models for and build in opportunities to practice active lesson planning including preparing and planning for the actual lesson and building a positive classroom environment. Equipped with theory and concepts behind the practice, the instructors' FD can then move into the actual 'field' environment of the classroom (Geddis & Wood, 1997). Depending on the instructor's individual needs, various forms of systematic mentoring, co-teaching, practice teaching (including microteaching and POT) can be designed that will enhance the EFL instructors' classroom teaching skills and efficacy. As mentioned, teaching practice and POT support quality EFL teaching in Saudi higher education (Albaiz, 2016; Ali, 2012).

### ***Peer observation protocol and feedback***

The absence of a clear protocol to follow and the lack of feedback on the peer observations were mentioned by all interviewees and highly noted between researchers and within field notes. Although the department notified the instructors of the observations ahead of time, it became evident that no choice of their 'peer' or no exact time of observation (an 'invitation' to observe) led to anxiety and an overall sentiment that

the observations were more evaluative (judgmental) than developmental (Ali, 2012). Evaluative and unannounced, supervisor-led observations have been the norm historically in academic development in Saudi (Al-Ghamdi & Tight, 2013). Unfortunately, the kinds of procedures inherent in the study's context reinforced the atmosphere of anxiety and judgement. As Richards and Farrell (2005) noted, and evidenced by the findings, observation procedures should be discussed and negotiated by all participants involved in the process.

The findings further confirmed that instructors need in-depth feedback and focused subsequent observations to inform their teaching. As per the department, the normally required feedback/debrief meeting during POT (Shousha, 2015, York St. John University, 2018) was not completed. One of the subthemes was anger and frustration at not receiving feedback. Although receiving feedback is certainly an area for improvement in observation procedures, this may not be an entirely negative point. Previous research has shown there is a good chance that the EFL instructors *did* learn from the peer observation experience (through continued exposure) and may change their practice based on the experience with and perception of their performance (Ali, 2012). However, teaching efficacy, reduced anxiety, and improved practice would clearly be more enhanced by providing feedback sessions, follow-up observations focused on improvement, and best practice in observations (Albaiz, 2016; Bailey-McHale & Moore, 2011; Shousha, 2015; York St. John University, 2018).

Further, the definition of 'peer' observation can be debated when direct feedback, choice of peer, and sharing are *not* involved. "When the main focus of peer observation is on helping colleagues develop their teaching, the process is often conducted as a reciprocal exercise, with staff observing each other, sharing their insights and providing mutual support" (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1). In fact, Bell and Mladenovic (2008) noted that teachers found the exercise of observation itself, actually observing their peers, as the most beneficial aspect of POT (more than receiving feedback) emphasizing the importance of systematic and reciprocal peer observations. Further to this point, the shift to a more constructive FD paradigm does not support peer observation without peer engagement and reflection (Nguyen & Baldouf, 2010). This paradigm involves shifting from "requiring teachers to attend one-shot 'sit-and-get' in-service training and workshops

to a more inquiry-based, socio-constructivist view of teacher development with transformative purpose regarding the language teachers as co-constructors of knowledge who can make more autonomous decisions about their own teaching practices" (Danış, A., & Dikilitaş, 2018, p. 28).

The clear implications regarding peer observation protocol and feedback for Saudi EFL foundation year instructors are two-fold: (a) shifting the perception and 'climate' of POT from evaluative to developmental with heightened focus on the 'peer' aspect and transparency of the process, and (b) following constructivist best practices for peer observations including feedback and follow-up. Firstly, all faculty members, prior to the observations, should discuss the process of peer observations from beginning to end including the concept and purpose behind it (e.g., timing, schedule, choice of peers, instrument for observation) (affirmed by Shah & Alharthi, 2014). Peer observations that are clearly focused on development and reflection may facilitate a shift of perception from evaluative to peer-focused and truly developmental. Second, although follow up was not present in this peer observation protocol, findings suggest that it is imperative that the three meetings (i.e., initial, observation, and post/feedback) should take place if practice is to change and peer observations accepted as the norm (Shousha, 2015; York St. John University, 2018). Through these adjustments to the perception and process, POT observations can improve practice and meet EFL instructors' needs.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Limitations of the study focus primarily on the study context and observation procedures. First, future research should include both male and female participants across several universities in the Kingdom, which would produce more generalizable results. Second, there are few studies on faculty professional development in Saudi higher education in general, emphasizing an area for further study. Third, the department-mandated protocol limited the study. Without pre and post-observation sessions, participants could not express their instructional needs or choices to the observers nor could the observer support the classroom instruction in a fully reciprocal way. Future research should focus on observations with the recommended three-meeting protocol and fully transparent procedures.

## **Conclusion**

The study explored the faculty development needs of EFL instructors teaching in a foundational year program. Based on the findings and discussion, faculty developers and department heads should continue to develop instructors' content knowledge and presentational skills as valuable strengths to their instruction. Further, enhanced FD initiatives should be arranged around (1) active lesson planning using a variety of tools and resources, (2) active teaching strategies to engage students with both the lesson content and the English language, and (3) creating a well-organized and effectively managed learning environment. These pedagogical changes could support active learning in the EFL classroom and improve the chances of Saudi university graduates to effectively learn the English language and bolster the educational initiatives at home and on the global stage.

In-service workshops and sessions, mentoring and guidance, and resource material focusing on active learning can initially lay the foundation for effective EFL instruction. From there, these elements can be addressed and improved through hands-on planning, practice teaching (e.g., microteaching or co-teaching), active-learning focused FD, and follow-up development plans. Finally, changes to the POT procedures are required to create a trustful atmosphere of FD and improvement that maximizes instructors' potential and minimizes anxiety. Transparent and inclusive POT procedures may improve the instructors' educational experience and professional development and, by association, students' success in learning EFL in the foundation year.

## **Conflict of Interest Statement**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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## **Axiological Potential of Sociocultural Language Mission in Education**

**Irina Savchenko, Zhanna Nikonova, Maria Vikulina, Anna Gorokhova**

*Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (LUNN), Russia*

**Liudmila Bolsunovskaya**

*National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Russia*

### **Bio-profiles:**

**Irina Savchenko**, Dr.Sci.(Soc.), Professor of the Department of Philosophy, Sociology and the Theory of Social Communication, Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia); Professor of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Nizhny Novgorod Academy of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia). E-mail: [teosmaco@rambler.ru](mailto:teosmaco@rambler.ru)

**Zhanna Nikonova**, Dr. Sci (Phil.), Member of the Presidium of the Russian Union of Germanists, Rector, Professor of the Department of Theory and Practice of the German Language, Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia). E-mail: [nikonova@lunn.ru](mailto:nikonova@lunn.ru)

**Maria Vikulina**, Dr. Sci (Pedagogy), Professor, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Honored Worker of Science and Education, Scientific Secretary of the Dissertation Council D 212.163.02, Head of the Research Activity Center, Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia). E-mail: [prof\\_vikulina@lunn.ru](mailto:prof_vikulina@lunn.ru)

**Liudmila Bolsunovskaya** is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Core Engineering Education at Tomsk Polytechnic University, Russia. She has 30-years' experience in the sphere of higher education. Her research interests extend to education, English as a second language, English for specific purposes, CLIL, EMI, applied linguistics and discourse analyses. In the field of linguistics, her work focuses on discourse analyses and cognitive linguistics with a particular interest in engineering discourse. She is the author and co-author of about 65 journal articles in the field of English as a second language, applied linguistics and discourse analyses. E-mail: [bolsunovskl@tpu.ru](mailto:bolsunovskl@tpu.ru) / [bolsunovskaya@inbox.ru](mailto:bolsunovskaya@inbox.ru)

**Anna Gorokhova**, PhD (Phil.), Member of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Member of the National Association of Teachers of English in Russia; Associate Professor of the English Philology Department, the Faculty of the English language, Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia). Has passed CPE exam (Cambridge Assessment English) at Level C2. E-mail: [gorokhova@lunn.ru](mailto:gorokhova@lunn.ru)

### **Abstract**

What do we know about the role of the language in ethnocultural development? How are peculiarities that typify an educational system reflected in the dynamics of linguocultural processes? Under what circumstances do these processes possess value nature and when do they shift towards the domain of instrumentality? Can linguocultural transformations take place irrespective of ideological and educational trends, adopted and spread within a certain state? And finally, what constituents shape the conceptual sphere of native speakers? The pool of listed questions is thrown light upon in the article under consideration.

The terms “conceptual sphere”, “language consciousness” and “linguocultural identity” are paid close attention to, their basic peculiarities are singled out. According to the authors, linguistic identity is a component of cultural identity connected with the people’s historical past, history of the language and so on. The category of language consciousness is a bit different being characteristic not only of a certain ethnos but integrating all those speaking this or that language, making it possible to specify the

language consciousness of Russian-speaking, English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, etc. people. In the quantitative sense, language consciousness generally covers a much bigger amount of people than linguocultural identity.

The authors provide sufficient ground for understanding the mechanisms of language value-instrumental diversity, claiming that upon turning a language into a mechanism of political confrontation, the participants of the controversy turn a blind eye to the language value potential: the instrumental functions of the language therefore prevail in ideology and school systems.

Up-to-date educational paradigm is aimed at shaping scientific knowledge and derivative skills and abilities, acquiring which is not infrequently connected with perceiving isolated facts. Quite often their understanding lies on the surface and does not presuppose delving deeply into a student's consciousness and personality. Instead of the mentioned isolated notions a full-scale outlook entity, complete and manifold, is inculcated into some communities' educational systems based on illusory, imaginary, unreal facts, touching upon the history of the people, its language genesis, related ethnoses and other spheres of human existence. Under such circumstances differentiating value and instrumental factors of ethnocultural and educational dynamics is a complicated task. It is safe to assume that this phenomenon requires further contemplation in the pedagogical theory.

Meanwhile, no matter how spiritual, social and political trends develop in society, there is no denying the fact that a language inevitably ranks highest among significant factors telling on ethnocultural dynamics and remains an indispensable part of the educational process.

**Keywords:** *language, educational process, ethnocultural dynamics, instrumental and axiological manifestations, solidarization and desolidarization, conceptual sphere, linguocultural identity, language consciousness, cultural policy, cultural manipulation*

## **Introduction**

Among sociocultural factors determining social solidarity and entity of a people's cultural identification, the commonality of moral imperatives, lifestyles, worldview and

outlook, concurrence of collective habits, customs and rituals, are traditionally singled out. A vast majority of authors, starting with W. von Humboldt (Humboldt, 2001), attach vital significance to language commonality as a leading factor fomenting ethnocultural dynamics (Cheboksarov, Cheboksarova, 1985, Guboglo, 2006, Likhachev, 1993, Kirnoze, 2001). Other scientists, such as Gumilev, L.N. (Gumilev, 2010), however, do not trace the language to factors instigating communities' ethnocultural development. The third group of researchers is inclined to a dialectical and ambiguous interpretation of the influence on the ethnocultural processes dynamics caused by a linguistic factor (Arutyunyan, 1990, Savchenko, 2010, Connor, 2000, Joseph, 2006, Nikonova, 2018). In this context, both the degree at which the language affects sociocultural transformations and the display of the qualitative characteristics typifying the named influence in the educational process are of interest.

Amidst social institutions of culture education occupies a peculiar position and its purpose is of a dialectical nature. Thus on the one hand, education serves as a conductor of social norms, cultural values, ensuring upon the whole, to a considerable extent, social solidarity and a people's consolidation around a cultural core. On the other hand, it is in education that all social processes, including spiritual growth or decline, public solidarity or split, integration or disintegration, predominantly manifest themselves.

Hence the language sociocultural mission in the educational process objectively reveals itself both axiologically and instrumentally. The focus of education has a destructive impact, when as a result of cultural manipulation and ideologization of the linguistic factor, the language instrumental function suppresses its value potential.

### **Problem Statement**

Understanding interconnectivity of linguistic and ethnocultural dynamics specifically in the face of rapid society polyethnisation, raises certain questions, the solution of which, most likely, could benefit modern science. In the era of complex political and sociocultural transformations both on the global scale and within the framework of separate commonalities, the range of problems associated with ethnic dynamics, ethnic passionarity growth and decline, ethnic identity, ethnic revival, ethnic marginality and ethnic radicalism, is reflected in the educational process and is becoming especially acute.

Analyzing how the language affects the processes of social solidarization and desolidarization that are inevitably transmitted by educational dynamics, we attempt to calculate the degree of this influence. Should the language be looked upon as the core and “the energy force” of an ethnos, its “united spiritual energy” (Humboldt, 2001: 44) or is it merely one of national unity elements, its role rather being instrumental? The stated objectives sculpture the aim of the present article, which consists in determining the value and instrumental parameters of the linguistic factor influence on solidifying and desolidating sociocultural trends, manifesting themselves in the evolution of educational systems.

### **Methodology**

The authors rely on the methodological provisions and conclusions in which dynamics of culture, linguistic transformations and changes in the educational field are interpreted as interwoven constituents of a holistic process (Savrutskaya, Zhigalev, Dorozhkin, Ustinkin, 2014). The given perception requires implementation of a systematic approach (Sadovskij, 2004). The analysis of the educational and linguocultural sphere as a systematic sociocultural unity framing internal impulses for its development is carried out within the framework of a sociocultural approach dating back to the scientific heritage of Vygotsky, L.S. (Zashihina, 2014), which is gaining renewed relevance today against the increase in cultural heterogeneity of modern communities (Cirulnikov, 2007) and a rapid alteration of educational paradigms (Asmolov, 2012).

Studying value functions of the language in educational and sociocultural dynamics, the authors have contemplated the ideas of the conceptual sphere (Likhachev, 1993), (Kirnoze, 2001), linguistic security (Zhigalev, Ustinkin, 2015), (Gal’perin, 1998), linguistic consciousness (Galperin, 1998), linguistic identity (Savchenko, 2010) and name philosophy (Bulgakov, 2011), (Losev, 2016). The issues of formation and manifestation of the language instrumental functions in various spheres of public life, and, in particular, in pedagogy, are thrown light upon based on the works of Connor, W. (Connor, 2000), Joseph, J. (Joseph, 2006), Savchenko, I.A. (Savchenko, 2010). Perceiving education as a dichotomous system, which simultaneously builds up and reflects the sociocultural state of the social system, has predetermined the authors’ resorting to the dialectical method of

examining social phenomena mainly in accordance with the observations put forward by Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997). The study of the dichotomy of instrumental and value, conscious and identity components of the language has also been conducted in terms of the dialectical approach as “the language acquires the ability to express the contradiction that it is at the same time itself and something other than itself, identical and not identical” (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 29).

### **Basic Concepts**

Understanding the language as the cornerstone cause of sculpturing the system embracing “national images of the world” (Savrutskaya, Zhigalev, Dorozhkin, Ustinkin, 2014), linguistic security, establishment and preservation of the “spiritual and moral unity of societies” (Zhigalev, Ustinkin, 2015: 33), formation and retention of national world images is based on the systematic approach (Sadovskij, 2004) and specifies a set of multifaceted requirements towards education as a means of keeping linguistic authenticity of all those participating in the educational process.

Many other researchers think the language to be the most important identification force of an ethnos (Guboglo, M.N. (Guboglo, 2006), Cheboksarov, N.N. Cheboksarova, I.A. (Cheboksarov, Cheboksarova, 1985: 6-7), etc.). In cognitive linguistics, the notions of the conceptual sphere (Likhachev, 1993), linguistic personality (Karaulov, 1987), the unity of language, consciousness and activity (Tokarev, 2000) are subjected to a keen understanding. In the conceptual sphere theories, it is demonstrated how the language, forming a conceptual unity of a social environment (Kirnoze, 2001), determines the semiotic specificity of not only education, but also all public life realms – economics, politics, and, finally, individuals’ everyday life.

The notion of the conceptual sphere integrates two sociolinguistic phenomena: *linguistic consciousness* and *linguocultural identity*. These phenomena are interdependent and interconnected, but non-identical. *Linguistic consciousness* presupposes the consequences and peculiarities of a person’ (or community) mental activity determined and verbalized by the lexical, grammatical and stylistic means of a national language (Gal’perin, 1998). It is possible to define the linguistic consciousness of an individual nation only when the number of native speakers is limited to

representatives of that concrete nation. In this case, one deals with distinctive and unique local cultures (Merekina, 2008).

Is it right to talk about the linguistic consciousness of Russians (Polyakova, 2009) or the English (Pseunova, 2006), as many authors do? In this respect one should rather determine the linguistic consciousness of those who speak Russian, English, etc., realizing, of course, that not only Russians and the English adhere to the named group. There is no denying the fact that the linguistic consciousness is also subject to transformations due to diversities within one language – for example, British and American English – but if so extra-linguistic factors affecting the linguistic consciousness should be tackled.

Often, it is the linguistic consciousness that plays a distinguished social role. For example, in modern Baltic states, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews are involved in the struggle for the Russian language, thus attaching an overall greater prominence to the concept of “a Russian-speaking person”. The situation is somewhat similar in modern Ukraine, where the Russian language is the mother tongue not only for Russians and Jews, but also for representatives of many other peoples – primarily a significant part of the Ukrainians themselves. In the mentioned context, it is vitally important to emphasize that in this kind of “a struggle for the language” the language itself is not an instrument of political confrontation because people only defend the right – theirs and their children’s – to use the language they consider their mother tongue in everyday discourse and studying. Therefore, in the given circumstances, the language retains its value function. The opportunity to get education in a native language gains utmost importance and worth.

Upon a deeper insight into its nature, the phenomenon of linguocultural identity, being one of the ethnic identity angles, also reveals complexity and ambiguity (Savchenko, 2010). The following statement can briefly describe the marker of the linguistic and cultural identity: “I belong to this people, because I speak the language of this people.” For instance, “I am Jewish because I speak Yiddish”... It is clearly seen that linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identities do not necessarily have to coincide.

On the one hand, the concept of identity is initially subjective. Each person themselves determines both their ethnic identity and the factors that shape it (country of residence, parents’ nationality, religion, political views, etc., and, finally, language). On

the other hand, it is possible to come across a huge number of people who think Russian to be their mother tongue, although they might not consider themselves Russian; or francophones identifying themselves as Arabs, etc. The language a person is educated in, influences the linguocultural identity profoundly. This is where the distinction between the linguistic consciousness and linguocultural identity comes in handy. We can differentiate between the linguistic and cultural identity of the British and the linguistic consciousness of all those who speak English; portray the linguistic and cultural identity of Russians, simultaneously taking into account the linguistic consciousness of Russian-speaking people, etc.

Representative is the situation when a language that people get education in, does not fit into the paradigm of archetypal images of the world inherent in a particular ethnic group. This example is widespread in many African countries, where people study, starting from school, in English, French, Portuguese, but do not trace their people to English, French or Portuguese cultures that are associated exclusively with the epoch as understood by African ethnic groups.

Several years ago one of the authors of the present article conducted a research among Russian students and foreign students studying in Russia (Savchenko, 2010), within the course of which it became clear that not all peoples perceive the language as the main ethnic identification attribute. Responding to the question “What does it mean for you to be a representative of your people” a vast majority of African and Indian students (around 80%) as well as 12% of Chinese and slightly over one third of Russian students answered, “To speak one’s native language”.

At that time, we suggested that large ethnic groups, the so-called nation-ethnoses (such as, for example, Russians and the Chinese), being titular in their states, label the culture as a whole, general history and common future of the people, as the leading marker of a national identity. It should be borne in mind, however, that the languages of such nation-ethnic groups frequently play the role of *lingua franca* in their native lands and even beyond their borders. That is why there is no way to turn such languages into an ethno-isolating and ethno-marking tool (incomprehensible and foreign to “strangers”) as they are commonly understood.

As a rule, the languages of those communities that differentiate themselves primarily by the linguistic criterion are less common, local, comprehended only by representatives of a small ethnic language community. This peculiarity is characteristic of India, where two state languages (English and Hindi), 18 regional clerical work languages and more than 500 tribal dialects coexist. In Africa, the linguocultural mosaic is even brighter – often residents of neighboring villages cannot understand each other without using *lingua franca* (English, French or Portuguese).

This empirical evidence is testified to by numerous examples. The “language issue” generally becomes relevant when representatives of a certain community are confronted with an acute problem of self-differentiation and sociocultural preservation. It is not by chance that about half of Russians inhabiting Soviet Tashkent marked themselves by the language, whereas in Moscow other ethnic distinctive indices prevailed (Arutyunyan, 1990: 43-44).

The study under consideration may not shed light upon the full scope of issues related to the correlation of ethnic solidarity, linguistic identity and linguistic consciousness. Nevertheless, it is possible to assume that these concepts exhibit a higher degree of interconnection and interdependence in local cultures than in global and regional cultures. In our opinion, such observations should not be turned a blind eye to, especially in education involving work with foreign students. It should be understood that different categories of foreign students might have a varied attitude to the language of the host society, the evaluation of their mother tongue and the language that they use as *lingua franca*.

Notable are the arguments put forth by Gumilev, L.N. who claims that it is not “the language unity” that allows people to reveal “the nature of ethnic groups visible objectification”, since there are many “bilingual and trilingual ethnic groups and, vice versa, various ethnic groups that speak the same language”. According to Gumilev, L.N., “Mexicans, Peruvians, Argentineans speak Spanish but they are not Spaniards,” and, referring to the history of the Ottoman Empire, – the Turks were an ethnic group but a young soldier listened to commands in Turkish, spoke Polish to his mother, and Italian to his grandmother, bargained in Greek at a bazaar, read Persian poems, and prayed in

Arabic. Nonetheless he was an Ottoman for he behaved as one, an incarnation of a brave and pious warrior of Islam” (Gumilev, 2010: 179).

“Ethnicity, found in people’s consciousness, is not a product of consciousness itself,” said Leo Gumilev about the relationship between ethnic identity and ethnic consciousness (Gumilev, 2010: 23). Analyzing interdependence of linguocultural identity and linguistic consciousness, though, it is worth mentioning that, following the scientist’s logic, linguocultural identity can be found in linguistic consciousness (of an individual or community), but it is not a product of linguistic consciousness. Despite the controversy of Leo Gumilev’s postulates they are of undeniable educational value. In case for some reason education does not use the linguistic factor to ensure ethnic identity, other factors come into force (tradition, historical memory, etc.). For example, in modern Abkhazia, ethnic Abkhazians receive secondary and higher education mainly in Russian, which does not prevent the Abkhaz people from maintaining their identity. At the same time Armenians living in Abkhazia attend both Russian and Armenian schools, which again does not pose any obstacles to feeling ethnic cultural unity.

Cultural-historical theory (Zashihina, 2014), systematic (Sadovskij, 2004) and sociocultural (Asmolov, 2012) approaches to the analysis of the studied phenomena contribute to formulating an important thesis: as long as we consider the social-solidifying function of the language in the conceptual sphere, linguistic consciousness and ethnocultural identity context, notwithstanding all the contradictions, the language will pose as a systemic value category, and not an instrument of manipulation or political struggle, the latter, of course, being equally reflected in the educational process.

### **Language and Ideology**

A language may become an instrument of national liberation movements, simultaneously sacrificing its value function. At the end of the XIX century, Irish nationalists advocated preserving and reviving the Irish Gaelic language, fighting for the right of Irish schoolchildren to study in the language environment of their ancestors, which by that time, alas, had failed to keep its position in Irish society. After Ireland had gained independence, the language, which was a symbol of the liberation struggle against the British, lost its semantic nucleus and emotional content, and, ultimately, the new free

state became even more English-speaking than under the rule of London (Connor, 2000: 117). In today's Ireland, where 87,4% of the population is ethnic Irish (Naseleine Irlandii, 2019), only 11% of the population consider Irish Gaelic to be their mother tongue and use it in everyday life. Due to the effort of the government, Irish Gaelic is studied at school, and it is not likely to sink into oblivion like other Celtic languages, particularly Manx Gaelic. However, it is hardly possible to say that in the foreseeable future the Irish will overwhelmingly stop communicating with each other in English: upon graduating from school young Irish tend to forget the language of their freedom-loving forefathers.

The fate of the Scottish Gaelic language, the Irish language closest relative, was a little different, but bore similar consequences. Examining the correlation between national identity and language (Joseph, 2006) exemplified by Scottish environment, J. Joseph showed how historically simultaneous functioning of two different Scottish languages (including secondary education) – Celtic Scottish (Scottish Gaelic) and Germanic Scottish (Scotts) – prevented the development of a consolidated Scottish identity in this country, since the speakers of each of the two languages were focused on competing with each other's ambitions instead of fighting the English language hegemony. It is noteworthy that J. Joseph saw a deterrent effect in that rivalry, which prevented an open clash between the titular ethnic group (the British) and Scottish population. The researcher is convinced that the centuries-old struggle between the Gaelic language and the Scotts was a "reasonable way" to keep "ethno-nationalist ardor within acceptable bounds" (Joseph, 2006: 537), especially among the youth. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the past century, the linguistic competition between the two Scottish languages had ended, and both the opponents lost. In the present day Scotland as well as in Ireland, they speak English intermingled with certain dialectical inclusions. In the XXI century with an intention to make Scotland sovereign and its identity being reinforced by the title of the most beautiful country in the world (Nazvana samaya krasivaya strana v mire, 2017), the national football team and kilt, few have any hope for the prospects of using two Scottish languages in everyday communication.

The experience of Ireland and Scotland, which became increasingly Anglophonic in attempts to alienate from England, is representative when it comes to analyzing language processes in modern Ukraine, where the language "is apologetic", "already

corrupt” and “not capable of being either neutral or practical” per se (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 268). The ruling elite of Ukraine supposes that spreading Ukrainian monolingualism, especially at schools and universities, will enable shaping a new form of social solidarity. The example of Scotland and Ireland suggests that, regardless of how the political process develops in Ukraine, the position of the Russian language in this country will only intensify.

In a political confrontation, where the educational process is somehow involved, the instrumental function of the language usually tends to outweigh the value one. Propaganda transforms the language into a “tool, lever, machine” (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 307), and the instrument-language becomes “as similar to lies as things become identical in the dark” (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 268). The nature of this process is solely destructive.

### **Relativity of “the truth about a language”**

“The truth about a language” is as a rule an indisputable argument that can shake a whole ideology. For example, the linguistic research of the German eugenicist Hans F.K. Günther at one point forced the Nazis to practically abandon the term “Aryan”. Günther, a philologically educated racist, was aware that many Indo-European peoples could be traced to Aryan descendants on the basis of their language, including Gypsies persecuted by the Nazis, and Armenians, “the closest relatives of Jews”. Therefore, the Nazis had to abandon the “Aryan” concept in favour of the term “Nordic” to refer to representatives of the “ruling world race” at the end of their empire in the “educational process” focused on the youngest generation of Germans.

In some cases the linguistic factor in the pedagogical process undergoes devaluation, and imaginary notions replace the historical truth about the language. Sometimes a project, whose connection with reality is illusory, is laid into the idea of ethnic solidarity in the process of teaching and education. It might not though necessarily aim at falsifying history but rather shape a fantasy related to history of an ethnos and history of a language. There are enough examples of historical and linguistic misconceptions inculcated in students’ and children’s consciousness globally. Let us dwell on a single instance.

Hungary is a state with a fairly short history of independence. The Hungarian Kingdom was sovereign from 1001 to 1301. Afterwards Hungary lived through Byzantine, Bohemian, Bavarian, Sicilian, Polish rulers. For a long time, Hungary was part of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. In the second half of the XIX century, it acquired a relatively autonomous status as a part of Austria-Hungary, and after the First World War it became independent. Since 1938, Hungary was Hitler's ally, which brought to territorial acquisitions in Eastern Europe. Today's official Hungary, being a member of the European Union, the Schengen Agreement and the Bologna Process, constructing a system of school and university education, nevertheless strives to form a nation with a unique, authentic history and distinctive linguistic identity. The given circumstances provoked putting historical and linguistic illusions into practice.

It happened so that Hungarians date back to the Baltic-Slavic populations (Grzybowski, 2007) genetically and spiritually, adhering linguistically to the ancient Ugric nomads. In the second half of the first millennium of the new era, a part of the Praugorsk tribes migrated from the steppe zone to the north of Western Siberia and laid foundation for the Khanty and Mansi cultures. The other part of these tribes moved west and, finally, settled on the territory of the former Roman province of Pannonia (present-day Hungary), having triggered off linguistic assimilation of the local population.

Surprisingly that assimilation turned out to be solely linguistic in nature and almost did not affect other components of culture and life. Meanwhile, in modern Hungary, the idea of kinship with either the Slavs or the Finno-Ugric peoples is not supported. Today's Hungary advocates the idea of a trans-ethnic "Great Turan", the historical kinship of the Turkic peoples at the state level (Semushin, 2012). This concept is being actively introduced into educational practice at schools and universities. Kurultais are annually held in Hungary, bringing together representatives of the Turkic peoples "related" to Hungarians: Kygiz, Kazakh, Uzbek, Uigur, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Turkmen, Bashkir, Tatar, Gagauz (Kulzhanova, 2013).

Indeed, in the 5th century of the new era (before the Ugrians arrived there), Panonia fell into the hands of the Huns (originating from the older Huns) for some time, which gave birth to one of the country's names – *Hungary*. This fact gave the Hungarians a reason to call themselves (their self-name *Magyars* has a common root with the self-name

of *Mansi*) not only the descendants of the Huns, but also trace the Hungarian language to the Turkic-Altai languages (Jobbik, 2011). Turning to the ideas of the “name philosophy” (Bulgakov, 2011), (Losev, 2016) in this case we are confronted with “the antagonism of names”: the name of the state in Western European languages, going back to the Turkish-Latin *hunni*, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the name of the state in the native language of the Hungarians (*Magyarország*) and the self-name of the people (*magyar*), having an Ugric root. Each of the names reveals its own “truth”. Neither linguists nor genetics confirm kinship between the Huns and Hungarians (Grzybowski, 2007). The Huns have only one direct linguistic descendant – the Chuvashs (Ishakov, 2001: 45). It is worth agreeing with the fact that, despite close linguistic kinship, “there is very little in common between modern Hungarians and, for example, Khanty” (Kungurov, 2015), except for some gastronomic traditions. For example a fish soup cholasle described in detail in the book by L.M. Mints does not presuppose removing blood from a fish, while “only the closest linguistic relatives of Hungarians – Mansi and Khanty on the distant Ob – use fish blood in their food (Mints, 2012: 47). Undoubtedly, modern Hungarians constitute, in socio-anthropological and spiritual terms, a very distinctive, but still typical Central European people (Kozlov, 2012).

It is not uncommon when some ethnos from any part of the world seeks to differentiate themselves from other peoples, especially from its neighbours. But it occurred the Hungarians found more reasons for this in the history of their country than their neighbouring ethnoses. So the idea of a striking difference between the Hungarians and their European neighbors and the Hungarian – Huns relationship penetrated the educational process.

At this point we are making an ambiguous conclusion. On the one hand, pedagogy can be considered efficient when it is based on scientific facts; pedagogy of historical illusions cannot be productive. At the same time the basis of modern pedagogy ripened in the era of Enlightenment, when knowledge outweighed imagination. The “Enlightenment Program” consisted in “disenchanted the world” expressed in the destruction of myths and the overthrow of the imagination via knowledge (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 16). If it was possible to cast a spell on the world, then, most likely, its re-enchantment is also possible, which is often called a return to the “New Middle Ages”

(Savchenko, 2013), (Berdyayev, 2018). Just as the ancient Romans considered themselves the descendants of the Trojans, and the Scythians – the descendants of Hercules, the Hungarians in the XXI century identify themselves as the descendants of Attila and the Huns. Emancipation is liberation from dependence, primarily through education. But does it mean mandatory liberation from a fantasy through ready-made knowledge acquisition? Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. insisted that in reality “spiritual enlightenment was not simultaneously accompanied by a real emancipation of a person”, and, therefore, “the disease affected education itself. The less social reality managed to narrow the gap between itself and the “educated consciousness”, the more it became subject to materialization. Culture transforms into a commodity distributed in the form of information without penetrating into those who absorb it. Thinking becomes asthmatic and is reduced to comprehending isolated facts” (Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997: 244).

Instead of comprehending “isolated facts” (about the short Turkic rule, Central European anthropology, the Ugric language assimilation, etc.), thus forming the “asthmatic thinking” mentioned above, the Hungarians preferred a consistent holistic fantasy that formally resembles a system.

Hungary provides a vivid example of how scientific facts (historical, linguistic and even genetic) become secondary to fantasy, which turned out to be an existential human need, in social reality and educational process. An illusion can add a specific value content to education to some extent, which, alas, does not fit the “truth about the language”. Understanding and solving this problem is challenging for scientific and pedagogical communities, since in this case the instrumental and value elements of ethnocultural and educational dynamics are biased, shifted and have a relatively ambiguous manifestation.

## **Conclusion**

The processes of social and ethnocultural development are undoubtedly interconnected and interwoven, which is inevitably reflected in school and university education, but this interdependence has various manifestations (Cirulnikov, 2007). A language can fulfil a value-solidifying function, and consequently play a significant role in the conceptual sphere formation, giving reasons to believe that people who speak the

same language can still be distinctive in their common thinking, common sense, and most probably share archetypal understanding of morality and legal awareness. In such conditions, the language of a person's education plays a very important role. Nonetheless, one can hardly assume that upon "beginning to think in German", a hero of a famous Soviet film, the Soviet agent Stirlitz, had a somewhat weakened sense of solidarity with Russians. Moreover, people might begin to speak the same language due to various causes: assimilation, migration, colonization, globalization, cultural manipulation. In cases where there is no reason to talk about historically rooted spiritual unity, a language which performs the function of surface mechanical solidarity is no longer a value but an instrumental tool.

The value-instrumental shift in the language functions becomes most noticeable when a language as a conductor of the educational process turns into an element of a political struggle or ethnic conflict.

Meanwhile, certain paradoxes may occur, when the ethnos's strive for self-differentiation modifies the educational paradigm and gives ground for fantasy ideas concerning the history of the language and the people as a whole. As a result the illusion of social solidarity is formed via education, often aimed at some transethnic or transnational perspective. In such a situation, the instrumental and value components of linguocultural dynamics can have very unexpected manifestations that scientists and teachers have yet to contemplate.

Under any circumstances, however, the language has a sufficient impact on the processes of solidarization and desolidarization and remains an indispensable factor without which education cannot possibly function.

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