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Letter from the editor

Dear Colleagues,

We have the pleasure to announce the release of our newest issue in Volume 4, Number 1. The new issue is accompanied by more international recognition. As well as many others, AWEJ is now also newly indexed and listed in the following well known educational databases, research centers and universities:

- **EBSCOhost** Databases, USA

- **NewJour: Electronic Journals & Newsletters**, Georgetown University, USA
  http://old.library.georgetown.edu/newjour/a/msg05383.html

- **University of Zurich**, Switzerland
  http://www.jdb.uzh.ch/591/

- **STATE LIBEREARY, New South Wales**, Australia
  http://library.sl.nsw.gov.au/search~S2/tArab+world+1%2C2C-1%2C0%2CB/frameandFF=tarab+world+english+journal1%2C1%2C

- **Scribd Database**, San Francisco, California, USA

- **World Englishes**
  http://english6.net/a/arab-world-english-journal-w16327.html

- **University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth**, England UK
  http://www.marjon.ac.uk/aboutmarjon/stafflistandprofiles/name_22363_en.html

- **Academia.edu**, San Francisco, CA
  http://www.academia.edu/1305484/Does_English_Proficiency_Level_Predict_Writing_Speed_Length_and_Quality

- **Nanyang Technological University**, Singapore
  http://research.ntu.edu.sg/expertise/academicprofile/pages/StaffProfile.aspx?ST_EMAILID=ALVIN.LEONG&CategoryDescription=linguisticsandmultilingualstudies

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  http://journalseeker.researchbib.com/?action=viewJournalDetails&issn=22299327&uid=rf2cd2

This is a significant achievement and a result of continuous, hard, and dedicated work by AWEJ’s team. Finally, we would like to express our sincere apology to the authors whose papers are not published in this issue due to a large number of submissions. We have given the priority to the date of submission and the date of completion of the requirements. Those papers not appearing in this issue will be given priority next time. We would also like to remind our dear colleagues to read AWEJ’s guidelines before submit their paper to minimize the chance of manuscript rejection.

Kind regards

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ELT and the Risk of Political Brainwashing: A Novel Approach to Deconstructing Politically-Constructed Identities

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Abstract

Much headway recently has been made in terms of devising pedagogical tactics to lay bare the ‘powerful unsaid’ of the ‘topdog’, preserve the learner’s Arab identity and meet the dangerous effects of a foreign culture. Among the strategies of resistance most frequently employed by Arab intellectuals, scholars and educationists, we find the censorial approach. The belief behind this is that any exposure of Arab students to Western culture and values is likely to lead them to culture-shock, to political brainwashing, and even to a rejection of their own culture and identity. My belief, however, is that the real solution to cultural brainwashing and the Arab identity crisis is not censorship of cultural texts. A more fruitful defence against cultural indoctrination would be to draw Arab students’ attention to how language works through unstated assumptions and to sensitize them to the working of ideology. This paper advances the claim that, because students are in any case in contact with Western values, and not necessarily through textbooks, Arab scholars should help students develop a sense of "healthy criticism" and equip them with a "critical language awareness" and effective discourse patterns. For the implementation of this strategy, linguistic tools from the "Prague school of Linguistics" are considered, mainly 'Theme', 'Rheme', and 'Foregrounding'. Illustrative passages from President Dwight Eisenhower's "The Chance for Peace Speech" will be scrutinized.

Key Words: EFL learners, cultural brainwashing, thematic approach, censorial approach, healthy criticism
1. Introduction

The paper seeks to be a starting point for rethinking prevalent strategies and approaches to preserving the learner's Arab identity and enable him/her to avoid political brainwashing and cultural indoctrination. The main argument is to find an approach which serves best the learners' needs, helps them deconstruct ideology, analyse cultural texts independently, and consolidate their linguistic ability.

The paper first explores the thematic approach to culture and asks if it reduces cultural brainwashing. It next examines the censorial approach which suggests meeting cultural brainwashing by rejecting all contact with western values. The paper then argues in favour of a learner - centered strategy, which attempts to sensitize learners to the working of cultural brainwashing and shows them how linguistic / discoursal tools such as Foregrounding, “Given” (Theme) and “New” (Rheme) equip them to meet the dangerous effects of a foreign culture. Finally, and in terms of methodology, excerpts from the US president Eisenhower’s “The Chance for Peace” speech (1956) are given to demonstrate how learners cannot only resist cultural brainwashing but also gradually lose the habit of relying on their teacher for the analysis of cultural texts.

2. Language and Ideology: How Language Works Through Tacit Assumptions

However, the paper proposes, first, to examine the relationship between language and ideology. According to linguists, language is not an innocent tool at the service of knowledge (Phillipson, 1992). It is laden with ideological issues and presupposed theories. It paves the way for a writer to infiltrate his ideas through tacit and unstated assumptions. One specialist who draws our attention to the implicit meaning of words, to the ideological and "the powerful unsaid" of language, is Volosinov. He maintains that "the divorce of language from its ideological implication is one of abstract objectivism's most serious errors" (1973, p. 48). Similarly, Michel Pêcheux (1982, p. 111) argues that "the meaning of a word, expression, proposition, etc., does not exist in itself... but is determined by the ideological positions brought into play in the socio-historical process in which words, expressions, and propositions are introduced" (p. 101). In this respect, Whorf believes that language shapes a person's ideas. He assumes that the linguistic system "is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but is itself the shaper of ideas" (1958, p. 209).

Fowler is also a linguist who springs to mind when we deal with language and ideology. In his view, it is erroneous to assume that language is innocent or that "the world has a natural structure from which language draws its meanings passively" (1986, p. 24). He claims that the structural form of any text "constitutes a representation of a world, characterized by activities and states and values". In other words, whether the text is a novel, poem, or cultural text, in Fowler's view it is "a communicative interaction between its producer and its consumers" (1986, p. 84).
3. Approaches to Cultural Pedagogy

3.a. The Thematic Approach

In a thematic analysis of Eisenhower's “The Chance for Peace” speech, most learners are likely to focus on the speech's key content and strive to understand topic sentences. Unaware of language intricacies, EFL students will probably interpret the writer's assumptions as common sense or given issues. My contention is that learners are likely to see President Eisenhower, in this text, only as a defender of peace and freedom around the world. They may at face value interpret his speech as a neutral comment on the value of peace and the folly of war. The president's speech seems to create a powerful impression of US flexibility and conciliation. It also seems to show the Eisenhower’s desire not only to save peace but also to build his reputation as a champion of peace, a keen advocate of freedom and a “soldier” for global harmony and democracy. Such an approach, however, pays scant attention to covert linguistic devices or to implicit and unstated ideas. Therefore, by relying on it, EFL learners will ignore the importance of discoursal tools such as 'Theme' and 'Rheme', and the speech's foregrounded parallel structures.

The negative side of this method is that it encourages learners to act as passive receptors of information and prevents them from seeing through the text or deconstructing its ideology. There is, then, a risk of cultural indoctrination and brainwashing if students' understanding of cultural texts is based only on a thematic approach. To sensitize learners to the subtle workings of ideology, the paper suggests alternative approaches.

3.b. The Censorial Approach

Among the methods the Arab world most frequently employs to draw a learner’s attention to the interconnectedness of culture and ideology is the 'censorial' approach. The rationale here is that it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to benefit from the fruits of western culture without importing some shortcomings. Learners exposed to western culture, it is claimed, become discontented, reject their own culture, change their habits, their way of thinking and even perhaps their religious faith. Advocates of this approach, like Galtung (1980), assert that exposing learners to a foreign culture involves in some respects the acquisition of a second identity. Some educationists hold that learning about a foreign culture may lead to psychological crisis and feelings of frustration and loneliness. From an African perspective, moreover, Ngugi's theory supports Galtung's view that learning about a foreign culture represents a threat to learner stability rather than an enriching asset. Ngugi maintains (1985) that "political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control its tools of self-definition in relationship to others" (p. 289).

Defenders of the censorial approach make even further claims. Muslim scholars, for example, argue that the assumptions of western civilization are the antithesis of Islamic principles. The western model of moral permissiveness and the degradation of its secular thought, they see, represent a direct threat to the basic beliefs of a Muslim society.

Interpreting culture from this viewpoint tends to reduce learners to passive receptors and culture studies to an occasion for imperialist enemies to shape mental structures and inflict their ideologies via the power of language. In my view, it would be imprudent to turn a blind eye to
the close relationship between culture and ideology. However, the real challenge in revealing this link is not censorship. This authoritarian view of culture fails to show how learners can equip themselves with tools to deconstruct ideology, protect their identity and resist political and cultural brainwashing. More important, rejecting the idea of exposing learners to western culture or controlling its content will in no way sensitize students to the workings of ideology in cultural texts. This is because learners in any case are in contact with western values, not mainly through university textbooks but through the cinema, music, magazines and the Internet.

3.c. Towards Sensitizing Students to the Working of Ideology and Encouraging "Healthy Criticism"

The real issue, as the paper attempts to show, is not to avoid exposure to a foreign culture but to face it and provide EFL learners with appropriate linguistic tools. Once equipped with effective discourse patterns and "critical language awareness" (Fairclough, 1992), they can decode the "powerful unsaid" of language (Volosinov, 1973) and deconstruct ideology.

It seems obvious from this statement that knowledge of foreign language intricacies, together with language awareness, can play a key role in helping learners to decode ideological messages concealed in a text. This implies that, without understanding language as discourse, learners "cannot understand the systematic ways in which the western developed countries have been able to manage and control, and in many ways, even create the third world politically, economically, sociologically and culturally" (Escobar, 1985, p. 384). For his part, Fairclough (1992) stresses the importance of a learner's critical reading and language awareness in uncovering the ideological messages of the "topdog" or writer. He also points out that "ideologies are embedded in features of discourse which are taken for granted as matters of common sense" (p. 66).

It is my view, therefore, that any text analysis or teaching about cultural issues should be learner-centered. Instructors should play the role of monitor to guide learners and help them to decode the writer's hidden messages. Hence, the best road to a learner awareness of the relationship between culture and ideology is not by having texts censored or being spoon-fed. A more suitable strategy would be to avoid accumulating information as "superior knowledge", as Scholes puts it (1985, p. 16), maintaining that the role of a learner is to challenge any propositional knowledge and to resist the writer's ideological assumptions. He states:

"In an age of manipulation when our students are in dire need of critical strength to resist the continuing assaults of all the media, the worst thing we can do is to foster in them an attitude of reverence before texts".

The central point of interest so far has been that a certain dimension of language awareness is essential for EFL learners to see how ideologies are permeated through language. Theoretical knowledge about language, however, is not sufficient and cannot enable a learner to meet brainwashing and decode the implicit messages in cultural texts.

Even when learners may be aware of the danger and pressures of language, they remain powerless and they lack the practical skill to dismantle political discourse. Therefore, while recognizing that language awareness as advocated by Norman Fairclough is helpful in some
respect to learners, the present paper claims that there are more discoursal tools that could lend themselves to a more appropriate manner to our corpus.

Since language awareness is theoretical, discourse analysis seems to be a more efficient and practical way of challenging language practices. To sensitize EFL learners to the workings of ideology and help them question "taken for granted" assumptions, their theoretical understanding of language should be supplemented with a practical analysis of the language strategies. In other words, access to linguistic tools will empower the learner to examine the "textness"/"texture" of texts and to look at obvious and "given" assumptions in a critical way. This implies that a learner, equipped with more effective discoursal tools, will no longer play the role of an "undergog" or a model reader. Henceforward, a learner will be able to challenge the ideological content of cultural texts and unravel cultural brainwashing.

In the above theoretical part, the paper attempted to look at cultural texts as ways of permeating ideology and changing opinions of the addressee or reader. The paper also attempted to describe in general terms how linguistic tools can help students unravel some of the strands of discourse and decode the ideological assumptions of the writer.

Now, the paper will apply this theory to excerpts from a speech by the US president Dwight D. Eisenhower entitled “The Chance for Peace”. The terminology adopted here has been suggested by the Prague School of Linguistics. The discoursal tools that the paper applies to the present corpus are: 'Theme', 'Rheme' and 'Foregrounding' in order to show how they are used in political language as a means of persuasion and permeating ideology. Throughout an examination of particular situations where ideology is crucial, the paper will underscore the role of a learner to read between the lines and uncover the hidden or implicit message of the writer.

Study - Case : Excerpts from Dwight D. Eisenhower’s speech :

“The Chance for Peace”:

Excerpt one:

The world knows that an era ended with the death of Joseph Stalin. The extraordinary 30-year span of his rule saw the Soviet Empire expand to reach from the Baltic Sea to the Sea of Japan, finally to dominate 800 million souls. This free world knows, out of the bitter wisdom of experience, that vigilance and sacrifice are the price of liberty. It knows that the defense of Western Europe imperatively demands the unity of purpose and action made possible by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, embracing a European Defense community. It knows that Western Germany deserves to be a free and equal partner in this community and that this, for Germany, is the only safe way to full, final unity. It knows that aggression in Korea and in southeast Asia are threats to the whole free community to be met by united action. (My italics)

Excerpt Two:

I know of nothing I can add to make plainer the sincere purpose of the United States. I know of no course, other than that marked by these and similar actions, that can be called the highway of peace. I know of only one question upon which progress waits. It is this: What is the Soviet Union ready to do? ( My italics)
Excerpt Three:

In the light of these principles the citizens of the United States defined the way they proposed to follow, through the aftermath of war, toward true peace. This way was faithful to the spirit that inspired the United Nations: To prohibit strife, to relieve tensions, to banish fears. This way was to control and to reduce armaments. This way was to allow all nations to devote their energies and resources to the great and good tasks of healing the war’s wounds, of clothing and feeding and housing the needy, of perfecting a just political life, of enjoying the fruits of their own free toil. The Soviet government held a vastly different vision of the future. (My italics)

Comment:

President Eisenhower's political language in this speech is not just a discourse of objective or innocent description but one of persuasion, brainwashing and action. The ideology here is founded on a certain belief about what is inevitable, namely Peace through cold war."

Throughout the speech, the president's discourse is built on the reader's presupposed acceptance of the "given" or "taken for granted" information. The given elements ('The world knows', 'It knows') in the first excerpt assumes the prior consent of the reader and suggests that the information it communicates is already taken for granted and not conveyed as fresh ideas. Repetition of the same structure suggests that president Eisenhower is including the addressee as someone who will react as if the president’s statements embody taken for granted assumptions. It is worth noting, too, that Eisenhower is not speaking only of and for himself but also on behalf of American citizens nationwide as if they accept that they have a common interest to defend, namely true peace. In other words, Eisenhower is making an implicit authority claim to articulate on people’s behalf his personal perception of peace.

Close discourse analysis of the speech also shows that there are many foregrounded groupings of lexical items resulting from deviance from the normal language code. The most obvious method of foregrounding here is parallelism, where some structural features are held constant while other lexical items are varied. In excerpt two, the structure and some words are repeated creating a parallel structure which is a repetition of ' I know of '. In this example the parallel meaning, promoted by the parallel structure, is obvious because of the similarity in meaning of the two words involved.

A more restricted method of foregrounding in the speech is repetition. In excerpt three, for example, there is repetition of the paradigm ' this way ' in three successive lines which makes the contextual meaning stand out. By inference, the learner is indeed intended to conclude that, in opposition to the Soviet Union, the United States is striving to move the world toward true peace and freedom. It should be obvious, from such foregrounded features, that Eisenhower’s discourse constitutes a powerful and sobering comment. But it would be wrong for the learner to assume that the speech is a call for freedom, universal peace and disarmament. The real goal, in my view, is the achievement of power superiority at all costs over the Soviet government, which, it is said, holds a vastly different vision of the future. Eisenhower’s speech, in fact, consolidates not the discourse of peace but rather the rhetoric of war, victory, security and superiority. The meaning of peace has been distorted and used to justify all sorts of violence and belligerence. Hence, Eisenhower’s words are uniquely nuanced and aimed at cultural indoctrination and political brainwashing, since he is striving to persuade Americans nationwide to see no contradiction between pursuing peace and waging war.
In other words, the definite article in Eisenhower’s “The Chance for Peace” makes it obvious that he has violated the meaning of 'peace' and has cunningly used the word as a weapon of cold war. Thus he has entwined the rhetoric of peace and the rhetoric of cold war, doubtless to legitimize the use of nuclear weapons, persuade Americans that war is a way of achieving perpetual peace, and crucially accuse Russia of being fully responsible for condemning the world to a life of perpetual fear and tension.

Conclusion

This paper is based on technical terms and linguistic tools suggested by The Prague School of Linguistics. It is worth noting, however, that terms such as Given and New have been developed by Halliday and Matthiessen in An Introduction to Functional Grammar (2004). But, because the scope of the paper does not allow for a broader coverage, the main intention was to start and stimulate discussion about the importance and usefulness, for the learner, of linguistic or discoursal tools in the analysis of cultural texts and deconstructing politically-constructed identities.

About the author:

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References


Students and Teachers of Engineering Speak Out! What do you really need?

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to determine the English language needs of the Faculty of Engineering and its undergraduate students at the British University in Egypt in order to help the English Department enhance its current programme. Information was obtained from a combined quantitative-qualitative approach in which questionnaire surveys of teachers and students were followed by a round of interviews of students and a set of teachers. The findings of the study have shown that a) there is a need to prioritize speaking and writing skills and b) to incorporate a number of curriculum components for each language skill in the syllabus for each English module that students would find interesting and relevant to their requirements.

Keywords: language needs; foreign language; curriculum; needs analysis
1. Introduction

This study examines the English language needs of engineering students and their engineering faculty at the British University in Egypt (BUE). The purpose of writing and submitting such a paper is that although needs analysis is claimed to be a very important part in the process of curriculum planning in second and foreign language learning, few studies have been conducted in the Arab world on this topic. Therefore, this paper adds to the findings of studies by presenting evidence to show that besides equipping students with the right skills, English classes should be more specifically related to the degree area. The findings may prove to be beneficial for language teachers, curriculum planners and materials writers in other universities and institutions worldwide.

2. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

An important development in English Language Teaching which came into focus during the 1960s is the introduction of English for Specific Purposes. ESP has become a recognised and lively branch of ELT which has had considerable influence in the area of syllabus design and materials development. The term ESP refers to situations where the learner of English has some specific reason for wanting to learn the language. For example, an engineer needs English to be able to read textbooks about his subject, write reports and to keep up-to-date with new developments in his specialised field. Therefore, we can say that ESP focuses on the learner and the reasons why he requires the target language. More importantly, the learners' course of study is initiated after their needs have been analysed and identified. The same arguments are expressed in Munby (1978).

The theory of communicative competence brought about a new dimension in the field of English Language Teaching. It was a theory which has had considerable influence on ESP. Robinson (1991:22) in agreement with Widdowson (1978) says:

One important reason for the development of ESP was the realisation by those involved in teaching English as a foreign language that, while students might be acquiring some knowledge of English usage through EGP classes, they had not actually learned to use the language in the specialised contexts of work or study.

What Robinson is referring to follows on from Hymes's view of communicative competence, that is, the language we speak and write varies according to the context in which it is used. Therefore, we need to know more about the language learners’ needs in order to develop their ability to be communicatively competent. This view has had an outstanding effect on the fact that there are important differences between say, the English of business studies and that of engineering. With this new insight into language teaching it is now possible to design courses for specific groups of learners based on features of learners’ needs. By introducing the learners of English to texts within their field of knowledge will motivate and interest learners. They will be able to see the relevance of the material in relation to their immediate and future needs.

According to Gillet (1996) “ESP courses are based on a needs analysis which aims to specify as closely as possible exactly what it is that students have to do through the medium of English.” More importantly, the learners’ course of study is initiated after their needs have been analysed and identified. Richterich (1984, p.29) states that “… a need does not exist independent
of a person. It is people who build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment.” After all, it is the students who are going to learn and use the language. Therefore, showing students that teachers are taking their needs into consideration will motivate them to learn the language. Dörnyei (2001, p.8) emphasises that “motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it.”

Richards, Platt J., and Platt H. (1992, pp. 242 & 243) state that Needs Analysis is “the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities.” Needs analysis can help students awaken their awareness of what they need, the teacher to adapt his/her teaching accordingly, for teachers to develop or look for material to suit students’ needs and for faculties and departments to plan and adapt their current programmes. Unfortunately, since the needs of learners in the Arab world are seldom or never analysed, but rather perceived for them (Johns, 1991) there is a lack of published studies conducted in the Arab world on this topic.

3. The Setting

English is the medium of instruction at the BUE. The English Department acts as a support centre for all students in the different faculties and departments. All students have to take English. There are six faculties, namely, Faculty of Business Administration, Economics and Political Science (BAEPS) Engineering, Informatics & Computer Science, Nursing, Pharmacy and Dentistry with numerous specialisation areas.

There are four levels of English on the Preparatory Year: Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advanced and Advanced Writing. The Advanced and Advanced Writing modules are compulsory for all students to take.

The University also offers a Foundation Programme for those students whose English language is not yet ready for them to enter the Preparatory Year. This is a one-year programme which allows students to study twenty hours a week to enable them to develop their English language skills. Students will progress to the Preparatory Year upon passing the Foundation Programme and obtaining a score of 120 (i.e Intermediate) on the English Placement Test.

4. Aim of the study:

The main aim of the study was to provide data concerning the English language needs of undergraduate engineering students and their faculty at the BUE to help the English Department enhance its current English programme.

5. Research methodology

5.1 Subjects

Ninety three students learning English as a foreign language from the Faculty of Engineering comprising six departments: Petroleum 57 (61.3%), Architecture 5 (5.4%), Civil 11 (11.8%), Mechanical 13 (14%), Electrical and Communications 7 (7.5%) and 26 teaching staff participated in the completion of the questionnaire. The teaching staff was from the three above named departments: Petroleum 1 (3.8%), Architecture 4 (15.4%), Civil 8 (30.8%), Mechanical 5
(19.2%), Electrical and Communications 5 (19.2%) and Basic Sciences 3 (11.5%) The students were from degree years one (after the preparatory year) two and three.

Fourteen engineering students and 6 lecturers participated in the semi-structured interviews. Students were selected according to their faculty, the English module they were in and the grade obtained for English. One lecturer from the departments of Petroleum, Architecture, Civil, Mechanical, Electrical & Communications and Basic Sciences was invited to take part in the interviews. Lecturers were selected randomly. While interviewed students were representing the students in the Faculty of Engineering, lecturers were speaking on behalf of their departments. It was also possible to compare teacher responses to look for commonalities and compare them with the student findings.

6. Data collection instruments

To obtain a strong overall needs analysis a combination of four information-gathering procedures have been used: 1) a questionnaire for students; 2) a questionnaire for teachers; 3) a semi-structured interview for students and 4) a semi-structured interview for teachers. As stated by Brown (1995, p. 52) “multiple sources of information should be used in a needs analysis.”

6.1 Student and teacher questionnaires

Two questionnaires were devised and used in order to obtain data for this study: a questionnaire for students and a questionnaire for teaching staff. The questionnaire for students contained 24 questions divided into six sections. The topics were: background information, importance of English, overall skills level, curriculum components, additional information about the course book, writing components, and contact hours as well as one open-ended question. The teacher questionnaire consisted of 22 questions which paralleled those of the students’ version with an additional 2 open-ended questions. The student questionnaire was piloted on a group of intermediate level preparatory year students and was modified as required prior to being administered on the subjects for the research.

6.2 Student and teacher semi-structured interviews

Four interview questions were devised for the selected students and lecturers to help complement the quantitative research findings. The students’ questions which paralleled those of the lecturers are as follows:

1. What kind of reading material would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
2. What kind of writing tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
3. What kind of speaking tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?
4. How can the English Department help you to make more progress in your degree area?

7. Data collection procedures

The investigation consisted of four stages. For the initial stage, the questionnaire was administered to all the students by two of the researchers towards the end of Semester during their regular English class time. The students who were present on the day the questionnaire was administered took part in the completion of the instrument. For the second stage, the teacher
questionnaire was sent electronically to all teaching staff, including teaching assistants, in the Faculty of Engineering. Those who were willing to assist completed the questionnaire. The third and fourth stages of data elicitation were the interviews. Two semi-structured interview techniques were used as a second instrument for the present study. The interviews were conducted during the regular working hours of the university and over the period of three weeks. Students and lecturers were contacted and appointments were made. Individual interviews were audio-taped.

8. Data Analysis

8.1. Questionnaires

The data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed by means of using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 13.0). The analytical procedure consisted of running frequencies, and descriptive statistics. The Chi-squares test was also conducted whenever appropriate. $P$-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

8.2. Interviews

The data collected through interviews was analysed by using content analysis technique. Based on this analysis, responses were categorised according to each question. At the end of the analysis, there was one complete table for each student and lecturer illustrating the responses to the question.

9. Results & discussion

9.1. Student & Teacher Questionnaires

9.1.1. How important is English for your degree area and work field?

The student and teacher’s questionnaires have two questions concerning the importance of English. Question 1 (Q) concerns the importance of English for the student’s degree area, while Q.2 examines the importance of English for the student’s work field. With regard to the former question, the majority of students 90 (96.8%), and all the teaching staff 26, (100%) perceived English to be either very important or important to the student’s degree area. There were similar findings to the latter question as 88 (95.6%) students and all teaching staff 26 (100%) believe that English is very important or important for the students’ work field.

9.1.2. How would you rate writing, reading, listening and speaking skills from 1 – 4 to your degree area?

The aim of Q.3 was to determine which of the four language skills is considered by students and teaching staff to be most essential for their faculty. The students and teaching staff were asked to rank the four skills from 1 to 4, where 4 is the most important skill and 1 is the least important. The results of the descriptive analysis of the data (See Tables 1 & 2) showed that speaking and writing are considered to be the most important skills for the students of engineering followed by reading and listening respectively. The findings for the teaching staff reveal a similar picture with regard to the former two skills as they also believe that speaking and writing should also take priority followed by the other two skills in reverse order.
engineering students are required in their faculty to give effective oral presentations, the ability to write technical reports and research projects.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Data for Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate writing skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.9570</td>
<td>.94310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate reading skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.6129</td>
<td>1.15186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate listening skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.6022</td>
<td>1.11453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate speaking skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.2903</td>
<td>.95075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Data for Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate writing skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.1154</td>
<td>1.14287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate reading skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.8846</td>
<td>1.21085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate listening skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>1.05830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate speaking skills to the degree area?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.3846</td>
<td>.85215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.1.3. How satisfied are you with your language level?

In response to Q.4 which asked about the degree of satisfaction with the students’ language level 72 (77.4%) students indicated that they are satisfied to some degree. With regard to the teaching staff, although 16 (61.5%) claim to be satisfied, 10 (38.5%) stated that they are not really satisfied or not satisfied at all. The results of the Chi-square test demonstrate that students are more satisfied with their language level than the teaching staff is.

9.1.4. Does your language level affect your learning in your degree area?

Just over 70% (66/93) of students and 53.9% (14/26) of teaching staff stated that the language level of the students affects the learning in the degree area to some extent. There is, however, a significant difference between the number of students 21 (22.6%) and teaching staff 12 (46.2%) who believe otherwise (P<0.02, OR=2.94). This finding indicates that not all teaching staff believes that the students’ language level affects the learning of subjects in the degree area. One possible reason for this is that modules orientated towards numbers may be seen as requiring a lower level of English language proficiency than those that are more text-based.

9.1.5. How would you rank yourself in the following skills?

Questions 6-12 of the Student’s Questionnaire asked students to rank themselves in various skills areas. In addition, the teaching staff, were asked to rate the problems students have with these skills in their faculty (Qs 7-13 of the teacher questionnaire). Differences can be noted in the relative ratings of skills by students and teaching staff (See Table 3). The results indicate that with all the skills students perceive themselves to be at a higher level than the teaching staff regards them to be. Along similar lines, in a study conducted by Zaghoul & Hussein (1985) results showed that students tended to overestimate their abilities in the different language skills.

In addition, with regard to Q.6 of the teacher questionnaire, teaching staff were asked to rate the language problems of students in their faculty. Of the 26 teaching staff, 10 (38.5%) believe that over 50% of students have problems with English whereas 16 (61.5%) indicated that less than 50% of students have problems. There may be a number of possible reasons for this finding, such as, whether the content of modules is orientated towards numbers or text-based, the educational backgrounds of the students (i.e. IGCSE, American Diploma and Thenawee Amaa) and the students’ language proficiency which varies greatly amongst them.
Table 3. A Comparison Between Students & Teaching Staff Rating of Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Percentage of 93 students’ ratings from good to excellent</th>
<th>Percentage of 26 teaching staff ratings of 50% or more students that have problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking (oral presentations, short talks &amp; group discussions)</td>
<td>49 (52.7%)</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking relevant and clear questions in lectures &amp; tutorials</td>
<td>54 (58.1%)</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to academic lectures</td>
<td>75 (80.6%)</td>
<td>17 (65.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading academic texts</td>
<td>63 (67.7%)</td>
<td>16 (61.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing academic English</td>
<td>50 (53.7%)</td>
<td>11 (42.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes during academic lectures and tutorials</td>
<td>57 (61.3%)</td>
<td>9 (34.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes from reading texts</td>
<td>54 (58.1%)</td>
<td>8 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.1.6. Choose three components for each skill (reading, writing, listening & speaking) which you consider to be the ‘most important’ to your academic studies and future profession?

Regarding the importance of academic skills to the English modules, students and teaching staff were asked to choose three curriculum components for each skill (reading, writing, speaking and listening) which they consider to be the ‘most important’ for their academic studies and future profession. Results have shown that there is agreement in the responses of students and teaching staff for more than half the number of these skills components (See Table 4). The results clearly indicate that students and teaching staff believe that these skills should be incorporated in the syllabus for each English module. In particular, attention should be given to those skills that have been rated by 60% or more of students and teaching staff. For example: reading academic texts, writing technical reports, giving oral presentations, listening to course lectures and to oral presentations.
Table 4. A Comparison Between Students & Teaching Staff Ranking of Curriculum components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Student (n=93)</th>
<th>Teacher (n=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reading texts</td>
<td>59 (63.4%)</td>
<td>21 (80.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reading texts</td>
<td>28 (30.1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical vocabulary</td>
<td>47 (50.5%)</td>
<td>13 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>32 (34.4%)</td>
<td>11 (42.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction booklets</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 (38.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11 (42.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical reports</td>
<td>67 (72.0%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV’s</td>
<td>30 (32.3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing diagrams/charts/processes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11 (42.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical vocabulary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9 (34.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12 (46.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving oral presentations</td>
<td>66 (71.0%)</td>
<td>24 (94.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class discussions</td>
<td>34 (36.6%)</td>
<td>10 (38.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with lecturers &amp; TA’s</td>
<td>30 (32.3%)</td>
<td>8 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking at conferences and seminars</td>
<td>30 (32.3%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving opinions/suggestions/ideas</td>
<td>34 (36.6%)</td>
<td>10 (38.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To course lectures</td>
<td>63 (67.7%)</td>
<td>21 (80.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class discussions</td>
<td>47 (50.5%)</td>
<td>14 (53.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To lectures &amp; TA’s communicating</td>
<td>45 (48.4%)</td>
<td>14 (53.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In tutorials</td>
<td>29 (31.2%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To presentations</td>
<td>62 (66.7%)</td>
<td>18 (69.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only 30% or more of students & teaching staff who considered these components to be important have been included.

9.1.7. *To what extent do you think your English course has helped you in your degree area?*

Question 17 asked students to rate the extent to which they think their English course has helped them in their degree area. The results showed that 68 (73.1%) believe it has helped them to some degree. Although the teaching staff was not asked this specific question, a total of 10/26 (38.5%) claim not to be satisfied with the students language level (See 9.1.3).

9.1.8. *In your opinion, is the content of the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

In response to Q.18 which enquired as to whether or not students think their course book is interesting and relevant to their degree area, the results are shown in Table 5. The selected course books and material do not focus on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that is, English for Engineering Students. There are no specific course books for the Advanced and Advanced Writing modules. Therefore, this question relates to the material that is selected and used by teachers. Although a number of students chose ‘Yes’ indicating that the course book and materials are interesting to some degree, in contrast to this, others have responded ‘No’. In addition, some students wrote comments on the questionnaire stating that they are not relevant to their degree area indicating that course books and materials should be relevant to the engineering field.

**Table 5. Is the Content of the Course Book/Selected Material Interesting and Relevant to Your Degree Area?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17 (73.9)</td>
<td>6 (26.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Intermediate</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17 (53.1)</td>
<td>15 (46.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 (37.5)</td>
<td>10 (62.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Writing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10 (45.5)</td>
<td>12 (54.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = No answer

9.1.9. *Are the reading topics in the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?*

Question 19 of the student’s questionnaire concerns the interest and relevance of the reading topics in the course book for the Intermediate and Upper Intermediate modules and the selected reading material by teachers for the Advanced and Advanced Writing Modules. As shown in Table 6, there is a consistent pattern that has emerged with regard to the number of students that responded ‘No’ for the Upper Intermediate, Advanced and Advanced Writing
Modules. Responses indicate a need for teachers to incorporate reading topics that are relevant to the students’ subject-matter studies.

**Table 6.** Are the Reading Topics in the Course Book/Selected Material Interesting and Relevant to Your Degree Area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15 (65.2)</td>
<td>8 (34.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Intermediate</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9 (28.1)</td>
<td>23 (71.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3 (18.8)</td>
<td>13 (81.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Writing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10 (45.5)</td>
<td>12 (54.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = No answer

**9.1.10. Are writing paragraphs and essays such as the following interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

Both questionnaires (Qs 18 & 20) elicited opinions from students and teaching staff as to whether they thought the writing components listed for each of the English modules are interesting and relevant to the students’ degree area. As shown in Table 7 more than 50% of students and teaching staff have responded positively to the majority of the writing components. However, there is a significant statistical difference for the descriptive paragraph and essay which indicates that students believe this to be of more interest and relevance to the degree area than the teaching staff (P<0.02, OR=4.75). Significant differences can also be found with the narrative paragraph/essay as only 2 (7.7%) of the teaching staff in comparison to 14 (60.9%) students (<0.00008, OR=18.67) have answered positively to this component. Furthermore, although only 7 (31.8%) of the advanced writing students gave a positive response to the problem and solution research paper, there is a significant statistical difference among students and teaching staff (<0.000003, OR=53.57) as the latter perceive it to be more relevant to their faculty than the students.

**Table 7. Are Writing Paragraphs and Essays Such as the Following Interesting and Relevant to Your Degree Area?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No. of Lecturer &amp; TA's</th>
<th>No. (%) positive</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>No. (%) positive</th>
<th>P-values [OR]¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive paragraph &amp; essay</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13 (50)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19 (82.6)</td>
<td>P&lt;0.02 [4.75]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative paragraph &amp;</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2 (7.7)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14 (60.9)</td>
<td>&lt;0.000008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is the vocabulary in the course book/selected material relevant and helpful to your degree area?

The aim of Q.21 of the Student’s Questionnaire was to elicit from students whether or not the vocabulary in the course books and from the selected material is relevant and helpful to their degree area. Although a higher percentage of students for the majority of modules responded ‘Yes’ to this question, it needs to be stated that a number of students also gave written comments stating that the vocabulary is helpful to their everyday life, but not for their degree area (See Table 8). With regard to the teaching staff, a total of 23 (88.5%) indicated that technical vocabulary related to engineering would be more relevant and helpful to students and their faculty.

**Table 8. Is the Vocabulary in the Course Book/Selected Material Relevant and Helpful to Your Degree Area?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14 (60.9)</td>
<td>9 (39.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Intermediate</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15 (46.9)</td>
<td>17 (53.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10 (62.5)</td>
<td>6 (37.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Writing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12 (54.5)</td>
<td>10 (45.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = No answer
9.1.12. Is the listening material in the course book interesting and relevant to your degree area?

Results for Q.22 of the Student Questionnaire deal with assessing the listening material in the course books. The Advanced and Advanced Writing Modules have not been included since they do not focus on developing the skill of listening. 17 (73.9%) Intermediate and 18 (56.3%) Upper Intermediate students believe the listening material to be interesting and useful for developing this skill. As for the teaching staff, they believe that listening material should focus on scientific and technical material, listening at conferences and seminars, to oral presentations, discussions, documentaries, professional meetings and the language of negotiation.

9.1.13. In your opinion are the contact hours for this course (i.e. 48) sufficient to help you improve your language proficiency?

The next two questions for both questionnaires (Q.21, 22, 23 & 24) concern the contact hours for the English modules. As many as 70 (75.3%) students and 19 (73.1%) teaching staff believe that 48 teaching sessions per semester is sufficient to enable students to develop their language proficiency. One possible reason for this finding is that students are required to take English modules alongside their degree area subjects. This puts a heavy load on their shoulders. Therefore, students would not welcome more contact hours for English. As for the teaching staff they may be concerned that if more English sessions were to be given it would be at the expense of the degree area modules.

9.1.14. In your opinion, do you benefit more from the one hour or two hour teaching session?

Both questionnaires (Q.24 & 22) asked students and teaching staff to give their opinions as to whether students benefit more from the one or two hour teaching session. The results clearly demonstrated that 55 (59.1%) students are in favour of the one hour session whereas 16 (61.5%) teaching staff believes two hours is more beneficial.

9.1.15. In your opinion, how can the English Department help students make the necessary progress in their degree area?

The last consideration of the questionnaires for the needs analysis was to elicit the opinions of students and teaching staff as to how the English Department can help students make the necessary progress in their degree area. Among the responses of 30% or more students were: developing speaking skills related to degree area, 34 (36.6%) introducing and developing technical writing (including technical reports) and technical vocabulary, 71 (76.3%) class discussions/debates and oral presentation skills, 42 (45.2%). With regard to the teaching staff, included in the responses were: introducing and developing technical writing and technical vocabulary 9 (35%).

In response to Q.24 of the teacher’s questionnaire which enquired about how students’ language development is picked up and reinforced in their faculty, a total of 11 (42.3%) teaching staff stated that students write technical reports and 9 (35%) give oral presentations.
10. **Interview Results**

10.1. **What kind of reading material would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

Students’ perspective

The next consideration for the needs analysis is what reading material should be emphasised in the English modules. In accordance with the findings of Table 6, the responses to Q.1 of the interview clearly demonstrate that all students (100%) believe that receiving topics related to their degree area would be interesting and relevant for them. This is how one student responded to the question: “Students should receive reading material related to the degree area. Students must see relevance of material to attend classes.” In addition, a number of students 6 (42.9%) stated that receiving interesting and age appropriate topics would help motivate them. Students’ preferences for reading topics were: the environment, geology, worldwide events, biographies, technology (power plants, engines & machines) and sports. The teachers’ findings concur with the results of the students as all teachers, 6 (100%) claim that reading material relevant to the degree area should be introduced in the English modules. One teacher stated that reading material should be relevant to the degree area modules.” This teacher goes on to say: **Engineers can provide resources to English staff.**” Furthermore, 16 (61.5%) teachers believe that students have problems reading academic texts (See Table 3). The following subject-related topics were elicited from teachers: new technology, inventions, electricity, understanding assignment sheets, historical sciences, historical mathematics, National Geographic and simple science articles. One teacher also mentioned introducing authentic reading material on worldwide issues. In accordance with this finding, Edwards (2000) ESP case study demonstrates that authentic materials are appreciated by students and instrumental in motivating them.

10.2. **What kind of writing tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?**

Students and teachers are in agreement that writing technical reports, CVs, developing research and writing skills are important components for their faculty. These findings concur with those of 9.1.15 above as 71 (76.3%) students stated introducing and developing technical writing skills (including technical reports) would help them make more progress in their degree area. In a study conducted by Abu-Rizaizah (2005) in Saudi Arabia, the results demonstrated that report writing is the most common activity for engineers in communications. One interviewed student in this current study highlights this by saying: “Paragraph and essay writing is not helpful for engineers. We need to develop skills involved in report writing.” This is what another student had to say: “Focus on students writing needs and help them develop this skill.” This interviewed teacher’s response is in accordance with the students. “Technical report writing is more useful for the degree area and the work field. It should be introduced from the Preparatory Year.” Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, 11 (42.3%) teaching staff expressed that students have problems writing academic English.
10.3. What kind of speaking tasks would you find interesting and relevant to your degree area?

The emerging patterns for Q.4 of the interviews indicate that there are a number of speaking tasks that students would find interesting and relevant to their degree area. Amongst these giving oral presentation have been rated highly by students (92.9%) and teaching staff (100%). This student believes that English modules should: “Help students develop their oral presentations skills.” Similarly, interviewed teachers also mentioned that: “Oral presentation skills need to be introduced in all English modules.” Developing communications skills have also been rated highly by 85.7% of students and 83.3% teaching staff, while 57.1% of students stated class discussions and debates and 50% teaching staff.

In accordance with this finding, giving oral presentations has been rated highly by both students and teaching staff (See Table 4). Also, in response to the last question of the student questionnaire, 42 (45.2%) students stated that developing presentation and speaking skills (i.e. through class discussions and debates) would help them make more progress in the degree area (See 9.1.15 above).

10.4. How can the English Department help you to make more progress in your degree area?

Question 4 of the interview attempted to elicit what students think the English Department can do to help them make more progress in their degree area. The results show that there are similarities in perspective between the students and teachers as both groups have identified three important factors which are: 1) motivation; 2) developing speaking skills in all English modules and 3) the English Placement Test.

10.4.1. Motivation

An important factor that can have a detrimental affect on the motivation of a student is the Module-Specific Components, which are related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, and the learning tasks. Ten (71.4%) students and all interviewed teachers, 6 (100%) mentioned that there should be a connection between what students take in English and Engineering modules. Among the motivational factors elicited from the students and teachers were: make the classes interesting, meaningful and relevant to the degree area, that is, incorporate reading material, speaking and listening tasks as well as writing topics that are appropriate to student and faculty needs. One interviewed student expressed his opinion on this issue by saying: “If English classes are not interesting and do not relate to modules in the degree area students will not attend.” In accordance with this, one teacher stated: “It is important to make classes attractive, interesting and relevant to the degree area.”

10.4.2. Speaking Skills

While students and teaching staff rated speaking skills to be the most important skill for students of Engineering (See Tables 1 & 2), half the number of teaching staff (that took part in the completion of the questionnaires) stated that 50% or more students have problems with this skill (See Table 3). While some students mentioned that it is possible to pass English modules without enhancing speaking skills, the majority are in agreement that all English modules should allocate sufficient time to developing this important skill. One student highlights this by saying:
“More emphasis should be on speaking skills.” Furthermore, students stressed the need for developing oral fluency, a British accent and as one student stated: “A need for the BUE to employ British academic staff so that teachers will not be able to speak Arabic and students will be discouraged to do so.” Teaching staff also agreed that: “Students should be encouraged to speak in English with teachers and classmates.”

10.4.3. Placement Test

Nine (64.3%) students and 2 (33.3%) teachers raised concern over the English Placement Test which students sit upon entry to the BUE and are placed in one of the English levels according to the score they obtain. The English Placement Test consists of two components: Listening and Grammar. Students expressed their concern with the components of this test as expressed by this student: “There are problems with the test. There is no speaking and writing components. Students are misplaced.” The same concern is also illustrated in this teacher’s comment: “Students in English modules have been misplaced.” Both students and teachers believe that writing and speaking components should be added to the English Placement Test to determine the students’ overall language proficiency and to ensure correct placement in one of the four English levels at the outset.

11. Conclusion

This research paper has been an attempt to describe the English language needs of engineering students and the Faculty of Engineering and to draw the attention of policy makers, curriculum planners, materials designers and language teachers to the need of not only equipping the students with the language skills they regard to be the most important, but also to support the need for English modules to be more specifically related to the degree area. Relevance to the students’ needs and interests is essential as it will have an important influence on their motivation.

12. Recommendations

It is recommended that the important findings of this research be included in the English Department’s Annual Programme Review (APR) and fully implemented within the weekly plans of each module. It is also suggested that a member of the English Department is selected to work collaboratively with teaching staff identified by the Faculty of Engineering to help select content-based reading material and topics, vocabulary, writing tasks and research projects to ensure relevancy. Although students ought to be given material representative for their target language use situation, it will also be possible for teachers to select interesting and subject-related material from a variety of sources.

In addition, since lecturers and teaching assistants in the Faculty of Engineering are not English language teachers but rather specialists in the field of engineering, they can help students develop the content of their technical writing, whereas staff in the English Department can focus on developing the form (i.e. vocabulary, spelling, sentence structure, focusing on the task and organisation of ideas). This can be applicable for the writing of reports and research projects. Cooperative teaching will reduce the workload of students as less writing will be required of them which in turn should result in a higher standard of written work.
13. Limitation of the Study

This study invited all teaching staff (i.e. lecturers and teaching assistants) to take part in the completion of the questionnaire survey and one lecturer from each department in the Faculty of Engineering took part in the semi-structured interviews. The teaching assistants, however, who assist by giving the tutorials and give individual conferencing to students are an important source of information and should have been involved in the interview sessions.

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14. References


Advantages of Using Short-stories in ELT Classroom and the Libyan EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards them for Developing Reading Comprehension Skill

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Abstract

Short-stories have been the center of attraction for centuries for various people for various reasons but mainly due to fascinating pedagogical aspects embedded in them. For many ELT professionals and pedagogues, they have been important topics of debate and discussion in the recent years due to numerous pedagogical benefits and implications for developing language skills of EFL learners. The advocates of the use of the short-stories for developing language skills argue that the use of short –stories offers the material which is real, creative and rich in language selection, as well as is amusing and motivational in nature. It is also considered as a highly effective approach for teaching and learning of foreign language like English and is recommended for the same reasons by eminent intellectuals. In the background of this effectiveness of the use of short-stories for developing language skills in EFL classrooms, the present paper investigates the attitudes of the Libyan EFL learners towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill. The present status of the use of short-stories in the Libyan EFL classrooms and the researcher’s perspective on the use of short-stories in the Libyan context also form an important part of the discussion in the paper.

Keywords: Short-stories, ELT, advantages, implications, EFL teachers and learners, learners’ perceptions
1. Introduction

The role of short-stories, in developing reading comprehension skill, has been acknowledged for centuries by many ELT professionals and pedagogues. This use of short-stories has been widely discussed and recommended, particularly, in places where English is taught and learned as a foreign language. This is because of the fact that learning and mastering foreign language skills pose many problems and difficulties for EFL learners due to various reasons including the lack of target language exposure, inappropriate methodology, boring teaching and learning material used inside the classroom for developing the language skills and negative perceptions of teachers and / or learners towards any material or methodology. Therefore, scholars like Brumfit and Carter (1986) advocate the use of short-stories as one of the best methods in ELT, which a teacher can use, because of various educational aspects. According them, short-stories help to develop the language skills of the students more effectively. They are easy to finish in a class and definite to understand. Stories also attract the students’ attention more than any other normal passage. Keeping in mind the importance of such views about the use of short-stories in ELT classrooms for developing language skills, the present paper attempts to investigate the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards this use of short-stories as the learners, and their perceptions towards the use of any material or methodology, determine the success of that material and methodology in the classroom. The paper also focuses on the current status of the use of short-stories in the Libyan EFL classroom and offers the researcher’s perspective about the use of short-stories in the Libyan EFL classroom for developing reading comprehension skill.

2. Background to the study

English is a foreign language in Libya, Arabic being the only official language. It is taught as an optional subject in colleges where the focus of teaching and learning it remains on language, linguistics and translation studies. Therefore, it is not surprising that literature forms very insignificant place in the ELT curriculums. The major subjects studied by B. A. students, specializing in English, include: four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), Introduction to Linguistics, Levels of Linguistic Analysis, Major Branches of Linguistics, Introduction to Literature, Introduction to Teaching Methods and Theories and Practices in Translation .

In the first four semesters, of the eight semesters B. A. English Course, the focus remains on developing language skills which include: Listening Comprehension, Spoken English, Reading Comprehension Skill and Writing Skill; whereas in the later four semesters, they are taught other subjects, mentioned above, with just one course in Introduction to Literature. Lack of appreciation for literature, on the part of language teachers, in general, due to traditional teaching methods and the stigma attached to it as being a difficult subject, leads both teachers and students to the alienation from literature.

The materials and methodology used for teaching language skills, specially reading comprehension skill, vary from teacher to teacher as there are no prescribed text-books. This gives freedom of material selection to the course teachers. The reading comprehension skill course teachers often use a variety of texts for teaching reading comprehension skill which include: news paper articles, informative passages and varied essays and articles from various sources. It is important to note here that authentic short-stories, by distinguished English writers or writers in English, do not form a significant place in these materials selected by the course teachers. This leads many Libyan EFL learners to develop a negative attitude towards learning of
English in general. Most of them regard it as a very boring and difficult language due to the uninteresting material used. This also makes the learners dependent on the course teachers for all the activities in the class. Today the role of the communicative approach in foreign language teaching is highly recommended as it promotes learner-centered teaching, making the learners more independent, critical, logical and analytical in their thinking under minimum supervision. However, that does not seem to be the case in the Libyan ELT classrooms as neither the communicative approach is adopted nor are the learners encouraged to be self-dependent, while developing their language skills, especially reading comprehension skill.

On the one side we find the continuing debates, and research studies, recommending the use of literature, in general, and short stories, in particular, in second and foreign language education and on the other side, we find the lack of appreciation for literature on the part of the Libyan EFL teachers due to traditional teaching methods and the stigma attached to it as being a difficult subject. With this background, this paper attempts to investigate the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards literature, in general, and short stories, in particular, for developing their reading comprehension skill. It also discusses the advantages of the use of short-stories in ELT classrooms for developing the reading comprehension skill and the implications of this use of short-stories both for the Libyan EFL teachers and learners.

3. Short-stories in ELT Classroom for Developing Language Skills: Advantages and Implications

Many scholars (Bretz, 1990; Kelly, and Krishnan, 1995; Gilroy, and Parkinson, 1997; Belcher, and Hirvela, 2000; and Kim, 2004) have discussed the use of literature, in general, and short-stories, in particular, in ELT classrooms for developing language skills and recommended the use of short-stories in teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Such debates and discussions, on the role and use of short-stories in ELT classroom, have often concluded on recommending storytelling as a holistic approach to language teaching and learning. Such recommendations, according to Mourão (2009) are founded on the understanding that ‘learners need to interact with rich, authentic examples of the foreign language’ (p.17).

The use of short-stories in ELT classroom for developing language skills has many advantages and implications. Bretz (1990), while discussing the importance of the use of short-stories in foreign language teaching, illustrates that stories help to improve communicative competence by providing ‘a springboard for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation’ (P.338). Wright (2003), another champion of the use of short-stories, argues that ‘in using stories in language teaching, we are using something much bigger and more important than language teaching itself’ (p.7). Pathan (2013) classifies various benefits of the use of short-stories in EFL classroom under different categories such as: linguistic, socio-cultural, personal and emotional and discusses them in detail focusing on their possible implications for EFL teachers and learners. Mourão (2009) also offers a list of thirty advantages of the use of short-stories in ELT classrooms. According to Lazar (1993), the use of short-stories in ELT classroom offers the teaching and learning material which is motivating, authentic and has great educational value. Stories help students to understand another culture and work as a stimulus for language acquisition. They also develop students’ interpretative abilities and help in expanding their language awareness. Stories also encourage students to express their opinions and feelings and make language learning fun by bringing a bit of excitement to a classroom which can work as a change of routine and a new recipe. This is why scholars like Garvie (1990) propose that foreign language learning be led by story.
Short-stories are filled with many linguistic advantages such as simplicity of sentence structures and vocabulary used in context and make learning of foreign language skills easy and simple. They help to improve EFL learners’ vocabulary and motivate them to learn the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing more effectively. Elaborating on this linguistic aspect, Murdoch (2002) argues that stories allow instructors to teach the four language skills to all levels of language proficiency, and if selected and exploited appropriately, ‘short-stories provide quality text-content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency’ (p.9).

The controlled length of short-stories with the concise writing, with carefully selected vocabulary and lexis, is another linguistic benefit that short-stories can offer in ELT classrooms. Stories contain authentic, contextualized, natural and simple dialogues which can help EFL learners not only in understanding the usage of English in a better way but also in using these dialogues and important structures in their own life. In foreign language teaching situations like Libya, where learners often have negative attitudes towards reading in English, short-stories, quite readily, can lend themselves to capturing and holding the attention spans of learners and can help in transforming these negative attitudes into positive ones.

Collie and Slater (1991) also strongly advocate the use of short-stories in ELT classroom for developing reading comprehension skill due to various practical benefits. They also offer practical techniques and strategies for incorporating short-stories in ELT classroom in an effective and interesting way. According to them, short-stories are practical in ELT classroom as their length is long enough to cover entirely in one or two class sessions. They are not complicated for students to work with on their own and can help develop their self-dependency while learning a foreign language like English. They have a variety of choice for different interests and tastes and can be used with all levels (beginner to advanced), all ages (young learners to adults), and all classes (summer courses to evening classes).

The use of short-stories has many socio-cultural benefits as well. In the culturally sensitive contexts like Libya, they can also be the best method of inculcating cultural and moral values as stories have been the best method of transmitting values, principles, and common sense for centuries. In this regard, Kirschenbaum (1995) asserts that storytelling is ‘one of the effective tools for inculcating morality, especially for the youth, as stories contain powerful images and symbols and operate on both conscious and unconscious levels, conveying intellectual and emotional meaning’ (p.68). Pathan (2013) also elaborates this argument for the use of short-stories and stresses that ‘in the modern, culturally barren, world of today, where cultural values are degrading everyday and many evils and tribulations are infecting our young generation with unthinkable bad habits, immoral deeds, inmodest behavior and horrific crimes in their early tender age, stories can be the best method of inculcating healing cultural and moral values’ (p.24).

The stories from the Holy Quran and other Islamic stories, about the life of the Holy Prophet [peace and blessing be upon him], and his companions as well as other religious and moral stories, can be highly effective for this purpose with the Libyan Arab EFL learners. The Libyan Arab EFL learners’ familiarity, with these stories, will not only make their learning of English easy but will rejuvenate their cultural and moral values as well. Thus, stories will not only help them in developing their foreign language skills but also their moral character.

The use of short-stories has emotional benefits also for EFL learners. Stories provide language learners a picture of people, through the characters, while they are struggling and suffering which can prepare young learners to cope with the conflicts in their own life. Stories also help language
learners to release their own feeling, which is considered to be very essential for a healthy development. The use of short-stories can also help them in strengthening their creative impulses, particularly in the area of writing.

With such advantages, there is no doubt that if rightly used; short-stories will help the Libyan EFL learners in developing not only their language skills but their character as well. However, as the learners and their perceptions determine the success of any material used in the classroom; their attitudes need to be investigated before making the decision about that material. Therefore, the following section of the paper investigates the Libyan EFL learners’ perceptions towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill before recommending this use for them.

4. Libyan EFL Learners’ Perceptions towards the Use of Short-stories

4.1 Participants and Methodology

To investigate the Libyan EFL learners’ attitudes and perceptions towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill, various methods were adopted to suit the purpose of this study. 50 third semester Libyan EFL students [both male and female], doing their B. A. in English, were selected for the study. The reason, behind selecting the third semester students, was to avoid selecting only the beginners or advanced students. These students were given questionnaires to find out their initial opinions about-a) learning of English, in general, and reading comprehension skill, in particular, b) kind of material used by their course teachers to teach reading comprehension skill, and c) their perceptions towards literature, in general, and short stories, in particular, for developing reading comprehension skill. After analyzing and understanding their initial perceptions, these selected participants were taught by the researcher using short-stories as the main teaching and learning material for three months. The short-stories were selected following various criteria. They were neither too simple nor too complex for the learners; they were written both by English writers as well as by the writers in English, they were about various topics and did not go against any cultural or religious values of the Libyan Arab society.

After teaching reading comprehension skill using short-stories, following various techniques and strategies proposed by Lazar (1993) and Collie and Slater (1991), these participants were offered another questionnaire to find out-a) their attitudes towards reading comprehension skill and b) the use of short-stories for teaching reading comprehension skill in the classrooms. The data collected from both the questionnaires, offered prior and after the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill, were classified in the line with the aims of the study and analyzed to find out the results of the study and draw the appropriate conclusions. The following section of the paper focuses on this analysis, discussion and the results of the study.

4.2 Data Analysis, Discussion and Results

4.2.1 Analysis and discussion of the data of the questionnaires offered prior to the use of short-stories

The questionnaires, answered by the participants, were classified in the line with the aims of the study and their responses were analyzed to find out the details about the specified aims. The responses of the participants to the questions asked varied.
First, they were asked if they liked studying English language. To this question, almost 30 participants (60%) replied positively. They were further asked about their views about reading in English, in general, and reading comprehension skill, in particular to which only 15 participants (30%) replied positively saying that they felt comfortable with this important skill in English. The remaining 35 participants (70%) had negative attitudes towards reading comprehension skill due to various reasons. Some regarded it as the most difficult skill whereas some regarded it as a boring course. This question was essential for the purpose of the study as it aimed at investigating the initial attitudes of the Libyan EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill. The following chart reveals these initial attitudes, before the use of short-stories, of the Libyan EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill.

**Figure: 1 Initial attitudes of the Libyan EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill**

The next question was about the teaching material used by their course teachers in reading comprehension skill class. The participants replied that their course teachers used various types of material including- various reports, newspaper articles as well as other informative passages from magazines and internet, and essays etc. None of the participants mentioned the use of authentic short-stories as the teaching and learning material to develop reading comprehension skill in the Libyan EFL classrooms. These responses of the participants, thus, reveal the status of the use of short-stories in the Libyan EFL classrooms. An overview of these teaching and learning materials used in reading comprehension skill class is presented in the following figure.
They were further asked about their perceptions towards literature, in general, and short-stories, in particular. It was clear from their responses that most of them had negative attitudes towards literature, in general. They regarded it as ‘a very difficult subject’ and the subject that required ‘a lot of study’. However, most of them liked reading stories. Of the 50 selected participants, 38 participants (76%) replied that they liked to read stories but in their mother tongue Arabic only and not in English as they assumed that stories in English would be very difficult for them. 10 participants (20%) liked reading short-stories in English as well but could not find enough in the library. 2 participants (4%) did not answer. These opinions of the Libyan EFL learners towards reading stories in general are presented in the following figure.

**Figure: 3** Libyan EFL learners’ perceptions towards reading short-stories
The data obtained and analyzed from the questionnaires, administered to the Libyan EFL learners prior to the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill, offer the insight into the Libyan EFL teachers’ and learners’ general perceptions towards use of literature in general and short-stories in particular. The data also help in understanding the present status of the use of short-stories in the Libyan ELT classrooms for developing reading comprehension skill. The main findings of the analysis of the data are presented below.

1. Most of the Libyan EFL learners regard reading comprehension skill as a difficult and boring course.
2. Literature, in general, and short-stories in particular, do not form the part of teaching and learning material of reading comprehension skill.
3. Most of the Libyan EFL learners like reading stories but in their mother tongue Arabic only as they assume that stories in English are very difficult and require great proficiency on the part of learners to read them.

4.2.2 Analysis and discussion of the data of the questionnaires offered after the use of short-stories.

The selected students were offered another questionnaire after they had been taught reading comprehension skill by using short-stories. The aim of this questionnaire was to check if the initial perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards a) learning English, in general, and reading comprehension, skill, in particular and b) the use of short-stories for teaching, learning and developing reading comprehension skill were the same as before or had changed after the use of short-stories in the classroom. Their responses were classified and analyzed. The data revealed quite interesting facts about the use of short-stories in the Libyan ELT classroom for developing reading comprehension skill.

The first question, in the questionnaire, was about their perception towards the reading comprehension skill, after they had studied this skill with the use of short-stories as the main teaching and learning material. They were asked what they felt about reading comprehension skill after studying it with the use of short-stories. To this question, 47 students (94%) replied positively saying that they enjoyed reading because of the stories used in the classroom. 03 students (6%) replied negatively. The following chart shows these perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill after studying it with the use of short-stories.
These perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners, if compared with their initial attitudes towards reading comprehension skill (as specified in Figure: 1) speak a lot about the role of short-stories in transforming the negative attitudes of the Libyan EFL learners into positive ones. This also proves that short-stories can play a very important role in arousing love and liking for reading among EFL learners who often dislike this important language skill and have negative attitudes. They were further asked if they liked to be taught reading comprehension skill by using such stories by their course teachers and if so, why. They were asked to give as many reasons as possible based on the benefits they experienced from the use of short-stories in their reading comprehension skill class. Their responses to this question were positive and the reasons varied. They reported that the use of short-stories not only developed liking for reading comprehension skill among them but also helped them in guessing the meaning of the difficult words from the context as it was quite easy compared to other informative texts their teachers used. Some believed that the use of short-stories was and could be the best method to learn a foreign language like English as through stories, they could learn how the characters in the stories used English for various purposes and thus understood the usage of English in a better way. They also reported that the dialogues and narratives of the characters in the stories helped them in learning and mastering not only essential, selective vocabulary and structures but also idiomatic expressions which they needed in day to day life. Some also stressed that the use of short-stories provided them the much needed target language exposure. They believed that by reading stories in English they could overcome the problem of lack of exposure of target language in Libya as English is taught and learned here as a foreign language.

The participants also wanted the use of stories in their reading comprehension skill class because they believed that the stories they studied taught them many lessons, through the characters. The characters struggling with many conflicts and problems in their life, in the stories they studied, helped them in learning and understanding many problems in their own life in a better way. Thus, they contributed in their personal growth as they felt quite motivated after reading the stories.

They also replied that while reading stories, they imagined themselves with the characters and got involved in the stories emotionally. Sometimes they laughed and sometimes they cried with the characters in the stories as they made emotional appeal to them and helped them to release...
their own emotions with the characters and for the characters. Sometimes certain conflicts in the stories made them think that they were their own stories depicting their own emotional, personal, psychological, social, religious and political conflicts. And through stories, they learned how to face and overcome such conflicts and problems in their own life.

These various benefits experienced and reported by the Libyan EFL learners in support of the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill were classified under different categories. The details of these categories, the number of the participants, who reported these benefits of the use of short-stories, along with their percentage are tabulated below:

Table: 1 Various benefits of the use of short-stories reported by the Libyan EFL learners in support of the use of short-stories along with the number and percentage of the participants who reported these benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details of the benefits of the use of short-stories experienced by the participants</th>
<th>Number of the participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Linguistic benefits</td>
<td>Stories helped in developing liking for learning English in general and reading comprehension skill in particular</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories helped in guessing the meaning of the difficult words from context and in improving essential vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories helped in understanding the usage of English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories helped in learning and understanding idiomatic expressions as well as most required structures in English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories offered the much needed exposure to the target language</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Stories made learning English a fun</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Personal benefits</td>
<td>Stories motivated significantly</td>
<td>05</td>
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<td>Stories helped in understanding problems and conflicts in life in better way</td>
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<td>Stories helped in facing the problems in life and overcoming them successfully</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Emotional benefits</td>
<td>Stories helped releasing emotions with and for the characters in stories</td>
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<td>Stories helped in establishing emotional and cognitive balance</td>
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<td>Total number and the percentage of the participants who favoured the use of short-stories in reading comprehension skill because of various benefits they experienced</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94%</td>
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These reasons given by the Libyan EFL learners, in support of the use of short-stories in their EFL classroom, strengthen the arguments, presented in the section 3 of this paper, of various scholars in support of the use of short-stories.

The participants were further asked about the types of stories and the writers they preferred. They replied that they wanted their teachers to use all types of stories such as personal, social, religious, moral, historical etc. as they enjoyed the mixture rather than using just one type of the stories. Regarding the question about the writers, their opinions were divided. Half of the participants preferred the stories only by English writers as they believed that through the stories by native speakers of English they would learn ‘real’ English, whereas the others preferred stories written by any writer in English around the globe. According to them, stories written by various writers in English around the globe would offer them window into various cultures and not just the English culture. Thus, the stories written by writers in English around the globe would offer them opportunities to understand various cultures, and the world at large, in a better way. These divided opinions of the Libyan EFL learners are shown in the following chart.

**Figure: 5 Preferences of the Libyan EFL learners for the writers of short-stories to be selected for reading comprehension skill class**

The discussion of the data, about the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill, offers the following results:

1. The Libyan EFL learners develop liking for reading comprehension skill with the use of short-stories in the classroom.
2. They experienced and enjoy various linguistic, personal and emotional benefits with the use of short-stories which significantly contributed in their learning and mastering of English as a foreign language.
3. They prefer the use of short-stories in their classroom from their course teachers for developing reading comprehension skill.
4. They prefer various types of short-stories, written by both English writers and any other writer in English around the world, to be taught in their reading comprehension skill class.
5. They believe that short-stories not only make their learning English, in general, and reading comprehension in particular, a fun but also contribute in developing them into ‘a complete person’.
5. Conclusion

The use of short-stories in ELT classroom has always been recommended by the pundits in the field for developing reading comprehension skill as stories offer infinite linguistic as well as personal, socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional benefits for the language learners. Being the product of creative writers who have better command over language, stories are considered to be rich in language and amusing in nature and help in overcoming the problem of negative attitudes of EFL learners towards reading comprehension skill. Stories expose EFL learners to the functional, situational and idiomatic use of language and thus, help in understanding and mastering the intricacies and nuances of a foreign language like English.

However, as the learners and their perceptions determine the success of any material used for developing language skills, it was essential to investigate the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill. From the investigation, it was observed that the Libyan EFL learners have positive attitudes towards the use of short-stories. Their initial negative perceptions towards reading comprehension skill and literature, in general, were due to an inappropriate material used in the classroom and because of their misconceptions about literature, in general, and short-stories, in particular. With the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill, these misconceptions, however, were cleared up and they were offered an alternative learning material which is considered to be rich not only linguistically but from many other perspectives. This learning material, presented in the form of short-stories, helped in transforming their initial negative attitudes towards reading comprehension skill into positive ones and also contributed significantly to easy fostering of their other related language skills.

Therefore, to conclude, if foreign language teachers and learners in Libya come out of their misconceptions and stigma towards the use of short-stories in ELT classroom, they can equip themselves with what is regarded as one of the best methods of teaching English as a foreign language in an authentic context. And, if selected and taught appropriately, understanding the levels and perceptions of the learners, short-stories can create miracles not only in developing language skill like reading comprehension but also in developing socio-cultural, moral and other personal traits of the Libyan EFL learners.

About the Author:

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Advantages of Using Short-stories in ELT Classroom

References


Appendix: A Questionnaire offered prior to the use of the short-stories

Dear Student,
This questionnaire aims to collect the data about the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill. Kindly return this questionnaire by answering all the questions in it. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

1. Do you like studying English language?

2. Do you like reading in English in general and reading comprehension skill in particular?

3. What materials do your course teachers use to teach reading comprehension skill?

4. Do you find these materials interesting or boring? Why?

5. What is your view about literature in general and the use of literature in reading comprehension skill class? Please specify your answer.

6. Do you like reading short-stories? Please specify the type of short-stories you read.

7. What do you think about the use of various types of short-stories in your reading comprehension skill class as the main learning material? Please specify your answer.

Appendix: B Questionnaire offered after the use of the short-stories

Dear Student,
This questionnaire aims to collect the data about the perceptions of the Libyan EFL learners towards the use of short-stories for developing reading comprehension skill. Kindly return this questionnaire by answering all the questions in it. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

1. What is your opinion now about reading comprehension skill after studying the skill with the use of short-stories?

2. What is your opinion now about the literature in general and short-stories in particular?

3. Did you enjoy the use of short-stories in your reading comprehension skill class for developing the skill? Why?

4. Would you like to be taught the reading comprehension skill by using short-stories? Why? Please specify your answer.

5. Do you think the use of the short-stories has benefits for the EFL learners like you? Please mention any many benefits as possible which you experienced with the use of short-stories in reading comprehension skill class.

6. Do you like your teachers to use just one type of short-stories or different types of stories in reading comprehension skill class? Why? Please specify your answer.

7. Do you prefer the stories written by English writers or any writer in English around the world? Why? Please specify your answer.
Self-reflections of an English language teacher in the Palestinian Territories

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Abstract
This paper examines through self-reflection the characteristics of what makes a good English language teacher. Through the application of defining principles and questions of communicative language teaching, the author reflects on his perceived failure to meet the needs of his students. However, he concludes that the demarcations imposed by the conditions of living and working within the Palestinian Territories, circumscribe what is and what is not possible, and therefore his self-addressed label of ‘failure’ is not warranted.

Keywords: Teaching  Higher Education  Political demarcation
Introduction

I have never actually been asked directly: “Are you a good teacher?” I have received comments alluding to the quality of my teaching: “I have heard very favorable reports about your teaching” (the Vice-President of the university). “Doctor Fennell was my teacher and he is a very good teacher” (graduate student and university employee). So, if I were to be asked directly: “Are you a good teacher?” I would answer, “Yes”. Yet recently I have felt a particular unease with my teaching. Self-reflection (a characteristic of a good teacher) has led me to question the degree to which my belief in communicative language teaching has been compromised. In recognizing this compromise, is there then the possibility of redressing it when it is rooted in the reality of military occupation? I conclude that this is not cause for a self-addressed label of ‘failure’.

Principles of good language teaching

There is a plethora of academic and intuitive based definitions of what makes a good teacher. Certainly, there are some that I do not meet. For instance, if having clear, organized board work was one of the defining specifics then I would be far wide of the mark. It is for this reason that I have decided to focus on the wider, more general descriptions of what makes a good teacher.

Being a good teacher, in essence, is a balance between what you feel is right, and feels comfortable with the needs and wants of your students (Hadfield and Hadfield, 2008).

As a language teacher, the guiding principles that lie behind the successful attainment of such a balance are fourfold: Firstly, learning language is about natural, meaningful and useful communication. Secondly, the individuality of our learners should be respected and this is reflected in varied and appropriate activities and materials. Thirdly, lessons should foster a positive learning experience where there is interest, motivation, and enjoyment. Fourthly, being a good teacher involves encouraging and challenging our learners to seek out and make the most of their learning opportunities and thus to reach their full potential (Hadfield and Hadfield, 2008).

If one were to overlay the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) there would be the need to add: “What are we using language for? Who are we communicating with? What feelings do we want to show” (Baker and Westrup, 2000, p. 15)? It is in the answering of these questions within the context of the already stated principles of a good language teacher that I realise is the source of recent disquiet over my teaching and which through further self-reflection has come to be resolved.

Anecdotal self-reflection outside of lectures

After four years of working at the Arab American University Jenin, Palestinian Territories, I have become aware of how the students’ lives are shaped by the occupation. Particularly, because as Practicum Supervisor, I have made over 200 classroom observations to 49 different schools during which I have witnessed and heard much.

A busy day of classroom observations was planned, and I was waiting for my taxi, a little impatiently. I was new to Palestine and the phenomena of flying checkpoints and lockdowns. My phone rang. It was my assistant supervisor calling in to apologise that he would not be able
to make his observations. In fact, he would not be able to make it out of his house – the army were in his village. Wondering what to do, my phone rang again. This time it was my taxi driver ringing to say he would be late. The army had closed the main roads and he had to go round the hills and across the fields. Another morning, driving out with the Ministry of Education Supervisors, we received an urgent radio message from the Directorate ordering us to return immediately. It was too dangerous to travel. We succeeded in setting out the very next day but had to make our way slowly through streams of pupils pouring out of the town’s schools. They were striking in sympathy for the family who had lost a son that morning, shot in his home, in the early hours. Such strikes were not sanctioned I was told because it meant yet more school days lost but the Ministry was powerless to stop the pupils and would again ask the teachers to hurriedly cram through the missed material. Later that day, coming back from the surrounding villages, high on the hillside cemetery we could see the male mourners gathered to bury the boy. On another day, in a hot and crowded classroom with windows open level with the local mosque, the loud speaker clicked on, the teacher paused and the students’ listened to the names of young men taken.

In the classroom observations themselves, I would give the students the opportunity to practice their English. Fully expecting, to deal with questions about where I was from and my likes and dislikes, I was initially disconcerted when the secondary school students would ask: “How do you find life in Palestine? Do you agree with the war in Gaza?” “What do you think about the occupation?” “Have you learnt any Hebrew? “Do you feel safe in Palestine?” Then, there were the comments and corrections. “The foreign media sees us all as terrorists which is wrong. We want to live in peace.” After observing a reading lesson about the Aral Sea, I remarked that Palestine is without rivers or a sea. No, I was told, that is not true. The River Jordan and the Dead Sea, though both in the Israeli military exclusion zone, were indeed part of Palestine.

The occupation meant students were often late or absent, and I had to check whether the university regulations permitted such excuses. “Sorry I am late, Doctor Fennell. There was a road block and the bus was held up for an hour.” “Doctor Fennell, I am sorry I missed the class, we were ordered off the bus and told to stand in the sun for two hours.” “Doctor Fennell, I couldn’t reach the university as our village was under siege.” At other times students asked to be excused in advance for reasons relating to the occupation. A young male came up to me breathless with excitement. “I am visiting my brother in prison – the first time in eight years so I won’t be in class tomorrow!”

It was not just individual classes that were missed. An older male student who was struggling in class explained that he had missed two years of university because he had been in administrative detention. A female student wanted to reschedule the mid-term exams as the date coincided with her monthly visit to see her brother, on a permit valid only for that day. Later, three more female students came to ask whether I would change the date of the exam. “The day before the exam I have to visit my father in an Israeli prison”, said one, “It will take me all day from four in the morning until eight at night. It is only an hour and a half away but we have to wait.” I remembered watching a TV documentary on the Al Jazeera channel where a student exhausted by a similar journey had had to sit her end of year exams the next day – emotionally and physically drained she had fared badly. I offered my sympathies but the girls looked at me
askance: “Oh, don’t worry Doctor Fennell, this is our way of life here in Palestine. Everyone has a brother, or an uncle, or a father, or a cousin in prison.”

Anecdotal self-reflection inside of lectures

This all took place outside of my lectures. Within the classroom I heeded the words of the Chair of the Modern Languages Department, himself a Palestinian: “Do not talk about religion or politics especially as you are an ajnabe (foreigner).” At times the students’ experiences touched on the occupation. For instance when I asked about the need for English in today’s society – the answer came back: “To speak with our enemy. We will not use their language so we speak in English.” Then I would give a non-committal response such as “Yes, OK” and hasten on with the lesson – in effect changing the subject.

However the inadequacy and indeed the inanity of such a strategy of response was made clear to me in an elective course. In the Introduction to Communication and Culture course, I had the students engage in a warm-up activity which led into the topic of long winter nights in Northern Scandinavia. “Get into groups of four and tell each other about a time when you were afraid of the dark,” I instructed. Fairly innocuous, I thought and in the feedback I fully expected to hear tales of seeing monsters in the shadows of the wall, of hiding under the bed covers, or of being alone in the house when the electricity was cut. Most indeed were, but one student and his story put an end to the activity.

The student stood and solemnly told of how in the middle of the night, he was woken by armed soldiers. Hauled from his bed he was taken through the dark and deserted streets to the city hospital. There, in the basement morgue, he was asked to identify the body of his cousin - a bullet wound in his head. In the long and heavy pause that followed, I recall feeling totally inadequate, my usual ability to think on my feet and adapt to the situation, having deserted me. I was at a loss for words and or action. I must have mumbled something because the lesson did not end there – it went on, other tasks engaged in and completed. Afterwards in my office, still feeling uncomfortable about the inadequacy of my response, I asked myself why I had been unable to respond appropriately. This tale of tragedy, though not common, was certainly not one that would have been unfamiliar to the students.

After some thought, I decided to utilise this aspect of the students’ lives. However, so as to still heed the warning never to discuss politics or religion, I asked students to write a short sketch about their experiences of the occupation but ones which rather than being damming in nature were instead, encouraging and hopeful. Stories which showed that despite the stringencies of occupation, the students were where they were. They had successfully completed their compulsory education and now were studying in Higher education. Each day they came in to university was testament to their surmounting unique political, social, and economic conditions – their culture contributing to their stubbornness to overcome.

The day arrived for the students to perform their sketches and I invited the Chair of the department to join us, more in confidence that he would be impressed and less as backup in case it all went wrong. It did go well, in that the Chair was impressed, particularly at giving students such an opportunity to use their English in front of their fellow students. Indeed, he asked one particular student to take on the organisation of the students’ celebratory graduation party at the
end of the semester. I, though I did not admit it, was disappointed - not in the students’ performances but rather in the failure to produce positive personal accounts.

The sketches, apart from one depicting the life of Steve Jobs (Co-founder of Apple Inc.) with a loose connection made to a model of inspiration, were ones which depicted the brutal realities of life under occupation. Where were the uplifting stories, the ones that said yes, this was so but look what we have achieved; the enthusiasm of youth in thinking that yes there was a future and they were it? Instead, the students played the parts of frightened school children telling to their Headmistress stories beyond their age; of what had befallen their families and why they had been absent from school. Then, there was a sketch of school children, excited and eagerly awaiting a day trip to the wonders of Jericho, but having faced the ordeal of numerous checkpoints, they return in a state of distress. Foremost of all, vividly supported with props, power point slides and YouTube videos, there was the enactment of a family home being first surrounded and then stormed by soldiers, a younger brother arrested and taken from his bed, not allowed to dress, the subject of an administrative detention order.

**Concluding reflections**

As such, I did not achieve what I had hoped. Furthermore, the nature of the failure that it was overtly political has meant it is unlikely I will repeat the activity. Yet, this aside, further reflection led me to question my failings as a teacher. The reason why the performances did not go to plan was perhaps because I had failed in providing the students with the opportunity to discuss (through English) their life experiences as shaped by the occupation. I had not met those principles that characterise a good teacher. For in an area so significant to my students’ lives, I had deprived them of learning language that was natural, meaningful and useful. I had not respected the individuality of students by providing varied and appropriate activities through which to explore and use such language. Moreover, unable to draw students away from the negativity of occupation, I had failed to provide a positive learning experience. Finally, I had failed in encouraging and challenging my students to make the most of their learning opportunities and so reach their full potential.

Furthermore, with regards to the occupation, if I were to ask my students the three questions indicative of CLT, in their answers I would also be seen to be lacking. What are we using English for? “To communicate with Israelis, get through checkpoints and be able to travel.” Who are we communicating with? “The outside world so they understand that we want peace and an independent country.” What feelings do we want to show? “How the occupation is affecting us as human beings.”

However, that said, I was providing them with language and the opportunity which while not specific to these particular needs, did enable students to talk about them outside of the classroom, to take responsibility for their own learning, and to work towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace. Thus, within the demarcations imposed by the conditions of living and working in the Palestinian Territories, I was perhaps, after all, providing effective and communicative English language teaching.
About the author:

Michael Fennell gained his PhD from the Institute of Education, University of London. With his thesis on the construction of the teacher-self, he has long been interested in teachers’ lives. For the past five years he has been working at the Arab American University Jenin, Palestine as Assistant Professor (TEFL) and Practicum Supervisor.

References


Using Group Learning Strategies to Enhance the Acquisition of English in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to promote using group learning strategies in the Saudi classroom. The article reports a qualitative case study of the use of group learning strategies in an English-Arabic, Arabic-English translation class in King Abdelaziz University/ Women Campus during the first semester of the year 2012-2013. The test group is composed of 14 female students between the ages of 19-21 of various English language abilities. The researcher aims to identify best practices for group work application in Saudi Arabia and to investigate the inhibiting factors and limitations against its use in order to create awareness of the validity of using group work strategies as a learning model. By doing so the research hopes to suggest ways to make group work operative and proposes some application models including specific worksheet models.

Key words: Group Learning, involvement, motivation, enhancement, learner-centered approach
Introduction

Group learning is an approach to teaching that has become an important learning modality especially with the advent of Internet and smart phones. Despite the fact that group learning has been acknowledged and tried for a long time in different parts of the world, it has only been recently explored in Saudi Arabia (SA hereafter). When effectively employed, group work can be instrumental in overcoming some of the inhibiting constraints Saudi Students face when learning English academically. As a learner centered approach (Blumberg & Weimer, 2008, p.3), it has the capacity to empower the learning of English language in SA where the implementation of some group work learning strategies is feasible and in sync with the current tendency to emphasize the importance of learning English in SA.

This paper reports a case study that focuses on group learning initiated in class and followed up outside the classroom using Internet and mobile technology to create life-long English language learning experiences. It address the current situation of English language learning conditions in SA that are not conducive to group work, the various constraints on the use of group learning in SA, which must be identified in order to make group work effective, discuss its advantages and proposes ways of applying group-learning strategies efficiently.

After presenting the constraining problems, the article proposes some solutions that are mainly based on the learners’ familiarity with electronic tools such as the Internet and smart phones, both being broadly available to learners for the past five years in SA. Young Saudis’ familiarity with social media can be employed as a tool for group learning inside and outside the classroom to enforce Internet based methodology of learning English by initiating a peer group follow up system and by creating communities of practice(Adler et al. 2008, p.1-7; Barkley et al., 2004, p.9-16; Stehlik & Garden, 2005, p. 1-8). Furthermore, ‘new literacies’ cohere with group learning because, unlike “conventional literacies”, they are “participatory, collaborative, and distributed in nature”(lankshear & knobel, 2007, p. 9). This corresponds to the social conditions of the new generations of SA students as it makes an innovative use of their familiarity with mobile and Internet technologies to support a new system for learning English that uses the Internet to establish a virtual emersion environment, which mimics natural language acquisition (Stehlik & Garden, 2005, p. 1-8).

The experiment aims at investigating group work constraints and at testing the proposed group work strategies. The article and the experiment on which it is based aims to help SA students become effective learners capable of assimilating, disseminating, using and producing their expertise of the English language.

Methodology

This article gives an expose of a qualitative case study of the use of group learning strategies in a translation class of the department of European Languages and Literatures at King Abdelaziz
University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in the first term of 2012/2013. The course is taught as a department of English specialization course after the students finish their prep year in which they study 15-18 hours of English per semester. The responses and observations made attest not only to the current situation but also to students’ memories of the way they have been taught English. The trial group, students’ English language fluency is as follows: one student was lower advanced, one was upper intermediate level, eight are low intermediate-to-intermediate, three were low, and one was very low. The learners understudy were females between the ages of 19-21. The total number of students in this group was fourteen. The researcher has been teaching general English language and general English courses to English Department students as well as specialized courses in English literature courses and translation for over 20 years so this case study culminates many years of non structured-observation and experiments of the method that studies the effect of group learning on improving English language acquisitions and of the implementation of group work strategies as a tool to enhance the learning of English language in SA.

**Method of data collection**

The author conducted semi-structured observation, comparison of pre and post course tests, semi-structured and open-ended focus group discussions

**Results**

Observation and comparisons with previous results indicates a clear improvement in how the learners responded to group work. Observation and focus group discussions pointed to various constraints on the use of group learning in SA, which must be identified in order to make group work effective, such as time and space limitations, quota of material to be covered in the classroom as well as students’ reticence and their pre-existing learning conditions and, teacher/student relationships, current assessment strategies and the problems of high and low achievers.

Focus groups discussions emphasized that student’s usually appoint the high achiever(s) among them to do the required task(s). This inhibits English Language learning because the less achieving students do not experience the language and the high achievers are overburdened and resentful. Some students expressed their concern that the same grade is eventually allotted to all members of the group equivalently regardless of their participation or their language acquisition. The respondents also pointed out that there was a dependency on root memory crash-study prior to exams. This strategy in particular is known, and almost required, by students, teachers and parents because it is safe and momentarily reliable. However, root memorization defies the gradual and scaffold nature of the language learning acquisition process and inhibits the internalization of English language structures and vocabulary. I also found that the student’s memory of the way they were taught English in schools and their prep year at the university along with the how group work was conducted influenced their attitude to it initially. One of the upper level students rejected participation then later agreed to it after finding out that there is a system to work division and that she would not have to do all the work by herself.
Discussion

A preview

Group work as an educational strategy has not been sufficiently explored in SA; therefore, there are no papers or academic research on it. However, the concept of group learning is not new. Group work drew attention since the beginning of the 1990s. Some authors have argued that group learning is specifically effective for English Language teaching (Exley & Dennick, 2004; Michaelsen, Knight, & Fink, 2004). Scholarship in the field studied group work practices, examined methods of application to specific areas like reading and writing English. In the 2000s, it has investigated and is still investigating internet and mobile technology and the use of electronic advances to enhance different aspects of group learning. (Gundher et al. 2004, p. 69-82). Furthermore, literature in the field have explored different group work practices (Toseland & Rivas, 2011), examined earlier Strategies in second language learning including direct vs. imbedded instruction (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990), pointed out difficulties in teaching English that call for group learning strategies, the importance of group learning, the theory behind it and its various techniques including how to form groups, assign roles, solve problems and assess students (Barkley, 1 & Major, 2004, p. 9-16) and presented different ways of implementing pair and group learning strategies (Scrivener, 2005, p. 43-45; 2011, p. 40-51).

The interest in group-learning intensified towards the mid 2000's because of the new trends in learning and the increasing possibilities of distant and online learning that changed the definition of boundaries and locale. Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler have investigated the educational foundations and effectiveness of mobile learning and the issues of accessibility, assessment, training teachers for mobile technology, student support and student-authority relationships (Kukulska-Hulme&Traxler, 2005, p. 1-7). Sugiyama and Kawanabe explored learning by using machines focusing on the non-stationary nature of electronic machines and on the types of learning activities that can be developed using technologies such as Internet and mobile communication (Sugiyama & Kawanabe, 2012, p. 3-6, 45-46, 70-72). Gundher et al. discussed both the teacher and student experiences and preparations and the organization of time and space and examined the role of the teacher as a facilitator of group activity, which shifts the position of the teacher to one of assisting students’ natural learning potential by preparing them for in and out-class learning and by supporting their formal and extended informal language learning (Gundher et al., 2004, p. 1-13, 21-36). Daradoumis et al. investigated the importance of scaffolding in learning and presented innovative methods for developing technological frameworks and infrastructures that enable e-collaboration settings in order to enhance collaborative on-line learning. They, as well as Falchikov stipulated tools for assessing student's interactions. (Daradoumis, Demetriadis&Xhafa2012; Daradoumis, Caballé & Xhafa 2011; Falchikov 2005).

SA is an interesting case for group learning because it is far more advanced in regard to technology than in the implementation of student centered learning strategies such as group
learning or in the concept of communities of practice. Internet is available almost everywhere and most school and university students use both Internet and smart phones regularly and with ease. Such a combination facilitates out of class group learning and makes it possible to move into electronic group learning strategies after basics are set and clarified.

Some critics argue that language learning happens mostly outside the classroom (Adler & Rodman, 2008, 1-7). I agree yet I contend, based on student’s responses in focus groups and on observation, that group activities must be experienced in class first to be emulated outside of class, so neither the student nor the teacher are left in a chaos. I also maintain that, though group activities outside the classroom are not controllable, certain strategies and models can be set to ensure their usefulness and approximate measurability. In other words, group activities must be designed well to suit the students and their environment in order to be effective. To do so, we need to keep the main objectives of why we learn English in mind and to ask basic questions such as: What do we need from learning English? How can we achieve our goals? Do we need as much memorization as used to be required in the past? Do we coerce students to draw within the lines and think within the box? Do we equalize the concepts of memorization with hard work and joy of learning with laziness? Do we penalize creativity and make students lose their personalities in their attempt to get good grades? How do we motivate our students and awaken their creativity and desire to learn and how can we re-instill joy into the learning process? Finally, how can we transfer our educational environment from teacher centered to learner centered and what is the role of the teacher in an autonomous learning environment? Some of these questions do not pertain only to learning English as a second language yet they are important to ask in this context because second language learning, like a first language learning is a circular rather than a linear activity. As such, the activity may well include processes that are not exclusive to it.

Limitations and constraints of Group learning

This part of the article explores some limiting factors of group learning in SA. In spite of its advantages, group work can be constrained with certain teacher and student or classroom arrangement factors that limit its application scope such as students’ reticence to change their learning mode and to participate in new activities because of earlier learning experiences, achievement and assessment problems along with teachers’ reaction to group activity, time limitation vis-a-vis the amount of material to be covered, classroom seating arrangements, teacher/student relationships, current assessment strategies and the problems of high and low achievers. These issues are interrelated so though they can be theoretically singled out I may not do so when this contradicts with practicality. One of the major concerns the respondents expressed is that students end up depending on each other and appointing the high achiever(s) among them to do group task(s); students may also get apprehensive about their own performance and about making mistakes in front of their colleagues, so they may assign tasks that require response to the more fluent in the group, which
can seriously impede the process of learning. Another student’s problem is their dependency on root memory crash-study prior to exams, a strategy well known to students, teachers and parents.

Both modes are destructive to English Language learning because language learning is involved, gradual and scaffold. Group activity is a qualitative activity that does not focus on grades so the grading system is not as clearly delineated as in memory root learning, which can be minimized significantly by giving clear grading criteria. However, This means that the teachers will have to put extra out of class time to prepare for the initial setting up of group work but when they do not have the time, they may get too stressed; which can affect their performance.

As such, group work can be threatening to students when it moves away from the familiar zones of grade accumulation attained by the memorization of allotted material. Teachers and educators may contribute to this, despite good will, by giving tasks and quizzes that focus on root memory learning and by enforcing standardized exams.

Standardized and memorization based assessments are the preferable form of assessment these days in SA, yet group work and language learning are qualitative activities that do not adhere well to standardized assessments. Group learning, which is qualitative in nature, is constrained by the quantitative and standardized assessment methods in Saudi Universities and schools. This creates a dilemma that has to be delicately resolved when introducing group learning in SA.

Furthermore, teachers are sometimes threatened by group activities because of their elusive nature. They are commonly concerned with time because there are usually demanded by management to cover a certain quota of the course’s syllabus per class. Thus, the teachers may not be at liberty to cover the quota in whichever way they see fit to spare the time to negotiate new strategies with their students and to incorporate enough practice time to internalize new activities and proper Language learning. Moreover, teachers are typically assessed on their ability to fulfill requirements, good student results and lack of students’ complaints. If the overall assessment is not satisfactory, competent teachers can be threatened with contract terminations.

Hence, some teachers may perceive group work and student centered learning in general as threatening to their authority. In group activities that focus on the learner, the role of the teachers is mainly one of assisting the students’ natural learning potential by preparing them for in and out-class learning and by supporting their formal and informal language acquisition. This involves a certain level of risk taking because it automatically requires teachers to forfeit some of their control.

Along with the previous limitations, shortage of practice time generates feelings of frustration and inadequacy among both students and teachers, which results in student’s blaming teachers for not giving them enough time and teachers blaming students for not trying hard enough. Furthermore, when teaching academic English, compound skills are forced together either without scaffolding or with inadequate scaffolding. Educators tend to force together listening, speaking, reading and writing activities at an early stage of language acquisition when the
students should just listen to the language and learn to understand and produce it orally. This has a very serious negative effect on many students because facing such obstacles; a psychological barrier against learning a new language is subtly created. Any task of learning English then is looked upon as too hard a task so most students close in and aspire to achieving grades rather than learning.

**Recommendations: shifting towards effective group learning strategies in the English language classroom**

Group learning, even when done in a limited way can positively enhance the teaching/learning environment, and effective use of group activities within classes can resolve some of English language learning limitations in SA by generating ways to target and solve typical classroom problems that inhibit learning. However, in order to use group activities to enhance language learning, students, teachers and administrators have to consciously collaborate.

Group work must have parameters that make it effective for the acquisition of English as a second language. One of the first parameters that need to be addressed across the range of strategies, activities and skills is to decipher and disentangle the different skills to teach at an early stage then group them again in a scaffold method that mimics the natural process of first language learning. Scaffolding is very important because the learner needs to internalize the vocabulary and structures in order to be able to automatically produce them. The internalization process typically takes time that varies from one learner to another. Therefore, learners and teachers need to be patient in order not to impede the learning process with negative feelings of incompetence and fear.

Natural language acquisition is scaffold but when learning English in a society where the learner does not hear or repeat the language, a major part of the language infrastructure is usually missing. Therefore, to make English language learning effective in SA, we must pay attention to pacing, which imbued with group learning can be a useful tool to efficiently learn English. It is important is to have realistic expectations Therefore, in the early stages of implementation, pacing is particularly important to change behavioral patterns (Schacter, 1997, p. 5-7). Part of pacing would be the pacing of the phasing out of older educational strategies built primarily on quantitative measures and on memory learning.

Instructors must also be clear and must use guiding and organizing forms so the students can experience a smooth transition to the new modality of learning. The teacher can introduce certain group activity’s ‘rules’ at the beginning of a group’s life to establish the norms explicitly. Furthermore, it is better to focus on attainable short objectives and to start implementing group work to reinforce rather than initiate learning.

End of class group summarizing activity can work well as an initiation strategy to establishing group work patterns because it uses group learning to reinforce prior knowledge (appendix 3).
Including activities that lead to the successful completion of whole-group tasks or involve small-group competition games usually motivate students and create a positive sense of accomplishment. Generating an end of class summary encompasses all these factors.

Classroom seating arrangement can be problematic too but group learning can be employed effectively in spite of limiting classroom seat distribution. Most classrooms at King Abdelaziz University, including the one the experiment was conducted in, have seats that are fixed to the floor which is not conducive to group work. To overcome logistic constraints such as the way the seats are arranged in class the teacher may ask the students to sit in blocks of four. In small classes like the experiment class, the students were divided into two groups of three and two of four. In the case where groups consist of four students, two were seated front raw and two exactly behind them. In the cases of groups of three students were divided to two and one whereby those in the front turn around to face those at the back. It was also beneficial that the groups left empty seats all around them so the groups do not merge together.

Advantages of Group Work

a. Benefits of group work to SA students in learning English

Group work can radically change the learning and teaching environment. Group activities help minimize the pressure by dividing language learning activity and making it less strenuous and by providing peer contact and support. When done effectively, group work transfers the teaching environment into a learning environment wherein the student becomes a learner rather than a receiver and the teacher a facilitator rather than an all-knowing instructor. It also reinforces learning because it demands students’ contribution, while it respects student’s individuality and autonomy because it does not demand contribution in a superimposed way. Consequently, group work personalizes the classroom because it is based on students’ needs and their individual learning pace. It encourages students’ autonomous thinking and self-control and prevents the emergence of rigid educational patterns and enforces a culture of sharing which is important to build since language is a sharing activity. Furthermore, Group work breaks the monotony of classes because it allows students physically and mentally to move, which is specifically useful in long sessions.

Furthermore, group work draws on the student’s desire to learn, so it has a lot to do with motivation. The typical motivation strategy model used in SA is the model of the carrot and stick epitomized in the ‘grade system’. However, if we motivate students to learn for other rewards, we will get a better learning outcome and we will move from surface impersonal motivational strategies to deeper personal ones.

Moreover, group-learning activities combined with using electronic facilities mimics first language acquisition, enable self-paced learning and take language learning beyond the limits of the classroom sessions. It makes possible a condition of immersion that used to be impossible
unless the learner lives in native speaking environment, which can be costly and almost unfeasible for the majority of learners.

\textit{b. Creativity, standardization and group work}

Though we formally demand creativity in SA, we tend to penalize as well and stigmatize kids who do not do well in standardized exams. This holds true when it comes to learning English as a second language. Language learning by default is elusive therefore it does not flourish in distilled standardized environments. Group work defies limited standardization. This is not to say that all forms of standardization have a negative impact on learning English. Standardization can be a useful tool to ensure quality but problems occur when standardization shifts from being a tool to becoming an objective for which teachers and learners are pressured with curriculum and time limitation in ways that do not leave scope for a relaxed qualitative group learning.

\textit{c. Benefits of group work to teachers}

Teachers can also benefit from group work in two ways at least: better student learning which means better student’s grades; and a break for not having to continuously speak and instruct the class. In a group learning environment, the teacher delegates the task of learning to students which means she/her only has to supervise, go among groups and answer questions which is a break for the teacher from the intense delivery mode.

Group work changes the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the students so the teacher’s role becomes one of a facilitator rather than an instructor and teachers need to negotiate their class control when implementing group learning. New literacies are less “expert dominated” by default (Lankshear & Knobel, p.9). However, teachers still retain some control. They decide on the amount of group activity that can be incorporated in a certain class or as a follow up to it but they should be willing to forfeit some of their control to boost the student’s autonomy. Once the teacher is comfortable with forfeiting some of her/his control, she/he will find task delegation beneficial because teachers are usually relieved from the task of spoon-feeding their students and from having to speak every minute of the class time. Furthermore teachers have a powerful role in motivating or demotivating the learners into using group learning strategies. The teacher can start motivating learners and inspiring their primitive tendency for learning by engaging them and by involving them in thinking about group learning and assessing its problems (appendix 2). The teacher can elicit suggestions from the learners about making decision of how to conduct group activities. Teachers should explain the importance of the norms they mandate and how they expect the activities to enhance learning, and should provoke learners’ agreements or propositions. However, provoking student's positive responses is not synonymous with luring them; the teacher has to be explicit about her/his role and goals to foster understanding and build trust between her/him and the learners (Coleman & Klapper, 2005, p. 29-30).
d. Assessment and achievements

There are ways to effectively incorporate the assessment of group activities into English learning. Falchikov explored why and how we assess and the problems with traditional assessment patterns, and investigated assessment as measurement, procedure, enquiry, accountability, and as a quality control measure and examined student’s involvement in assessment and computer-assisted assessment (Falchikov, 2005, p. 32-40, 60-64, 112-117, 222-228). Pergum suggests “forms of group, peer and self-assessment” (Pergum, 2011, p. 13). Daradoumis et al. also discussed assessment. Their inputs are specifically important for SA context because they can be applied in environments that still maintain standardized assessments (Daradoumis et al., 2012).

Moreover, group work has to be set up so it does not impose on high achievers to support low achievers. Therefore, we have to be aware of the Saudi students' tendency to delegate the task to the higher achiever who becomes individually responsible for accomplishing the work for the group and assuring that all the members of the group have the desirable score. Grades sometimes are given to the group as a whole which means that high achievers could get a lower grade than their average while low achievers can get a higher grade. This does injustice to both high and low achievers as well. Consequently, high achievers can resist group activity because of the burden it presents and because of its grade risk. Delegating the tasks to high achievers also harms low achievers because it fosters dependence and possible future disappointments. Therefore, group activities have to be designed and implemented properly so they neither mislead low achievers about their outcomes and their abilities nor impede high achievers.

Rotating and designated tasks and roles assigned to each member of the group may present a way to resolve this dilemma. The teacher’s task, in this case, would be to monitor and ensure the rotation process (appendix 4). Another solution is to allot separate grades for group achievements and for individual achievements within the group.

e. Using the Internet and phone technology to establish out of classroom group activity

Saudi Students are faced with the problem of lack of listening and speaking world around them that can help them pick up vocabulary, grammatical patterns to enable fluency. The emergence of new Internet and the mobile technologies infused with group learning would enable a simulation of the natural language learning process and offers the potential to provide a virtual immersion world through which the learner can acquire English vocabulary and patterns (Blattner & Fiori, 2011, p. 24-43) and internalize them to acquire fluency, which in turn is crucial for transferability of both knowledge and strategy (Schacter, 1997, p. 5-7; Coleman & Klapper, 2005, p. 29-30).

The Internet and smart phones also enable peer and teacher follow up on the group. Group follow up is important because the learners need other people to dialogue with who can also follow up with/on them. Simple charts can be generated for follow up. These can be general or
targeted. For example easy to follow up on weekly, monthly or yearly charts can be generated for vocabulary build or for reading activities for both learner and monitoring or supporting person. As such new technologies offer opportunities that can augment group collaboration and provide new models for English language learning as well (Daradoumis et al., 2012, p. 157-178).

Furthermore, group-learning strategies are integrally individualized activities that demand qualitative rather quantitative measures. Therefore, educators must make the material meaningful and teachers should give tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult; they should also be liberal; for example, they should allow movement in class because a free interactive learning environment creates non-threatening conditions that make the learners feel safe and eliminate or minimize inhibiting fears and enable learners to internalize English language vocabulary and structures.

Conclusion

A priori, group learning empowers students’ involvement and autonomy and motivates them because they become involved as active members of the learning process and not just as receivers of knowledge (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 68-90). When effectively employed, group work enables independence because it puts the students in charge of their learning and encourages wider class participation and one to one peer learning. Incorporating group work in and out of class can effectively break the psychological barriers Saudi Students develop towards learning English because it makes learning English as a second language self-paced, attainable, and autonomous. However, when setting up and implementing group work models to enhance English Language learning, the models must adhere to the student’s specific conditions to be truly effective. We need to think about the big picture and develop the details but we should not get lost in them.

The researcher hope that investigating group learning strategies would enhance the learning of English both in the classroom and outside of it in SA and that it can break the psychological barriers most Saudi students have in regard to learning English. This entails training both teachers and students, creating administrative and educational support bodies, and a fresh look at assessment in order to establish some learning strategy the group members can refer to and some model patterns for group activities that ensure efficiency.

About the author:

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References


Appendix 1

Conducting in-Class Group work

Guidelines for Teachers

[To Teachers: The worksheets and forms I suggest here are by no means inadaptable. Play with them, find out what works for you and your students, and adapt them to your specific situation]

I. Announce to students the time allotted for each activity before they start. Allotted time depends on the group.
II. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 depending on the class size.
III. Hand the students the worksheets
IV. Ask students to fill the sheets individually (in erasable pencil).
V. Ask the students to share their ideas with the person next to them.
VI. Ask the groups to collectively share their ideas and writes them down in an organized, possibly linear pattern (in erasable pencil).
VII. Ask the group to choose a representative to speak for it
     Record the name of the representative:

                         Group representative: 

VIII. Collect responses from the group and write them in a way that enables all to see.
IX. Have a few minutes for recording information and for open discussion

Appendix 2

Worksheet for Group Work

Encouraging Students’ Involvement in Group work Learning

- Please list at least three factors that constrain group work in the classroom?
  1.
  2.
  3.
- Share your ideas with the person next to you and then with group

- Discuss possible solutions to at least three problems. Record solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem no.</th>
<th>Solution</th>
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• Choose a representative to speak for the group. The teacher asks each group to present one problem and its solution and records the problem and solution in front of the groups then gives the groups time for in-group discussion and writing.

Appendix 3

Worksheet for Group Work

Using Group learning Strategies to Reinforce and Summarize Context

[To teachers: this activity can be used at the end of every session. It helps students recall the main ideas and important details presented in the session. Ideally the teacher follows the presentations of the ideas in the session linearly, and calls on semi-volunteer participation of the groups. This means that group representatives raise their hands to present the next idea. However groups are requested, in advance, to participate and should be given time to prepare. The teacher should nudge reticent groups to participate]

Course details [Name, number and section]
Instructor: Student:
Activity: Student no.:
Date:

Instructions: on this sheet record, in linear order, what you remember from this session.

Information & activities
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
[Add more if you wish]

Impressions [if you have any]
•
•
•
•
[Add more if you wish]

Appendix 4

Out of-Class Group Meeting Record

Course details [Name, number and section]
Instructor: Student:
Activity: Student no.:
Date:

Topic of the meeting:
Meeting place:
Length of session:
Group members' information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name</th>
<th>Student number</th>
<th>Phone number</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Role</th>
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[Add more if you wish]

Proceedings

- 
- 
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[Add more if you wish]

If a second meeting is required, the next meeting is:

About:

In: At (date):

Signatures

- Group Leader
- Group member 1
- Group member 2
- Group member 3

[Add more if you wish]
Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Speaking Classrooms: A Case Study of First-year LMD Students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida, Algeria

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Abstract

Affective variables are one of the various variables that influence foreign language learning, and foreign language speaking anxiety is among several outstanding factors that often have a debilitating effect on the oral performance of students learning English as a foreign language. This paper aims to contribute to the literature on foreign language speaking anxiety by investigating the nature of anxiety that first-year Licence-Master-Doctorate(LMD) Algerian students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida experience when performing orally. It also seeks to examine the sources generating foreign language speaking anxiety in students and finally provides teachers with some solutions and suggestions for reducing it. Through the use of quantitative methods, this study adopts Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope’s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to measure the level of speaking anxiety exhibited by the participants. The findings suggested that foreign language speaking anxiety was pervasive among first-year LMD students and appeared to mostly stem from fear of interaction, error correction, language proficiency, low self-confidence and self-esteem, etc. This paper ends with some implications to assist teachers in encouraging speaking and strive for a pleasant atmosphere where every student can feel relaxed and motivated to communicate orally.

Keywords: Foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA), LMD system (Licence-Master-Doctorate), EFL, University Saad Dahlab of Blida, Algeria.
Introduction:

Among the several affective factors which influence foreign language learning in general and speaking in specific, anxiety appears as a crucial factor that often affects students’ oral production in the foreign language they are required to use. This construct accounts for various phenomena like students unwillingness to participate in the speaking classrooms, and sadly even for their low performance and achievement. Foreign language students who exhibit speaking anxiety do not feel at ease when required to perform in the target language. Consequently, they prefer to remain silent viewing speaking in front of the whole class as a threat rather than a chance to improve their communication skills.

Speaking anxiety experienced in EFL classrooms has often a pervasive detrimental impact and influences students’ adaptation to their learning environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals. (Mohamed and Wahid, 2009). For this reason, this paper 1) reviews the speaking anxiety phenomenon in the field of foreign language learning. It 2) investigates the nature of and the possible sources that cause speaking anxiety to come into play in oral classes and hinders the oral performance of Algerian first-year LMD students of English enrolled at University Saad Dahlab of Blida. 3) Understanding the nature of this anxiety and the sources it springs from helps to gain more insights and suggests ways on how to deal with it in EFL classrooms. This paper also ends with some implications and suggestions to help teachers support anxious students in order to overcome feelings that deter their speaking proficiency. To fulfil these objectives using quantitative methods, a modified version of the foreign language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was adopted.

Literature Review:

Research in foreign language learning and acquisition in the 1980s (Brown, 1974; Gardner, 1978; Krashen, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; McIntyre and Gardner, 1989) shifted attention to the role of affective variables in learning and teaching of foreign languages. Affective factors are considered as both aids and barriers influencing foreign language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) observed that what influences foreign language learning cannot be attributed only to cognitive abilities for it has also to do with emotion. Emotions, as noted by Williams and Burden (1997), must therefore be considered as an integral part of learning, and must be also involved in the teaching and learning process. This orientation towards affect is influenced by humanistic education which takes into consideration that learning is affected by how students feel about themselves and is also concerned with educating the whole person, considering both the intellectual and the emotional dimensions. (Moskovitz, 1978). This humanistic approach to language teaching comprises a number of modern teaching methods and approaches that aim at reducing learners’ anxiety and enhancing their self-esteem and confidence. Examples of these approaches are: The community language learning, the Silent Way, and Suggestopedia among others.

Among the affective factors which influence EFL learners, anxiety appears as one of the most outstanding factor due to its pervasive effects on foreign language learning. (Idri, 2012). In the previous two decades, there has been a great deal of research into second or foreign language anxiety. This research revealed that anxiety has a debilitating effect on the language learning process. It is, according to Brown (1974), an affective block that obstructs and deters effective language learning from occurring. Moreover, Oxford (1999) noted that language anxiety ranks high among factors influencing foreign language learning.
**Defining Language Anxiety:**

Broadly speaking, anxiety is a state of unease, a kind of troubled feeling in the mind marked by excessive uneasiness. It is also defined by Spielberger, (1983, cited in Awan et al. 2010, p. 33) as “a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (p.15). In addition, Sillamy (1996 cited in Idri, 2012) described anxiety as an affective state characterized by a feeling of insecurity, a diffused trouble. Anxiety in relation to foreign or second language learning, on the other hand, is defined as the specific negative reaction experienced in particular foreign or second language learning contexts when learners are expected to perform in the second or foreign language. (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). These definitions reflect researchers’ diverse views on anxiety, complicating the issue of finding one encompassing definition of this concept.

**Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety:**

For decades, the body of extensive research undertaken on foreign language anxiety has been to a great extent concerned with the role of anxiety in language learning in general, its causes and the way to cope with it. (Brown, 1974; Horwitz et.al, 1986; Oxford, 1999; Krashen, 1985; Aida, 1994; Idri, 2012). Moreover, many studies also deal with and explore anxiety associated with foreign language speaking (Subaşı, 2010; Cheng et al., 1999; Kitano, 2001; Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002; Liu, 2007; Tsiplakides and Keramida, 2009; Fang-peng and Dong, 2010) because it is considered as a highly anxiety-provoking aspect in a foreign language learning situation. (Cheng et al., 1999).

Devoted solely to speaking and communicating in the target language, foreign language speaking classrooms have often filled many students with nervousness and dread. Horwitz et al. (1986) claim that students suffering from foreign language speaking anxiety report feelings of apprehension and worry, and also feel uncomfortable about speaking in class. They believe that only correct English must be spoken and comparing their skills with native speakers of the target language, which makes them fear that their pronunciation is not good enough. Kitano (2001) argues that “speaking skill is usually the first thing that learners compare with that of peers, teachers, and native speakers” (p. 550). Faced with their teachers’ questions that they must answer and the possibility of talking in front of the whole class, they may have difficulty concentrating, and experience some symptoms like “nausea, sweating, weak knees and a dry mouth”. (Boyce et al., 2007). These anxious students may also skip classes, exhibit some disruptive behavior in class or quit studying altogether.

Although it is a major obstacle to foreign language learning in general and to speaking more specifically, anxiety can be reduced. Understanding the nature and the sources of foreign language speaking anxiety can offer more insights on how to deal with it. It can help teachers to support and encourage anxious students to be actively involved in foreign language speaking classrooms, as well as to ensure a relaxed low-anxiety environment for the improvement of their speaking skills.

**Theoretical Underpinnings:**

The literature overflows with research on foreign language anxiety and space does not permit a detailed review of the literature on this construct. Yet, to understand its nature, it is crucial to examine some theories postulated by major researchers in the field of language anxiety.
Horwitz et al.’s Research on Language Anxiety:

Foreign language classes had always left students with feelings of uneasiness, nervousness and dread and this cannot be attributed only to cognitive abilities, or proficiency in the language. (Horwitz et al., 1986). In almost thirty years of research, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) found that foreign language anxiety is a distinct affective variable in the foreign language learning process and that it has specific, well-defined detrimental effects on learning. To discover the real causes of language anxiety, Horwitz et al. designed in 1986 the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a tool including thirty-three items used by foreign language instructors to determine and capture the scope and severity of students’ anxiety and to examine its effects on learning in different contexts.

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three varieties or sources of foreign language anxiety. The first variety is communicative apprehension, which arises from the inability to adequately express thoughts and ideas. The second is fear of negative evaluation (FNE) which is defined as apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate one-self negatively. The third source is test anxiety or apprehension over academic evaluation. These three types of anxiety can cause students to postpone language study indefinitely or to quit learning altogether. They are experienced by many language learners and they pose potential problems because they interfere with and restrain learner’s ability and ultimately impede their proficiency in the foreign language.

Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis:

Krashen (1985), on the other hand, developed the Affective Filter Hypothesis which stipulates that a number of affective variables play a role in second language acquisition. He observed that anxiety if high is considered as “an ‘affective filter’ or a ‘mental block’ that correlates negatively and prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device” (Krashen, 1985, p. 100). In other words, when the filter is high it obstructs success in the second language. Therefore, Krashen asserted that second language teachers need to make sure that the students' affective filter is low at all times in order for learning to take place. He also believed that the Affective Filter is caused by environmental factors such as a stressful learning environment (i.e., too much instructional error correction, a strong focus upon pronunciation and form, or being humiliated amongst one’s peers.

In order to account for students’ foreign language anxiety, Krashen and Terrell (1983) developed the Natural Approach to teaching, which emphasizes the importance of decreasing the affective filter or barrier. They proposed a set of affective-humanistic activities that favor the use of short and useful dialogues, interviews and pair work on personal information. Their approach also encouraged the use of charts and tables, opinion polls on favorite activities that make students reveal information about themselves, or activate their imagination. Krashen (1985) also believed that for teachers to lower the Affective Filter, they should:

1- Create a relaxed learning atmosphere for the learners.
2- Avoid pointing out at the students’ grammatical mistakes and instead model the correct grammar.
3- Stress meaningful communication in the classroom.
Oxford’s Research on Anxiety and the Language Learner:

To understand the nature of anxiety experienced by language students (foreign or second language), Oxford (1999) studied the types of language anxiety and the factors that correlate with it. According to Oxford (1999), foreign or second language anxiety is related to performing in the target language and is not just a general performance anxiety. She made a sharp distinction between state anxiety and trait anxiety, i.e., a short-term state or a lasting trait. She also distinguished between helpful anxiety and harmful anxiety.

Trait anxiety is a stable personality trait. People who are trait anxious feel stressed in different situations and on regular basis. This type of anxiety has pervasive effects on language learning and often deters students’ performance and achievement. State anxiety, on the other hand, is not a lasting but a transitory condition and is felt only at a particular moment, for example, when a student is asked to perform in the target language. Oxford (1999) also classified anxiety into helpful and harmful. Helpful anxiety (or facilitating anxiety) facilitates language learning by keeping students alert and even by raising their self-confidence and motivation. (Scovel, 1978). This type of anxiety, Oxford (1999) believes, does not exist when students are confronted with difficult learning tasks. The harmful kind of anxiety, also referred to as debilitating anxiety, has detrimental impacts on performance. (Idri, 2012).

In addition to the three varieties of anxiety (communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety) outlined by Horwitz et al. (1986), Oxford (1999) identified four other sources linked to language anxiety: identity and culture shock, teachers and learners beliefs, classroom activities and methods as well as the instructor-learner interactions. The feeling of the loss of identity when learning a foreign language and the symptoms which go with it (like alienation, panic, etc.) lead to anxiety. This is referred to as culture shock. Moreover, some teachers and students’ beliefs are also associated with anxiety. The way students perceive their performance in terms of having to speak accurately and fluently, with an excellent accent, and their belief that languages are difficult to acquire, etc., also make them anxious. Also teachers’ beliefs and behaviors such as correcting every error made by students and exhibiting an authoritative role lead to anxiety. In addition, Oxford (1999) observes that some classroom activities like speaking tasks and oral presentations in front of the class trigger anxiety. Finally, anxiety is also related to instructor-student interactions in the classroom. When teachers constantly and harshly correct their students’ mistakes or errors, and when they ridicule them in front of the class, they are contributing to students’ anxiety and stress.

From this examination of the literature, it is clear that anxiety in language learning is a complex phenomenon. There are different causes that trigger it and its consequences are detrimental to students’ learning and performance. This paper focuses on harmful anxiety as the specific reaction of students towards speaking EFL that impairs their oral production. It seeks to investigate the nature and the sources of anxiety as it manifests itself in first-year LMD EFL students when communicating in speaking classrooms in an attempt to find out what might ease and decrease it.
Methodology:

Background of the Study and Research Questions:

Many first-year LMD students enrolled in the English Department at Saad Dahlab University of Blida get good grades on their written examinations, yet, when it comes to speaking English in oral classes which are devoted to speaking and communicating solely in the target language, many students exhibit serious problems and their oral performance is questionable. Four years of teaching EFL in the English Department at University Saad Dahlab of Blida were quite enough to reveal to the researcher that many freshmen students are poor communicators, reluctant to participate in class or share their thoughts and comments, and even prefer to use Arabic, their mother tongue, in class. Most importantly, these students appear fearful when asked to answer questions and resort to silence during the whole oral session and even in other courses that require any form of interaction.

Most of the time, teachers translate students’ hesitation to speak and their poor oral performance as an inability to achieve fluency in English allowing them to speak with confidence, a lack of interest and motivation, or simply regarding communication in English and oral classes as unimportant. These claims fail to recognize the pivotal role some affective factors other than students’ limited linguistics competence play in learning and speaking a foreign language. Students are very likely to experience anxiety in speaking and communicating in a new foreign language. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the nature and sources of anxiety in students and propose solutions to overcome it.

These observations were the starting point of this research. Moreover, what also shape the present research was the need to investigate the phenomenon of anxiety experienced by first-year LMD students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida where EFL speaking anxiety had not been previously addressed. This may make this study the first one to tackle the construct of anxiety in relation to speaking EFL in the English Department at Saad Dahlab University of Blida.

This study sets out to answer the following two research questions:

1. What is the nature of the anxiety experienced by first-year LMD students of English enrolled at Saad Dahlab University of Blida when speaking EFL in oral classes?
2. What possible factors contribute to EFL speaking anxiety and increase it in oral classes?

Participants:

This study was conducted in the Department of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida. A sample of 54 first-year LMD students of English was randomly selected to participate in this study. The sample was chosen in terms of two groups formed randomly by the administration of the English Department. However, the size of this sample was reduced to 30 participants who returned the questionnaire administered to them. Freshmen students, aged 17-22, are the focus of this paper for two major reasons. First, they are beginner learners and are still at a comparatively low level of English proficiency, thus can more likely experience foreign language anxiety in performing orally. Besides it is crucial and more beneficial to understand the phenomenon of
Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Speaking Classrooms

Melouah

anxiety and the factors that reduce it at an earlier stage of students’ university studies in order to help them overcome any feelings of nervousness and stress and improve their speaking skills.

Instrument and Data Analysis:

For the purpose of collecting data, the instrument employed is a questionnaire distributed to all students involved in this study. It is a self-report tool used to elicit the participants’ anxiety responses towards speaking EFL in oral classes. The questionnaire contains 23 items all related to the degree of EFL speaking anxiety as well as possible causes attributed to it. It is a modified version of the original Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) which is composed of 33 items. The existing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale used to measure language learning anxiety did not meet the purpose of the current study, which is examining the nature and the sources of EFL speaking anxiety exhibited by first year students. For this reason, the foreign language speaking anxiety scale (FLSAS) was constructed (see Appendix for details).

The instruction on the questionnaire sheet required the students to rate the 23 items of the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. Moreover, they were given simple instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and were asked to think of their experiences in previous oral classes. To motivate the students to give frank answers, they were informed that there were no right or wrong answers, and were not informed about the real objectives of the study. To maintain confidentiality, they were told that they do not have to write their names on the questionnaire sheet.

When students completed the questionnaire and returned it, their responses were quantified by classifying and tallying them into five categories: agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree and undecided. When the responses were transformed into numbers, they were tabulated and stored into the computer for analysis. The data analysis has been done quantitatively. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the data generated from the questionnaire. Only descriptive statistics were performed and these consists namely of percentages. For better understanding, the results will be reported using tables in the following section.

Results and Discussion:

The results of this study are discussed by addressing each of the two research questions:

1. What is the nature of the anxiety experienced by first-year LMD students of English enrolled at Saad Dahlab University of Blida when speaking EFL in oral classes?

As stated previously, a number of 30 first-year LMD students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida took part in the study and returned the questionnaire. When students’ responses were transformed into percentages, both ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ responses were combined together to gain a global degree of agreement. The responses ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ were also matched to get an overall measure of disagreement. The responses marked with ‘undecided’, which represent only 6 % of the total answers, were dropped because they reveal students’ indecisiveness as whether they experienced speaking anxiety or not.
Following the analysis and interpretation of the participants’ responses, the results indicated that most of the students reported that the speaking course often makes them feel tense and nervous (items 19, 21). As seen in table 1, 56 % of the respondents stated that they experienced anxiety in oral classes and outlined specific situations that usually lead to their stress. At the same time, only 38 % of the respondents stated that they do not feel anxious in the oral class. This reveals a negative relationship between anxiety and speaking EFL among first-year LMD students. Foreign language speaking anxiety was pervasive among first-year LMD students and is a passing state students experience in certain situations. The results also show that the anxiety students experience in speaking English is debilitative. It hinders their oral performance as shown in item 10, fills them with feelings of worry, self-doubt and uneasiness (items 1, 3, 9, 13, 19, 20), and lowers their self-esteem and self-confidence (items 17, 18, 22). The factors which provoke this anxiety among students will be examined in the following section.

Table 1. EFL Speaking Anxiety Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>Experienced Anxiety</th>
<th>Did not experience Anxiety</th>
<th>Showed indecisiveness</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What possible factors contribute to EFL speaking anxiety and increase it in oral classes?

Identifying the underlying factors behind EFL speaking anxiety in the oral classroom is a crucial step before suggesting solutions to deal with it. The major sources of speaking anxiety were extracted from students’ responses. These are six anxiety-provoking sources reported in table 2 to help identify the causes which are the highest among the students.

Table 2. Factors Correlating Negatively with EFL Speaking Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of EFL Speaking Anxiety</th>
<th>No. Items</th>
<th>Agreement Mean (SA+A)</th>
<th>Agreement (%) (SA+A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of interaction</td>
<td>3, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23,</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of perceptions of others (fear of audience)</td>
<td>22, 17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and lack of confidence</td>
<td>1,14, 17, 22</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language proficiency</td>
<td>2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 20</td>
<td>12.83</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error correction/ fear of negative evaluation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of speaking with natives</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that EFL speaking anxiety appears to mostly stem from error correction, language proficiency, lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem, fear of interaction, fear of perception of others, and fear of speaking with natives. The highest level of oral anxiety has been exhibited by those items related to fear of interaction where many students (58%) were concerned about the possibility of being called on to answer questions in the oral classroom in front of other students and felt their hearts pounding. These students also commented that it is “embarrassing to volunteer answers in the oral class”. Therefore, a lot of students prefer to remain silent and do not participate in the classroom.

In addition, fear of perceptions of others (with 54%) and lack of confidence and low self-esteem (with 51%) take the second and third place, respectively, among the major causes of EFL speaking anxiety. Most of the students’ perceptions of other students and the teacher together with the fear of being embarrassed and criticized in front of the whole class troubled many students and engendered speaking anxiety. Students were afraid that they could not respond appropriately or correctly in front of their classmates. These fears are brought on by the possibility that their peers would laugh at them and ridicule them if their performance is poor. Learners exhibiting lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem have a tendency to rank their speaking abilities lower than that of their peers. As the results showed, many students (51%) stated that they “never feel quite sure of themselves when speaking in the oral class” or they believe that “the others students speak English better” and that these students “will laugh at them when they speak English”.

With a percentage of 43%, language proficiency is also an important factor leading to EFL anxiety in the oral classroom. Many students claim that they feel afraid when “they don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the oral class”, and that they even “forget things they know and get nervous and confused when speaking English in the oral class”. Often, the incomprehensible input caused anxiety among students who might not understand what the teacher is saying and asking.

Students’ anxiety is also brought on by a fear of negative correction and evaluation with 29% of the respondents claiming that they are “afraid their teacher is ready to correct every mistake they make”. Many of the students were conscious and anxious that their knowledge and performance of English will be judged negatively by their teacher and their classmates. Concerns are made about the teachers’ manner and reactions towards error correction and the feedback they give to the students. The last factor behind EFL speaking anxiety is fear of speaking with natives with 15% of students believing that “it would be nervous speaking English with native speakers”. Comparing their speaking abilities with people proficient in the English language, this statement shows that the students perceive themselves less competent than the native speakers of English and this makes them feel a greater amount of anxiety. Given that all the teachers are native Algerians, many students in the Department of English did not have any experience of speaking with English natives and thus reported in the questionnaire that they would be nervous in such a situation.

In summary, EFL speaking anxiety is pervasive among first year LMD English students enrolled in the English Department at Saad Dahlab University of Blida and it greatly affects their oral performance. This study also revealed that EFL speaking anxiety stems from six different factors. Among all these sources, the top cause of speaking anxiety found in this study is the fear
of interaction. These findings corroborate the study of Subaşı (2010) who found that sources like fear of negative evaluation, teachers’ manners of error corrections, students’ low language proficiency and students’ self-perceived ability in comparison with that of their peers or native speakers impacted negatively Turkish EFL students’ speaking. Based on these results, the following section puts forward some suggestions to help reduce speaking anxiety in the EFL oral classroom.

**Implications:**

By investigating the factors that contribute to EFL speaking anxiety several recommendations can be offered in dealing with it in the oral classroom. These suggestions are the results of the conclusions drawn from this study. They are meant for educators and teachers of speaking to successfully help their students overcome feelings of anxiety and provide them with a positive environment. The following ideas can be tried by teachers:

1- Making students more comfortable in the classroom and with speaking English by creating a pleasant atmosphere, eliminating competition and perfectionism, addressing students with their first names and by including humor, laughter or jokes.

2- Reassuring students that mistakes are part of their learning and that it takes time to acquire the language and become fluent speakers of English.

3- Allowing discussions in smaller groups so that students do not have to face the whole class.

4- Encouraging students to speak English outside the classroom and interact and practice with their peers and family.

5- Giving positive feedback to the students and encouraging remarks and rewards to raise their self-confidence in performing orally.

6- Incorporating classroom speaking activities based on plain and easy language so that all the participants can practice and speak without any difficulty.

7- Presenting and writing on the board new vocabulary associated with the topic the class is discussing before starting the speaking lesson so that the students get familiar with it.

8- Avoiding negative error correction and humiliation of students.

9- Correcting students’ mistakes indirectly while they are speaking. For example, when correcting indirectly a student’s spelling or pronunciation errors the teacher can repeat what the student said using the right spelling or pronouncing the words correctly. This can help the student recognize his mistake without pointing at it directly.

10- Incorporating games in the classroom that interests the students (for example, role plays).

11- Making students sit in a circle, instead of in rows.

12- Allowing students to move around the class and work in groups or make projects and presentations as posters.

13- Helping anxious students outside the classroom.

**Conclusion:**

The present study was undertaken to investigate the nature and sources of foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by first year LMD students of English enrolled at Saad Dahlab University of Blida. Through the use of a modified version of Horwitz et al.’s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the results of this study demonstrated that many
EFL first-year LMD students suffer from anxiety in the oral classroom due to factors like fear of interaction, fear of perception of others, low self-confidence and low self-esteem and many others. On the basis of these results, several implications were proposed to raise teachers and educators’ awareness about the negative impacts anxiety has on students’ ability to speak and the various sources that contribute to it. It is hoped that these implications will encourage the teachers to identify students with a high level of anxiety and create a safe supportive environment so that they feel motivated to communicate orally and practice the English language.

About the author:

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References:


Subaşı, G. (2010). What are the Main Sources of Turkish EFL Students’ Anxiety in Oral Practice? *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 1*, 2, 29-49.


**Appendix:** Questionnaire for first-Year LMD Students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida, Algeria

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is part of a research conducted in the Department of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida and is aimed at gathering information about how you usually feel in the oral class as first-year learners of English as a foreign language. The items in the table below may reflect your feelings in the oral class or about speaking English in general. Kindly read each item and indicate honestly whether you 1) Agree, 2) strongly agree, 3) disagree, 4) strongly disagree, 5) undecided. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR FRANK OPINION IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED AND WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL. THERE ARE NEITHER RIGHT NOR WRONG ANSWERS; WE ARE MERELY INTERESTED IN YOUR ATTITUDES.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>U</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the oral class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t worry about making mistakes in the oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in the oral class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more English oral classes per week</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>During the English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well to my oral presentation</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I am usually at ease during the oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In the oral class I can get so nervous I forget things I know</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I often feel like not going to the oral class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I feel confident when I speak in the oral class</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I am afraid my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make while speaking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in the oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I feel more tense and nervous in the oral class than in my other classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in my oral class</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>When I am on my way to the oral class, I feel very sure and relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak English</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I feel nervous in the oral class when the English teacher asks me questions and I must reply in the oral class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, U=Undecided*
Raising Awareness: Introducing Ecocomposition into EFL Writing Classroom

Entisar A. Elsherif
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA

Abstract

Ecocomposition is a fairly new applied approach in the composition classroom. Its application helped first-year composition teachers raise environmental awareness and discuss the impact of place on writers. In spite of its significance, ecocomposition application in the EFL classroom is nearly nonexistent. The purpose of this paper is to explore how ecocomposition is implemented in the composition classroom to propose introducing it to the EFL writing classroom. This is by discussing the ways in which ecocomposition is applied in the first-year college composition classroom by a number of compositionists and writing teachers such as Derek Owens and others. In discussing those ways of applying ecocomposition into the EFL writing classroom, EFL writing teachers will have examples that would help them design ecocomposition courses that would help raising place and environment awareness.

Keywords: Ecocomposition, environment-oriented composition, place-oriented composition, and sustainability.
Introduction

Topics such as nature, environment, climate change, sustainability, and the relationships between writers and places increased interest in environment-oriented and place-oriented composition classes. Many educators changed their focus from cultural to environmental literacy to raise awareness to human influence on the environment (Long, 2001) and their interactions with the place. First-year college teachers discussed environmental matters in their composition class. They encouraged their students to write about changing the world, saving nature, and sustaining ecosystems. In these courses, students read, discussed, and wrote about place and environmental problems while developing their written communication. English composition courses that included reading and writing about the place, and environmental matters are now known as ecocomposition. Writing teachers referred to their courses as ecocomposition to pay attention to what is going on outside the class by bringing it into their writing classes and to refer to their interest in place and environmental issues.

The present essay explores how ecocomposition is applied in the composition classroom with the aim of proposing its implementation into the EFL writing classroom. It summarizes the procedures taken by selected first-year college composition teachers in teaching ecocomposition to facilitate answering the main question that asks: how to apply ecocomposition in the EFL writing classroom?

What is ecocomposition?

As a subfield in composition studies, ecocomposition is regarded as a new approach that is still developing. The term was formed by combining ecology with composition (Dobrin&Weisser, 2002a) taking ‘eco’ from ecology and adding it to composition to state interest in place and environment. Ecocomposition was defined in a variety of ways. Mostly, these definitions focused on ‘writing about place’ and ‘writing in place’. Some simplified it as nature writing whereas others brought environmental problems into their classroom. Dobrin&Weisser (2002a,p. 6) defined ecocomposition as “the study of the relationships between environments and discourse.” The meaning of environment here not only covers natural places but also “constructed and even imagined places” (p. 6). Environment covers classroom, political, ideological, historical, economic, and natural environments, as well. Dobrin&Weisser (2002b,p. 587) insist that ecocomposition is not just providing students with texts on nature writing; it should include “the act of producing writing” as well.

Although many writing teachers dealt with nature and environmental issues since 1970s, nearly most of ecocompositionists regard Marilyn Cooper’s essay titled The Ecology of Writing published in 1986 as the primary step of introducing ecocomposition that created its foundations (Dobrin&Weisser,2002b). She offered an ‘ecological model’ of writing and explained that writers were influenced by as well as influence the ‘systems.’ She referred to the environment with the term ‘systems.’ Ecocriticism, which looks at “the relationship between literature and the physical world” is regarded as an opening to ecocomposition, as well (Golflety& Fromm, 1996,p. xviii). It offered “two critical component” (p. 262). Ecocriticism presented place and the relationships between humans and the world as components to ecocomposition. In addition, the appearance of four books that were devoted to ecocomposition formed the fundamentals of
Ecocomposition as a theoretical and pedagogical approach (Dobrin & Weisser, 2002b). Those books are Dramas of Solitude: Narratives of Retreat in American Nature by Randall Rooda, Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation by Derek Owens, Weisser and Dobrin’s edited collection of essays in Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches, and Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition by Dobrin and Weisser.

Ecocomposition in the EFL writing classroom

Rising temperatures are changing the world. Climate change is affecting rain forests, causing ice melting, and increasing violent storms. Natural disasters that are caused by climate change are affecting many areas around the world. For that reason, literary educators are raising awareness through writing. Teaching for raising environmental consciousness should not only be limited to the composition class, it should also be included in the EFL writing classroom. Since Weisser and Dobrin (2001, p. 2) believe in the necessity of a bio-diverse ecocomposition. Bio-diversity can be achieved by implementing ecocomposition into the EFL classroom. Therefore, I propose implementing ecocomposition in the EFL writing classroom.

The first question that was posed inquired about the ways in which ecocomposition applied in the EFL writing classroom. As it was clear that published research on ecocomposition in the EFL classroom is nearly nonexistent, another question was raised, which is: how is ecocomposition applied in the composition classroom? Looking at essays published in peer-reviewed journals and books published by trustworthy academic publishers revealed that ecocomposition was considered and applied in a variety of ways, which included looking at physical environment, created environments, place and/or space. While some first-year composition teachers concentrated on sustainability, others integrated service learning and/or webbed environments into their ecocomposition courses.

First-year composition teachers are now playing a great role in raising awareness. EFL writing teachers can play the same role by broadening their writing courses’ requirements to include not only advancing students’ written fluency but also their relationships with place and environmental issues. They should engage students in global and local matters that are going outside the classroom by bringing them into the class through relevant readings, discussions, and writing. As Blitz and Hurlbert (1998, p. 55) state, “what is the point of teaching people to read and write if we are not also trying to teach them to understand the world and to make it better?” The EFL writing teacher can play an active role in raising consciousness and helping students understand their world by discussing the significance of sustainability, helping students appreciate and interact with their locations, engaging students in service learning, involving students in campus ecology and webbed environments, familiarizing students with suburban studies, and adopting relevant readings.

Discuss the significance of sustainability

EFL teachers can introduce what Derek Owens suggested about environment and sustainability into their writing classes. Owens encouraged writing teachers to include environment in their courses. He believes that environmental issues are as important as race, class, and gender because “such sites of cultural conflict are so often matters of environmental injustice as well”
By providing the students with the chance to write about the environment, their ‘testimonies’ might help in raising the faculty, administrators, and public awareness towards important environmental issues. He encouraged writing teachers to change the role of composition into a “service” discipline as well as their roles as educators by designing a curriculum “that moves continually toward environmental stability and community revitalization” (p. 35). The main aim for writing teachers is to motivate ‘sustainable thinking’ through writing courses.

Owens stressed the significance of integrating the concept of sustainability in the academic curriculum. He defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the needs of the future generations” (Owens, 2001a,p. 27). He believes that educators are responsible to create a pedagogy that is local and raises the awareness to the necessity of thinking and acting sustainably. For Owens, it does not matter what the teacher calls the course ‘ecocomposition’ or ‘sustainable composition.’ What matters is writing teachers’ responsibility in raising students’ awareness to the threatened world they live in.

Owens argued that designing a sustainability-based pedagogy is based on six tenets: 1) promoting sustainability conscious curricula forms a sustainable society, 2) the result of careful consideration of “social traps” of unsustainability is “avoiding” them, 3) understanding the terms “antigrowth and prodevelopment” will show the reality of what is known as growth and development, 4) supporting sustainability, 5) refusing the existing ideas about work and labor by redesigning business and work nature, and 6) demonstrating the sustainability curriculum through college campus everyday procedures (Owens, 2001b,p. 27 – 32).

For EFL writing teachers who are interested in integrating sustainability in their writing classes, Owens summarized his approach in his article Sustainable Composition and provided detailed explanations with examples of his students’ writings in his book Composition and Sustainability. He explained three steps for creating a sustainable curriculum. As a first step, he asked writing teachers interested in sustainability to recognize their institutions’ levels of awareness of sustainability by taking the “Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) for colleges and universities” which is available online (p. 34). This questionnaire will help the teachers check whether their institutions are committed to teaching for sustainability. He predicted that this questionnaire would show the teachers’ and their institutions’ failure as educators in raising awareness for sustainability. Secondly, he encouraged teachers to investigate other scholars’ and organizations’ results about ‘sustainability-minded education.’ This will provide teachers with essential information that would form the basis for their curriculum. The final step was to examine what has been collected, and design a curriculum that promotes sustainability and offers collaboration. In fact, by following those steps, EFL writing teachers not only would be able to create writing courses that promote sustainable thinking but also would be able to create an ecocomposition course related to their perceptions.

Although Owens did not include his course syllabus in the summary, a detailed course syllabus was added in the appendix of his book. This would provide writing teachers who are interested in ecocomposition with ideas and insights about integrating sustainability in the writing classroom. Appendix B showed that there were four phases during the course. By dividing the first-year composition course into four stages, each of which is about three or four weeks, Owens designed
a theme-based course that aimed to develop students’ sustainability awareness. Students chose from “two or three writing sequences” (Owens, 2001a, p. 30), explored and wrote about subjects and problems of significance to them. Owen’s goal was to form a class environment where students present their concerns on local issues and create written texts instantaneously. In the first-phase students were asked to write about places whereas in the second and third phases, students were asked to choose one from a list of themes in each phase. In the final phase, students were asked to write about the future. The seven themes were: 1) place portraits, 2) designing Eutopia, 3) neighborhood histories, 4) oral history preservation, 5) tribal testimonies, 6) work stories, and 7) future scenarios.

In *Place Portraits* students explored their close surroundings. Then, they created written descriptions and photographic pictures about the places they lived in order to help their peers envision the place. By the middle of the process, students showed photographs about their neighborhoods to their peers and created discussion that would improve students’ written texts. Finally, students published their “written and photographic studies” on a website monitored by him (p. 31). One of his goals is to expand this project to include college students’ writings from all around America. EFL teachers have the chance to achieve this goal by including different areas from around the world where English is the native language, a second language, or a foreign language. This will raise awareness and answer the call for international action.

Eutopia in *Designing Eutopia* infers to “the good place” (Owens, 2001a, p. 31). Those students who chose to advance their written and photographic portraits into their ‘local communities,’ Owens asked them to write ‘speculative essays.’ To write such essays, students read about the characteristics of good places and then wrote reflection essays. Subsequently, they wrote their own descriptions of ways of changing their communities from being bad places to good places. The final stage was making reflections and comparisons between the existing situation of their communities and the ones they designed in their written portraits.

Students who chose *Neighborhood Histories* studied the historical perception of their neighborhood or a different one they are interested in. They searched their libraries and read pieces that discuss the history of their neighborhoods. Then, they wrote imaginary images of how their place was in the past and how it will become in the future. His aim was to convince his students that they were “agents of change for that community” (Owens, 2001a, p. 32).

In the sequence of *Oral History Preservation*, Owen’s aim was to encourage students to realize the worthiness of preservation and having “preservational ethics” (p. 32). Firstly, students were introduced to short readings about languages’ distinction. Then, they were introduced to examples of oral histories and how to make them. After that, students interviewed old family members for four hours within a number of weeks of the course. Subsequently, students either wrote their results in an interview style or as a narrative. In this stage, some students got the chance to practice translation because their relatives did not speak English. Owens explained that these narratives mostly do not get published on the web because of the privacy of the content of most of the stories. They were stories that are meant to be reserved and valued by the students themselves.
With some similarity with the previous sequence, students who chose *Tribal Testimonies* got the chance to investigate a specific culture or subculture. In this sequence, however, students concentrated on cultural activities that have meaningful values to people. Students read texts that relate them to such values, as well. As a final stage, students had the chance to publish their written texts on the web.

*Work Stories* were intended to be as effective ways of relating students to their present and future interests. In this sequence, students read relevant readings that were chosen by Owens. After that, students explained what work meant to them and wrote descriptions of what they regarded as ‘good or bad’ jobs. As a final assignment, students designed a plan for a job that made their employees appreciate it and feel the pleasure of working there. This sequence is significant, since students’ main aim of attending colleges and universities is being able to have a decent work. Making students relate their writings to their future plans about work is beneficial and teaches students how to “criticize unsustainable businesses” (Owens, 2001a,p. 34).

The Final sequence is *Future Scenarios*. After reading texts by “optimistic” and “pessimistic” futurists, students wrote “speculative narratives” (p. 34). In their narratives, students speculate their families’ futures as well as theirs, and they predict what would happen in twenty-five years.

**Help students appreciate and interact with their locations**

In his article *Education and Environmental Literacy: Reflection on Teaching Ecocomposition in Keene State College’s Environmental House*, Long (2001) emphasized the importance of locations in teaching to improve the teaching of writing and environmental literacy. He provided his experience as an example that would encourage writing teachers to use their institutions’ locations to integrate ecocomposition. Long’s course was planned for students who were residents of the Keene College “Environmental House (E-house)” (Long, 2001, p. 137). First-year students who were interested in environmental issues were offered the opportunity to live in E-house, which enabled them to participate in “academic and residential activities” (p. 138). He planned this course to give the students the chance to understand and improve their relationships with place and environment.

Long explained to his students the type of work that they were asked to do in the beginning of the course. In his course, students were familiarized with language use conventions and the “process of inquiry” (p. 139). By teaching his students “careful observation, reflective thinking, disciplined research, and purposive writing,” he aimed to increase students’ proficiencies in thinking and writing creatively about their world (p. 139). Long started his course by discussing and writing about students’ experiences on the way they ‘got’ to college, the knowledge they got in their everyday interactions with the new environment, and about the motivations and plans they had for the future. In brief, Long asked his students to reflect on their personal, academic, and environmental transition. He believes that teachers need to help their students to examine and reflect on such experiences.

As a second stage, Long (2001,p. 139) offered his students the chance to discuss the “rewards” and “difficulties” of having efficient interactions with their environs. He engaged the students in readings about everyday life problems, adjusting to the environment, and awareness and embrace of the environment. Those readings introduced his students to varied names such
as John Dewey, Wiliam Carlos Williams, John Berger, and others. This gave the students the chance to see different styles and different perceptions that helped them create their own insights and writing styles. Long’s aims were to help the students learn from their everyday experiences, position themselves in their environs, develop interaction with the environment, and become capable of expressing their ideas creatively and logically. Students writing assignments varied from reflecting on their readings and describing terminologies to writing about authors who discussed environmental problems and the environment.

Long concluded his essay by presenting his evaluation of his course. He assured that the course helped him along with the students. He told the readers that he not only developed his understanding of literacy and environment but also learnt valuable lessons from this experience. He also encouraged writing teachers to move forward by helping students to understand “how human center gives meaning and value to the world in radically, and consequential ways” (Long, 2001,p. 143). Although he did not add his course syllabus, his explanations were useful in helping the reader to examine the type of readings that were introduced to his students. By providing names of the authors and some titles of the books, interested teachers could go back to such books and evaluate whether they are suitable for their writing classes or not.

Engage students in service learning

Ingram took ecocomposition “a step further” (2001,p. 209) by integrating service learning into the environmental writing class which broadened the limits of the classroom. In her essay, titled Service Learning and Ecocomposition: Developing Sustainable practice through Inter- and Extradisciplinarity, she described the benefits of integrating ecocomposition with service learning. Additionally, Ingram showed how this helped the students, the teacher, and their community. By working together outside their classes and in their communities, students improve their confidence and communicating skills and “succeed in composition activities such as peer review and substantive revision” (Ingram, 2001,p. 210). Students become familiar with basic environmental matters as well. Similarly, teachers participate in in-service work while teaching and become more aware of their local community.

Ingram linked ecocomposition theory with praxis by teaching issues related to the environment and integrating community practice while teaching first-year composition. She organized her ecocomposition curricula as theme-based and multi-disciplinary that offered diversity. She used three “ready-made environmental readers” (p. 217) that are: Reading the environment by Melissa Walker, Being in the world: An Environmental Reader for Writers by Schott Slovic and Terre Dixon, and Forest of voices: conversations in ecology by Chris Anderson and LexRunciman. Those readers provided varied collection of essays, articles, short stories, and poems and covered a variety of topics on nature and environment. These collections were written by different writers such as naturalists, journalists, poets and others. They were selected with the aim of introducing the students to the world around them, encouraging critical reading, and facilitating writing about their relationship with nature, the world, and themselves.

Her course began by introducing the students to common topics related to place by asking them to write, “personal essay[s] about place[s] they know well” (Ingram, 2001,p. 217). Following that, students read and wrote about different topics that comprise their experiences with wilderness, “environmental ethics, other species, and environmental activism” (p. 217).
arrangement of the assignments started from being “personal, local and familiar” and moved to being “more abstract, global and unfamiliar” (p. 217). The chosen readings concentrated on specific local areas whereas the assigned written assignments developed different writing and research skills. First, she engaged her students in ‘short research papers’ to improve their library skills and their ability in using sources. Then, students started their ‘research paper project’. In this stage, students applied the skills they had learnt while conducting the small research projects.

Although there is not as many details about the course as in Owens’ book and article, EFL writing teachers might find the brief description of integrating ecocomposition with service learning motivating and can be applied in their writing classrooms. She included her course syllabus, the assignments, and class policies in the appendix which provides real support for interested writing teachers.

**Involve students in campus ecology and webbed environment**

Monsma explored the relationships between the composition course, the campus, and the World Wide Web in his article titled *Writing Home: Composition, Campus Ecology, and Webbed Environment*. He described his composition course and explained the difficulties and potentials of integrating these apparently different spaces. Four elements cemented Monsma’s course design: the university campus, his interest in ecology-based course content, computers and internet, and the presentation of “the knowledge gleaned through the research project” (Monsma, 2001,p. 282). Since students tended not to pay attention to the surrounding environment, he sought to raise their awareness towards their local environments with the possibility of helping in raising the university’s attention to such matters.

Unlike Owens and Ingram who added their courses’ syllabus in the appendix, Monsma just provided a description of the procedures he took and an evaluation of his course. Inspired by Barry Lopez’s work, Monsma designed his course to enable the students to investigate their university’s natural history and relate them to their place.

Monsma started the course by asking students to walk around the university campus “considering the place through their nonvisual senses, and analyzing the possible effects on their perceptions” (Monsma, 2001,p. 283) and write about such experiences. Then, students chose their topics from a collection of environmental matters they noticed during their consideration of place as a direction of inquiry such as water use, water disposal and recycling, and landscape design. After that, students started their own investigations about their selected topics. In these stages, students wrote, revised, and progressively formed their final papers. This gave the students the chance to learn “textual, hypertextual, and interpersonal research methods” (p. 284). Students learnt how to conduct continuous “fieldwork” and observation, as well. In the meantime, students learnt to improve their writing similarly to an ordinary composition classroom such as the paragraph organization, paragraph development and other strategies.

Monsma noticed that the more the students gained progress in their projects the more they became aware of ecological relationships. Students realized that their topics were related in many ways and started to work together. He explains that students’ relationships were not enforced; the
cooperation between the students was a result of their consciousness and realization of the connections between place and humans. As the students’ projects developed, they designed a web page where they can contribute together. Instead of writing single research papers they gave themselves the chance to link each other’s work. At the same time, they made their written text available to readers outside their classroom peers. This gave them a great opportunity to learn the importance of writing and how it affects others and place.

**Familiarize students with suburban studies**

Hothem focused on the suburban environment and discussed connections between ecocomposition and suburban studies in his essay *Suburban Studies and College Writing*. He discussed his theme-based composition curricula that he taught to first-year undergraduate composition students with the aim of encouraging “practical application of ecoliteracy” and confirming the significance of creating “writing curricula on students’ experience” (Hothem, 2009, p. 38). He started to teach this course as an instructor of The Suburban Experience when he was in the Knight Writing Program at Cornell University. Then, he continued teaching it at the University of California at Davis and the University of California at Merced.

Hothem called for helping students to examine the suburban experience to improve their “sense of place” and reconsider the language they use to express normal ideas (p. 37). Accordingly, paying attention to suburban studies in an ecocomposition course makes students’ daily existence “a subject of serious inquiry” and raises their environmental consciousness in their writing (p. 37). He assures that composition classes are exceptional places for considering and practicing the knowledge of place.

Consequently, Hothem provides the students with the chance to write suburban histories that are connected their “personal backgrounds” to their “educational pathways” (p. 39). Through this procedure, students develop new perceptions for their scholarship. Students develop writing drafts through “brainstorm hypothesis discussions and workshops” that help them learn how to present their knowledge in their written texts. He exclaims that most of class discussions started by addressing the limitedness of suburbia. On the contrary, students’ examination of suburbia had always given them to produce more materials than they would have expected.

Similar to other composition teachers, Hothem chose readings that would engage students and provide them with the necessary knowledge. Students were given the chance to read texts written by authors such as Lopez and respond to those reading. After that, they “draw upon their responses” to write description of their own (Hothem, 2009, p. 43). He concludes that his course is similar to any course except in its focus on suburban values. He ensures that students “will find a place for themselves in their written expression” by implementing ecocomposition (p. 55).

**Decide what to adopt as relevant readings**

Another important point that should be raised is related to whether the EFL teachers are going to use textbooks or not. In his article, *A place in which we stand*, Hurlbert (2006, p. 353) confessed that he had not used a textbook while he was teaching undergraduate composition classes because textbooks are “distraction[s] from the realities of the places in which we live.” He noted
that what his students needed was personalized assistance from an experienced writing teacher, opportunities to learn, and appropriate readings. Planning projects, editing grammar, “desktop publishing,” and developing strategies of research and writing are the learning opportunities the students got during their writing process (Hurlbert, 2006, p. 454). Hurlbert gave the students the chance to research and read readings that were relevant to their topics. Therefore, EFL writing teachers have the choice to either adopt certain readers as textbooks, choose readings from different sources that would be related to their students’ environs or places as well as their interests, or design a course that would include readings from readers such as the ones used by Owens and the others and readers related to the learners’ environment and place.

Looking at the readers that were used by some of the composition teachers, it seems that they concentrated on different perspectives which helped the students to think critically about the nature, their attitudes towards their places, the value of place, the existence of webbed environments, and their relationships with all of that. One of the chosen readers was by Slovic & Dixon (1993). They divided their book into four parts that dealt with how people were involved and related to the surrounding environments. Although Being in The World was published in 1993, EFL teachers could choose readings that concentrate not only on nature but also on topics that deal with how to think about the environment.

If EFL teachers decided to deal with environmental issues to raise students’ awareness to climate change, for instance, they have a variety of choices such as Robert Henson’s The Rough Guide to Climate Change. This up-to-date guide, and other similar guides, provides the readers with thorough explanations about the signs of climate change. It also shows the debate between the skeptics, politicians, activists, and lobby groups; and the possible solutions. The book is divided into five parts that will aid the readers with essential information starting from the “basics,” recognizing the “symptoms” and how “science” defines this issue, to introducing the readers to the “debates and solutions” and providing ways that the reader can do to make a change (Henson 2011, p. x). It will assist the readers to be able to examine various sides of “this sprawling issue” (p. x).

Dobrin’s Saving Place: An Ecocomposition Reader is an additional choice for EFL writers. This reader includes thematic sixty-five collections of varied texts that consist of essays, poetry, comics, and ads. These themes state environmental and other varied topics highlight “rhetorical understanding” and “critical and analytical thinking” (Dobrin, 2005, p. vii). Each chapter provides students with selected readings related to a certain topic and asks them to write journals related to the readings. After the readings, students go through questions that are related to “ecological literacy and discursive ecology” (p. xvii). Finally, students are introduced to writing “prompts” about the discussed issues to write “different kinds of responses” (p. xvii).

An additional choice would be from the EFL learners’ environment itself. Teachers could look for readings related to the topics being dealt with in class, even if they were in the learner’s first language, to help EFL writers learn how to discuss such topics and contribute in the process of raising environmental consciousness.
Conclusion

Discussing composition teachers’ experiences in implementing ecocomposition does not mean that the EFL writing teachers have to follow them exactly. Luce-Kapler’s (2004, p. 5) experience with Nancie Atwell’s program shows that teachers have to plan their courses according to the environment of the class. Therefore, these experiences are discussed as examples to show how applicable is applying ecocomposition into the language classroom.

As said by Hurlbert (2006, p. 454), “It is writing inspired by place that teaches others about love of place.” EFL writing teachers should be encouraged to integrate ecocomposition into their writing classrooms not only to raise awareness to significant issues but also to help students relate their foreign language to places they love. Many EFL students are required to take language proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS which examine their language fluency by providing readings and writing prompts related to many environmental issues. Therefore, by integrating ecocomposition into the EFL writing classroom, students not only learn to appreciate, respect and love their places but also will be prepared for such topics when taking TOEFL or IELTS.

Killingsworth suggested specific changes to help the writing teachers concentrate on place-oriented teaching. He asked writing teachers to involve students in questions that lead them to discuss the “metaphors of place and space” (p. 370). When students are given the chance to choose the readings, he advised writing teachers to use ‘multidisciplinary environmental themes.’ The accessibility of some governmental documents related to ecological matters help students gain understanding about these issues and how to deal with such documents. Another point to consider is the significance of relating local issues. Killingsworth recommended writing teachers to equalize the teaching of localization and global matters during service-learning projects. For instance, while students dealing with a local issue, they can relate it and compare it to another place.

It is widely known that writing affects people and can make a change. Therefore, it is the responsibility of EFL writing teachers to change their writing classes to more effective writing experiences. Relating the students to their place and raising their awareness to their environment is a vital duty. In today’s environmental changes, it is better to start than wait for others to take action.

About the author

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References


Teaching English Phrasal Verbs to Non-native Speakers of English

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Abstract:

Researchers as well as learners of English language agree, to a great extend, that the phenomenon of English phrasal verbs (e.g., to break up, to give in, to get away with) (henceforth EPVs) poses a great deal of challenge to non-native speakers who want to learn the language and for interpreters/translator who involve in interpreting/translating them from and/or into the English language. Therefore, successful methods of teaching such complex English expressions to non-native speakers would undoubtedly help facilitate the process of learning them and in turn interpreting/translating them from and/or into English. Scholars from such domains as linguistics, lexicography and pedagogy have at length addressed the issue of teaching EPVs to non-native speakers and come up with a number of practical methods. In this paper this vital issue will be carefully investigated and the methods and materials used for teaching EPVs will be explored.

Keywords: Phrasal Verbs, Linguistics, Pedagogy, Teaching Methods, Teaching Materials
Introduction

A large amount of literature has been devoted to account for the question of teaching EPVs to non-native speakers who study English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). This stems from the fact that EPVs, especially the idiomatic type, constitute difficulty not only for learners of English but also for teachers, curriculum designers and material writers in the fields of ESL and EFL alike. Heaton (1968) makes the point that "[i]t has long been felt that this wide subject constitutes one of the major areas of difficulty for students learning English as a second or foreign language" (The preface, not numbered). Further, Cornell (1985) indicates that EPVs "have been 'discovered' as an important component in the curricula for English as a foreign language" (p. 269). In what follows a number of representative methods and materials will be systematically investigated and discussed.

Tom McArthur's method

In an article entitled Teaching English Phrasal Verbs, McArthur (1971) maintains that PVs must be taught as units, and as the equivalent of single verbs (p. 71). Further, he points out that the following points should be taken into account when planning a course to teach EPVs:

1. Phrasal verbs consist of a root verb and one or two particles.
2. They should not be confused with non-phrasal verbs which tend to take a certain preposition, such as compromise (with), confess (to), etc.
3. They are both transitive and intransitive, and sometimes the same verb may function in both ways […].
4. The total meaning of a phrasal verb is seldom simply the sum of its parts […].
5. Compilers of dictionaries have neglected the unitary nature of phrasal verbs and therefore classed them under their root verbs […].
6. Some phrasal verbs allow free variation in the position of the particle, while others do not (pp. 71-72).

Moreover, McArthur (1971) proposes five specimen exercises which "are not intended to be exhaustive [but to] serve as an introduction to the phrasal verb" (p. 72). Each exercise is illustrated by two examples followed by ten sentences, and a prospective student is asked to make similar changes in the sentences. Exercise 1 is "a specimen of how to approach freely varying phrasal verb" (p. 72); exercise 2 is a "specimen of how problems arise with this type of verb when the object of the verb is a pronoun" (p. 73); exercise 3 is a "specimen of how phrasal verbs may be exchanged for single verbs" (p. 73); exercise 4 is a "specimen of how single verbs may be exchanged for phrasal verbs" (p. 74).

McArthur (1971), however, admits that such specimen exercises "do not pursue the matter as far as it should be taken [since they] ignore the considerable problem of how a learner can begin to know which phrasal verbs can be divided and which cannot be divided" (p. 75).

Such a problem, however, has been ably taken up by Tom McArthur himself in his workbook Using Phrasal Verbs (1975), which is the fourth in the Collins' series of Patterns of English. The material of this workbook, according to McArthur, "has been developed out of linguistic research undertaken for Collins Bilingual Dictionaries" (p. 8) whereas its "teaching material has been
developed in 1970 and 1971 English Language Summer Schools run by the Edinburgh University Department of Education Studies" (p. 8).

Further, the book is intended for intermediate and advanced learners of English who are advised to study it in conjunction with the Dictionary of English Phrasal Verbs and Their Idioms by McArthur and Atkins (1974).

This book deserves a special attention as it makes a valuable contribution to this field of pedagogy. It "takes phrasal verbs as a single problem, and as a major part of English vocabulary and word-formation" (p. 6). It guides the learners through its eight units step by step in a very systematic manner. In addition to being relatively comprehensive in covering the main syntactic and semantic features of PVs presented in a simple language, it provides scores of guided exercises, examples, tables, and illustrative diagrams.

Colin Mortimer's method

In his book Phrasal Verbs in Conversation, Mortimer (1979) approaches the topic from a quite unique perspective by putting together 432 conversations, each of which is devoted to one separate meaning of one particular EPV. One of the most important aims of this book is to "contextualize individual meanings of a large number of phrasal verbs in such a way that these meanings will be remembered" (p. iii). Students, however, are best advised to go through conversations repeatedly as "[t]he more the conversations are used and discussed […], the more effectively will they fix in the mind of the student the meaning and use of the particular verbs on which they focus" (p. iv). Students are also advised to memorize the dialogue so as to give them, later on, "an opportunity to 'free' the language in the dialogue and to use it in a consonant, normalized situation arising from his own experience" (p. v). Moreover, Mortimer (1979) gives drills after the conversations, each of which "quotes from the conversation [it follows] one or two lines involving the use of the phrasal verb that is featured" (p. v). He recommends that "[t]hese lines should be drilled first in chorus, then in groups and then in pairs, for pronunciation practice, and to fix the idiom" (p. v).

What is more, the book is associated with three tapes as "an extensive source of listening and pronunciation practice" (p. vii), on which 124 selected dialogues are recorded. Unlike the ways of other tapes recorded for teaching purposes, the conversations in these tapes are spoken in normal speed with suitable hesitations, repetitions and interruptions to get "a considerable gain in naturalness" (p. vii).

Alan Cornell's method

In his article Realistic goal in teaching and learning phrasal verbs Cornell (1985) suggests to assemble a "core" of phrasal verbs (henceforth PVs) which "could be arrived at by native speakers working through a collection of phrasal verbs" (p. 276). He, further, proposes the following four criteria on the bases of which a selection can be made:

1. **Idiomaticity.** Is the meaning of the phrasal verb easily deducible from its constituent parts? (In the case of polysemic combinations each meaning would of course have to be considered separately)

2. **Replaceability.** Is there a one-word or already familiar phrasal verb equivalent which the learner can readily use instead? Can the meaning of the phrasal verb be easily and naturally paraphrased in already familiar words?
3. **Restrictions.** Is the phrasal verb subject to severe collocational restrictions which would have to be learnt? Are there particular grammatical constraints which have to be observed?

4. **Frequency (and usefulness).** Is the phrasal verb commonly used? (p. 276) [Emphasis in original].

Cornell considers the last criterion (frequency) as the "overriding" one, and "presents the greatest difficulties". This is mainly due to the fact that, unlike other aspect of the English language, there is a shortage of frequency counts for EPVs. The perfect solution to meet such a shortage is "a computer intelligent enough to scan a corpus and recognize phrasal groupings and assign meanings to them" (p. 277). But such an intelligent enough computer has not been developed yet, therefore "the best approach would appear to be to consult a sufficiently large group of native speakers and see what frequency rating is assigned on average to each phrasal verb or phrasal meaning" (p. 277).

Cornell points out that the core of PVs has to be of two lists, one for active mastery, and the other for passive recognition. The former needs to receive "the extra practice and attention necessary" (p. 276), it comprises the commonly used PVs such as: *hung up, put off, put up with,* and *show off,* while the latter contains "phrasal verbs with complicated restrictions" such as: *drink up, go off, hold with,* and *shape up* (pp. 276-279).

Moreover, Cornell, in this article, ably addresses some didactic problems PVs raise. Due to the fact that there exist large quantities of PVs used in everyday spoken and written English, he makes the quantitative problem his start point. Cornell indicates that such a large number of PVs learners encounter constitutes a real problem. In his attempt to water such a problem down, he confines it to the fully idiomatic PVs, in the sense that the non-idiomatic PVs (which constitute the majority) cause no real difficulty to learners owing to their transparent meanings. What aggravates the problem, however, is the phenomenon of polysemy in that "[i]t is not only the case that a particular verb + particle combination may be polysemic in having both an idiomatic and a non-idiomatic use: in addition it may well be polysemic in having more than one idiomatic use" (p. 270). Hence, Cornell raises the question of "How many idiomatic phrasal verbs does an advanced learner know on average?" (p. 271). To answer this question he refers to the research he conducted in 1980 in which he tested a group of his German ESL students "to establish their active knowledge of selected idiomatic phrasal verbs" (p. 271). The result showed "a widespread ignorance" of the 60 PVs tested. He concludes that "the learning of phrasal verbs at school and university is generally not very successful" (p. 273). The reason behind that, according to him, is the "limited contact with phrasal verbs", and exposing students "to such a bookish form of the language" (p. 273).

The other didactic problem Cornell outlines is the interference between L1 and L2 (in his case German and English) where PVs sound "illogical" for learners. As an example "why should one be *laid up* with illness when one is *lying down?*" (p. 274).

He then investigates some of the semantic and collocational problems learners face when dealing with PVs such as: the question of one-word equivalent. It is obvious that some PVs have one-word equivalents, e.g., *pull up* which corresponds to *stop,* and *put up with* to *tolerate.* Whereas other PVs have no such equivalents, they rather have PV equivalents, e.g., *make up for* which...
corresponds to *compensate for*, and *put in for* to *apply for*, or, otherwise, they have to be paraphrased (p. 274).

On the other hand, quite a few of one-word or PV equivalents can be deemed as alternatives for their PVs. Such a problem is related to "the degree of synonymity" since "synonymy is generally recognized as being a very relative concept" (p. 274). To use some of Cornell's examples:

*lie in* dose not merely mean "to sty in bed", but "to stay in bed beyond one's normal time for getting up".

*put up with*: unlike *tolerate*, it cannot be used in a positive manner (*to tolerate other people's opinions* is not the same as *to put up with other people's opinions*) (p. 274) [Emphasis in original].

Finally, Cornell outlines the grammatical problems caused by the following syntactic restrictions of PVs which typically "represent a considerable teaching and learning load" (pp. 275-276). To cite just two of his illustrative examples:

*come by* cannot normally be used in the passive, unlike its equivalents *acquire* and *obtain*.

*do with* can only be used with *can* or *could* in the sense of *need*: with *could* it only has a potential sense and does not refer to the past; it cannot be used in the passive (p. 275) [Emphasis in original].

**Richard Side's method**

In his paper *Phrasal verbs: sorting them out*, Side (1990) argues that the difficulties PVs create for learners "are sometimes increased by the way in which phrasal verbs are presented in course books or by teachers telling students that they will just have to learn them by heart, thereby implying that there is no system" (p. 144). Thus, he begins his article with criticizing the traditional treatment of PVs in course books in which PVs are grouped according to the verb along with a definition and an example for each one. Students, however, are advised to match the phrasal verb with its definition and to learn them by heart (p. 144). Unfortunately, students in such cases, stick to the Latinate definition given to them, and ignore the Anglo-Saxon PVs since the Latinate verb is "easier to learn, particularly if it is related to a word in the students' own language, and seems to make more sense" (p. 145). Another bad aspect of the traditional approach is the random way by which teachers teach particles, Side gives the following example:

A teacher recycling recently learned vocabulary is quite likely to ask 'Can anyone give me a phrasal verb meaning *arrive* starting with *turn*?' Students may then shout out the first particle which comes into their heads and this will continue until one of them hit the jackpot with *up* (p. 145).

Such ways of treatment, according to Side, aggravate the students' negative attitude towards PVs, who already dislike the issue of PVs for such reasons as their idiomaticity, confusion, polysemy, register or appropriacy, grammatical conditions, etc. What is more, the traditional approaches make the students see PVs as random combinations of verbs and particles, which is completely incorrect. PVs are not so random. There is, rather, a system behind forming them and
a close look at the function of particles shows the patterns underlying their combining with verbs (Side, 1990).

Newly coined PVs, according to Side, are not invented randomly. They are rather "formed by analogy with existing phrasal verbs" (p. 146), and "it is possible to isolate areas of meaning by finding the connections between them" (p. 146).

The particle, for Side, is "integral to the meaning of the phrasal verb and in some cases carries more weight of meaning than the verb" (p. 146). That is, the communicative function of the PV is mainly carried by the particle (Side, 1990).

In his attempt to pinpoint patterns underlying PVs, he takes up three particles (off, out, and up) to illustrate how the system of forming PVs by these particles works. He, for instance, gives the particle off five lexical meanings (indicating distance in time or space, departure, removal, disconnection and separation) illustrated by the following examples, to make the point that "[m]ost phrasal verbs with off fit into this pattern" (p. 148):

Strain off the liquid = removal, separation
The area was fences off = separation (from surrounding area
The plane took off = departure
I've been cut off = disconnection (telephone)
It's time to knock off = departure (from work)
Warn sb off = distance in space
The meeting was put off = distance in time
Come and see me off = departure, separation (p. 147) [Emphasis in original].

Some PVs are ambiguous in nature, but they could be understood by analogy with other PVs from the same pattern, e.g., the PV ease off in: You should ease off a bit "could be by analogy with taking one's foot off a car accelerator" (p. 148), and took off in: his business really took off "could be by analogy with an aeroplane taking off" (p. 148).

What has to be noted here is that not all PVs with the particle off can fit easily in this pattern. Some of them make Side (1990) admittedly declare that "[p]ersonally, I can find no convincing place for these within the overall definition" (p. 148). Such exceptional PVs are exemplified below:

He tried to buy me off
Stop showing off
You are always telling me off
I must dash off a letter (p. 148) [Emphasis in original].

Moreover, not all particles are as straightforward as off. The particle out is a good example where one cannot formulate a single overall meaning for it (p. 148). Therefore, "it is sometimes necessary to think laterally, metaphorically, or even pictorially" to understand the system in which PVs work (p. 147).

In his endeavor to find out more patterns, Side quite often refers to his own experience. For example, in outlining the highly idiomatic meaning of cough up, he narrates a real story happened to him when he was a child "if I choked on my food, my father would thump me on the
back and cheerfully cry 'Cough it up, it may be half a dollar!' "(p. 150). And, in explaining the PV hung up in: She hung up (to put the phone down), Side indicates that it "at first seems strange until one remembers what old fashioned telephones looked like" (p. 150). Consequently, Side concludes that the traditional approach is inadequate "either in that it fails to create learnable patterns, or in that it creates patterns of the wrong kind" (p. 150).

Peter Dainty's method

In his textbook Phrasal Verbs in Context, Dainty (1991) claims that "a new method for learning phrasal verbs" (p. 5) is offered. The book is of three parts. The first part contains "a specially written cartoon story in which 325 common phrasal verbs are introduced in a tale of adventure, love, money, crime, honour and blue Rolls Royce" (p. 5). Such a cartoon story is of fifteen chapters each of which is ended up with some follow-up exercises and grammatical notes.

The second part of the book, on the other hand, is devoted to "an extended blank-filling revision exercises based on the cartoon" (p. 5).

The third part is dedicated to the answers of the exercises along with a list of the 325 PVs used in the cartoon story. This textbook is associated with a tape on which the whole story is recorded.

Interestingly, Dainty (1991) claims that if the learner memorizes part of the story by heart and does the follow-up exercises, the 325 PVs can become a part of his everyday language as he develops "a more natural and more instinctive command of English" (p. 5).

Martin Shovel's method

In his book Making Sense of Phrasal Verbs, Shovel (1992) implements the "illustrations and question-prompts" method. Throughout the twenty units of the book, EPVs are accounted for in chunks, that is, each unit "introduces and practises six separate phrasal verbs" (p. 4). Each PV is exhibited through one or two lively cartoon illustrations followed by a number of question-prompts, which "are designed to focus the learner's attention and help him or her make an informed guess at the meaning of the phrasal verb" (p. 4). To take only one example, in explaining the PV take after, a cartoon picture with a man standing next to his son, who looks exactly as same as his father, is presented along with the following question-prompts:

Do you think these two people are related
What do you think their relationship is?
Do you think they look a like?
Make a sentence describing the way the small boy looks compared to his father.
Think of another way of saying take after.
Now turn to page 95 [reference section] to check your answer.
(p. 10) [Emphasis in original].

This book, which is intended to increase the confidence of the students of English as a second or foreign language at the intermediate level, is appropriate to be "used for self-study, for pairwork, for conventional class or group teaching, and as a reference book" (p. 4).
In addition, the presented PVs are listed alphabetically at the back of the book in a dictionary-like reference section where each one of them is given the following:

- a list of words and phrases that can be used with [it]
- a clear definition
- a context sentence or sentences related to the introductory illustrations
- easy to read structural information showing the positioning of noun phrases and pronouns (p. 4).

Surprisingly, unlike other scholars, Shovel (1992) avoids the employment of the grammatical classifications of PVs, claiming that "such classifications are often more complicated and difficult than the phrasal verbs are used to teach" (p. 4).

Lastly, each unit is ended up with a practice section where a variety of exercises are included. Such exercises "are very controlled to begin with and then gradually lead to free-production" (p. 4). Students are advised to study the PVs introduced in the unit before doing the practice section.

**Malcolm Goodale's method**

In his workbook *Collins COBUID Phrasal Verbs Workbook* (which accompanies the *Collins COBUID Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*), Goodale (1994) points out that "[t]hough the workbook can be used on its own, more benefit will be gained by working closely with the Dictionary" (p. iv). He approaches the practice "through the individual particles, as featured in the Particles Index of the Dictionary" (p. iv).

Goodale (1994), also, makes it clear that owing to the fact that adverbial PVs (idiomatic PVs) are almost always the most important type and the most difficult for learners of English to understand, "prepositional phrasal verbs [non-idiomatic PVs] are not included in this workbook" (p. iv).

Hence, the adverbial particles only are accounted for in alphabetical order throughout the ten units of the book. Each unit has an introduction in which the important meanings of a given particle are provided along with a list of the PVs to be taken up in the sections of that unit. Every section is devoted to one category of meaning. Given that most PVs are polysemic and have "as many as 20 different meanings", it is quite normal to see a phrasal verb appears in many different sections (p. iv).

Further, there is a section attached to each unit called "Other Meanings" which includes PVs "which are too common to be excluded, but which do not clearly fit into any particular category of meaning" (p. iv). As an example, the particle *over* is given two sections each of which is assigned to one particular category of meaning (Considering and Communicating, as in: *look over, put over, talk over, and think over*, and Changing and Transferring, as in: *change over, hand over, take over, and win over*), and a third section which is assigned to other meanings they include: *get over with, pass over, run over, and smooth over* (p. 87).
Berman and Kirstein's method

In their textbook *Practical Idioms: Using Phrasal Verbs in Everyday Contexts*, Berman and Kirstein (1996) design the whole book as chunks of dialogues between Pat, an instructor, and Lee, a talkative student.

Berman and Kirstein (1996) consider that the quickest way for learning PVs is "to practice them by families" (p. xi) as long as "it is a psychological axiom that learning related material is much easier than learning unrelated material" (p. xii) [Emphasis in original]. They, as a result, suggest two families in which PVs may be grouped: family A where PVs are listed alphabetically according to the verbs they begin with, e.g., *get about, get across, get around, get back, get on, get out*, etc., and family B where PVs are listed according to the particles, e.g., *back out, get out, give out, learn out, pass out, throw out*, etc. (p. xii). Berman and Kirstein (1996) make the point that "[f]amily A is more familiar arrangement-dictionary style [...and] fine for the purpose of reference" (p. xii). However, "[f]amily B makes far more sense as a learning strategy" (p. xii). Therefore, they opt for treating PVs in this book by particle, claiming that it is "much more likely to find similarities of meaning [...] among verb phrases [PVs] having the same particle than among verb phrases beginning with the same verb" (p. xii).

Peter Hannan's method

In his paper *Particles and gravity: phrasal verbs with 'Up' and 'Down'* Hannan (1998) employs the 'experientialism' approach which is a philosophical / linguistic approach outlined and applied by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their studies *Metaphors we live by* (1985), *Women, fire and dangerous things: what categories tell us about the mind* (1987), and *The body in the mind: the bodily basis of meaning, imagination and reason* (1987) (as cited in Hannan, 1998, p. 22).

Hannan (1998) attempts to explain how these two particles "have the uses they have", and discuss a number of implications of the experientialism approach for teaching PVs (p. 22).

The essential idea of this approach, as he puts it, is that "the meanings of our language [English], and indeed our structure of thought, are built up from regular patterns of bodily experience, extended into the other realms which we inhabit such as the emotional, mental and social" (p. 22). Such an extension, he elaborates, "is principally metaphorical, and what is preserved from the original physical pattern is the structure, or relationship between the elements, or some important association, and not the specific content" (p. 22). To illustrate this idea, Hannan (1998) provides two examples as "standard examples of metaphors" (p. 22), they are: *The line of people snaked around the corner, and The dawn of a new era*. Where the line, in the first example, "does not have scales or a forked tongue, but the winding form of the snake" (p. 22), and, in the second example, "there is no literal sun or light, but a noticeable beginning, perhaps where new knowledge is involved" (p. 22).

Moving on to the particles *up* and *down*, Hannan (1998) makes the point that by the term 'phrasal verbs' he means not only non-literal meanings of verb-particle combinations, but also the literal meanings of them, as part of his thesis is that "there is a continuity and extension from the literal meanings of verb-particle combinations to the metaphorical meanings" (p. 22). Hence, he deals with the literal meanings of *up* and *down* as basic and central meanings for their metaphorical extension. Therefore, he begins with the literal meanings of these particles in such PVs as *go up,*
come up, climb up, stand up, move up, go down, come down, climb down, sit/lie down, fall down etc. where up and down literally "refer to our experience of gravity" (p. 23). He, then, moves on to take up the graduation of the meanings of these two particles from literal to metaphorical from different standpoints, being: 1) Quantity: This metaphor is exemplified by our experience when we add objects to a pile the level of that pile goes up, while when we take away objects its level goes down. Such an experience "leads us to associate more with up, and less with down [and such an] association is extended to non-physical things to produce a simple correspondence of 'up = more, down = less'", as in: turn up, and turn down (the volume / heat) (p. 23); 2) Size: This metaphor is stemmed from the fact that physical size of anything around us reflects its power, in that big size means strong and powerful whereas small size means the contrary. Such an experience leads to associate up with big and powerful, and down with small and weak, as in: bring up (children), [and] bring down (cause someone's fall from power / respect; lower the tone or moral level of a conversation, etc." (p. 24); 3) Body posture: This point is built up on the fact that "[o]ur physical posture is obviously related to our activities and to our mental emotional state" (p. 24). In the sense that "[w]hen we are standing and moving around, we are active [while] when we are lying down we are inactive, and sometimes passive [...] So there is a natural association between 'up' and 'active' and 'down' and 'inactive' " (p. 25), as in: wake up, get up, start up, open up, calm down, settle down, shut down, break down, etc. (p. 25). Body posture, on the other hand, is related to our mental and emotional state where an erect and open posture reflects bright, lively and cheerful states of mind, while a bowed or slumped posture reflects dull, tired and sad states of mind. This fact makes us to associate up with happiness etc., and down with sad etc., as in: cheer up, be up, feel up, be down, feel down, let down, etc. (p. 25); 4) Perspective: Owing to the fact that close objects seem bigger, in the human vision, than far ones, and when they move closer they appear to go up in the visual field, one can associate up with nearness, and down with distance, as in: come up, and go down (p. 26); and 5) External environment: This point is stemmed from the fact that the "ground is home [of human], and high places are less frequented and inherently dangerous" (p. 26). Consequently, [...] 'down' is associated with what is familiar, real, easily reached or touched, known, and 'up' with the contrary" (p. 26), as in: bring up, come up with, bring down, get down to, etc. (p. 26).

Hannan (1998) concludes "that usually literal meanings are basic and central, and that metaphorical extensions can be understood and systematised with reference to the central meaning" (p. 26). And he introduces some implications for teaching of PVs, they include: 1) despite the fact that the systems of meaning accounted for in this approach are not 100% logical, they are "comprehensible in terms of human experience, generalisable, and often universal" (p. 26). The approach, as a result, is "opposed to the type of superficial use of quantitative information about frequency of use and collocations which simply says 'These are the common usages, Learn them' " (p. 26); 2) lack of logic and sense of PVs in the eyes of students make them "respond to phrasal verbs with various degrees of pain" (p. 27). Therefore, proving to students "that there is a human logic, based on experiences which they can recognise, gives them confidence that it is feasible to learn these things, and open doors to useful methods of vocabulary storage and organization" (p. 27); 3) highlighting such physical experiences makes the process of explaining PVs easier. For instance, to explain come up and go down, the teacher may move towards students closer and closer till they move their heads up to see him, and so on. The advantage of this process is that "relatively abstract concepts are grounded in direct sensory experience and so stick better" (p. 27); 4) it does not matter how to sequence PVs in a syllabus "same verb, various particles; same particle, various verbs; random verbs in context" (p. 27),
what does really matter is "literal or near-literal meanings are generally presented earlier than metaphorical ones" (p. 27); and finally 5) all patterns outlined in this approach can be grasped easily, "[t]his can lay the foundation for a positive and exploratory attitude to phrasal verbs in general" (p. 27).

**Darwin and Gray's method**

In their article *Going After the Phrasal Verb: An Alternative Approach to Classification*, Darwin and Gray (1999) assert that "[i]n research and pedagogy, approaches to the phrasal verb have been, and still are, rather arbitrary" (p. 66). The reason for such an arbitrariness, according to them, is "[…] the understanding of the phrasal verb, by both students and instructors, has not progressed as far as it might have if a more systematic approach has been used" (p. 66). They, therefore, have concerned themselves with providing such a systematic approach.

In their attempt to clarify the problem of the lack of progress in understanding of PVs, Darwin and Gray (1999) attribute the problem to the following three reasons: 1) the definitions provided for PVs by researchers produce conflicting results, and lead to confusion for both students and instructors; 2) the frequency of the commonest and more needed PVs has not been determined. As a result instructors, curriculum designers, and researchers are left with no choice but to use their intuition which may or may not be correct; and 3) the method of grouping PVs according to the verb. Although such a method may help learners understand the idiomatic nature of PVs, "it does little to promote their use" (p. 67).

Further, they point out that in order to avoid ambiguity in classification procedure of PVs "linguists must agree upon a definition, thereby requiring them to begin from the same point" (p. 67). Consequently, they adopt the definition produced by Quirk et al. (1985) as the standard whereby "[a] phrasal verb consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle that function together as a single unit both lexically and syntactically" (Darwin & Gray, 1999, pp. 76-77).

They criticize the nine traditional tests proposed by Bolinger (1971) maintaining that they admit noteworthy exceptions which cause "a problematic lack of agreement among those who study phrasal verbs as to exactly which verb + particle combinations are or are not included in the category" (p. 75). Such a disagreement "can seriously impair the learning of phrasal verbs by ESL students, preventing the placement of verb + particle combinations in a grammatical paradigm" (p. 75). Hence, they confirm the real need for a more systematic classification that can "promote greater agreement among the experts and better presentation of verb + particle combinations to the ESL learner" (p. 75).

Darwin and Gray's alternative approach is "to take the opposite stance" (p. 75). That is to say, instead of "excluding a verb + particle combination from the phrasal verb category until it is proven to belong, linguists should consider all verb + particle combinations to be potential phrasal verbs until they can be proven otherwise" (pp. 75-76). In doing so, they explain, two advantages that can be accomplished: 1) a degree of definiteness can be added; 2) a curriculum-based confusion students have can be eliminated (p. 76).

Moreover, in their attempt to clarify their new approach, Darwin and Gray (1999) set out seven tests focusing on semantics, phonology and syntax. In addition, they indicate that there is no
need to apply all these tests to all combinations; one test is enough to divide up a combination (p. 77). The tests in brief are the following:

1. **Particle repetition**, e.g., *I looked up, up, up* your name. [PV]
   
   *I looked up, up, up* to the very highest point [Not PV]

2. **Where questions**, e.g., He *ran up* the rally. Where? *Up* the rally [Not PV]
   
   *I looked up* the address. Where did you look? *Up* the address. [PV]

3. **Fronting**, e.g., He *made up* a story. *Up* he *made a story. *Up* a story he *made*

   [PV]. *Up* the tree he *went* [Not PV]

4. **Verb insertion**, e.g., He *pulled on* the lever, but it was stuck. He *pulled and jerked on*
   
   the lever, but it was stuck [Not PV].

   *I really messed up* on my test. *I really messed* and *fouled up* on my test. [PV]

5. **Adverb insertion**, e.g., *The mine caved quickly and forcefully in*. [PV]

   *They crept slowly and silently down* the hall. [Not PV]

6. **Stress**, e.g., *she RAN UP* a huge bill. [PV]

   *She RAN to the park.* [Not PV]

7. **Intonation units**, e.g., *I passed / out* in the doctor's office. [PV]

   *I hid / behind* the door. [Not PV] (pp. 77-81) [Emphasis in original] [My bracketing].

Interestingly, in their response to some critiques raised by some scholars (which will be outlined later on in this paper), Darwin and Gray (2000) elaborate in more details on their approach. They warrant their choice of Quirk et al's definition by claiming that it is "the most concise representation of definitions presented by others working on phrasal verbs" (165), and expect that such a definition "would lead to agreement about which verb + 'something' […] combinations to include in the category of phrasal verb" (p. 165) in order to establish a list of PVs that ESL learners are more likely to encounter. The definition consists of two parts: grammatical part where the verb + particle combination functions as a simple verb; and lexical part where the combination of verb + particle functions as "a single lexical item with a meaning significantly different from that carried outside the combination" (p. 166). For convenience, Darwin and Gray (2000) utilize the following features: V + X combination (where X represents particle, adverb, and preposition), [+ G] (representing a grammatical unity of the combination), [+ L] (representing the lexical unity of the combination). Thus, the definition of Quirk et al, according to Darwin and Gray (2000) "defines only an ideal, a phrasal-verb prototype" (p. 166) where a PV has to be [+ G, +L] not [- G, -L], [+ G, - L] or [- G, + L] V + X combination. In so doing, Darwin and Gray limit their list to only those "prototypical phrasal verbs" (p. 166). Their new method is to exclude any combination that exhibits any negative feature [- G] or [- L]. Any test of the seven tests proposed by them would be enough to demonstrate inclusion or exclusion of any given combination.

Thus, the lists of PVs built up by utilizing this method overlook many combinations, which exhibit the abovementioned negative features. Darwin and Gray (2000) justify such an omission
by claiming that it reduces the "conflict between definition and example in the pedagogical tools produced" (p. 167).

Using *freshman humanities textbooks* as their corpus, Darwin and Gray utilize their abovementioned tests in frequency count to develop the list of frequently occurring PVs.

Nevertheless, Darwin and Gray's method has been heavily criticized by Joan Sawyer (2000) and Ron Sheen (2000), who both agree with them on the question of choosing the most frequent PVs list to be taught to ESL learners. However, they both reject the method of teaching PVs proposed by Darwin and Gray, and instead each one has proposed his own method as in what follows:

**Joan Sawyer's method**

In her reply to the article of Darwin and Gray (1999), Sawyer (2000) denies the ruling out of the semantically transparent constructions and the constructions concentrating only on the semantically opaque (those which function as single units). She considers that scholars should open the membership of the class of PVs to include all types of combinations of verb and morphologically invariable particles because the semantically transparent combinations have the surface structure as the more semantically opaque ones, can "lead students to understand the surface structure of the combinations" (p. 152). This in turn can reduce "avoidance of these combinations on the part of students and gives teachers a simple functioning of the semantically less transparent combinations" (p. 152).

By adopting Fraser's (1976) view, Sawyer indicates that all PVs have a verb and a morphologically invariable constituent, but this constituent could be a preposition, an adverb or real particle (the element that forms a unit with the verb), as illustrated in the following set of examples:

- The cowboy shot *up* the hill. (preposition)
- The cowboy shot *up* the bullet. (adverb)
- The cowboy shot *up* the salon. (real particle) (p. 153)

[Emphasis and bracketing in original]

Sawyer believes that knowing the type of the particle "not only helps predict which combinations might be easily taught but also suggests the order in which they might best be presented to students" (p. 155). The "[a]nalysis of their different function offers teachers one way of considering which ones to teach and suggest a step-by-step process for doing so" (p. 157). Therefore, she outlines her method of teaching PVs, according to the particle type, in the form of three steps as follows:

**Step 1: Do Not Teach Verb-Preposition Combinations as Phrasal Verbs.** Verb-Preposition Combinations, according to her, are mere "standard verbs followed by PPs [prepositional phrases]" and "they do not present a challenge for comprehension or production of this group". In addition, ruling them out "from the class of phrasal verbs leaves only the combinations that include adverbs and real particles requiring specific instruction" (p. 155).

**Step 2: Teach Verb-Adverb Combinations.** Sawyer notes that the student knows the meanings of both elements of this type of combinations since it is semantically transparent and its elements
retain their original meanings. Besides, like the case of verb-real particle combinations, these combinations have "word-order alternation" (i.e. they can be split/separable or non-split/non-separable). Teaching a word order of such semantically transparent combinations gives learners confidence in that when "they begin working on less transparent types, they no longer need to be concerned with word order" (pp. 155-156).

**Step 3: Teach Verb-Real Particle Combinations.** In her endeavor to account for this step, Sawyer refers to her work *Verb-adverb and verb-particle constructions: Teaching and acquisition* (1999) in which she studies child language acquisition and demonstrates that real particles have at least three common functions: 1) telicity or completiveness, as an example, the particle *up* in: *eat up* and *drink up* whereby the object "is consumed completely". Teachers are advised to teach each one of these real particles by offering a number "of verbs with which the real particle has the telic reading" to encourage the students "to see a pattern that they can use to decode new combinations encountered" (p. 156); 2) real particles which do not add much semantically to the verb, such as: *clean up, lock up, wash up, act out, sort out,* and *start out*. Teachers as well are advised to "demonstrate each real particle that works this way with a set of verbs to which it adds little semantically" and the students also "would see that these are not isolated cases but show a pattern" (p. 156); and 3) idiomatic combinations which are "the most difficult to organize into groups for presentation; they must be presented in context" and have to be learned individually. For example, *give up, think up,* and *wear out* (p. 156).

Sawyer (2000) concludes that "[t]he fact that real particles can be clustered into groups by function [...] makes teaching more efficient" (p. 157). Such a method "may help students learn patterns for decoding new combinations and increasing their vocabularies while reducing their avoidance of these combinations" (p. 157).

**Ron Sheen's method**

In his reply to the article of Darwin and Gray (1999), Sheen (2000) admits that they "make a valuable contribution to teaching phrasal verbs [...] in pointing out the unreliability of choosing such items as curriculum content based on intuition and in emphasising the need to base such a selection on authentic frequency of use" (p. 160). He considers "[s]uch a selection would result in a bank from which one might choose a restricted list for active use and much longer one for passive" (p. 164).

Sheen, on the other hand, criticizes the approach of Darwin and Gray (1999), claiming that it addresses the complexities of PVs without touching upon the major question: "[w]hat is the best way to achieve familiarity with and fluency in the use of PVs, which is the absolute essential to a mastery of English?" (p. 161). In his attempt to address such an issue, Sheen proposes his method which is called "explicit-plus or explicit-minus?". By 'explicit-plus' he means "should teachers devote time and effort to enabling students to analyse PVs both syntactically and semantically?" (p. 161), and by 'explicit-minus' he means "[s]hould teachers be content with the minimalist approach [...] which would teach the word-order problems with transitive PVs and leave the rest to exposure, memorization, and practice?" (p. 161).

Reporting on his own experience as a teacher at university level, Sheen claims that he did apply both approaches. He first adopted the explicit-plus approach in which he devoted a great deal of time and effort to teaching syntactic and semantic complexities discussed by Darwin and Gray.
(1999), and McArthur (1979). Meanwhile, he spent some minimal time on classroom oral work encouraging students to use PVs outside. He then, conducted some written and oral tests. The results yielded a success in written proficiency, but such a success did not apply to oral proficiency which was poor and not encouraging.

On the contrary, when Sheen decided to adopt the explicit-minus approach in which he spent most of the time on oral activities the results of oral proficiency were far much better. Such an empirical experience has made Sheen argue for the explicit-minus approach, which "allowed the students to reach a standard nearer to that of Anglophones than did the explicit-plus approach" (pp. 161-163). Therefore, he concludes that "teachers need to devote time and effort to activities encouraging frequent and spontaneous use of PVs and not to the sort of analyses involved in exploiting the classification system proposed by Darwin and Gray" (p.164).

Rosemary Sansome's Method

In her paper Applying lexical research to the teaching of phrasal verbs, Sansome (2000) summarizes the insights obtained from research conducted in the Lexical Research Unit, Leeds University 1980-1984. The research has taken up a large sub-group of PVs, that is, combinations of verbs with collocates in which the latter changes the meaning of the former "in a systematic way by subordinating it to a new meaning introduced by the collocate" (p. 56). However, such meaning-changing collocates, according to Sansome, include not only adverbial particles; adverbs; prepositions; and prepositional phrases, but also adjectives and nouns (p. 61). The following two examples are provided by her to illustrate such collocates:

*He tricked her into taking her medicine.* Trick into means: "to get someone to do something by tricking them" (p. 60).

*She tricked him out of a fortune.* Trick out of means: "to get something out of someone by tricking them" (p. 60).

Sansome (2000) maintains that the issue of 'meaning-changing collocates' has been outlined in the works of linguists who dealt with the phenomenon of PVs such as Bolinger (1971) and Fraser (1976), but it has not been described systematically. In the sense, both Bolinger and Fraser have approached the issue from a syntactic viewpoint excluding verb-preposition combinations from their scope (p. 60).

Concentrating on analysing the meanings of PVs grouped into only one major subsection of the semantic area CONTACT, that is, PHYSICAL CONTACT, the research yields insights into the pattern underlying PVs belong to this subsection. Such a pattern, as Sansome puts it, is:

Nearly all the meaning-changing collocates in the PHYSICAL CONTACT area change the meaning of the verb according to the same pattern: 'to___ by ___ ing' (e.g., *pull apart* 'to separate by pulling'; *pull up* 'to raise by pulling'). The verb-meaning is subordinated to a new verb-meaning introduced by the collocate (pp. 60-61) [Emphasis in original].

Sansome, however, believes that such an insight has practical applications in the field of EFL teaching. She herself, as an EFL teacher, has conducted a comprehension test given to first-year undergraduate Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students to find out "to what extent foreign learners of intermediate level and above have absorbed the pattern underlying these verb-
collocate combinations and whether they cause comprehension problems" (pp. 61-62). The result showed that students have not acquired the pattern underlying the tested combinations. This matter "has implications not only for comprehension but also production; if students are not aware of any underlying pattern, they are unlikely to be able to use verb combinations except in cases where they have learnt the whole phrase" (p. 63).

**John Flower's method**

In his practice book *Phrasal Verbs Organiser*, Flower (2000) makes a noticeable contribution to the field of teaching PVs. Unlike other scholars who prefer to treat PVs either by particle or by verb, Flower treats more than 700 PVs in three different ways, i.e. by particle, by verb, and by topic. He rightly makes the point that "[t]he more different ways you meet these verbs, the more you will learn" (p. 3). In treating PVs by topic, for instance, he groups them according to the field they are commonly used in. In the section of "Technology and Computing", for example, he accounts for such PVs as *cut out, filter out, wire up, print out, back up* etc. (p. 89). While in the section of "Sport and Leisure" he takes up such PVs as *warm up, ease up, play off, stretch out, pass through*, etc. (p. 92).

Moreover, Flower (2000) provides, other than the mini-dictionary of the used PVs, "Test Yourself" section (pp. 108-112), where five tests are set up to give the learners an opportunity to examine themselves in what they have studied throughout the book.

In addition, he establishes "Your Personal List" (pp. 135-144) section where nine well organized blank tables are given to allow students to add their own PVs, or PVs that they learn in class or come across while they read.

**Conclusion**

A close look at the abovementioned methods proposed for teaching EPVs to non-native speakers of English reveals that pedagogues vary in what to teach as PVs to foreign students. Scholars like Hannan (1998), Sawyer (2000), and Sansome (2000) strongly believe that all types of verb-particle combinations (literal and idiomatic/semantically transparent and semantically opaque) have to be taught. They are driven by the reason that the former constitutes the central and the basis upon which the meaning of the latter can be grasped and understood. Other scholars, on the other hand, like Darwin and Gray (1999), consider that only idiomatic/semantically opaque type of PVs has to be taught as it is the prototypical. Pedagogues, also, vary in how to teach EPVs to non-native learners of English. Such scholars as Side (1990), Hannan (1998), Sawyer (2000), and Sansome (2000) are totally convinced that PVs have to be taught by knowing the patterns underlying them in order to pinpoint the system and the logic by which they work. Others believe that PVs are random combinations of verb and particles and they have to be memorized by heart. The issue of how to sequence EPVs in textbooks, as well, constitutes a debatable point. Scholars such as Side (1990), Goodale (1994), Berman and Kirstein (1996), Darwin and Gray (1999), Sawyer (2000) and Sansome (2000) are quite persuaded that PVs must be dealt with by particles. On the contrary, others prefer to tackle them by verbs. Interestingly, Flower (2000) believes that they have to be presented in different ways, i.e. by particles, by verbs, and by topics. Aside from how to sequence EPVs in textbooks, scholars such as Cornell (1985), Darwin and Gray (1999) and Sheen (2000) call for frequency counts of the EPVs, just like other aspects
of the English language, to determine the most common and needed ones, and in turn to avoid designing pedagogical tools according to pedagogues' intuitions. It is worth noting that despite the fact that most of the specialized dictionaries of PVs are developed as teaching materials to be utilized in classes of English as a second or foreign language, there are some workbooks written to be studied in conjunction with specialized dictionaries, such as *Using Phrasal Verbs* by McArthur (1975) and *Collins COBUILD Phrasal Verbs Workbook* (1994), which are produced in conjunction with the *Dictionary of Phrasal verbs and their Idioms*, and the *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal verbs* respectively. It is very noticeable that most of the researchers agree on the necessity of teaching PVs in context owing to the fact that presenting them in contexts enhances their learnability much more than presenting them as unrelated elements. To sum up, the undeniable fact is that PVs are not random combinations of verbs and particles. There is a pattern underlying each one of them. Although these patterns vary in their degree of comprehensibility, they need to be further investigated, and applied so as to provide learners of English with reliable pedagogical materials.

**About the Author**

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References


Students’ Perspective on Incorporating Arabic Words in the Teaching of English to Muslim Learners

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Abstract

The presence of words and concepts in the English language that do not correspond with the meaning held by Muslims has been highlighted by a number of Muslim scholars. It is argued that there are English words that fail to reflect the meanings that Muslims intend to convey due to the fact that many Arabic words are not accurately translatable into English. Furthermore, Muslims believe that many of the meanings of Arabic words and phrases are of divine provenance and may not be separated from their Arabic forms. Based on al-Faruqi’s framework on Islamic English that proposes the use of Islamic vocabulary be retained in their Arabic form in an effort to maintain the original meanings, this study investigated postgraduate Muslim students’ perspective on whether there is a need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be incorporated in the teaching of English to Muslim learners. A survey consisting of open-ended questions was administered and the findings indicate that the respondents strongly favoured the incorporation of Islamic terms in English language teaching. This paper has pedagogical implications on ESL teachers who teach English to Muslim learners.

Keywords: vocabulary learning, Muslim English language learners, Islamic English
Introduction

That English is a global language that could tremendously benefit its learners and second language users has long been established. However, meanings as conveyed by words of a language is culturally shaped and as Sapir (1929) mentioned “language is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such” (p. 213) and “no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality” (p. 209). This study is an investigation of words and their meanings in the context of religious representation. The study also concerns the need to incorporate Arabic words in the English language usage of Muslim learners.

Literature Review

The question as to whether language reflects a cultural worldview or language shapes the worldview of its users has led to a hypothesis that has been alternatively referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the Whorfian hypothesis, linguistic relativity or linguistic determinism. While linguistic determinism states that the language a person speaks determines the way that he or she interprets the world, linguistic relativism states that language merely influences a person’s thoughts about the real world. Although a debate on whether language shapes thought or thought shapes language has been taking place, most linguists today are more concerned with the fact that “language and culture interact, and worldviews among cultures differ, and that the language used to express that worldview may be relative and specific to that worldview” (Brown, 1986, p. 46).

Brown (1986) gives examples of how “words shape our lives” (p. 43). He points out that the advertising world uses words to shape, persuade and dissuade. “Weasel words”, he emphasizes, have the tendency to glorify very ordinary products into those that are “sparkling”, “refreshing” or even “scrumpdeliyicious”. In manufacturing, “enriched” or “fortified” products refer to food that has lost most of its nutrients during the manufacturing process. Brown also highlights how industry persuades people by using words like “receiving waters” which refers to lakes or rivers into which industrial wastes are dumped while the term “assimilative capacity” is used to indicate the amount of waste people can dump into the river before it starts to show.

Vygotsky (1986) and Szalay (1984), as cited in Lantolf (1999), agree that language is connected to a person’s worldview. Vygotsky distinguishes between conventional dictionary meaning (znachenie in Russian) and sense (smysl in Russian). To him, sense is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning (znachenie) is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense. Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense. The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realization in speech (p. 36).

Similarly, Szalay (1984) as cited in Lantolf (1999) differentiates between lexical and psychological meanings. While a word’s lexical meaning is fixed, its psychological meaning is fluid. He further elaborates by giving an example of the English word “drug”. While drug is
conventionally defined as “a substance with medicinal effects”, Szalay emphasizes that its psychological meaning varies from one person to another depending on the person’s experiences with the concept. Hence, to a Christian, drugs may have the connotation of hell, but for the addict, drugs may bring pleasure and heaven.

The difference in meaning from the Islamic perspective has also been highlighted by some scholars where it is generally agreed that since language reflects its worldview, it cannot detach itself from its relationship with the Creator. Al-Attas (1993) for instance, as cited in Asraf (1997), argues that knowledge to the Western people refers to what the rational mind can grasp of the rational and empirical world and it does not include the religious and the spiritual domains, which are relegated to the realm of faith and belief. This is in contrast with the Muslims’ conception of knowledge, which includes not only the “sensory and intelligible realms, but more importantly, the realm of the spirit” (al-Attas, cited in Asraf, p. 6). Similarly, the concept of happiness in Islam, represented by the Arabic word sa’adah, refers to “a permanent state of the soul when it has attained certainty concerning the most important matters in existence, through living in conformity with that certainty” (al-Attas, cited in Asraf, p. 7), is unlike in English and other Western languages, where happiness is considered mainly as the “fulfillment of physical and emotional needs, which are temporary and elusive”. In other words, Muslims aim to experience happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Ali (2001) analyzed the contents of two widely-read Malaysian English language newspapers, namely The New Strait Times and The Star, from late February to early April 2001 and highlighted twenty-five words like ‘goddess’, ‘prophet’, ‘idol’, ‘worship’, ‘miracle’, ‘followers’, ‘angel’ and ‘devil’, whose English definitions are not in line with the Islamic perspective. Since Islam espouses the oneness of God and the believe in all prophets as His messengers, words like “goddess” and “idol”, he argues, should not be used to refer to the object of worship. The word “worship”, on the other hand, should only be used with reference to God. Similarly, the word “prophet”, should not be used in a negative manner like “prophets of doom”, as Muslims have high respect for prophets. Ali also asserts that the word “followers” of Islam to be strictly used to refer to individuals who practice the teachings of Islam, rather than to individuals worshipping another individual. As for “angels” and “devils”, Ali insists the words are to be used with the original meanings and in a religious sense.

Based on the definitions provided by the New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (NOALD, 2006), Othman and Ibrahim (2009) point out twenty-six English words which have meanings different from that which Muslims have ascribed to them. Words like alimony, dowry, bigamy, polygamy, funeral, martyr, ablution, fast, prophet, mother nature, nation, assisted suicide and missing link were found to be defined not in line with the Islamic point of view. The word “alimony”, for instance, is defined as “the money that a court orders somebody to pay regularly to their former wife or husband when the marriage is ended” (NOALD, 2006, p. 37). In Islam, the money must be paid by a husband to a wife, and not vice-verse. Similarly, “dowry” which refers to “money and/or property that in some societies, a wife or her family must pay to her husband when they get married; money and/or property that in some societies a husband must pay to his wife’s family when they get married” (NOALD, 2006, p.473) contradicts the meaning in Islam. In Islam, “dowry” or the Arabic mahr, is imposed on the husband to the wife, and not to the wife’s family. As mentioned by El Alami (1992, p. 107), “mahr is a gift or sum of money given by the husband to the wife in consideration of marriage”. 
Othman and Ibrahim (2009) further explain that “bigamy” and “polygamy” also do not have identical meanings as understood in Islam. While “bigamy” is defined as “a crime of marrying somebody when you are still legally married to somebody else” (NOALD, 2006, p. 137); “polygamy” is “the practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time” (p. 1163). Practised with clear Quranic conditions, Islam permits a man to marry more than one wife and in fact, he can marry up to four wives. This practice does not apply to women.

Similarly, the word “mother nature” which is defined as “the natural world, when you consider it as a force that affects the world and human beings” (NOALD, 2006, p. 763), also contradicts with the Islamic understanding. In Islam, it is Allah who creates all existence (including nature) and the only force that affects the world and human beings (Quranic verses, 7:54-58). Similarly, “missing link” which is defined as “An animal that is similar to humans that was once thought to exist at that time that apes were developing into human beings” (p. 751) is not in line with Islam which believes that our forefathers were created by Allah as a man and a woman and not apes. The Quran states, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes” (49:13).

Al-Faruqi (1986), a renowned Muslim scholar who advocates Islamic English, has highlighted not only the presence of many words and concepts in the English language that do not correspond to the meaning held by Muslims, but more importantly, the words are unable to convey the meanings that Muslims intend to convey. This is due to the fact that many Arabic words are not accurately translatable into English. He argues that many of the meanings of Arabic words and phrases are of divine provenance and may not be separated from their Arabic forms. He gives examples of the words salah and zakat, which have been translated inaccurately.

Al-Faruqi (1986) disagrees when salah is translated as “prayer” in English. While prayer in English refers to “any communication with whatever is taken to be one’s god, even if that is an idol”, salah must be performed five times a day and “consists of precise recitations, genuflections, prostrations, standings and sittings with orientation towards the Ka’bah, and should be entered into only after ablutions and solemn declaration of intention or niyah” (al-Faruqi, p. 11). It is asserted that all the actions needed in performing salah cannot be compressed in the English word “prayer”.

Similarly, in discussing the term zakat, al-Faruqi (1986) expresses his concern when it is translated as charity, alms, poor-due or alms-giving. This is because the English words refer to “any act of voluntary, altruistic giving of anything useful in any amount, made with the intention of helping those in need”, which could correspond to the Arabic term sadaqah (al-Faruqi, p. 12). Zakat, although a kind of public welfare activity, is obligatory, and the amount of wealth to be given is specific. Hence, al-Faruqi (1986) insists that the Islamic vocabulary be retained in their Arabic form, as “to give an English translation of them is to reduce, and often to ruin those meanings” (p. 12). To him:

the English language stands in need of the precepts and values of Islam which only the Qur’anic language can provide. Constant use of their Arabic form will help to shield the English-speaking Muslims from the onslaught of materialism, utilitarianism, skepticism, relativism, secularism and hedonism that the last two hundred years have established firmly in English consciousness. And it will –
Insha Allah – inject a reforming influence into the consciousness of all English speaking Muslims, pulling them out of their tragic predicament in modern times.

(al-Faruqi, 1986, p. 15)

Because of the limitations of English words in conveying Islamic concepts, al-Faruqi (1986) proposes Islamic English to “serve the linguistic needs of the Muslim users of the English language” (p. 7). Islamic English refers to “the modified English language to enable it to carry Islamic proper nouns and meanings without distortion” which involves “the infusion of religious, spiritual and cultural terms of Islam to modern English” (p. 7). Al-Faruqi advocates for the need to use Islamic English in English language classrooms to shield English speaking Muslims from the influence of negative culture and values.

Abdussalam (1999) concurs that for any language—not just English—to be used and spoken by Muslims, it needs to be “Islamised with features that enable it to convey Islamic belief, values, and heritage” (p. 15). He terms this as Islamic language. The concept of Islamic language or Muslim language has also been discussed by al-Attas (1991, p. 30) who mentions that Islamic languages refer to languages that the Muslim people are using, “consisting of key terms which governs the interpretation of the Islamic vision of reality and truth, and which project the worldview of Islam in correct perspective”.

Sharifian (1999) who concurs with the use of Al-Faruqi’s (1986) Islamic English observed in his study conducted in Australia that some Muslim students in ESL classes preferred to use words from either the language of their religion, which was Arabic, or their mother tongues, as they found it difficult to express certain concepts in English. The students found certain English words were “either not strong enough, irrelevant, or even inappropriate for conveying the meanings they intended to get across” (Sharifian, p. 3). Examples of concepts such as “clean”, “pray”, “fasting”, “greeting”, “marriage”, “faith”, “God”, and “intention” that take on specific meanings for Muslims are highlighted.

Othman (2006) also observed the use of Islamic terminologies in English classes. Since both the teachers and students who participated in the study were Muslims, they were at ease in using words like zakat, jihad, Ramadhan and ‘asr in their classes without any need for explanations. Othman and Hamid (2009) investigated teachers’ perspectives as to whether there was a need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be incorporated in the teaching of English to Muslim learners. The results revealed that a majority of the teachers encouraged the incorporation of Arabic words in class and in fact, they also believed that the students were receptive to the idea. Nonetheless, they used Arabic words in their English classes only when the need arose. They were also aware that some Arabic words were not translatable to English and some English words did not correspond to the meanings held by Muslims.

Mahboob (2009) highlights Pakistani English, a new variety of English which represents Islamic values in Pakistan. A documentary analysis of English language textbooks used in schools in Pakistan revealed chapters on Prophet Mohammed, Islam and Hajj. In his linguistic analyses, Mahboob points out to the presence of Islamic greetings like Al-Salam ‘alaykum, and words of praise and appreciation, e.g. Masha-Allah and Alhamdulillah which were found not only in personal exchanges, but also in public discourses, e.g. on radio and television shows as well as political and other speeches. In discourse structures, he identified the Arabic phrase Bsmillahi- Rahmanir-Raheem (I begin in the name of Allah who is the most Gracious and the most
Merciful) in the Arabic text written in the preface of English language textbooks used in schools in Pakistan. He emphasizes that this represents the Islamic tradition of starting all things in the name of Allah. He reiterates that “the use of Arabic – and not its English translation – shows the iconic power of this text and its relationship to Islamic values and systems” (p. 185). The explicit praise of Allah is also seen in the acknowledgements written in 18 MA theses submitted to an English department at an urban university in Pakistan in 2006. Mahboob concludes how Pakistani English has been linguistically and culturally adapted to local cultural and religious norms to reflect a form of linguistic resistance to carry a Pakistani Muslim identity.

Considering the emphasis placed by Muslim scholars, specifically the late al-Faruqi (1986) who advocates Islamic English, this study aimed to investigate Malaysian students’ perspective on the use of Islamic Arabic vocabulary in English lessons.

Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate students’ perspective on the incorporation of Islamic Arabic vocabulary in the teaching of English to Muslim learners.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. Do students see the need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be included in the teaching of English to Muslim learners?

2. What are the possible problems in incorporating Islamic Arabic words in the teaching of English?

Methodology

The study employed a survey design with open-ended questions provided to the respondents. The respondents were 50 post graduate Muslim students who were enrolled in English Language Studies Master’s programme at the International Islamic University Malaysia. After having obtained their consent to be involved in the survey, the students spent a minimum of 30 minutes to respond to the questions. The emerging themes from the students’ responses are discussed below. The questionnaire is attached in the appendix.

Findings

Research Question 1 of the study is “Do students see the need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be included in the teaching of English to Muslim learners?” All respondents strongly saw the need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be included in the teaching of English to Muslim learners.

Clarity of meaning

The students believed that Islamic Arabic words were “more complete” and provided “clear, specific and detailed definitions and explanations”. An example of what was considered as inadequacy of English words was pointed out as follows:

There are some terms in Islam that are inadequate in meaning if they are literally translated into English. For example, the word “prayer” in English does not show even a
close resemblance of its meaning from the Islamic point of view. Prayer in English dictionaries refers to the act of praying to God, where a person needs to kneel down on the ground and performs his prayer. This is not in line with what prayer should mean in Islam. In Islam, a “prayer” is not just a “dua’a” but also an act of worship to Allah performed five times a day, with particular actions involved in the “salah” (prayer) starting from niyya to takbiratul ihram, standing still and reciting surah Al-Fatihah until the last action that is giving salaam which includes turning one’s head to the right.

Not only that English words do not convey the meanings intended by Muslims, but more importantly, some Arabic words do not have their equivalent in English which would lead to the loss of intended meanings as highlighted by the majority of the respondents. Below were some of the responses given:

…their translation may result in a dramatic loss or transformation of meaning. This loss or alteration may pose grave hazards for readers as the meaning is conveyed wrongly in Islamic terms. The word “jihad” for example is stripped of its many crucial aspects of meaning and is introduced as “holy war”. Therefore, to preserve the meaning, Arabic words should be used unsparingly in English whenever the need arises for it.

Similarly, another view of the respondents was as follows,

Arabic words should be included in the teaching of English because some Islamic Arabic terminology cannot be replaced by English words; in the sense that the English words might be inferior to the Arabic terms. For example, in the Muslim marriage, akad is important because the word explains that the marriage is in line with the teaching Islam. However, the English word “marriage” does not include this.

Another respondent agreed and pointed out that the inaccurate translation would have the tendency to confuse students and affect their understanding and application of the terms. Arabic words should be assimilated in the teaching of English due to the fact that translated Arabic words in English do not contain all the meanings that the words should have. Therefore,

…in order to retain the meaning, it is highly recommended that Arabic words be incorporated, for instance, the word “prayer” and salah. Prayer is translated from salah but the meaning of salah is entirely different from “prayer”. Prayer is simply translated as the act of supplication, act of worshipping. The accurate translation is crucial because students (Muslims especially) tend to get confused with the meaning of translated Arabic words. As a result, they might believe the meaning. For example, “prayer” as mentioned is defined as the “act of supplication or requesting of help from God” but salah is an act of worshipping based on certain manners outlined by Islam and compulsory on every Muslim 5 times daily. Therefore, if Muslim students take the meaning of “prayer” as simply du’a, they are indeed not performing the very fundamental teaching of Islam. Thus, it leads to moral repercussion.

The confusion caused by not using Arabic words was also highlighted by another respondent;

… they call hajj pilgrimage but the western definition of pilgrimage even includes Hindus’ visits to the temples in India. As put forward by Al-Faruqi, we must include
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these Islamic vocabulary in ELT. It would be blasphemous to view hajj in the same light as visiting the Vatican.

Using Arabic words would provide accurate meanings of terms and give a deeper impact on Muslims;

Are akhlak and adab equivalent to the words “behavior” or “values”? I believe it will have a better impact if they are in Arabic. Another instance would be the word God instead of Allah. Using the same term as used by the west in teaching English especially to the young ones will somehow inculcate this belief that all gods are the same when the fact is that Allah is beyond the ordinary.

Another respondent agreed with the previous view by saying that,

… by keeping a few Arabic words in English language, the message would be accurate. For example, instead of using the word missionary, we use daie. Even though both words convey the same meaning, “missionary” is normally associated with Christianity. Daie is the exact word to be used for an Islamic preacher.

One of the respondents emphasized that the Islamic vocabulary should only be used where equivalent terms or words are absent in English. She gave an example of adab which is mainly used in a teacher-student interaction to define “respectful relationship” or “ethical interaction”. She added that adab is a comprehensive word to describe a physiological act that might not be successfully defined by a single word from the English vocabulary.

Cultural effects

The second important reason as to why Arabic vocabulary should be incorporated in English language teaching is due to the possible cultural effects of the English vocabulary, as seen in the following responses;

There are potential cultural effects that accompany the learning process. This is possible because learning a language like English is learning about the culture of the native speakers as well. Therefore, it is very important to use Islamic vocabulary so that Muslim learners of English language will not be influenced by the western culture which is so different from Muslim’s way of life that is so much related to Islam. The word “freedom” for instance, is defined as our individual ability to do whatever we want without anyone stopping us. This definition is of course not suitable for Muslims because Islam has different perception about freedom. To begin with, Muslims have roles to play and fulfill as the vicegerent or khalifah of Allah. In our life, we are always required to pray and fast and refrain ourselves from committing sins. This is important because our life is always governed by Islam and the concept of halal or haram. Hence, it is not right to view freedom the way the westerners do because Muslims do not have the total freedom to do whatever we wish like the westerners propagate us to do. This example and explanation shows that the westerners’ definitions of words are not suitable for Muslims and thus must be amended so that they can be changed to suit the Islamic concept and way of life.

One of the responses highlighted the relationship between English language and Christianity;
The importance of advocating Islamic vocabulary in English language is of high priority. … language, culture and religion have been known to be interrelated with each other. English then is very much interrelated with the Christian faith and the culture of the west. Mastery in this language is an eventual mastery of its counterparts. Therefore, with the emergence of Islamic English, one is free from the association of Christianity and the west.

Another respondent shared the same view;

We should use Islamic vocabulary in teaching English to Muslim learners so that the learners are familiar with our own vocabulary that gives specific meanings especially in practicing Islam as a way of life. We don’t want the Muslim learners to be manipulated by the western ideas in understanding certain words which might affect their *aqidah*.

Similarly, the respondents believe that the incorporation of Islamic Arabic vocabulary would protect students from being influenced by the western culture. This is reflected in the following responses;

… we should definitely include Islamic vocabulary in ELT as to not allow students to go astray in their overall knowledge of Islam due to misinterpretation or mistranslation of Islamic vocabulary in its original form, which is in the Arabic language into the English language. This is extremely important so that the student’s knowledge of Islamic terminology and concepts will be of an authentic one, rather than a fabricated one. I strongly believe that ELT should not compromise the authenticity of Islam, in its very essence, as being conveyed by Islamic vocabulary and terminology.

… the knowledge and materials in ELT can be considered as very secular as they basically come from the western point of view. English is the language of the west. So, it carries the western culture for example in words like holy, goddess, miracle, absolute and many more. Thus, there is an urgent need to instill Islamic vocabulary in countries where most of the students are Muslims such as in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Due to the intricate relationship between language and culture, one respondent wanted the English language used by the Muslims to reflect Islamic culture;

Yes, English is a foreign language, a language of the west but there is nothing wrong in making it ours by including some of the words that are Islamic in origin and nature. This would adhere to the fact that all languages reflect culture. Therefore the English that is used by Muslims should reflect the culture of the Muslims.

Another response highlighted about restoring Islamic heritage in the educational system. The respondent says “Our Islamic educational system has been attacked. In order to restore our Islamic heritage in the educational fields, it is crucial that we include Islamic vocabulary in ELT”.

**Enhancement of Islamic knowledge**

The third main reason why respondents would also want Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be incorporated in ELT is because they would be able to enhance their knowledge about Islam. This is seen in the following responses;
… when Islamic vocabulary is used, students will also be able not only to learn vocabulary but also they can learn and enhance their knowledge about Islam. Based on this, Islamic vocabulary must be incorporated in all subjects and not only English because all subjects require the use of language, so that the benefits can be extended to all disciplines.

…we can understand and comprehend the meaning better. For instance, in the concept of marriage, Muslim has words like *akad* which gives a deeper meaning of the term. Besides that, in the process of learning, there are certain values that are being inserted in it. Western people for example, include their belief and values to their language, English. Thus, I think that we also should include Islamic Arabic words that we have, so that in the process of learning English, we are not only learning that language but knowledge about Islam as well.

Another respondent highlighted the lack of Islamic knowledge among students;

It is also important to use Islamic Arabic words as it will introduce the students to the Islamic values of the words. This is because most students especially in English class are not really aware of Islamic Arabic words and how words are defined or explained according to Islam.

Other responses include “Muslims learners can increase not only their understanding of Islamic concepts but they can also apply the concepts to become better Muslims”, “By incorporating Arabic words, Muslim learners will become more aware of the correct definition of words and this will correct our learners’ understanding of Islamic terminologies”, “incorporating Arabic words in learning English will give extra information for the students about certain words” and “by incorporating Arabic words, we unconsciously spread the terms among Muslims which will later be innate within them. When they have understood, there is a tendency that they will implement the knowledge and make it a way of life”.

**Correcting misconceptions and spreading the message of Islam**

The fourth main reason as to why Islamic Arabic words should be incorporated in ELT is to correct misconception about Islam and to spread the message of Islam. Two main responses are as follows:

The fact that some of the Islamic vocabulary have not been defined accurately by the west is a very strong reason for these terms to be introduced in ELT. In this case, the role of teachers or instructors is very important to reintroduce and clarify the meanings of the terms. Teachers or instructors should make use of this opportunity to correct the misconception and misunderstanding towards some of these terms, for example, the word *jihad*, that exist in the minds of their students. However, in playing this important role, the teachers and instructors themselves must be equipped with the deep understanding of the Islamic vocabulary.

We should maintain the Arabic words in English teaching so that we can present positive impression to non-Muslim learners. Nowadays, the west has viewed the Muslim negatively and Islamic education can play its role in changing that impression. The example of “jihad” can be used. As the teacher uses or maintains the word in English
teaching, she can also explain what is meant by “jihad”. It is not brutal murder like what is known by the non-Muslims but a sacred holy war that starts within us first.

*The present use of Arabic in English*

Finally, the fact that Arabic words have already been incorporated in the English Language has been one of the main reasons the respondents insisted for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be employed in English language teaching. A student highlighted that “the dictionaries are full of Arabic originated words such as ‘jihad’”. Another student pointed out the need for any language to evolve according to the present situation. To him “the current situation clearly indicates that English language needs to evolve as well.” He gave an example of the increased demand for Islamic banking system;

Muslim countries are becoming more active in today’s economic market. The setting up of Islamic banks around the world (including in western secular countries) shows that they embrace this Islamic finance system positively. Since this is new to them, they might find it hard to understand the whole concept since Islamic finance systems is so comprehensive. To use the current English to explain these Islamic concepts in Islamic finance is almost impossible. That is why Muslim scholars should participate in an active role to incorporate Arabic words into the teaching of English as this process will ensure better understanding for our next generation especially for those who are from secular background.

Furthermore, another respondent reiterated that the English language is an assimilation of various languages such as Spanish and French. “If the language is able to retain some of the Spanish and French words, it should not hurt if it incorporates some Arabic words. It would do more justice to the Arabic language and the meanings as well”. Similarly, “Islam is well-known in this world. If other languages can be absorbed and used widely in English language, why can’t Arabic?”

In short, all respondents strongly saw the need for Islamic Arabic vocabulary to be included in the teaching of English to Muslim learners due to the inaccurate translations and definitions in dictionaries and the absence of equivalent words in English. There was also the question of the potential cultural effects of the English vocabulary on impressionable Muslim learners. The incorporation of Arabic Islamic words would also enhance the learners’ knowledge about Islam, correct the now increasing misconceptions about Islam and spread the message of Islam. Finally, the respondents were of the opinion that the borrowing of words from one language to another had been taking place for as long as people of different tribes and backgrounds have mingled. The fact is that some Arabic words too have already been part of the English Language.

Research Question 2 of the study is “What are the possible problems in incorporating Islamic Arabic words in the teaching of English?”

*Differences in meaning of Islamic Arabic words and dictionary definitions*

The first problem concerns differences in the meaning of Islamic Arabic words and dictionary definitions. Two respondents pointed out the fact that the meanings of some Arabic words as defined in some dictionaries are not in line with Islamic perspective. In answering the survey question posed to them, one of them mentioned that, “definition of these words, because most of
the dictionaries (English dictionaries) are published in the west. It is not surprising that the meanings of these Arabic words are not correct”. The respondent even suggested steps for Muslims to take in ensuring that the meanings of each word are in line with what Islam perceives.

Another respondent emphasized that incorporating Islamic Arabic words in the teaching of English could be problematic when people rely on the definitions in English dictionaries and do not define Arabic words through the eyes of Islam. She stated, … Unfortunately, the Islamic Arabic terms used in dictionaries now define the words based on how others see the Muslim world, not through the eyes of the Muslims themselves. I believe that such words should be introduced in the teaching of English, but it has to be defined with care and caution so as not to mislead anybody. Some may take it for granted that because the words are Arabic in nature, the definitions in the dictionaries are presumed to be Islamically correct. The respondent also emphasized that the method of borrowing Arabic terms into English needs to be monitored.

Understanding difficulties caused by high frequency of Arabic words

The second problem that has been mentioned is the difficulties for others to understand English as used by Muslims should too many Arabic words be incorporated in the English language. One respondent highlighted this point when she said that “to put too many Arabic terms in the English language would be to clone it as another dialect of Arabic and that is not our purpose”. This is because, according to her, many Islamic words are Arabic in origin. “If there are too many Arabic terms in the language, it will be difficult for our western counterparts to understand us and as a result our communication with them will be affected”. The respondent’s concern is valid as successful communication is still the main objective of language users. To incorporate words belonging to another language into the main language may result in a variety that could be exclusive to very few people of the same interests.

Cultural ignorance

The third problem that is of concern here is that the well-meaning practice of incorporating Arabic Islamic words could lead to students’ ignorance of the western culture. A respondent said, “I do not believe that we should wholly incorporate Arabic words in the teaching of English to Muslim learners” as “we need to build awareness of other cultures”. Another respondent gave an example, “if teenagers aren’t aware of what “wine” means, then what would happen if they stumble across a real bottle of wine not knowing what it is?” Indeed, the learning of cultural nuances of a language is important in this globalization era. One, as a devout Muslim, may disapprove of alcoholic drinks and their consumption but to Islamicise a language and the learning of a language to the extent that it may produce ignorant users of that language who do not possess adequate vocabulary to communicate with users of various backgrounds will not abode well with the Islamic belief of respect and tolerance of all God’s creations.

Pronunciation of Arabic words

The next problem is in terms of pronunciation. A respondent highlighted the need for the Arabic terms to be pronounced accurately. She states, “If the Arabic terms do become part of the
English language, then teachers of English have to be taught the right pronunciation of these terms as the right pronunciation is crucial. The wrong pronunciation will alter the meanings of these Arabic words”.

In short, some of the possible problems as foreseen by the respondents are differences in the meaning of Islamic Arabic words and dictionary definitions, difficulties for others to understand English as used by Muslims should too many Arabic words be incorporated in the English language, the well-meaning practice of incorporating Islamic Arabic words could lead to students’ ignorance of the western culture, and pronunciation.

Conclusion

Based on the emerging themes of the students’ responses, it can be concluded that they see the need to incorporate Islamic Arabic vocabulary in the teaching of English to Muslim learners. In line with al-Faruqi’s (1986) framework, the need for the incorporation is due to the inaccurate translations and definitions in dictionaries and the absence of equivalent words in English. The fact that language is a carrier of culture (Corder, 1973) and therefore language and culture are intertwined and inseparable (Alptekin, 1993; Lado, 1957; Sapir, 1929) has led the respondents to mention the need to curb potentially negative cultural effects of the English vocabulary. The respondents also highlighted the need to enhance learners’ knowledge about Islam and the fact that some Arabic words have already been part of the English Language. Although some of the responses and thoughts may not be well-received in cultures where Islam is not dominant, the findings are of value to educators or language instructors who are sensitive to the role of languages in molding a person’s thoughts and personality. The findings also indicate the relevance of the Sapir-Whorfian arguments on whether language shapes thoughts or vice-versa and illuminate the cultural and theological paradox faced by both learners and instructors in the teaching and learning process.

In terms of the practical and pedagogical implications of the study, materials based on Islamic Arabic vocabulary need to be developed and used in English language classes. Apart from that, the choice of language instructors will also need to be carefully considered. The first, however, would require material developers who understand the need to teach Islamic Arabic vocabulary to Muslim learners and the potential complexity of this effort. This, in reality, may take a long time unless there is no hindrance in funding such material development projects where experts of various related fields could converge and work together.

What is even more crucial is the need to train potential teachers of the theoretical aspects of the issue and the requirements in preparing them to impart knowledge to students which include training them how to pronounce Arabic words correctly. The fact is that the ability to speak the Arabic language well would better ensure the success in incorporating those selected words. Teachers do have to know the meanings of the lexical items as understood in Islam and avoid reliance on the definitions given in English dictionaries.

It is acknowledged that this study has explored a tiny fraction of the issues concerning language, culture and faith of Islamic language (Abdussalam, 1999) or Islamic English (al-Faruqi, 1986). Further studies in this area which could include explorations on figurative or metaphoric expressions of English need to be carried out. The research is needed in order to investigate the reception to the idea of Islamic English by other parties involved in the teaching of Muslim
English language learners. It concurs with Lee (2003, p.10) that there is “a distinctively inseparable relationship between language, culture and identity.”

Acknowledgements

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References


Appendix (Questionnaire on Students’ Perception on Incorporating Arabic Words in English Language Teaching)

1. Have you taken the course on Islamization of Knowledge (IOK)? Yes / No

2. What do you understand by the concept “Islamic English”?

3. In your view, should we incorporate Arabic words in the teaching of English to Muslim learners? Please provide three main reasons and explain them.

   1.
   
   2.
   
   3.
Main Idea Identification Strategies: EFL Readers’ Awareness and Success

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Abstract:

The present study was designed to determine whether there is a facilitatory relationship between awareness of reading comprehension strategies and their effective use in foreign language reading. To that end, it investigated the effects of reading comprehension strategy awareness and use on main idea comprehension and recall of foreign language texts. Subjects were four Libyan Arabic-speaking readers of English as a foreign language (EFL). Subjects provided written recalls of foreign language texts, which were assessed according to weightings (Kintsch, 1988) derived from a propositional analysis of the texts (Zerhouni, 1996; Schellings, Van Hout-Wolter, Vermunt, 1996; Roloff, 1999). Subjects also completed a Reading Strategy Survey (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002) and a semi-structured Reading Strategy Interview. Additional data were derived from the experimenter’s observation of the subjects’ approach to the recall task. The results indicate a positive relationship between reading strategy awareness, use of these strategies and main idea comprehension of the text. The implications of these results for teaching FL reading are discussed.

Key words: foreign language reading, reading comprehension strategies, strategy awareness, main idea comprehension
Main Idea Identification Strategies: EFL Readers’ Awareness

Introduction

The identification of main points is considered to be one of the basic skills in reading a text and is critical to understanding it (Tomitch, 2000). A related skill is the ability to distinguish between main points and subsidiary points. A number of studies have indicated that many students lack proficiency in identifying these main points in their first language (L1) (Hudson, 2007; Schellings & Van Hout-Wolters, 1995; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). As little is known about the mastery of this ability in learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), the present study investigated four native Libyan Arabic speaking readers’ awareness and use of EFL reading strategies. The study examined how these readers interacted with written English texts and the types of reading strategies they used to identify the main idea(s). While acknowledging that the identification of the main and subsidiary points of a text is a complex process, it can be broken down into essentially three main types of reading strategies. These are: Global reading strategies, Problem-solving strategies and Support strategies. According to Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), Global strategies include using background knowledge, identifying the purpose for reading, and self questioning. Problem-solving strategies include deciding what to focus on, getting back on track when concentration weakens, and monitoring comprehension. Support reading strategies include note taking, underlining key ideas or words, and listing major ideas.

The present study examined four Libyan Arabic speaking EFL readers’ awareness of the above mentioned strategies, their ability to use them during reading, and the usefulness of these strategies for main idea comprehension and identification. The research questions were: Do EFL readers use Global, Problem-solving, and Support reading strategies in EFL academic reading? Which of the above mentioned strategies help EFL readers to identify the main idea when reading? These questions are addressed through detailed analyses of subjects’ text recalls, a written Reading Strategy Survey, a semi-structured Reading Strategy Interview, and observation of the subjects’ approach to the recall task.

The next section of the paper provides a Conceptual Framework for the study. This is followed by a section devoted to Experimental Design, including Instruments, Methodology and Subjects. The Results section presents both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data. The Discussion section looks at the findings in terms of the research questions the study was designed to address, while the Conclusion raises some broader implications of the findings for EFL reading and raises issues for future exploration.

Conceptual Framework

One of the main research questions of the present study is whether EFL readers use comprehension strategies of Global, Problem-solving, and Support Strategies to identify the main points of an academic text. This section examines research on the role these strategies play in reading comprehension.

Second Language (L2) Global Reading Strategies

Global Reading Strategies are rather complex, as they rely on the reader’s ability to integrate background knowledge with identification of the purpose for reading and self questioning.
Main Idea Identification Strategies: EFL Readers’ Awareness

Elashhab

A number of studies have looked specifically at the role of background knowledge as part of this complex. For example, Chen and Graves’s (1995) demonstrate that utilizing prior knowledge is especially useful for comprehending L2 texts containing culture-specific elements that cannot otherwise be accessed. Thus their study affirms that background knowledge activation plays a major role in comprehending and remembering L2 text information and can be considered one of the most important global strategies used for main idea comprehension.

In addition, Anderson (1999) demonstrates that activating background knowledge or schema has a major influence on reading comprehension. Anderson argues that meaning does not emerge entirely from the printed words, but that readers bring certain knowledge to reading which affects their comprehension. Anderson concludes that activation of background knowledge facilitates comprehension of the main ideas of a text because readers’ understanding of the meaning of words and the organization of texts facilitates their comprehension and enhances reading skills in both their L1 and L2.

In a similar vein, Lin (2002) and Hudson (2007) studied the role of prior knowledge in L2 reading. The results of Lin’s research demonstrate that EFL readers’ prior linguistic knowledge is the most important factor for EFL reading comprehension at the beginning stages of FL learning, while readers’ prior socio-cultural knowledge is considered the most important factor for FL comprehension at higher levels of proficiency. Lin argues that replacement of linguistic knowledge by socio-cultural knowledge takes place as FL readers improve their target language and attain advanced levels. Hudson (2007) also argues that cultural background knowledge plays an important role in interpreting reading texts, as this type of knowledge interacts reader’s comprehension process.

Vann and Abraham (1990) compared successful and unsuccessful Arabic EFL learners in terms of the quantity and quality of global strategies they used in various tasks, including L2 reading. This study provides counter-evidence for the notions that unsuccessful learners are inactive strategy users or that strategy use per se can differentiate between successful and unsuccessful learners. In fact, two unsuccessful learners in this study were found to be remarkably similar to successful EFL learners in their use of strategies. However, the less successful learners usually failed to apply the appropriate strategy for a particular task. In his study examining individual differences in strategy use for L2 reading by adult learners, Anderson (1991) likewise reports that effective reading is not simply a matter of being aware of strategies. This awareness must be coupled with knowing how and when to use the appropriate strategy. Block (1992) agrees that differences that exist in comprehension monitoring strategies between L1 and L2 readers seem to be more related to overall reading proficiency than to the language background of the readers. Both Anderson (1991) and Block (1992) note that skilled L2 readers are as proficient as skilled L1 readers in recognizing problems during reading and in applying problem-solving strategies to resolving them, which often means figuring out which other reading strategies they need to resort to. Problem-solving strategies are the focus of the next section of this paper.

L2 Problem-solving reading strategies

Poor reading performance by L2 learners can be attributed to inadequate use of problem solving strategies when a text becomes difficult to read. As such difficulty can be due to a lack of comprehension monitoring, a lack of awareness of rhetorical structure of L2, vocabulary
difficulty, lack of prior knowledge, and cognitive style, readers must be able to implement a strategy or strategies appropriate to the problem. These may include deciding what to focus on, getting back on track when concentration weakens, and monitoring comprehension. Using a recall protocol, Kim (1995) shows that persistently applying appropriate problem-solving strategies to the reading of L2 materials diminishes both language and reading problems while enhancing overall language learning. These problem-solving strategies include guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary, rereading to increase understanding, and adjusting reading speed to comprehend text information.

In a similar vein, Najar (1998) conducted a classroom study on the use of cognitive learning strategies during L2 reading tasks. Her results suggest that not all learning strategies are of equal benefit in helping L2 readers to identify main ideas and comprehend a text. On the basis of these findings, Najar suggests that problem-solving reading strategies, such as vocabulary identification and guessing meaning, lead to more successful task performance, because they encourage L2 learners to work with the text in order to comprehend it. Such work involves the use of support reading strategies, discussed below.

**L2 Support reading strategies**

Support reading strategies are implemented as needed and can include full translation, use of outside reference materials, note-taking, underlining key ideas and words and listing major ideas (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). Najar (1998) argues that these strategies enhance comprehension because they involve main idea recognition and organizing information into levels of importance. Note-taking also directs readers’ attention toward certain information, such as important points, which consequently increases their recall of information related to the main ideas.

**Reading strategy awareness**

The research reviewed above establishes the importance of global, problem solving and support strategies for comprehending written texts. Skilled readers rely on global strategies to manage their reading, on problem solving strategies as they process the material and on support strategies to help them comprehend the text. By effectively applying these strategies, L2 readers are able to compensate for a lack of English proficiency. However, in order to successfully use such strategies, readers must also be aware of them and familiar with their appropriate use (Mokhtari and Sheorey, 2002; Bernhardt, 2010).

**Research questions**

Unfortunately, little is known about the relationship between awareness of reading strategies and their successful use in reading comprehension by EFL readers. To shed further light on this issue, the present investigates EFL readers’ awareness and use of the three types of reading strategies categorized by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) and compares these to their ability to identify and comprehend the main ideas of a text. The main research questions are:

- Are EFL readers aware of global, problem-solving, and support reading strategies?
- Do EFL readers use these strategies appropriately in EFL academic reading?
Which of these strategies contribute to EFL readers’ ability to identify and comprehend the main ideas of a written text?

**Hypotheses**

It was hypothesized that participants’ awareness of reading strategies would be related to their use of them, but that only correct application of the strategies would lead to better reading comprehension and main idea identification outcomes.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

Participants were four native Libyan Arabic-speaking females between the ages of 27 and 34. The selected participants were recent university graduates in science, law or engineering. These four participants had all studied English as a foreign language in Libya for about six years, four hours per week. They had not received instruction on reading strategies in EFL reading during their education, because the Libyan curriculum and the EFL education system emphasize the teaching of grammar above all else. Moreover, Libyan EFL teachers, who also experienced the Libyan curriculum during their own education, received no training in reading strategies and are thus not equipped to teach them.

At the time of this study, all 4 participants were living in Canada as temporary residents, but had not yet taken any ESL courses in Canada. In this paper, each participant will be referred by her initials. Materials that were used in this study will be introduced in the following section.

**Instruments**

The instruments are discussed in their order of administration. No time limit was imposed on any of the tasks.

1. Participants’ Self-reported EFL Reading Strategy Awareness and Use were measured by Mokhtary and Sheorey’s (2002) Reading Strategy Survey, which was translated into Arabic, the participants’ first language (L1). This written test consisted of 30 statements, each describing a reading strategy from one of three categories: global reading strategies (13 items), problem-solving strategies (8 items), and support reading strategies (9 items). After each statement, participants indicated how often they use the strategy depicted using a 5-point Likert scale provided after each statement (ranging from 1 ‘I never do this’ to 5 ‘I always do this’). Participants were reminded that their responses should refer only to the strategies that they think they use during their reading of school-related materials. Appendix X contains an English version of the test.

2. The second instrument was a Text Recall Task based on a reading passage. Bilingual Arabic/English instructions for the task preceded the passage. The target English-language reading text of 719 words was on the topic of “functional foods” or foods that have medicinal functions. The text was interesting and non-technical, as it was written by a native speaker and addresses native English readers of a life style magazine. As it was written by and for native readers of English, without being modified or simplified for learning or teaching purposes, the text can also be considered authentic. This is crucial
for ensuring the reliability and validity of the results of the present study with respect to the participants’ ability to comprehend authentic L2 texts. All participants indicated to the researcher that “functional foods” was a familiar topic about which they had sufficient knowledge and interest to inspire them to read carefully. All of them are mothers who are concerned about the health and nutrition of their children.

After reading the passage, participants were given two blank pages upon which they were directed to write as much as they could recall from the text without looking back at it. Participants were permitted to write in either language to avoid the problem of limited L2 production abilities. This allowed for maximum insight into the strategies these EFL readers used for identifying the main idea of the text.

3. The third instrument consisted of informal researcher observation protocol of the participants’ performance in order to gauge their active use of various strategies to the extent that such use is observable. While participants read the text and performed the recall task, the researcher took notes on their way of reading, their use of support reading strategies and their use of a translation strategy, such as writing the Arabic translation on the text sheet above the English words as an aid to understanding the text.

4. The fourth instrument was a retrospective semi-structured oral interview (Appendix 1) with each participant during which the researcher discussed their task performance with them in order to confirm what she had observed and to obtain information about the strategies that participants thought they had used.

Results and Discussion

Self Reported Strategy Use

In accordance with Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), participants’ scale responses on the Reading Strategy Survey were divided into three levels of utilization of for each of the three reading strategies: high level (mean of 3.5 or higher), medium level (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low level (mean of 2.4 or less).

Tables 1 through 3 provide participants’ self-reported use of reading strategies by item. The results indicate inter-participant variation in their self-reported use of global and support strategies, with means ranging from high to medium levels (Tables 1 and 3). The highest average in the Global category was obtained by Asia (4.4). Amal scored 3.6, which is still considered a high level usage (Table 1). However, both Wala (2.6) and Nadia (3.2) fall into the medium usage level. In the case of Support Strategies, both Asia and Amal reported a high level of usage (4.2 and 3.7), while Wala and Nadia again were in the medium category (3.2 and 3.3). Conversely, there was no apparent difference in the self-reported use of problem-solving strategies across the four participants, as all of them were at a high level with means ranging from 5.0 to 4.1 (Table 2). Participants’ overall means combining the three types of strategies were: Asia-4.5, for Wala-3.2, for Amal-3.8 and Nadia-3.5
Table 1: Participants’ Self-Reported Use of Global Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Global Reading Strategies by Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Global mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>5 4 5 4 3 4 5 3 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 4 4 2 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>5 4 1 2 1 3 4 1 1 4 3 1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>4 3 3 3 4 4 3 1 4 1 4 5 3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Participants’ Self-Reported Use of Problem-Solving Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Problem-solving Strategies by Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Problem mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 5 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>5 4 3 5 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>5 5 4 4 3 2 5 5 5 5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Participants’ Self-Reported Use of Support Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Support Strategies by Item</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Support mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>4 4 5 3 5 5 4 4 4 5 4 4 5 5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4 3 5 3 4 3 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>5 5 5 1 2 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 2 3 3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>5 5 2 4 2 2 3 1 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring of the Recalls

Scoring of the recalls was based on the number of propositions a participant recalled. The propositions were identified following the guidelines developed by Zerhouni (1996), Schellings, Van Hout-Wolter, and Vermunt (1996) and Roloff (1999), who in turn based their analyses on Kintsch’s (1988) propositional analysis model. This propositional structure is a set of propositions organized into a hierarchy that reflects their relative importance in the text. Five hierarchical levels were assigned to the reading text: a Macro propositional level (MP), which is the highest in the hierarchy, presents the topic of the text; a primary propositional level (PI) represents the main ideas; a secondary propositional level (PII) corresponds with the ideas of comparable importance, which clarify and/or expand the main ideas; a tertiary propositional level (PIII) represents ideas of lesser importance, which provide further details regarding secondary propositions; a quaternary propositional level (PIV) presents the details within the text that are related to names of substances and organizations, as well as those that provide clarification for tertiary propositions. In other words, propositions that are not important for main idea comprehension are positioned at this lowest level (PIV).

An idea unit analysis based on this model and verified by a native speaker analyst yielded 79 semantic propositions for the target text in the Text Recall Task. Following the weighting of the propositions suggested in Zerhouni (1996) and Roloff (1999), the scoring of propositions was calculated based on the weighted values shown in Table 4. Thus each participant’s score was arrived at on the basis of both the type and the category of propositions that they recalled from the text.

Table 4: Maximum Possible Score for Text-based Propositions by Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prop. Level</th>
<th>N of Props</th>
<th>Points for each proposition</th>
<th>Total points for each level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X 16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>X 8</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PII</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>X 4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIII</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>X 2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIV</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>X 1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Participants’ Propositional Recalls and Total Weighted Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of recalled props. From each level</th>
<th>Total recalled Props. (79)</th>
<th>Total weighted score (256)</th>
<th>Total weighted recall percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1 (6) 12 (20) 5 (44) 157 61%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wala</td>
<td>1 (4) 5 (25) 2 (96) 37.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>1 (3) 3 (22) 1 (80) 31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>1 (6) 7 (27) 1 (117) 45.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table 5, participants’ total weighted recall scores ranged from 80 to 157 out of a possible 256. The range in scores is not due to participants’ ability to recall the major point (MP), which they all did correctly, as expressed through their recall of the title of the text. Instead, they varied considerably in their recall of lower level propositions (Table 6).

Table 6: Percentages of Recalled Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Percentage of recalled props. from each level</th>
<th>Total recalled Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>100% 54% 80% 50% 41%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wala</td>
<td>100% 36% 33% 32% 16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>100% 27% 20% 32% 16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>100% 54% 46% 30% 8%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that Asia had the highest recall overall except for PI, where she tied with Nadia. But Asia was more successful on the second level propositions than on the first level propositions. She identified more from PII (80%) than from PI (54%), which could mean either that, she had difficulty recognizing higher-level propositions or that she focused more on the second level ones to the detriment of those from the first level. Nadia evidenced the same recall percentage as Asia from level 1 (54%), but in level 2 she recalled only 46% versus Asia’s 80%. Moreover, Nadia recalled 30% of the propositions in level 3 and only 8% in level 4, which is the lowest recalled percentage of all four participants. Wala recalled 36% of propositions from level 1, 33% from level 2, 32% from level 3 and 16% from level 4, suggesting that she paid almost the same amount of attention to these three different propositional levels. Nonetheless, both Nadia’s and Wala’s recall percentages ranged from high to low in the same order as the proposition levels. This indicates that they focused more on high level ideas than on low level ideas, which suggests that they used some effective reading strategies for identifying the main ideas of the text, although their overall averages are lower than Asia’s. Lastly, Amal’s recall percentages indicate that she may have focused on level 3 propositions more than on those from levels 1 and 2. Aside from the MP, her highest recall percentage was for level 3 propositions at 32%. This indicates that, like Asia, she had a problem distinguishing the most important from the more secondary ideas or supporting details of the text. In contrast, Nadia’s and Wala’s recalls indicate that they focused more on level 1 propositions, as they recalled 54% and 36% respectively and their percentages of recalls for the lowest level decreased to 8% and 16% respectively.

In summary, aside from their 100% recall of the MP, the participants varied with respect to their recall of the main ideas of the text. Asia considered the second level ideas as the most important ones, while Amal focused more on the third level propositions. On the other hand, Wala’s close recall percentages from levels 1, 2, and 3 indicate an inability to differentiate between main ideas and supporting details. Overall, the generally low overall averages of the recalled propositions, ranging from 55% to 27%, reveal the participants’ deficiency in recognizing the main ideas of
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the text. An examination of these recall results in the light of data from the researchers’ observation protocol and the semi-structured interviews, as well as from the participants’ strategy awareness questionnaires, sheds additional light on the participants’ approach to FL reading.

Text Recall as a Function of Self-reported Strategy Use, Observed Usage and Interviews

A comparison of participants’ total averages on the L2 Reading Strategy Inventory with their propositional recall results indicates a predictive relationship between self-reported use of more main idea comprehension strategies and greater recall of idea units from the text (Table 7). For example, Asia scored 4.5 overall in the strategy survey and recalled 55% of the propositions of the text, which represent the highest scores in both cases. The other three participants performed similarly to one another, achieving scores at lower levels on both awareness and recall.

These findings are consistent with Najar (1998), who reports that readers more proficient in finding and comprehending main ideas used global and problem-solving strategies more often than less skilled readers.

Table 7: Scores of Recall and Self-Reported Comprehension Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Recall %</th>
<th>Mean Overall Strategy Use</th>
<th>Mean Global Strategy Use</th>
<th>Mean Problem Solving Strategy Use</th>
<th>Mean Support Strategy Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wala</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another notable finding was that conscious application of global reading strategies correlated positively with reading performance and comprehension, which is consistent with the conclusions of Feng & Mokhtari (1998). For example, Asia scored 4.4 in self-reported global strategy usage and recalled 61% of the text. This finding agrees also with the results of Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes (1991), whose research on EFL and ESL reading for meaning indicated that users of global reading strategies focus primarily on textual propositions. Likewise, both the researcher’s observations and the data on strategy awareness in the present study indicate that support reading strategies such as note taking, translation, underlining of key words, and strategies which utilize some form of main idea recognition led to more effective comprehension of the reading text than cases where there was no evidence of support strategy use. Furthermore, strategies that include main idea recognition and the organization of information into levels of importance lead to more interpretation and analysis of the text owing to the fact that they involve the reader in working and interacting with the text to understand it and committing time to the task. According to Najar (1998) and Hudson (2007), this interaction leads to a better understanding of the text content. Hence, using this reading strategy improves FL reading comprehension.
Lack of FL Reading Strategies

Conversely, lack of FL reading strategies causes most of the problems of misinterpreting the paragraphs of the reading text. In explaining why participants could not recall the main idea of the reading text, it is crucial to emphasize that the most important aspect of getting the author’s main idea is to understand what s/he is saying in each paragraph by using the required strategies. This is in agreement with Jacobowitz (1990). However, according to the researcher’s teaching experience, most of EFL readers’ problems in paragraph interpretation are: getting a vague general notion of the text without comprehending the main point of the author; failure to realize the relationship between the main idea and the supporting details of the text and to differentiate between them; or introducing irrelevant concepts that the author never intended.

Another explanation of this study’s EFL readers’ failure to locate and identify the main idea of the text was their lack of the following reading strategies: reading the introduction and the conclusion; focusing on the topic sentences of the paragraphs; and using appropriate macrostructure formation (Mannes and Kintsch, 1987). The analysis of the participants’ recalls, researcher’s observations and their statements during the discussion with the researcher supported this notion, since they revealed that they read the text word by word, from the first word to the last word, paying the same amount of attention to every word. According to the researcher’s observation, Amal and Nadia did not realize where one sentence began and another ended since they read the paragraph as if it were one sentence. They dealt with the text in terms of words, not sentences or paragraphs. They did not pay attention to the introduction or to the conclusion, since they were not aware of the text structure or organization. This was noted by the researcher during the experimental session and also stated by the participants. “I read every word and try to understand its meaning”. They read all the words and tried to understand the meaning of each word; they were intent on not missing a word. This explanation agrees with Swaffer, Arens and Byrnes’s (1991), Bernhardt (2010) and Hudson (2007) discussions that readers with low proficiency are more likely to use bottom-up strategies, such as paying the most attention to the meaning of individual words.

Participants’ inability to decide on the importance of some of the main ideas of the text was another crucial contributing factor to their failure to identify them. For instance, Amal stated that she focused on every word and paid the same amount of attention to every word. On the other hand, Nadia used the opposite strategy to Amal’s. Nadia neglected some important ideas or key-words completely and did not make an effort to understand their meaning. Block (1992) called this strategy “omitting” (when readers did not recall a component that was in the text). Some words that Nadia failed to understand and later could not recall were examples of omission. This omission of important ideas or words shows that Nadia could not decide on their relative importance.

Nadia also had a problem with connecting words to each other in a sentence, and with connecting different sentences with each other in a paragraph to understand the idea. By not paying attention to the beginning and the end of the sentences to comprehend their ideas, she merged a part of one sentence with another part of another sentence in the text in her written recall. For example, she wrote “green tea reduces cholesterol and prostate cancer.” However, the text says “green tea reduced cancer risk, lycopene in tomatoes and tomato products reduced risk of some types of cancer, especially prostate cancer.” From this example, it was obvious that
Nadia merged the first two sentences from one paragraph with the last sentence of the previous paragraph.

Moreover, according to the researcher’s observation of two of the participants during the experimental session, vocabulary difficulty with even simple non-technical words was one of their most serious problems. This is in agreement with Coady (1993) and Lems, Miller & Soro (2011), who assume that the lack of word recognition skills is often a cause of difficulties in developing L2 reading comprehension.

In contrast, all the participants brought their background knowledge to bear on understanding the main idea of the text by remembering and recalling what they had heard elsewhere about functional foods and their health benefits. For example, they recalled types of foods not mentioned in the text such as, “parsley reduces risk of urinary tract infection” and “nutmeg is good for kidney pain”. Also Amal used the base form of some words as a strategy to understand the new words. For instance, Amal returned the word “convincingly” to “convinced” as she was thinking aloud while reading the text.

Conclusion

The results of this study illustrated the correlation between reading strategy awareness (as measured by the Reading Strategy Survey of Mokhtari & Reichard, (2002)) and use (as observed by the experimenter) and main idea comprehension. Participants who used more main idea comprehension strategies recalled more idea units from the text. This notion is supported by the fact that those participants who believe that they implement L2 reading strategies and actually use them were more successful performers in the propositional recall task. The results suggested that not all support reading strategies were equally effective in helping the readers to identify the main idea and to understand the content of the text. It appears from the data that strategies such as vocabulary identification and translation were useful only when applied in conjunction with strategies which encourage the utilization of some form of main idea recognition. On the other hand, the data showed that support strategies such as note-taking and underlining key-words or ideas that involve organizing the information of the text into levels of importance and main idea identification led to more successful task performance. Therefore, EFL readers who used FL reading strategies of main idea identification were more capable of comprehending and identifying the main idea of the text.

However, none of the participants performed at an even near native level on the comprehensions task despite their apparent awareness and use of at least some reading strategies. This suggests that reading comprehension strategies alone are not effective unless EFL readers are capable of appropriately applying them. In other words, it is not enough to simply know the appropriate reading strategies; EFL readers must also be able to regulate and monitor the use of these strategies in order to comprehend reading texts. Helping EFL readers to think about their reading processes and encouraging them to build up their confidence to use their reported strategic knowledge may enhance their reading comprehension. This metacognitive knowledge might also help EFL readers to understand that linguistic proficiency in a FL is not the only factor in assisting their reading comprehension. Such knowledge could help them to realize that reading strategies play an obvious role in comprehending the main idea of any reading text.

In the light of the present study, as well as previous research findings, it might be possible to
enhance readers’ reading comprehension by having teachers focus students’ attention on both identifying main ideas and important supporting details in texts. This can be done by teaching some of the basic reading strategies, such as skimming and anticipating. It is crucially important, before asking teachers to incorporate strategy instruction in their classrooms, to convince them that students may have reading problems that must be resolved and that resolution of these problems is more important than teaching the meaning of specific words and concepts (Block, 1992). This could be done by providing teachers with programs and seminars on FL reading strategies. The goal of these programs would be to introduce teachers to cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies and to convince them of their importance to students’ ultimate success in reading.

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**APPENDIX I:**

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

At the end of the recall protocol session, the researcher asked participants to retrospect about their reading session. This was guided by the following questions:

1- At what rate (quickly, moderate, or slowly) did you read the text? And why?

2- In which order did you read the text? (e.g. 1st paragraph, 2nd paragraph. etc. or 1st, last paragraph.)

3- What did you specifically do to understand the text?

4- Describe the strategies that you used to make sure you understood the text.

5- What did you do to remember the important points of the text?

6- Did you do anything else to help you understand and remember the text?

7- Is there anything that you would like to add?
Lecture Note Taking Driving License: An Effective Programme for Arab University Students

Alaa Al-Musalli
ELTquest: CLIL Teacher-Training

Abstract

This paper aims to draw teachers’ attention to the need to revisit the theories behind the practices of teaching Note Taking (NT) in lectures to Arab university students. It attempts to present an effective approach to teaching note taking that mimics the concept behind the European/International Computer Driving License which provides complete training and a literacy qualification to ensure the successful use of information and communication technology in the workplace. The Lecture Note Taking Driving License is an intensive programme based on a collection of pedagogical advice from the literature concerning proper measures in teaching note taking in lectures. It provides students with the tools they need to take notes within two weeks after joining their universities. The programme has been developed for and tested on Omani students at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate on Oman; it may well fit other Arab learners when instruction in a target language is provided to new university students.

Keywords: Taking Notes in Lectures, Teaching Note Taking, Effective Teaching, Lecture Note Taking for Arab University Students, New Approach to Teaching Study Skills.
Introduction

30 years ago, Broome (1982: 72) made an observation about training in NT at schools that is strikingly still true of what is happening today in many institutions all over the world. He states that in ideal situations, although knowledge about different note taking techniques is introduced to students at school, many school students experience only a limited form of NT; thus, taking notes from dictation or from the board are the most common methods to most high school graduates. This is why many students find the transition to the active role of making their own notes at the university difficult.

Instruction in NT is important for university students because, Drew and Bingham (2001: 33) state, the type and amount of information at university is complex and needs to be looked at more critically than at school, which makes taking accurate and brief notes from such material challenging to even L1 learners. This gives emphasis to the scope of the problem for those learning through L2, who face bigger and more urgent problems. For example, students who study English as a school subject, in which they might not be completely proficient, face the problems of dealing with the language as a medium of instruction at the university.

Teaching NT skills to L2 students is important to help them develop into autonomous learners, who can fully depend on themselves. This can not be achieved through a surface approach to learning which are the causes of formal teaching methods. What learners need is a deep approach which is facilitated when teaching is less formal, such as in discussion and when students feel more independent from their teachers. Hence, teaching NT skills can be taught more effectively through a deep approach. The questions are: how much instruction do L2 students need in NT to make them independent and effective note takers? And more importantly, how much time do students need to become autonomous learners? Can teaching students effective NT be done in a few weeks or must it take longer time and put a big strain on the curriculum?

The Lecture Note Taking Driving License programme suggested in this paper, which follows the concept of the European/International Computer Driving License, will attempt to answer some of these questions. The fundamental theory behind this programme provides intensive tailor-made training in NT skills at the initial stages of the students’ transition form school to university rather than following the more common prolonged training using commercial NT and study skills books developed for a more general audience, which in most cases are useful for teachers more than students.

Note Taking and Study Skills Courses

Most of the books about or including NT are pedagogical in nature. Such didactic books provide insights into the teaching of NT and how to take notes. Basically, all these books concentrate on NT as a study skill which is developed in a scientific and gradual manner and in many cases by the learners themselves. One of the most effective models for teaching NT is proposed by Kennedy and Bolitho (1984: 92-93) who suggest the following three stages for NT courses:

- **Stage 1:** At this stage, NT involves the practice and checking of comprehension skills. The type and level of material presented to the learners may differ according to their purpose and level of understanding. As for the development of the material, it is graded
from word level to sentence level to paragraph level and then to larger texts until they is able to deal with short lectures.

- Stage 2: At this stage, a number of NT strategies and techniques are introduced. To start with, techniques of simplifying language can be practiced, for example, using abbreviations, numbers, and symbols, omitting verb to be and articles, etc. Learners can also be trained to look for and make lists of main and supplementary points. Tables and diagrams should be encouraged as a means to note down information. Learners should also be trained to relate NT to a purpose, i.e. take notes with a purpose. They should learn what to take down and leave out and develop their personal strategies and abbreviations.

- Stage 3: At this stage, learners read back their notes and expand them, making sure they serve their purpose and are clear and unambiguous. This ‘feedback system’ is important to pinpoint problem areas and evaluate the NT methods used.

The above stages is an ideal way of looking at the steps needed in NT training; therefore, we will attempt to present the quick-fix that the Lecture Note Taking Driving License programme presents in line with these stages, supporting each step with literature.

As for the duration of the proposed programme, the training takes the maximum of two weeks, which is considerably shorter than most NT programmes that use commercial NT and study skills books. The reliance on short-duration training is supported through research done by Al-Musalli (2008) who gave a sample of L2 students moving from school to university education an intensive tailor-made two-hour workshop on lecture NT techniques and tips. After the workshop, a dramatic change in students NT techniques as well as the quality of the information units written down from a live lecture was observed as compared to a control group that was not given the workshop. Students who received training were given the means and freedom to go beyond taking outline notes which were the prevailing form practiced in their course books. This supports the effectiveness of a quick-fix rather than a prolonged course using ineffective books or others written for different target audience.

**Lecture Note Taking Driving License Programme Components**

Before discussing the three stages in this proposed programme, it is important to discuss where and on whom it was tested. This programme was developed at Sultan Qaboos University for students making the transition from high school to university education. The students were all Omani Arab learners at the Language Center, who were involved in different English foundation courses before joining their colleges at the university, where the language of instruction is English. The programme was tested in the academic year of 2010-2011 on three groups of students in the first two weeks of a listening/speaking course, during which taped lectures provided with the course textbook were used to practice listening and NT. The students had had very little or no instruction in NT at school. Instead of following the course book which gave practice in one technique of NT, i.e. outline notes, the students were given specific information about NT and introduced to different NT techniques which they were given freedom to use and combine after practicing them with the teacher.

The focal aspect of the Lecture Note Taking Driving License is the teacher’s involvement in developing the learners’ NT skills in a quick fashion with emphasis on learners’ autonomy. The teacher’s role is not traditional. Instead of simply lecturing on NT and how to take effective notes, the teacher is involved in the actual writing and shaping of notes through providing
demonstrations on how to take notes. Such demonstrations involve: (a) sharing and discussing sets of ready made notes on the topic of the lecture with the students, (b) taking notes with the students from a recorded lecture on the board, and (c) taking notes from a recorded lecture on the board while the students are busy taking notes and discussing the different notes.

The common advantages of these three activities are: to give students examples of how notes on the same material can look and stress certain points in the material that they might have not picked. The advantage of the latter two activities is to show students that NT requires a lot of effort and imagination. All three activities are recommended in this programme, but the activity that provides the most benefit to students is the last one. When the teacher takes notes while the students are writing down their own notes, the students are asked not to look at the teacher's notes but focus on taking their own notes. After taking notes, students first look at their notes for a minute to complete them, then swap compare notes, and later compare their notes with the teacher's notes on the board.

The teacher’s involvement in the process goes beyond merely training the students; it requires a more active approach to giving NT advice, an approach that shows the teacher’s NT skills through which students learn to improve theirs. But before this active involvement in teaching NT skills, the teacher should first help students tune into their lectures by developing their listening skills as will be discussed below.

**Stage 1: developing lecture listening skills**

Introducing the difference between lessons and lectures is the most important step in the process of teaching lecture NT, for it sets the basis on which students build what they learn about how to listen and take notes in lectures. Also, aspects such as lecture duration and lecturing styles are of priority in the minds of the newcomers; hence, a general open discussion of these issues is favorable in the very first meeting with the students. L2 students, who might not have had much instruction in most school subjects in English, may manifest a lower linguistic ability than those who have had more contact with the target language. Therefore, teachers would have to deal with these needs by introducing these students to university lectures on a lower level than their more advanced colleagues.

An ideal way to introduce university lectures is through short demonstration lectures. Heaton (1975:19) states, it is useful to practice identifying salient points in short lectures or talks by distinguishing the relevant point from the irrelevant or less relevant points. Practice in picking out such points helps in developing students’ ability to listen and tune into lectures. Wallace (1980: 30-31) states that weak students can be helped in picking out important points by allowing them to read the transcript of the lectures as they listen to the first reading, then they could take notes during the second reading. Teachers can also give students practice in listening for main and subordinate points by discussing a few points before they listen to the text (see also McIlroy, 2003: 28). Adkins and McKean (1983: vi-vii) suggest allowing students to listen to important sections of the lecture more than once. Teachers’ support can also include practice in the recognition of structural items and discourse markers. Students should be made to realize the structure of the paragraph as a unit of meaning in order to improve their understanding of the material they deal with more effectively. Also, students need to know why they need to take notes to help them filter the information they listen to (Kennedy and Bolitho, 1984: 92-93; and
Tabberer, 1987: 10). Therefore, in the first stage of teaching lecture NT, students should be familiarized with the parts of a lecture and how to listen to each part effectively to write down what will serve their NT purpose.

Stage 2: introducing note taking techniques

There are different types of NT techniques that students should be introduced to in order to help them make use of the first stage and write down good notes. Good NT involves ‘listening, comprehending, and writing during the lecture’ (Salimbene, 1985: 82) which save time and promote learning since ‘Learning is a product of effective note taking’ (see also Turner, 2002: 56-57). Badger et al. (2001: 412) report students defining ‘good notes’ as tidy, legible, and include the important points of the lecture. Many NT and study skills books provide information on these techniques and advice students to devise their own, suitable for their way of thinking and studying.

Heaton (1975: 24), Martin et al. (1977: 205-206), Barrass (1984: 45), Palmer and Pope (1984: 78), Howe (1986: 80; 83), Casey (1993: 43), Fairbairn and Winch (1996: 28), Chambers and Northedge (1997: 59; 84-85) and Turner (2002: 62) all assert that there is no one best way to take notes in any given situation. Students who attend the same lecture take different notes for they select different points and arrange them in different ways. ‘Good note-taking combines the recording of useful information with alert thinking’ (Palmer and Pope, 1984: 87) explain; therefore, students should be advised to liberate themselves to use the NT techniques which are lively and amusing. “Making notes is more a ‘strategy’ than a skill” (Chambers and Northedge, 1997: 59) argue. It requires flexibility and creativity on the part of the note taker. They (ibid: 84-85) add that NT not only depends on the purpose of attending the lectures and the kind lectures they are but also the way the student learns best. If the student needs to write a lot of notes to reduce his anxiety and stay alert, then this is the right approach for him (see also Marshall and Rowland, 1998: 155).

Mace (1968: 49-50) and Heaton (1975: 108-109) state that when attending lectures, students do either one of the following three NT activities: at one extreme, one gives complete attention to grasping what is said without taking any notes, at the other extreme, one writes down every word that is said, and the intermediate method is to note down only the important information. Some of these methods are recommended more than others depending on two main factors. Barrass (1984: 49) and Rowntree (1988: 129-130) state that the NT purpose that students have in mind decides the amount and type of notes they should make (See also Heaton, 1975: 108; and Drew and Bingham, 2001: 35).

From the above, we understand that students should be made aware of the fact that the way notes are written in lectures depends on why they are taken as well as the source from which they are taken. In addition, students need to be advised to use the technique that works for them; they can devise whatever format they find suitable by improving on what is generally used. Rowntree (1988: 132-133) states that although there are only three ways to take notes, NT techniques can be combined in several ways. For example, a note taker may draw a diagram and add explanations to it. Thus, teachers should stress that there is no perfect way to take notes, for as long as the notes achieve the purpose for which they were written down, these notes are good.
One of the most important arguments to support the active involvement of teachers in students’ notes suggested in the proposed programme in this paper is given by Wallace (1980). He (ibid: 31) states that introducing NT techniques is best achieved through presenting modals of these techniques. Such modals, however, should not be presented as the only correct way of presenting the information. He suggests that for any NT practice, it is very useful for the students to watch the teacher build up model notes on the board of OHP while a tape recorder is playing the tape a second time. They would use these notes to improve their own notes already taken in the first reading (ibid: 41). Hamblin (1981: 88) agrees adding that students should discuss what they find useful in the model notes and are encouraged to modify or improve them as they think best. The following is an account of the three most common NT techniques found in the literature that should be introduced to students as models and practiced in any NT course:

**Outline Notes** Nearly all the available advice about NT asks students not to take down too many notes by concentrating on the essentials. This is why we chose to begin the discussion of NT techniques with outline notes which is the method most recommended in the literature. Heaton (1975: 108-109), and Howe (1986: 82) assert that this technique is the most satisfactory method to take selective notes of what is important and reflect on the relationship between the different ideas expressed in lectures. Carman and Adams (1972: 31) call this technique ‘logical outline’ arguing that it is a powerful tool for thinking, for the analysis it involves to discover the organization of the material helps note takers arrange the material in a logical form, making learning faster and remembering easier.

In addition to taking detailed outline notes, students should also be introduced and trained in ‘skeleton’ outlines. Palmer and Pope (1984: 78) call skeleton outline notes ‘key word noting’, arguing that this technique is best explained with the metaphor that considers a text a living body that has a basic structure similar to a skeleton with its main points resembling the vital organs. In order to focus on the central words or phrases, the skeleton and the major organs must be isolated. The advantage of this technique is that it saves time and provides quick access to the material. It can also, they (ibid: 85) add, promote both knowledge and confidence if the note taker stays alert, thinks while he takes notes, and does not attempt to learn everything right away. However, the problem in NT from lectures using the skeleton technique is that key words are not easy to isolate, so the note taker may end up writing too many notes (See also Rowntree, 1988: 137).

Whether students are interested in detailed or skeleton notes, proper indentation of the ideas noted down is an important element that they need to be trained on as it helps them group ideas under headings and sub-headings hierarchically into levels (Heaton, 1975: 24; and Salimbene, 1985: 98). Students should not be forced to use one outline form rather than the other but trained on both equally and given the tools to select the right technique for them or combining different techniques together.

**Linear Notes** While note takers are selective in outline notes, they write everything down they hear in linear notes. In linear notes, or ‘sequential notes’, as Barrass (1984: 47) calls them, students need to record not only the main points and as much as possible of the details, but to record them in the exact order in which the lecturer puts them. Maddox (1963: 101-102) states that only students who can catch up with the lecturers’ speed of delivery can take such notes, but they usually make these notes ‘as a kind of safety measure’ when they have a problem understanding the lecture fully and discriminating between the essential and the redundant.
The fact that students need to be quick writers to be able to make linear notes is a disadvantage of these notes. Making these notes allows students little time to think and select; hence, it does not allow critical interest in lectures. Revision can also be difficult since it is hard to organize pages of details. The note taker can also panic when he misses things (Burns and Sinfield, 2003: 124-125). Turner (2002: 58) adds that linear notes are not as creative and easily memorable as mind maps, which are associated with right brain functions. In spite of the many disadvantages of this type of notes, training students to use it and discussing its advantages and disadvantages can help shape the students’ understanding of what technique suits them in lectures and give them freedom to rely on any technique they choose even if it as selective-free as linear notes.

**Pattern Notes** Another NT technique that teachers should introduce and encourage is pattern notes. These notes are brief words and phrases used instead of full sentences to write down the essential key point of the material; thus, it is similar to skeleton outline notes but with a different format or layout. This NT technique goes by various names one of which is ‘branching’, for the result looks somewhat like a tree diagram. Other known terms for it are: ‘spray-diagrams’, ‘mind maps’ or ‘spider diagrams’ (Chambers and Northedge, 1997: 57). Turner (2002: 58) prefers to use the last term, for the result to him looks like a spider, and Marshall and Rowland (1998: 154) use the term ‘explosion charts’, but we have chosen to call them ‘pattern notes’ to acknowledge Buzan’s effort to advocate them.

Buzan (1974) devised this technique to take notes from both lectures and books. It is a creative pattern in which the main idea in the form of a word or phrase is put in the center of the page; then, related facts, also in single words and phrases, are placed around it. These sub-points are connected to the main idea by lines that show their relationships; the more important ideas are placed nearer to the main idea in the center of the page (Parsons, 1976: 38 & Howe, 1986: 85).

Turner (2002: 21-22) states that mind maps can help integrate different ideas on one topic together. Marshall and Rowland (1998: 155) report Buzan’s (1974) advantages of these notes over the linear notes. First, the relative importance of the ideas in the notes are more clearly defined. Second, the links between the main concepts are easily recognizable which makes recall and review more effective and quick. Third, the structure of the notes allows additions of new information without having to scratch out or squeeze in information. And finally, each pattern looks different from the other which aids recall. Parsons (1976: 39) adds that these notes are quicker to write and read because of the use of words and phrases, and students can save paper for the notes are brief (See also Casey, 1993: 40-42). Burns and Sinfield (2003: 128-129) stress the active and interactive feature of pattern notes arguing that the practice of selecting the essence of what is said and arranging it in a pattern keeps the note taker ‘actively engaged’ with the information being noted which ultimately facilitates learning.

**Stage 3: critiquing notes**

The final stage that teachers should focus on in NT training is involving students in a review, comparison and a discussion of their notes. Revision is best started in class. Wallace (1980: 36-39) advises teachers to check students’ notes in class and allow them to check or improve them while they listen to a taped version of the lecture. But more revision can be done after lectures. Mace (1968: 51), Langan (1989: 248), Drew and Bingham (2001: 45), Casey (1993: 39),
Marshall and Rowland (1998: 158), and McIlroy (2003: 30) express the urgency of reviewing notes ‘as soon as possible’ after lectures while the information and ideas are still fresh in the learners’ minds to improve the notes as well as learn the information better.

Williams and Eggert (2002: 177) state that one of the most important characteristics of effective notes is the clarity of the relationship between the main and minor ideas; thus, a good test of the effectiveness of a set of notes is whether or not a person who is unfamiliar with them can easily follow the links between the ideas. Therefore, comparing notes is another way to improve them. When notes are improved through comparing, students are advised to clarify them by making a distinction between main and sub-points, adding more information which they remember but did not write down during the lecture, adding comments and examples, filling in details, or restating ideas (Langan, 1989: 248; and Casey, 1993: 39).

After reviewing and studying their notes, Drew and Bingham (2001: 33-34) state, students should be able to: evaluate the effectiveness of their NT styles to improve the way they take notes, identify their purpose of taking notes and how it influences the type of notes they take, and check and improve the clarity of their notes. Although this is generally the responsibility of the learners’ themselves, teachers can start such review and discussion of NT techniques in class and ask the learners to finalize their decisions and reflections afterwards.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

When L2 students start their university education, they are expected to have had some training in NT at school to enable them to deal with the type and amount of information in university lectures. However, when little or no such training is provided and when the language of instruction at the university is different than that at school, teachers can teach NT skills effectively through the aspects of the programme suggested in this paper by:

1. providing an intensive tailor-made training that fits their students’ needs rather than depending on commercial books developed for a more general audience. This training would have to depend on the results of needs analysis and material development rather than a religious use of a commercial NT and study skills course book written for a wide audience.
2. training students to tune into and listen to lectures as a basis to teach NT skills rather than as an aim in itself since comprehension is a sub-skill of NT. During this training, teachers can help students practice filtering material and listening for a purpose.
3. explaining the usefulness of notes as a means of comprehending as well as recording information and discussing the purposes of taking notes.
4. presenting and practicing the three main NT techniques available in the literature and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each. This would give teachers and students the opportunity to move away from the more restricted forms of NT presented in NT and study skills books, i.e. outline notes.
5. providing demonstration model notes using the three main types of NT techniques and a combination of them through: sharing notes with the students, taking notes from a recorded lecture on the board with the students, and/or taking notes on the board while students take notes, all of which can help students understand the process of NT and learn through their teachers’ skills. This requires a lot of preparation from the teachers and confidence in their own NT skills.
6. helping students review their NT strategies and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their notes. The teachers’ involvement here is crucial as students might skip this step and not reflect on the way they are reproducing the lectures when they are asked to review their strategies on their own.

In conclusion, although NT and study skills books are crucial, a complete dependence on them can provide limited benefits if teachers do not take the students’ needs and backgrounds into account and tailor the training they provide accordingly. The Lecture Note Taking Driving License programme presented in this paper, which is based on some of the major theories on best practices in teaching NT, provides teachers with an example of such tailoring. However, this programme is only effective if teachers are willing to play an active role by being model note takers through practicing and experimenting with NT skills with students.

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Native Speakers Model Or English As Lingua Franca Core? An Exploratory Study Investigating Both Issues in Arabic-Speaking Classrooms of English  

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Abstract:  
This paper is a part of a larger study that was submitted as a Masters dissertation in TESOL. It starts off by giving an overview of the concept and the ongoing debate between supporters of the ‘native speakers model’ as the model of pronunciation that should be taught to English learners on one side, and those who are against this concept on the other side. Then, it focuses on the phonological proposal by Jenkins as an alternative phonological model which English learners should aim to acquire rather than the traditional native speakers model. Having described this phonological proposal, the paper goes on to highlight a number of issues that may arise when it is applied to Arab learners of English. These issues are mainly a result of the Arabic phonology that may clash with the proposed model, resulting in a lack of intelligibility and less appropriateness as well as collision with learners’ needs.  

Keywords: Native Speakers Model, English as Lingua Franca Core (ELC), English as Lingua Franca (ELF), English Language Teaching (ELT)
Introduction:

The number of speakers of English has grown dramatically in recent decades, to reach about a billion and half speakers around the world (Crystal, 2000). However, roughly three out of four speakers of English are non-native speakers, which denotes that they outnumber a billion speakers of English as a second or foreign language (Crystal, 2003). As a result, this has brought the concept of native speakers as the model that learners should aim to acquire in ELT classrooms into question. This, therefore, has created intense debates between supporters of adopting a native speaker model in ELT classrooms and those who argue that native speakers should not have 'ownership' of English due to the fact that the majority of communication in English occurs between non-native speakers of English and each other (Nelson, 1995; Kramsch, 1998). This has resulted in the concept of English as Lingua Franca (ELF) in which English is used for communication between non-native speakers with each other. However, because English is used by different speakers of different languages, ELF may create a number of challenges related to intelligibility once it is implemented. Thus, this has created the need for a linguistic solution that maintains intelligibility without referring to a native speaker model at the same time. This solution was addressed by Jenkins (2000) who provides English as Lingua Franca Core (ELC) as a compromise that could achieve this goal. Therefore, the focus of this paper will be on ELC and its advantages in maintaining intelligibility when English is used as ELF in communication. The paper will further argue that, despite its advantages, ELC has drawbacks once it is applied to Arab learners. These drawbacks are related to Intelligibility, Appropriateness and Learners’ Needs. It is important to point out that this paper, however, does not argue for adopting a native speaker model, but it highlights the issues that are linked to ELC once it is introduced to Arab learners. Therefore, once they are aware of these issues, the decision is in the hands of the learners as to whether they prefer a native speaker model or ELC. In order to do so, this paper will start with a literature review focusing on the reasons behind the shift from the native speaker model of English to the use of ELF. Secondly, the paper will address the concept of ELC and how it assists non-native speakers of English to maintain intelligibility without any references to the native speaker model. Then, the discussion will be about the disadvantages of ELC and how it could impede intelligibility, creating a lack of appropriateness and colliding with the learners’ needs once it is applied to Arab learners of English. As a result, this could create the opposite effect of what it aims achieve. Finally, a conclusion and implications of the study will be drawn at the end, providing insights for English teachers of Arab students.

Literature Review:

For the majority of English learners, acquiring a native-speaker-like linguistic competence could be frustrating in many occasions (Jenkins, 1998). However, the issue may go further to take an ethical direction once the native speakers model were to be introduced to learners. This issue is explained by Byram (1997) who argues that once native speakers became the model that English language learners should aim to achieve, this created a power struggle between both native and non-native speakers once they are in contact. In other words, non-native speakers will struggle to match their linguistic competence to reach the standards of native speakers’. Therefore, they will be “linguistically schizophrenic, abandoning one language in order to blend into another linguistic environment, becoming accepted as a native speaker by other native speakers” (Byram, 1997: 11). This, as a result, will also influence their identity as independent individuals with their
own cultural identity to conform to the native speakers’ cultural norms (p. 12). Furthermore, adopting a native speaker model could result in giving native speakers teachers of English superiority over the non-native ones, which in many cases results in discrimination against the latter when it comes to job applications (Braine, 2010). In addition, one of the most famous debates focusing on this topic was between Randolph Quirk and Braj Kachru as Pickering (2006) reported. The former argued that either American or British varieties of English should be the model that learners of English should aim to achieve in learning the language. On the other hand, Kachru responded that “it was time to legitimize non-native speaker varieties and recognize the ‘paradigm shift’ that the increasing use of English as an international language required” (ibid.,1). In other words, Kachru calls for ‘English as Lingua Franca’ (ELF) which is defined by linguists in different ways. Conrad & Mauranen (2003: 513) define (ELF) as "a vehicular language spoken by people who do not share a native language". Furthermore, Pickering (2006) also defines it as "talk comprising expanding circle speaker-listener, also described as non-native speakers”. In addition, ELF was also illustrated by Firth (1996: 240) as:

"A contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for who English is the chosen foreign language of communication".

Another definitions is addressed by House (1999, cited in Jenkins, 2007), who pointed out that ELF is the language used "between members of two or more different lingua cultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue" (p. 74). On the other hand, there are linguists who include speakers from inner and outer circles in the definition of ELF (Seidlhofer, 2004). In other words:

"ELF is not limited to members of the expanding circle, and those who also speak English internationally, whether they come from an inner or outer circle country, are not excluded from ELF communication" (Jenkins, 2007: 2).

Having provided an overview of ELF and its definitions and usage amongst non-native speakers of English rather than the native speaker model, the issue of pronunciation and which phonological model it should be based on remains challenging. Therefore, ELC by Jenkins (2000) was proposed to overcome any challenges related to intelligibility.

**ELC: What is it? And how can it help?**

Jenkins (2000) notes that miscommunication often occurs between non-native speakers when they communicate with each other in English. The reason for this, as she argues, is their different phonological background as they transfer their first language (L1) phonology into English. For instance, Bansal (1990, cited in Jenkins, 2000) maintains that when English is used as lingua franca in India amongst individuals who do not share the same first language, there seems to be serious miscommunication between them because of their different pronunciation which is "likely to affect the intelligibility" (ibid., 27). Moreover, Deterding (2005) studied a number of Singaporean students and their understanding of a British English variety (Estuary English). He reported that there were certain sounds such as glottalisation, and some vowels caused problems to intelligibility. In addition, Jenkins (2002: 88) exemplifies the lack of intelligibility because of the L1 phonology transfer by a Korean speaker who informed his friends that he failed his driving test. However, he pronounced the verb ‘failed’ as ['peɪld]. Jenkins explains that this
happened because of the substitution of /p/ for /f/ in Korean, which caused confusion for his listeners and thus lack of intelligibility. This will also be heard in other words, such as 'wife' being pronounced as 'wipe'; 'finish' as 'pinish' and 'coffee' pronounced as 'copy' (p. 88). From the studies mentioned above, it seems that miscommunication is likely to occur when speakers transfer their first language phonology into English. Therefore, Jenkins (2000) suggested English as Lingua Franca Core (ELC) proposal, which is "a set of core phonological features that will result in maximum intelligibility in ELF interaction" (Pickering, 2006: 223). The aim of her proposal "was primarily to identify those segmental and suprasegmental features that obstruct the intelligibility of pronunciation in ELF interaction when pronounced with L1 influence" (Jenkins, 2007: 22). Therefore, Jenkins’ proposal would provide a compromise that seems to solve the problem of English learners' pronunciation. It is divided into two main parts: core features of pronunciation and non-core features. In the former, she argues that there are certain sounds and pronunciation features that cannot be compromised which are crucial for intelligibility and thus have to be taught. For instance, most consonants in English except /ð/ and /θ/, "which do not occur in the majority of the world's languages", are necessary to achieve intelligibility (ibid., 122). Sounds such as /t/ in words like 'water' and 'letter', for instance, should be taught, rather than the General American flapped [r] (Jenkins, 2002). Moreover, when it comes to vowels, the quantity of a vowel such as recognizing the difference between short vowels in words like 'live' and long vowels in words like 'leave' is another aspect of pronunciation that has a high priority in Jenkins' proposal.

On the other hand, she argues in the second part of her proposal that there are other aspects of pronunciation that learners do not have to achieve and thus should not be focused on. For instance, as mentioned above, consonants such as /ð/ and /θ/ should not be taught because they do not exist in most languages (ibid., 122) and they are "not necessary for intelligible EIL pronunciation" (Jenkins, 2000: 138). This concept has its origins in Brown and Yule’s work (1983), who pointed out that learners should not spend time and effort learning these two sounds as long as they are not crucial for intelligibility. Furthermore, when it comes to vowels, the use of the whole vowels rather than the schwa in words like 'to', 'from' and 'do' does not seem to be a significant barrier to intelligibility and thus should not be focused as Jenkins seems to assert. Moreover, the vowel quality, as she argues, does not seem to be a barrier to intelligibility. For instance, the near-high near-back vowel /ɔ/ and the low-mid back unrounded vowel /ʌ/ in pronouncing the word 'bus' as [bɔs] or [bʌs] do not seem to be crucial as long as their quantity is maintained (Jenkins, 2002). Another aspect of pronunciation which should not be focused on as Jenkins' proposal suggests is assimilating certain sounds in connected speech, "so that /red paint/ (red paint') becomes /reb paint/" (Jenkins, 2002: 90). Finally, 'Word stress' in which "the rules are highly complex, containing manifold exceptions and differences among L1 varieties and according to syntactic context" as well as 'intonation' are other examples of aspects of pronunciation that learners do not have to acquire as Jenkins argues (1998: 123; 2000: 151).

Thus, ELC can be summarised as having 'core features' of pronunciation that cannot be compromised, which implies that native speakers' norms have to be the model and thus learners have to aim to acquire this. On the other hand, there are 'non-core features' that can be substituted to suit the L1 phonology of a particular linguistic context where English is taught, as Jenkins (2007: 26) argues. Hence, native speakers norms in this case seem to be unnecessary to be taught to learners.
Shortcomings of ELC:

Although Jenkins' ELC proposal seems to be useful in many contexts, it may have some challenges in the Arab context, for a number of reasons. Needless to say, these reasons come from the second part of Jenkins' proposal that she calls 'the non-core features' which may collide with the Arabic phonology, and thus can be divided into two categories; Intelligibility and Appropriateness. A further drawback related to the Learners’ Needs, which is not necessarily linked to Arab learners, will be discussed below.

1- Intelligibility:

Intelligibility is the backbone of ELC and its main goal. However, the nature of some of the ‘none-core features’ of ELC is likely to impede intelligibility once it is introduced to Arab learners because of a number of reasons. Firstly, in term of vowels, Jenkins' proposal seems to pay more attention to the difference between short and long vowels or, in other words, the vowel quantity. However, as Arabic speakers, Arab learners may be able to master the vowel quantity in words like 'live' or 'leave' but contrary to Jenkins’ argument about the unnecessary mature of vowel quality, problems may occur in the short vowels regardless of their quantity. For example, the mid front vowels like /e/ or /ɛ/ exist in all varieties of English as Davenport and Hannahs (2010) maintain but they do not exist in Arabic. As a result, Arab learners tend to change the position of these vowels to a higher level and thus it is heard as [i] which is the closest representative of mid front vowels in Arabic. Consequently, words such as 'sex' and 'pen' would be pronounced as 'six' and 'pin' by Arab learners. Therefore, if ELC was to be introduced as a local variety in order to "suit the local communication needs" (Jenkins, 2007: 26) in the Arabic-speaking context, some barriers to intelligibility when Arab learners communicate with other speakers may emerge. Interestingly, Jenkins herself states that once English was based on a local norm, “there is a danger that their [English learners] accents will move further and further apart until a stage is reached where pronunciation presents a serious obstacle to lingua franca communication”. (Jenkins, 2006: 35). This shows that adopting the ELC may lead to a point where speakers develop their own variety of English in order to suit their "local communication needs" (Jenkins, 2007: 26) to a variety that may not be understood by speakers from other languages. Thus, if an Arabic variety of English were to be implemented backed by ELC, English may lose its effect as a lingua franca when they are in contact with other speakers from different languages and hence, less intelligibility. Lack of intelligibility, however, is not linked to English speakers of different languages but it could also occur between speakers of the same language when they communicate in English. This was reported in Van Wijngaarden’s study (2002) that looked at research about a number of Dutch speakers and found that they had difficulties in understanding each other when they communicated in English. On the other hand, when they were in communication with native speakers, intelligibility and comprehension were higher. In the case of Arab learners, a similar result may, or may not, occur when they communicate in a local variety of English based on Arabic. Therefore, further research is required to explore whether intelligibility is maintained or impeded when Arab learners communicate with each other in English.
The other challenge that appears from ELC is that although 'word stress' and 'intonation' may not be crucial for intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000: 150-51), a lack of appropriateness when Arab learners communicate in English may occur. The reason comes from the word stress and intonation of Arabic, which are different from the ones in English, when learners transfer them into English. Thomas-Ruzic and Thompson-Panos (1980, cited in Adelman and Lustig, 1981) explain that when Arabic speakers transfer the Arabic phonology into English, their sounds may appear aggressive to an English-Speaking listener because every word in Arabic is accented. Moreover, when it comes to intonation, Thomas-Ruzic and Thompson-Panos argue that the flat intonation of Arabic in declarative sentences may sound like a lack of interests, while the intonation in information-seeking questions may sound accusing. As a result, lack of appropriateness may occur if Arab learners are to adopt Jenkins' ELC and transferred their L1 intonation and word stress into English. Therefore, this may be a barrier towards relationship building when communicating with other speakers, which is the second function of learning a language as Brown and Yule (1983) argue.

3- Learners’ Needs:

There are other major issues -not necessarily linked to Arab learners- that would appear from adopting Jenkins' ELC relating to the learners themselves and their requirement to learn English. The first issue of ELC in relation to learners’ needs is the absence of a live model of the language because it is "nobody's mother tongue" as Rajagopalan (2004: 111) states. Kuo (2006: 215) states "SLA researchers seek to enable L2 learners to achieve target-like performance by means of noticing the gap and attending to linguistics signals which can be unattended to in comprehension". This 'target-like performance', however, does not exist if Jenkins' ELC were to be implemented. The second issue is linked to the learners’ attitudes toward the nature of the language that they want to learn, whether it is based on a native speaker model or a local variety supported by ELC. In contradiction to Jenkins’s argument (2007) that English learners have the desire to show their identity and local accent when they speak English, some empirical research was conducted by Timmis (2002) and Kuo (2007) has shown the opposite in which most of the learners (in their studies) showed a desire to acquire a native speaker model. Interestingly, Jenkins (2005) herself interviewed 8 teachers of English and asked them about their attitudes toward their own accent and identity appearing in their English. Four of them felt negatively about it, and three were positive. On the other hand, when they were asked about their attitude toward native speakers norms, the majority of the participants, including those who were positive about their identity appearing during communication showed a desire to acquire a native speaker model. Therefore, the claim that learners show a desire to maintain their identity when they communicate in English is over-generalised and thus each learner’s attitude may be different from another. On the other hand, if the learners were taught in a variety of English that they did not want to learn, they would have what Lippi-Green (1997) called "the listener attitude' in which Smith and Nelson (1985, cited in Pickering, 2006: 225) maintain that "a listener who expects to understand a speaker will be more likely to find that speaker comprehensible than one who does not". What supports this concept is the study conducted by Lindemann (2002) who studied a number of North American English speakers toward Korean speakers of English. The findings showed that those who had had a negative attitude towards Koreans did not manage to understand their speech. As a result:
"this suggests that listeners may react negatively to certain accents (and thus claim to find them unintelligible) even when we would expect that the features of those accents themselves do not directly impede intelligibility" (Lindemann, cited in Pickering, 2006: 226).

Therefore, further research about Arab learners to explore their attitude to both a local variety of English based on Arabic and backed by ELC, or a variety of a native speaker of English is required.

Conclusion:

This paper has highlighted a number of issues related to teaching English pronunciation to Arab learners. It focuses on the long-debated concept of the native speaker model to be used by English learners and how this concept has been challenged, resulting in the emergence of ELC as an alternative model. On the other hand, despite its advantages, ELC may be challenged if it were to be introduced to Arab learners. Thus, because intelligibility is the backbone of ELC, further research about Arab learners is required to investigate whether intelligibility will be maintained or impeded once ELC is introduced to Arab learners. If it is maintained, appropriateness is the other area that has to be achieved too, which may create another challenge to introducing ELC to Arab learners. Needless to say, Arab learners’ needs in terms of which variety of English they want to learn is essential for their learning process too. Two implications can be drawn from this paper. First, despite the ongoing debates about whether the native speakers model should be the target that learners should aim to achieve, or ELC as an alternative to this model, this decision should be made by the learners themselves rather than being imposed on them by teachers or educators. Learners’ needs should be high priority and this can be achieved by discussing this issue with the learners. Secondly, English teachers have to be aware of essentialising the concept of ‘native speakers’, as there are different varieties of English spoken by native speakers. Thus, a clearer definition of who a native speaker is, and what variety of English should be taught is another issue that has to be discussed with the learners. Hence, this paper provides fruitful grounds for researchers interested in the field who are willing to conduct further studies about Arab learners of English especially in the field of teaching pronunciation.

About the author:

Muneer Alqahtani is a PhD student at the School of Education, Durham University. He studied his MA in TESOL at Durham University in 2010 and that was the starting point for his research interests. He is interested in researching issues related to intercultural communication, and English phonetics and phonology.
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The Competency Based Language Teaching in the Algerian Middle School: From EFL Acquisition Planning to its Practical Teaching/Learning

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Abstract

Algeria has adopted a new educational system called ‘the Educational Reform’ characterised by using the Competency Based Approach (CBA). Its goal is to modernise and develop education to face globalisation requirements. This reform, thus, introduces new dimensions related to globalisation like introducing ICT’s use and focusing on foreign languages teaching without falling into the trap of losing one’s identity and acculturation. This goal is not an easy task to accomplish, especially when it comes to language planning. The concern of the present paper is to give a panoramic view on EFL policy in the Algerian educational system, with focus on the middle school level, and its different objectives seen by policy makers. It attempts to have a bird’s eye view on the general situation of EFL teaching/learning in the Algerian educational system after the adoption of the CBLT method; (the Competency Based Language Teaching). Eventually, it unveils some practical problems faced in the Algerian classroom, and analyses them showing to which extent they might hinder the development of EFL teaching/learning classroom.

Keywords: EFL, The Algerian Educational Reform, CBLT, Acquisition, Planning- Practical Teaching/ Learning
1. Introduction

English is the language of globalisation. It is assigned a primordial role in science, technology, business and commerce. Due to globalisation, knowing English and being part of the world became synonymous. Algeria is giving importance to foreign languages, particularly, English, which is promoted through a special acquisition planning that begins from first year middle school, attempting to form competent users of English. However, when it comes to real classroom practices of EFL teaching, the situation still has some complications that have to be reconsidered in EFL acquisition planning in order to come to more effective results.

2. The Algerian Educational System

For any responsible authorities in the world, enhancing the educational system is a priority, since education is the tool by which the leaders can form the future generations. Ignored problems in any educational system may expand to more serious problems at a larger scale in the future society. The Algerian policy makers, being aware of the seriousness of this sensitive sector, have been concerned with supplying the future generations with the ‘appropriate’ training. They have been setting up special goals to achieve the intended model future citizen.

Therefore, since the independence (1962), the Algerian educational system has witnessed many changes according to the most ‘said efficient’ teaching methods in the world. The Grammar Translation Method was inherited from the already prepared French colonization syllabi. The Audio lingual Method was soon adopted, then, because of its behaviourist approach, relying on the principle of stimulus-response, the learner was treated as a ‘machine’ that responds to the teacher’s stimuli to learn. This proved to be unable to form learners who can communicate effectively as far as language teaching is concerned. For this reason, recourse was called from the communicative approach in the 1980s, with the ‘teaching with objectives method’. However, little was done to prepare the Algerian classrooms to adopt this teaching method, mainly in terms of classroom density and teaching tools. As a result, it proved to be a failure.

An urgent reform at all the educational levels was urgent in order to remedy the problems found in the previous system. There was a transition from the fundamental school of nine years of studies. It was split into two educational stages, which are the primary and the middle school. The primary school includes a five year studies period while the middle encompasses four years with a final national exam at the end of each stage. In order to solve the problem of those learners who have already been schooled in the previous system and finished their first part of six years of studies, they were integrated within the new system by being learners of first year middle school instead of being a seventh year learner, studying four years in the middle school, instead of three. After this stage of studies, the learners go to the secondary school to pass three years ending with the national exam of ‘baccalaureate’, before passing to university studies.

The change was not restricted to the academic years distribution but in the teaching approach as well. The previous teaching method; ‘the teaching with objectives’, relied on teaching units to be accomplished in a definite period of time, marginalising the learners’ achievements. It was substituted by a teaching method adopting the CBA principles, or the Competency Based Approach. In language teaching, the term CBLT can be found in writings about the topic to refer to the Competency Based Language Teaching. In other terms, the approach of teaching is termed
CBA, to refer to the theory of teaching/learning believed in, and which appears in the teaching of any subject in the educational curriculum, be it Mathematics, Physics, or Arabic, while the term CBLT is restricted to the teaching method adopted for teaching a Foreign language, in our case, it is EFL.

3. EFL and the Algerian Middle School

Despite all the efforts spent in Algeria in order to pursue the mission of enhancing education, the educational level in general, not least that of EFL has witnessed a dilemma in the 1980s onwards. Because of the spoon-feeding nature of the adopted teaching method as well as being bent to time and not to the learners’ achievements, EFL learning has reached an alarming situation in which it was divorced from its communicative nature. It became, thus, treated by the learners as a mere subject to be restricted to classroom use and never go beyond its boundaries. It became learnt solely on purely instrumental motives such as getting the average grades to pass to the next level. (Bouhadiba, 2006).

In the educational reform, EFL is given a special status, being the language of globalisation. It is learnt since the learners’ first year middle school, after being acquainted with French in their primary school education; the country’s second language. EFL is compulsory for the four years of middle school, but with a coefficient that is less important than other subjects like mathematics, Arabic, and physics. EFL remains compulsory in the next stage of studies; i.e. the secondary school, before taking their final national baccalaureate exam. In this three years stage, its coefficient depends on which studies stream is it; it is more important for literary streams than scientific or technological ones, in which technical and scientific subjects like mathematics and physics are more important.

As far as the middle school is concerned, since their first year middle school, the learners study EFL three times a week with a specialised teacher in EFL. They take two tests and one exam each trimester, that is to say three times a year. The change of teaching method has brought new requirements from the teacher. This is exposed in the next section.

4. The Educational Reform Requirements

One might come across a diversity of definitions of CBA. We will attempt to give a comprehensive one as presented by the Ministry of National Education in the national programme of English as a Second Foreign Language in the First Year Middle school teachers’ guide (2003). It is defined in relation with the definition of the competency, which is:

… a know how to act process which interacts and mobilizes a set of capacities, skills and an amount of knowledge that will be used effectively in various problem-situations or in circumstances that have never occurred before. (p. 4)
CBA aim, thus, is to prepare more competent learners able to relate what they study at school to their everyday life. They should be able to solve their life problems relying on what they have learnt in school. The goal is to train future citizens who can rely on themselves and have a critical thinking. These goals are planned to be achieved through a special teaching method in which the teacher should not explain every detail or give ready made conclusions to the learners.

Through his learning, the learner ‘learns how to learn’. In other terms, he learns how to master some cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that enable him to learn by himself. The learners, also, are encouraged to seek information relying on their reasoning. Learning in this method, thus, should not stop at the low cognitive levels of the learner like merely knowing information, understanding them or applying rules, but should reach higher levels, mainly, analysis, synthesis and even evaluation.

EFL teaching is promoted in CBLT in the sense that the learners should be able to use it to communicate and not to keep their linguistic knowledge passive. Learners are trained, since their first year of the middle school education, to communicate orally as well as in the written form. They should master functions in which they need to use a set of linguistic forms. These are, thus, situationalised and never presented overtly (Comission Nationale des Programmes, 2004). The English syllabus for the middle school four years aims at achieving linguistic, methodological and cultural objectives.

The learner should achieve a certain communicative competence that enables him to communicate effectively. None of the four linguistic skills should be neglected. Since their first year, the learners are trained on listening and speaking, including pronouncing the different English sounds. They are, also, exposed to written texts in which they explore different functions and different linguistic forms which they should reproduce later. They become responsible for their own learning so that they should manage how to learn. They are exposed to other cultures than theirs. They can compare their own culture to others so that his tolerance is raised, which is an important component of globalisation.

One might dare to conclude that the EFL syllabus during the four years within the educational reform is said to enable the learners to learn English effectively if the teacher knows how to monitor his classroom and present his material attractively to raise his learners’ motivation. Indeed, CBLT carries ‘glittering’ tenets that might solve the educational dilemma.

One cannot deny that in a vertical standpoint, considering particular individual learners, the approach has proved to be fruitful, giving tangible results in terms of the learners’ level, i.e. a second year middle school learners’ linguistic level is remarkably better than a former ninth year fundamental school learner’ ability to use English. However, adopting a horizontal standpoint, the concrete situation appears quite different from the expected one. EFL teaching is still suffering from several problems that have to be solved.
5. EFL Classroom Problems

This section is not exhausting all the problems found in all the Algerian EFL classrooms, the situation might vary from one region, one school, and one teacher to another. The summarized below problems were observations of the author, relying on her own experience as an EFL middle school teacher, compared to observations shared by her colleagues, mainly in net forums and Facebook chats, in addition to data collected from interviews conducted to teachers and learners of EFL in Algeria.

5.1. The Learners’ Effective Variables

EFL is introduced to the learners in their first year middle school. In generalising terms, most of them are motivated to learn this new language. Some, however, might reject it in a set of negative attitudes either for being a foreign language or because of being associated with French, a language that they have already known in the primary school, and towards which they might had already carry negative attitudes too.

After some contact with EFL, many learners can communicate orally in this language, but they are surprised by having a low grade in the written test. This results from the fact that the oral skills are focused more than writing abilities (Semmouk, 2005). These low grades, according to (Dornyei, 2009), may lead to negative attitudes towards this language. These negative attitudes generate a lack or even a loss of motivation to learn this language. The learners might adopt a purely instrumental motivation in learning EFL aiming not at learning the language per se, but to get ‘a good grade’, especially that there are other subjects with a higher coefficient, and which are regarded as more important, like mathematics, or physics.

For this reason, it was attested in many interviews conducted to the middle school learners that they express a kind of avoidance of doing efforts in ameliorating their EFL, considering that as a waste of time and efforts, and they prefer to invest in other more important subjects in terms of coefficient. Therefore, they generally abandon autonomous work in spite of the fact that relying on themselves is one of the first tenets of CBLT. Group work presented in the form of projects is often a welcomed opportunity by some learners, not to learn English, but to practise some business by collecting money from their peers in order to go to a cyber café, an internet space, ask a person to copy-paste the research topic from the internet and print it, then give it to the teacher without even reading it. One might wonder about the reasons generating this behaviour, which are not learner related solely, but which might be a result of their environment.

5.2. Socio-Political Variables

If one attempts to analyse the learners’ behaviour, s/he can relate it to many reasons. The first factor is the teacher who is in direct contact with the learners, so the way the lesson is handled or presented decides on the efficiency of teaching learning. Yet, the teacher is not an autonomous person that decides on every detail to be included in teaching. The content comes from a higher authority and the teacher often finds himself just an agent to apply the instructions of the system. Even if the system of education is a tight one, the role of parents and even the whole social character affects the way in which the learners perceive learning.
Teachers of English were either trained within the national training program called ITE, which is an ancient institute specialized in training teachers in Algeria, or have a license degree in the English language; the equivalent of a BA degree; a baccalaureate plus four years of university studies in the specialty of EFL.

Most of the teachers have witnessed the transition from previous teaching methods to CBLT. Many teachers complain about the complexity of the content of the reform in EFL. They often find themselves teaching linguistic points that they do not master themselves. Many of them were not trained to be teachers. So, teaching for them is just a job for ‘bread earning’. Some do efforts to ameliorate their teaching, by keeping their level updated and by trying to modernise their teaching using ICTs but many do not care about their self development and do not have access to technologies like computers which might help them in accomplishing their job.

Many teachers still do not know how to apply CBLT in concrete situations in spite of seminars, study days and training sessions organised by inspectors to solve this problem. If you ask a teacher in which point in the syllabus he is, you might hear an answer like ‘I dealt with the past simple’ instead of saying ‘I dealt with narration’. This type of answers reflects that the teacher is still focusing linguistic points more than language functions which are the core of CBLT.

The reform brought new administrative responsibilities to the teacher so that s/he, often, finds him/herself sunk in preparing lessons, at least two tests per trimester and an exam, giving grades including providing a grade for a continuous evaluation of the learners’ work in class, a mark that is rarely based of objective criteria of evaluation and is often used as a means to threaten the learner to be ‘a good learner’ in class. The teacher should also fill the grades in his notebook, the administration’s notebook and the learners’ marks books, which are rarely consulted by the learners’ parents. S/he has to fill them in a matrix of each learner’s grades provide statistics of his subject and of a class of his responsibility.

These tasks may seem simple if the teacher teaches a limited number of non crowded classes, but the tasks become time consuming and efforts demanding with eight overcrowded classes. In this case, the teacher focuses all his efforts in being updated with administrative documents rather than in providing an effective teaching.

Many complains were sent to the ministry of national education from teachers of all subjects concerning the density and the length of the syllabus in the Algerian middle school. Their claims were answered in 2008-2009 by slimming down the syllabus. This work has been accomplished first by inspectors, then by some teachers who finalised the work before being implemented. Therefore, the teachers of all subjects, including EFL, received the slimmed down syllabus, and received instructions from the inspectors on what to skip as lessons. They used to gather us in seminars and study days, being an EFL middle school teacher at that period, explaining the content of the slimmed down syllabus. Many files; teaching units, were removed, but the
learners’ books and the teachers guides did not change because this occurred in a hurry without an effective planning of experts.

Many others complains may be found in some areas in Algeria like the density of classes, mixing the former system learners with the new ones which makes classes mixed not only in terms of ability, but in the age range as well. So, the teacher finds himself confronted to 10 years old children, resulting from the primary school of the educational reform, schooled in the same class with 16 years old teenagers, who were educated within the former fundamental school, and were integrated within the new educational system. This situation makes the teacher confuse which teaching techniques appropriate for both age ranges, and compatible with both educational backgrounds of the learners.

6. Perspectives on EFL Teaching in Algeria

After exposing these problems, one might wonder about the future of teaching in Algeria, particularly that of EFL. How can the responsible authorities solve these problems? How can policy makers design solutions by which the learners become motivated about learning EFL in an integrative way? What can make learners rely on themselves, be responsible of their learning, and avoid ready made projects? How can policy make parents interested in their children’s learning without leaving the whole task to the school? Which solution can we provide to make teachers convinced in the change in the teaching approach? What can motivate them to develop themselves keeping up with the world development using technologies and teaching methods? These questions do not have watertight answers because their solving means changing the Algerian character at once, which is not an easy task to do overnight.

Semmouk, A. (2005), an Algerian sociologist noticed that accepting what is cited from above without a critical thinking or discussion is deeply rooted in the Algerian psyche. Indeed, if one has a sociologist eye, s/he may attest this behaviour in the Algerian society. This begins from the level of the family, accepting the parents’ orders with no discussion, to higher layers of the Algerian society. This explains the learners’ behaviour of avoiding autonomous work and always wondering what to do for pleasing the teacher to get a good grade. It may explain also the teachers’ behaviour, being part of the Algerian society, who do not adopt the change in method and do their jobs to apply the authorities’ words. This character is deeply rooted in our society and it might take many years, if not decades, to be changed.

7. Conclusion

There have been considerable efforts in the educational system from top to bottom, from policy makers to learners in order to enhance education in Algeria, however, being in a transition time point; many difficulties still hinder the development of this sensitive sector. Considering the seriousness of the reform, one can have an optimistic vision and expect positive results on the long term, but this can not be achieved if not all levels, from authorities to family, strive to adapt the Algerian social character, making the Algerian citizen more open on the world and more convinced in his beliefs, in order to be able to survive in a world of globalisation. Changing the social norms, which is not an easy task to accomplish, and cannot be done without the coordination of not only educationists, but also of sociologists and anthropologists, may solve most of the problems found in the Algerian education. In parallel, education is the main sector by
which a society can develop. Here, we find ourselves wondering which one effects the other education or society.

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Miss **Lamia BENADLA** has a master degree and is preparing a doctorate in sociolinguistics. She has been concerned with educational linguistics, language policy, and interaction in classroom settings. She had a three years experience as a teacher of English in the Algerian middle school, which permitted her to make reflections on EFL acquisition planning in Algeria.

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High Tech & Low Tech Out-of-Classroom Language Learning for Arabic L1 Speakers of English

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Abstract

As early as the nineteenth century the value of foreign language learning outside the classroom was recognized. In the 1960s, a statistical correlation was found between learners’ extracurricular use of the target language and their scores on standardized foreign language proficiency tests. Subsequently, a direct correlation was found between TOEIC/TOEFL scores and extracurricular use of English, as reported by test-takers. Finally, in the 1990s out-of-classroom language learning (OCLL) was dubbed a strategy. Increasingly, researchers are acknowledging that more second language acquisition takes place outside the classroom than inside. This article surveys research into both low-tech and high-tech extracurricular language learning in the light of measurable proficiency gains. High-tech includes blended learning and Computer Mediated Communication. Special attention is paid to the situation of Arabic L1 learners of English.

Keywords: blended learning, CALL, CMC, extracurricular learning, proficiency gains
1. Introduction

In Asia and the Middle East in the 21st century, foreign language instruction continues to be largely teacher-centered at the primary and secondary levels (Tushyeh, 2005; Al-Issa, 2007; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Fareh, 2010; Al-Mohanna, 2010). Although the younger generation of teachers has been trained in communicative approaches to language teaching, a majority teach the way they were taught through a combination of grammar-translation and audiolingualism. In doing so, teachers can satisfy their immediate goals of finishing the textbook, following the syllabus, preparing students for a written examination, and finally maintaining disciplinary control over the students (Al-Issa, 2007; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al-Saadi, 2011). As a result of their teacher-centered classroom experience and because of the cultural norm that all knowledge derives from the teacher, language learners in Asia and the Middle East consider the classroom as the only place where learning occurs (Thamraksa, 2004; Reinders, 2000, 2005; Handhali, 2009). Consequently, they do not seek opportunities for more exposure to the target language, which involves taking responsibility for their own education (Malcolm, 2004; Vrazalic et al, 2009; Al-Saadi, 2011). Additionally, Omani and other Arabic L1 undergraduates strongly dislike courses that involve self-study (Al-Saadi, 2011). Thus the situation of English language teaching differs according to world region in two important ways. First, where English is a foreign language (EFL), the learners in Asia and the Middle East are mainly monolingual, whereas Europeans are more than 50% bilingual and more than 40% multilingual (Eurobarometer Survey, 2012). Secondly, speaking a foreign language with one’s compatriots is considered unnatural or socially awkward in much of Asia and the Middle East (Hyland, 2004; Marefat & Barbari, 2009). However, Northern European and Americans are less inhibited. The main issue is getting learners to realize the value of classroom interaction between peers but in a foreign language. Once that is achieved, just about anyone will undertake it. Unlike in Western countries, classrooms in Asia and the Middle East tend to be overcrowded, and students’ exposure to English is generally limited to 45-minute sessions four to five times per week. In a classroom of 45-50 students, it is not possible for the instructor to check the oral proficiency of each student individually. Moreover, teachers avoid introducing communicative activities, such as role plays and games, for various reasons. Either they worry about losing disciplinary control over the class or they know that students will immediately revert to the native language (Cheon, 2003; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al Saadi, 2011).

2. Extra-curricular Language Learning Research

Self-study and autonomous learning have traditionally been the norm in Western countries, such as using the Bible or phrasebook to learn another language in the absence of native speakers or qualified teachers. In the 19th century, the most widely known methods for learning a language outside the classroom included overseas study in the host country and finding expatriate workers or tourists to converse with (Sweet, 1899). In the 1960s the first large-scale survey of foreign language learning revealed a statistical correlation between proficiency and extracurricular use of the target language. The most important of these uses are: time spent abroad (semester or year), use of L2 at home, use of L2 in social settings (office or with friends), reading three or more books in L2. Other extracurricular uses of the target language at American universities include: language dormitory, language table, language club and pledge. All of these were found to correlate significantly with proficiency by increasing exposure to the target language (Carroll, 1967).
More than thirty years later, researchers at ETS further corroborated the findings of Carroll’s study of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) by showing the direct correlation between proficiency scores of TOEIC test and use of English outside the classroom. In particular, for all the nationalities surveyed by ETS, those test takers with the highest scores had spent at least three to five months working or studying in an English-speaking country (as shown in tables 1.0 & 2.0 below).

**Table 1: Time Spent Abroad versus TOEIC Score (ETS 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>TOEIC Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one year</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, Arabic L1 learners of English are less likely to take advantage of overseas study in an English-speaking country (Malcolm, 2004). For example, both graduate and undergraduate enrollments from Middle Eastern countries in USA in 2010/2011 amounted to 5.8% of all world regions (Chow & Bhandari, 2010).

In countries like Japan and Korea, test takers reported using English less than once per week, which correlates with their low English proficiency. By contrast, daily use of English by test-takers from Singapore and the Philippines correlates with scores that are among the highest in Asia (Chow & Bhandari, 2010).

**Table 2: Mean Total TOEIC Scores by Frequency of English Usage (ETS 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of English usage</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than once per week</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every week</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times per week</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daily</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, anxiety and embarrassment about making mistakes are among the greatest obstacles to using English communicatively outside the classroom (Inguva, 2007). For example, in one survey 54% of undergraduate respondents from Saudi Arabia reported using English rarely or never outside the classroom (Malcolm, 2004). Two surveys of undergraduate non-English majors in Thailand gave the same responses (Puengpipattrakul 2007; Pawapatcharauodom 2007). Not surprisingly, the TOEIC scores for both KSA and Thailand are among the lowest worldwide.
3.0 Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

One of the most popular pass times among the Net Generation is chatting by text or voice or in combination (Malcolm, 2004). Only during the last decade has the value of CMC chat to foreign language learning begun to be examined (Chun, 1994). Research has concentrated on learner attitudes to CMC, as well as measurable gains in oral proficiency. These topics are discussed below.

3.1 Learner Attitudes to CMC

Classroom research has shown that, regardless of their native language, many learners agree that CMC interaction is more enjoyable than face-to-face (F2F) interaction in the classroom with both peers and instructor. The reason for this higher preference is that, because CMC interaction is not face-to-face, there is less stress or risk of embarrassment from making mistakes. Learners highly rate CMC because it increases their exposure to the target language and gives them a sense of self-improvement (Cheon, 2003; Lengluan, 2008).

However, to be successful CMC requires that both the learner and the teacher have computer literacy or prior experience with chatting (Patronis, 2005; Alahmadi, 2011). As with distance learning and self-study, CMC as a pedagogical tool requires that instructors monitor online activity and provide feedback in the form of positive reinforcement (Rybak, 1980, 1983; Umino, 1999; Patronis, 2005). As many teachers are from the pre-Internet generation, their own lack of know-how in this area makes them hesitant to incorporate CMC in their teaching (Shaabi, 2012). Finally, there is a disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of Internet access (Al-Adi, 2009). Some representative research into learner attitudes is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Research on Learner Attitudes to CMC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>CMC mode</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Graphic chat</td>
<td>Alahmadi 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Discussion board</td>
<td>Patronis 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Graphic chat</td>
<td>Cheon 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>graphic chat</td>
<td>Lengluan 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 CMC and Oral Proficiency

Approximately 57% of research in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) between 1990 and 2000 concerned English L1 learners of European languages: French, Spanish, and German. Of these studies 86% concerned the proficiency gains of first-year or elementary learners. Finally, oral-aural skills account for less than 10% of these studies (Kripps, 2009). As graphic chat involves only writing skill, one might wonder how it could improve oral proficiency. Research on cross-modality transfer from writing to speaking skill is very limited, and scant evidence suggests that graphic chat might enhance speaking skill, although it cannot replace oral practice. However, in one early study, participants admitted to either subvocalizing while typing or vocalizing while reading messages (Payne & Whitney, 2002).
According to the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and Defense Language Institute (DLI), French, Spanish and German are classified as the easiest languages for English L1 learners (Jackson & Kaplan, 2003; Jackson & Malone, 2009). Therefore, one has to be careful about generalizing research about proficiency gains to learners of languages unrelated to English. Nonetheless, comparison of pretest and posttest results shows significant gains in oral proficiency with course having a CMC component. Sample studies are summarized in table 4 below.

**Table 4: Research on CMC and Oral Proficiency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>CMC mode</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Graphic chat</td>
<td>Payne &amp; Whitney 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Audio-graphic chat</td>
<td>Lamy 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Audio-graphic chat</td>
<td>Volle 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.3 Blended Learning**

The incorporation of CALL, CMC, and e-learning into traditional classroom instruction is called hybrid or blended learning. In the USA and Europe blended learning courses exist for languages as diverse as Arabic and Japanese. The latter are classified “challenging” languages by FSI and DLI because between 1200 to 2000 hours of intensive instruction are needed to reach level 2 “limited working proficiency”. But in a traditional undergraduate degree program, these hours would need to be spread over 8-10 years for native speakers of English to reach level 2 in Arabic. That is roughly equivalent to level 1+ “advanced elementary proficiency” on the TOEIC for Saudi test takers’ average score of 409 (ETS, 2005). For FSI level 2 and TOEIC level 1+ the learner should be able to conduct a job interview, participate in meetings, and engage in casual conversations on familiar topics, but as a blue-collar worker. Since the extra number of years to reach FSI 2 is not feasible in a traditional academic degree program, blended learning is considered a viable option in the USA and Europe. In five blended learning curricula surveyed by this researcher (Table 5), time spent online is at least equal to F2F instruction time in two cases. In the other three cases, the time that students are expected to spend online is between two to five times the amount spent in the classroom.

**Table 5: Blended Learning Models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total per semester</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>CALL</th>
<th>F2F</th>
<th>Researchers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95 hrs</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Chinese, Japanese, Korean</td>
<td>5 hrs/wk (+5hrs/week self study)</td>
<td>1 hr/wk</td>
<td>Fleming &amp; Hiple (2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Social Networking

Teachers in Asia and the Middle East agree that one of the biggest problems to incorporating the Internet in the classroom is students navigating away to unrelated websites, most prominently Facebook (Chairungruang, 2005; Al-Adi, 2009). Rather than combating the social networking phenomenon, some schools have begun integrating the discussion board feature of Facebook into the curriculum. Surveys of learner attitudes about using Facebook in their English courses reveal the same positive aspects as those found for CMC chat and discussion boards (Ng, 2010; Osman, Abu Bakar & Yassin, 2010). One researcher discovered that message postings in the target language on formal discussion boards were surpassed by postings on Facebook (Lamy, 2011). A 2010 report on Facebook use in the Middle East found that postings in English were more than two-fold more numerous than postings in Arabic (Facebook MENA, 2010). Therefore, educators might want to consider Facebook a potential friend rather than foe for learners both inside and outside the classroom.

4. Conclusion

In 1933 when Leonard Bloomfield described foreign language teaching in the USA as an “appalling waste of effort”, he was referring to a system that was still deeply grounded in grammar translation and teacher-centered learning. In an American foreign language classroom of 20-25 students each learner might get 10 minutes of aural-oral practice, with some 320 hours of listening and 27 hours of speaking practice during the academic year (Asher, 1974). By contrast, in the Middle East students in a foreign language classroom of 40-45 might be lucky to get five minutes of aural-oral practice. However, the total target language exposure during the academic year is reduced by teachers’ and students’ use of the mother tongue (Al-Mohanna, 2010). It has already been found that in the classroom greater use of the mother tongue correlates negatively to oral proficiency in the target language (Carroll, 1967). Regrettably, this fact is either ignored or forgotten in EFL environments today. Since more language acquisition potentially takes place outside the classroom than in it (Hyland, 2004), we should be looking for more ways to integrate extracurricular learning into the foreign language curriculum and ways to guide learners to seek opportunities to use the target language extracurricularly.
About the author:

Anthony Kripps received his Ph.D. from Indiana University and his M.A. from Georgetown University. He has taught EFL in Asia and the Middle East for more than fifteen years. His research interests include CALL, self-teaching of language and multilingualism. He has taught other languages than English, such as French, Greek, Korean, Serbian, and Uzbek.

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Abstract

This piece of research will address the concept of professional consecutive vs. simultaneous interpreters' required competence. The concept of competence denotes a set of aptitudes and expertise that professional consecutive and simultaneous interpreters must have a good command of them in order to fulfill their target language communicative goals. Professional Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpreters (PCSIs) work within the realm of interlingual communication which requires certain sorts of oral communicative competences in the working languages, intellectual merits, and certain cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. The optimal required competence catalogue for PCSIs has always been on-the-spot and controversial. Accordingly, this study has been designed to look into this issue from diverse angles using the comparative descriptive tool of analysis to have a broader image of what is the optimal competence catalogue required for PCSIs.

Keywords: Language competence, Interpretation competence, Models of Interpretation Competence.
Introduction

Professional interpreters are deemed to be mediators between two languages; source language (SL) and target language (TL). In principle, they must grasp linguistic and other sub-linguistic competences to fulfill their communicative tasks. In 1965, the concept of competence was first tackled by some formal linguists (e.g. Noam Chomsky) whose main interest at that phase was to define linguistic competence. In the last few decades, research into interpretation competence theories has prospered manifestly in the general sense. Nevertheless, some features of this field are still thrust and questionable, namely, the optimal required competence catalogue for professional consecutive vs. simultaneous interpreters (PCSIs). Competence in the field of interpretation is crucial, since it mirrors the output of interpreters' training, experience, as well as their skills and aptitudes to embark on this profession. Recently, Many theorists have developed a variety of models of interpreters' competences paying more attention to the required competences for professional consecutive interpreters (e.g. Gile, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009; Deborah and Carol 2003; Al-Salman and AL-Khanji 2002; Nolan, 2005; Kermis, 2008). This may raise two important questions; is there a clear cut catalogue of PCSIs required competence? Are the required competences for professional consecutive interpreters the same as required for simultaneous interpreters?

In what follows, we will present some salient definitions and classifications of interpretation competence, then; look at some traditional and diachronic views in addition to some moot points among interpretation scholars on the models of professional interpreters' competence. Second, we describe and compare comparatively interpretation scholars and neurolinguists' stands of competence. After that a synoptic catalogue of PCSIs required competence will be put forward in an attempt to answer the aforementioned questions.

Interpretation Competence Defined, Classified and Modelled

Interpreting profession is demanding; it requires a high level of proficiency in the working languages (SL and TL). This proficiency must base on several types of competence. There is no rigorous definition of competence, since this issue has been approached in many different trends whose main focus was to define and determine what the language competences are. Chomsky (1965) reveals that linguistic competence is the perfect knowledge of an ideal user of the language in a homogeneous speech community. His well-known distinction between language competence (the speaker-listener’s knowledge of language) and language performance (the actual use of language knowledge in real life situations) spurs many scholars' interests to find out what are the exact parameters of this perfect knowledge (competence). During the era ranging from 1970s to 1980s, many applied linguists with a chief interest in the theory of language acquisition and the theory of language testing gave their significant contribution to the development of the controversial concept of competence (Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007).

The applied linguists Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) state that communicative competences are classified into (1) grammatical competence (e.g. language learner's knowledge of morphology, phonology, syntax, and so forth), (2) sociolinguistic competence (e.g. discoursal and pragmatic competence), (3) strategic competence. Neubert (1994, p. 412), on the other hand, offers three main components of competence; language
Professional Consecutive vs. Simultaneous Interpreters

competence, subject-matter competence and transfer competence. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) (as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2007) suggest that actional competence (the ability to comprehend, analyze and produce all significant speech acts and speech act sets) should also be included in communicative competence. These scholars made two significant changes in the terminology of the Canale-Swain's standpoint of competence (1980): (1) that sociolinguistic competence can be modified into sociocultural competence (the cultural knowledge needed to interpret effectively) and (2) that grammatical competence can be re-labeled as linguistic competence to explicitly embrace sound system and lexicon, as well as grammar (e.g. syntax and morphology) (p. 42).

According to Hymes (1992), communicative competence can be defined as the communication abilities of language users. Hymes also revealed that this competence is the sum of convergence of two developments: (1) transformational generative grammar, (2) ethnography of communication. Similarly, some translation and interpretation scholars provided some definitions of the concept competence. For instance, Hurtado Albir defined it as “the ability of knowing how to translate” (1996, p. 48).

Gile's approach (2004) in addressing interpreters' required competences was totally different from others; he asserts on the kinship and partnership between translation and interpretation though the process is different, thus, he categorizes the required competences based on the nature of differences between interpretation and translation process which are as follows:

1) Technical constraints' differences: translators usually have longer time to deal with the problems encountered, whereas interpreters only have a few seconds or minutes depending on whether they are working in simultaneous or in a consecutive mode.

2) Working environment differences: In conference interpreting, stress may originate in stage fright at high-level meetings or when interpreting for the media, especially in view of the fact that, unlike translators, interpreters cannot correct their initial utterance, and also in the physical environment in the booth. In court interpreting and dialogue interpreting of various types, for instance, much stress is inherent due to the situation environment. conference interpreting, Gile argues, is often associated with an exciting, sometimes glamorous working environment: presidential palaces, international conferences on highly visible, highly topical issues and events, international festivals and sports events, the possibility of meeting and sometimes talking face-to-face with well-known personalities.

3) Product differences: The product of interpretation is an oral, which is mentally processed by the listener as soon as it is heard (or seen), at a rate determined by its rate of delivery, generally in the original communication situation. It is highly personal, as its perception by the user of the interpreting service depends not only on its content and linguistic choices in terms of ‘words’ but also on the quality of the interpreter’s voice and on various delivery parameters, including accent, intonation, pauses, articulation speed, etc., Whereas the product of translation is a written text, which is read at the speed chosen by the reader, as many times as the reader wishes and potentially in any communication or non-communication situation.

4) Skills and personality differences: Both translators and interpreters have to be familiar with the respective norms of their professional environments with respect to the requirements of professional translation/interpretation. This includes the acceptability and relative merits of various strategies to help them cope with translation/interpretation problems. Translators
are required to produce editorially acceptable written text, while interpreters produce spoken text for immediate processing by listeners. Translators, therefore, have to be good writers and not necessarily good speakers, while interpreters have to be good speakers (and, in dialogue interpreting, good social mediators) but not necessarily good writers. Interpreters have to master the oral form of their passive languages, including various accents, well enough to process them rapidly and without difficulty. (Gile, 1995) (as cited in Gile, 2004, pp. 12-13).

Since the mid 1990s, deep research into interpretation competence has prospered creatively addressing novel aspects of the nature of interpretation and the interpreters' required skills and competences. Kalina and Köln (2000) laid emphasis on the interpreters' goal-oriented approach to find out more about the competences required for interpreters. They believed that the concept of interpreters' required competence includes text production and text processing skills. According to Kalina and Köln, this distinction is depicted from interpreters' teaching and training methodology. Though this distinction of competence looks innovative, it lacks clear connections on the nature of integration of these skills particularly in the problem solving mechanism.

Al Salman and Al Khanji (2002, p. 608) catalog the following model of linguistic and non-linguistic skills and competences as crucial for interpreters:

1) Mastery of the active language,
2) Solid background of general knowledge,
3) Some personal qualities like the faculty of analysis and synthesis, the ability to intuit meaning, the capacity to adapt immediately to change in subject matter and different speakers and situations.
4) Good short and long term memory,
5) The ability to concentrate, a gift for public speaking, and physical endurance and good nerves.

If we scrutinize Al-Salman and Al-Khanji's model, we will clearly notice that they mingled competences and skills with each other though they are truly different. Deborah and Carol (2003), correspondingly, assert on the integration between interpreters skills and interactional interpretive setting within the training context. They stress on the importance of the pathology of interpreters' speech problems. Finally and based on the interpretation task type, they formulated the competences required for interpreters. Meaning that, each interpretative type calls for a certificate of certain competences. For instance, Medical interpretation requires the following competences:

1) Basic linguistic proficiency
2) Recognition of ethical issues
3) Standards
4) Decision-making
5) Cultural competence in both cultures
6) Health care terminology
7) Integrated interpretation skills
8) Ability to interpret both oral and written directions
While educational specialized interpreters calls for other competences:

1) Knowledge of the purposes, procedures, and goals of the meeting, tests, and treatment.
2) An understanding of the need for confidentiality
3) Comprehension of school policies and procedures
4) Appropriate dress
5) Sensitivity to the issues and needs of the participants (Cheng, 1991) (as cited in Deborah and Carol 2003, p. 79).

So, they classified competences based on the SL nature and specialty. They further add that these competences must be attested by certificates from specialized agencies before interpreters embark on their profession (Deborah & Carol, p. 78-80). However, they also mingled competences and skills in their model.

Consecutive interpreters, Gile (2005) reveals, work respectively in two major phases: (1) the listening phase in which they listen attentively to the speaker and take notes, (2) the reformulation phase in which they produce the TL rendition of the speech as the speaker is waiting for them to end before resuming her/his speech. Accordingly, Gile (2005) argues that processing capacity (PC) requirements in the first phase listening phase are almost shared with simultaneous interpreting between Listening and analysis, Memory, and production efforts. Consequently, the difference is only in note taking and time lag caused by it, whereas in simultaneous interpreting PC along with cognitive efforts work instantly. In the second phase reformulation phase, Gile adds, the consecutive interpreters read his/her notes, reconstruct the speech through the long term memory with the help of the notes, and produce the TL version. Therefore, we can surmise that long term memory is an essential demand for consecutive interpreters along with pacing note taking, listening, and message production.

Interpreters must master two basic competences for fulfilling their TL communicative goals. These two basic competences are procedural knowledge (knowledge of how to perform perfect production which depends heavily on the mastery of connections between stimuli, responses and cognitive skills), the second basic knowledge is the declarative/descriptive knowledge which entails basic information for certain tasks and situations (Riccardi, 2005). Riccardi (2005) also elaborated on the nature of integration between these two basic competences by clarifying that while knowledge about grammatical rules is declarative, the natural application of these rules is procedural. This highlights the significance of procedural knowledge over declarative knowledge, because it is the means of reflecting declarative knowledge which underpins the significance of strategic competence in interpretation as a procedural competence in the course of interpretation.

Other interpretation scholars, on the other hand, started to broaden their research into interpreters' required competence by investigating the role of non-verbal communication situational cues in interpretation (Cecot, 2005; Zhe, 2007). Nonverbal communication, or paralinguistic features as referred by other scholars, may take several forms (e.g. gestures, body postures, intonation, etc.) each of which clarifies or replaces a particular part of the verbal communication; it includes many more elements than one may envisage at first. Therefore, Zhe (2007) asserts on the importance of paralinguistic or non-verbal communication for professional interpreters. When interpreters are in a working environment where the audience will not see them, paralinguistic or non-verbal communication may represent a problem, as the audience
might even be declined to assume that the interpreters have not done a good job. Thus, interpreters need to make sense of paralinguistic/non-verbal communication cues in the course of interpretation (Zhe, 2007). He further adds that intelligence and emotional intelligence are indispensable for interpreting non-verbal elements. Many emotional expressions may appear to be displayed universally. However, non-verbal behavior varies across cultures. In the realm of paralinguistic/nonverbal communication, predictability is exceedingly important for interpreters. Consequently, predictability of meaning in the interpretation is the sum of interpreter’s general cultural knowledge and their ability to interpret paralinguistic/non-verbal communication (Zhe, 2007).

Kermis (2008) proposed the following model of competencies required for professional interpreters as an attempt to clarify how demanding interpretation profession is:

Professional Interpreters' Competence

Common

1) Linguistic Competence
2) Comprehension Competence
3) Production Competence
4) Subject Area Competence
5) Cultural Competence

Specific

1) General Knowledge
2) Memory Skills
3) Public Speaking
4) Moral Competence
5) Stress Tolerance

(Kermis, 2008: 46)

In her model, Kermis categorized professional interpreters' required competence into two major sets; (1) common competences which could be shared with professional translators and (2) distinctive competences for professional interpreters. This has been an ingenious attempt. Nevertheless, upon deep scrutiny of Kermis' standpoint of interpreters' required competence, it turns out that Kermis mixed skills and competences together. For instance, stress tolerance and memory skills have been classified as competences though they are skills as outlined by Kermis herself. They could be technically grouped into physical and cognitive skills respectively. Even if other interpretation scholars will consider them as competences, they could be classified under the cognitive and physical competence. Moreover, Kermis common competences for interpreters lack key competences essential for both professional interpreters; for instance, strategic competence is crucial and essential competence for interpreters (Celce-Murcia et al. 2007; Al-Khanji et al. 2000). Another common competence missed by the Kermis' model is the ethical viability/neutrality, as this issue is critical to the interpretation profession (National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services, 2007; Baker and Maier, 2011).

Some psycholinguists and interpretation scholars have questioned about the role of interpreter's personality in the course of interpretation (Leontiev, 1981; Nolan, 2005). The
concept of personality has existed in the field of psychology almost from the moment it appeared as a science; this concept is integrated of mental features and a combination of individual characteristics. Some psychologists generally believe that personality traits determine the concrete behavior and beliefs of mankind (Leontiev, 1981). According to Leontiev, there are other valuable factors other than the integration between mental features and the combination of individual characteristics; these valuable factors are motives of activity which probably play a fundamental role in personalities. She validates this notion by exemplifying that:

When a child's personality is being formed, a great deal depends on the motives which condition the activities of the adults surrounding him and on the motives and aims set for the child…the child must be taught to evaluate his behavior, and that of others, against the yardstick of their motives (p. 19).

It seems that Leontiev's view of personality in language production and learning is deemed to be innate in mankind what is important, then, is the motivation of these mental features and the combination of individual characteristics to better shape the personal traits intended for effective language production and learning. However, some scholars (e.g. Nolan, 2005) and despite of the dissimilar terminologies share the basic idea with Leontiev by asserting on the role of willingness in the effective communication process.

Nolan (2005) argues that interpreters must adapt their willingness to learn by keeping up todays' pace of time in interpretation, such as knowledge of new events, neologism or any new language use in the working languages. In this sense, interpreters might be compared with physicians who must keep abreast with any changes in his/her medical domain. Moreover, He also adds that another vital personality trait interpreters must clasp is public speaking skill. Nolan asserts on this trait as a result of his observation that many expert interpreters may freeze up and mentally blocked when they are on the stage, under lights, facing the audience, or interpreting for very important persons. Nolan's view is made with special reference to conference interpreters.

In closing, research into interpreters' skills and competences in the general sense has rapidly increased over the past decades. though many scholars vary in their understanding and access of the definition and classification of interpretation competence, they share one basic point that competence is based primarily on linguistic competence in the SL and TL. What differs is the rigorous details; minor or sub competences such as, cultural, subject-matter, transfer, strategic and so forth. On the other hand, other potential distinctive competences between consecutive vs. simultaneous could be the span of memory (e.g. short/long term memory) and concentration competence or processing capacity (PC) as referred by Gile (2009) which entails that consecutive interpreters must have the competence of pacing note-taking intervals with listening and production in consecutive interpreting, where as in simultaneous interpreting the pacing competence include listening, comprehending and coordination, and TL oral production simultaneously without any time lag.

**Neuroscientists and Neurolinguists' Viewpoint of Competence**

To have an overall view of interpreters' competence, my feeling is that we should look at this issue from different angles by addressing Neuroscientists and Neurolinguists' viewpoint of competence. Neuroscientists and Neurolinguists have accumulated a substantial body of research on the nature of humans' brain structure (e.g. individuals' personal cognitive differences, memory
strength span, analyzing and comprehension, concentration, and language response/reaction systems) to investigate how communication competence is set, developed, retained, interrelated, activated, deactivated and so forth. These matters perplexed them and made them strive to identify these areas and their functions in communication aptitudes.

Neuroscientists and Neurolinguists, using especial empirical tests, argue that the left hemisphere is responsible for logical thought and language functions (e.g. speech, song, and writing). This indicates that there are cerebral areas in the left hemisphere that control speech. The right hemisphere is controlled by the left hemisphere, and the right is in charge of such things as the spatial-relation skills, the perception of rhythm, and abstract or intuitive thought. They also stated that a particular part of the brain can be detected as a hint of higher intelligence as it has developed later in evolution than other parts; this part is called the cerebral cortex. The cerebral cortex is responsible for higher intellectual functions in addition to language functions (Steinberg, Nagata, and Aline. 2001).

Finally and based on their ad hoc experimental tests, they proposed the following classification that almost demonstrates areas responsible for language competence in conjunction with their functions:

1) Frontal Lobe - Plays an important role in reasoning, planning, parts of speech and movement (motor cortex), emotions, and problem-solving.
2) Parietal Lobe – Responsible for the perception of stimuli related to touch, pressure, temperature, and pain.
3) Temporal Lobe – Involved in the perception and recognition of auditory stimuli (hearing) and memory.
4) Occipital Lobe - Concerned with many aspects of vision.
5) Brainstem – Part of the brain that connects to the spinal cord. The brain stem controls functions such as heart rate, breathing, digestive processes, and sleeping.
6) Cerebellum – Coordinates the brain’s instructions for skilled, repetitive movements, and helps maintain balance and posture.
7) Wernicke’s area – The part of the brain that is important in language development.
8) Broca’s area – The part of the brain important for speech. (Virtual Labs Interactive Media (2007) Stanford University)
Empirical experimental studies recently contended that both cerebral hemispheres' massive and synchronized activation is required when interpreters are engaged in the course of simultaneous interpretation (Tommola, 2000, 2001) (cited in Kapranov, 2008). The partnership established between Neurolinguist Franco Fabbro and interpreter trainers played an essential role in the progress of conference interpretation in the early 1990s. The investigation of lateralization patterns in interpreters was the center of this partnership, but primary findings proposed more equally balanced involvement in both hemispheres in interpreters which were contradicted by mysterious results, thus, the evidence is inconclusive (Gile, 2006).

Other Neourolinguists examined the link between language/communication competence, production, and directionality, for instance, Ullman (2001) reveals that L2 grammatical competence is acquired explicitly and is represented and activated in a left temporal spot together with L1 and L2 vocabulary. Grammatical competence in L1, on the contrary, is acquired completely centered along the frontal-basal ganglia circuit. Accordingly, L2 Production compared to L1 will be mediated and managed by explicit metalinguistic competence rather than by implicit grammatical competence which is procedurally represented (Ullman, 2001; Abutalebi and Green, 2006).

I would like here to affirm that research into the connections between language competence and brain is still lacking, in view of the fact that the brain structure is very intricate and there could be other undetected spots and functions in the human brain. Nevertheless, what matters for interpretation scholars is how to better enhance this competence to achieve their communicative goals. In the light of the above reviewed about the concept of interpreting competence, a new brief catalogue of PCSIs required competence will be put forward as an attempt to have an inclusive image of this issue.

Based on the aforementioned and discussed models and approaches of competence, we can conclude that it is not easy to come up with a clear cut definition or catalogue for
competence, since it incorporates many factors and viewpoints. Consecutive interpreters' competence cannot be discussed or examined apart from simultaneous interpreters' competence, as well as both of them cannot be analyzed apart from language/communication competence, since they all share the same interlingual communication realm. The following brief developed catalogue will almost illustrate this issue differentiating between required shared and distinctive competences, skills and personal traits.

**Figure 2** A brief inclusive catalogue of PCSIs' required shared and distinctive competences, skills and personal traits
Conclusion

The discussion in this paper has given an overview of competence as a broad term which calls for certain sorts of expertise and aptitudes that professional interpreters need to have a good command of. PCSIs work within the realm of interlingual language. Thus, they share basic required competences. Both of consecutive and simultaneous interpreters share the same grounded competences and skills with few distinctive competences required for consecutive interpreters that are pacing note taking with listening and TL oral production, as well as very good long term memory. In the current study, the researcher attempted to develop and unify a new catalogue of PCSIs' required competences based on the aforementioned and compared views and models in an attempt to unify the previous research into a comprehensive clear cut catalogue of PCSIs required shared and distinctive competences and skills. Besides, differentiating briefly between competences, skills, and personal traits.

If we scrutinize the previous catalogue, we will realize how demanding it is to be in the realm of interpretation profession. Competences can only be activated and presented through certain skills and personal traits. As the previous brief catalogue necessitates, PCSIs required competences are almost the same irrespective of diverse terminologies used by some interpretation scholars. Yet, it is worth pointing out that what distinguishes consecutive and simultaneous interpreters' required competencies are of two facets; (1) memory (consecutive interpreting calls for long term memory while simultaneous interpreting calls for short one), (2) concentration competence (consecutive interpreting calls for pacing note taking with listening and then production with intervals, whereas simultaneous interpreting requires pacing all the effort listening, comprehending and coordinating, and finally TL oral production opportunely with no intervals). Studies differentiating between competences and skills required for certain types of interpretation (e.g. press conference interpreting, conference interpreting, media interpreting, and so forth) are suggested for future research.

Notes:
1. Chomsky's well known distinction between competence and performance is inspired by structural theorists, namely, de Saussurean distinction (1959) between sign systems and convention which embrace langue (language) and parole (speakers' speech acts).


3. Some scholars use the concept of competence in diverse terminologies based on their field of interest, for instance, linguistic/language competence (e.g. Chomsky, 1965), communicative competence with reference to foreign/second language learning (e.g. Canale and Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al, 1995; Rababah, 2002), while other scholars employ the concept translation/translational competence with reference to translation (e.g. Campbell, 1991; Schäffner, 2000; PACTE, 2005, 2011). Interpretation scholars, on the other hand, employ the concept interpretation competence/skills in connection with interpretation (e.g. Gile, 2004, 2005, 2009; Pöchhacker, 2004).
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The Effect of Using Online Tools on Ninth Grade Jordanian Students' Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract
This study investigated the effect of using integrating online tools - games, You Tube and digital storytelling, which are embedded in a wiki, on students' vocabulary learning in EFL classroom. The participants of this study consisted of two ninth grade male students classroom sections and two female classroom sections of the same grade (70 male, and 70 female students) in Irbid city in Jordan. One male and one female ninth grade classroom sections were assigned to be the experimental group and the other two sections (one male and one female) to represent the control group. The study tried to answer the question: Are there significant differences in EFL students’ achievement in the vocabulary post-test due to the method of teaching: method of using integrating online tools and the traditional method?

Performance results on the post-test revealed that the experimental group showed better improvement in their vocabulary achievement in comparison with the improvement of the control group regardless of their gender. The study recommended to examine the effect of using these online tools on students’ achievement in the other language skills, sub-skills and language components.

Key words: CALL, Online tools, EFL students writing
Introduction

In the twenty-first century, students live changes in the aspects of technology life and find themselves enjoy the World Websites. They also found themselves in an urgent need to improve their learning for English language. For schools in a country like Jordan, to survive in the fast changing technology environment, and to avoid having a gap between students' life inside and outside the school, it is an essential matter to use the digital technologies in teaching and have the students practice the language.

Learning vocabulary is a fundamental component of learning any language. Many ESL/EFL scholars emphasized the importance of learning vocabulary in ESL and EFL. Wilkins (1972) believed that, without learning grammar very little can be conveyed and without learning vocabulary nothing at all can be conveyed. Harmer (1994) also claimed that language structures make up the skeleton of language and it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. EFL figures look at vocabulary teaching through different perspectives. McKeown, Beck; Omanson, & Pople (1985) believed that repetitions are required to learn new words; and acquiring a new word requires seven or more encounters with the word which online tools meet. There are different strategies and methods for learning vocabulary of a second or a foreign language but learning through using technology has a great deep effect on motivating students to have a better learning. Learners need an explicit introduction to vocabulary, accurate and effective support in interpreting new vocabulary, and practice for remembering vocabulary. Using CALL helps teachers to work towards these goals for vocabulary teaching and learning (Chapelle and Jamieson, 2009). Providing EFL learners with different online tools gives them chances to choose the suitable tool for their own learning style. On the other hand, it gives them more opportunities to encounter the new words in many different situations.

Online tools can provide background pictures, objects, characters, sound effects and even music to be integrated into storytelling. Teachers can use YouTube and games as online tools to enhance language teaching situation. Besides, with the online tools, teachers can easily integrate the culture knowledge of the English language through them. In other words, with the unique features of the Internet, teachers can easily gather authentic materials of English speaking cultures, such as songs, pictures and activities. Furthermore, online tools can provide creative classroom activities for use after using the online tools. For instance, the teacher or students can select a set of pictures and sound effects to design YouTube clips or to create other stories. Furthermore, the online tools also allow students to use them again and again for reviewing purposes.

You Tube, video games, speaking avatar and interactive stories are more attractive technology tools for students that they use in their lifetime. Therefore, using these educational technology tools to improve students' achievement and attitudes towards learning EFL is essential. Applying this new method of teaching vocabulary through online tools might motivate students and attract their attention towards learning vocabulary or any other language components and skills which might lead hopefully to a better learning (Jitsupa; Nilsook; and Piriyasurawong, 2012).

A wiki is a free web site that can gather all the different online tools such as, links for games, interactive stories, and useful sites providing various kinds of authentic materials. Moreover, it provides teachers with the opportunity to add their power point slides and other files for their classes. It is a fertilized place which offers learning through different contexts. For example, the clips on YouTube may improve students' achievement in the four language skills; they also help to learn real English vocabulary as spoken by real native speakers. They provide the students...
with attractive authentic materials which lead to a comprehensible input. Digital games, whether computer, game console, or handheld-based, are characterized by rules, goals and objectives, outcomes and feedback (Prenksy, 2001). Interactive stories help students to understand words in an interesting way. New vocabulary needs to be learned both receptively and productively (Corson, 1997) which can be done effectively through the use of these online tools in an integrating way. Moreover, Brady (2004:1) believed that "multimedia education improved both comprehension of the lesson material and students’ interest in the lesson topic".

The aforementioned functions of the online tools demonstrate their significant value and importance in education, especially in foreign language teaching and learning. Because of its convenience, these online tools hold great potential for solving problems which teachers typically encounter when attempting to introduce new vocabulary or new terms for the students in a foreign language classroom.

Students in the Arab world in general and Jordan in particular still face difficulties in English language learning which might be due to the methods of teaching and the shortage use of the different technology devices of which wiki is one. A study of the effects of using integrating online tools may participate in improving the English language teaching and learning situation in Jordan.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The researcher noticed through his experience in teaching the English language that most students complain from the difficulty of remembering the words they have learned which may be the result of the ineffectiveness of the teaching methods which EFL teachers use. As a result, the researcher feels that students need a material that helps them to build their vocabulary through entertainment, games and social website practice. Could integrate online tools be suggested as an applicable solution for this problem? Could the use of integrating online tools increase the motivation and create an enjoyable atmosphere accompanied with useful learning? In order to answer these questions, this study is conducted to investigate the effect of using integrating online tools on students’ vocabulary learning.

**Research Objective and Question**

This study investigates the effect of the use of integrating online tools on students’ vocabulary learning. It addresses the following question:

*Are there significant differences in EFL students’ achievement in the vocabulary post-test due to the method of teaching: method of using integrating online tools and the traditional method?*

**Significance of the Study:**

Although this study is limited to the EFL male and female ninth grade students and its findings might not be generalized for other grades or places, the present study familiarizes the English language teachers with the importance of using integrating online tools in their classes which may enhance the chances to learn new vocabularies through different contexts. It is also expected to provide language instructors and curriculum designers with a systematically designed educational wiki. Furthermore, it may prove the literature in a way that wikis help students to acquire new English vocabulary in a collaborative learning environment through allowing students edit each other’s work.

**Learning English Using Technology and Computers**
CALL is “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997:1). It is used extensively in teaching English as a foreign language (Davies, 2010). Using technology in teaching English requires integrating technology tools to teaching English language in order to facilitate learning and motivate young learners to learn English. It is an approach to language teaching and learning in which the computer is used as an aid to the presentation, practice and assessment of material to be learned and usually involves an interactive element. Because CALL has profound and lasting impacts on education, it has received considerable attention from researchers (Bataineh & Baniabdulrahman, 2006). Aweis (1994) found that American learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language who received computer-mediated instruction improved their reading comprehension more than those who received instruction only via a teacher. Similarly, Bataineh & Bani Hani (2011) found that there were significant differences between the achievement of sixth grade students studying English in Jordan CALL as opposed to traditional learning alone, in favor of those using technology. According to Masie (2002) the most advantageous and preferable way of using CALL is to use it to supplement traditional face-to-face teaching.

CALL can be considered to be advantageous over traditional teaching methods alone for a number of reasons. It has been found to develop students’ ability to learn independently, analyze information, think critically, and solve problems (Chavez 1997). It is also thought to promote visual, verbal and kinesthetic learning, higher-level thinking, and problem-solving (Turnbull & Lawrence 2002). It can help students progress at their own pace and study alone without being dependent on others as it gives immediate feedback, correction and error analysis (Hanson-Smith, 1997). Lam and Lawrence in Luik & Kukemelk (2008) found that the use of computers in the language classroom can shift the traditional teacher-student role and provide a more learner-centered classroom. Learners are more able to manage their own learning process by making their own decisions and being responsible for their own learning, whereas the teacher becomes a “facilitator, a resource person and a counselor rather than the only authority and decision-maker” (p. 305).

CALL has also been found to have positive effects on the learners’ attitudes towards learning a language. Almekhlafi, and Almeqdadi (2010) reported that the use of CALL has positive effect on Emirati students’ attitudes towards studying English. In addition, Klassen and Milton (1999) found that attitudes of university students in Hong Kong learning English improved when multimedia devices were included in their learning program.

In spite of the benefits of CALL mentioned above, there are some limitations to its use. Since the computer is a human-made tool, without a competent user, it cannot guarantee successful achievement in the classroom (Dündar, 2005:196). External barriers to the use of CALL such as time constraints or inadequate teacher training can limit its use; and internal constraints such as the teacher’s attitude towards technology may also place a barrier to the use of CALL in the classroom (Baniabdulrahman; Bataineh; and Bataineh, 2007).

**Games and Vocabulary Learning**

To have good outcomes of learning, students should be motivated to learn. Learning through games encourages students to enjoy the learning situations. Musei (2002) studied the effect of using educational games on the motivation of EFL Tenth Grade learners. Findings revealed that the educational games could increase significantly the self-reported motivation of the students and the overall class observed motivation. Calao (2010) investigated the effects of playing
educational games on kindergarten achievement. The results revealed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher than the control group in vocabulary and overall achievement. Students who play educational games, can learn better than who do not play such games. Moreover, using games reduces the anxiety level between the peers as it is proved in a study of Wang, and Briody (2011). The results also revealed that using games in vocabulary teaching had positive effect on the students' acquisition of English vocabulary.

Al Neyadi (2007) claimed that using games in vocabulary learning improves the memorization of English vocabularies. Games help students to use the words in meaningful context. They also have a great effect on improving the students' vocabulary building skills. Dehaan (2010) examined the effect of interactivity with a music video game on second language vocabulary recall. The results revealed that both the players and the watchers of the video game recalled vocabulary from the game, but the players recalled significantly less vocabulary than the watchers. The players perceived the game and its language to be significantly more difficult than the watchers did. Qteefan (2012) proposed that it is important to have the students an access to the use of video games before they advance to higher education. There are also some limitations to the use of video games. In addition to the lack of time for teachers to know how to use and apply these games, there is sometimes a mismatch between video content and the content of the curriculum (McFarlane; Sparrowhawk;and Heald, 2002).

**You Tube and EFL learning:**
You Tube can provide students with authentic materials which are beneficial in EFL classes. Mekheimer (2011) examined the impact of using videos on whole language learning in EFL context and found that using you tube can improve the linguistic proficiency of EFL students at university levels. You Tube is a good resource for promoting authentic vocabulary development through providing students with lively content and online videos (Watkins, Wilkins, 2011). Al-Seghayer (2001) examined the effectiveness of the use of image modalities (dynamic video or still picture) in aiding vocabulary acquisition. The results revealed that a video clip is more effective in teaching unknown vocabulary words than a still picture.

Hines and Silverman (2002) studied the effects of using multimedia video (YouTube) in conjunction with traditional read aloud methods on improving the growth of English language learners' vocabulary. They found that the results of the study supported the effective role of multimedia in supporting vocabulary instruction.

Abidin; Mohammadi; Singh; Azman and Souriyavongsa (2011) investigated whether learners expose to songs using YouTube would experience a change in vocabulary competence compared to those exposed to the traditional teacher-fronted approach. Results revealed that the learners who exposed to song using You Tube experienced a significant improvement in their vocabulary competence compared to the control group.

**Storytelling and Vocabulary Acquisition**
According to Krashen (1989) vocabulary is incidentally acquired through stories because (1) familiar vocabulary and syntax contained in the story provide meaning to less familiar vocabulary and (2) picture illustrations clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words. Tavil and Selmin (2008) examined the effect of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition to very young learners in Kindergartens. The pre and post-tests showed that the students could not point to the mentioned words before the application but they were all successful in recognition of the
selected words. Moreover, the results revealed that Storytelling is a great tool to teach vocabulary to very young learners as words are best learnt in context. Elley (1989) examined the effect of listening to stories on vocabulary acquisition to Elementary school children in New Zealand. The results showed that reading stories aloud to children is a significant source of vocabulary acquisition than teachers' explanation of words. Raines & Isbell in (Louise Phillips, 1999) conducted a storytelling study that compared two groups of three to six year olds over an eight week period. One group had a story read to them three times a week and the other had stories told to them three times a week. When the students who had stories told to them were asked to retell the story, they were more capable of retelling it. They included more story conventions; told longer and more sequential stories; and employed more diverse vocabulary, than those that had been read to. Mason (2004) studied the effect of interactive storytelling on vocabulary acquisition. The participants were first year English majors at a four-year- private college in Osaka, Japan. He compared the effects of interactive storytelling and the traditional method on vocabulary acquisition. The result confirmed that listening to stories leads to the acquisition of vocabulary. Moreover, stories are far more pleasant than traditional instruction, and students can gain other aspects of language from stories, as well as knowledge.

**Wikis and Collaborative Learning**

Wikis enhance the chance of being the students independent and give them the opportunity to share responsibility with their peers (Franco, 2008). Wikis promote the different kinds of learning styles and helps teachers to be fair in their assessment through using the icon provided in each wiki page to see the contributions and changes each student makes (Elgort; Smith & Toland 2008).

Xiao and Lucking (2008) studied the effects of a wiki-based peer assessment method on university students' writing performance, and found that the experimental group revealed greater improvement in their writing than the control group and the experimental group exhibited greater satisfaction with the peer assessment method. Moreover, Wikis, being student-centered, give students a chance to work together and collaborate on their work without strong presence of the teacher. Wikis can facilitate interaction between learners (Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes, 2009).

Coyle (2010) discussed how Wikis encourage students to have cooperative learning and networked interaction. He found that students were encouraged more with their weekly post assignments than with cooperative ones.

Wikis can be used as a source of information and knowledge, as well as a tool for collaborative authoring. Wikis allow visitors to engage in dialogue and share information among participants in group projects, or to engage in learning with each other by using Wikis as a collaborative environment in which to construct their knowledge (Boulos et al, 2006). In their study of "the use of Wikis to support group project work" Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes (2009) found that Wikis encourage individual and group responsibility. Moreover, Wikis help in solving the problem of free riding in group work where one person controls the project and does all the work.
Chen (2008) investigated the effectiveness of applying Wikis in terms of students’ learning outcomes. He also investigated Wikis effect on students’ attitude towards language learning. He found that EFL student groups in Taiwan using Wikis performed better in listening and reading abilities. Students reported having a more favorable attitude towards cooperative learning.

The previous studies confirmed the positive effect of Wiki on the collaborative learning. Wiki encourages students to learn because it provides them with the opportunity to learn together in a cooperative way.

Similarities and Differences between the Present Study and the Previous Ones:

The present study agrees with the previous studies with regard to the positive effect of games, storytelling and YouTube on vocabulary acquisition. Previous studies examined the effect of each of them on the English language vocabulary learning separately. This study is different from the previous ones in the way in which these different tools were used. They were used as online tools. Furthermore, they were used in an integrating way. In this way, the researcher enhances the chances to the students to choose the suitable tool that suits their own learning style. Moreover, this study provides students with different opportunities to learn new vocabularies through different contexts. These reasons are the core importance of the present study.

Methodology

This study is a quasi-experimental one because of the impossibility of identifying the study sample randomly. The independent variables were the teaching methods - the use of integrating online tools versus the traditional method without using online tools and the students' gender. The dependent variable was the ninth grade students' achievement in the vocabulary post-test. After reviewing the related literature, suitable online tools were chosen to be used in the study. They were interactive stories, educational games and YouTube clips. These online tools were selected according to various criteria such as having comprehensible lyrics and not being popular among the students. The topics of the selected online tools were associated with the units studied in the class. The study covered the units from unit two to five which covered the topics “In the Public Eye, Around the World, Travelers’ tales, and Enjoy Reading.”

Then, interesting activities related to the vocabulary competence based on the selected online tools were planned out and included. Some of these activities were: guessing the meaning of new vocabulary through context, giving synonyms and antonyms, and paraphrasing the meanings of vocabulary. The lessons then were carried out and data were collected through vocabulary tests.

Context and Participants

This study was classroom-based. The participants of this study consisted of two ninth grade male students classroom sections (70 students) and two ninth grade female classroom sections (70 students). One male section (35 students) and one female section (35 students) were randomly assigned to be the experimental group and were taught English vocabulary throughout the use of integrating online tools. The other male students section (35 students) and female section (35 students) were assigned to represent the control group and were taught the new vocabulary throughout traditional way in which the teacher explains new words in classroom without using online tools. Students there studied “INTERPRISE 3 textbook” which is a dynamic British English series for international communication designed for pre-intermediate students. The book integrates the four English language skills, presents grammar in context and
helps students develop natural conversation. They learn English five hours weekly, one hour per day. The experimental group sections were taught by a male and a female non native experienced teachers of English and the same thing was done for the control group.

In order to ensure the equivalence of the experimental and the control groups before the experiment was carried out in vocabulary, the two groups sat for a pre-test after establishing its validity and reliability. The test was of two main parts: vocabulary and reading chosen from what the students were taught in the second semester while they were in the eighth grade. The test consisted of 40 multiple choice questions in its final form. The results are presented in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the students’ Results in the Pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Gender</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.69</td>
<td>9.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Gender</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64.11</td>
<td>9.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.92</td>
<td>9.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.87</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there were observed differences between the mean scores of the two groups regardless of their gender, they were close. To ensure that the two groups were equivalent, ANOVA test was used. The results are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Results of ANOVA Test of the pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F=Value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.42857143</td>
<td>6.42857143</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.11428571</td>
<td>0.11428571</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.9714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>12142.06</td>
<td>88.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>12148.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 2 show that there were no significant differences between the two groups regardless of their gender. The post test also consisted of two sections (reading and vocabulary). It consisted in its final version, after being validated and its reliability was established, of 40 multiple choice items. It was built out of the vocabulary which the experimental and control groups were taught throughout the treatment. As the case in the pre-test, the post test was also marked out of 100. Two points and a half were given to each correct choice and zero for the wrong choice.

Material and Data Collection Procedure

The researcher designed the Wiki which was provided by PBWorks (http://pbworks.com/). It is designed to provide students with different helpful online tools to learn English vocabulary. These online tools (You Tube, Interactive Stories, Educational Games) enhance the chances for the students to learn a bigger number of vocabulary in different contexts (Hines and Silverman, 2002; and Tomin and Liu, 2008).

In the introductory class, students were given access to the Wiki web space and were asked to navigate and explore the Wiki. Then during the experimental classes, the students were asked to learn vocabularies which were categorized in different themes through using the selected online
tools. To ensure their learning, they were asked to complete selected activities based on the studied ones. The Wiki content was updated daily and based on the theme covered that week in the class. The study lasted for eight weeks. Finally, the post test was conducted on the two groups to measure the students’ vocabulary achievement.

**Validity and Reliability of the Tests**

In order to make sure that the pre-test and the post-test measure what they were designed to measure, they were given to a jury of specialists in educational studies and EFL Experts. Their views and comments were taken into consideration and the tests items were modified according to their suggestions.

As for reliability, the pre-test and post-test were applied on one male and one female ninth grade students sections from outside the sample of the study at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2012/2013. Three weeks later, both of the two tests were applied again on the same students. Then, Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to test the reliability of the pretest and posttest. The total value for the pretest was 0.84 whereas, the total value for the posttest was 0.82.

**Results and discussion**

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of the Students’ Results in the Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Gender</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71.06</td>
<td>9.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.61</td>
<td>10.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73.04</td>
<td>9.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68.63</td>
<td>9.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that there are seen differences between the control group mean scores and the experimental group means scores. ANOVA test was then run to check if the differences were significant.

Table 4: Results of ANOVA Analysis of the Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F=Value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>682.007</td>
<td>682.007</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>0.0078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>12802.35</td>
<td>93.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>13491.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of ANOVA test do not reveal any statistically significant differences between the experimental group mean scores and the control group mean scores due to the students gender (F-value = 0.07, P= 0.788) but the results show statistically significant differences between the two groups mean scores due to the method of teaching in favor of the experimental group (F-value = 7.30, P= 0.0078). This result is in harmony with most of the previous studies. The positive
The effect of the use of the integrating tools might be due to the fact that Wikis help in creating an innovative learning environment where students are interested and engaged in the learning process. Wikis encourage individual and group responsibility. Moreover, wikis help in solving the problem of free riding in group work where one person controls the project and does all the work (Cowan; Herring; Rich and Wilkes, 2009). Wikis enhance the chance of being the students independent and give them the opportunity to share responsibility with their peers (Franco, 2008). Wikis can be used as a source of information and knowledge, as well as a tool for collaborative authoring. Wikis allow visitors to engage in dialog and share information among participants in group projects, or to engage in learning with each other by using wikis as a collaborative environment in which to construct their knowledge. Wikis give students a chance to work together and collaborate on their work without strong presence of the teacher. Furthermore, wikis can facilitate interaction between learners.

Integrating online tools is a major resource for teaching the Net Generation and for drawing on their multiple intelligences and learning styles to increase the success of every student. There is a match between the media and the students’ intelligences (Gardner, 2000).

It seems that using online tools such as games, You Tube and digital storytelling offers the students a chance to follow their own desire with the use of online tools instead of that everything will be mastered by the teacher. Furthermore, online tools can also be used in non-entertaining areas such as education. It could teach and convey knowledge and cultural values to students interactively instead of the old traditional methods.

The content of the online tools provides comprehensible input while learners interact in the group, allowing students to clarify meanings of words in such contexts. The use of online tools also enhanced students’ motivation to learn vocabulary. This might be because the students have experienced new methods of teaching, as they have been used only to learning the new language through drilling the vocabulary. The strategy which the researcher adopted also allows them to interact with peers, which is also a new experience for them since they are used to teacher-centered methods for the whole of their learning experience. The online tools also provided a challenge, where they need their concentration to get the activities done which strengthen students’ mental work. Such activities were also new to students’ experience, and they think carefully to get the right answers.

Based on the results of this study the English language teachers are recommended to integrate online tools in their lessons in order to motivate their students to learn the target language and to make the whole teaching process more fruitful. To have better outcomes of learning, teachers should choose online tools that suit the students' level, condition, culture and meet the skills that needed to be taught. Moreover, the teachers are recommended to be ready all the time to surprise the students with a new content of online tools if the teacher thinks that there is a need to change the dull atmosphere in the class. It is also recommended for the teachers to believe that using online tools can be a very fruitful way of teaching if they are carefully chosen to suit what is needed to be taught. Also the teacher should be sure about the appropriateness of any chosen tool.

**Conclusion**

The results of the study revealed that the use of online tools has positive and significant effect on improving EFL students' vocabulary learning which resulted in improving the experimental groups vocabulary achievement in comparison with the improvement of the control group regardless of their gender. Based on the results it is recommended to use online tools in teaching
vocabulary and to conduct similar studies that investigate the effect of using integrating online tools on the language skills like (speaking, writing, reading and listening). Other aspects to be investigated are the students' and teachers' attitudes toward using integrating online tools.

About the author:

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http://www.bucks.edu/media/bcccmedialibrary/documents/academics/facultywebrources/Beyond_constructivism.pdf
The Effect of Using Online Tools


The Effect of Using Online Tools

Baniabdelrahman


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Investigating the Reading Difficulties of Algerian EST Students with Regard to their General English Knowledge

Djihed AZEROUAL.
Department of Languages, University of Constantine 1
Algeria.

Abstract
This paper reports on a study which investigates the reading comprehension problems of master students of Physics while reading scientific texts in English as a foreign language. It aimed at testing a hypothesis of a causal relationship between two variables; students’ GE knowledge and reading comprehension. The results were obtained from a students’ questionnaire and a test. The analysis of the data proved that the students’ difficulties are due to their linguistic handicap mainly in grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, it confirms that these students’ have a poor level in General English which compounds their reading comprehension difficulties. These results lead us to believe that the teaching/learning situation of English at the Physics Department, at the University of Constantine 1 should be re-considered. In other words, the results proved that there exists a gap between GE and EST teaching. For that, we suggest to implement reading courses to reinforce the students’ General English knowledge and promote their reading comprehension of scientific texts.

Keywords: linguistic knowledge, GE/ EST dilemma, reading skill, reading comprehension difficulties.

Introduction

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This paper reports on a study which investigates the reading comprehension problems of master students of Physics while reading scientific texts in English as a foreign language. It aimed at testing a hypothesis of a causal relationship between two variables; students’ GE knowledge and reading comprehension. The results were obtained from a students’ questionnaire and a test. The analysis of the data proved that the students’ difficulties are due to their linguistic handicap mainly in grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, it confirms that these students’ have a poor level in General English which compounds their reading comprehension difficulties. These results lead us to believe that the teaching/learning situation of English at the Physics Department, at the University of Constantine 1 should be re-considered. In other words, the results proved that there exists a gap between GE and EST teaching. For that, we suggest to implement reading courses to reinforce the students’ General English knowledge and promote their reading comprehension of scientific texts.

Keywords: linguistic knowledge, GE/ EST dilemma, reading skill, reading comprehension difficulties.
The overriding need for English as the language of science and technology has then resulted in its integration in the Algerian educational system at all levels. At the tertiary level, English is taught as a compulsory module in the Science Faculties. Without doubt, English is significant to the students’ academic success, especially for graduate and post-graduate students as most of the documentation related to their field of specialization is written in English. More accurately, these learners require English to comprehend texts written in English, which are related to their discipline. In other words, reading is a vital fundamental skill in language learning as being a way of getting information, exploring knowledge and broadening the academic scopes. In fact, reading constitutes a significant source of linguistic input and texts are an important vehicle for information (Johns & Davies, 1983) for learners of English for Specific Purposes / English for Science and Technology. For that reason, there is a growing need to devote more emphasis to promote the student’s proficiency in this essential skill. This study is conducted for the purpose of exploring the teaching/learning situation of English at Physics Department, University of Constantine 1, shedding light on the students’ attitudes towards reading and investigating the students’ reading comprehension difficulties.

**Reading Science in English as Foreign Language**

Research literature on reading showed that it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between SL and FL reading (Alderson 1984). In fact, reading in a Foreign Language (FL) is more or less the same process as in the first language or second language (Davies, 1995), except, texts are written in a FL. According to Alderson (2000), the nature of reading in a FL/SL is controlled by two variables: the reader and the text. Many aspects of the text can either facilitate or impede the reading process in the FL. More obviously, the reading ability in a FL is primarily determined by the learners’ proficiency in that language (Alderson, 2000; Wallace, 2003; Hudson, 2007; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Nation, 2009; Grabe, 2009; Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010; Bernhardt, 2011). However, it is claimed that readers are not able to read effectively in a FL unless they reach a threshold of linguistic level before they engage in reading (Alderson, 2000).

Reading science in a FL is a real challenge for science learners who are in constant struggle with comprehension shortcomings. These readers are reading to learn and their learning cannot be ensured unless they comprehend the text they read. A large proportion of the reading comprehension difficulties are mainly caused by the language deficiencies students have. Linguistic knowledge is important while reading as it helps readers in the process of constructing the mental representation and the process of generating the meaning from the text. It is widely assumed that science is completely different from the other genres of language, namely the language used in GE.

To address this EST/GE dilemma, register analysis (in terms of lexical and grammatical features) has revealed that there is no significant difference in the grammar of scientific English. Furthermore, all the items of scientific discourse do exist in General English (Trimble, 1985; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987), the only difference that we could highlight is the frequency of occurrence (tendency to favour) of given language items in both GE and ESP/EST discourse. In scientific writing, there are some language aspects and grammatical patterns that are regularly used more than others as they are the best ways for carrying and representing the message. To illustrate these conventions we can take the use of simple present to express generalization, simple past to express specific experiments and modality to make a recommendation or give an instruction. Therefore, readers should be well equipped with such language aspects and be aware of their purpose in use for a better literacy achievement.
In this paper, we attempted to explore Algerian EST learners’ difficulties in reading scientific texts and highlighting the causes behind such difficulties. In addition, the data gathered from this study will be useful to provide EST teachers with a new perspective about the teaching of English at EST institutions for the purpose of overcoming students’ reading comprehension problems.

**Research Design**

**Participants**

This study was conducted at the Department of Physics in the University of Constantine 1. Among the students of the department, we have chosen magister students to be our research population because of two main reasons. First, it is because I was a former student in the scientific stream, who knows such difficulties with the English language. Second, it is our permanent contact with our friends -magister students- who constantly talk about their problems with GE. From the present population, sixty students, we have randomly selected a sample of twenty students. All students studied English at least for six years, five in secondary school and one year in university and they were in the seventh year at the time of the study.

**Data Collection Tools**

Two research instruments are used in the present study to test the hypothesis: a questionnaire and a test.

*The Questionnaire: Description and Administration*

The students’ questionnaire consists of nineteen closed items designed on the basis of the answers we got from the pilot study. This questionnaire is made up of short questions written in simple English to make them easy to understand. They are grouped in three sections: personal and academic information, students’ needs and problems with English, especially with General English, and their reading difficulties.

Concerning the administration of the students' questionnaire, it was directly handed to respondents during their regular English session. The students’ sample was given enough time to read and to answer each item carefully. We have given them the right to ask for further explanation about the meaning of any item or any word. These questionnaires were completed under our supervision and were collected right after they were completed. We have tried to be sure that every student completes his/ her questionnaire alone.

*The Test: Description and Administration*

The test is mainly used to (i) explore the students’ reading comprehension problems and (ii) to assess the students' comprehension with regard to their level in GE. It consists of a text (reading passage) with different activities. The text is an authentic passage extracted from a book entitled “General Physics” and the questions are grouped into parts. The first part is meant to evaluate the students’ comprehension of the text. It also aims at making students locate specific information in the text, find synonyms and antonyms in the text, and fill in the gaps. The second part consists of six questions which evaluate the students’ knowledge in GE about grammar; sentence construction, tenses, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The test was administered during the regular English session where students were given enough time (two hours) to read the passage and do the activities.

**Results and Discussion**

Apart from the sample subjects’ responses to the questionnaires submitted, we can say that these students range from different levels of language proficiency on the one hand, and using Trimble (1985) words, different levels in subject knowledge on the other hand. Yet, the majority (85%) of the total respondents expressed an intrinsic motivation to learn English as a
Investigating the Reading Difficulties of Algerian EST Students

AZEROUAL

foreign Language and to become skilled at reading. Still, their motivation for learning English is affected by a strong conflict between their perceived language needs and their language wants, as Boyle (1993) stated. Their wants were related to immediate personal interest, namely: listening to music, watching movies, chatting and surfing on the net reading short stories, and traveling abroad), whereas they expressed their unawareness of needs or their instrumental requirements which are basically restricted to using language to gain up-to-date information in their field of specialization.

In general, magister students read for the purpose of having basic comprehension of the main ideas of a text, and finding and locating specific information as Grellet (1981, p. 3). put it “understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible”. In other words, they read to achieve the global understanding of texts and deal with their literal meaning "reading the lines" (Alderson, 2000). Although it is the least level of understanding that they need to accomplish, not all students, only (35%) of the respondents, succeed in generating this type of comprehension because they face different difficulties while reading science texts. Accordingly, they acknowledged that the difficulty they encounter does not result from the information (content) rather it results from the organization of the information in the text and from the language in which this information are embedded. Besides, they emphasized that they suffer from a linguistics handicap which is the dominant reason for their reading comprehension problems. Ultimately, we can say that students’ reading comprehension difficulties are compounded by their linguistic shortcomings; namely, grammatical-rhetorical relationships (Trimble 1985) and non-technical vocabulary appear to be the major causes of their comprehension problems not the technical terminology as 75% of the respondents stated. This may be true as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) say "technical terms are … likely to pose the least problems for learners: they are often internationally used or can be worked out from a knowledge of the subject and common word roots" (p.166).

We will move on to look at other findings obtained from the test that are going to confirm what we hypothesized above: that magister students face many problems while reading scientific texts and the low level of these students in GE covers a large proportion of these difficulties. The test results are summarized in Tables 01, 02 and 03 which indicate the students’ answers in detail: right, wrong, and blank answers (no answers), as well as the scores of each question.

A detailed look at these tables shows that the subjects encountered problems and comprehension difficulties as their wrong answers (47%) are higher than their right answers (41.25%). It is important to say that the percentages of the ‘no answers’ are noticeable (11.75%), and this can only mean that the students don’t know how to answer which can be explained by the fact that they have no idea about how to answer the questions and ,thus, they gave no answers. Besides, just 35% of the total respondents (N= 20) obtained average and above average scores and, as it was expected (following questionnaire’s responses), none of the respondents obtained above the score 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nbre of answers</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right answers</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong answers</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of the Results

A critical reading of the subjects’ answers summarized in table 02 proves that magister students have many comprehension problems and these are caused by their poor knowledge in General English (43.12%), in particular with the basic simple grammatical structures and vocabulary items as we will see in the discussion below.

As an illustration, Table 02 shows that 47.5% of the students’ answers of part one are wrong which means that many of the respondents failed in understanding the passage. Besides, it reveals the different comprehension problems that subject respondents have, that basically result from their General English (GE) linguistic shortcomings. Without doubt, it is impossible to read and understand without having a reasonable store of linguistic knowledge (Grabe, 2009).

In response to the comprehension questions, which aim at checking both the students’ general and detailed understanding and assessing their ability in using language to answer, only 37.5% of the total respondents have answered both questions correctly which reveals that the majority of the respondents (62.5%) have not comprehended the passage. Interestingly, almost all the students who understand the text failed in expressing their understanding accurately as they have made a considerable number of mistakes; namely, confusing verbs and nouns, misusing tenses, ignoring the rules of singular and plural, overlooking punctuation, and abusing conjunctions to combine meaningful sentences. The rest of the students answered by copying sentences from the text word for word and most of their answers are irrelevant to the questions asked.

Strong evidence on the students’ lack of competency in GE is also found in the students’ answers to the question of inferring. Although students are asked to give synonyms and antonyms to general vocabulary words (non-technical terms), the average of the right answers in no more than 43.5%. Furthermore, in the last activity of filling the gaps, the number of respondents who answered correctly is only 25% which illustrates one more time that the subjects have not understood what the text is about. Similarly, subjects’ answers to this question show the students’ lack of linguistic knowledge mainly about parts of speech, gender, and number.

Comparing the results of Table 02, we notice that there is a variation in the scores obtained in the different activities; for instance, activity one unlike the rest of the tasks, students gave (00%) no answers. Having no blank answers in this task is explained by the fact that most of subjects prefer to put random answers -rely on chance- if they fail in understanding the statement or the text. Comparing students’ scores in statement ‘a’, ‘b’ and ‘c’ can clearly
illustrate the point, only few students did understand the meaning of statement ‘c’ because they were unable to guess the meaning of the verb ‘built up’.

To put these facts into perspective, we conclude that students have low comprehension achievements and students’ poor GE knowledge is the main cause which compounded their problems and difficulties of understanding.

Similarly, the data obtained from Table 03 can be connected with the data in Table 02 in proving that magister students of physics have a low level in GE. As Table 03 indicates, the majority of the respondents (60%) failed in giving the right number of sentences in the last paragraph. This result is well explained by examining their answers which reveal that these students have different wrong concepts about what a sentence means. For instance, they consider each line as a sentence, a series of words between two commas, or a series of words between any other punctuation marks as a sentence, too. Moreover, 75% of the total respondents gave wrong answers when asked to count the number of passive sentences in the passage. As a matter of fact, magister students have also problems in identifying the passive sentence which is widely used in scientific discourse. In fact, subjects not only have problems with sentence structure but also with tenses; in particular the present and the past tenses which are frequently found in EST texts (Trimble 1985). In this respect, only 20% of the subjects gave right answers in identifying the tense used in the text which is the present. Having a scrutiny at the subjects’ answers when asked to extract verbs from the text in both past and present tenses reveals that all students’ answers, except three: decreases- consist-grows, range from the auxiliary ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ [is- are- has- have] Similarly, in extracting past tense verbs from the passage students’ right answers are restricted to the regular verbs with the final ‘ed’ [created, called, determined, etc] apart from two answers [built up- made].

In the same line of thought, subjects don’t only have limited knowledge of past verbs (only regular verbs) but they also confuse between adjectives and past verbs; i.e., they considered all the words ending in ‘ed’ as past verbs; namely, the adjectives ‘complicated’ and ‘involved’ were frequently repeated in their answers. Further examination showed that they also confuse between what the adjectives and the adverbs. Many of the respondents put adverbs when they are asked to find adjectives, and vice versa.

In short, these results have made it clear that the magister students- under investigation- have a poor knowledge of GE, to use (Steinhausen, 1993) words they are “false beginners” in English. In other words, the subjects are not equipped with the linguistic package needed to study English at the university level.

Comparing the findings of both Part One and Two, it is noticeable that students’ not only have poor knowledge of GE but also poor comprehension level. It appears from this that the lack of linguistic knowledge is most significant cause of their reading comprehension problems. Students proved to have problems at both word and sentence level.
The possible explanation for the students’ linguistic handicap in grammar and vocabulary is they regarded English as a ‘minor’ subject compared to other subjects like math, physic and science. Hence, less attention is devoted to it and all what students care about is getting a pass mark. Consequently, the majority of the students end up each step of their learning at high school and even in early stages at university with a little schematic information a shortage in knowledge of GE. Most students are not aware of the importance of English as the international language of science and technology until they become post graduate students.

From the earlier discussion, we see that EST teachers are in a dire need for a new perspective in teaching English to magister students of physics through re-considering teaching GE and make learners skillful with the basics of the English language. In so doing, we suggest implementing GE reading courses as we very much expect will help learners build their vocabulary repertoire, reinforce their knowledge in grammar and promote their English literacy. Ultimately, this would then lead to a sound improvement in their reading comprehension proficiency.

**Conclusion**

This study has been concerned with investigating the reading problems and difficulties faced by magister students by examining the relationship between the students’ knowledge of GE and their reading comprehension proficiency. The results obtained from both the questionnaire and the test support the belief that if the magister students have an adequate knowledge in GE (grammar and vocabulary), they will alleviate their reading difficulties and promote their reading proficiency. This study has been able to demonstrate that the inadequate level in GE is a prime obstacle that prevents magister students of physics from reaching comprehension in dealing with scientific texts. As a result, Magister students of physics require a re-teaching of English. Apart from this, GE cannot and should not be separated from EST teaching as it is the only way that we expect, in the long run, which can lead to improvements in how students behave and react to any text presented to them, or any text they would read. Hence, we believe that in the Department of Physics, of the University of Constantine, and by extension in the other Algerian universities, the teaching of GE should urgently be reconsidered and reading course should be implemented as well. Finally, we deeply hope that these findings and suggestions will be taken into consideration while reconsidering teaching General English to Physics students.

For that, we recommend teachers to focus their attention on these points:

- Make students more eager to learn English by explaining the crucial importance of this language and raising their motivation to learn through choosing interesting texts. By interesting, we mean texts about their field of specialisation that meet their expectations and interests, suit their level in English, and satisfy both their needs and wants.

- Well consider the learners’ needs and wants, their level in English, and the time and the number of sessions devoted to the English session.

- Integrate GE courses within EST courses. These GE courses serve as foundation courses that will create a real communication in the classroom using General English and Scientific English. Enriching the students’ linguistic background and reinforcing their efficiency in reading and learning English.
Focus on reading since it is the main skill needed for the EST learners by implementing reading courses.

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Appendix A : Students’ Questionnaire

We would like to ask you to answer the following questions. Please put (x) in the appropriate corresponding box. Thank you in advance.

1. Age: …………. Gender: Female Male

2. Is your option of speciality:
Matériaux
Energétique
Théorique
Rayonnement
Astrophysique
Investigating the Reading Difficulties of Algerian EST Students

AZEROUAL

3. Do you like studying English?
   yes □ no □

4. Did you consider English as important as the other matters you studied?
   important □ important as □ less important □ not □ important □

5. Do you like the time (the timetable) of the English session?
   acceptable □ suitable □ not suitable □

6. What do you think of one session of English per week?
   enough □ not enough □

7. What do you think of the courses given by the teachers?
   just good □ good □ boring □

8. Do you do classwork (exercice d'application)?
   yes □ no □

9. Do you think it is important to study English this year especially that next year you are going to prepare your dissertation?
   yes □ no □

10. What do you need English for?
    Answer exam questions □ understand and understand □ read documents □
    write scientific reports □

11. What type of English do you need (want) to learn?
    terminology □ text study □ grammar and vocabulary □ translation □

12. Do you read in English?
    yes □ no □

13. If yes, how often do you read in English?
    always □ often □ sometimes □ rarely □ never □

14. If you read, what do you read in English?
    newspapers □ short stories □ text □ document in your field of interest □

15. If you read, do you have difficulty?
    yes □ no □

16. If yes, how often do you have difficulty in reading?
    rarely □ sometimes □ never □

17. In reading you understand:
    only words □ general idea □ general idea with details □ all the text □

18. Your problems of understanding are due to:
    vocabulary □ grammar □ scientific knowledge □

Appendix B: Test

Structure of Matter

Matter is anything that has both mass and. It is made up of molecules. Molecules consist of atoms. Atoms are bound in molecules by forces which are called chemical forces. There exist molecules consisting of two, three, four atoms. The largest molecules, protein molecules, consist of tens and even hundreds of thousands of atoms.

The molecule kingdom is exceptionally varied. By now, millions of substances built up out of various molecules have already been isolated by chemists from natural materials and created in their laboratories.

Properties of molecules are determined not only by how many atoms of one or another sort participate in their construction but also by the order and configuration in which they are bound. A molecule is not a heap of bricks, but a complicated architectural structure, where each brick has its place and its completely determined neighbors. The atomic structure forming a molecule can be rigid to a greater or lesser degree. In any case, each of the atoms carries out an oscillation about its equilibrium position. In certain cases, some parts of a molecule can even revolve around other parts giving different and the most fantastic configurations to a free molecule in its process of its thermal motion.

The interaction between atoms has a characteristic form, it first goes down, then turns up forming a "well", and afterwards rises more slowly towards the horizontal axis on which the distance between the atoms is marked. The distance from the vertical axis to the bottom of the well can be called the equilibrium distance.
When atoms are at a great distance from each other, they are attracted; this force decreases rather rapidly with an increase in the distance between them. As they approach each other, the force of attraction grows and reaches its maximum value when the atoms come very close to each other. As they come even closer, the attraction weakens and, finally, at the equilibrium distance the force of the interaction vanishes. When the atoms become closer than the equilibrium distance, forces of repulsion arise which sharply increase and quickly make a further decrease in the distance between the atoms practically impossible.

(Adapted from Molecules by Landau & Kitaigorodsky, pp. 29-31)

Questions

Part one:
1. Say true or false.
   a. Properties of molecules are determined only by how many atoms participate in their construction. ........
   b. Variant molecules build millions of substances. ........
   c. Each brick is randomly placed in the structure of the molecule. ........
2. How is matter structured?
3. Does the distance between the atoms affect the attraction force?
4. a. Find in the text synonyms for the following:
   Made up = .................. matter = ..................
   b. Find in the text antonyms for the following:
   Slowly ≠ .................. backward ≠ ..................
   5. Complete the following sentences:
   a. .................. are the smallest particles of pure chemical substances.
   b. .................. is a basic unit of matter.
   c. .................. are those links between the atoms.

Part Two:
1. How many paragraphs are there in the text?
2. How many sentences are there in the last paragraph?
3. How many passive sentences are there in the first paragraph?
4. What is the tense used in the text?
5. Find in the text two adjectives and two adverbs.
6. Find two verbs in the past and two in the present in the text.
Comparative Genre Analysis of English Argumentative Essays Written by Chinese English and Non-English Major Students

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Abstract

Argumentative writing has long been regarded as an essential mode of written discourse. Despite some studies on argumentative essays across ages, grade levels, cultures and languages, research has not yet been conducted on writers from different academic disciplines in the Chinese context. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the current situation of move-step structure of argumentative essays written by English learners in an EFL context. Two sets of corpus of English argumentative essays written by Tongren University students were built, 100 from English majors and the other 100 from non-English majors. A selected analytical framework was used to analyze the move-step structure of the essays and some linguistic features were also investigated. Results revealed that the majority of the argumentative essays were found to follow the three stages set in the model. Findings also showed some differences in terms of move-step structure between the essays written by these two groups of students. In the conclusion, pedagogical implications informed by these results and findings are offered to benefit teaching argumentative essay writing.

Keywords: Argumentative essay, Genre analysis, Move-step structure, Linguistic features, English and non-English major students
Introduction

Argumentative writing has long been highly regarded as an essential mode of writing discourse and it plays an important part of second language learners’ academic experience at the university level (Zhu, 2001). Argumentative texts are required to be produced in a variety of contexts.

First, in academic settings, argumentative writing is an important instrument for students who face the task of writing research papers before finishing their university careers (Crowhurst, 1991). Next, for test-takers, argumentative essay is a required genre to produce in different tests or exams, ranging from national level tests (College English Test [CET] and Test for English Majors [TEM] in China) to international tests (TOEFL and IETS). Finally, in the workplace, individuals may need to persuade others to support their proposals or opinions. Given the importance of argumentative writing, it is clear that argumentative writing plays a significant role both for academic success and for general life purposes (Crowhurst, 1990). Therefore, finding a suitable way to teach writing of this text type will prepare the students to handle this writing task well and successfully for the academic and professional purposes.

However, argumentative writing is a difficult type of text for students to produce. One weakness is poor organization associated with a lack of knowledge of argumentative structure. The student writers have inadequate exposure to argumentative writing structure, and have little knowledge of this genre. Normally, their writing lacks clear organization, and they may produce inappropriate style of writing by using inappropriate language and wrong connectors (Crowhurst, 1987). Several studies have mentioned that this problem exists in a variety of contexts (e.g. Ferris, 1994; Hyland, 1990; Connor, 1990; Crowhurst, 1990, Crowhurst, 1991). Chinese ELT learners have been reported to suffer with this difficulty as well (e.g. Gao, 2007). Therefore, more studies particularly in ELT contexts are needed to enrich the existing findings.

This present study was conducted at a public university in the south-west of China, with a student population of about 7,000, this university provides English language programs for both English majors and non-English majors.

College English is a required basic course for all first and second year undergraduate non-English major students at this university. The objective of College English is to develop students’ ability to use English in a well-rounded way (CMOE, 2007). Normally, in the College English classroom, every English teacher is required to teach all four skills and this practice is known as the “one-teacher-package-class” model in the Chinese ELT context (Lu, 2007). Unsurprisingly, in three hours per week teaching, compared with instruction in listening and reading, much less attention has been devoted to writing.

For English majors, a writing course is offered to them only in term seven with two hours per week. The textbook for this course consists of eight chapters arranged in the order from word, sentence, and paragraph level to essay level. Normally, writing instruction follows the textbook based on the principle of ‘from simplicity to difficulty’. However, one substantial flaw of this
textbook is the absence of writing an argumentative essay in the essay composition chapter, which would lead to the students’ unfamiliarity with the structure of argumentative essay. Obviously, most English and non-English majors at this university are struggling with composing argumentative essays. Writing an argumentative essay is a demanding task for them due to inadequate exposure to this genre (Gao, 2007), insufficient explicit instruction, and unfamiliarity with the structure of argumentative writing. Therefore, the major purpose of the study is thus to investigate current rhetorical patterns of argumentative essays produced by English and non-English major students at the target university, so that the weaknesses of their writing can be identified, and therefore improvement can be suggested. The second purpose is to explore current linguistic features of the argumentative essay written by English and non-English major students so that information about language use can be obtained. The third purpose is to reveal the similarities and differences by comparing the argumentative essays written by these two groups of students, so that the teachers can adapt in different ways when teaching different groups of students this genre.

Research Methodology

Writer Participants and Teacher Interviewees

Two hundred students were selected as writer participants among students who were required to write an argumentative essay on the given topic. Among them, 100 writer participants were English major students, who were second-year, third-year and fourth-year students. The other 100 students were non-English major students who major in Chinese, mathematics, politics, history, biology, chemistry and agriculture. All of them were second-year students. To triangulate the source of data, the researcher conducted the interviews with 20 student writers and 5 teachers. Among these 20 student interviewees, ten were sophomores, juniors and seniors English majors, and the other 10 were second-year non-English major students who were majoring in mathematics, history, politics, agriculture and Chinese. As for the teacher interviewees, two teach extensive reading to English majors, one teaches writing to English majors, and another 2 teach English for non-English majors.

Data & Data Collection

“The analysis of a genre based on data obtained from a small corpus of texts has become a widely used method of obtaining information about language use.” (Henry and Roseberry, 2001, p. 93). Data for the present study were students’ writing pieces of the argumentative essay. Two set of corpus were built; one was the texts collected from English majors, and the other from non-English majors at the target university. The corpora consisting of 200 writing pieces derived from two sources: 100 writing pieces composed by English majors, and the other 100 pieces by non-English majors. As for the writing task, background information about the topic was provided; the required text length, content and basic elements needed to be contained in the argumentative essay were clearly stated.
**Procedure**

Data were collected in September, 2010 at the target university. More than 100 English major and more than 100 non-English major students were asked to write an argumentative essay with more than 220 words on the topic ‘Should Smoking be Banned in All Public Places?’ in one hour. After they had finished the writing, only 100 pieces of texts were selected from each group to be used in the investigation, constituting a corpus 200 texts. The selection criteria of the texts heavily depended on the text length required for the writing task. Texts were rejected if they appeared to be illogically written or shorter than expected. These 200 texts were then ready for the analysis using the selected framework.

**Analytical Framework**

Despite the availability of four other argumentative essay analysis frameworks proposed by Toulmin (1958), Veel (1997), Lock and Lockart (1998), and Derewianka (1990), the 3-move model by Hyland (1990) was chosen as a framework for the analysis of these 200 argumentative essays for the following reasons (See Appendix A). First, Hyland’s framework is a comprehensive model for analyzing argumentative essays. It provides a detailed description of each stage and move, which offers a clearly explained rhetorical structure of an argumentative essay that can be used as a suitable sample model for analysis. The second reason for using this model is because of its validity. This framework has proved valid because Hyland arrived at it by analyzing 65 top 10% of essays submitted for a high school matriculation in English. Finally, this framework has been employed to analyze the texts produced by non-English speakers, which are similar to the target writers in this present study.

**Analysis Procedure**

The corpus categorization and the move analysis took a coding system. Two corpora were categorized according to students’ majors. One set of corpus was coded EM which stands for English major, while the other one was coded NEM which stands for non-English major. The texts were labeled from EM001 to EM100 to indicate the number of the pieces of writing, and the same happened to NEM001 to NEM100. As for move analysis coding system, I stands for Information, P for Proportion, M for Marker, and etc, according to Hyland’s framework (1990). In this study, a set of moves and linguistic features characterizing the structure of the text were identified. Then, the linguistic features of some of the moves were analyzed. The selection of these moves for linguistic feature analysis was based on two criteria, i.e. moves with high frequent presence and moves with the status as central moves according to Hyland (1990).

Both move analysis and linguistic features identification were conducted manually. This may lead to subjective results with low reliability. The inter-rater reliability method is a good solution to this problem. In order to increase the accuracy of texts analysis and obtain high reliability, a researcher at TU with applied linguistics background, who specializes in genre analysis, analyzed the texts as an inter-rater. Texts were analyzed by two raters independently before
confirming the results to reach agreement on move analysis. The statistical calculation for percentage agreement used in this study was the simplest and most common method of reporting inter-rater reliability. Holsti’s (1969) coefficient of reliability (C. R.) indicates the number of agreements per total number of coding decisions. And it provides a formula for calculating percent agreement:

\[
C. \text{ R.} = \frac{2m}{n_1 + n_2}
\]

Where:  
- \(m\) = the number of coding decisions upon which the two coders agree  
- \(n_1\) = number of coding decisions made by rater 1  
- \(n_2\) = number of coding decisions made by rater 2

When the C. R. value is above 0.75, it indicates excellent agreement.

After the analysis of all texts, the interviews with 5 teachers and 20 student writers from different disciplines were conducted. These five teachers were coded as T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 for easier description later in the discussion section. The interview questions were formulated based on the results from the analysis (Appendix B). The semi-structured interviews with teachers and students were conducted in Chinese to achieve better understanding of both the interview questions and responses, and the interviews were tape-recorded.

Results and Discussion

Results were found after 200 texts were analyzed. The results are reported here from two aspects: move analysis and linguistic features. This section starts with the report of the results from six aspects in move analysis, and the results from the analysis of linguistic features were reported from four aspects.

Move Analysis

Non-Argumentative Essays

Two texts, NEM 005 and NEM 100, were taken out of the corpus because they are not argumentative essays. These two texts only compared the two opposite opinions on the controversial issue, which is whether smoking should be banned in all public places. However, neither of these two writers expressed their own standpoints on this issue. NEM 005 and NEM 100 cannot be viewed as argumentative essays because they lack the writer’s opinion or position, which is a necessary element in an argumentative essay (Hyland, 1990). It is assumed that the writers of NEM 005 and NEM 100 do not know the Proposition, the writer’s position, is one of obligatory components in argumentative writing.

Moves Always/Mostly Present
Information move in the Thesis stage

As a universal element in the argumentative writing, the move of Information was found to be used in 93.85% of the texts. A possible reason given by T4 is that they are university students, so it is most likely that they keep up with the current events around them on campus. If an essay topic is about current events, therefore the related information about these issues will be familiar to the students. Another reason provided by T3 reveals the relationship between the Information move and the issue being discussed. The Information functions as supporting materials to help increase the awareness of current situation concerning the controversial issue, or attract the reader’s attention to this issue.

Examples of Information move:

1. Smoking in the public places has always been a hot topic which draws a lot of attention. (EM 036)
2. Since January 1, 2011, smoking in public places will be forbidden in China. (NEM 015)

Proposition move in the Thesis stage

Among the 198 texts, Proposition move occurred in 86.5% of the texts. According to the interview data, T3 and T4 provided possible reasons why the Proposition move occurred so frequently in essays. In their opinion, most students have opinion on significant topics, especially topics related to their health and to their environment. If the topic is one that students are familiar with, the Proposition move is a very natural thing to be able to use. However, T2 thinks this is because of L1 transfer. In a Chinese argumentative essay, the writer is required to claim his or her position on an issue. Students just transfer this skill naturally from the Chinese writing tradition.

Examples of Proposition move:

1. I think smoking must be banned in all public places. (EM 043)
2. I don’t think it should be banned completely. (NEM 080)

Claim move in the Argument stage

As the central move in the argument stage, the move of Claim appeared in 180 texts in the first move cycle. The high rate of appearance of this move may result from the following reasons. T1 thinks that it has something to do with the teaching practice in class. When discussing something on a topic, students are normally expected to provide reasons to support their opinions. Moreover, according to T2 and T3, university students are equipped with reasoning, analyzing and logical skills and abilities to a certain extent. Once they give their opinions, supporting reasons must be present to accompany them. However, it seems to T4 that the claim, the reason for acceptance of proposition, would follow the proposition. When students are able to formulate
the proposition or take a stand on a subject, the claim naturally comes after the proposition, functioning as complimentary materials. Interestingly, the number of claim in the third move cycle reduced to 92. That is to say, most students could just offer two reasons to explain why they accepted the proposition. Moreover, not all claims were followed by a support, which is an indispensable part to the claim in a tied pair of moves. The failure of giving sufficient reasons and the support may result from the lack of particular field knowledge related to the given topic. This assumption was confirmed by most student interviewees, who claimed that their failure of providing sufficient reasons to support their stand on a subject is their common problem when writing an argumentative essay. The following are examples to show when only claims were provided without any supporting details to support these claims.

1. (EM 002) Smoking will waste your much money.
2. (EM 006) Smoking in public places is a bad habit and it harms public environment.
3. (NEM 001) We all know smoking is harmful to our health.
4. (NEM 018) Smoking is bad for the evaluation of a country’s image in the world.

**Moves Rarely Present**

**Gambit move in the Thesis stage**

Only 7 out of 198 (3.55%) students’ texts were found to contain this move. According to T4, the students lack understanding about perceived function of the Gambit. In his opinion, attention grabbing does not give information so it might not be seen as necessary by some students. Furthermore, it requires better master of written language and may be beyond some students’ skill levels. This explanation also agrees with that of Hyland (1990) who pointed out that the Gambit move requires certain skills which are beyond students’ awareness and ability. However, T3 attributes the nearly absence of this move to the lack of knowledge about the structure of argumentative essay. This assumption confirms the demonstration of Crowhurst (1990), who identified a lack of knowledge about the structure of argumentative essay as one of the characteristic problems of student writers. For example:

1. Nowadays, people’s health has become a serious problem, more and more people has kinds of diseases and passed away. (NEM 001)
2. As we all know, the phenomenon of smoking has become more and more serious. (EM 067)

**Evaluation move in the Thesis stage**

Only 7.6% of the texts contained the move of evaluation, giving a sound reason to give a brief support to Proposition. The possible reason for this scarcity given by T4 is that Evaluation is higher order thinking and may be beyond students’ skill levels. Therefore, most students just
gave their positions on the given topic rather than gave a further explanation to the reason for their stances. For example:

1. *From my viewpoint, I agree with the government’s decision because we need a clean environment.* (NEM 031)
2. *In my opinion, government should ban the smoking in all public places, because smoking not only influence people’s health, but also cause environment problems.* (EM 012)

**Restatement move in the Argument stage**

Restatement move is a repetition of proposition. The move functions as a reminder of the subject. The Argument stage consists of a possible three move cycles repeated in a specific order in this study. In 3 move cycles, only 5 students were found to use this move (in the first move cycle, no text was found to present this move; in the second and third move cycles, 2 and 3 students used it respectively in each move cycle). T5 attributes this to students’ unfamiliarity with the structure of an essay and ignorance of the need to restate their position on the proposition. One more reason is that the students do not know the function of this move, according to T2.

**Non-Argument Embedded in Argumentative Essay**

The narratives and dialogues to be described below, which function as one move in the text respectively, are part of an argumentative essay. Although both of them were incorporated into the essays to help persuade the readers, they appeared little persuasive or argumentative.

**Narratives**

Argument is a typical characteristic in an argumentative writing. However, EM 074 was found to contain a short narration rather than an argument when he or she attempted to persuade the reader to stop smoking in public places.

“It is a very satiric, once I was waiting for the train, there is a big sign said no smoking, but I also saw some people smoke in the waiting room, so I hope everybody should pay more attention on our health and environment.”

This non-argument agrees with that of Crowhurst (1990), who found some student writers respond to persuasive tasks with writing not recognizably persuasive but with narratives that are rather informative. He assumed that probably narrative is more primary text type and less cognitive demanding than persuasive one, therefore the student writers tend to use easier one instead of more challenging, expected form.

**Dialogues**
In addition to narratives, dialogues, another kind of non-argument, was found in the corpus. NEM 002 used this type of non-argument which made a conversational exchange between two persons.

“Sometimes, I ask my friend why smoking, and if you can’t smoke what can you. He tell me: “when I feel lonely or hurted, or if I have not it, I feel sad, looking as it is my girlfriend”. I laugh at him: “you regard it as girlfriend, but she will kill you”. Finally, I failed, because I try to smoke and find it well. But I love it less than now I can’t make money.”

This paragraph mainly informs the reader the reason why people smoke and the difficulty in stop smoking. However, it gives no attention to trying to persuade the reader not to smoke in public places. Also, this incidence confirms that of Crowhurst (1990), who had a similar finding with younger learners. One possible reason for such responses is that dialogues and description may be easier than giving reasons for EFL student writers with relatively poor English language proficiency and writing ability.

**New Moves**

**Contradiction move in the Argument stage**

Five texts were found to contain a new move, called the Contradiction move in the Thesis stage. Take NEM 052 and NEM 072 as examples, the writers originally held the point that they agreed with the smoking ban in all public places, and already provided two reasons as claims to support the proposition. However, it seems that the third claim is contradictory to the standpoint which the writer held, thus the name the Contradiction move. This claim stated the potential disadvantages of banning-smoking policy may bring. T4 provided possible reasons for this new move of Contradiction. He assumed that the presence of Contradiction move reveals the internal conflict of the writer, especially related to the topic ‘smoking’. On one hand, the students think the policy would cause people to stop smoking, on the other hand, they would not see anyone lose their jobs as the result of bankruptcy of tobacco industry. This may cause inner conflict, and that inner conflict is reflected through their writing. The other four teacher interviewees stated that the students may be uncertain about their positions on the issue. When they found the inconsistence with the original opinion, they could not stop and just let it go. Another possibility is that the students attempt to increase the words to reach the required length.

**Examples:**

1. (NEM 052) In my opinion, I think smoking should be banned in all public places...... 
Smoking can make them forget their sadness and unhappy. And smoking can make them very happy...
2. (NEM 072) In my view, smoking should not be banned in all public places…… Smoking is harmful to health, we shouldn’t smoke too much, it harms yourself and it also harms others.

**Non-Supporting move in the Argument stage**

Three texts presented a new move which seems irrelevant to the proposition. For example, EM 083 stated the difficulty in stopping smoking, which has little to do with the writer’s stance. One reason for this given by T4 is that the writers lack knowledge of the purpose and generic structure of the genre, so they just present all related or unrelated knowledge of the field they have, hoping that they complete the writing task without caring about the quality. According to the other 4 teacher interviewees, EFL students tend to write short texts. When students present all they know about the topic but find the texts are still short, they may try to write whatever to reach the required text length to satisfy the requirement of the writing task.

**Examples:**

1. (EM083) It is not easy to give up smoking.

2. (EM099) Many adults begin to smoke for it looks cool, especially for some actors in movies.

3. (NEM033) Smoking have other ways to receive nicotine nowadays, we have many ways to receive nicotine.

**Suggestion/Recommendation move in the Conclusion stage**

Ten writers provide some suggestions or recommendations for the government, the smokers or the public. These statements are not accounted for in Hyland’s model (1990), so they are categorized as a new move called “the Suggestion/Recommendation move. The Suggestion move aims to help carry out the government policy by providing suggestions or recommendations. The presence of this new move may attribute to the following reasons. T3 thinks that if the students have good understanding of the issue, and have deep insights into this issue, then, they are likely to provide suggestions or recommendations. According to T4, whether to offer the Suggestion move depends on the topic. The more they are familiar with the argument or topic, the more they are likely to have this move.

1. (EM 074) Government…doesn’t allow the factory to produce the cigarettes.

2. (EM 094) Government should set a special place for the people who really can’t give up smoking.

3. (NEM 098) I think smokers had better give up smoking, not only in private places, but also in the public places.

**Differences between EM and NEM**
Despite no significant differences between EM and NEM, the following three items are still worth noting, which provide insights into apparent differences between disciplines.

_**Average move frequency per person**_

The result showed that an average English major student used more moves than an average non-English one. 10.6 moves occurred on average in the text written by an English major, while only 7.59 moves occurred on average in an non-English major’ essay. Though there was no significant difference between these two groups of students in this study, the existing slight difference is still worth dealing with. Based on the interview with teachers and students, most interviewees claimed that the difference lies in students’ majors. EM students have more English language exposure to the English language, so they have better understanding of nature of English, especially sentence, paragraph and essay structures. They have greater awareness of those things. It is easier for them to include more moves in their paper because they have more linguistic knowledge on the structure of essay.

_**Contradiction move**_

Interestingly, this new move was only found in essays written by non-English majors, though its occurrence frequency was very low (only 5 essays present this move). It is assumed that English majors have better knowledge about English argumentative essay. They know how it is structured and know the purpose of this genre, which is to convince the reader that the writer’s opinion is correct or it is at least worth considering. English majors are more skillful at making their claims consistent with the Proposition. According to most of the NEM student interviewees, their problems when writing an argumentative essay are normally at syntactic, vocabulary, grammar or sentence levels, while for most of EM student interviewees, their problems usually related to essay level, such as reasoning skills and logical skills. This may indicate again that English majors have better command of English, and when writing an argumentative essay, non-English majors focus more on the basic language level.

_**Non-argumentative essays**_

Two non-argumentative essays which cannot be regarded as real argumentative essays only appeared in the corpus of non-English major students. Proposition, an obligatory move, was absent in these two essays. According to the student interviewees, they learned about the structure of argumentative essay from teachers, books and CET, but most of them just knew about it in general at the stage level rather than in specific at the move level. Moreover, 65% of the student interviewees supposed that English major students have a better basic knowledge about writing argumentative essay than non-English major students. In their opinion, English major students have much more exposure to English because they have to take more English courses due to a requirement of the specific discipline, and they have more opportunities to use English.
A new pattern of argumentative essay was identified in 12 texts, which is quite different from Hyland’s model. In the new pattern of Information ^ Advantages (Claim & Support) n ^ Disadvantages (Claim ^ Support) n ^ Proposition, it starts with the background materials for the topic contextualization. Next, it lists the advantages of smoking or banning smoking, meanwhile, possible reasons are provided to support these advantages. Then, the disadvantages are analyzed, which is similar to what happens to advantages. Finally, the writer expresses the stance through comparison the advantages and disadvantages stated earlier. The difference between this new model and Hyland’s model is that it shows both sides of arguments whereas Hyland’s model just only requires information of one opinion. Students learn about the new pattern from the following three sources according to the teacher and student interviewees: from the English teachers in high school; from reading materials and reference books for CET when they were preparing for it; and from the writing teacher at university. Through the exposure to these sources, the students are encouraged to say both sides of pros and cons, and write about advantages and disadvantages of an argument of a topic.

**Linguistic Features**

The analysis of linguistic features was concerned with tenses, specific attitudinal stance, auxiliary verbs and markers in the moves of Information, Proposition, Claim and Support, and in the Argumentative stage. Comparatively, these selected moves appeared with high frequency. Moreover, the Proposition, Claim and Support are indispensable moves according to Hyland (1990).

**The Information Move**

Table 1. *Occurrence Percentage of Tenses in the Information Move*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenses</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>NEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Tense</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Perfect Tense</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Tense</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three tenses were mainly used in the move of Information, which are present tense, present perfect tense and future tense. Present tense and present perfect tense are used in this stage to indicate the liveliness and contemporary relevance to the thesis to be argued. In addition, adverbs of time, such as recently, and nowadays, were used to correspond with the tenses used in the Information move. Future tense was found used as well. This incidence is related to the topic which is about a will-be-done action in this study. Therefore, future tense was
used in the essays to show that the government policy on smoking will be put in force in a future time. These three tenses were alternatively used to highlight the features of the move of information.

**Examples:**

1. (EM 037) *Recently, the problem of smoking should be banned in all public places has aroused people’s concern.*

2. (NEM011) *From January, 2011, in China, smoking will be banned in all public places.*

3. (NEM 055) *Nowadays, it is reported that a new policy will be carried out.*

**The Proposition Move**

Table 2. *Frequency of Phrases in the Proposition Move*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>NEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in my opinion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as far as I’m concerned</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personally speaking</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as for me</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from my standpoint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my viewpoint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from my perspective</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. *Frequency of Verbs in the Proposition Move*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words/Phrases</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>NEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>think</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The words or phrases in Tables 2 and 3 were found to be used to help the realization of this move. The phrases in Table 2 indicate that the writer’s position of a particular controversial issue will come next. These phrases help prepare the reader that the writer is going to state his or her proposition. Such phrases appeared in 63 texts of EM, and in 51 texts of NEM. One function of these words is to claim ownership of the proposition. For example,

1. (EM 035) As far as I’m concerned, smoking should be banned in all public places.

2. (EM 045) Personally, I would say yes to this ban and I firmly support it.

3. (NEM 008) in my opinion, I reject smoking very much.

4. (NEM 031) From my viewpoint, I’m very agree with the government’s decision…

The Claim Move and the Support Move

Table 4. Frequency of Auxiliary Verbs in the Claim and Support Moves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Claim Move and the Support Move</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>NEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Claim is the central move in the Argument stage, and the Support move is obligatory in this stage. Meanwhile, the Support move is an indispensable second part to the Claim in a tied pair of claim-support moves (Hyland, 1990). Therefore, linguistic features were identified in these two go-hand-in-hand moves. Auxiliary verbs such as can, will, may, and could were found to be used in these two moves. These four auxiliary verbs appeared in 74 texts of EM, and 69 texts in NEM. Among them, will and can were frequently used. For can, it helps the writer illustrate the potential of smoking or the ban of smoking, and the writer used will, may or could to indicate the probability and possibility the government policy on smoking may bring. Some examples are given below:

1. (EM 033) It could lung cancer.
2. (EM 082) It is obvious that cigarettes would produce some waste gas which pollutes our environment.
3. (NEM 024) Smoking in public places will result in many bad effect and don’t have benefit at all.
4. (NEM 027) Smoking can influence other people’s health.

The Marker move in the Argument stage

Table 5. Occurrence Frequency of Markers in the Argument Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markers</th>
<th>Occurrence Frequency (EM)</th>
<th>Occurrence Frequency (NEM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first(ly)…, second(ly)…, finally</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to begin with…, then…, last…</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on one hand…, on the other hand</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moreover/furthermore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what’s more</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in addition/additionally</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Markers which indicate the sequence and connections between the argument and the proposition were found to be used by both English major and non-English major students. In the first move cycle, 74 texts by English majors presented this move, while 39 by non-English majors. In the second move cycle, the number of this move occurrence increased to 84 and 47, respectively. Interestingly, the number decreased to 64 and 29 in the third move cycle. Two main devices for achieving the function of the Marker move were found to be used. One device was listing signals such as ‘first(ly)…, second(ly)…, finally’, etc. Most students used such signals in the main study, which corresponds to that in the studies by Hyland (1990) and Chen (2002), who claimed that such markers to frame the sequence were preferred by students. another types of device is transition signals to indicate the step to another sequence, marking addition, contrast, condition, specificity, etc. For example, words or phrases such as additionally, in addition, what’s more, moreover, and on the other hand were found to be used. However, the students tended to use few types of markers, and sometimes misused discourse connectives. They used above all instead of first of all, at last instead of lastly, in one hand instead of on one hand, for instances. Also the misuse of these markers both in the Argument stage and the Conclusion stage was found in the study of Chen (2002). Some examples are given below:

1. (NEM 015) At last (lastly), I read in the newspaper and in my gardening magazine that the ends of cigarettes are so poisonous that if a baby swallows one, it is likely to die.

2. (NEM 039) In all (All in all), online evaluation is needed.

3. (NEM 047) In total (In conclusion), smoking should be banned in all public places.

4. (EM 008) At first (First of all), it’s very impolite to smoke in public places.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

In general, most argumentative essays written by TU English major and non-English major students contain three stages: the Thesis stage, the Argument stage and the Conclusion stage, which corresponds to an established model by Hyland (1990).

The results showed that there are no significant differences between English major and non-English major students in terms of move-step structure and linguistic features.

The presence of the new moves which do not exist in Hyland’s model (1990) and new pattern of argumentative essay highlighted the finding of the move-step structure of argumentative essays written by TU English major and non-English major students. Although only the minority of students used these new moves and patterns, it is possible that much more students whose texts were not included in these 200 essays used them.

The results from the present study are of great significance for teacher educators and materials developers both in theoretical and practical perspectives. Particularly, the results strengthen
pedagogical claims about the importance of genre-based approach, which provides valuable resources for classroom practices.

First of all, from a broader perspective, genre theory should be included in curriculum which guides the design of textbooks and the implement of teaching practices. A wide variety of genres are expected to be learned by university students. However, neither the curricular nor textbooks has included any single word about genre. Also, neither of them has put emphasis on genre. Thus, developing a framework for a flexible genre-based writing curriculum for EFL learners is necessary.

Secondly, a significant topic should be chosen when teachers assign writing tasks of composing argumentative essays as a topic plays a significant role in writing an argumentative essay. Crowhurst (1990) claimed that students write better when they write on issues that really concerned them. The topic has impact on generating content, formulating arguments and using language. Thus, teachers need to explore meaningful, interesting topics and guide students to look for information on these topics to make sure students prepare themselves for sufficient arguments.

Thirdly, teachers should present complete text or range of texts with similar schematic structure as writing models. Teachers can select and provide good models of argumentative genre, analyzing representative samples of the genre to identify their stages and typical linguistic features, deconstructing and analyzing the language and structure. Students need to be exposed to such text type and a method of understanding how the contexts and purposes of texts are related to their schematic structures and linguistic knowledge. Thus, by providing and analyzing text samples of the genre, it is a way to familiarize students with the structure and linguistic features of this genre. In this way, teachers would help students increase the awareness of the structure and the purpose of the argumentative genre. Meanwhile, students are empowered with strategies and skills necessary to replicate these features in their own writing. Also, it is possible to choose poor writing scripts as bad models for students as suggested by Hyland (1990). He pointed out that badly organized texts could also provide opportunities for analyzing weaknesses and examples of ineffectual communication. However, ‘presentation of the model alone was not successful in producing improvement. Improvement in overall quality was hardly to be expected from a single exposure to the model’ (Crowhurst, 1991, p. 330). Therefore, explicit instruction of argumentative genre is necessary and required in classroom practices.

Thus, next, teachers should offer students explicit instruction in argumentative writing. Writing instruction needs to offer students an explicit knowledge of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they look like because learning to write requires outcomes and expectations. The explicitness sets very clear outcomes and expectations of writing rather than obtains the knowledge from unanalyzed samples, from repeated writing experience and from teachers’ comments and suggestion (Hyland, 2003). Students would be sensitized to argumentative genre by sharing the teacher’s familiarity with such genre.
Finally, teachers should encourage students to make good use of positive L1 transfer. Definitely, students have various skills and specific knowledge for writing argumentative essay in L1. The repertoire of strategies can be transferred from L1 to L2. L1 influences L2 writing in terms of rhetorical patterns such as paragraph organization, linear organization structure, coordinating conjunctions, indirectness devices, rhetorical appeals and reasoning strategies (Uysal, 2008). Chinese vocabulary, discourse and Chinese writing styles were found to have direct or indirect effects on English writing (Wang & Wen, 2004). Students should be encouraged to compare writing argumentative essay in L1 and L2, finding out the similarities and differences between these two and borrowing useful writing strategies, skills, rhetorical device and relevant knowledge from L1.

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References


**Appendix I. Elements of Structure of the Argumentative Essay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Move</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thesis</td>
<td>(Gambit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduces the proposition to</td>
<td>Attention Grabber – controversial statement of dramatic illusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the Gambit move in most of students’ essays?
2. Why do you think most of students can use the move of Information?
3. Why do you think most of the students could use the move of Proposition easily and naturally?
4. Why did most of students fail to present the Evaluation move?
5. Why did the Restatement move rarely occur in students’ texts?
6. Why do you think most of the texts present the move of Claim?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Argument</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discusses grounds for thesis.</td>
<td><strong>Marker</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(four move argument sequence can be repeated indefinitely)</td>
<td>Signals the introduction of a claim and relates it to the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposition</strong></td>
<td>Furnishes a specific statement of position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Evaluation)</strong></td>
<td>Positive gloss – brief support of proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Marker)</strong></td>
<td>Introduces and /or identifies a list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Conclusion</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesized discussion and affirms the validity of the thesis.</td>
<td><strong>(Marker)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidation</strong></td>
<td>Signals conclusion boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents the significance of the argument stage to the proposition.</td>
<td><strong>(Affirmation)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restates proposition.</td>
<td><strong>(Close)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widens context or perspective of proposition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hylan d’s Model (1990)**

**Appendix 2. Interview Questions for Teachers**

1. What are possible reasons for the absence of the Gambit move in most of students’ essays?
7. Why do you think most of the students used much more Affirmation than Consolidation?
8. Why do you think an average English major student used more moves than an average non-English major?
9. Do you think an essay with the pattern ‘I + A (C+S) n + D + P’ is an argumentative essay? Why do you think some texts have this pattern?
10. Do you think the new move Suggestion/Recommendation in the Conclusion is acceptable? What are reasons for the presence of this move?
11. What are reasons for the presence of the new move of Contradiction to the Proposition?

Interview Questions for Students

1. Did you know about the general structure of argumentative essay before? From who?
2. What are the problems you have when writing one?
3. Do you think an essay with the pattern ‘I + A (C+S) n + D + P’ is an argumentative essay? Some students wrote their essays with the pattern. From whom do you think they got it?
4. Do you think those EMs would have a better basic knowledge about writing argumentative essay? Why?
5. What makes a good conclusion in an argumentative essay?
6. What are basic elements for an argumentative essay?

1. 你以前知道英语议论文的大致结构吗?从哪里知道的?
2. 你觉得在写英语议论文的时候，主要有哪些困难?
3. 你觉得‘I + A (C+S) n + D + P’是议论文的结构吗?有些学生用了这个结构,你觉得他们是从哪里了解到的?
4. 你认为英语专业学生比非英语专业学生有比较好的有关英语议论文知识吗？为什么？
5. 你认为一篇好的议论文的结尾应该是怎样的？
6. 你认为一篇英语议论文有哪些基本要素？
The Effect of Explicit Instruction in Expository Text Structure on the Writing Performance of Arab EFL University Students

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Abstract
This action research study investigates the relationship between explicit instruction in the organizational patterns of comparison/contrast texts, regarded as a major type of expository English, and EFL writing performance. The study also examines whether students’ metacognitive and cognitive knowledge of the text structures of comparison/contrast texts improves their in-class writing performance. 22 Palestinian EFL university students enrolled in an academic writing course participated in the study. The study spanned over three weeks during which the subjects received nine hours of explicit instruction in the organizational structures of compare/contrast texts. Data gained from pre- and post-test mean scores point to a direct correlation between explicit instruction in text structure and improved writing performance. The interviews with student participants provided evidence that students felt more comfortable and confident about writing when they are explicitly taught the organizational structures of expository texts. The pedagogical implications of this study are of significant value to EFL writing teachers and curricula developers who should make explicit instruction in text structure an integral part of EFL writing courses.

Key Words: text structure, comparison/contrast, explicit instruction, EFL Arab students, writing performance
Introduction

Writing is inarguably one of the most difficult skills EFL learners encounter when learning a target language due to the fact that “the concerns ESL students have about writing in English may be substantially different from those of native language users” (Gungle & Taylor, 1989, p. 245). EFL learners come from various cultural backgrounds and discourse traditions where they had learned to develop and organize their ideas and information differently in both spoken and written discourses. Consequently, they bring in these rhetorical conventions when writing in English. For that reason, learners almost always encounter difficulties in writing English, especially academic English, as they are always expected to adhere to the organizational patterns of English academic texts. Grabe and Kaplan (1989, p. 263) candidly put it that, “The effort to understand how writing in a second language (L2) is also influenced by the cultural and linguistic conventions of the writers’ first language (L1) is now recognized as an important element which must be accounted for in any approach to L2 writing research and instruction.” Some of the intriguing writing problems for EFL learners might not be grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, or even lack of ideas; it may rather be finding out a way “within the rhetorical conventions of the expository essay to acknowledge or articulate the conflict they experience as they move between the contradictory rhetorical practices of their native and adopted cultures” (Corbett, 1998, p. 2).

Since writing in the L2 is a challenging task for EFL learners, it is imperative that they should be equipped with the strategies and skills with which they are better capable of controlling their own learning and improving their writing. One important way to achieve this optimal goal is through explicit teaching of text structure and raising learners’ awareness of generic features such as rhetorical structures, discourse markers, the relation between the writer-reader, purpose of writing, voice, topic expectations, and medium of communication, and making these part of their schemata. Gordon (1990), for instance, holds that research suggests that students receiving explicit instruction in expository text structure are better able to use text structure when reading, writing, speaking, and sometimes in activities or events in everyday life. Indeed, students need to know how to write before they are asked to actually write.

Despite an avalanche of research on teaching text structure and L1 writing performance, little research seems to have been devoted to the relationship between explicit instruction in text structure and L2 writing performance. This action research study investigates whether explicit teaching of the rhetorical organization of one text type of expository English (comparison/contrast texts) improves students' writing performance. The study identifies the various cognitive and metacognitive processes learners go through when writing in the expository genre and how this correlates to better writing performance in this genre.

Theoretical Background

Not only does writing effectively, whether in L1 or L2, involve forming grammatically correct sentences, generating and organizing coherent content, and using a wide range of vocabulary and syntactic structures (Caudery, 1998), but it also entails making the right choices in creating appropriate texts for specific occasions and communicative purposes. Ploeger (1994) points out to the fact that “the text is created by the writer, who is a member of a discourse community, influenced by that community’s traditions, discourse conventions, textual and topic requirements and constraints” (p. 2). Unfamiliarity with the discourse and textual features
appropriate in one genre may constitute a serious obstacle for ESL writers in different academic settings (Hinkel, 2002). As a result, raising learners’ awareness of the underlying elements that constitute writing encourages students to pay due attention to important factors in writing such as audience, context, purpose, and organization, which will increase their writing productivity (Burnett & Kastman, 1993).

Interest in genre theory and its pedagogical applications has increased significantly as evidenced by a substantial body of literature connecting genre research and classroom writing pedagogy (e.g. Bhatia, 2002; Caudery, 1998; Clark, 1999; Grabe, 2002; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002; Paltridge, 2002; Oliver, 1999; Reppen, 1995, 2002; Swales, 1990). In particular, theorists have been concerned with the extent to which familiarity with rhetorical patterns and organizational structures of different text genres can influence learners’ academic writing performance. Pedagogically speaking, the term genre suggested “an emphasis on form, and to a certain extent, on form exclusively, because, in its most simplistic application, students were encouraged to pour content into formulaic text slots without questioning the rationale for doing so” (Clark, 1999, p. 8).

Current conceptualizations of genre have shifted away from a restrictive, exclusive, and static perspective focusing on form into a more social, communicative, and dynamic approach to genre. Genres are referred to as “inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures” (Bhatia, 2002, p. 23). A thorough examination of the literature on writing pedagogy shows that learners need to be immersed in and have practice writing in different genres (Reppen, 1995). Thus, introducing genre-related writing activities is a crucial element in helping learners comprehend different genre texts and enabling them to construct their own texts. Reppen makes the point that getting learners to practice genre writing is “important for English L1 students and crucial for English L2 learners… simply allowing students to write a lot will not necessarily provide sufficient practice in the types of writing valued for academic writing” (p. 32). Moreover, learners’ knowledge of genre offers them new ways to see writing as a social construction that ultimately moves beyond genre boundaries and in this way provides them with useful, practical possibilities of writing creatively (Clark, 1999). That is, equipping learners with the language to talk about texts enables them to understand how to write effectively and communicatively in different communicative situations.

Research on writing and reading comprehension has commonly dealt with expository writing as a more generic classification although there are more specific subgenres within the exposition (Cox, Shanahan & Tinzmann, 1991). Expository writing differs from narrative and descriptive writing in that it expresses an idea about a topic and uses supporting details to inform or explain to the reader that the idea is sound. While the narrative or descriptive modes attempt to evoke the reader’s emotions or senses, the exposition mode resides in the realm of logic. Taylor and Beach (1984) postulate that a difficulty with expository writing may be attributable to students’ lack of knowledge about the text organization used in comprehending and producing expository texts. As a result, one way proposed by Grabe (2002) to help learners to overcome difficulties in expository writing is by exploring the generic structures and organizational patterns used by writers to convey or explain information and that “a more coherent and focused
The effect to teach expository writing and to practice such writing consistently would improve students’ writing abilities” (p. 263).

Regarding the organizing structures of expository writing, Cox, Shanahan and Tinzmann (1991) hold that expository writing “relies heavily on hierarchical and logical relations among the ideas in a text.” Raphael and Kirschner (1985) believe that knowledge of text structure helps writers in many ways: (1) explore the subject, (2) clarify the purpose, (3) make decisions about how to arrange ideas and information, and (4) revise the ways ideas are presented. Similarly, Taylor and Beach (1984) found out that “students who notice and use text structure to aid them in forming a macrostructure for what they have read may have a better understanding of the need for incorporating text structure into their own expository writing” (p. 137). Grabe (2002) argues that rhetorical instruction is advantageous and that there is strong evidence in research that students possessing better knowledge of the organizational structures in a given text (comparison/contrast, classification, cause-effect, problem-solution, argument for a position) are able to recall more information from the text and perform better on comprehension tasks.

A wealth of research has underscored the importance of explicit instruction as an effective methodology in teaching language skills (see, for example, Archer & Hughes, 2011; Bomer, 1998; Goeke, 2008; Price, 1998; Serafini, 2004). Explicit instruction often refers to the systematic sequencing of instructional procedures in a lesson. More importantly, it involves the degree of clarity in the learners' constructions and their deliberate use of a particular concept, strategy or procedure, calling to consciousness what is being taught and strives to clarify for learners the expectations the teachers have for their learning (Bomer, 1998; Serafini, 2004). According to Goeke (2008), explicit instruction can be provided when the goal is to teach a well-defined body of information or skills that all students must master, assessment data indicate that students have not learned the basic skills, strategies and content, and assessment data indicate that student progress towards mastering skills, strategies or content needs to be accelerated.

Several studies were conducted on the correlation between explicit instruction of expository writing structures and writing performance. A study by Raphael and Kirschner (1985), for example, revealed that students receiving instruction in expository text structure made significant improvement in their free writing, and made specific improvement in writing comparison/contrast text structures which have been found to be particularly difficult. Raphael and Kirschner hold that instructors should provide a scaffold to help learners improve their comprehension and production of expository texts. Such a scaffold should consist of four essential components:

1. Familiarizing learners with the structure of expository text they read to increase their access to relevant information of text,
2. supplementing this information by activating background knowledge,
3. equipping learners with skills to organize information, and
4. providing them with a structure that they could use to write about the information.
Grabe and Kaplan (1989) hold that students should be furnished with strategies for text organization that are appropriate for the rhetorical and coherence systems of English by raising their awareness of general organizational structures such as thesis statement, body, conclusion, logical relationships among parts of a text, and options available at hand for selecting and arranging their information in a text.

At first glance, the area of cognitive and metacognitive strategies that ESL writers engage in has spawned a vast literature of its own. Empirical research reveals a strong impact of increasing learners’ cognitive and metacognitive awareness on language learning. Cumberworth and Hunt (1998) believe that increasing students’ cognitive knowledge of useful strategies is necessary to improve their writing. By having students cognitively and metacognitively aware of features of different text types, “students learn the language needed to talk about texts, begin to understand how and why texts are organized in certain ways, and are able to evaluate their own writing and participate in peer editing sessions more effectively” (Reppen, 1995, p. 32). Schraw and Dennison (1994) hold that metacognitive awareness enables students to plan, sequence and monitor their learning which has a positive effect on writing performance.

In a related vein, Hamilton and Ghatala (1994, p. 400) define cognitive strategies as “mental processes for controlling learning and thinking. Using [cognitive] strategies appropriately enables students to efficiently manage their own learning, remembering, and thinking.” Similarly, Vermunt (1996) sees these cognitive strategies as thinking activities that learners use to process learning content. Some of these cognitive activities include looking for relations among parts of the subject matter (relating), distinguishing major and minor points (selecting), thinking of examples (concretizing), and looking for applications (applying). In their study on the connection between young adolescents’ motivational processes and their use of cognitive and self-regulating (metacognitive) strategies with expository texts, Mizelle and Carr (1997) found that there is strong evidence in research that teaching students cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as making inferences, mental imagery, summarization, use of text structure and question generation increased students’ strategy knowledge and enhanced their understanding of expository texts.

Methodology

This study uses an action research design for the purpose of examining the role of explicit instruction in organizational patterns of comparison/contrast texts in improving writing performance. Berg (2001) holds that action research aims at two related tasks. First, it aims to reveal knowledge or information that will be directly useful to a group of people. Second, it is meant to empower the average person in the group to use the information collected in the research. Nunan (1992) identifies the key components of action research design as being initiated by a question, supported by data and interpretation, and carried out by a teacher in his/her own context. The key features of an action research design are that it is carried out by teachers themselves, uses qualitative or quantitative methods, for the purpose of teacher development, has no expectation for generalizability, seeks to improve classroom practice, and aims at the development of teacher theory (Griffee, 2012; Harmer, 2007). Thus, action research ultimately aims to bring about a change or modification in how something is done or understood.

For purposes of the analysis, 22 EFL Palestinian university female students enrolled in a mid-intermediate writing course participated in the study. This writing course, which used a process-oriented approach to teaching writing, aimed to develop the students’ writing abilities in
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areas such as content, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy. The participants in this study had not previously received explicit instruction in the text structure of comparison/contrast texts. They were in the second year of their study, ranged in age between 19-20 years, came from similar socio-economic backgrounds, and speak Arabic as their mother tongue. Their language proficiency is quite similar since all of them were enrolled in the university according to a fixed grade point average (GPA) in their general secondary school and studied the same English language courses. The students were also more or less homogenous in their language proficiency based on the results of their mid-term scores as they were studying the same course. The study focused on the following questions:

(1) Is there a correlation between explicit instruction in text structure of comparison/contrast texts, as a major type of expository English, and improved writing performance as measured by post-instruction essay writing?

(2) Does students’ metacognitive and cognitive knowledge of the organizational patterns of compare/contrast texts improve their writing performance?

This research was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The experimental method was based on one group pretest-posttest design, where comparison of the mean scores is done within the same group (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). Two essay writing tasks served as pre- and post- achievement tests. Data were analyzed using the statistical package (SPSS). T-test for independent sample was used to measure statistical differences in the mean scores of the students’ pre- and post-tests in order to determine the overall effect of instruction. It is hypothesized that in case there were statistically significant differences between both mean scores, we are in a better position to ascribe this improvement on the post-test to the role of explicit instruction and students' metacognitive and cognitive knowledge of comparison/contrast text structure and their ability to make use of this knowledge in constructing their own texts. Conversely, if no progress has been noticed in the subjects’ writing abilities, we may argue that students’ familiarity with expository text structure has no significant impact on their writing performance.

First, students were pre-tested with a one-hour compare/contrast essay on the similarities and differences between our lifestyles and our grandparents' lifestyles. The researcher-teacher, thereafter referred to as RT, asked the subjects to monitor the thinking processes and strategies, if any, they go through while writing the essay. Two experienced teachers graded the writing samples using a scoring rubric that is specifically designed to measure two writing categories, namely organization and coherence, on a scale of one-to-ten, with 10 being the highest score. Each rater assigned a combined score of both writing areas. In order to measure the test scores' inter-rater reliability, where data are independently coded by each rater and then compared for agreement (for measuring inter-rater reliability, see Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991, p. 533-535), all the ratings were correlated and a Pearson correlation matrix was produced and then an average of all the correlation coefficients was calculated. The inter-rater reliability of the ratings computed between both graders was reasonably high, about 76 percent.

Moreover, qualitative methods involved conducting semi-structured interviews with student participants to give a more complete picture on students’ performance, attitudes, and mental processes as a result of the intervention. To illustrate, the RT interviewed the participants right after having students write the pre-instruction essay. Every participant was asked about nine questions in each interview, but some questions were formulated during the interview since the
RT intended the interview to be conversational and two-way communication. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was twofold. First, RT sought to probe into cognitive and metacognitive processes students went through when writing a comparison/contrast essay, i.e., interview questions addressed whether students planned, brainstormed, monitored and/or revised their compositions. Secondly, RT wanted to probe into the subjects’ own choices concerning organization and content and to know if the subjects were aware of the textual organization of comparison/contrast texts and the discourse markers appropriate in such texts. Equally important, the interviews asked students about their affective relationship with English writing and how they could improve their writing. To facilitate some students’ ability to accurately verbalize the mental processes they undergo and to reduce the inhibitions and difficulty some may feel when speaking in English, RT asked each interviewee to speak in her first language, if she felt so.

Following the pre-instruction procedures, the students received 9 hours of classroom instruction that spanned over a period of three weeks; two sessions conducted a week with each session lasting for one and a half hours. During these sessions, RT explicitly taught students the organizational patterns of comparison/contrast texts using reading texts and consciousness-raising activities. RT intended to familiarize students with the two major organizational structures of compare/contrast texts, namely, block organization and point-by-point organization and to equip the subjects with the transition signals associated with such texts. During classes, students read compare/contrast texts and transferred information into tables about the similarities and differences between topics, identified patterns of text organization and applied the new information by constructing their own texts. The purpose of all these activities was to help students internalize this knowledge and apply it in their writing assignments.

At the end of the instruction period, students were asked to write a comparison/contrast essay in order to determine whether the intervention has resulted in a change in their writing performance. RT gave the students one hour to write about ‘the similarities and differences between the roles of men and the roles of women in their society’. The researcher thought the pre- and post-test essay tasks were more or less equivalent in that they represent the same level of difficulty and intend to elicit from the students the same kind of writing performance. RT utilized the same scoring procedures used in assessing the pre-teaching essays. Following the post-test essay, RT interviewed each participant about six questions that aimed to identify any change in attitudes and feelings about writing and the instruction, steps used in organizing compare/contrast texts, and any metacognitive and cognitive processes she may have used while writing the post-treatment essay.

A naturalistic and grounded perspective formed the basis of this classroom research study. That is, RT used statistical methods to gather data for the purpose of validating the hypothesis. Data obtained from the interviews provided the researcher with insights on the various experiences, responses and attitudes of the participants towards writing and whether they made use of certain strategies and skills while performing the writing tasks. The interview questions were tailored in a way that had the subjects verbalize and reflect on the various mental processes that they underwent during the process of writing as a result of direct teaching of organizational structures of comparison/contrast texts.

Findings and Discussion
In analyzing the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests, it is observed that there has been a reasonably significant increase on the post-test mean score compared with the pre-test mean score (see Table 1 below). The average pre-test mean score that started at 48.18 percent moved up to about 66.59 on the post-test with an increase of 18.41 percent on the post-test. The matched-pairs t-test performed showed statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the pre- and post-tests attributed to explicit instruction of text structures. Given the fact that the study lasted for three weeks during which students received only nine hours of classroom instruction, the researcher would hypothesize that this increase would have moved up quite significantly in case the study has lasted longer and the students were exposed to more instructional time and writing training practice.

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<th>N</th>
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<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>Pre_Test Gains</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>48.1818</td>
<td>11.39606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Test Gains</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>66.5909</td>
<td>14.34161</td>
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The significant gains on all post-instruction essays provided statistical support for the pedagogical significance of explicit instruction of the rhetorical structures of comparison/contrast texts. This increase observed here, which is consistent with previous studies, indicates that explicit instruction of the rhetorical structure of texts can be a pedagogically useful source for improving writing quality. However, given the limitation of statistical design, one could argue that the sole reliance in this study on statistical findings to interpret the data may fall short of presenting a plausible explanation to the study findings. These findings will be qualitatively verified by conducting interviews with the participants in the study in order to provide a more complete picture of the study’s outcomes.

**Pre-Instruction Interviews**

Results of the pre-instruction interviews show that the students had mixed feelings about writing, and feeling of and anxiety towards writing seem to predominate in the students' responses. To illustrate, in responding to a question about how they felt about writing in English, some students stated that they enjoyed writing in English. For example, a positive remark towards writing was expressed by Maha who pointed out:

I think it is good to try to write in English... I think I am making progress in writing in English.

On the other hand, other students either found writing English a difficult task to master or expressed a sense of anxiety and uncertainty towards writing stating that they still faced many
difficulties in writing English. To cite one example, Majida indicated that she still has some problems in writing:

According to my point of view, I want to develop writing strategies, I have a lot of problems in writing, I like to speak, but I don't not like to write because in Arabic also I don't have the talent of writing and to express ideas, because I don't have the style of creativity.

The range of problems and difficulties students had in writing as revealed by these interviews ranged from word choice, sentence structures and spelling to punctuation, prepositions, cohesive devices and organization.

**Planning, Organizing and Revision**

An important finding in these interviews revealed that students varied in their use of their metacognitive and cognitive processes, specifically strategies of planning, editing, and revising. For instance, six students pointed out that they often planed before they write. Fatima, for instance, said that she outlined her ideas and planned before she started writing about the topic:

Of course, okay, when you said you gonna write about similarities and differences some ideas just happened in my mind right away, and after started doing the outline and putting down some ideas, just what I have in my mind and then decide what I am going to write about.

The other students, however, were either unaware of planning as a pre-writing strategy or they thought of planning as simply activating their background knowledge about the writing topic. For example, one student noted that:

I think I have some knowledge about this topic because I think it’s one part of my life…

In the same context, the initial interviews with students show that most students had no concept of time planning either before or during writing their essays. An illustration of students’ lack of awareness of timing is best exemplified in the following excerpt from one student’s interview:

Huda: I am bad with organizing time, so I started writing and said I am gonna be done in 15-20 minutes and found that I am over time. So that’s I wanna know about myself, I do not organize my time.

In addition, interviews with the students showed that most students made use of reviewing and revision while and after they wrote their essays. However, most of them indicated that they focus on grammar and spelling in their revision rather than on text organization or content.

**Knowledge of Compare/Contrast Text Structure**

About organizing text structure of compare/contrast texts, some students had knowledge of general organizational structures such as an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. However, all students were unaware of specific compare/contrast text structures, namely, block
organization and point-by-point organization. In fact, the first interviews with the students revealed they had a difficulty organizing such texts. One student stated that:

In this compare and contrast topic, it's hard to organize … how can I contrast/contrast, sometimes I first compare and make contrast and sometimes I mix them.

This student and others recognize that they lack the knowledge of how to write compare/contrast texts. Another student, for example, said that in writing compare/contrast texts she just listed down her ideas:

Hala: hmm, in this case, I just list

Similarly, another student, Tamarah, expressed the same notion of unawareness of text organization when asked about the way she organized her ideas in the essay:

I always found a big problem in similarities and differences, I don't have, I don't know how to begin and how to organize it, I don't know really.

Students also varied in their responses to a question about their knowledge and use of compare/contrast transition signals. To illustrate, five students pointed out that they were aware of and used transition signals in their essays though it was not clear that they have already had specific knowledge of transition words used in comparison and contrast texts. Conversely, other students indicated that they either did not use transition words in their writings or had a difficulty using them. A case in point is a question was put to one student regarding her feeling about writing comparison contrast essays, she pointed out the following:

Majida: Oh yeah, especially in using connectors in comparison contrast essays using the suitable connectors such as conversely, on the other hand, but, similarly, but, at the beginning, I don't have knowledge about them and I felt I was so confused when writing about a topic like compare and contrast, so yeah it definitely helped.

Post-Instruction Interviews

The post-instruction interviews aimed to identify the students’ feelings and attitudes towards writing following the instruction period and whether they found learning about the text structure of comparison/contrast texts helpful in improving their writing. The interviews also got students to verbalize on how they made use of the information they learned and to report on any changes in their metacognitive and cognitive processes after the instruction period.

Organizing Text

Initially, all students believed that explicit instruction in the textual patterns of compare/contrast texts was very helpful and necessary in that it helped them better organize their ideas in such texts and use transition signals effectively. For instance, one student pointed out:

Maha: Yes sure, at first I learned the organization of comparison/contrast subjects and transition signals and it’s good for the other writing…
Another student also indicated that she also learned a lot from taking these classes, especially how to structure her writing in compare/contrast texts:

Fatima: First of all, I did not know about compare and contrast, I thought they were both one thing, I thought that both meant the same, actually they didn’t, and because of the block and point-by-point, I did not know about them, these are all new stuff, I was mixing both types together in my writing, now that I know how to differentiate the point-by-point or block organization, I can write the essays I want.

Another student said,

I had very little knowledge, but this activity has developed me a lot, you gave us a lot of essays to write about and practiced a lot, so now I can organize my ideas and how to write in a good way, so yeah I am developing the writing.

**Cognitive and Metacognitive Knowledge**

In other interviews with the students, RT found that all students were better able to talk about the text structure of their writings. The following excerpt from an interview with a student illustrates this:

Salma: I think I learned a lot concerning transition words and also how to organize, I saw the difference between block organization and also point-by-point organization and I think now I am really understand how to use those instructions.

In contrast to initial interviews with the students, the post-intervention interviews showed a conspicuous change in the students’ use and articulation of metacognitive and cognitive processes such as brainstorming, outlining, organizing, editing and using transition signals. All students indicated that they brainstormed and outlined their essays before they started the actual writing. For instance, when Fedaa' was asked about the steps she took in writing her essay, she said,

First, I think about my topic, brainstorming, and then I choose ideas like U.S. and Palestinian education for the body then I think about my organization and I write down my essay by block organization.

It was clear from the post-instruction interviews that the students possessed the language to talk about their essay writing. Most students pointed out that they would apply what they learned in this study to other writing contexts and they could make use of this learned knowledge of text organization as well as cognitive processes in similar writing situations. In the following example, the student shows that she uses metacognitive and cognitive strategies when writing and this clearly indicates a change in her thinking processes in contrast to her first remarks in the initial interview.

I start with an introductory paragraph which has general statements and a thesis statement to make my paragraph interesting, I try to make my paragraphs either
by point by point or by block style, but I personally prefer the block style, then I try to make summary of the points in the conclusion.

**Positive Attitudes to Writing**

In the same vein, students’ responses on how they felt about writing following the instruction were unanimously positive. The students pointed out that they became increasingly comfortable writing in English and especially in comparison/contrast types given the fact that text organization formed a challenging difficulty for them and that the instruction helped them better organize their texts. When asked by the RT about how she felt about writing after the instruction period, one student felt that she accomplished progress in writing English:

Majida: at the first recording I was fully persuaded that I am not one of those who have the talent of writing, that I believed that the talent of writing is a gift from God to some people, but now I change my mind, I start to believe that the talent of writing is given to every one of us, but you just need to discover it and the thing that makes this one a creative writer and this one not creative is he first discovered himself then he practiced a lot to be a creative writer

Finally, students have generally indicated that they liked the classes because these few classes helped them better their writing especially in constructing their own comparison/contrast texts and expanding their repertoire of discourse markers associated with such texts. For example, this student was able to articulate her ideas about writing clearly whilst expressing positive attitudes towards writing. She pointed out that she felt more secure in organizing her writing:

Salma: Before that I didn't know how to write essays or how to organize my writing, you helped us a lot. I feel more confident when trying to put two sentences together and I feel more confident when writing essays, I am not scared anymore... I am pretty sure what I am gonna do and I am pretty sure that I am gonna write a good essay and in case I did not know, I am gonna ask you [student and RT laughing].

To conclude, the results of researcher's intervention indicate that significant differences exist between pre- and post-intervention students' response clearly in favour of the latter. These results are consistent with theoretical and empirical research suggesting that explicit instruction is effective in improving writing performance. One can detect a noticeable improvement in the students’ attitudes and feelings towards writing. Further, the students were conscious of metacognitive and cognitive processes that they would use in a way that will ultimately improve their writing performance.

**Conclusions & Pedagogical Implications**

This study that is designed as an action research study ties with my desire to improve EFL university learners’ writing abilities and my conviction that an effective way to do so is by
explicitly teaching the rhetorical structures of English texts. While this research was carried out on an intact class and its statistical design precludes generalizing the findings, it is significant in its support of previous research that suggests that explicit teaching of text structure generally enhances students’ comprehension and production of expository texts. Drawing on such research findings, the study has been conducted to illustrate that students receiving explicit instruction in the rhetorical structures of expository texts are able to construct their own expository texts effectively.

The qualitative data presented in this study have clearly shown that students feel more comfortable and confident about writing when they are explicitly given the tools and knowledge with which they could write effectively. In addition to the affective impact to this awareness of text structure, the data indicate that students’ knowledge of text structure and how to organize texts greatly influence their sensitivity to and ability to reflect and self-monitor their own writing process. In other words, the students’ responses provide a further illustration that sensitizing students’ awareness to specific organizational patterns in expository writing correlates positively with improvement in EFL students’ in-class writing. In the same way, the quantitative data analysis show tangible statistical differences in the writing performance of all students following the researcher/teacher’s intervention.

The findings reported in this study underscore the need that text structure instruction should be systematically incorporated in ESL/EFL writing courses. They suggest that an instructional syllabus based on teaching explicitly the text structure of expository texts promotes EFL students’ writing abilities. EFL writing teachers should therefore structure their instruction and curricula in a way that enhances students’ awareness of text structure and in this way enabling them to become better writers. Another finding demonstrates that direct instruction of text structure and raising students’ awareness of metacognitive and cognitive knowledge of how to organize texts can be intertwined to bolster students’ ability to construct their own texts and that students’ knowledge of text structure of compare/contrast text can be transferred to other text types.

In conclusion, the aim of this study has been designed to answer specific questions about the connection between text structure instruction and improving writing abilities. Grabe and Kaplan (1989) maintained that students’ knowledge, in one way or another, of the preferred rhetorical patterns of English remains a principal goal of a general instructional writing methodology. In practical terms, this study supports the idea that one way to make EFL writing more effective comes through providing EFL student writers with the necessary information about the organizational structures of English texts.

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References


The Effect of Explicit Instruction in Expository Text


An Integrative Model of Grammar Teaching: from Academic to Communicative Needs

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Abstract:
Language teaching has often raised the issue of students’ overall academic performance. This paper deals with a foregrounding subject in language teaching namely grammar teaching. With regard to the critical situation of grammar teaching in our English departments in Morocco, this paper is premised on the assumption that formal grammar teaching does not provide the expected output that the teaching-learning enterprise requires from both teachers and learners. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to review the grammar teaching methods and find out the practical solutions for the following problems: lack of coordination and consistency of methods, lack of communicative grammar text books, the difficulties in students’ mastery of the English grammar even when students get plenty comprehensible input, and finally the teaching of grammar according to syllabus not needs. The paper concludes with a new model that engages students in a more practical, comprehensible and useful method of grammar teaching: the Exploration, production and Integration Model.

Keywords: Grammar Teaching, Needs Analysis, Exploration, Integrative Model
Introduction

Grammar teaching has often been regarded as a structure based formal activity. After the integration of several sources and techniques, which are mainly based on communicative activities, the teaching of grammar gained a new insight. In the teaching of grammar, focus on form is often modified to a meaningful structured discourse. In order to make a grammar lesson effective, beneficial, and interesting a teacher should use some well-developed, interactive and fascinating techniques in the classroom. In the present paper, the examples of such integrated sources and techniques -the use of the inductive approach along with communication and problem solving activities- are assumed to be mostly motivating for a successful grammar teaching method. The approach advocates a more integrative model of grammar teaching based on three basic steps: Exploration, Production and Integration.

1. Historical background

Not many Moroccan English teachers relish the thought of teaching grammar due to the complexity and irregularities in the syntax of the English language. Teachers often ask what exactly the best method to teach grammar is. In the early days of grammar teaching, the (methodological) grammar translation method required students to do the toughest tasks of translating sentences into English based on grammar rules. Thus, students may end up constructing sentences that are grammatically correct but would be perceived as not interpretable or 'unacceptable' by most native speakers (Howatt, 1984). In the 1940s and 50s the audio-lingual method was popularized by behaviourist psychologists such as Skinner and Watson. Teaching grammar was simply making students learn language habits through various drills and pattern practices (Brown, 1994). However, there were problems with this method as there was no focus on "the intentions, thinking, conscious planning and internal processes of the learner" (Stern, 1984, p.305).

In the 1970s and 80s the Communicative Approach propelled by sociolinguists and the collective works of Krashen, Halliday and Hymes, replaced the audio-lingual method. This approach focuses on meaning rather than form (grammar rules) as it was believed that it is meaning which drives language acquisition and development. Ellis (1994) noted in his review of research in the 1970s that much of the Communicative L2 teaching focused on meaning only. The question teachers now often ask is whether a return to grammar teaching is necessary. If so, should grammar be taught implicitly or explicitly?

Information about official level decision-making about methods can be found in policy documents relating to curriculum, materials and assessment, which may all imply certain methodological principles or choices. This means that for the sorts of analysis needed to deal with questions of the place of method in language-in-education policy a more finely grained typology is needed for at least part of the scope of Kaplan and Baldauf's model. Language teaching methods have the potential to be included in, to influence and to be influenced by at least four sub-components of language-in-education policy:

- Methods policy: policy statements dealing with questions of language teaching method;
- Materials policy: policy statements dealing with questions of textbooks and other resources for language learning;
- Curriculum policy: policy statements dealing with the goals and content of language Learning.
Assessment policy: policy statements dealing with what is to be assessed and how.

The question that we need to start with in this framework of Needs Analysis is as follows: Which grammar method, which curriculum and for which students?

1.1.1 Current grammar teaching methods

The grammar teaching methods to be adopted in classes are usually debatable. Some practitioners believe that grammar is the focal academic subject of languages and learners should be presented with explicit grammar courses. Others, however, think that knowing the grammar doesn’t necessarily lead to language mastery. They assume that focusing on explicit grammar teaching produces unsuccessful language users.

1.1.2 Implicit grammar teaching

With regard to the pitfalls in the ongoing process of grammar teaching, some practitioners think that people can acquire language without any overt grammar instruction in the same way children learn their mother tongue. Conscious use of language forms are expected accordingly to end up with high affective filter and consequently poor language proficiency and fluency. These teachers prefer language use to language usage and focus on meaning rather than form. For language activities, they advance the use of contextualized and authentic language and do not refer to rule based teaching.

1.1.3 Explicit grammar teaching

The traditional view of language teaching which focuses on language forms presentation explains the grammar rules and practice through drilling, though the required effects are not obtained. Disaffected students who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests do consistently make errors when they try to use the language in context. In other words, students subject to this kind of teaching know a lot about the language. However, these students are unable to use the language itself appropriately in contextualized situations for different reasons. In this respect, language learning, according to the different works in the field related to materials development for language learning, recommends that course books should provide learners with more opportunities to acquire language features from frequent encounters with them during motivated exposure to language in use (Cunico, 2005; Islam, 2001; Maley, 2003). Different authors support this position from a variety of angles: Experiential learning theory claims that learners gain most from apprehending from experience before comprehending from analysis (Kolb, 1984). Comprehensible input theory states that acquisition is facilitated by meaningful and motivated exposure to language in use (Krashen, 1989, 2004). Deep processing theory also claims that meaningful encounters are necessary to achieve the deep processing needed for durable learning (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). There is also support for this position from Asian applied linguists (e.g. Masuhara, 2000, 2003; Mukundan, 2005a, 2005b; Renandya, 2005) who argue for a reduction in the number of textbook activities involving explicit teaching of language and an
increase in opportunities for implicit learning. Yet, for reasons of the present paper, I think that the most effective way of acquiring language implicitly from motivated exposure is through opportunities to reflect on language as a structural input in different academic tasks like writing, reading or article reviews.

1.2 The proposal: Exploration and integration instead of explanation

Any focus on grammar explanation and the absence of any reference to meaning can be detrimental to language teaching and learning. Grammatical competence can be helpful in producing accurate forms of language and acts in monitoring its use. However, one can communicate more or less a message with vocabulary items alone while it is impossible to do so using grammar alone. This shows that grammar alone doesn’t make the language. In addition, language use can be tremendously affected by conscious language usage as this may create a stressful environment. So a learner based approach that opts for contextualization of grammar teaching takes into consideration the appropriate use of language without the internalization of the rules. A grammar-discovery approach involves then providing learners with data to illustrate a particular grammatical point and getting them to analyze it in order to reach an awareness of how the feature works. Following this line of thinking, students will be able to develop analytical skills to understand and internalize and discover language rules. Therefore, grammar becomes content for exploration and communication. In general, research indicates that a combination of form and meaning may be the best teaching approach. A research by Prabhu (cited by Beretta & Davis, 1985) showed that students who received meaning-based instruction did well on the meaning-based test but poorly on a discrete-point grammar test. Spada & Lightbrown (1993) postulated that "form focussed instruction and corrective feedback within the context of communicative interaction can contribute positively to second language development in both the short and long term" (p.205). This is supported by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1997) who suggest that the integration of form and meaning is gaining importance in what they refer to as the 'principled communicative approach.' Musumeci (1997) went on further to say that students should learn grammar explicitly but should also be given the opportunity to practise them in communicative authentic and simulated tasks.

2. Grammar Teaching

2.1 The rationale:

While it is essential for learners to be able to manipulate grammatical form, they also need to understand the concept(s) expressed and the function(s) performed through a particular grammatical item. For Moroccan university students for which English is a foreign language, knowledge of the rules is much needed. In this paper, I stress the urgent need for some more successful methods and drills that promote the grammar class from abstractness to a more integrative subject. This paper will discuss a blended approach to teaching and reinforcing grammar. For each item of grammar 2 (a grammar based on teaching tenses and modal verbs and grammar 3 (a grammar based on teaching sentences, phrases and clauses), specific teaching points will be highlighted. Classroom experience and management such as immediate feedback and correction will also be discussed; as for motivation, it is mostly required since
it depends largely on the teacher, the method, the language activities, and the classroom situation. This puts heavy burden on the class teacher who is required to compensate and be creative in his teaching method in order to build enough motivation for learning, and develop in every possible way the four skills of language: listening, reading, speaking and writing.

2.2 Background:

Given the confusing situation of the teaching methods applied by grammar teachers at the Moroccan university, I believe that reaching a somewhat successful teaching of grammar requires a specific care of the following factors:

1. Students’ needs and teachers’ goals

The new pre-course needs analysis is important to know about his students’ needs and set his goals.

2. Class activities and drills

Class activities will affect teachers’ pedagogical values in the sense that they will foster more practice in classes, and more expose of students to real world.

3. Learning materials

The more learning resources are available, the easier it will be to employ different strategies when teaching a given grammatical item. For example, a group of students who like using hand-outs could use the hand-outs to study a certain grammar task while another group who prefers spoken oral practice might prefer an explanation of any item with a number of examples. Others however would require practice, though practising a grammatical structure under controlled conditions does not seem to enable the learner to use the structure freely.

4. Evaluation

The new method of testing, the formative assessment as well as a variety of types of assessment will enable the teacher to evaluate the achievement and the degree of success of a given teaching method.

5. Student’s learning style

Is the learner comfortable with the standard teaching techniques (logical charts, worksheets, exercises etc.)? Does the learner work better with note taking, hand-outs and repeating exercises? Certainly, given the non-organization of delivery of subjects to teachers, we will end up with a class of learners with different learning styles. Therefore, if you have a class of mixed learning styles then you need to try to provide instruction using as many different methods as possible. Once you have answered these questions, you can more expertly approach the question of how you are going to provide the class with the grammar they need. In other words, each class is going to have different grammar needs and goals and it is up to the teacher to determine these goals and provide the means with which to meet them.

2.3 The objective
2.3.1 A Pre-Course Needs Analysis

The key to beginning a successful grammar course is to clearly establish the students’ interests and motivations. As part of a preliminary grammar course, the teacher is expected to get the students talk about what they like with an emphasis on usage of grammar in their studies, careers, jobs, and communication. The list resulting from the needs analysis may have prerequisites. We therefore need to decide with the students what their objectives for the coming course will be, for example: to develop their ability to discuss certain topics with more confidence, fluency, accuracy and awareness of relevant language.

With regard to these prerequisites, the research carried out aimed to make students’ feedback for some foregrounded questions the basic starting point. The issue that university students try to manifest in their studying the course of grammar has usually been their desperate need to satisfy their academic needs.

Through a random selection, 36 university students from the English department (semester 4) were handed a questionnaire as a pre-test needs analysis. The students were asked to respond according to their general needs while studying grammar.

Needs Analysis (Survey Questionnaire)

Please order the following suggestions according to your needs for grammar:

You would like to use Grammar for the sake of:

- Accuracy and Fluency: 36%
- Academic Achievement: 30%
- The improvement of various language skills: 25%
- The understanding of the British and American culture: 10%

2.3.2 Set short term objectives

Given the data based feedback of our university students, Grammar is positively taken to be a source of a structured background for the overall academic achievement and communication. Therefore, the need for such grammar should be comprehensible in terms of topics and current affairs that tend to lend themselves to a great deal of discussion. It is important that the students don't feel that grammar or language input has been abandoned altogether. Although they may not want to follow a structural syllabus per se, there will be structural errors which repeatedly occur both in needs analysis and during the course and these will form the underlying framework for language input.

3. The research:
3.1 The problem:

Out of a small-scale research done recently, I found out that students’ academic needs are not satisfied. First, student’s language is in its average and most of the students’ choice in studying grammar is because of good reasons like communication and better understanding of other subjects. Students’ feedback has shown that 85% of the class has problems with verb tenses, the identification of mistakes and the breaking down the sentence into phrases and clauses. This output proves that students have problems with the usual basic grammar (Probably because the teacher has to find out what stage of development the learners have reached before teaching a given item). Finally and most importantly, 82% of the class didn’t know how to write a good paragraph while responding to the questions. The structural organization of ideas and the coherence of their paragraphs were terrible. In this respect, I can say that all my expectations about my students’ level were to the point. The majority of the class has problems in the grammar and almost all students have serious problems in writing effective, organized and well-structured paragraphs. In addition to writing problems, students also have difficulty with academic reading. In short, they have difficulty seeing beneath the surface of the words to the complexity of the ideas expressed in complex language structures. In this respect, Mulroy (2003) forwards some excellent arguments for the teaching of grammar to anyone who uses language.

Sentences always have and always will consist of clauses with subjects and predicates and of words that fall into classes fairly well described as verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Individuals who understand these concepts have a distinct advantage over others where the use of language is involved—and that means everywhere. (p. 118)

To show how the proposed method of integrative grammar teaching can function and what students' attitude towards it will be, several lectures were conducted to see how the method really works and what its potential is. The subjects were some 68 Moroccan students who have previously experienced studying grammar in secondary school and the university. The primary stage of the research has shown that mistakes are an integral part of their learning and that students have acquired some background knowledge but it is not systematized. This experimental study was conducted during class time. The research procedure is as follows:

3.2 The procedure

The analysis in this paper aims to foreground the students’ grammatical problems and objectives with their various academic needs. Thus, the striking issue would be to start with a diagnosis of actual problems students have and to look for the possible remedial process to overcome those difficulties.

Most Commonly Occurring Errors:
### 3.3 The objective

- To move from form to structure-discourse match
- To connect grammar teaching to everyday interaction (real world)
- To engage students in meaning-focused tasks
- To target consciousness-raising than formal teaching which has a delayed rather than an instant effect
- To enable the student to interact positively with all educational inputs
- To promote usage of grammar rules in writings
- To set up a comprehensive assessment based on exploration, practice and induction.
- To allow students to work in terms of an EPI (Exploration Practice Integration) Model.

### 3.3.1 Teaching Grammar 2 in Situational Contexts

The objective of this course called Grammar 2 is to familiarize students with the basic grammatical items of the English Grammar. The syllabus is designed in a way to satisfy students’ academic needs to understand and use the different tenses and modal verbs in different contexts. The methodology adopted is based on drills based on a specific choice of short texts in business, literature, linguistics or daily activities. The organisation of the course is based on students’ cooperation in the on-going process within a sort of teacher learner show. The movement from one grammatical item to another is expected to be smooth and reference is made to a situation or event that students suggest in their examples. Accordingly, the combinations of the grammatical items to different situations are proposed as in table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation or Context</th>
<th>Grammatical items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write a narrative (about a past experience or historical event)</td>
<td>Past tense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar 2 (tense, modal verbs)</th>
<th>Grammar 3 (sentences, phrases and clauses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tense shift</td>
<td>1. wrong identification of fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wrong tense or verb form</td>
<td>2. Comma Splice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. avoidance of mixed conditional types</td>
<td>3. Run on, fused sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. misuse of non-restrictive relative clauses</td>
<td>4. Dangling, misplaced modifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. misuse of modals verb forms</td>
<td>5. unawareness of noun clauses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give directions to a tourist to reach a given place, or</td>
<td><strong>Present tense</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report daily schedules of students (in the class, exams/tests,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lectures, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express future career moves</td>
<td><strong>Future tense</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express hope regret about some experience a medical review on a visit</td>
<td><strong>Conditional tenses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining experience with a new doctor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain rules and regulations to someone, i.e. rules for the</td>
<td><strong>Modal verbs: Can Must Should would may need</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faculty cafeteria; doctor’s instructions to a sick patient,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or give advice to a relative about his choice for the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend an invitation over the telephone to someone to come to a</td>
<td><strong>Verb Would</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting, conference, party, or expressing preferences (a questionnaire)</td>
<td>like...Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit a neutral position as in the discovery of something wrong</td>
<td><strong>Active and passive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in your office: use <strong>active voice</strong> while stating a fact on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phone (oral communication) and the <strong>passive voice</strong> while writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a report, an e-mail or a memo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.1.2 Teaching Grammar 3 in terms of Expansion, Rehabilitation and Transformation of sentences

The major goal of teaching grammar 3 is to allow students to recognize how language operates. Using phrases, clauses and sentences requires the implementation of some materials that makes the recognition of how language operates a simplistic task for students. The new model recommends some involvement and cooperation of the layers of the teaching learning enterprise “student-teacher”. The teacher’s role is descriptive and explanatory; while that of the learner is studying the structure of English and reacting grammatically to it. This reaction of students is summarized in terms of expansion, rehabilitation and transformation of sentences as in the following:

A. Sentence Expansion: From simple to Complex Sentences:

1. Take a basic sentence:
   
   We tend to use technologies.

2. Expand on it:
   
   We tend to use new technologies.

3. Expand again with additional information:
   
   We tend to use technologies that are not harmful.

4. Combine two sentences:
   
   We tend to use new technologies. Our use should be wise.
   
   We tend to use new technologies, but our use should be wise.

5. Extend more/
   
   We tend to use new technologies, but our use should be wise otherwise they might be harmful.

6. Make substitutions to elaborate or link ideas
   
   We tend to use new BUT NOT HARMFUL technologies, SO our use should be wise.

7. Add information and construct a short narrative around the sentences students have created:

B. Sentence Rehabilitation
Sentence recombination is an effective activity for teaching sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, transition and coherence, and parts of speech. Students must also use critical thinking skills to cluster and organize ideas and concepts. Sentence recombination exercises are thematic and can be easily constructed in advance by the teacher or as a group activity with the students.

There are many variations on the paragraph or composition that students can create in this exercise. However, the efficiency of the method would be to explore students’ awareness of the basic types of sentences like: the simple sentence, the compound sentence, the complex sentence and the compound complex sentence. This categorization of sentences is based on the number of clauses and the type of conjunctions used: coordinate and correlative conjunctions for compound sentences, while subordinate conjunctions are used with complex and compound complex sentences.

C. Sentence transformation

Consider the following sentence which requires the student’s integration to solve writing and meaning based problem. The student’s objective stems from his need to improve his language and the style that marks his better understanding and expression of his idea:

Unclear: Probably, no part of writing elegant, effective, and rigorously academic essays--even for advanced writers-- seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

vs.

Much clearer: Probably for every writer, no part of writing essays seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

vs.

Clearest: Probably for every type of writing, nothing seems more daunting than coming up with effective beginnings and endings.

The plausible approach to this process of sentence transformation is based on the type of error correction and the student’s responsibility to overcome the problem. Occasionally, learners may need some explanations for certain grammatical structures. In fact, the combination of different approaches will certainly satisfy different learning styles. We also urge the adoption of the competency-based approach which constitutes the main theoretical framework within which the teacher has to proceed when teaching grammar. Nunan states that:

The concept of competency-based education (CBE) has been brought in to ESL from the field of adult education where it is used to specify the skills needed by adults to function in today’s society in areas such as communication, problem-solving and interpersonal relationship, and computation,...In ESL a competency is a task-oriented goal written in terms of behavioural objectives... It is not what the students know about Language, but what they do with the language. (Nunan 1988: 34)
The objective underlying students’ involvement in the make-up of sentences requires from the teacher to engage new methods of comprehension and usage of a structured English language, correlate conscious-raising to better usage, combine assessment with team spirit and encourage learners to practice auto-learning and self-assessment. Innovations in method of language teaching, however, often fail to reflect the complexity of change in language teaching in that they fail to give adequate attention to the context in which a language is being taught. In particular, teacher characteristics such as level of professional learning and level of language proficiency and cultural dimensions such as expected learning and teaching styles, learner and teacher roles, expected outcomes of language learning and patterns of classroom interaction may have practical and positive impact on the learning teaching enterprise.

3.4 Results and implications

Given the various methods adopted, we would like to check some of the issues raised and try to find out a plausible framework of grammar teaching. For this reason, a questionnaire was handed out to students about different items that we consider basic for the ongoing research project. The students belong to the English department, university of El Jadida, Morocco. The results have shown that 74 % have no problem in grammar while 24 % admitted to have serious problems in their grammar learning. Concerning the teaching issue, more than 44 % consider the teacher and the method used to teach grammar to be the source of the problem; while 27 % think that grammar is a complex subject of study. 77 % of students consider writing to be directly monitored by their grammar in comparison to 6.81 % for literature and 9.10 % for translation.

With respect to these results, we would like to inquire about which method would give us the required effects of grammar teaching. Is it a question of implicit or explicit grammar teaching or just a question of the materials and the context where grammar is taught? Shall we focus instruction and expect a surface corrective feedback from students? Should we re-examine the course book and redesign it in a way that might make grammar a flexible academic subject and a positive tool for learning? These are some of the questions and issues that are supposed to have been the main concern of theoreticians and practitioners as well and therefore need some answers.

Figure 1: The difficulty of Grammar Learning

![Image of a pie chart showing the difficulty of understanding grammar: 74% understand, 26% understand to some extent, and 0% do not understand.](image-url)
Figure 2: the pedagogical effects of Grammar

Students’ feedback shows that the need for grammar in their academic progress at the university relies on the link they find between grammar and other related subjects namely writing, reading, and translation. So the communicative issue is not a direct need but a peripheral issue that they don’t deem important. However, the objective we need to achieve is to make our students able to monitor their competency-based skills. Fluency and accuracy, we believe, are two ingredients that make up a practical and more integrated learner of the language. Accordingly, the present paper aims to underline the difficulty and find out the plausible solution for a practical use of the language in different social and interpersonal interactions.

A major implication of the findings above is that students care about grammar as an academic subject and not as a powerful tool to implement their language use. Students are also expected to be the passive recipients of a rigid content where their involvement does not change anything in the teaching-learning enterprise. Being rule based, grammar is given a status to be a restricted domain of work or analysis and requires specific drills to fulfil the accuracy requirement of language.

With respect to the theoretical framework, grammar teaching is not a unique task but a combination of different tasks, materials, methods, and assessment procedures. The variety of views advanced under the explicit teaching method agrees on the efficiency of the contextualized grammar teaching. The movement from students’ apprehension from experience before comprehending from analysis is an interesting issue in that it allows a meaningful structural input for students. Also, the contextualized exposure to language within a principled communicative approach is a helpful issue for the present proposal. However, the present paper has shown the credibility of integration not only as a method but as a process where the integration of the materials, the resources, and even assessment are involved.
Starting with the needs analysis, we could come over the intricate issue that may combine the teacher’s method with the learner’s academic and communicative needs. Exploration is the background to the student within a practical communicative atmosphere of learning will hopefully integrate the student, the teacher and the method, all as one. Accordingly, a movement from form to structure-discourse match where grammar teaching is linked to real world context will ensure students’ engagement in meaning-focused tasks. Additionally, the findings have shown that targeting consciousness-raising will have the instant effect expected. As for assessment, the new model (EPI) allows the student to be aware of his mistakes and therefore his feedback towards errors will be integrative and communicative, given that he will be in charge of correction as well.

To make the above findings more useful for our readers and students, we will try to provide a proposal for grammar teaching and some remedies for an overall better performance in the teaching and learning of a foregrounding academic subject like grammar.

4. Proposal and remedial work

The present survey

The present paper is based on a small-scale attempt to find the answer. Because of time constraints, I have regrettably not been able to check all original sources, so my conclusions must be treated with caution; but I think the overall conclusions are sufficiently robust and merit serious consideration:

4.1 The Teaching Situation

The program designed for our students at Chouaib Doukkali University is actually not a proficiency course designed for university leavers who wish to enrol in any kind of teacher training. Instead, the syllabus designed for grammar2/3 targets the promotion of the four language skills especially writing. In the writing class, a series of poems were used to review and reinforce grammar rules the students should have ‘learnt’ while in school. This was deemed necessary as most of the students have limited to average English proficiency.

4.2 The proposal: an integrative model (EPI)

4.2.1 Methodology

The proposed model (EPI) is based on Exploration, Practice and Integration. These items fall into the teaching of grammar 2 and 3 at the university level. This proposal does not disregard the teaching of grammar rules and forms of language with regard to their foregrounding role in enhancing the basic structural input. However, this model provides a more comprehensible and efficient method based on exploration of the input, practice of the rules and integration of all interactive and comprehensible tools for the teaching of grammar and language. This model might become more interactive according to the following teaching-learning activities:

1. Start stating the academic and communicative objectives of the lesson.

2. Explore Students’ awareness of the basic items like the sentence, phrase, clause, fragment, appositive, compound, complex, modifier etc. that will be needed to introduce, explain, or practice the new item.
Many methodologists recommend that practice work be preceded by a presentation stage to ensure that the learners have a clear idea about what the targeted structure consists of.

3. Motivate the teaching of structures by showing how they are needed in real-life communication. Noticing forms of grammatical structures is a prerequisite for students’ awareness of the language system.

4. Engage the students in varied guided comparisons or selection of grammatical structures and ask them to identify the new concept or the problem. (Note that it is assumed by Ellis that whereas practice is primarily behavioural, consciousness-raising is essentially concept forming in orientation).

5. Write two of the students’ proposed structures on the board. Underline the new structure and use diagrams to involve them in the illustration of the relationship of the structure to other words and/or parts of the sentence.

6. Have the students use the structure with communicative expressions and familiar or new topics. Provide opportunities for more group work and peer interaction then a practical follow-up activity.

4.2.2 The proposed Grammar Activities

The common teaching strategies that tend to develop grammar activities tend to develop the kind of automatic control of grammatical structures that will enable learners to use them productively and spontaneously. It is common to distinguish a number of different types of practice activities – mechanical practice, contextualised practice, and communicative practice. Exploratory practice consists of various types of controlled activities where students are provided with sufficient data to work on as a background to explore the rules of the item to be taught. Contextualised practice is still controlled, but involves an attempt to encourage learners to relate form to meaning by showing how structures are used in real-life situations. Communicative practice entails various kinds of `gap’ activities which require the learners to engage in authentic communication while at the same time `keeping an eye on the structures that are being manipulated in the process. The proposed grammar activities might be summarized as follows:

- Explore student’s background knowledge of the grammar item to be covered, including form, meaning, and use, and then describe them through a handful of examples. (grammatical input)
- Provide oral or written input (eg, reading selection) that addresses the topic and review the point of grammar, using examples from the material (meaningful input)
- Have students to practice the grammar point in communicative drills that focus on the topic (structured output)
- Have students do a communicative task on the topic (communicative output)

4.2.3 Needs Analysis objectives and curriculum design

With respect to the integrative model and the grammar activities proposed, the student is supposed to be the focal participant to benefit from the teaching process. However, students are different in each class and so are their learning styles and needs. For this reason, identifying the linguistic, communicative and discourse features of the curriculum that need to be taught to a particular group of students indexes the
starting point for the integrative grammar syllabus. An objective expectation of students’ progress should take, while designing the syllabus, the following suggestions into consideration.

- A flexible lesson plan should be designed in a way to be changed once a given communicative or academic need arises.

- A flexible error correction should be performed to motivate the learner to ask for more exemplification and more meaningful practice.

- A practical and purposeful assessment should involve different types of practice to foster the objective needs and the real pitfalls of students’ overall performance.

- The learning of different academic skills should link grammar needs to writing, reading comprehension and communication skills.

- Students integration in more conversational classroom activities will obviously help the student’s grammatical and communicative competence to come up and be ready for acting.

Objectively, when a teacher develops a course curriculum, it is very helpful to connect students and make them participants and moderators of the whole design. The student will accordingly understand the method, the process and the objectives of the course. The grounding of these incremental factors in students’ grammar course is probably a prerequisite to attain the objectives of the proposed Exploration, Practice and Integration model.

Conclusion

The teaching of grammar is by far, the most challenging task any Moroccan teacher may face in his/her daily classroom. Many do not wish to teach grammar explicitly, but they are keenly aware that students need an understanding of the rules to achieve fluency as well as accuracy. The formal syllabus in place in Moroccan universities is improvised by teachers of grammar focusing on form and disregarding the gist of meaning through communicative activities. Unfortunately, many students do not have adequate English proficiency to excel in their studies. One possible solution is thus, the blended or integrated approach to grammar teaching where there is a focus on the form but the activity is meaning and context based. The module of language and grammar study should be correlated with the improvement of students' writings, reading, communication and involvement in different academic tasks. It is to be noted that grammar is a foregrounding subject that targets the promotion of the different types of language input. The needs analysis has shown that students are aware of their academic and interactive needs. These needs should in a way be taken into consideration by teachers to set the appropriate goals. Given students’ enthusiasm to learn the English language and about it, I suggest that grammar teachers should make reference to writing and linguistics as they are the closest subjects to grammar. Fragments or run-on sentences are however still persistent in students’ writings, the fact which incorporates the role of the teacher and the learner in one enterprise called “Integration”. The mistakes made may suggest a lack of concern for accuracy, perhaps an indirect effect of the communicative approach. In any case, the students found grammar class more challenging and interesting as evident from their feedback and that is in itself a major success to breaking the traditional view of grammar classes as dull and immensely structured.
About the author:

I am Yahya Dkhissi, an associate professor of Language and linguistics at Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco. My Doctoral thesis was on the syntax of Arabic and dealt with a minimalist approach of Standard Arabic structures. Currently, I am in the field of linguistics and language teaching. My interest is to find better practical methods to teach academic subjects at the faculty. I am involved in an ELT program; I teach “sociolinguistics and Language teaching”.

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Self-serving Bias in Moroccan EFL University Teachers’ Attributions of Their students’ Success and Failure

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Abstract

A heated debate has been going on recently on the universality of self-serving bias in causal attributions. One of the main reasons behind this debate is the scarcity of studies on self-serving bias in non-Western cultures. Previous studies in the Western world have provided evidence for self-serving bias in teachers’ and students’ explanations of learners’ achievement outcomes. However, emerging evidence from the East, especially from Japan, show that Western claims about the theory may not be universal. This study investigated the effect of self-serving bias on North African university teachers’ attributions and explanations of their students’ success and failure. A causal attribution scale for teachers (CAST) was distributed to 40 Moroccan EFL teachers to rank 26 attributions of success and failure. Using locus of control as an independent variable, the independent sample t-tests showed that Moroccan EFL teachers display self-serving bias only on causal attributions of success. Reversed bias was made for failure perceptions. Interesting implications are drawn for both research and classroom practice.

Keywords: Self-serving Bias, causal attributions, University teachers, EFL
Introduction:

During the 1950’s research in social psychology shifted attention to the importance of people’s perceptions and their effect on subsequent behavior. The pioneering work of Heider (1958), Jones and Davis (1966) and Kelley (1967) opened new venues for research in causal attributions of past events and how these attributions shape future actions. The assumptions and the conclusions reached by these researchers were further elaborated by Weiner (1972, 1980, 1986, 1996, 2000) who applied causal attribution principles to the field of education and academic performance. Based on empirical evidence, Weiner (1972, 1980, 1986, 1996, 2000) and many other researchers (Kelley, 1973; McMahan, 1973; Williams, M., Burden, R., Poulet, G., & Maun, I., 2004) reached the conclusion that perceptions about success and failure affect learners’ expectations and goal setting. These perceptions shape our judgments of the causes behind our success or failure; therefore, they can be either positive or detrimental depending on how achievement outcomes are explained. In this vein, Weiner wrote that ‘the allocation of responsibility manifestly guides subsequent behavior’ (Weiner, 1972; p. 203). Preliminary conceptualizations of attribution theory sketched by Heider (1958) focused on three causes to explain human behavior- ability, effort and task difficulty. Rotter(1966), on the other hand, contended with explaining behavior by reference to one internal variable; skill or ability, and one external cause; luck or chance. Using cognitive theory, Weiner (1971) elaborated on these conceptions and developed a three dimensional model that describes attributions of achievement outcomes as cognitively processed. The most important premise of this model is locus of causality which refers to whether the perceived causes are internal or external to the learner. To further illustrate, a learner’s success or failure might be attributed to factors inherent in the learner such as effort or ability which are internal causes. On the other hand; difficulty, teacher effectiveness or the environment are external causes that observers may refer to so as to justify students’ performance. This study used causal attribution theory and locus of causality to test the effect of self-serving bias on Moroccan EFL teachers’ explanations of their students’ success and failure. Self-serving bias refers to ‘teachers’ tendency to ascribe students’ success to themselves (i.e., effective teaching, skilled teacher etc.) and impute failure to learners’ individual dispositions (Parastou Donyai, 2012; Starker & Hancock, 2011). This bias makes teachers adopt ‘flawed interpretations’ of their students’ achievement outcomes and may impact their instructional moves. Therefore, studying teachers’ causal attributions of their students’ success and failure and testing the existence of bias in these attributions is of paramount importance.

1. Review of the literature:

1.1. Teachers’ Causal Attributions of Students’ Success and Failure

While studying learners’ attributions of success and failure provides information about their achievement behavior and persistence tendencies, investigating how teachers explain their students’ outcomes has helped researchers shed light on some classroom behavior and decisions. The results of these investigations made some researchers suggest that the most important beliefs that teachers have about students are their causal attributions for their students’ performance (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Peterson & Barger, 1985). Most studies have focused on investigating links between teachers’ attributions and variables like teachers’ feedback (use of praise and criticism) and students’ future performance. Weiner (1972, 1995), for instance, directed his
emphasis towards how teachers’ beliefs and attributions might drive their instructional choices inside the classroom. In a series of studies, Weiner provides evidence for a strong relationship between teachers’ perceptions of causality and their behavior, and how the ongoing process that results from this relationship might affect students’ achievement. He stated that teachers’ causal biases when interpreting their students’ success or failure have important implications for achievement striving. It was suggested that teachers’ causal attributions of their students’ success and failure have a strong impact on their feedback and their pedagogical decisions. For instance, Teachers who consider learners responsible for failure because they have not invested enough effort tend to punish the learner and are less likely to offer help (Weiner 1995). Conversely, attributing students’ failure to an uncontrollable event such as lack of ability may trigger feelings of sympathy and urge teachers to offer help and support.

Research done by Graham(1986, 1988), and Graham and Weiner (1987) show that the way teachers react to students’ failure will affect students’ attributions and motivation. It is suggested that teachers’ responses or feedback about students’ behavior and performance send cues to students which might affect their future performance. To illustrate, sympathy towards students who have failed might be interpreted as a sign that these students have low ability, an uncontrollable factor which might, in turn, undermine the learner’s motivation to work harder. On the other hand, when teachers feel angry about a student’s failure, it makes the students feel that they haven’t invested sufficient effort and might make them try harder next time.

1.2 Self-serving Bias and Teachers’ Attributions

The concept of self serving bias has also been used to account for teachers’ causal attributions of their students’ success and failure. Self serving bias originates in the works of Fritz Heider (1958). It is defined as a self-concept experienced during the process of seeking explanations for achievement outcomes. Heider claims that individuals feel the need to maintain a positive image of themselves, which triggers an inner cognitive process or strategy known as self serving bias. In educational settings this manifests itself through teachers and students’ tendency to ascribe success to internal factors and failure to external variables which may respectively result in self enhancement and self protection.

In this context, Peterson and Barger (1985) identify two patterns in teachers’ attributions: the ego-enhancing attributions and counter-defensive attributions. In the ego-enhancing pattern, teachers consider themselves responsible for their students’ success while they impute their students’ failure to factors inherent in the learners, mainly to ability and effort. Conversely, in the second pattern, teachers blame themselves for low students’ outcomes and consider students responsible for their success. These patterns correlate positively with classroom interaction patterns. This means that teachers would invest more efforts explaining difficult material again and helping the learners improve if they acknowledge responsibility for their students’ failure, whereas those who blame their students would be less willing to help (Peterson and Barger 1985, p 170).
In the same vain; Tetlock (1980) suggests that ‘professional teachers’ often make counter-defensive attributions for pupil performance- by imputing student failure to themselves and giving the students credit for success.

Johnson et al. (1964, reported in Forsterling, 2001, p. 88) were among the earliest researchers who tested the effect of self-serving bias on teachers’ perceptions of success and failure. The participants were asked to play the role of teachers of Arithmetic but they were led to believe that their (bogus) students were having authentic interaction with them while their performance was determined by the experimenter. These participants ascribed high performance to their good teaching and attributed their pupils’ failure to learners’ dispositions.

However, some researchers have recently challenged the self-serving bias concept to be a psychological strategy linked only to North American cultures. Heine & lehman (1997) and Heine et al. (1999) for example, provide empirical evidence from cross-cultural research carried with Japanese and North-Americans against the universality of self serving attributional bias. Such findings intrigued a few researchers to conduct more cross-cultural studies on the impact of self-serving bias. As a consequence, many studies provided further evidence for the cross-cultural differences (March & Young, 1997, Heine & Hamamura, 2007). One of the main findings of this group of research was that identity and self-worth are not as closely linked in East Asian culture as in Euro-American cultures. Asians showed a weaker self-serving bias as they attributed failure to themselves and success to external factors.

The study reported in this research paper tends to test the assumptions of self-serving bias in a North African context by studying the causal attributions of Moroccan EFL university teachers of their students’ success and failure.

2. Methodology:

2.1 Research Questions:

This study raises two research questions:

1- How do Moroccan EFL teachers explain their students’ success and failure?
2- Do Moroccan EFL teachers show self serving bias in their explanations of their students’ success and failure?

2.2 The Participants:

Forty eighty teachers took part in this study. All of them teach English as a Foreign Language to adult students in four universities. Those subjects were selected because they gave their consent and showed their readiness to participate in the present study.
2.3 Data Collection:

A causal attribution scale for teachers (CAST) was specially adapted and devised for this study to elicit teachers’ attributions of success and failure. The CAST was designed by the researchers on the basis of the propositions made in Weiner’s (1972, 1980, 1986, 1996, 2000) causal attribution theory and on previous research in the same field (Weiner 1992, Fraser and Killen 2003,). The teachers were asked to rate 12 hypothetical success statements and 14 hypothetical failure statements that explain their students’ performances on a five likert-scale. All these items can be grouped under Weiner’s Locus of causality dimension.

The “CAST” questionnaires were distributed by the researchers inside the universities. The researchers also pinpointed the importance of the study and the teachers’ contributions. Teachers were also asked to reflect on their students recent outcomes before answering the questions.

3. Data analysis and Results:

The SPSS software was used to analyze data for this research paper. Data were analyzed first by using descriptive statistical measures through calculating the frequencies and means. Then, paired samples t-tests were conducted to check within group’s differences on locus of causality in order to test for the effect of self-serving bias on teachers’ attributions.

3.1 Teachers’ Causal Attributions of their students’ Success:

Table 1 displays the means and percentages of the teachers’ responses on the causes behind students’ success. The results show that the participants ranked interest and effort, ability, classroom engagement, intelligence and talent on top of the variables that contribute to students’ success. On the other hand, the influence of effective teaching, home environment, cheating, luck, social, financial and personal stability and reinforcement classes was downplayed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factors/ teachers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 interest and effort (engagement)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ability</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 classroom engagement</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 self-confidence</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 intelligence</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To test the effect of self-serving bias on the participants’ causal attributions of success, a series of paired samples t-tests were conducted to measure differences between teachers’ ranking of effective teaching on the one hand and effort, ability and classroom engagement on the other hand. Tables 2 and 3 report the results of these t-tests. The results revealed significant differences between teachers’ judgment of the impact of effective teaching and other learner-related variables. This means that teachers attribute success to external variables more than to internal factors.

### Table 2 means and standard deviations for internal locus and external locus of success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective teaching</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.462</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Effective teaching</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.462</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom engagement</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.223</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Effective teaching</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.462</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intelligence and talent</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.342</td>
<td>.338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Paired Samples Test for internal locus and external locus of success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort - Effective teaching</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>2,462</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Effort - Effective teaching</td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>2,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Effective teaching - Classroom engagement</td>
<td>-1,188</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Effective teaching intelligence and talent</td>
<td>-1,188</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Teachers’ Causal Attributions of their students’ Failure:

Data on the teachers’ attributions of failure are reported in table 4. The means and percentages indicate that teachers blamed students’ failure to get good grades most on effort and ability. A very little importance was given to factors like problems, ineffective teaching, luck, lack of help from teachers, test difficulty, and unfair grading. Average means and percentages were detected for factors like teachers’ attitude, interest, external pressure and student’s engagement.

Table 4: Teachers’ attributions of failure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low grades factors</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Effort</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ability</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Interest (uninteresting subjects)</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Pressure</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To test the effect of self-serving bias on teachers’ attributions for failure three teacher-related variables: teacher attitude, ineffective teaching and unfair grading were computed into one ‘internal locus of failure’ variable whereas three learner-linked variables: effort, ability and classroom engagement were computed into an ‘external locus of failure’ variable. A paired sample t-test was run to compare teachers’ scores on ‘internal locus of failure’ and ‘external locus of failure’. The statistics in table 5 show clearly that the teachers attributed their students’ failure to learner related variables while they underrated the effect of factors linked to the teacher. After conducting the t-test (see table 6), It was found that the mean differences between teachers’ ‘external locus of failure’ scores ($M=10.56, \ SD=4.72$) and their ‘internal locus of failure’ scores ($M=5.69, \ SD=4.20$) were significant, $t(47)=5.26; \ p<.001$.

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics for teachers locus of failure (pair 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 External</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.726</td>
<td>.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locus of failure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus of</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.208</td>
<td>.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6: Paired Samples Test for teachers locus of failure (pair1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Internal locus of failure - External locus of failure 1</td>
<td>4,875</td>
<td>6,420</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4. Discussion:

The results on teachers’ explanations of students’ success reveal that Moroccan EFL teachers do not take credit for their learners’ success. On the contrary, they give more importance to learners’ dispositions. This indicates that these teachers do not show self serving bias when the outcome is positive which contradicts the usual assumptions made in research carried with Western subjects. On the other hand, these findings provide support for research that stresses cultural differences in perceptions of the links between self-worth and accomplishments (March & Young, 1997; Heine and Hammamura, 2007). In this research, it is suggested that people in eastern cultures tend to display modesty behaviors through attributing success to either external factors or to groups (Miller & Schlenker, 1985). This might explain why Moroccan EFL teachers attribute their students’ success more to the students’ effort and abilities than to themselves. Nevertheless, there is need for retrospective protocols that inquire about the reasons why Moroccan EFL teachers attribute their students’ success mainly to learners’ induced factors.

Attributing success to learners’ variables also implies that these teachers are ready to provide positive feedback to their students and are aware about the active role learners’ play in achievement. These conclusions might be backed by the fact that the teachers did not totally deny the role effective teaching plays in students’ success. This means that Moroccan teachers think that their role is important but it is the learners’ dispositions that have the biggest impact on their positive outcomes. These findings, though interesting, need to be backed up by evidence from further research on the relationships between Moroccan EFL teachers’ causal attributions of success and classroom feedback.

The findings on the teacher’s attributions for failure show that Moroccan EFL teachers blame their students’ failure on lack of effort and ability. While they do not deny the impact of teacher linked variables on students’ low outcomes, these teachers believe that learners’ dispositions have a much bigger influence on their failure to progress. The significant differences in the scores on teachers’ ‘internal locus’ and ‘external locus’ is in line with previous research that shows that teachers tend to use self protection strategies through placing the responsibility of failure on the learners’ shoulders. While using motivational perspectives have been the trend for explaining causal attributions of teachers, there is an alternative perspective to self-serving bias, the cognitive approach.
Explanations for these teachers’ self-serving bias in failure outcomes can be found in the cognitive approach to self-serving bias theory. Self-serving bias here is not believed to be motivated by self-concepts like self-enhancement or self-protection but by objective considerations underlying people’s causal attributions. These objective evaluations are built around experience and expectations and mediated by outcome. If teachers think they are effective they will expect engaged learners to succeed. Therefore, when the students fail the teachers will not consider this failure to be due to themselves. The first logical reason that occurs to them, then, is that the learners did not expand enough effort and did not have what it takes to succeed. To test these conclusions, the researchers conducted informal interviews with two university professors who took part in filling the questionnaires. These teachers were asked to provide detailed explanations of their learners’ failure to progress. The first reasons that were mentioned were the learners’ entry characteristics and effort. ‘Selection Interviews’ carried out with new comers who wish to enroll in the English department give the teachers the impression that a lot of students are not capable of achieving success. For teachers, this inability coupled with lack of effort is what leads to failure to progress. Interesting conclusions can be drawn here. It seems that teachers’ attributions are not only driven by their expectations about their own teaching but they are motivated by their expectations about their students’ abilities and effort. Therefore these teachers may feel reluctant to invest more effort in teaching or review their teaching methodologies or even reflect on factors like the extent to which their learners are really interested in the subjects being taught. Motivational disengagement might result from such perceptions leading teachers to withdraw from providing help to ‘weaker’ students under the pretext that these learners are unable and unwilling to progress.

5. Practical Implications

The results discussed above have some compelling implications for EFL university teachers and reveal the need for further investigations in teachers’ causal attributions and the effect of self-serving bias. Concerning success attributions, it might be positive to attribute positive outcomes to the learner-induced variable; however, teachers at the same time need to recognize and acknowledge the impact of effective teaching on their learners’ success. This will lead these teachers to focus on what worked well in their classroom practice and to continue practicing these successful moves. Through emphasizing the effect of their teaching methods on their students’ success, teachers can enhance their self-efficacy and contribute to improving teaching practices. In the same vein, attributing failure solely to students may have a negative impact on the role of teachers in helping their learners overcome the difficulties they face in their learning experiences. Ascribing failure to other variables like teaching methods, the environment as well as learners’ variables might help teachers to accurately diagnose students’ difficulties and design effective remedial work that would help these learners perform better. In addition, questioning the role of ineffective teaching practices in students’ failure makes teachers transform their instructional practices and adopt better classroom moves.
Conclusion:
This research aimed at investigating Moroccan EFL teachers’ causal attributions of their students’ outcomes and the effect of self-serving bias on these explanations. The investigation centered upon the way teachers explain their students’ success and failure and whether or not these teachers exhibit self-serving bias in their perceptions of the learners’ achievement outcomes. The findings revealed that these teachers attribute both success and failure to learner-induced variables. This means that Moroccan EFL university teachers do not assume any responsibility for their students’ positive and negative outcomes and, therefore, hold the learners responsible for their success and failure. Therefore, self-serving bias affects teachers’ attributions of failure but tends to be reversed in their explanations of success. These results partly support evidence for self-serving bias and partly corroborate results reached by cross-cultural studies that tend to debunk universality of self-serving bias. This means that more research is needed to shed more light on non-western teachers’ causal attributions of their students’ success and failure. The fact that these teachers ascribe success to learners’ internal variables might give students a sense of feeling that they control their own achievement and, hence, empower them to keep trying harder. However, denying the impact of effective teaching on students’ success may have negative bearing on teachers’ self-efficacy. Similarly, attributing failure solely to the learners will not lead to an accurate diagnostic of learners’ difficulties and fails to highlight the real reasons behind their negative outcomes. While it might be beneficial that teachers explain to learners that their achievement is within their own control, the same may not be true for teachers. That is to say, teachers need to admit that their teaching methods as well as the learning environment and other external factors do play a role in learners’ failure.

Although the results that emerge from this research are compelling, they need to be taken with caution. First, they are limited by the methodology used to collect data. In spite of being a very common instrument in this kind of research, Self-report scales raise questions about the reliability of the findings. Secondly, more research is needed and deep investigations of teachers causal attributions using retrospective protocols are required to support these findings. The results are also limited to the context of teaching EFL in Moroccan universities and need to be supported by similar research in other non-western cultures. In addition, there is need for more research on the relationship between educational psychology and teachers’ cultural dispositions to highlight the extent to which teachers’ causal attributions are driven by their cultural tendencies and not by other information processing characteristics.

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Abdelaziz Zohri is an EFL teacher and researcher in Morocco. He is currently doing doctoral studies in the college of Education in Rabat. He holds a master degree in education since 2002. He is interested in research in applied linguistics, educational psychology and professional development. Abdelaziz Zohri is an active participant in debates on education in Morocco and has intervened in many conferences on Education.

Badia Zerhouni is associate professor of Applied Linguistics/TEFL at the Faculty of Education Mohammed V-Souissi University-Morocco where she teaches in BA English Studies and MA Applied linguistics/TEFL programs. She supervises BA research projects and MA theses, and is
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References:


Teaching Scientific Vocabulary to EFL Learners Using English: Content and Language Integrated Learning

Rehab Helmi Albakri
The British University, Dubai, UAE

Abstract

This study investigates a method for teaching vocabulary of Biology using English to Arab learners who study English as a foreign language at a private school in Sharjah. The rationale for doing this study is that Arab students who learn all subjects in Arabic find difficulties when they learn the same subjects in English, consequently, a failure in understanding English scientific texts will happen to students. The methodology of teaching vocabulary of Biology in English is expected to enhance students' skills such as reading, writing and speaking to be able to understand scientific texts especially those related to Biology. Also, the study is adapted to suit the needs and motivations of the Arab learners whom I teach and may be suitable in schools that provide academic subjects in Arabic while English is studied as a foreign language. To achieve the purpose of the study a literature review of the main theories related to content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is conducted. Then, data samples are collected from 30 female students of grade 12 who are nearly advanced learners of English and have studied Biology for about three years but in Arabic. The qualitative instruments used to collect data include observations by school supervisors, students' works, and interviews with some of the students who are involved in the study. The results of data analysis prove the positive outcomes of the study which are represented by promoting students to understand English scientific texts, answering questions of comprehension, pronouncing words of the lesson correctly and reading aloud parts of the texts easily.

Key words: CLIL, vocabulary of Biology, English skills, Arab learners, scientific texts
Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been recently applied in many schools in the United Arab Emirates. These schools provide subjects like History, Math, and Science in English in addition to the English language at early stages. Students are taught by teachers specialized in the learning material and could be either native speakers or foreign language teachers with high proficiency in English. However, teaching Science through English represents a real challenge to Arab learners of English whom I teach. This is because learners study Science in Arabic, and when they have to study it in English, they face difficulties in comprehending the scientific terminology in English, and consequently fail to achieve understanding of most of the scientific texts. The purpose of this study is to investigate a method to teach scientific vocabulary especially those related to Biology in English. The investigated method is expected to develop learners' strategies in learning scientific vocabulary in the future, as well as to reinforce their reading, writing and speaking skills when dealing with scientific texts. The review of literature will focus on the theories associated with CLIL, in addition to one of the early CLIL experiments. Moreover, factors affecting teaching vocabulary to EFL Arab learners and practical suggestions for teachers to integrate reading and writing skills in CLIL lesson will be discussed.

Literature review

The review of literature will include a reference to theories discussing the aspects of language learning from which CLIL has derived the basics of its programmes. The theories are the second language acquisition theory of Krashen (1982), the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), the constructive theory and finally immersion. In addition, a reference will be made to one of the early experiments of CLIL which has taken place in the Netherland. In this study which is about teaching vocabulary of Biology to promote other skills, the concepts conducted by the theories included in the literature review will be used to provide a CLIL lesson that adapts to students’ needs and levels.

The second language acquisition theory

Since content and language integrated learning is based on using language to learn other materials, the focus will be on meaning while language knowledge and skills will be learned implicitly. This idea relates to Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition where he states that adults have two ways to develop competence in a second language. The first way is language acquisition which is a subconscious process or implicit learning and is similar to the way children acquire their first language. In this way, Krashen (1981) indicates that learners use language for communication:

Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language --natural communication—in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. (p.1)

The second way to develop competence according to Krashen (1982) is by language learning which he calls a conscious process or explicit learning where learners become aware of the rules of language. CLIL lessons make use of the language acquisition theory by providing learners with comprehensible, meaningful and interactive environment similar to the one they used to have while acquiring their first language. CLIL widens learners' exposure to the target language
through teaching subjects like Biology, History, Science, Art and Math using English, and giving learners the chance to paraphrase, recycle information and communicate in classroom. By teaching other subjects using English, learners are provided with meaning while formal instructions develop language ability, and consequently, conscious knowledge or learning takes place. In this study, the vocabulary of Biology will be presented through meaningful context to facilitate learning and using these words in other skills.

**The sociocultural theory**

In CLIL lessons, interaction between students in classroom is an important factor in the process of learning. The concept of interaction is stated by Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Social Development, where he focuses on the importance of culture, community and interaction in learning. In other words, people learn by interacting with the sociocultural context around them. Vygotsky (1978) argues that people communicate by using mediators created by human culture (Lantolf, 2006). Moreover, he introduces the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development as the place where learning happens, and the learner becomes able to produce language but with the help given by the other knowledgeable person (Mitchell and Myles, 2004). The CLIL lesson prepared for this study will present the learning material which is vocabulary of Biology through creating interaction between learners and relating the topic of the lesson to their culture. English language will be used as a mediation to get to the zone of proximal development, and later reach the mental function required to achieve learning of vocabulary.

**The constructivist theory**

A third theory that CLIL has used as one of its basics is the constructivist theory which Resnick's (1989) observations about it state that during the process of learning learners always try to relate the new material to what they already know about it. Resnick (1989) explains that:

> The general sense of constructivism is that it is a theory of learning or meaning making, that individuals create their own new understandings on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and believe and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact. (as cited in Richardson 2003, p.1623)

Also Piaget (1963) as cited in (Zanthou, 2011) indicates that the process of learning depends on building new information upon prior knowledge. In CLIL lessons, (Casal, 2008) teachers present the material in an interactive and cooperative environment that allows learners to negotiate meaning, ask questions to clarify vocabulary meaning or grammar structures, and have the chance to relate new information to what they already know about the topic. In this study which is about teaching vocabulary of Biology, students build up the new information about DNA structure upon old material of the same topic studied in previous years, and this happens in classroom through brainstorming learners and giving tasks that involve all students and reinforce the relation between new and old information.

**Immersion versus CLIL**

Immersion is a programme that focuses on learning subjects like Math, Science, History and others using a second language. Learners enrolled in the immersion programme begin in kindergarten or first grade and continue through the immersion years (Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999). For immersion programmes, learning the target language (Coyle, 2010) takes place during
the development of first language skills, and presents the learning material in social contexts similar to the ones native speakers have. However, this is not the case in CLIL, because students study content using a foreign language in a foreign language context.

A study conducted by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2012) shows that there are five main points of similarity between CLIL and immersion. These similarities are indicated by their final objective which is to help students become proficient in both first and target language, and to achieve that, Stein (1999) claims that students should be taught in a completely new language to resemble first language acquisition:

An important characteristic of immersion education is that the second language is introduced as a holistic system with the purpose of communicating meaning at all times. Immersion students are typically exposed to a range of academic vocabulary and linguistic structures from the very early grades without having to go through the process of learning them piece by piece. (p.2)

In addition, Somers and Sumont (2012) indicate that immersion and CLIL are rated as the best programmes for target language learning. This is because learners are taught by teachers who should be bilingual to implement the school activities using the target language, and create the communicative environment required to achieve effective learning. In this study, the final objective is to help students become proficient in English as a foreign language, since they are already proficient in their first language which is Arabic. The environment where this CLIL study is taking place is in a foreign language learning classroom directed by foreign language teachers. But to what extent the new language used in classroom could resemble first language acquisition is an issue that is determined only by the ability of teachers to provide learners with instructions and wider exposure of English as the target language.

The same study by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2012) states that there are differences between CLIL and immersion. The differences are related to the language used in classroom, teachers, starting age of learners, teaching material and the learning objectives. Immersion uses language in students' context like home or society, which means students use local language in formal and informal situations. Besides, teachers, who should be native speakers and whose objective is to achieve excellent command of the language of instruction, use teaching materials aimed at native speakers. Furthermore, immersion starts at early age to provide wider amount of exposure to the target language, and consequently achieves target language proficiency similar to native speakers. However, in Arab countries aiming at native speaker context and language may take learners away of the environment where they live. Teachers who are native speakers might not be aware of the cultural differences between Arabs and other nationalities. Arab learners have their own background knowledge and may face difficulties in adapting to different cultures.

CLIL language, on the other hand, is not local but a foreign language used in a formal instructional context, which is similar to the context and language in this study, since English is a foreign language and is used only in a formal context in classroom while other subjects are taught in Arabic. Somers and Sumont (2012) state that in CLIL lessons, teachers can be trained foreigners who teach other subjects using English to learners who have experienced traditional foreign language teaching, and start learning other subjects using English at a later stage. CLIL programmes use abridged materials that require a pedagogical adaptation, but they could help learners use language for communication and act effectively. In this study, foreign language
teachers of English are teaching foreign language learners who have experienced traditional teaching of English and are going to learn other subjects using English at a later stage in the university. In addition, teachers use material from learners' books and try to look for equivalent material in English to help learners improve their skills and use English language in communication.

**Early CLIL experiment**

A variety of CLIL programmes are conducted in Europe and other countries, where subjects are taught in two or more different languages. The application of CLIL programme in the Netherland is made by researchers on different levels of learners with different motivations and objectives. De Graaff, Koopman, Anikina and Westhoff (2007) invest CLIL with students who aim at a better command of language to prepare to study abroad, live in an international society or involve in courses taught in English, and the language of instruction in addition to Dutch is English. Dutch learners start at the beginning of secondary education with subjects like History, Geography, Biology and are taught by Dutch staff selected and trained well by English teachers. The results of this programme indicate that CLIL neither minimizes language proficiency in the Dutch language nor demands extra time in the curriculum, on the contrary, learners achieve higher levels of proficiency in English.

On the other hand, Thijssen and Ubaghs (2011) use 28 female and 26 male Learners of grade 9 who study English as a compulsory course from grade 7 and Chemistry from grade 9 and who none of them are born in an English speaking country. Whereas teachers are CLIL Chemistry teachers with some of them have extensive teaching experience. When difficult chemical concepts are explained for the first time, only specific Chemistry words are translated into Dutch. Chemistry is exclusively taught in English which allows students to be exposed to a high amount of English input. The study shows the positive correlation between students' proficiency and students' confidence as well as between teachers' confidence, teachers' didactics and teachers' corrective feedback.

Although the above experiment is performed in a foreign language context and uses different levels of learners with different aims, still Dutch and English are European languages who may have the same letters and some similar words or expressions. In addition to that, they are left to right languages and teachers are specialists in the learning material. The questions that may arise are: what if the experiment is applied on students whose mother tongue is Arabic which is completely different in origin from English. Will there be other problems related to the interference between mother tongue and target language that students may face while studying other subjects in English?

**Methodology**

The methodology adopted in teaching vocabulary of Biology using English to Arab learners depends on collecting data that consists of 30 females who study English as a foreign language. In addition, instruments like some characteristics of effective CLIL programme and the importance of using communicative competence in classroom will be considered.

**Participants**

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The samples collected for the data are 30 Arab females between 16 and 17 years old of grade 12 who study English as a foreign language in a private school in Sharjah, and are going to be taught by me as an English foreign language teacher. These are my students and the data collected is a normal one that I always collect as part of my work. At the moment of gathering the data, learners have been studying English as a foreign language for about twelve years and Biology nearly three academic years but in Arabic. Learners have some background information about the material of the research, which is DNA structure, since they have studied it in grade 10.

**Instruments**

The study uses qualitative instruments in collecting data which consist of students' answers in the handouts given during the lesson, observations made by two supervisors and interviews conducted with students. In planning the lesson, we use the CLIL planning tools which focus on content, communication, cognition and culture (the 4Cs) suggested by Do Coyle (2005). The reason behind choosing these tools is that they cover most of the aspects that the teacher should be aware of and are required to achieve an effective CLIL lesson, especially that teaching vocabulary of biology in English is happening for the first time in this school. In addition, the 4Cs adopted in planning the lesson make use of the theories discussed earlier in the literature review, like creating communicative environment and sociocultural context to achieve learning. As for observing the teaching of the CLIL lesson, we use a list of tools investigated by De Graaff (2007). The advantage of using these observation tools is that they consider points that help observe the implementation of the lesson plan prepared for a CLIL lesson. These tools give the chance to focus on students’ interaction in classroom, the effectiveness of the learning material and the core activity of teaching like classroom environment and instruction. They also concentrate on the teaching techniques, the teacher’s performance and achievement of the objectives of the lesson. The lesson has been observed by two Arab supervisors who work at the same school and are responsible for English language. The observation will concentrate on learners’ interaction, their responding to teacher's instructions, performing the task, discussion during group work, and the effectiveness of the lesson. The two observers may be bias positively since they observe my lessons regularly and write reports to the administration of the school.

In designing an effective CLIL lesson for English foreign language learners, the characteristics of a successful CLIL programme suggested by Zarobe and Catalan (2009) will be used. In this study some of the ten points of these characteristics are applied while others are modified to adapt to the context where the study will be implemented. The points support learners’ first language and culture which is Arabic since the material used resembles what they have in their original books. Teachers are Arabs, highly proficient in English and use a variety of teaching techniques and devices to achieve communicative and interactive environment in classroom between teachers and learners on one side and between learners on the other side. The study does not depend on optional courses but it extends over the whole academic year and includes different aspects of Biology in order to help learners improve their skills in understanding Biology texts in the target language. The idea of the study is supported by parents and the administration of the school.

Another application to be used in designing an effective CLIL lesson is related to the communicative competence and cooperative learning in classroom. Coyle (2010) has discussed different aspects of communicative competence like linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and...
strategic competence. In this study, linguistic competence is achieved since learners have knowledge of most of English grammar and a lot of them are advanced learners of English. The sociolinguistic competence is limited and needs to be developed since learners use English only for academic purposes and sometimes for interacting with some people in society. The discourse competence is acceptable as learners know how to write different types of articles, organize ideas and produce well unified texts. The same applies to spoken discourse because learners' speaking skill is acceptable to some extent. The strategic competence needs to be improved by keeping learners aware of the different situations and events in life.

The analysis

In this section, an explanation of the procedures followed during teaching the lesson and how the lesson plan is implemented will be provided. Then, the analysis of the data includes analyzing learners’ interaction, students' answers in the handouts, observers' notes and students’ evaluation of the lesson.

Procedures

The lesson is taught in learners' classroom and is observed by the two Arab supervisors mentioned earlier. Also the lesson is videoed to be used later in analyzing students’ interaction. The teacher uses teaching aids like the computer, the data show, videos and handouts. According to the lesson plan, the teacher asks students to watch a short video to guide them to identify the topic of the lesson. Then she asks them questions like what do you know about DNA structure? What information have you studied about it? The teacher gives students a handout that includes a definition matching activity for vocabulary. She divides them into five groups each group consists of six students. The reason behind getting students to work in groups is that teaching vocabulary of Biology in English is a new idea and students may face difficulties if they work individually or as pairs. Despite that most students of the data are advanced learners, there are still individual differences in levels and abilities. So each group contains students of different abilities so that they help each other and respond effectively. The teacher asks them to discuss in English only and gives them time to do the task. Students try to relate the words and the meanings to the terminology they have studied before although it is in Arabic. After eliciting the answers and correcting them, the teacher reads the words and asks students to drill chorally, individually and in groups. Questions to check the meaning of words are asked and students are given another handout of the words and the meanings. (See Appendix 2 for vocabulary list) To reinforce learners' understanding of the words and their meanings, they are given a gap fill activity, where they have to put the pictures that contain the words they have studied in their suitable places in the text. The reason behind choosing pictures with words instead of words only is that learners are not yet familiar with the uses of the words in actual texts. After eliciting answers and correcting mistakes students watch another short video about the components of DNA. Since the purpose of the study is to teach learners words of Biology to use them in understanding academic texts in English, learners are given a productive activity which is to read a text about the history of DNA and answer questions of comprehension. Finally, the teacher elicits answers and corrects mistakes, then gives students a survey about the evaluation of the lesson to answer. (See appendix 1 for more details about lesson plan).

Data analysis
Analyzing learners' interaction and responding to teacher’s instructions

Since the teacher has been teaching the learners for about six months, they are familiar with the instructions and they respond highly, especially that learners are accustomed to group work, matching definition and gap fill activities. Students show interest in the topic especially while watching the videos, and try to remember some information about DNA. Learners work hard, however, some difficulties in performing the tasks have appeared, since it is the first time they learn Biology in English. Some pauses, hesitations and misunderstanding of the requirements of the task are noticed. In the matching definition and gap fill activities, learners' correct answers are less than those in the reading comprehension task. In addition, when learners are forced to discuss in English only and never use Arabic, there have been some disturbances among some groups because of the individual differences between learners. During eliciting answers, learners feel embarrassed to give wrong answers but some of them try to participate.

Analyzing learners' answers in the handouts

The tasks used during the lesson are three: matching words with their meanings, gap fill activity and reading comprehension. In all tasks the percentage of correct answers varies not only according to the task but also between the groups. The higher result is in the reading comprehension task. In matching words with meanings, group 1 achieves 67 %, group 2 45 %, group 3 80 %, group 4 33%, while group 5 has 80 % correct answers. On the other hand, in gap fill picture task group 1 gets 50 % of the answers correct, group 2, 3 and 5 64 %, while group 4 80 % correct answers. However, the reading comprehension results are as follows: group 1 achieves 50 % correct answers whereas group 2 and 4 answer all questions correctly, group 3 got 90 % and group 5 80 %.

Analyzing notes of the supervisors

The two supervisors agree that the lesson is performed in an effective way in general. As stated earlier in the methodology, they use tools to observe CLIL lesson investigated by De Graaff (2007). They rate points like selecting authentic materials, adapting texts to learners' level, promoting learners' interaction, suggesting communicative tasks, encouraging learners to speak only in English, giving examples and overcoming problems in language comprehension as highly effective. While other tools such as stimulating feedback and reflecting on use of comprehension strategies are rated as effective. However, in private meetings with the two supervisors, they talk about the problem that the class is small in comparison to the large number of students which is 30. Such a problem does not enable the teacher as well as the supervisors to move comfortably between students. They appreciate the way the teacher teaches the spelling of difficult words through dividing the word into syllables. For more details see appendix 3 for tools to observe CLIL lesson.

Analyzing learners' evaluation of the lesson

Learners are given six questions to answer about their evaluation of the lesson. Nearly 90 % of students answer yes to questions like enjoying the lesson and the videos used, like to know more about the lesson and search for DNA Structure on the internet. About 70 % of students understand the words and the lesson, while nearly 40 % answer no to the question of explaining the lesson to anyone, and in explaining why they say that they still find difficulties in speaking
about Biology in English. (See appendix 4 for a survey to evaluate the lesson by learners). Also, in the interview conducted with few students they explain their feelings while doing the tasks and their opinions about the topic.

Excerpt 1:

S1: I liked the lesson but the words were difficult and their meanings were difficult as well to understand.

Excerpt 2:

S2: This is the first time I study Biology in English but it could be more interesting if the lesson was about the brain or the human body in general.

Discussion

The analysis of data shows that learners appreciate the thought of studying vocabulary of Biology in English although the words are new and strange. By the end of the lesson, learners become able to read the sentences and parts of the texts while answering to the questions in the task, which means that by repeating the words more than one time and using them in meaningful contexts students are not only able to read them but to read parts of the texts. The idea of building new information on prior knowledge takes place through encouraging learners to refer to what they already know about DNA. Also, the learning material is introduced in a meaningful context such as videos and reading texts which enable learners to achieve social interactions. This interaction promotes their mental operations through performing tasks that indicate the notions of the acquisition of second language investigated by Krashen (1982), the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) and the constructivist theory referred to earlier in this study.

Furthermore, the findings of the study support the importance of cooperative learning in CLIL contexts discussed by Johnson, Maruyama, Nelson and Skon (1981) (as cited in Casal 2008, p.3) and indicate that "Cooperative learning has also proved favourable to social cohesion and collaboration within the group, allowing students to overcome fear in front of other students or teachers". Also students’ ability to communicate during the tasks is associated with the effect of group work which is indicated by Casal (2008) as an important factor to increase opportunities for practicing the target language, improve the quality of conversation among students, and promote learners' motivations towards participating in the lesson. Students find difficulties in using the new words in useful sentences of their own words, which supports the notion mentioned by Xanthou (2011, p.124) about the difficulties learners may encounter in CLIL lesson "CLIL students may encounter difficulties in conveying and constructing content related meaning in the way CLIL is delivered, that is, task-based learning on its own."

Implications for teaching and learning

The results of data analysis seem to support the idea that teaching vocabulary of other subjects especially Biology is necessary not only to increase students' linguistic knowledge but also to encourage learners to use these words in their future studies. Teachers in planning for vocabulary lesson should be aware of the factors affecting teaching vocabulary in classroom especially in a foreign language context. Yongqi Gu (2003) states that these factors are related to learners' motivations, levels, age, individual differences, the purpose of the task, classroom environment,
and strategies followed by learners to learn vocabulary. Asgari (2011) identifies different strategies that learners use in learning vocabulary such as discovery strategies, consolidation strategies, social strategies like learning new words through interaction with others, memory strategies by linking background knowledge to new one, cognitive strategies like mechanical ones and metacognitive strategies that involve monitoring, decision making and evaluation. The teacher could work on learners’ strategies and improve them to achieve better understanding of the vocabulary. In considering the above mentioned factors, teachers could be aware of the anticipated problems that may arise while teaching vocabulary.

In addition to that, teachers are advised to choose the suitable teaching aids like videos, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, discussion board, brainstorming activities and other ways to promote learning, practice vocabulary in classroom and increase students’ linguistic accuracy. There are different techniques teachers could follow to improve teaching vocabulary in classroom in addition to the ones used in this study. Choudhury (2010) refers to these techniques as either incidental learning like learning vocabulary through context or explicit learning which uses activities focusing basically on vocabulary learning like defining activities, matching words with their definitions, synonyms or antonyms, true or false, cross words, games and creative use of words in useful sentences. Also, teachers need to relate new information to prior knowledge by encouraging learners to tell what they have studied about a particular topic. This can be done by getting students to identify the topic of the lesson through presenting some information of what they have studied before and could elaborate on. Furthermore, teachers should choose the suitable material of Biology that adapts to students’ needs and relates to topics found in their original books. Presenting the material in a meaningful context is important to facilitate learners' understanding.

To achieve the previous suggestions, Casal (2008) suggests that teachers should apply certain strategies in classroom like the cooperative learning which can be implemented through structured group work. When students, especially in the secondary level, work in groups and exchange ideas, the effect of the individual differences between learners will be less, students will practice self-esteem through face –to–face interaction with their peers, understanding of the tasks will be better, and the learning outcomes will be more since the level of participation is expected to be high.

Moreover, it is clear from the analysis of students' answers in the reading comprehension task that there is a solid relation between learning vocabulary and other skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking. The wider the vocabulary of Biology learners have and know the correct pronunciation of the words, the less the difficulties students face in understanding English texts of Biology, write notes and speak about the topic.

The advantages of integrated reading and writing activities in reference to content learning are as follows: reading texts from a given discipline provides information that can be later used in written production, and therefore contributes to revision and consolidation of content material. Furthermore, the necessity of selecting information in the writing process helps students develop critical thinking skills. (Loranc-Paszylk, 2009, p.2)

Nunan (1999) provides strategies and classroom techniques that help develop reading skills which can be used by teachers even in lessons where other subjects like Biology are taught using English. Some of these strategies encourage students to make inferences about the main ideas of the text, teach them the three types of reading skim, scan and read for details, avoid reading word
Teaching Scientific Vocabulary to EFL Learners

Albakri

by word, inferring unknown vocabulary from the context and using their background knowledge to understand ideas in the text. To apply the previous strategies teachers could use classroom techniques like ordering a sequence of pictures, matching pictures with texts, completing a document, mapping, jigsaw reading, comparing several texts and summarizing.

Writing skills can also be integrated in a CLIL lesson. Lorance-Paszylik (2009) talks about some practical suggestions to integrate writing in a CLIL lesson which is through cooperating with other skills. After teaching vocabulary teachers give students texts to read and answer questions of comprehension. Then students write notes of what they understand from the text and start constructing essays about the topic which they have studied. In this case writing skills could be as a help to revise material and also demonstrate understanding of the source text. Connecting vocabulary learning with reading and writing skills could be useful for students who are going to study subjects like History, Science and Math using English. Another practical suggestion is through giving students two reading texts and asking them to compare and contrast the two texts. Students take notes about similarities and differences and later construct essays. Furthermore, when learners understand a text and write about it they will be able to discuss it orally without fear of failure since the ideas are processed semantically and syntactically.

A further implication of CLIL lesson in classroom is related to cultural awareness. Sudholf (2010) states that since CLIL programmes foster the usage of the foreign language as a tool to communicate and work on content matter, students utilize the foreign language in a functional as well as authentic way and deal with the tasks and problems the subject raises. A real world connection can be observed by engaging topics that contribute to the formation of the cultural identity of people.

Conclusion and further research

The advantages of CLIL resulted from previous experiments are represented by introducing cultural context which prepares students for internationalization. Integrating content and language is not new in Emirates, however, it is the idea of teaching other subjects like Biology in English to students who study English which is a foreign language is the new one. The purpose of the study is to investigate a methodology for teaching vocabulary of Biology using English performed by English language teachers, and to identify the role vocabulary recognition plays in practicing other skills like reading, writing and speaking in classroom. To achieve this purpose, the data samples are collected from a group of female learners and the context of the experiment is a private school where English is taught as a foreign language while other subjects are taught in Arabic. The findings have proved increasing in students' abilities to understand texts of Biology, which could help them in their future studies. In addition, the theories reviewed especially the second language acquisition, the sociocultural theory and the constructivist theory are applied in planning for CLIL lesson, through presenting the learning material in a meaningful context, using cooperative and communicative strategies in classroom activities and relating new information to prior knowledge by promoting students to tell what they have studied about the topic. Moreover, strategies to apply reading, writing and speaking skills in teaching CLIL lesson in classroom are suggested.

However, since the lesson in this study is taught once, further research should be implemented on teaching vocabulary of Biology. The study needs to be conducted on other Biology topics
with larger samples of male and female learners of the same school or even other schools. On the other hand, other subjects like History, Geography and Economy may be used in CLIL lesson to give a wider insight of a methodology for teaching vocabulary of other subjects to foreign language learners of English.

**Limitations and difficulties of the research**

This research is conducted on a group of Arab learners studying English as a foreign language while other subjects are taught in Arabic, and who are considered nearly advanced learners of English. So, the same results may not be applicable if the experiment is conducted in another school that teaches academic subjects in English or if the learners' level is different. Some of the difficulties that the researcher faced while doing this research were finding the suitable topic in Biology to be taught for the first time in English which should match the information students had in their books in Arabic, time of the lesson which was only 45 minutes, and preparing the teaching aids like data show to be used in teaching the lesson.

**References**


Teaching Scientific Vocabulary to EFL Learners  


**Appendix 1: Lesson Plan**

**Teaching Vocabulary of Biology in English**

**Lesson Planning**

Level: Grade 12 students  
Number of students: 30  
Timing: 45 minutes

1. **CLIL Model:**

   The CLIL model to be adopted in this lesson is 'subject topic' adapted for teaching in English to explore the subject which is vocabulary of Biology from a different perspective through the medium of English whilst improving foreign language skills.

2. **Content:**
The main aim

The aim of this lesson is to learn and use vocabulary of Biology, especially those related to DNA structure and building through the medium of English.

Teaching objectives

1. To identify the topic of the lesson.
2. To teach vocabulary: modeling & drilling.
3. To check concept: answer questions to check the correct meaning of words.
4. To practice using vocabulary in a matching task (productive activity).
5. To practice using the vocabulary taught in a reading comprehension task.

Content to be taught

1. Introduction of the topic: video about the structure of DNA.
2. Vocabulary: Cells, Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), Enzyme, Gene, Genome, Protein, Recombinant DNA, Synthesis…….
3. PowerPoint presentation about DNA structure.

Communication:

Language of learning

Vocabulary derived from the text, the video and the PowerPoint presentation.

Language for learning

1. Definition of DNA and its structure.
2. Explain the process of building DNA.
3. Add information they already know about DNA.
4. Asking each other questions like: what do you know about DNA? Can you tell me something about its structure? How do you spell a word? What does this word mean?
5. Classifying: the different elements and components of DNA.

Language through learning

1. Decide language needed to carry out activities.
2. Record, predict and learn new words which arise from activities.

Cognition:

1. Provide learners with opportunities to understand the new words and use them in different contexts.
2. Enable learners to identify the structure of DNA and the process of building it.
3. Encourage logical argument about predictions that may happen during the process of building DNA using English language as a medium of discussion.

4. Problem solving: (how can DNA help in identifying the person?)

5. Culture: Understand that they can learn, no matter which language they are using. Look for Arab scientists who studied DNA.

6. Learning outcomes:
By the end of this lesson learners will be able to use the vocabulary taught to reinforce reading, writing and speaking skills in their future studies and researches.

7. Procedures:
1. Lead in: T tries to elicit from SS the topic of the lesson by using a video about the history of DNA, then ask them what is the topic of the lesson.

2. Elicit: T elicits the new words. In groups SS are given papers for definition match and try to match each word with its suitable definition.

3. Feedback: SS exchange answers. T provides the correct definitions.

4. Drill: SS repeat the spelling of words chorally, group and individually.

5. Check the concept: to focus on meaning, form and pronunciation: T asks questions about the meaning of some words and parts of speech.

6. Provide a written record: T gives a written record of the meaning of words.

7. Productive activity: SS are given a text to read. T gives time to do the task then SS put pictures in their suitable places.

8: Freer activity: SS are given a text to read and answer questions of comprehension. T monitors and gives feedback.

### Appendix 2: Vocabulary used in the lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cells</strong></th>
<th>The smallest living units of the body which together form tissues.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)</td>
<td>The genetic material in a cell.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enzyme</td>
<td>Biological molecule, usually a protein, which promotes a biochemical reaction but is not consumed by the reaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>A separate unit of inheritance, represented by a portion of DNA located on a chromosome. The gene is a code for the production of a specific kind of protein or RNA molecule, and therefore for a specific inherited characteristic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genome</td>
<td>The complete set of genes an organism carries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recombinant DNA</td>
<td>DNA that is cut using specific enzymes so that a gene or DNA sequence can be inserted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backbones</td>
<td>supports, sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helix</td>
<td>Curl, twist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rungs</td>
<td>steps, stairs or stages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DNA polymerase | An Enzyme that catalyzes the formation of new DNA and RNA from an existing strand of DNA or RNA
---|---
Catalyze | Undergo a transformation or a change of position or action
Nucleotide | Any of several compounds that consist of a ribose or deoxyribose sugar joined to a purine or pyrimidine base and to a phosphate group and that are the basic structural units of nucleic acids (as RNA and DNA)
Ribose | Pentose sugar important as a component of ribonucleic acid
Nitrogenous | Relating to or containing nitrogenous

### Appendix 3: Tools to observe CLIL lesson

Please check if the following tools are being activated efficiently in classroom according to the following levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points to observe</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>effective</th>
<th>Highly effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher facilitates exposure to input at a minimally challenging level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Selecting attractive authentic materials</td>
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<td>b. Adapting texts up to the level of the learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Scaffolding on the content and language level by active use of body language and visual aids.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teacher facilitates meaning-focused processing</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Stimulating the learners to request new vocabulary items</td>
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<td>b. Check the meaning of new vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Use explicit and implicit types of feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teacher facilitates form-focused processing</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Giving examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Using recasts and confirmation checks</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Clarification requests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Giving feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teacher facilitates output production</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. encouraging learners' reaction</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Working in different interactive formats

c. Practicing creative forms of oral and written output production

d. Suggesting communicatively tasks

e. Giving learners enough time for task completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points to observe</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Highly effective</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. Encourage learners to speak only in English</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Providing feedback on students’ incorrect language use</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Stimulating peer feedback</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Teacher facilitates the use of strategies:

a. Stimulating students to overcome problems in language comprehension and language production.

b. Reflecting on use of comprehension strategies

c. Scaffolding on the spot strategy use.

Supervisor’s name:

Signature:

**Appendix 4: Students’ Evaluation of the Lesson**

**Evaluation of the Lesson**

Thank you for participating in the lesson. Please read the following questions about evaluating the lesson. Put a tick in the column that suits your opinion. If your answer is no explain why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you enjoyed the lesson?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Teaching Scientific Vocabulary to EFL Learners

#### Did you enjoy the videos in the lesson?

#### Did you understand the words of the lesson?

#### Can you explain the lesson to anyone?

#### Would you like to know more about the lesson?

#### Would you like to search for DNA Structure on the internet?