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Instilling Critical Pedagogy in the Italian Language Classroom

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***Abstract*—This article explores theoretical underpinnings for the use of critical pedagogy in the Italian language learning classroom. Its description of various components of critical theory lends a historical context for critical pedagogy, particularly in the arguments of Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, that contrast with positivist tenets. These critical elements extend to the classroom in a Freirian framework, including concepts such as banking, coding, and conscientization. Such lenses apply to the realm of foreign language teaching, particularly aspects of transformative learning. Issues surrounding materials design are also considered. Avenues and opportunities for critical thinking are explored through lesson plan ideas, as well as possible thematic unit topic suggestions in Italian courses. This paper concludes with questions for future research by language scholars in the field of education, in addition to a call to action for educators of Italian.**

***Index Terms*—positivism, critical theory, Frankfurt School, critical pedagogy, conscientization, banking, coding, language pedagogy, transformative learning, thematic units, Italian**

I. Introduction

Many elements in the field of education share common instrumentalist and positivist orientations towards language and teaching. In this view, language becomes an objective system that theorists can more or less describe and practitioners can transmit, and teaching becomes a technical process prescribed by experts and implemented by teachers (Pennycook, 1990). These questions seem to derive on the one hand from researchers' attempts to understand the language-learning process according to the positivistic paradigms of the social sciences, and on the other hand from teachers' struggles to relate this knowledge to the daily realties of classroom practices. What is lacking is a view of the social, cultural, political, and historical context and implications of language teaching. The field of Italian language education presents a particularly far-reaching lacuna in this regard because there has been no such critical application to this area of pedagogy. This absence allows language to be reduced to a system for transmitting messages rather than an ideational, signifying system that plays a central role in how we understand ourselves and the world.

Looking at language as a political enterprise, critical pedagogy aims to raise learners' critical consciousness to be aware of their sociopolitical surroundings and to fight against the status quo, with the intent of transforming both the classroom and larger society (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Although critical pedagogy was developed primarily in the 1970s, it entered the second-language (L2) arena in the late 1980s, when pragmatic attitudes and communicative approaches surrounded L2 teaching (Canagarajah, 2005). The intent of this article is partly to highlight the practical relevance of critical pedagogies to the Italian language classroom.

Additionally, while materials are usually considered the core resources in language-learning programs (Richards, 2010), remarkably little research has been conducted on materials development in critical pedagogy. The area is underdeveloped (Rashidi & Safari, 2011), with a complete dearth of research regarding Italian language instruction. In the absence of a comprehensive framework to develop materials on critical pedagogy, this study is also intended to provide considerations for a materials-design and thematic framework wherein the main principles of critical pedagogy are included and applied. It seeks to design a teaching materials model with the purpose of leading educational situations to flourish students as transformation agents in society. Materials choice is imperative to develop critical thinking, acceptance of cultural multiplicity, and ideological mindfulness (Álvarez, Calvete & Sarasa, 2012) rather than using language to reinforce stereotypes, prejudices, and lack of acceptance towards oneself and others (Araya Araya, 2007). Moreover, critical pedagogy-oriented materials challenge students' commonsense assumptions by uncovering power relations inherent in discourses of different cultural groups. With these purposes in mind, this article addresses the question, What principles of material and thematic development could be derived from the philosophies of critical pedagogy to teach Italian from a critical perspective? The stance taken is that critical thinking is relevant for Italian language-learning classrooms.

II. Critical Theory

A. Positivism, Gramsci, and the Frankfurt School

Gramsci claimed that with the growth of modern science and technology, social control was exercised less through physical power than through dispersal of an intricate system of standards and necessities. The latter was used to advance

to institutional authority a degree of unity and certainty and afford it apparent universality and legitimation. Gramsci called this form of control "ideological hegemony," a method of control that not only manipulated perception, but also drenched and established the everyday practices that formed performance (Gramsci, Hoare & Nowell-Smith, 1971). Hence, ideological hegemony referred to those systems of practices, meanings, and values that gave validity to the dominant society's institutional arrangements and interests (Giroux, 1979). Gramsci's analysis is relevant to providing a theoretical foundation of social and cultural reproduction, particularly because it reproduces social processes distributed in learning spaces.

Views of education and curricula based on positivist interpretations of knowledge tend to make strong claims of objectivity and empirical verification of facts without questioning the nature of knowledge, truth, or the social, cultural, or political interests of different claims to knowledge (Pennycook, 1990). The major assumptions underlying the positivist culture are drawn from the logic and method of inquiry associated with the natural sciences (Dallmayr & McCarthy, 1977). Based on the reason of scientific methodology, with its interest in description, calculation, and practical control, the principal of rationality in the natural sciences was viewed as superior to the speculative social sciences (Giroux, 1979).

Positivism associates knowledge with scientific practice. Questions regarding the social structure of knowledge and constitutive benefits behind the collection and organization of facts are hidden under the postulation that knowledge is objective and value-free. This view does not consider information from the subjective world of perception, philosophy, and nonscientific theoretical frameworks to be relevant (Giroux, 1979). In this light, values are not associated with facts. They are considered irrational and subjective emotional responses (Habermas, 2014). The idea that facts, theory, and inquiry can only be quantitatively determined and used is susceptible to conservative values. Unable to reflect on its own presuppositions or provide for critical reflection in general (Husserl & Lauer, 1994), it ends up uncritically supportive of the status quo. In the positivist framework, rather than comprehending the world holistically as a network of interconnections, learners are taught to approach problems as if they existed in isolation, detached from the social and political forces that give them meaning. In turn, this creates a tunnel vision in which only a small segment of social reality is open to examination (Giroux, 1979). It also leaves unchallenged those economic, social, political, and social frameworks that attained their current forms naturally, as opposed to having been constructed by historically specific interests.

In response to the rise of fascism and Nazism and the failure of orthodox Marxism, the Frankfurt School approached ideas surrounding control and liberation from a different standpoint. It placed greater weight on the issue of how the domain of culture and everyday life embodied a new territory of control (Giroux, 1979). Similar to Nietzsche's warning concerning people's blind faith in reason, Adorno and Horkheimer critiqued modernity's steadfast faith in the promise of the Enlightenment's rationality to save the world from ignorance, fantasy, and misery (Nietzsche & Collin, 2014). Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse believed the progression of reasoning had infiltrated all facets of everyday life from mass media to education (Wellmer & Cumming, 1974). According to Adorno (2007), the calamities of reason occur as society becomes more rationalized because it loses its critical capacity to realize social harmony, becoming then a tool of society and resulting in critiques considered illogical (Giroux, 1979). Positivism slurs nonpositive thinking as mere gossip. For the Frankfurt School, this mindset threatened the concept of subjectivity and critical thinking. Our society celebrates positivism, free from context and ethical commitments, as undisputed facts. Presented as neutral and scientific, knowledge then becomes rational based on whether it is efficient and economic. Those associated with the Frankfurt School called for dialectics in theory. They hoped to bring about critical thought and reveal insufficiencies and imperfections in what mainstream society considered a finished system of thought (Held, 2006). For these thinkers, rationalism was no longer just the exercise of critical thought, but a crossroads of action, liberation, and society (Giroux, 1979).

A more critical understanding of knowledge would describe it as a social construct associated with human intentionality and conduct. Interpreting this view into pedagogical principles, the concept of knowledge must link to the concept of power (Giroux, 1979). This means classroom knowledge can be used in the interest of either domination or liberation (Greene, 1989). It can be a critical tool to disrupt false logic or to unreflectively legitimize explicit interests appearing value-free and unsusceptible to criticism. However, in a condition of post-modernity, we are likely to value and recognize nonhomogeneity rather than assume some unitary progress (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

B. Critical Pedagogy

Approaching pedagogy with a critical lens begins with the central notion that knowledge is socially constructed. Critical pedagogy identifies that all knowledge is constructed in a particular social, cultural, and historical joining of relationships. All assertions to knowledge mirror the group's particular concerns and are tied up in power relationships (Pennycook, 1990). This argument opposes all claims that knowledge can be value-free, neutral, ahistorical, or general. Therefore, as an ideological process, it allows learners to view relationships between knowledge, culture, power, and ideology. Critical pedagogy seeks to investigate and make clear how knowledge is fashioned and legitimated within the classroom, in addition to challenging those forms of knowledge critically in an attempt to legitimize other subjugated forms and produce new ones (Giroux, 1988).

Critical pedagogy refers to teaching practices that report variances, power, or social stratification (Johnson & Randolph, 2015). It is informed and produced by critical studies in other fields such as queer theory. Crookes (2012)

posited that critical pedagogy is the most extensive form of social justice oriented in language teaching. It describes social justice approaches that use critical pedagogy to create social justice outcomes for learners, and is the route to arrive at social justice in the language classroom. Pedagogy reframes the field of language teaching, emphasizing a departure from traditional pedagogy that reinforces the meaning that students acquired from social conditioning in traditional education, whereas critical pedagogy tries to transform learners' meaning standpoints by resisting the main social purpose of education: to indoctrinate learners with social ideology (Kennedy, 1990). Social organizations use traditional pedagogy to prepare students to go about in the social conditions in which they find themselves while critical pedagogy prepares students to resist, reassess, reflect, and create change in response to social inequality.

An original voice of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire (1970) used the term conscientization to describe the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. This differs from his term, banking education, a process by which the instructor uncritically hands over knowledge as opposed to the knowledge being a focus of critical awareness. Learners of critical pedagogy instructors become aware of how ideology inhibits learning, obstructed by social habits and cultural forms that together form how they understand the world. These ideologies appear on the outside to be common sense and status quo (Norton & Toohey, 2004), as opposed to structures intentionally skewed in favor of those in power. Because ideologies are difficult to perceive, uncritically transferred knowledge strengthens the existing hierarchies and structures. Education is thus never neutral (Shaull, 2007).

C. Instructor and Students Roles

Through the paradigm of critical pedagogy, teachers become problem posers (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011), a practice often absent in Italian language-learning classes. To understand this, Dewey (2017)—a pioneer of the progressivist movement of education in the United States whose central tenant held that traditional schooling does not serve a learner's needs or interests (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012)—believed learning through problem solving and practical application led learners to more active roles in determining their positions within society. Similarly, Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) posited that the instructor must empower leaners by raising their awareness of the process of reproducing an undemocratic status quo. Educators are thus transformative intellectuals with the knowledge and skills to alter existing disparities in society (Sadeghi, 2008). By creating appropriate social conditions, educators empower learners to become cultural producers who can revise their observations and sensitivities and understand how to question authoritarian powers (Giroux, 2008). Instructors can help develop critical consciousness that supports students to assess the legitimacy, justice, and authority within their educational and living circumstances. In this way, critical educators help learners recognize reasons behind the facts (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Learners and teachers should participate in questioning knowledge, but it is the instructor who helps students identify how to move forward critically in their training (Keesing-Styles, 2003). Students are dynamic participants. Together with the instructor, they learn to contest norms (Giroux, 2008). Critical learners are those who can reject or suspend judgement about a claim (Moore & Parker, 2016). They should engage in social criticism to produce a public sphere in which people can exercise power over their own lives and learning (Giroux, 2008). By enabling learners to reflect on their own commonsense knowledge, they learn how to transform their lives, resulting in the Freirian shift to conscientization (Freire, 1970).

III. Critical Language Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy offers many ways to move past Eurocentric tendencies within L2 teaching practices, techniques illuminating and relevant to diverse learners studying Italian in North America. Farias suggested this concept is built on a groundwork of understanding of how we function as humans and a conception of a common experience articulated by language—whatever that language or our relation to it might be. This raises awareness within the learner by considering language pedagogy as a social practice. Language does not exist outside its sociocultural milieu, particularly when operating within a set of pedagogical or institutional considerations. Critical language pedagogy could provide the concept of language itself as a critical practice involving self-consciousness and engagement with others when such awareness fosters a critical practice (Farias, 2005).

Critical pedagogy can also be utilized in the L2 classroom (Randolph & Johnson, 2017), which functions all-too-often as a purely practical and proficiency-based class. Rather, the classroom becomes a place where educators take a more critical tactic towards teaching. Issues of immigration, inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, and globalization dominate our country's present political environment. The study of languages enhances all of these. Integrating this type of pedagogy requires a critical deconstruction of dogmatic and established power structures, in addition to their unspoken and overt impacts in the curriculum development and organization. Critical pedagogy can be scrutinized at all levels of the world-language program.

A. Importance of Culture

Students must develop their intercultural communicative competence (Randolph & Johnson, 2017), often a transformative learning process that deeply changes the way learners interrelate with their world, even within the Italian classroom. When students participate in this type of learning, they cannot disregard historical and current injustices. It is easier and less provocative to interact with communities as tourists (Byram, 1997) profiting from advantaged places without recognizing truths of class, race, coercion, and control. Learners are unable to participate successfully within

the societies about which they study without also understanding the societal, historic, commercial, and political contexts in which they exist. In the present political climate in which our language classrooms are positioned, learners clearly need to communicate not only in the most operative way probable, but also in ways that facilitate problem solving. Educators cannot teach learners to participate in intercultural communication without also conveying cognizance of disparities that exist within and between studied communities. Instructors must free themselves of the one-dimensional ideal of a speech community so that students can acquire a multidimensional assessment of history and effectually analyze it. Teaching history in the target language can be challenging and result in shallow, remote pictures from history. Instructors often present Italian language and culture as a superficial, homogenous entity. Thematic units devoted to simplified perspectives praising the worlds of fashion and sports, for example, all too often lack a critical perspective with which to consider Italy's culture and history and thus opportunity to question hegemonic notions embodied within them. These texts should have the objective to arouse the learners' critical cultural awareness by examining practices, products, and perspectives of the culture being studied and one's own through a critically conscious lens.

False resources created for the language learner prioritize language over culture (Moeller & Fatlin Osborn, 2014). If language learning alone is the only objective of instruction, such constructed texts serve a clear purpose. However, if language learning is about arriving at other cultures through language and increasing views, then more critical texts and materials afford occasions for critical language and culture learning (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). Instructors convey an artificial framework interpretation into the classroom at the peril of disseminating stereotypes that do not improve students' cultural capabilities (Garrett-Rucks, 2016). When educators fail to consider such a critical perspective, students are left with prearranged interpretations of culture not developed through a critical method. Instructors need to take a critical approach in the language classroom and must not sustain outdated texts and pedagogical practices. Language learners must engage in critical analysis to learn different cultures in order to perceive the world themselves.

B. Language Learning and Teaching

A determination whether and under what circumstances critical pedagogy can fit Italian language pedagogy is required. Learners can encounter syntactic structures or words they do not comprehend. Whether they miscue the significance of parts of the discourse depends on their level of capability. The effort to integrate critical pedagogy into communicative language teaching means reconsidering the methodology of accommodating occasions for critical analysis in the linguistic curriculum in addition to the discourses in and for which the L2 is used (Briedbach, Medina & Mihan, 2014). It proposes reassessing the relation of the learners' language and the L2 being acquired, in addition to the functions both have for different curriculum elements. Critical pedagogical L2 teaching should be grounded on a two-sided curriculum made up of the traditional language curriculum as well as a curriculum of discourse addressing critical analysis matters. In this case, the L2 can become the communication standard in relation to the learners' growing ability. The critical discrepancy between a language and a discourse curriculum accommodates understanding that learners at all levels should be permitted and directed to scrutinize discourse related to the L2 critically. Communicative language teaching should emphasize task provision for the functional language. Distinguishing between first- and second-order tasks (Breidbach, 2011) allows differentiation between nonreflexive tasks in a traditional language curriculum and instances for a more reflexive structure open to negotiation of content, aim, and structure in learning contexts.

Foreign language materials for critical pedagogy are expected to foster social and language-skill development (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Learners acquire new means to question the status quo and engage in transformative actions to eradicate inequalities while they master the target language (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). A critical curriculum formulates students who read the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In the same vein, L2 materials should aid students to transcend the written word to arrive at an understanding of the world's authenticities and act to alter the world. Language-learning skills are not effective alone, but only in relation to transformative action (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).

Foreign language materials typically have a set of prespecified goals and outcomes. In a critical pedagogy framework, such strong and exact outcomes are not recognized. Foreign language materials creators can design activities to allow learners to attain strong results. The exercises should let instructors and learners contribute in dialogical development while they practice language skills (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Learners and instructors can discover cultural morals, traditions, and principles in the language being studied as well the student's primary language to examine the parallels and variances among societies and work to alter basic inequalities (Crawford, 1978).

The issues and topics encompassed in L2 resources should generate rich dialog and examination. Overall, propagative themes proposed by learners define the organization of the content of the L2 materials (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Such themes could revolve around matters of American culture, target language culture, or the relationship between the two. Additionally, some themes can extend to critique other multiplicative themes. In this case, the instructor can turn the suggested topics into the L2 being studied, recognize the vocabulary and constructions the learners are required to study, and offer resources for language learning. Crawford (1978) pointed out that linguistic content may also produce some cultural points for students to explore the differences between first and target language structures and examine their fundamental values.

The means of educating is by involving students in a series of reflection and action by implementing dialogical problem-posing exercises. Acting to change the world to improve society satisfies the calling relative to critical pedagogy. To this end, Crawford (1978) posited that individuals should act reflectively; thus, education's task is to aid

people to fulfill their human inclination by including them in the cycle of reflection and action. That is praxis. By requiring learners to partake in dialogical problem-posing practices, they initially decide on the content of discussion and then relate the issue or problem to their own lives (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). After personalizing the problem, the instructor poses questions aimed at critically challenging learners and guiding them towards conversation on the socioeconomic, political, or cultural reasons of the problem as a form of decodification. Crawford (1978) claimed traditional class discussions are antidialogical. Predefined ideas chosen by the instructor may not correspond to learners' experiences and perceptions, but are what students are supposed to accept. In contrast, in a critical language classroom, discussion is for creation, not of an idea. Students combine their experiences to express the topic for themselves and articulate freely what they think about it (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).

Continuing learner assessment is a central component of any critical language-learning program (Degener, 2011). Activities must develop learner growth, maturity, and empowerment. Thus, assessment turns into a manifestation of a learner's conception and application of acquisition (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). An exercise may entail text or images conveying an unknown issue people generally regard as a social norm and not a problem, and then require learners to share their perceptions (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Foreign language materials can provide activities to assess linguistic aptitude. Crawford (1978) considered that such activities can reveal to learners the degree and value of their cognitive growth and increasing ability to use the L2. Such exercises also can determine the integrity of the critical language pedagogy at hand. Language-learning materials should also move away from assigning usual homework projects and instead assign tasks for learners to gather, choose, or generate matters and pedagogical resources. Altering the learner's part in critical language-learning materials from an inactive container to a creative student also alters the prospects positioned on the learner. Instead of blindly receiving information to remember and later regurgitate, the student uses the language knowledge and skills to confront the topic at hand. In this emancipated role, learners have freedom to decide topics, themes, and linguistic content. In this way, they dynamically partake in cultural codification and decodification processes (Rashidi & Safari, 2011).

Crawford (1978) upheld that current L2 learning materials separate the learner from concern and the prospect to be imaginative and dynamic in the language process. According to Crookes (2009), increased availability and assortment of sample materials that aid instructors in acquainting themselves with critical theories in relation to language learning in critical L2 pedagogy classes could enhance the pragmatism of critical pedagogy. For example, an outline of key principles considered crucial in creating materials could support instructors (Rashidi & Safari, 2011), but there exists a dearth of research on materials development in critical pedagogy (Crookes, 2009). This study attempted to create a prototype for designing materials in agreement with critical pedagogy philosophies.

Foreign language materials should advance learners' communicative skills while promoting learners' critical consciousness (Rashidi & Safari, 2011). Most language-learning materials are comprised of exercises with the goal of refining L2 communicative skills regardless of social problems and contexts. They thereby reflect the traditional "banking method" of education (Reagan, 2006). Materials should develop learners' language skills as well as cognizance of the social structures. In a critical L2 pedagogy, materials aim to achieve this dual objective (Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Therefore, the major task of L2 learning materials should be to enable learners to read their world and not simply the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Foreign language can become a way to discover sociopolitical matters and cultural ethics (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). Learners' language skills could be a way to critically discover and transform situations in their own and in the target language society (Degener, 2001).

C. Transformative Learning

Because critical pedagogy entails learners viewing the world in different ways, shifting their own understandings, and taking the interlocutor's standpoint (Byram, 1997), for learners of Italian, learning becomes transformative in nature. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) defines the process of re-examining formerly held views and assumptions and learning to understand practices from a new standpoint. Advocates of critical pedagogy in the language classroom make a strong case for why transformative learning is essential: Learners must cultivate an idea of identity in which they obtain consciousness about their own values before getting to know another culture (Randolph & Johnson, 2016). Learners must explore how they developed their own awareness of society. By contesting their own notions of truth, they become better equipped to discover another culture (Moeller & Fatlin Osborn, 2014). Mezirow (1991) discussed the perspective through which one sees the world, the assemblage of one's views, expectations, understandings, and cultural norms as a meaning perspective. Most people make sense of their understandings by viewing society from a static lens. The information a learner obtains is filtered through the meaning perspective. This lens comprises essentials such as social norms, cultural codes, and common sense. These elements permit people to live within the parameters of their native culture and readily reject input that does not align with their system. A standard component of language acquisition comprises becoming taught the codes and conventions of one's native culture. Intercultural connection places contrarily mixed individuals in communication and many times leads to conflict (Randolph & Johnson, 2016). Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically conscious of how and why our conventions have come to pressure the way we observe society, imagining an all-encompassing outlook, and permitting learners to act based on this new awareness (Mezirow, 1991).

Constructing relations with people who are different entails considered risk-taking for the learner and a desire to confront issues, contradictions, and trials of cultural variances (Sosulski, 2013). Having this capacity requires learners'

personal growth. Thus, transformative language learning is about not solely language, but also enlightening ourselves and the ways we relate with others (Randolph & Johnson, 2016). Language acquisition is one of the most human actions we can undertake. Research in transformative language learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2010) helps educators focus on the humanity beneath the pedagogical practices and support learners to see the world in different ways.

D. Ideas for Novice and Intermediate Learners

A major issue with novice Italian language learners is that they have not yet established the required language ability to participate in critical thought in the Italian language. Educators must wisely consider how to utilize critical language-learning goals to foster growth of the learners' linguistic capabilities. They should choose critical pedagogy themes that connect to language topics in beginner courses, judiciously choose materials with supplementary level-suitable knowledge exercises, and permit students to deliberate in their first language in a way that does not impede their progress in the Italian language (Randolph & Johnson, 2016). At the beginning of the course, an instructor could present, for example, a critical theme by integrating readings, activities, and discussions connected to the grammar and or cultural topic being reviewed. For language transcripts too challenging for beginners to comprehend, instructors could change what learners have to do with the text rather than adapting the text (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Learners can even work on follow-up work constructed on the resources studied and themes discussed during class. Depending on the arrangement and level of critical engagement necessary, homework can be done in the target language or English, which can be reflective, action based, or a combination of the two. The instructor could enable a follow-up reflective discussion in English about hegemony and stereotypes, for example. Regardless of the activity, through cautious preparation and solid, thematic curricular strategy, learners can participate in evocative critical work early in the course (Randolph & Johnson, 2016). Critical themes support the students' Italian language development while simultaneously presenting occasions for them to use English to participate critically. Although instructors may want to keep their students speaking Italian most of the time, the tactical use of English can help integrate critical pedagogies without sacrificing language proficiency objectives (Johnson & Randolph, 2015). Critical pedagogy is not averse to using a first language in the L2 classroom because it may help with meaning negotiation (Larson, 2014).

Turning to the intermediate level of Italian, learners begin inventive thought using whole sentences. Although requiring less scaffolding than beginners, their language skills are still inadequate to partake in subtle discourse about critical matters. Thus, instructors could adjust the strategies mentioned previously, as well as the deliberate use of English, to intermediate learners to reach critical pedagogy objectives (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). As intermediate learners acquire growing ability in the Italian language, instructors can substitute communicative exercises with activities that pertain more to critical communicative frameworks. For example, when learners study how to describe past actions, they can participate in debates, discussions, and skits about life stories that formed their cultural, ethnic, sexual, and gender self-identities. The goal is to insert critical matters in a way that encourages language ability objectives and other fundamentals from the world language curriculum while simultaneously permitting learners space to partake in transformative learning.

Intermingling with Italian speakers in the proper setting can be a transformative experience. Intermingling with target language communities abroad can be problematic (Byram, 1997) because learners often believe they are traveling to another country to enlighten others. Instructors contribute to this process by asking learners to complete projects that are invasive or emphasize stereotypes. Language instructors must instead challenge learners to uphold a critical outlook and be open to developing their own opinions (Randolph & Johnson, 2017). Instructors can propose exercises such as creating journals, blogs, and discussion boards that permit learners to be involved in self-reflection rather than objectification and analysis of others (Arends, 2014).

Another way to approach critical pedagogy is through codes. In a Freirian context, codes are tangible physical expressions that signify all facets of a subject around an issue (Freire, 1970). They can take many forms, including pictures, illustrations, collages, stories, written dialogues, films, or songs and encourage critical thinking and discussion. When using a code, learners should designate the problem, comprehend how it relates to them, find causes, simplify it to others, and propose alternatives or resolutions (Wallerstein, 1983). Technology facilitates the use of codes in the form of news articles, YouTube videos, cartoons, advertisements, short stories, and blogs (Larson, 2014). A prearranged study program may limit many instructors, but codes could be applied sporadically to look critically at some issues. Regardless, these ideas attempt to implement Freire's concept that we cannot deposit our ideas into others or think for or without others (Au & Apple, 2007). Instead, education is the practice of freedom, not of domination, and instructors must encourage the process of producing and acting upon ideas—not consuming those of others (Álvarez et al., 2012).

When choosing texts, it is important to pay attention to illustrations and characters (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012). Characters should represent nonnative Italian speakers using Italian and a variety of races, genders, disabilities, ages, and families, such as divorced parents and gay couples. Instead, by including a wide array of individuals, the texts can deter perpetuating social norms that tend to marginalize people who do not fit traditional expectations (Goodmacher, 2008). Instructors can also develop course materials rather than using a course book for advanced discussions (Sandy & Kelly, 2009). Learners can select social issues relevant to them, read articles on these themes, and discuss societal power relations. With correct scaffolding, learners can raise an issue, critically analyze it, discuss how that power is reflected and reproduced in their own society, position, and problems, and brainstorm actions they can take.

Instructors should question whether they are representing a discriminatory society and perpetuating the status quo

when providing supplemental materials, visual aids, and example sentences (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012). Subtle changes towards this end may include using "she" as an engineer and "he" as a nurse in example sentences. Instructors should switch stereotypical gender roles and vary nontraditional gender orientations when possible. The objective is not to occupy classroom time with the discussion of these social issues per se, but to purposely include groups of people that would otherwise be disregarded (Sandy & Kelly, 2009).

IV. Thematic Considerations for the Italian Language Classroom

Too often, the Italian language classroom concentrates on themes of stereotypical norms, such as coffee house life, town square, family life, cuisine, and soccer matches. Although all are important aspects of Italian culture, they frequently are presented in two-dimensional, positivist, and decontextualized formats void of potential for critical discussion or for learners to reflect critically on their own culture. The topics focus solely on language acquisition through culture, without transformative learning prospects. Learners risk perpetuating not only common stereotypes of Italian speakers and italophone cultures, but also potential cultural hegemonic ideologies. This leaves no space to question existing power structures or discuss marginalized groups leaners find relevant to their own lives and may use as a springboard for emancipatory action. Instead, thematic topics may be inserted into the Italian language-learning classroom as catalysts for not only language learning, but also the critical thinking currently absent in Italian pedagogical practices.

Displaying examples of important pieces from Italy's contemporary Arte Povera movement could provide rich class discussion, as well as an exciting opportunity for learners to not only amplify vocabulary related to art, colors, materials, and shapes, but also stir within them commentary on the dramatic ways these artists attacked the values of established institutions of government, industry, and culture. Such is the case with Michalengelo Pistoletto's iconic Venus of the Rags. Arte Povera usually incorporates organic and industrial materials in ways that reveal conflicts between the natural and man-made (Lista, 2006) and facilitates analyzing incorporation of the environment and its accompanying vocabulary. Such in-class analyses through student discussions around these artwork provide not only a unique vehicle towards acquiring Italian through a critical lens, but also a starting point to contest issues addressed in the Arte Povera moment and reflect on American consumer culture.

The Slow Food Movement, founded in Italy, is a grassroots organization that strives to preserve traditional and regional cuisine. It encourages farming of plants, seeds, and livestock characteristic of local ecosystems and promotes sustainable foods and small businesses to combat negative aspects of globalization on agricultural products (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011). Internet clips and short readings on this subject vary in language proficiency level and are offered in English. They can foster vocabulary-building in topics ranging from food to economy and environment and discussions on ecology, fast food, industrial food production, nutrition, ecoregions, ethical consumerism, and organic farming. Optimally, opportunities for the class to visit a small farm or have local farmers or small business people who support slow food practices come to the classroom would promote rich experiences for the learners. These consequentially promote further discussion, outside research, or assignments in where learners apply Slow Movement concepts to North American contexts. For example, they may confront issues of food deserts, genetically modified foods, pesticide use, organic food culture, ethical eating, "McDonaldization," and the importance of composting, cocacolinization, and cultural imperialism. The instructor can modify all these example thematic units to fit students' specific needs, interests, and levels.

The trial and conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti is another potential thematic unit upon which Italian language skills can be strengthened and, more importantly, critical discussion borne on a vast range of subjects. The instructor can develop and assign short readings in English or at the students' Italian level for reading in or out of class. Depending on the students' linguistic competence, grammar in context may vary, but amplification related to trials, laws, human and workers' rights, immigration, and racism can be covered. On a deeper level, discussion around labor unions in the United States and Italy, as well as the U.S. judicial system, can reflect the unjust treatment of immigrants (Joughin & Morgan, 2015)—in this case, Italians in America's past. Students can then be asked if similarities exist between the blatant discrimination demonstrated in the Sacco and Vanzetti trial and the current landscape in the United States, particularly among Latino and Muslim immigrants. Discussion may also be on anarchism or the death penalty. In addition, students may theorize about why the Sacco and Vanzetti case—although having received strong support from workers' movements internationally, American folk singers, and even Gutzon Borglum, sculptor of Mount Rushmore (who created a sculpture commemorating the two Italians)—currently remains hidden from the public, largely undiscussed in American history. Discussions of this nature could also tie to an explanation and reflection on the importance of May Day or International Worker's Day in Italy. In Italy, it started initially as an attempt to celebrate workers' achievements in their struggle for their rights and for better social and economic conditions. It was abolished under the Fascist Regime and immediately restored after the Second World War. May Day is now an important celebration in Italy and a national holiday, regardless of on which weekday it falls. This could be another potential juxtaposition in either Italian or English of Italy's Festa dei lavoratori and America's Labor Day, with the instructor comparing both celebrations with photos (e.g., PowerPoint), short readings in English and Italian, and simplified readings in Italian, depending on the learners' level.

Film showings and subsequent class discussions offer a treasure trove of opportunities to better foster critical thought

amongst learners of Italian while they study vocabulary, grammar, culture, and cinematic history. Films from the neorealist period demonstrate a watershed moment in world cinematic history regarding technique. Also, their subject matter exposes the shallowness of modern capitalist society and exploitation of working-class people. Their unique focus on the real-life problems of common people, poverty, crime, and social injustice (Bondanella, 2012) can steer learners to reflect on modern mainstream films and their roles in society as entertaining as opposed to revelatory or emancipatory. Films ranging from Bicycle Thieves to Umberto D are obvious choices because they delineate the extent of the neorealist movement. The instructor may also offer vocabulary related to cinema production, technique, poverty, class issues, and beyond, and assign reflection journals in either English or Italian, depending on the level.

Similarly, films from Italy's commedia all'italiana or Italian style comedy period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s often contained social criticism. Films of this era provide an accurate mirror of changing Italian customs and values. They aided in forcing the average Italian into a greater awareness of conflicting values by attacking age-old prejudices and questioning the inept rule of governing elites and institutions (Bondanella, 2012). They often embodied a dark, grotesque vision of contemporary Italian society; laughter in these works was bittersweet. Similar to the neorealist activities, film showings from the commedia all'italiana era can spark critical discussion and readings in Italian or English on a myriad of cultural progressions and changes within Italian culture, such as the once-illegal divorce from the famous Divorce Italian Style. They also can be compared to those of American culture. This could segue into themes of more contemporary issues in Italy and the United States addressed in many older and modern films, such as those of Paolo Sorrentino and The Great Beauty, a commentary on spiritual and moral emptiness in a modern consumerist, celebrity culture.

Critical themes often ignored in traditional Italian classes abound as they relate to Italian acquisition and culture and reflect the learner's own culture. Articles, clips, and readings in either English or an appropriate Italian level can cover a plethora of subjects, including civil unions in Italy starting in 2016 and gay marriage in the United States and other civil rights; photos and articles concerning Italy's Triangle of Death and vocabulary and readings concerning environmental issues and their ecological relationship to health concerns and organized crime and big business collaboration; clips and readings on fascism then and now in Italy and the United States, including growing extremists groups and causes of their rise; discussions on the current economic crisis in Italy, austerity measures, brain drain, and bank bailouts linked to more advanced readings with economy-related vocabulary lists; Italian advertisements for products in Italy and the United States and their power, embeddedness, and allusiveness in our society can introduce learners to the concept of Gramsci's cultural hegemony (Gramsci et al., 1971) as a critique of consumerist culture, so students can reflect on their own experiences when questioning the status quo; showing the documentary-like film Fire at Sea to initiate a powerful discussion on the European migrant crisis and a juxtaposition to migrants entering the United States and reflecting on its causes, in addition to resistance fueled by nationalism and racism; the theme of racism in Italy can also be discussed in light of racist remarks against Sicilian-born soccer star of Ghanaian parents Mario Balotelli, the plight of Africans in a previously overwhelmingly monocultural society, and accomplishments and achievements of Cécile Kyenge, Italy's first black cabinet minister. The instructor can use these example thematic units with discretion and adapt to learners' pedagogic cultural and linguistic needs to better foster critical thinking through Italian learning as a tool for empowerment, resistance, conscientization, dialogism, and to prevent cultural reproduction, marginalization, and devaluation.

V. Conclusion

Some inquiries must be examined for imminent study and research. The first deals with the effects of instruction for critical pedagogy in Italian language-learning classrooms. The complete and utter dearth of critical perspective with regards to Italian language pedagogy leaves a great deal to explore in regards to practices, techniques, and evaluation. Such an examination would comprise topics and issues covered herein, choice of writings, responsibilities given to learners, and practice of classroom language. Regarding suitable texts, investigation can be done with not only established research, but also more recent texts with a higher likelihood of stressing and observing particular social matters. Another issue concerns possible procedures for instructing critical thinking. Configuring such strategies begs the question whether the concept of critical pedagogy is truly compatible with the limiting strategies. The effect of the critical pedagogies notion on orders between instructors and learners, evaluator and evaluated, also needs consideration for more profound investigation (Breidbach et al, 2014). This would consist of research into instructor education at the university level and how future language instructors can acquire critical pedagogy technique. Postulations that the growth of critical pedagogy would simply shadow language learning are dubious. Instead, focused pedagogies for developing critical thinking are essential, if founded in insightful theory and strong empirical work. The many published case studies in the field of critical pedagogy specify that waiting for critical pedagogy to develop accidentally is unrealistic for language educators.

Although the phrase "critical pedagogy" is seldom mentioned in the field of Italian language learning, some language instructors encourage and exercise critical themes such as global issues and critical thinking (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2012). As L2 critical pedagogy theory becomes more commonly known by educators, this powerful theory could bond those instructors as critical teachers. When instructors share their thoughts, resources, and curricula as examples of practical L2 critical pedagogy, the influence of a receptive and knowledgeable group can aid other instructors. Societal

improvement should be an unbiased objective of every Italian language classroom. Instructors represent transformation, and transformative pedagogy is radical in nature (ELT News, 2011). Critical pedagogy can apply in classrooms at countless levels and contexts. When learners perceive their social power, encounter a shift of power, and acquire sensitivity and inclusion of diversity, an Italian language classroom can be a learning community that leads to empowerment. Italian language critical pedagogy is crucial to further the community and broader society. This literature review proposes that the present challenge in the Italian language classroom is to recognize methods to improve not only learners' Italian language proficiency, but also their cultural awareness. One way to achieve this is by applying a critical pedagogical approach to the language classroom. In the critical classroom, learners question class content, and instructors develop resources to approach Italian culture in alternative ways. The educational system often has been defined as a system in which explicit cultural values are reproduced by developing specific outlooks in learners and instructors who then creates specific practices (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1998). Those practices empower them to question conformist ways of seeing the world and enhance learning (Moreno-Lopez, 2004). By applying critical pedagogy, the Italian language classroom has potential to become a space in which learners attain language proficiency as well as develop critical awareness, a growing imperative in the ever-increasing neoliberal influenced culture of education.

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The Impact of Computer-assisted Language Learning Training on Teachers' Practices

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***Abstract*—This study investigated and identified the common computer-assisted language learning (CALL) teacher training types in the Iranian private language schools (PLSs), and their effectiveness in shaping and encouraging teachers' use of new technologies. An exploratory mixed method approach was employed, and a total of 86 Iranian EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers participated in this study. The results indicated that teachers were primarily self-trained, in the absence of comprehensive CALL training provided by either PLSs or teacher training courses offered at university level. It was concluded that self-training had resulted in subsequent sporadic and non-systematic use of CALL by teachers.**

***Index Terms*—language teacher training, computer-assisted language learning, English as a foreign language, professional development**

I. Introduction

The utilization of new technologies in language teaching and learning, generally known as computer-assisted language learning (CALL), is a relatively new phenomenon in the Iranian private language schools (PLSs). Despite its newness, CALL has attracted the attention of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and they have expressed positive attitudes towards integrating new technologies into their teaching practices (Fatemi Jahromi & Salimi, 2013; Zare-Ee, 2011). Teachers' positive attitudes, however, may not necessarily and automatically result in the effective implementation of CALL (Godwin-Jones, 2015; Peeraer & Petegram, 2010). Research has consistently shown that different factors discourage teachers from stepping outside their comfort zone and embracing the affordances provided by 21st century technologies. For instance, in Hedayati and Marandi's (2014) study, three main barriers to the integration of new technologies were identified: teacher constraints (e.g. lack of CALL preparation), facility constraints (e.g. limited access to technology), and learner constraint (e.g. insufficient digital literacy).

While availability of new technologies (Chun, 2016) and learner characteristics (Lee, 2016) are of considerable importance, it is widely agreed that teachers perform the central role in effective integration of the technological tools and affect "the outcomes of CALL through their instructions, scaffolding, feedback and responses" (Arnold & Ducate, 2015, p. 1). Given this, over the past two decades, a considerable amount of literature has been published on CALL teacher education (Cutrim Schmid & Hegelheimer, 2014; Egbert, Paulus, & Nakamichi, 2002; McNeil, 2013; Wildner, 2013) and the journal of Language Teaching & Technology (Vol. 19, 2015), for instance, allocated a special issue to teacher education and CALL. Recent evidence suggests that CALL teacher training positively contributes to teachers' more effective use of new technologies (Kozlova & Priven, 2015; Tai, 2015; Wach, 2015). Debate, however, continues about the modality, length and nature of the CALL training that teachers need to receive (Chao, 2015). In addition, research indicates that context is an important factor to be considered in CALL instruction (Gonzalez & Louis, 2013, Hong, 2010).

During the last decade, whilst CALL has been acclaimed by Iranian EFL teachers, it seems that limited attention has been given to CALL teacher training in this specific context. What is not yet clear is the type and nature of training that EFL teachers generally receive, and how this training affects the implementation of CALL and its outcomes. In view of this, the purpose of this study was to explore the current CALL teacher training system in Iran, and to investigate its impact on EFL teachers' use of new technologies.

II. Literature Review

The integration of new technologies, such as the Internet, Web 2.0, wikis, blogs, podcasts and other ever-changing digital facilities and gadgets, into second/foreign language teaching and learning requires a comprehensive understanding of the educational context and the factors that may affect the planning, process and outcome of this

synergy (Gonzalez & Louis, 2013). Adopting a simple plug-and-play approach to computers has proven to be ineffective (Cuban, 2001). Hubbard and Levy (2006) stated that the increase in the availability of the Internet and computers in schools and home settings has resulted in the more widespread use of technology in second or foreign language teaching and learning, and as a consequence, teachers feel incompetent and ineffectual if they are not reasonably familiar with CALL.

A. The Role of the Teacher

While a large volume of published studies have reported the effectiveness of using new technologies in second/foreign language teaching and learning (e.g., Blake, 2013; Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014; Lamy & Hampel, 2007), some researchers have warned that seeing technology as a panacea is a misleading idea (Chun, 2016). To achieve effective and successful implementation of CALL, one factor, among others, has been reported to be extremely critical, and that is the role of the teacher (Arnold & Ducate, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2016; Guichon & Hauck, 2011; Hubbard, 2008; Little, 2007; Zhao & Cziko, 2001). Godwin-Jones (2016) wrote that "language teachers play a vital role in both encouraging our students to explore extramural learning activities and finding ways to assist and assess the learning achieved" (p. 6). Little (2007) asserted that teachers could help students to foster learner autonomy by guiding them throughout the learning process and monitoring and evaluating their progress. O'Dowd (2015) purported that teachers in telecollaborative exchanges, where students from different cultural backgrounds engage in online communication, not only need to have ICT knowledge, but also need to develop competence in multiliteracy and intercultural communication to successfully mediate the communication among participants. The role of teacher is critical not only in CALL, but also in a broad sense of every educational context. Kumaravadivelu (2002) emphasized the importance of the teacher's role by using a metaphor. He considered theorists as play writers and teachers as actors on the stage. Theorists and curriculum developers design and construct knowledge behind the scene, whereas, teachers understand and transfer that knowledge on the stage. With respect, if the actor cannot act successfully on the stage in front of the audience, then all the behind the scene plans will be negated.

B. The Use of Technology by Teachers

Early in the 21st century, when the implementation of CALL was accelerating, Zhao and Cziko (2001) recognised an ironic contradiction in the process of integrating technology into education. They argued that although the benefits of technology in education have been reported widely, most teachers do not use it frequently in their teaching practices. Research on teachers' use of technology reports different reasons for teachers not using technology. For example, an absence of appropriate training, traditional pedagogical attitudes, teachers' personal attitudes toward technology, resistance to change, time management issues, low technical and administrative support, and a lack of digital literacy (Egbert et al., 2002; Mumtaz, 2000). The successful implementation of technology, however, in education, and particularly teaching, depends on how teachers perceive and implement technology (Motteram, Slaouti, & Onat-Stelma, 2013; Mumtaz, 2000). Hence, acceptance or rejection of the use of technology in teaching practices directly and indirectly affects the teacher's role in the classroom environment. Teachers aspiring to use technology should prepare themselves to play different roles from teachers who are following traditional methods. As Hubbard and Levy's (2006) propose, CALL teacher roles can be associated with being a practitioner, developer, researcher, and/or trainer.

C. CALL and Teacher Training

CALL teacher training/education has been identified as a major tool for encouraging and boosting technology use among language teachers (Wach, 2015). Chapelle (2006) asserted that teachers in CALL should gain the related literacies and skills to be able to choose, use, and sometimes ignore technology for their learners. Despite this, Kessler (2006) purported that many of the TESOL masters programs lacked formal CALL training, and graduates were reported to be dissatisfied with the technology-related lessons they received. He also observed that training was mainly focused on either digital literacy or software features.

Globally, CALL teacher training is being delivered in/to different structures and degrees, according to context-specific educational conditions and teacher characteristics. This continuum ranges from short-term CALL workshops (e.g., Liu & Kleinsasser, 2015; O'Dowd, 2015) to university courses in CALL (e.g., Shin, 2015). One major categorization here is formal versus informal training. This is closely related to whether teachers are pre-service or in-service when they receive their training. Arnold and Ducate (2015), for example, believed that informal training is more effective in in-service contexts. Situated learning is another method of training that has been proved to be effective in CALL contexts (Egbert, 2006; McNeil, 2013; Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010). There is an ongoing discussion regarding the modality, duration and content of CALL teacher training (Arnold & Ducate, 2015). Egbert et al. (2002) investigated how teachers learn about CALL and how their training impacts their teaching practices. The results of their mixed-method study revealed that a single course on CALL may result in learning about the available technology but not necessarily to its use. They suggested that coursework should be situated in authentic learning contexts where teachers have the opportunity to practice, apply technologies and observe evidence of student improvement.

Dooly (2009) reported on the results of a collaborative CALL teacher training project where teachers could learn from each other via dialogic network-based interactions. She found that "novice (or soon to be) teachers are worried about how they will deal with their students when they are on their own in their classroom. These worries and doubts

need to be acknowledged and given sufficient time and attention" (p. 365). Hampel (2009) suggested that an effective CALL teacher training program should contain the following components:

- mix of pre-service and in-service training to develop a range of skills and maintain and update them;
- tools training and technical support;
- hands-on pedagogical training; putting teachers in the role of students interacting with one another and collaborating on a task;
- guidance with task design that creates the right conditions for collaboration and makes best use of the tools employed;
- modelling what is expected of teachers (e.g. careful scaffolding of tasks, precise task instructions, moderation);
- activity banks with interactive tasks for tutor use;
- pedagogical support;
- self-reflection and feedback; and
- space for sharing experience(p. 48).

In her study, Hampel (2009) also discovered that there are a number of institutional factors that can influence the success of the training programs. These factors include "the necessity of tailoring training to specific institutional needs (e.g., in terms of tools), the fit of pedagogical approaches and institutional set-up, and the need to regulate and monitor tutor workload" (p. 49).

D. CALL in the Iranian Context

While CALL is recognized as a standard and expected part of a language teaching and learning curriculum in some developed countries (Kessler, 2006), it is still a relatively new approach in others, such as Iran. Limited access to technological tools, insufficient digital literacy among language learners and teachers, and a lack of CALL instructional design skills are considered factors that have resulted in the inadequate implementation of CALL in Iranian schools (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014). Despite its newness, CALL has attracted Iranian EFL teachers' attention and they have expressed positive attitudes towards integrating new technologies into their teaching practices (Fatemi Jahromi & Salimi, 2013; Zare-Ee, 2011). In addition, a considerable amount of research has been conducted into the application of CALL with Iranian EFL learners (Foomani & Hedayati; 2016; Ghaemi & Ebrahimi; 2015; Hedayati & Foomani, 2015; Khodaparast & Ghafournia, 2015). To date, however, there has been little discussion about CALL teacher training/education in the Iranian context, and how training impacts on teachers' implementation of CALL. Hence, this study was conducted to investigate and identify the CALL teacher training status quo in Iran, and its impact on EFL teachers' use of new technologies.

III. METHOD

Following an exploratory mixed method design, this study began by interviewing eight EFL teachers. Afterwards, the quantitative phase was conducted by surveying 78 EFL teachers. It was intended that broad information gathering methods would help to address unanticipated topics (Patton, 2002). Only teachers employed in private language schools (PLSs) were invited to participate in this study, as the majority of language learners (especially adult learners) in Iran take courses in PLSs to learn a foreign language, such as English, in a communicative and more flexible way (Khoshsima & Toroujeni, 2017). While language units are embedded in the national curriculum of Iran, and are offered in public schools, the lack of competent language teachers and limited class hours in these contexts motivates language learners to seek better language learning experiences in PLSs (Mohammadian Haghighi, & Norton, 2017).

EFL teachers in four different PLCs in a northern city of Iran, Zanjan, were invited to participate in this study. Purposeful sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) was engaged and all the participants needed to be Iranian, EFL teachers, employed in a PLS and have a basic knowledge of ICT. The four schools were equipped with computers, data projectors, and the Internet. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and participants were asked open-ended questions. The questions were designed and developed prior to the interview, but the researcher explored further related questions where more illustrations and probing were needed and/or more data could be obtained. As the teachers were all proficient users of the English language, the interviews were conducted in English, and no translation was required. To protect the participants' identities, pseudonyms (Arash, Sima, Navid, Maryam, Reza, Ava, Amir and Mahin) have been used. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the participants in the qualitative phase.

TABLE 1
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Pseudo-names	Gender	Age Range	Teaching Experience (Years)	Qualification
Arash	Male	31-40	13	PhD in TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language)
Sima	Female	18-20	2	B.A Student in IT (information & technology)
Maryam	Female	21-30	5	M.A. Student in TEFL
Ava	Female	21-30	2	B.A Student in English Language Translation
Navid	Male	21-30	6	M.A student in TEFL
Reza	Male	21-30	9	B.A in Psychology
Mahin	Female	21-30	8	M.A. in TEFL
Amir	Male	21-30	2	B.A student in TEFL

Participants responded to the following focus questions:
• What type of technological tools do you use in your teaching?
• What do you use technological tools for in your teaching?
• Please describe a lesson were you implemented CALL.
• What type of CALL training have you received? Please explain.
• How does school provide you with CALL training and tools?
• How did you receive training to help you implement CALL?
• How do you share your CALL knowledge and skills with colleagues?

After conducting the interviews, 150 invitations were sent out to potential participants via LinkedIn, and 78 (44 females; 34 males) of these responded to the survey, which equated to a response rate of 52%. The reason for recruiting participants through LinkedIn was threefold. First, it was convenient to search for and identify teachers who met the eligibility criteria required for this study. When a teacher uses LinkedIn, the presumption is that she/he is familiar with the Internet, web browsing, social media and similar affordances of ICT. Secondly, the survey implemented in this study was online, and it was appropriate to send the link to the participants through LinkedIn's messaging feature. Finally, this medium provided the opportunity to reach subjects from 22 different cities all around Iran, a variation which in turn enhanced the generalizability of the findings to the target population. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of the participants in the quantitative phases of the study.

TABLE 2
SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	categories	n	%
Gender	Female	49	62.8
	Male	29	37.2
Age	18-20	2	2.6
	21-25	12	15.4
	26-30	25	32.1
	31-35	25	32.1
	36-40	7	9.0
	Above 40	7	9.0
Professional language-related degree	None	6	7.7
	Bachelors	12	15.4
	Masters	44	56.4
	PhD	16	20.5
Teaching experience (years)	1-3	15	19.2
	4-6	30	38.5
	7-9	9	11.5
	10 and more	24	30.8

The survey was composed of 17 multiple-choice questions, including demographic information, teachers' CALL competence (through self-assessment) and the types of CALL training they had received. The survey was developed, designed and implemented on the Qualtrics platform (www.qualtrics.com). A link to the survey was sent to the participants through the LinkedIn messaging system.

The collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted using both thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) methods. For the quantitative data, descriptive and correlational analyses were employed using SPSS.

IV. RESULTS

A. Qualitative Data

1. Technology use

In response to the first question, what type of technological tools do you use in your teaching, teachers identified various tools. The most commonly used technologies included CD players, personal computers, TV screens, and, in some cases, data projectors and smart phones. Two of the eight teachers reported using online resources, with one using the Telegram social networking tool and the other employing the Edmodo learning management system. Teachers' motivations for using technology were categorized into three groups: 1) delivery of audio-visual materials in the target language, 2) using technology as a search engine, and 3) sharing of resources, along with feedback. In the first category, CD players were reported to be widely used for playing audio tracks for listening exercises. Three teachers, however, preferred to use their laptops and smartphones instead on a regular basis. They used TV screens and data projectors to display visual materials (e.g. pictures and videos) related to the content of the textbook. Teachers expressed their inclination to use current technologies, rather than outdated tools like CD-players. Arash, for instance, mentioned that he played supplementary videos for each lesson in the core textbook on a big screen using data projector. Maryam noted that playing audio files for listening exercises was an unavoidable part of teaching. She reported playing audio files on her smartphone, rather than CD player, as she thought the latter was outdated and time-consuming.

In relation to the second category, teachers reported their use of new technologies for searching purposes, using either digital dictionaries or online search engines. Sima stated that she browsed the Internet to find relevant pictures and videos for the topic of every lesson, and displayed them on her laptop or data projector. She also encouraged her students to use their smartphones to browse online resources to find answers for the questions raised in the class. She believed that it was a fun way to engage students in discovery learning. Reza perceived technology as a tool, which could help teachers compensate for the lack of content knowledge when teaching certain points. He reported regular use of dictionary applications on his smartphone to look for the meanings of vocabulary items.

In terms of the third category, two of the teachers reported using social media and learning management systems. Ava created an online group using the Telegram social media application to maintain her connection with students after classroom hours, and she posted extracurricular multimedia materials, relevant to the textbook lessons. In this group, students were encouraged to share their materials and comments. In contrast, used the Edmodo learning management system (LMS) to mark students' assignments and provide them with feedback. Students were expected to upload their assignments or questions to Edmodo, and their teacher, Navid, provided feedback via the same platform. Navid mentioned that Edmodo allowed his students to upload various modes of multimedia, appropriate to their learning styles and preferences. Similarly, he stated that he could provide them with feedback, in not only text format, but also other multimedia files such as audio or video.

2. CALL training

A majority of the interviewees (6) reported that they had not received any type of CALL training, either during their university studies, or in their workplace. These teachers were reported to be self-trained in CALL; except two of them, Navid and Ava, who had the experience of attending CALL workshops. Three categories of reasons for teachers' following a self-training method were identified: 1) lack of CALL training provided by the PLS, 2) lack of CALL units in university language teacher training courses, and 3) lack of peer-learning among teachers in PLSs. Mahin, who had been teaching English for eight years, stated that:

We have training sessions in our school, but it doesn't cover any topic specifically related to CALL. I use Internet and digital dictionaries in my classes, based on what I have learnt myself…. Most the time I try a tool and see if it is useful or I need to try another one.

Amir, another teacher with two years of teaching experience also said that:

I like to be a teacher who is aware of new technologies, [be]cause I think this is what my students expect from me. There are many Internet [online] sources that I can get hints from them. I like to discuss about CALL with my colleagues and try to get new ideas, but this doesn't happen very often. The school doesn't demand us to use any specific technology, but I personally like to use it.

This was a recurrent theme in the interviews; a sense amongst interviewees that there is no CALL training provided by the PLSs, and in most cases, no obligation from schools to use new technologies, except outdated ones like CD-players. Another emerging theme was the lack of CALL training in university TESOL courses. Arash, for example, who had a PhD in TEFL, had done his bachelors and masters in English language teaching as well. He said that, during all those years of studying TEFL, he was never offered a course or unit on CALL at university. He explained:

I think the content of TEFL courses at university need to be modified, and include lessons on CALL to prepare teachers to use technologies effectively…. Language teaching context is different form 10 years ago, and it keeps changing. So, I think the content of teacher training [at university] should be up-to-date as well and address the needs of teachers and students.

Teachers reported a lack of pedagogical competence in identifying/designing and implementing technology-integrated tasks, which could help them achieve the course objectives. Technology use was mainly restricted to simple tools such as CD-players, which, as stated by Navid, are considered as outdated technologies in today's world. As Mahin explained, a lack of instructional design knowledge for the implementation of CALL left teachers puzzled about answering what, how, when and where questions regarding the use of new technologies. They found it difficult to choose the appropriate tool which would be relevant and attractive for students. Amir, an early career teacher, said that:

A big challenge for me is selecting appropriate tool…. Another problem is using that technology regularly. Because I use for example Internet browsing spontaneously at the times that I think it is helpful to use…. I can say I don't follow a specific plan for integration of technology.

Yet, Navid, who had the experience of attending a CALL workshop, perceived this training type as effective and informative. He explained:

I recently attended a two-hour workshop about the Edmodo website. I think it was very informative. After this workshop, I decided to transfer part of my teaching into this online environment. Before attending this workshop I had no idea about learning management systems.

While Navid was satisfied with the content and structure of the workshop, he highlighted the existence of a few problems:

One problem is that these kind of workshops are sometimes expensive to register and attend…. I myself decided to attend this workshop, so I received no financial support from school. The other problem is that when I decide to apply Edmodo in my classes, I receive no support or appreciation from school, which I think is demotivating sometimes.

The findings from the interviews, together with the reflections from related literature, formed the content of the survey for the quantitative phase. The survey was conducted to examine the qualitative findings in a broader context, to increase the generalizability of the results.

B. Quantitative Data

Of the study population (n=78), 62.8% were female and 37.2 % were male teachers. Participants were recruited from 22 different cities around Iran, including major cities such as Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad and Isfahan. The majority of teachers aged between 26 and 35 (64.2%) which indicates that EFL teachers in PLSs are relatively young. This accords with the earlier observation in Mohammadian Haghighi and Norton's (2017) study, which reported the youthful characteristics of Iranian EFL teachers in PLSs. Nearly all the participants (92.3%) had language-related professional degrees, with more than half of them (56.4%) holding a master's degree, followed by a PhD (20.5%) and bachelors (15.4%) degrees. These results indicate Iranian EFL teachers' desire to seek advanced teacher training courses at masters and PhD levels. A small minority of those surveyed, six teachers, indicated that they had no language related professional degrees, certificates or diplomas, which shows that teachers with no language-related qualifications are allowed to teach in PLSs, as long as they demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency in the target language. More than two-thirds of the participants (69.2%) had degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT), and the remaining participants graduated in English Literature and English Language Translation subjects.

In response to the question about job status, 53 of the participants reported that they were part-time teachers (teaching for less than 30 hours per week), while the other 25 were full-time teachers (teaching for 30 hours per week or more). Job Status was defined based on the norms of working hours in Iran. There are three possible explanations for the popularity of part-time teaching among Iranian teachers. First, many of the teachers were simultaneously studying at university, and it leaves them with limited time available for working. Secondly, the salary of PLS teachers is relatively low compared to other professions, and teachers need to take other jobs to supplement their income. Finally, PLSs usually offer language classes in the evening to meet the needs of students, and accordingly, there are not many teaching opportunities during the morning or afternoon.

When participants were asked to self-assess their competence in implementing CALL on a scale from 0 (not confident at all) to 10 (highly confident), over half expressed having middling to nearly high (Mean= 7.09, SD= 2.09) confidence. A point-biserial correlation was run to determine the relationship between teachers' professional degree and their perceived CALL competence. Surprisingly, results showed that there was a weak negative relationship between these two variables (rpb = -.228, n = 78, p = .048). This shows that higher professional degrees had not increased Iranian EFL teachers' confidence in using CALL. Likewise, no meaningful relationship was observed between the gender and CALL competence variables (rpb = -.082, n = 78, p = .047). It should be noted, however, participants' competence in CALL was assessed based on their personal perceptions. In other words, assessing participants' CALL competence based on their practical practices may demonstrate different results.

The second section of the questionnaire required respondents to provide information about CALL teacher training. The first question asked about the type of CALL training that teachers had received, presenting them with 6 choices (adopted partly from Kessler, 2006). Respondents could choose more than one answer. Table 3 below summarizes the responses:

TABLE 3
CALL TRAINING THAT IRANIAN TEACHERS REPORTED HAVING RECEIVED

1. I learnt CALL …	n	%
on my own (for instance by browsing the net)	55	70.5
from my colleagues in school	16	20.5
by attending a workshop	14	17.9
by attending a training course organized by a language school	5	6.4
by undertaking a course at university	13	16.7
other	9	11.5

It can be seen from Table 3 that the majority of teachers (70.5%) had learnt to use CALL on their own, or in other words, they were self-trained. Only five teachers reported having experience of learning CALL by attending a training course organized by PLSs. One-fifth of the participant population experienced learning how to use new technologies by interacting and sharing knowledge with other teachers. CALL workshops and courses at university, although not very common, were other resources for learning about the use of new technologies in language teaching. Many of the respondents who chose "other" also indicated examples of self-directed and peer learning; for instance, via using social networking tools and browsing the Internet for online resources.

To compare teachers' present CALL training with their preferred ways of learning CALL, teachers were asked how they preferred to learn CALL. The results showed a disparity between preferences and experiences, as shown in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4
TEACHERS' PREFERRED WAY OF LEARNING CALL

2. I prefer to learn CALL …	n	%
on my own (for instance by browsing the net)	19	24.4
from my colleagues in school	5	6.4
by attending a workshop	34	43.6
by attending a training course organized by language school	11	14.1
by undertaking a course at university	5	6.4
other	4	5.1

As illustrated in Table 4, the majority of teachers (43.6%) indicated that attending a workshop would be their first preference. Comparing this response rate to teachers' current CALL training through workshops (17.9%), highlights the existence of a gap between teachers' current practices or opportunities and their preferences. The other striking difference was related to self-directed learning. While currently a majority of participants learn CALL on their own, the data show that only a quarter of them prefer to continue this way. When examining teachers' preferences, only five individuals chose undertaking a CALL course at university. Some respondents also indicated their preference for having more opportunities for learning CALL through attending a training course organized by a language school.

Table 5 below illustrates the succeeding questions in the survey, and participants' responses to them. Employing a top-2-box scoring method for interpretation of data, the majority of teachers reported that they are likely to share their knowledge. However, they reported less likelihood of this kind of cooperation among teachers in their PLSs. Teachers were motivated to learn CALL, irrespective of the availability/quality of technological tools in the PLS. Most of those surveyed believed that PLSs need to provide language teachers with CALL training. There was a moderate tendency toward the idea that early-career teachers are better at learning and adopting CALL. These findings are further discussed in the discussion section below.

TABLE 5
TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 3-7

	extremely likely		somewhat likely		neither likely nor unlikely		somewhat unlikely		extremely unlikely	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
3. I share my CALL knowledge and experience with my colleagues at school.	28	35.9	24	30.8	12	15.4	8	10.3	6	7.7
4. In my school, teachers share their CALL knowledge with each other.	10	12.8	26	33.3	16	20.5	20	25.6	6	7.7
	strongly agree		somewhat agree		neither agree nor disagree		somewhat disagree		strongly disagree	
5. I am not motivated to learn CALL, because there is not suitable technological infrastructure in my school.	9	11.5	13	16.7	9	11.5	19	24.4	28	35.9
6. I think schools are responsible for training teachers how to use CALL.	45	57.7	24	30.8	4	5.1	5	6.4	0	0
7. Novice teachers are quicker in transferring into CALL teachers.	8	10.3	31	39.7	26	33.3	8	10.3	5	6.4

V. DISCUSSION

The initial objective of the current research was to identify the prevalent CALL training types received by Iranian EFL teachers, and investigate how these training types affected teachers' practices. Prior studies have shown that training has various types and structures, ranging from short-term CALL workshops (Liu & Kleinsasser, 2015; O'Dowd, 2015) to university courses in CALL (Shin, 2105). However, there are teachers who have expressed their willingness to learn CALL on their own (Kessler, 2006) or from colleagues (Egbert et al., 2002).

A. CALL Teacher Training

Consistent with the results of Kessler's (2006) research, the majority of respondents in this study, both qualitative and quantitative phases, reported they were self-trained in CALL. What is surprising is that, despite almost all of the participants in this study had English language related university certificates, they had not received specific training in how to implement CALL in their practices. This shows that TESOL courses in the Iranian universities, regardless of being bachelors or masters degrees, do not particularly train EFL teachers to become competent and efficient users of new technologies for pedagogical purposes. These results accord with earlier research in the Iranian context (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014), and highlight the necessity for changes in the content of language teacher training courses at the university level (Hong, 2010). By comparing the responses to questions 1 and 2 in the survey, it was also recognized that, while a small number of teachers reported learning about CALL at university, this training type was not identified as their preferred way of learning CALL. This lack of interest, likewise, may be attributed to absence of solid CALL units in TESOL courses offered by universities. One of the interviewees stated that CALL was not taught as a separate

unit, and this topic was introduced briefly by those professors in applied linguistics, who were personally interested in this subject area.

Another interviewee mentioned that the discussions they had about CALL at university were mostly theoretical, and no hands-on practice was offered. Considering these aspects, it seems unlikely that current university-level teacher training would prepare Iranian EFL teachers to use technology. Similar to Egbert, Paulus, and Nakamichi' (2002) findings, this kind of coursework and training "may lead to technology learning but not necessarily to its use" (p. 111). In a similar vein, Hubbard and Levy (2006) differentiated between CALL knowledge and CALL skill, where the first one is about what the teacher needs to know, and the latter explains what the teacher should be able to do. Given this, theory-based CALL instruction may increase teachers' CALL knowledge, however, gaining CALL skills requires undertaking hands-on lessons. Moreover, skill-based training can be tailored to teachers' context-specific needs to enhance effectiveness. O'Dowd (2015) stated that, "It is unrealistic to attempt to train educators in the intricacies of telecollaborative exchange through the simple transmission of facts and guidelines in instructor-driven set ups" (p. 77).

The findings of this study highlight the need for Iranian EFL teachers to gain relevant context-specific literacies and skills to use new technologies. According to governmental policy, for instance, some technologies (e.g., YouTube) are not allowed to be used in Iran. These kinds of restrictions are sometimes imposed by outsiders as well. For instance, the name of Iran is not even included in the registration forms of some popular global websites. Moreover, cultural, privacy and security concepts are different from those in western countries (Nia & Marandi, 2014). A teacher who intends to use new technologies needs to be aware of these facts and factors. It seems that CALL teacher training at PLS level may be the best place for teachers to gain not only technological knowledge, but also knowledge of the context.

CALL teacher training was reported to be absent in PLSs also. As one of the teachers pointed out, PLSs provide training sessions for teachers, however, no CALL-specific content is included in these sessions. Moreover, schools do not urge or expect teachers to integrate technologies into their practices. Accordingly, teachers who implement CALL are not supported or encouraged by the school system. Conversely, as one of the participants stated, support from PLSs seems necessary to help teachers apply the skills they have learnt in the workshops or any other training environment. As Hubbard and Levy (2006) ask, "what are teachers able to do with the material they acquired in a CALL course once it is over? And what factors may explain individual differences in success with transferring CALL knowledge and skills to their own classrooms?" (p. 250). A number of teachers in this study chose training or workshops organized by PLSs as their preferred way of learning CALL. One key advantage of school-led workshops could be the delivery of context-specific training, which is informed by the pedagogical and technological characteristics of that school, as well as the existing affordances and limitations.

Comparing the responses to Questions 1 and 2 reveals the existence of a gap between teachers' current received CALL training (i.e. self-training) and their preferred ways of learning CALL (i.e. attending workshop). While Kessler (2006) acknowledges teachers self-directed lifelong learning, he highlights the need for empowering this learning type with theories and principles of CALL, together with hands-on practices. This may justify why participants in this study reported limited and sporadic use of technologies in their practices, despite assessing themselves as relatively competent in implementing CALL. It is suggested that self-training, which is not accompanied by a sound understanding of CALL theories and foundations, leaves teachers unguided in various stages of CALL design, implementation and evaluation.

Another important finding was the lack of appropriate conditions for fostering cooperation and peer learning among teachers in PLSs. While over half of the teachers said they were likely to share their CALL knowledge and experience with colleagues, they reported that, in practice, not many teachers in their schools share their CALL knowledge with others. While this could be result of 'impression management' displayed by teachers to express their unselfish behavior, another possible explanation for this difference might be that, despite teachers' willingness to share their knowledge, PLSs are not successful in creating cooperative learning opportunities, or professional learning communities among teachers (Hord, 2009). Professional learning communities, which are based on constructivist learning theory, encourage teachers to bring their prior knowledge and experience to the new learning community, and perceive learning as a developmental process that requires being active and reflective (Burns, Menchaca, & Dimock, 2002). Kozlova and Priven (2015) conducted a study where teacher trainees engaged in cloud-based collaborative learning to develop 3D-specific teaching skills. Results showed that collaboration among teachers, by providing constant peer-evaluation and scaffolding, helped teachers to develop their skills effectively. In view of that, initiating this kind of collaborative and informal learning communities among Iranian EFL teachers could help them to enhance their CALL knowledge and skills.

One unanticipated finding was that teachers were enthusiastic and motivated to learn about CALL and the affordances by new technological tools, regardless of the limited availability of advanced educational technologies in their schools. However, it was the expectation of the majority of respondents to receive CALL training provided by PLSs. Teachers also thought that they could use new technologies for educational purposes, similar to their applications in everyday life. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to Bax's (2003) concept of 'normalization' in integration and implementation of CALL. He asserts that normalization "is relevant to any kind of technological innovation and refers to the stage when the technology becomes invisible, embedded in everyday practice and hence 'normalized'" (p. 23). This explains how CALL teacher training should ultimately empower teachers to systematically

use new technological tools in their practices without experiencing anxiety, or even without recognizing them as technologies.

Interview results suggested that CALL is not effectively practiced among Iranian EFL teachers. Talking about this issue, an interviewee said he mainly followed the conventional methods of teaching and used CALL as a supplementary tool in a non-planned way. Another interviewee, Sima, mentioned that she did not have a general plan for running a CALL-based class, but she used technologies like digital dictionaries and the Internet to help her at some points in her teaching. The most advanced use of CALL observed in this study was one of the teacher's use of the Edmodo learning management system. Navid, who had the experience of attending a workshop on Edmodo, reported he used this tool to receive students' assignments and homework, and to provide them with feedback. He believed that Edmodo was a useful tool to receive multimedia outputs from students, and to provide them with feedback in different modalities. In the current study, no instructional design for CALL (Chapelle, 2003) provided by PLSs was reported. Hence, teachers were using CALL based on their own motivation and plans. Accordingly, it seems that teachers' self-directed learning in CALL has not effectively resulted in their systematic or normalized use of new technologies (Bax, 2003). In Hubbard and Levy's (2006) CALL teacher framework, teachers are seen as practitioners, designers, evaluators or trainers. Results from this study showed that Iranian EFL teachers take the CALL practitioner roles, without perceiving their roles as designers, evaluators or trainers of CALL. This was attributed to limitations relevant to time, funding and support from the PLSs.

As acknowledged by Arnold and Ducate (2015), "CALL teacher education overall still appears not to be adequate and effective" (p. 1). This study was motivated by similar calls for researching CALL teacher education in various contexts to address the existing challenges and suggest possible solutions. It was observed in this study that context-specific training could play an important role in teachers' successful use of CALL. With the relatively small sample size in this study, in both qualitative and quantitative phases, caution must be applied, as the findings may not be applicable to all Iranian EFL teachers and/or PLSs. Outside the scope of this study, there could be teachers or PLSs that implement regular and systematic CALL after receiving sound training. However, one of the strengths of this study was recruiting teachers from 22 different cities all around Iran, including large (e.g., Tehran) and small (e.g., Dezful) ones. This variety can assure us that the voices of various teachers from different educational contexts have been heard, which in turn provides us with a more realistic understanding of the phenomenon. These findings have important implications for developing appropriate and effective CALL teacher training programs that meet the needs of Iranian EFL teachers and students. This is an important issue for potential research. In the future investigations, it might be possible to conduct experimental research on various types of CALL training and observe their short- and long-term effects on teachers' use of new technologies.

VI. Conclusion

This study investigated the status of CALL teacher training in Iran and its effect on EFL teachers' use of educational technologies. The findings revealed that the amount and types of current trainings have not resulted in teachers' normalized (Bax, 2003) used of new technologies. It became evident that principally teachers were self-trained, in the absence of formal CALL training provided by the PLSs and TESOL courses at university level (Kessler, 2006). Teachers identified workshops as the most effective way of learning about CALL, however, only a small minority experienced this training medium. The evidence from this study suggests that CALL teacher training is not appropriately provided in the Iranian PLSs and/or universities, which calls for considerable changes in these sectors. Self-edification and lack of instructional design seemed to result in sporadic and non-systematic use of CALL among Iranian teachers. It is recommended that PLSs should provide context-specific CALL training to promote the regular and systematic use of technologies by teachers (Herna ńdez-Ramos, 2005). The current findings add to a growing body of literature on CALL teacher education. This topic is understudied in the Iranian context, and it is recommended to conduct further studies in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues. The implementation of gradual and systematic changes into current EFL teacher training courses is critical, for the success of CALL strongly relies on language teacher education (Hubbard, 2008).

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Motivating EFL Students with Conversation Data

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***Abstract*—Motivating learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to improve their speaking fluency is challenging in environments where institutions emphasize reading and listening test performance. The focus tends to shift to strategic reading and listening first in order to attain acceptable test results, often at the expense of communicative competence. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is well positioned to assess and develop communicative competence for EFL learners, and to motivate them to speak. This article introduces the Objective Subjective (OS) Scoring system, a CALL system which sets clear immediate goals on the path to better communicative competence with data from videoed conversation sessions. It motivates learners to improve on their data in every consecutive conversation session, whereby an environment is created which facilitates conversation practice as well as individual error correction.**

***Index Terms*—communication systems and technology, foreign languages, higher education, language teaching**

I. Introduction

Setting a goal involves creating a psychological discrepancy between current ability and ideal ability (Locke and Latham, 2002). Transforming current ability into ideal ability requires time, effort and motivation. When goals are set too high, learners become demotivated, and when they are too low, learners lose interest. Scoring well on an international speaking proficiency test is one example of a distal goal that represents a major discrepancy in what learners from many parts of the world are generally capable of, and what they would eventually like to be able to do communicatively. To keep them motivated, more attainable goals with periodical moments of success and rewards are needed. To this end, the Objective Subjective (OS) Scoring system sets clear immediate learning goals for every individual, which form stepping stones on the path to speaking proficiency, but concentrates on fluency, i.e. amount of language produced. It involves students rating themselves with data compiled after transcribing videoed conversation sessions. The system will be elaborated in a later section. The next section discusses some issues concerning EFL speaking proficiency rating with specific attention to motivation, which in general is a neglected attribute in proficiency rating systems.

II. EFL Speaking Skill Rating Principles

Speaking and writing skills are more complicated to assess than reading and listening skills. Reading and listening can be objectively assessed with a cloze test or multiple choice questions (Ellis, 1985; Fulcher, 2003), whereas speaking and writing need a relatively subjective perspective i.e. a human element on the assessing end. It is this human factor that modern speaking skill raters aim to emulate. Many modern speaking tests are done with CALL systems. Computer based speech raters such as the speech rater® system patented by Educational Testing Services (ETS) feature the ability to use voice recognition software in order to measure a spoken response against a corpus of previous responses with tagged data, and then predict how human raters would assess the same response. This step up is often referred to as intelligent CALL, or iCALL (Gamper, Knapp, 2002). Zechner, Chen, Davis, Evanini, Lee, Leong, Wang, and Yoon, (2015, p.1), at the time researchers at ETS, describe the steps in a typical modern automated scoring system as follows:

"…adapt a non-native English speech rater (trained on TOEFL Practice Online data) to transcribed THT (Test with Heterogeneous Tasks) task responses, then compute a set of relevant speech features to predict trained human rater scores."

In the example above, the typical challenges inherent in the process of rating a spoken response come to light: (1) Non-native English responses need to be assessed differently from native responses; (2) a criterion, usually a corpus of prior responses and a database of previous scores, is needed against which speakers are measured; (3) a set of focal speech features need to be decided and; (4) a scoring model comprising valid analytic scales and a composite score need to be put in place in collaboration with human raters. This system mirrors and improves the way human raters would assess a response against all of their previous experiences as raters. Such a system seems to be sufficiently objective; however, (2) and (3) above tend to demotivate test takers in Japan. The problem is that the corpus used by the program takes the place of previous human experience. In other words, mirroring the tagged data and focal speech features in the corpus becomes the ultimate goal, and the test taker is forced to master the particular corpus language features in order to attain a higher score. This practice often has negative effects on motivation as the goals to attain in order to appear proficient are unclear to many test takers unless they are committed to spending time and money researching the specific testing products on sale. The designers of the corpus and the language features are subjectively in charge, which in the case of high stakes assessment is a method not completely ethically sound in a world with so many first

languages and variations of English. Computer based speaking tests are valuable because of their superior accuracy; however, the majority of the CALL systems and tests are not motivational. Bodnar, Cucciarini, Strik, and van Hout (2016) outlined various issues concerning CALL systems with special emphasis on motivation. They agree that not enough research has gone into making CALL systems inherently motivational. This article aims to add to the body of research concerning this issue. It calls for the localization of speech raters, especially in Japan, which would add beneficial elements of objectivity and validity and enhance motivation toward producing more language, regardless of whether the language produced is exactly in line with an Anglo-American dominant corpus.

A speaking assessment must be valid as well as sufficiently objective; however, it should also be a fair, calculated measurement of proficiency that takes into account variables such as linguistic interference and educational background. Many CALL systems address this through student modeling, but few of these systems take motivation into account (Bodnar et al., 2016). As an additional overall guide to test validity in general, Bachman (1990, p.300) states that an assessment should *"capture or recreate…the essence of language use."* The speaking tasks, in other words, need to reflect real world usage and a speaker who scores well on the assessment should also be able to use English communicatively outside of the testing environment. In the experience of the researcher, this is rarely the case with internationally sold computer based tests in Japan. There is as of yet no test able to assess and predict proficiency for Japanese students conversing with each other. The types of expressions Japanese students use naturally in conversations are not paid much attention in the literature. Instead, students are generally expected to model their expressions around what is dictated by international testing companies. As a result, many students start to focus on beating the international test, and regard being able to converse in English with their peers as less important.

Motivation requires constant *"feed-forward control in addition to feedback."* (Locke et al., 2002, p.708). Without attainable intervals that feed forward through periodical successes, most people become demotivated regardless of the nature of the final goal. EFL learners in Japan are no exception. To make matters worse, some stop improving communicative ability altogether when they have received an acceptable score on an international speaking test. Learners want to improve their ability, in other words close the gap between current ability and future ability. Speaking proficiency rating has become a very lucrative business which feeds off an ultimately elusive, idealized final goal.

III. Proficiency Goals and Attainable Fluency

A clearly defined set of goals to attain proficiency often eludes students in parts of the world such as Japan where English is seldom used outside of pedagogical situations. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) designed and sold by the British Council Inc., for example, rates speaking proficiency on nine bands, according to four factors: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation (IELTS, 2015). In North America, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) suggests four factors, namely function, content, context, and accuracy as indicative of speaking proficiency. In fact, most regions have their own innate concept of proficiency and these overlap somewhat to form an intuitive rather than a concretely quantifiable concept of proficiency internationally. For EFL learners in general, staying motivated throughout the long path toward proficiency as prescribed by these and other testing institutions is no small task.

The OS scoring system considers these developments, and is designed in such a way that the students become the creators of their own corpus. They are ultimately measured against their former selves—not against a foreign corpus as they do not reside in an English-dominant region. Atkinson (1958) has shown that motivation decreases in the face of a task or goal deemed to be distal and out of reach. The OS Scoring system aims to shift the focus of the learner from proficiency as perceived by independent international testing companies, to fluency more immediately attainable by improving on prior data. It aims to motivate speakers in conversations by lowering their affective filter, by giving them a sense of control over their assessment, and by allowing them to analyze their own data to see where they need to make progress in their expressions.

IV. OS Scoring and Conventional Speech Rating

The OS Scoring system represents the culmination of fourteen years of trial and error using video to assess speaking skills. Peter Wanner (2002) described in detail the first attempts at the Kyoto Institute of Technology to assess group discussions using video and the subjects themselves as raters. Since then, technology has improved, and the process has been streamlined to deliver more accurate qualitative as well as quantitative data. This article serves to bear on these developments using the most recent speech rating research and to introduce OS Scoring as an effective motivator and assessment tool.

OS Scoring differs from conventional rating in the high entropy tasks it requires in each conversation session. High entropy tasks include more unpredictable activities such as expanding on the opinions of others, not only question responses with predictable answers. Unlike the human to computer interaction, which is the norm in conventional rating, OS scoring involves human to human interaction which necessitates real time responses to natural, unpredictable conversation. Table 1 below outlines the five main differences in the processes of conventional speech rating and OS Scoring:

TABLE 1.
THE FIVE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONVENTIONAL SPEECH RATING AND OS SCORING.

Conventional Speech Rating	Objective Subjective Scoring
(i) Subjects are generally assessed one at a time by a computer.	Subjects assess themselves in a group with the aid of a computer.
(ii) Subjects are compared to tagged data.	Subjects are compared to their last session.
(iii) Scores are predicted by a computer and verified by human raters afterwards.	Scores are exact analyses of utterances, done by the subjects themselves.
(iv) The test result is a once off analysis of a comparison with tagged data.	The subjects assess themselves a number of times per semester and are able to document development.
(v) Tasks are planned and corpus specific.	Tasks are topic specific with natural unplanned interaction.

As can be inferred from Table 1 above, OS Scoring makes the subjects responsible for their own scores. This eliminates obstacles common in speech rating such as rater bias (Caban, 2003) and accent comprehension (Major, Fitzmaurice, and Balasubramanian, 2002). The natural unplanned interaction allows subjects to interact by asking for clarification, as well as perform *"confirmation checks"* and *"comprehension checks"* as nonnative speakers are reported to do more often than native speakers (Zhang, 2009, p.92). OS Scoring therefore enables a more personalized evaluation of nonnative speakers than a once off computer based test.

The system sets itself apart from conventional speech rating by keeping the subjects involved in the rating process and introducing them to the basic measuring methodology for phrases such as mean length of turn (MLT) and total TIME spent speaking English. These will be elaborated later. Total TIME spent speaking English is considered by the researcher here to be a valuable indicator of motivation, especially in Japan where students can be reluctant to speak in front of their peers.

V. OS SCORING PRINCIPLES

Thus far, some of the literature concerning motivation as an important factor in assessment systems as well as what sets OS Scoring apart from conventional systems have been discussed. This section moves on to introduce OS Scoring as a motivational CALL tool that can be utilized in university English courses.

Setting up the system is easy. Similarly proficient students are divided into conversation groups of six to eight members. Each member of the group is assigned a chair, labeled for the camera as A to H. These labels are used in the transcription stage to identify which subjects spoke at which turns. Conversation topics can be chosen from the English curriculum for every session. In this case, topics included a *Self-introduction* as warm-up, followed the next week by *Conflict*, then *Population*, and this investigation concluded with *The Environment* as the last topic although there were six more topics following the investigation.

At the beginning of each session, the camera is switched on and students have twenty minutes to converse. After twenty minutes, the session is concluded and a copy of the video file is sent to each student in the group. Students then use the CLAN program (MacWhinney, 1995) to transcribe their utterances with the assistance of a researcher as they watch themselves speak, adhering to the Codes for Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT) protocol. Students also transcribe what their friends say before they speak in order to pay attention to how dialog flows from one student to the next. At the time of this research, instructions for this protocol were available online in both English and Japanese, free for students to download from the CHILDES website (MacWhinney, 1995), which also supports the transcribing process and helps students familiarize themselves with language transcription in general. The program allows readouts of frequency, mean length of utterance, mean length of turn, and other data which the students compile in a spreadsheet. This data is submitted and the researcher then records it into a master spreadsheet as a collection of analytic scales that will finally make out a percentage of the composite score for each student.

Students are given their data readouts each week. In this way, they are constantly aware of the time they speak individually during every session, their ability to form and pronounce utterances that are lexically and syntactically coherent, and the pauses they take between utterances. This self-awareness serves to motivate them to challenge the data, to speak more, to form better coherent utterances, and to pause less during each following conversation session.

VI. OS SCORING VALIDITY

For the OS Scoring system to be a valid speaking proficiency assessment tool with the benefit of improving subject fluency in conversations, there must be proof, both that the system delivers results indicative of communicative speaking skills, and that it improves speaking fluency. The first of these two attributes to be proven has to do with traditional concepts of validity: concurrent validity, construct validity, content validity, face validity, and predictive validity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Li, 2011). Since OS Scoring is a relatively new concept, concurrent validity and face validity for OS Scoring as a system indicative of speaking proficiency have not been established, and much needs to be done in the future to develop its validity on these fronts; however, the fact that the subjects rate themselves in real interactions attest in some degree to construct validity and predictive validity. As for content validity, at this point it is perhaps adequate to choose relevant topics for conversation, and to make sure that sessions include various language tasks such as arguing opinions and expanding on the opinions of others, or other content which may be specific to

course curricula. The second attribute concerning validity, a measurable effect on fluency, will be discussed in light of statistical evidence in the following sections.

VII. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of the research is to find out whether there is an increase in the overall fluency of 45 subjects after four sessions of OS Scoring. The research question is formulated as follows: Is there a significant difference in the overall mean length of speaking turn (MLT) and total time spent speaking English measured during the *Conflict* session, and the overall (MLT) and total time spent speaking English measured during *The Environment* session? In other words, is there proof of an increase in the willingness to converse in English?

VIII. HYPOTHESES

In order to establish empirical grounds for the claim that OS Scoring improves speaking fluency, two variables, MLT and total time spent speaking English (TIME), in three data sets, TOPIC1, 2, and 3, were subjected to a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to test the following two hypotheses:

(1) OS Scoring administered over three sessions increases MLT.

(2) OS Scoring administered over three sessions increases TIME.

In both instances, the null hypothesis holds if there is an increase not significant enough, or which results in $p>0.01$, i.e. $\alpha=0.01$, a cumulative probability of less than 99%.

IX. METHODOLOGY

The subjects in this study were second-year science course undergraduates in one of the top-rated public universities in Japan. They were on average 20 years of age, 50 students in total, and English was a compulsory subject. Five students out of fifty unfortunately submitted incomplete or corrupted data and were disregarded, thus N=45. The students exchanged opinions in conversations on the following topics: *Conflict* (TOPIC1) during session two; *Population* (TOPIC2) during session three; and *The Environment* (TOPIC3) during session four. The first session, *Self-introduction*, was not included in the analysis because students were still learning how to use the CLAN program at this stage and needed some time to settle into the assessment environment. The first session is therefore excluded in order to minimize confounding variables and is treated as an introduction to OS Scoring in general.

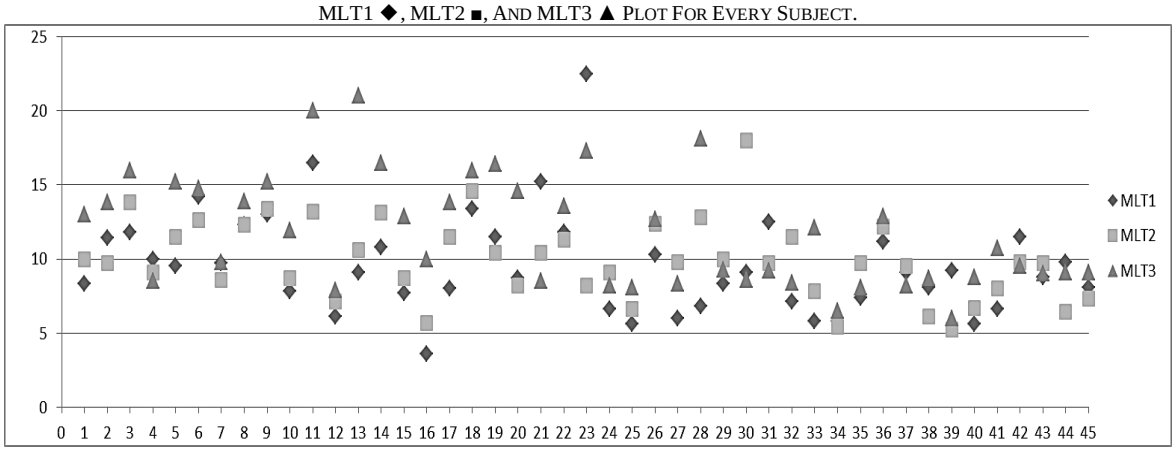
After each session, every student was given a video file of their group talk and tasked with analyzing their individual data. They created three files for each session in the CHAT program and submitted these to the researcher. This procedure is similar to the one discussed in detail in Wanner (2002). Each of the three CHAT files contains readouts of various language related data, but only two variables are of interest in this investigation: MLT measured in words and total TIME measured in seconds.

Analyzing data is a specific and difficult task, and many students were reluctant at first; however, it soon became clear that, as Locke and Latham (2002, p.706) have also found, *"specific, difficult goals consistently led to higher performance."* Many students found the transcription tasks tedious and daunting at first, but all the students seemed to like crunching the data in the end; they enjoyed seeing their speech reflected in the data, and like most language learners, jumped at every opportunity for corrective feedback.

X. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

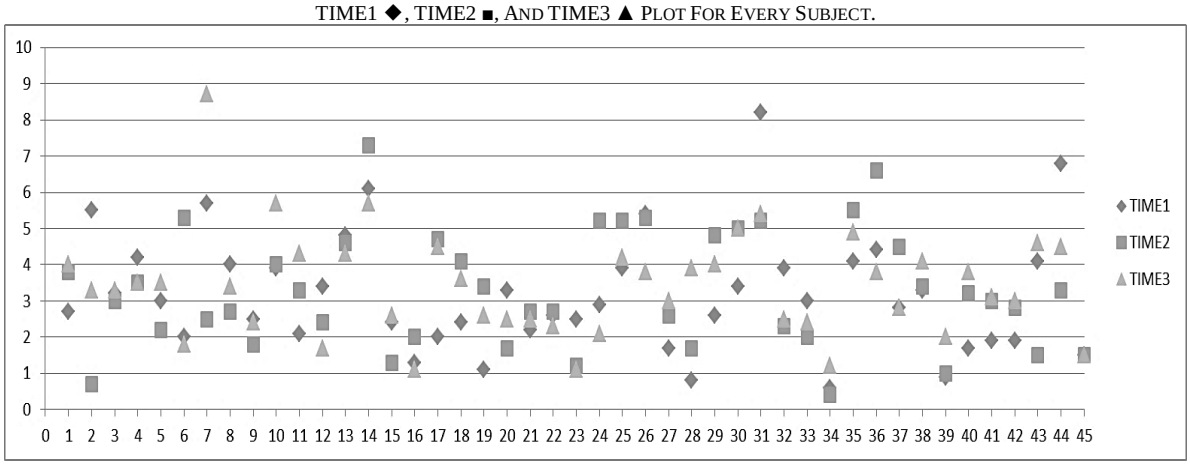
A one way ANOVA was conducted to look for variation in the sum of squares (SS). The SSW (within) was subtracted in both cases from the SST (total) to arrive at the SSB (between). The results were used with the factor degrees of freedom (k-1=2), and error degrees of freedom (135-k=132) to arrive at a Fisher ratio $F(2,132)=(SSB/(k-1=2))/(SSW/(135-k=132))$. Effect sizes were calculated by finding eta ($\eta 2$), which was arrived at by $\eta 2=(SSB/SST)$. The one way ANOVA was performed using Microsoft Excel 2013, and all calculations were confirmed with the scientific calculator of an Apple iPhone 7. A significant increase in MLT is illustrated in the plots for MLT 1, 2, and 3 below in Table 2.1:

TABLE 2.1.
MLT1 ◆, MLT2 ■, AND MLT3 ▲ PLOT FOR EVERY SUBJECT.



In Table 2.1 it can be seen that 29 out of 45 subjects increased their MLT from TOPIC1 to TOPIC3, illustrated by the MLT3 ▲ higher than MLT1 ◆ in each of the 29 subject plots. The second variable, TIME measured in minutes, showed a surprising tendency: most subjects moved closer to the mean as they progressed through the sessions, illustrated in Table 2.2 below.

TABLE 2.2.
TIME1 ◆, TIME2 ■, AND TIME3 ▲ PLOT FOR EVERY SUBJECT.



The plot for TIME1, 2, and 3 shows that only 16 out of 45 subjects spoke longer during TIME3 ▲; however, note how TIME3 ▲ moves closer to the mean for most subjects, and how there are many instances of TIME3 ▲ lying between TIME1 ◆ and TIME2 ■ (19 out of 45 cases). This can be interpreted as subjects tuning in to one another or maturing in the test environment as those who initially spoke a lot started giving others time to speak, and those who did not speak much during TIME1 ◆ and TIME2 ■ spoke longer in order to increase their score for TIME3 ▲. As an example, subject 34, noticeably the most reluctant throughout the study, increased speaking time by 30sec. during TIME3 ▲ in order to beat the data and get a passing score.

XI. RESULTS

MLT describes the average length of every speaking turn, and this study found that there was a considerable difference between MLT on average measured after TOPIC1 *Conflict* , 9.6 words per turn, and measured after TOPIC3 *The Environment*, 11.78 words per turn (a total increase of 2.17 words per turn), and in this case the increase proved significant ($p=0.004$, $\eta 2=0.079$). MLT showed a definite increase—and for the purposes of this investigation—a positive effect on motivation. As can be seen in Table 3 below, MLT increased significantly.

TABLE 3.
SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN MLT.

Mean MLT		INCREASE	**yes/no**	Total
MLT1	9.604444			Increase
MLT2	9.92	0.315556	**yes**	1st to 3rd
MLT3	11.78222	1.862222	**yes**	2.177778
				p=0.004, η2=0.079

MLT increased from 9.6 to 11.78. It has to be mentioned that the researchers constantly motivated subjects beforehand to use their 20 minutes as effectively as possible in order to increase their chances of getting a higher score by beating the data. Therefore, a type 1 error is present in this one way ANOVA; the same participants were measured over time without a control group. This renders the statistics of little use when it comes to isolating the cause of the increases. Nevertheless, as the increases were significant, the fact that the system is motivational cannot be ruled out. It is not designed to be an exact measurement of the source of the increases; rather, it is designed to help students keep track of progress. The system requires only that they beat their previous data with a statistical significance. Later sections in this article discuss excerpts with data that show specific instances of increases in MLT and TIME.

TIME showed an increase in averages as well, from 3.1 min. after TOPIC1 *Conflict* to 3.4 min. after TOPIC3 *The Environment* (a total increase of 15 sec.), but did not reach the significance threshold ($p=0.74$, $\eta 2= 0.004$). However, OS Scoring showed a surprising tendency: Here, the one way ANOVA proved extremely useful. Subjects tended to tune in to one another as time spent speaking English for each subject became less varied. In other words, those who may have spoken overbearingly for the 20 min. during TOPIC1, tended to speak less during TOPIC2 and then less or more during TOPIC3, and those who spoke little at first tended to speak more towards the end. This notion was arrived at by looking at the shrinking differences in within-group variances of TIME after each session; after TOPIC1 *Conflict*: VAR=2.59, after TOPIC2 *Population*: VAR=2.53, and after TOPIC3 *The Environment*: VAR=2.03. Table 4 highlights the shrinking variances that show how students matured or became more familiar in the test environment:

TABLE 4.
RAW MEANS FOR TIME WITH SHRINKING VARIANCES.

Mean TIME		INCREASE	**yes/no**	VARIANCE	Total
TIME1	3.171111			2.59	Increase
TIME2	3.264444	0.093333	**yes**	2.53	1st to 3rd
TIME3	3.422222	0.157778	**yes**	2.03	0.251111
				Shrinking Variances ⇑	p=0.74, η2= 0.004

TIME increased by 0.25 minutes for every subject on average, in other words, an increase of 15 seconds on average during TOPIC 3.

XII. CONVERSATION DATA AS MOTIVATOR AND INDICATOR

Concerning MLT, a definite increase in overall mean length of speaking turn indicated that OS Scoring administered over three sessions has a high probability of increasing sentence length as well as amount of sentences uttered per speaking turn. The null hypothesis is rejected. This bodes well for data as an energizing goal (Locke, E.A., Latham, G.P. 2002). The subjects also significantly increased MLT throughout the course, which can be interpreted as a significant increase in willingness to converse. The statistics show that data can motivate subjects to speak in longer utterances. However, they do not guarantee motivational impact in this study, because of the type 1 error inherent in a one way ANOVA done over a span of time. Nevertheless, a closer look at some random samples of the data shows that the subjects seemed motivated to increase their MLT and TIME. They show signs of challenging themselves to speak with varied vocabulary, and to elicit more conversation so that their partners have a better chance at beating previous data. Note the spontaneous question by Student A (STA), below as well as the repetition of *"Generally."* to elicit conversation from Student B (STB) (see APPENDIX A for full excerpts).

EXCERPT 1. AN EXCERPT FROM A GROUP CONVERSING ON THE FIRST TOPIC, *CONFLICT*.

**STE:I wrote my essay just like you. I thought, when I'm tired, very tired and so sleepy, I have a report to hand in tomorrow, so there is the inner conflict. I wrote it already essay so I understand it. It is very vrey difficult but I must win my desire.*

**STA:What is your conflict that you wrote?*

**STB:Generally.*

**STA:Generally.*

**STB:How prevent from conflict so very difficult to think.*

**STA:How do you think to prevent conflicts? It's that you can't prevent my inner conflict?*

STA prompts STB with the question *"What is your conflict that you wrote?"* This question is answered with one word, which STA repeats in order to keep the conversation going. Throughout the course, many strategies like this one emerged as students did their best to increase their MLT and TIME in order to beat the data from previous sessions.

Students also had a chance to focus on innate Japanese-English errors. In the last utterance in Excerpt 1 above, the pronoun *my* was wrongly used for the possessive pronoun *your*, a common error among Japanese subjects which occurs because of the ambiguity of 自分の *jibun no*, which translates as *one's own* in their first language. This type of interference is well documented. The transcripts doubled as a speaking assessment and an exercise in lexis, orthography and syntax where the subjects were able to receive instruction afterwards on the mistakes made in their transcriptions. Adams (1980) noted that vocabulary and grammar are the two factors that distinguish proficiency most dramatically. OS Scoring proved useful for indicating irregularities, and facilitated subsequent formative instruction in vocabulary

and grammar, with the added benefit of being able to focus on innate Japanese-English errors. This proved to be highly motivational as subjects looked forward to receiving constructive feedback on their transcripts.

Students are motivated when they feel like they are making progress, and the system became a useful CALL tool for pinpointing where progress is most necessary. The group of students in Excerpt 1, especially STA, showed improvement in consecutive sessions. Excerpt 2 below shows progress in the form of longer utterances and better coherence, although there is much room for improvement in spelling.

EXCERPT 2. AN EXCERPT FROM THE SAME GROUP CONVERSING ON A LATER TOPIC, *POVERTY*.

**STA:Speaking of poverty, we likely to think that the problem is only in developing countries but, certainly, there is a problem about poverty in developed coutries. Then, what is like the problem about poverty in developed countries? We can pick up, for instance, working poor problem. Workong poor is the people who can't get enough money to live even though they get regular jobs. The trouble is, they can't get much money to live. but they have a certain job so they can't use public welfare system, in Japanese, Seikatsuhogo. So they are suffering from serious poverty.* [sic]

Excerpt 1 and 2 above are samples from the files of the same student (STA). Notice that the differences between Excerpt 1 and 2 are significant when it comes to MLT and TIME (longer, more coherent utterances as well as more language produced in the allocated time). Both variables increased. STA seemed adamant to generate conversation in the first excerpt already by asking questions and repeating responses. This initial positivity seems to bloom in Excerpt 2 where there are almost monologue length utterances and a discernable freedom in the flow of expression.

Almost all of the submitted CHAT data files, of which Excerpt 1 and 2 above are examples, show improvement in coherence and increases in amount of language produced. These excepts serve as examples of how beating the data in subsequent sessions can become a positive influence as a goal, and ultimately a valuable motivational strategy.

XIII. CONCLUSION

Although there was a significant increase in the overall mean length of speaking turn (MLT), this research looked at speaking data through an ANOVA over a span of time. Other influences may have contributed to the increase, for example reminders by researchers to beat the data of each previous session. A follow-up study is in the works which will include a control group where students will not analyze their data. This group will then be compared to a group subjected to OS Scoring with analyses as discussed in this article. Thus, the efficacy of OS Scoring and its motivational impact can be isolated and measured with more accuracy. Nevertheless, since the focus is on measuring an increase in speaking time and length of utterances regardless of the cause, i.e. to make sure that an awareness of the data is at least a factor to some degree, the current results seem to be proof enough that conversation data can be a motivator as well as an illuminating indicator of changes in student speaking behavior in an authentic conversational setting.

The variances in TIME became smaller after each session. The researcher interprets it as students tuning into one another over time. As they matured in the testing environment, less communicative speakers were coerced into speaking more in order to beat their data from previous sessions. At the same time, overbearing speakers started to hold back in order to give their reluctant friends more time.

Because OS Scoring involved subjects in the speech rating process, it facilitated formative instruction in morpho-syntactic errors specific to Japanese as first language learners, and thereby doubled as a self-motivational learning tool. This is perhaps its most valuable aspect, and it is sincerely hoped that other researchers in the field will recreate and improve this study by trying the system in their courses, collecting data of conversations, and by finding ways in which it can be used to motivate students to have more confidence in conversations in English and to scaffold skills in preparation for international computer based tests.

APPENDIX. TRANSCRIPTS OF CHAT DATA

EXCERPT 1. AN EXCERPT FROM A GROUP CONVERSING ON THE FIRST TOPIC, *CONFLICT*.

**STE: I wrote my essay just like you.*
**STE: I thought, when I'm tired, very tired and so sleepy, I have a report to hand in tomorrow.*
**STE: so there is the inner conflict.*
**STE: I wrote it already essay so I understand it.*
@Time Duration: 05:47-06:08
**STA: It is very vrey difficult but I must win my desire.*
@Time Duration: 08:10-08:13
**STA: what is your conflict that you wrote?*
@Time Duration: 08:22-08:23
**STB: generally.*
@Time Duration: 08:23-08:24
**STA: generally.*
@Time Duration: 08:30-08:40
**STB: how prevent from conflict so very difficult to think.*
@Time Duration: 09:23-09:27

**STA: how do you think to prevent conflicts?*
@Time Duration: 10:30-10:35
**STA: it's that you can't prevent my inner conflict?*
@Time Duration: 10:38-10:39
**STA: no no no no sorry sorry.*

EXCERPT 2. AN EXCERPT FROM THE SAME GROUP CONVERSING ON A LATER TOPIC, *POVERTY*.

**STA: speaking of poverty, we likely to think that the problem is only in developing countries but, certainly, there is a problem about poverty in developed coutries.*
@Time Duration: 0:36-0:45
**STA: then, what is like the problem about poverty in developed countries?*
@Time Duration: 0:47-0:55
**STA: we can pick up, for instance, working poor problem.*
@Time Duration:0:56-1:14
**STA: workong poor is the people who can't get enough money to live even though they get regular jobs.*
@Time Duration:1:16-1:28
**STA: the trouble is, they can't get much money to live.*
@Time Duration:1:29-1:47
**STA: but they have a certain job so they can't use public welfare system, in Japanese, Seikatsuhogo.*
@Time Duration:1:48-2:00
**STA: so they are suffering from serious poverty.*
@Time Duration:2:07-2:14
**STA: why they are suffering from poverty?*
@Time Duration:2:15-3:25
**STA: most of them engaged in non-regular job or daytime job and they are so hard to make a livng the day so they don't afford improve job skill to increase their income and it is too difficult to get regular job.*

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An Approach to Digital Game-based Learning: Video-games Principles and Applications in Foreign Language Learning

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***Abstract*—During the present decade, researchers and educators of different fields have increased their attention towards digital game-based learning. The rise of interest towards this approach is partially connected to some important technological advances during the same period of time, such as the *Smartphone*, enhanced Internet connection from mobile devices, diversity and spread of free and low-cost video-games and educational applications in e-stores, development of speech recognition systems and artificial intelligence, among others. More concretely, this research focuses on the area of foreign language learning, an educational field which requires that students gain not only a solid theoretical knowledge on grammar and vocabulary, but they also need to develop different communicative competences; and this implies rehearsing and experiencing the use of the target language. The purpose of this paper is to define some basic concepts related to digital game-based learning, such as gamification and serious games, and to introduce some theoretical principles on foreign language learning and acquisition through the use of video-games based on literature review. Finally, a connection among these elements will be discussed.**

***Index Terms*—serious video-games, gamification, digital game-based learning, language learning**

I. Introduction

People and society are continuously changing together. The development of new ideas and inventions has led to build new perspectives and visions towards the world. In this sense, what it had been once considered revolutionary and original finally became obsolete. This process of changing from innovative to obsolete is a matter of evolution, a universal truth that has been constant throughout history beyond mankind. No one can question that evolution is present in any single aspect of life, and this involves education matters as well. In this case, education has always evolved towards the needs of society in any particular period of time or place; however, the speed of this evolution has been different along history. In the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s, changes in education became more significant after the earliest cognitivist studies (see Ausubel, 1968; Bruner, 1966, Chomsky, Lakoff or Piaget, 1952, among others); whereas more recently, some relevant inventions and advances in technology such as the computer, the internet or the smartphone among many others have made the evolution process more evident in the eye of science (Harris, 2012; Pechenkina, Laurence, Oates, Eldridge, & Hunter, 2017). As result, technology and education have especially gone hand-in-hand in contemporary times, and this fact has given rise to new perspectives in life (Loveless, & Williamson, 2013; Selwyn, & Bulfin, 2016).

Researchers from different educational fields are constantly questioning the educational models from the last century that still remain in the present educational centers (Wilson, 2014). Some of these discussions revolve around the fact that the way current students find motivation differs vastly from those in the past (Buchanan & Elzen, 2012; Prensky, 2001; Qian, & Clark, 2016). In this line, even though the use of games as a pedagogical resource is not new in learning centers around the world, game-based approaches are gaining ground to other more theoretical teaching methods thanks to the introduction of technological resources that are attractive to students and have introduced new applications and possibilities (Eseryel, Law, Ifenthaler, Ge, & Miller, 2014). Thus, this paper focuses on reviewing the connection between digital game-based learning and the process of foreign language learning through video-games, both conventional and serious ones. To this purpose, this paper defines the concepts of serious video-games, gamification and digital game-based learning and then it focuses on explaining how learning languages is processed from the initial stage (input) to the production one (output) in the digital game-based approach.

II. Definition of Three Basic Concepts: Serious Games, Gamification and Digital Game-based Learning

A. Serious vs Conventional Video-games

Contrary to the primary purpose of conventional games, serious games aim at teaching specific content rather than being pure entertainment for the player (Calvo-Ferrer, 2018). However, this does not imply that serious games should not remain loyal to the main principle of conventional games: to provide entertaining (Oliveira, Correia, Merrelho, Marques, Pereira, & Cardoso, 2009; González-González, & Blanco-Izquierdo, 2012). Thus, serious games seems to be

characterized for combining and integrating both teaching and entertainment in simulations, and consequently they could not be understood as such if any of these two features are omitted.

In order to make this definition clearer, serious games should be distinguished from conventional ones. In this sense, it shall be acknowledged that all video-games are educational and the difference between one and the other lies in the fact that serious games are designed on purpose for teaching aims (Bellotti, Kapralos, Lee, Moreno-Ger & Berta, 2013; Escribano, 2012). Thus, any game involve educational factors even if they have exclusively been designed for playing aims (Reinders, 2012). Some examples of games used for pedagogical aims are *Who is Who* and *Domino*, whereas some examples of video-games are *World of Warcraft* and *The Sims*. On the hand, serious games are designed to teach specific content and the play aspect remains secondary. However, in line with this statement, the play aspect is the primary basis of any conventional video-game; and thus, serious video-games should not be understood as such without it. As result, the play aspect seems to be one of the main sources to motivate students; in this sense, if students effort through playing, it is more likely that they will learn (Dondlinger, 2007). The reasoning for this assertion is that fostering motivation among students shall increase their efforts to complete the task and promote their enjoyment during the gaming time (Gros, 2009). Some examples of serious video-games are *Combat Medic* and *Hilton Ultimate Team Play* (designed by Virtual Heroes), *Hazmat: Hotzone* (designed by Carnegie Mellon University), and *Anti Money Laundering* (designed by Playgen), among many others. For the aim of this research, this paper will only focus on video-games from now on.

In addition to this introduction to serious video-games, it shall be acknowledged that the use of serious video-games in the classroom is not new (see Gagnon, 1985; Malone, 1981; Silvern, 1986); yet, technological barriers have made that their application was not accessible for most educational centers and students until approximately the decade of the 2010, coinciding with the launch of portable devices such as the *Smartphone* or the *Tablet*. Since the origin of their application in the classroom, numerous researchers and teaching professionals have described their experiences with serious video-games and enumerated the main characteristic and benefits that they have identified. One of the first researchers who described the characteristics of serious video-games was Malone (1981). In this sense, this author suggested that serious video-games need to establish clear meaningful learning and playing goals for the students, and providing continuous feedback on their progress. As its video-game nature, the difficulty must be adapted to the learners' skills and rise progressively according to the learning aims. Besides, it should also provide elements of surprise to break monotony. Similarly, Susi, Johannesson and Backlund (2007) provided a description of the main characteristics of this type of video-games which highlighted the importance of task-solving in a scenario where communication should be natural. In this line, Sampson and Karagiannidis (2002) also appointed task-solving as one of the most relevant principles in electronic education. This suitability to introduce tasks in serious games could be justified with the fact that the best learning comes from experience (Cohen, 2007; Jarvis, 2009) and video-games allow that players solve tasks while playing (Ziegler, 2016). As result, this fact makes that the learning process becomes engaging and motivating.

At last, it also needs to be acknowledged that serious video-games are a subtribe among video-games. Therefore, they share some characteristics with conventional video-games that must be considered. To this purpose, Calvo-Ferrer (2018) clearly explains, in words of Gee (2005), the features that are shared between both conventional and serious video-games. In this sense, good video-games should have an attractive design, customized difficulty levels, power of manipulation, characters with identity and well-ordered problems. Besides, feedback must be continuous (as previously stated by Malone [1981]), but this should also be challenging, provided on demand and in the necessary time; and in addition, it should respect the circle of expertise before moving to the next stage: tutorial, practice and testing. Finally, regarding how video-games transfer knowledge to their players, Gee (2005) identifies two principles: system thinking and meaning as action image. The first one implies that the game should help players see and understand how the different elements fit into the game. The second one, meaning as action image, aims at teaching through actions and experiences rather than on lectures.

B. Gamification

Gamification is the process from which games can be adapted to particular teaching purposes in the classroom (Werbach, 2014). Having defined serious games and introduced its characteristics and benefits, gamification could be understood as the mechanism used to integrate different games in a lesson or the curriculum (Molin, 2017). Thus, gamification implies that teachers and lecturers can design lessons or subjects introducing a wide range of games with a particular linearity along them.

From a broad perspective, one of the most frequently used definitions among researchers for gamification is the one provided by Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke (2011), who explained that this process concerns "the use of game design elements in non-gaming contexts" (p. 12). Other authors have also provided their own definitions; in the case of Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa (2014), they make special emphasis to the importance of emotions, as it has also been appointed in the description of serious games: "[gamification is] a process of enhancing services with motivational affordances in order to invoke gameful experiences and further behavioral outcomes" (p. 3025). In the practice, some researchers such as Werbach and Hunter (2012) or Robson, Plangger, Kietzmann, McCarthy and Pitt (2015) have previously suggested their own model of gamification, as it can be observed in figure 1.

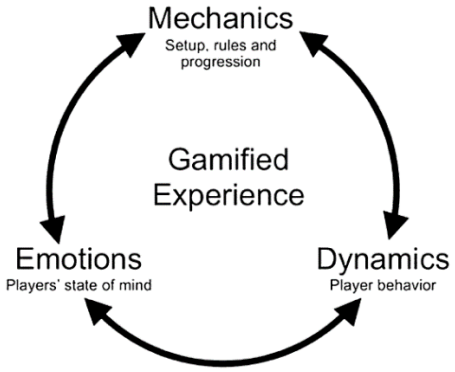

Figure 1. Processing Gamification (Robson et al., 2015, p. 416)

This model contains three elements that are defined in these lines. The first element is mechanics and it represents the objectives, rules, setting, context, interactions and boundaries within the game; its purpose is to promote action in the video-game and create engagement among players. The second one concerns dynamics; its aims at describing the functioning of the rules in the practice and at configuring the behavior of the players that participate in the experience. The last element in this model is emotions, which focuses on the players' affective states and reactions caused by the game. These feelings and emotions are what contribute to emotionally engage the player to play and consequently to learn.

The importance of emotions along both the gaming time as well as the learning process is fundamental to understand the benefits of learning through gamified resources. In this sense, Malone and Lepper (1987) identified two types of motivation to attract learners' attention: individual and interpersonal. On the one hand, the individual motivation concerns student's emotions towards challenge, control, curiosity and fantasy. On the other hand, there are three elements that influence on the learners' interpersonal motivation: cooperation, competence and recognition. As it can be observed in table 1, there are different elements that promote the players' individual and interpersonal motivation within each category.

TABLE 1.
TYPES OF MOTIVATION (MALONE AND LEPPER, 1987).

Individual motivation	1. Challenge	*a. Goals* *b. Uncertain Outcomes* *c. Performance Feedback* *d. Self-Esteem*
	2. Curiosity	*a. Sensory Curiosity* *b. Cognitive Curiosity*
	3. Control	*a. Contingency* *b. Choice* *c. Power*
	4. Fantasy	*a. Emotions* *b. Cognition* *c. Endogeneity*
Interpersonal motivation	1. Cooperation 2. Competence 3. Recognition	

As result of rising learners' motivation, it seems that emotions play a fundamental role in determining the success of the learning process. In addition, to the types of motivations introduced by Malone and Lepper (1987), Butler (2016) suggested that working on emotions in the gamification process is determined by four elements: engagement, autonomy, mastery and progression. The first element aims at connecting the player/learner with the content; providing storytelling, narrative and challenge help involve the players with the game. The second item in the list concerns autonomy. Video-games are characterized by allowing players control avatars, take their own decisions, explore the virtual world at their own pace and be the protagonists. As result, they get immersed in the learning process more easily and also engage them with intrigue and suspense. Next, mastery refers to the opportunity offered to students to exercise and repeat tasks until they are completely controlled. At last, progression is the main reward to students for their efforts. As far as they advance in the video-game, they feel motivated to continue playing until they fulfill the goal of the game while learning. As it can be observed, there is a clear connection between Butler (2016) and Malone and Lepper (1987) since they both focus on motivating students through the use of video-games. The difference lies in the fact that the first focus on elements that are necessary to motivate players through a gamified lesson, whereas the second aims at making a game engaging.

The combination of these prior pieces of research was previously used in our own research (Casañ-Pitarch, 2017a) with the aim of explaining the gamification process as well. In this case, our model of gamification was introduced following mainly Robson et al. (2015) and Butler (2016), as it is shown in figure 2. This model is divided into four rings

and it needs to be interpreted from the inner circle to the outer layers. The inner circle has been slightly adapted to our interests in this research and it focuses on the teaching and learning purposes (what to teach). The second ring focuses on choosing the playing purpose (how to teach). In this sense, it is different teaching languages, music, algebra or science, among many others. Thus the educator needs to consider the pros and cons among the different games and methods, and then they can choose the most suitable according to their own criteria. Once the content and the gaming method have been chosen, the educator should manage to select a suitable video-game genre (i.e.: graphic adventures, puzzles) as the scenario for the teaching and method. The last step within the circles is the development of the video-game mechanics, dynamics and emotions in, as explained by Robson et al. (2015). This stage concerns the development of the video-game with its characters, story, context or awards, among many others. Finally, this process needs to be accompanied with the four elements introduced by Butler (2016) to incorporate feelings and emotions in the game and rise learners' motivation and engagement to play and consequently to learn.

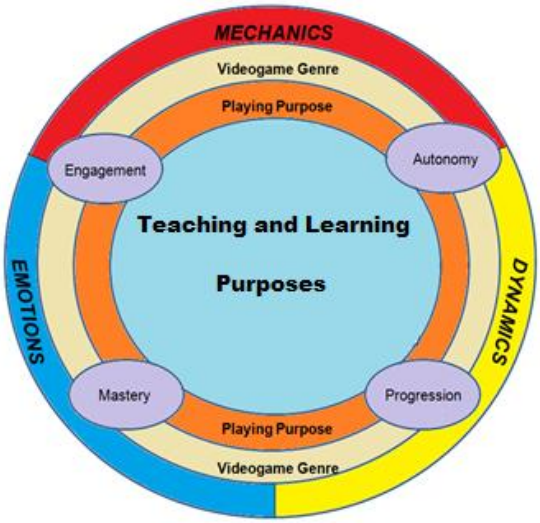

Figure 2. Gamification Process (Adapted from Casañ-Pitarch, 2017a, p.111).

C. Digital Game-based Language Learning as an Approach

As previously explained, gamification should be considered a mechanism from which any approach can be benefited from the application of games in the classroom (Kaur & Geetha, 2015). The digital game-based learning is a pedagogical practice that has more recently derived from a broader term that involves the indistinctive use of both digital and non-digital resources (Deterding, Khaled, Nacke, & Dixon, 2011). Consequently, introducing a well-defined distinction has been necessary in order to specify when technological resources are used in exclusive. In this sense, game-based learning could be considered the hypernym of digital game-based learning. In both cases, these approaches imply that the use of games can be implemented in non-playful environments (Aguiar-Castillo, Rufo-Torres, De Saa-Pérez, & Pérez-Jimenez, 2018). Kirriemuir, & McFarlane (2004) defined game-based learning as those "activities that have a game at their core, either as the main activity or as a stimulus for other related activities, and have learning as a desired or incidental outcome" (p. 7). The broadest difference between one and another is the fact that digital game-based learning only concerns the use of electronic games for learning objectives. De Freitas (2006) explained that this digital educational approach focuses on the usage of electronic applications that include characteristics related to video and computer games to provide students with engaging and immersive learning experiences that focus on delivering specific educational goals. Furthermore, and as it has been explained in the previous sections, different authors have assumed that games are intrinsically motivating; and consequently, they suggest that the use of this resource in the classroom can be beneficial in the students' learning process (Alessi, & Trollip, 2001; Cooley, 2015; Garris, Ahlers, & Driskell, 2002; Prensky, 2001; Oblinger, 2004).

Digital game-based learning was born from social educational needs raised from the existence and usage of new forms of technology, which have significantly changed learners' contemporary thinking patterns and motivation. In this line, Prensky (2001) coined the term digital natives in reference to the people born in XXI century who have grown using digital technology and contrasting them with the rest of population, who have gradually introduced technology to their lives as it was being developed. Thus, it seems that new pedagogical practices and approaches like this one are fundamental to teach and motivate contemporary students, who have been tagged as digital natives.

From a broad pedagogical perspective, Prensky (2001) classified this practice as an approach which mainly focuses on the completion of tasks and role-playing simulations through electronic games. To be considered an approach, digital game-based learning involves a series of learning theories. To this purpose, Margarida, Veloso, Papastergiou and Kordaki (2010) identified three main paradigms connected to digital game-based learning with: behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. Firstly, digital game-based learning provides students with stimulus and positive or

negative reinforcement; thus the learning process happens when there is a change of reaction between them. Secondly, this approach also requires the students' active participation in order to learn, this involves both memorization and problem solving. And thirdly, digital game-based learning involve learning by doing, which implies constructing and interpreting knowledge and applying it in the virtual world according to the learner's own knowledge and experience. In addition to these principles, Kam, Gogolin, Blakemore and Emerick (2013) also stated that students need to be aware of their learning process; this implies reflective learning. Thus, learners should consciously think, analyze, and learn through the reflection of their gaming experience.

In the field of language learning, different researchers have pointed out complimentary theories related to game-based learning. For example, Dickey (2005) suggested that game-based language learning can reconstruct narrative as an immersive story with elements of participation and consequently promote pragmatic learning through problem-based tasks. Furthermore, game-based language learning promotes students' acquisition of new terminology and language forms by developing mind maps in which they associate symbol, reference, and referent (Casañ-Pitarch, 2017b). This semantic triangle connects a thought to an object or subject (referent), and also a word to an object or subject (Ogden, Richards, Ranulf, & Cassirer, 1923). As result, the comprehension of referents is based on the individual's previous experience (what they already know), and on the fact that individuals need a reference about the symbol that is represented. Besides, game-based language learning also helps students learn new terminology in a comprehensible and playful way that allow testing functions and practicing what they have learned (Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell, & Haag, 1995).

In sum, the connection among serious games, gamification and digital game-based learning needs to be understood in order to implement the digital game-based approach in the foreign language classroom. To this purpose, it is also necessary to combine the ideas introduced in this section with those pedagogical theories involved in the process of learning foreign languages with serious video-games.

III. Pedagogical Implications in Foreign Language Learning with Serious Video-games

As previously explained, the amount of research and practical cases that are documented within this field have been rising sharply in the decade of the 2010. This can be justified with the technological advances that have been developed during the same period. For example, computers are no longer mandatory to play video-games in the classroom. These devices were space consuming and the educational centers had to afford the expenses derived from the purchase and maintenance of them. Nowadays, most students can use their own smartphones, laptop computers or tablets instead, especially at tertiary education. These gadgets are personal, portable and their connection to the internet is wireless; as result, students can work individually and remotely. Furthermore, there is a wide and rising range of applications and games in the e-stores; they can be purchased and downloaded online, and their prices are generally far lower than they used to be. These facts, among others, have recently changed the perception of education and the world as well. This section focuses on explaining how video-games help students develop their communicative skills in foreign languages; to this purpose, student's learning process has been divided into three stages, as an attempt to organize this section: input, input processing and output (Symons, 1988).

A. Providing Students with Input

Before students can do any exercise or task, they need to receive a reasonable amount of suitable input; otherwise, they will rely on their previous experience and knowledge, and consequently they will barely advance towards new knowledge. Richards and Renandya (2002) defined input as those sources that are used to start the learning process. It shall be acknowledged that the form of input is important, and to this aim, Krashen (1985) coined the term *comprehensible input* (*i+l*), which he defined as the suitable one for successful learning. In this sense, he explained that learners need to confront easy and comfortable tasks but also challenges through new information at a slightly superior level to their own. In other words, input needs to be neither too easy nor too difficult to accomplish learning objectives. Muñoz (2007) extended this definition and claimed that input needs to be authentic, varied, and relevant; and Skehan (1998) added that it should also be experimental in order to activate the learners' long-term memory and help them process the new knowledge. In this sense, video-games are part of a fiction world, but they are also a representation of reality (Galloway, 2004). This type of experimentation and simulation in virtual worlds extends the time of exposure to the contents and consequently it can improve the process of developing and acquiring new knowledge (Roediger, & Karpicke, 2006). Thus, educational video-games may provide students with a great support in their learning through the completion of challenging problem-solving tasks in specific contexts (Barr, 2013; Griffiths, 2002). At last, from a neuroscientific perspective, Vassiliadis and Rigas (2002) explained that the new information modifies the receivers' behaviors and produces a response (output).

According to these ideas, it seems that there is a well-defined order towards learning that starts with the input that the subjects receive through any of their receptor senses. In language learning, this mainly has to do with hearing and seeing senses. Therefore, if any teaching aims were to provide learners with new information and knowledge, there would be two main possibilities: visual and audio input. On the one hand, visual input can occur through reading or watching. Regarding input through reading, Carver (2000) defined reading as "the process of looking at visually presented words, letters, or other language symbols to gain information or knowledge" (p. 407). Within the education

field, one of the main supporters of reading is Krashen (1989, 1993, 2004). He thinks that reading is fundamental in the process of acquiring new knowledge, especially foreign languages. In this sense, through reading, individuals gain new knowledge at their own pace, with the possibility of re-reading, and according to their own cognitive skills. In addition, Franceschini, Gori, Ruffino, Viola, Molteni, and Facoetti (2013) suggested that the use of video-games also enhance learners' attentional abilities, which is relevant feature when dealing with reading since it requires high degrees of concentration and motivation.

Similarly, input through watching is another form of visual input. In this case, watching involves that a subject looks at or observes an action or an object or subject with attention over a period. As result, a subject may compile a series of information that remains in his or her memory, and which can analyze and interiorize for their later imitation or adapted-usage (Karakaş, & Sarıçoban, 2012; Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg, & Oller, 1997). Besides, it seems that visual input through video-games has some benefits due to the connection between action and knowledge. In words of Schenk, Lech and Suchan (2017), video-games promote higher activations in occipital visual areas, such as cuneus, which help increase visual attention and processing. These areas concern the processing of visual stimuli; and these include the inferior temporal gyrus and attention-based areas such as the superior and inferior parietal lobe. As result, the superior parietal lobule receives more visual input and it enhances players' attention to certain actions or objects.

On the other hand, audio input involves the use of listening skills. Listening could be defined as "an active focusing process which allows for a quick and precise analysis of sounds that are heard" (Gilmor, Madaule, & Thompson, 1989, p. 18). As it happens with visual input, this is another form to transfer information and knowledge from the video-game to the player. However, audio input is not only a way to convey oral messages or to enhance listening skills, it is also related to emotions. In words of Parker and Heerema (2008), the sense of hearing connects to the limbic system, in which memories may be recalled using sounds such as music and voices, whereas loud and sudden sounds might cause a sudden startle reflex in fear, for example. Thus, it seems evident that sounds are connected to emotions and this results in making experiences more real and vivid to the players, and consequently this can be a motivating factor to continue playing as it has been previously explained in table 1.

In addition to these forms of input, Borba and Zuffo (2016) identified a third possibility, which is known as corporal input and consists in providing players with corporal stimuli that also transfers information. This type of input promotes learners' embodied cognition which concerns the interactions among body, mind, and game environment that can lead to learning (Hacker, 2017). As they explain, the corporal stimulus is a relatively new way to understand virtual experiences since this is a more natural way to explore digital environments. Whereas conventional games only transport players' imagination to a virtual world, some tools can also transport the body inside the synthetic world. In their research, they showed some forms of input through video-games that provide or are controlled by corporal stimuli; in this sense, vibrations or pressure (i.e.: inflating or deflating garments) on the player's body are the main forms of delivering corporal messages that may help the player react in a specific way. Thus, virtual experiences seem to bring more realistic experiences that allow receiving information by means of body stimuli, being this complementary to visuals and sounds.

B. Processing Input

Once learners have received the necessary input, they should practice in order to process it and consequently interiorize the new information. In this sense, whereas language acquisition is unconscious, learning is a conscious process. In the case of processing communicative skills, learners need to do serious activities consciously in order to activate the unconscious one. This tend to be carried out with drills, which are repetitive exercises that help interiorize new knowledge (Paulston, 1970). De Keyser (1998) defined drills as those activities that encourage "the student to use the language to convey real meaning, while some recently taught rules, the focus of the drill, can be kept in mind" (p. 52). Besides, this learning stage involves that the instructor has to provide feedback to the learners based on their performances (Swain, 1995). In the field of video-games, there are different strategies and exercises to help learners process their communicative skills.

Firstly, players are constantly reading through video-games. In this sense, players need to read texts when they are playing and also when they are not. On the one hand, they need to read all the information shown in the screen. Among others, players need to read game instructions, characters' dialogues, and also their controlled actions, i.e.: 'jump', 'open', 'go', 'collect', 'give' (Griffiths, 2002). On the other hand, they also need to read instructions to learn how to play or what to do in specific moments of the game. This implies that they need to look for information on the net; as result, players have to read official websites, blogs and forums, as well as watching videos (Wang, & Singhal, 2009; Wilhelmsson, 2011). The comprehension of these texts can be tested when the players is on the game: if they do not follow the instructions, it is likely that they will not fulfill their purpose. In addition, serious games can incorporate comprehension tests, quizzes or some specific tasks to check that players have read and understood the information provided (Erhel, & Jamet, 2013; Coelho, & Primo, 2017).

Secondly, when playing video-games players need to continuously listen to messages delivered by the computer or by other players. In this sense, it seems that video-games can be a great help to develop learners listening skills if they practice with suitable video-games for this particular aim, as it can be observed in the results introduced by Calvo-Ferrer (2017). In this case, this researcher tested the development of listening skills with a video-game in which the player performs the role of an interpreter; in other words, listening to messages and then translating them or some

fragments. In other video-games, messages can also involve instructions to take actions in order to advance in the game; thus, this fact should be sufficiently motivating to take efforts to listen properly (Cuenca-Minchala, 2017). As it happened in the development of reading skills, video-game designers could also introduce tests and quizzes to check players' comprehension and allowing them to advance provided they fulfill the minimum requirements of the exercise.

Next, some video-games also help develop productive skills, both written and oral. In the case of writing skills, players can train their written language skills responding to blogs, discussing the actions of the video-game with other players in a chat room, or writing their own entries in blogs. According to Liao, Chang and Chan (2018), video-games for enhancing communicative skills can be used to foster imagination, improve learning engagement, and enhance learners' participation. In this sense, there are a series of video-games that can help enhance writing skills, especially those in which real players interact in a virtual world or role-playing games. For example, Squire and Jan (2007) suggested the video-game called *The Mad City Mystery*, which consist in developing and arguing scientific writing or explanations to decide the cause of a death. This video-game incorporates the need for reflection and critical thinking to solve the criminal cases with written activities. Another example in which writing skills are practiced is *Habbo Hotel*; this video-game is a hotel where users control an avatar and interact among themselves as if they were in a chat room. As commented, the instructors could suggest their students to practice their new knowledge in some of these video-games; besides, if the students and teachers interact in the same chat room or virtual world, teachers could also monitor learners' progress and provide feedback. This suggestion is possible to be implemented in *Second life*.

At last, video-games also help enhance speaking skills. Kongmee, Strachan, Montgomery and Pickard (2011) suggested that MMORPG are a good means to practice speaking skills. *World of Warcraft, League of Legends, Diablo* or *Guild Wars* are examples of video-games that allow players to talk among themselves to discuss issues of the game. In addition, some serious video-games can be exclusively designed to help improve speaking skills. Advances in speech recognition have given rise to new possibilities and applications. For example, *Lingo Online* is a video-game which focuses on conversational skills and pronunciation; players practice their speaking skills at the same time they received personalized feedback on their performance. Similarly, Johnson, Vilhjalmsson and Samtani (2005) created the video-games *Tactical Levantine Arabic* and *Tactical Iraqi* with the aim of training militaries' conversational skills. In this case, players engage in oral conversations with game characters through automatic speech recognition. This game also incorporates intelligent tutoring to provide feedback based on the learners' individual performances.

C. Students' Output in the Foreign Language Classroom

Students will be ready to produce output when they can analyze different forms and choose the most appropriate and accurate ones depending on the specific given context (Swain, 2005). At this output stage, students may notice their errors and mistakes and learn from them (Lyster, 2004). Swain (2005) states that learners need to have enough opportunities to produce language according to the contexts and aims that they have been instructed for. As suggested for comprehensible and meaningful input, teachers should also provide their students with the adequate context for the right output, being this authentic, varied and relevant. In this sense, after drilling to process and interiorize the input recieved, students should be able to implement their new knowledge into a real environment. In the case of languages, their objective would be to reproduce specific language forms in a real scenario in which communication flows in a natural way. To this aim, Nunan (1989) defined tasks as "activities that can stand alone as communicative act in its own right" (p. 10); besides, learners should be able to comprehend, produce and manipulate them while producing authentic language. The main focus of this type of exercise is placed on the meaning rather than the form since the purpose is to promote the development of real communication while practicing the new knowledge (Nobuyoshi, & Ellis, 1993). Then, in order to list and classify tasks played with video-games, three main possibilities are considered: written, oral, and corporal tasks.

To start with, students can produce both written and oral output by means of different tasks. Two possible tasks can be considered at this point: those happening inside the video-game world and those outside. On the one hand, students continuously need to interact with avatars controlled by other real player. In this sense, they need to practice their language in spontaneous environments in which any language form they know could be useful to communicate with other players. Besides, video-games should also be considered an immersive virtual environment for learning purposes. Thus, language immersion could be defined as the exposure to a target language with the aim of developing it together with various cultural and social skills related to the same language (Cummins, 2009). In this context, the simple act of playing and communicating with other players could be considered a task which involves either speaking or writing. To benefit from the use of video-games in the classroom, teachers could encourage their students to achieve particular goals by means of using certain target language forms. Other researchers have previously introduced some examples with the aim of practicing both oral and written skills. Concerning oral tasks, some other authors have promoted their implementation in the foreign language classroom. For example, researchers such as Canto and Jauregi (2017), Chotipaktanasook and Reinders (2018), Cózar-Gutiérrez and Sáez-López (2016), Jauregi, Canto, Graaff, Koenraad and Moonen (2011), Oliver and Carr (2009), Strachan, Kongmee and Pickard (2016), White (2016) and Zheng, Wagner, Young and Brewer (2009) have previously practiced oral skills with some video-games such as *World of Warcraft, Second Life, Everquest,* or *Minecraft*, among others. Most of these tasks had to do with negotiation in a virtual environment. For example, Canto and Jauregi (2017, p. 26) used *Second Life* to perform a series of oral tasks that involved planning a holiday and reflecting on past holiday experiences, or participating in a cultural television game

style context between a Dutch and a Spanish team. Similarly, Strachan, Kongmee and Pickard (2016) used *World of Warcraft* to practice the language forms studied in class through interactive tasks among the students. Concerning written tasks developed with video-games, it is difficult to identify examples occurring inside the virtual world except those based on communicating with other real players in written chats during the gaming time or drills, as explained when describing how to process input. In this sense, it seems there is a lack of video-games that promote writing formal documents on professional or academic issues, for example.

On the other hand, the reality that the players have experienced when gaming can also be used in the classroom with the aim of implementing tasks that allow students to develop their written and oral skills. In this sense, some researchers such as Ferdig and Pytash (2014), Knobel and Lankshear (2016), Peterson (2016) or Sourmelis, Ioannou and Zaphiris (2017), among others, have promoted the development of written skills by writing entries to blogs, participating in forums, interacting in written chats, developing the plot or story of a new video-game, among others. Similarly, concerning the oral register, other researchers such as Chun, Kern and Smith (2016), Goldstein and Driver (2014), Kessler (2013), or Reinders (2012), among others, have promoted or suggested oral tasks that included in-class discussions based on the video-game experience or filming videos on giving advice and tips or providing instructions for the game and uploading them on internet video channels like *Youtube*.

At last, there is also a relatively new possibility which concerns corporal output. Some video-games are increasingly incorporating body movement to control the game. One of the first video-games that incorporated this technology was *Eye Toy*, released by Sony Playstation in 2003; since then, there have been several games that are controlled with the body. Within the field of foreign language learning, we have not be able to identify relevant literature that describes features or previous examples. However, other fields of education have used this type of video-games for teaching purposes. Therefore, it could also be possible to use some video-games controlled by body movements to teach content through a foreign language, as it happens in the CLIL approach and it would also result in a language immersion. In this sense, the benefits of using video-games controlled with kinetics would be twofold. On the one hand, it would provide a closer reality of the virtual world, in which the player would experience their learning process by doing. Some authors that have been previously cited (Margarida, Veloso, Papastergiou & Kordaki, 2010; Sampson & Karagiannidis, 2002, Cohen, 2007; Jarvis, 2009), suggested that the best possible learning comes from experience and task solving should be the main principle of electronic learning. With kinetics, the learners would have the opportunity to construct and interpret their own knowledge and apply it in the virtual world according to their knowledge and experience. On the other hand, due to its practical nature and close-simulation of reality, these experience would result highly motivating for the students (González, Gómez, Navarro, Cairós, Quirce, Toledo and Marrero-Gordillo, 2016; Lohse, Boyd and Hodges, 2016; Sun, 2015; Yang, Hsieh and Ku, 2015).

IV. Discussion

This article has aimed at reviewing the relationship between digital game-based learning and the elements related to it along the process of foreign language learning. In the previous sections, a series of definitions, theories, and examples of applications have been introduced; however, this paper would be incomplete without a discussion on the connection of these items. Following these previous explanations and definitions, it seems that the application of the digital game-based approach in the foreign language classroom could bring some benefits in terms of learners' motivation and extending their time of exposure to learning with a wide range of both conventional and non-conventional exercises and tasks, as well as other resources.

Despite the game-based approach has been used for centuries and the application of video-games for educational purposes has been considered at least since the decade of the 1980s, it seems that this approach has become increasingly popular since the decade of the 2010s. As it has been explained, the last technological revolution (i.e.: *Smartphones*, Tablets, portable and wireless Internet, more powerful CPU) has led to social and educational changes. In this sense, the new electronic gadgets mentioned in this paper have quickly become part of people's routines; and consequently, it seems that they need to be part of the current education rather than being excluded. Definitely, this approach should be considered a real pedagogical possibility in the field of foreign language learning, and it would also be fundamental that any teacher or instructor learned their benefits and how to implement it in the classroom. In this sense, they should firstly determine the content to be taught in the classroom and then decide which methodology would be the most adequate one to fulfill their particular learning goals.

This paper invites to its readers to critically think how the introduction of electronic and digital gadgets into the game-based approach can offer a wide range of pedagogical possibilities in the field of foreign language teaching as well as in the broad educational field. In particular, video-games have shed light on educational fields for different reasons. For example, video-games provide students with the opportunity to practice or implement their acquired knowledge in virtual simulations that imitates real-life situations and actions happening in the learners' present world. Besides, due to the fact that the nature of these resources is the same or similar to a conventional video-game, they entertain their learners, despite the primordial objective of these is to teach. The emotions and feelings of engagement, competition, satisfaction after fulfilling their achievement, or discovery in the process of learning, among others, are some of the reasons why the implementation of video-games as a pedagogical tool seems to enhance learners' efforts to complete their tasks.

After defining and connecting three basic concepts within the target context (serious video-games, gamification, and digital game-based learning), the real interest of this paper has been to show how language learners can acquire and develop their language skills. To this aim, both serious and conventional video-games are only *'another'* way of learning, which is not necessarily different to other more traditional ones. Therefore, the stages of learning described by Symons (1988) are suitable to explain how learners can develop their language skills in environments gamified with serious video-games as well as conventional ones. Either considering that teachers use serious or conventional video-games, learners should receive some valuable input first which would challenge the current knowledge of the learner. Then, they should have the opportunity to interiorize the contents by means of drilling exercises, before they have the opportunity to do any task. In order to explain this process, this paper has individually shown some particular cases of serious and conventional video-games, as well as results of previous experiments, in which the development of any of the four language skills was tested and analyzed by other researchers.

Regarding the cases that have been introduced in this paper, it seems that video-games can contribute to develop learners' language skills. As it has been shown, video-games can help learners develop their reading, listening, writing and speaking skills as well as providing them with new vocabulary and grammar structures. As it happens in other approaches, the development of these skills needs to be carried out with tasks that promote the use of their knowledge into meaningful contexts. In addition, it has also been commented that the video-game industry has also developed the necessary technology to introduce problem-solving exercises through physical movement. In this case, input and output do not only occur through hearing and seeing but also through body stimuli; learners can consequently carry out their tasks with body movement including hands, legs, waist or face. It seems that this last option enhances playability within virtual-reality scenarios, giving a sense of further liveliness.

At last, based on this discussion, it seems that the future still has lots of possibilities to offer, and gamified proposals and the use of serious video-games in the foreign language classroom require further research and experimental cases to determine and specify their benefits and effects on learners. If any teacher or instructor decides to apply the game-based approach with the support of video-games, either serious or conventional, it would be advisable to carefully design their lesson plan and follow a model of gamification in which the content to be taught should be chosen before the type of game, as it has been suggested with our own previous model (Casañ-Pitarch, 2017a). To end this discussion, this review on the connection among the different elements related to digital game-based learning along the process of foreign language learning has compiled and suggested some possible benefits and present applications of video-games as an educational approach. Newer applications will be determined by new research and the continuous development of artificial intelligence.

V. Conclusion

As it has been observed, the field of serious games in foreign language learning offers a wide range of pedagogical possibilities to be exploited and developed within the next few years. Their use in the classroom could enhance learners' motivation towards learning foreign languages as well as extending their time of exposure to learning with either conventional or non-conventional resources. The development and use of serious video-games seems that they have become a reality in the present decade since the development of the technology is sufficiently adequate to implement the digital game-based approach in most educational centers. The use of mobile phones, tablets and portable computers allow that students may have both individualized as well as cooperative learning either in the classroom or at home. In the future, this research could move towards an empirical study on the use of serious games in the foreign language classroom, analyzing the benefits of learning foreign languages with video-games and consider how motivation can influence in their learning. To conclude, it shall be acknowledged that future research will also depend on new technological advances, especially those derived from artificial intelligence.

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Developing Reading Skills in Beginning Readers in Nigerian Primary Schools towards the Millennium Development Goals

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Abstract—**Against the objective of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this study investigated impediments to the reading competence of primary school learners in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The objective was to determine how reading approaches such as pointing at words, vocalization and sub-vocalization, excessive eye fixation, regression as well as involvement in extensive reading and teachers' instructional techniques relate with the academic performance of learners at the basic education level. The study which employed a simple survey design raised three hypotheses as a guide, while 200 pupils selected through a stratified random sampling technique responded to an achievement test of a 12-item questionnaire. The resulting data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The findings revealed that wrong reading approaches, learners' non-involvement in extensive reading and teachers' instructional techniques significantly relate with the reading competence of learners in Nigerian primary schools or the basic education level. Based on the findings, the study recommended among other things that teachers should diversify and improve on their instructional techniques to meet the current objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.**

Index Terms—**reading, reading skills, beginning readers**

I. Introduction

In the Nigerian society, the acquisition of literacy and oracy skills guarantee success, acceptance, employment and interaction with Nigerians from other linguistic groups. A few Nigerian children attend private nursery/primary schools while the majority attend public primary schools which lack adequate and functional instructional materials and facilities that would enhance teachers' and pupils' reading activities (Ekpo, Udosen, Afangideh, Ekukinam & Ikorok, 2007). This impedes the development of reading skills in public schools and constitutes a setback in the achievement of the nation's Millennium Development Goals.

The primary school is that point at which proper foundation should be established for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are derived from the process of reading as reading skills dictate performance in other disciplines. Reading, according to Soneye (2000), is the principal tool which children must have in order to effectively apply all other essential skills so as to comprehend what they read.

Today, learners' lack of proficiency in reading and writing and even in spoken English has created serious social and academic problems. Soneye (2000) observed that English expressions used by learners at almost all levels of education in Nigeria presently are filled with very poor articulation of words, grammar and meaning. One of the factors blamed for this problem is usually poor attitude towards reading by both learners and their teachers. However, the causes of poor reading skills development are multi-faceted. Etuk (2005) observes that learners' reading habits and their lack of involvement in extensive reading, teachers' instructional techniques and government's unstable national language policy are possible causes of poor reading culture among young school learners.

However, the importance of a right reading skill if adopted at the primary school level by learners cannot be over-emphasized, especially in this era of the Millennium Development Goals. MDG requires that each child should be functionally literate and be able to communicate effectively. Functional literacy means that individuals can read with understanding and be able to apply knowledge gained to solve life's problems. Functional literacy does not just stop at learning, but ensures reading for survival even when a child's academic endeavour terminates at the primary school level (Omojuwa, 2005). A child learning to read encounters the difficulty of either reading by ear or by eye. This implies that the child does not need to sound the words, i.e. to hear what he reads before he can make meaning. This process is called vocalization (or sub-vocalization, depending on the loudness of the vocalization) and it is a poor reading approach for beginning readers and even for advanced readers at any level of education. Ekah (2005) views vocalization as the reader quietly pronouncing the words in the sentence while attempting to read. Too much emphasis

on individual words rather than phrases and clauses reduce comprehension and Ekah warns that this poor habit impedes academic achievement of learners at all levels of education.

Also, there is a time frame for the interpretation of what comes within the eye span. The pause should be within measured time. When the eye fixation is too long, that is beyond or above the normal seconds, then the reader is fixing his eyes excessively. Ekah (2005) illuminates that during reading, the eye should see more words at a time and try to match them swiftly for comprehension to take place. Uya (2000), in the appraisal of reading habits among learners remarks that excessive eye fixation is a drawback to effective learning and academic performance.

In addition, poor readers, especially beginning readers, often engage in another wrong reading approach called regression. This is when a reader goes back on what has already been read by pushing forward and backward and distributing his trend of thought. Soneye (2000) maintains that when a reader fails to push forward until he gets to the end of the reading material, he engages in regression. The author warned that this poor habit affects reading comprehension negatively, especially for those who are just beginning to learn how to read. On the World Wide Web, there is a confirmation in this manner:

Studies have shown that the average slow reader will re-read as much as one quarter (¼) of a page again. Just think how this frustrates and slows you down. It's like climbing a sand dune: three steps forward and two steps backwards… like watching a DVD with your finger on a rewind button. (NWW.turboread.com/regression.htm).

It is generally accepted that most Nigerian learners at all levels do not read. This is even truer for beginning readers. Uya (2000) states that very few read for pleasure, while some only read when there is an examination or interview for a job. Yet Ekah (2005) views extensive reading by learners as a panacea for poor academic performance. Extensive reading utilizes certain skills useful and necessary for comprehension. The skills so utilized are adopted in various reading materials. Udofot (2007) states that extensive reading develops communicative competence because it enhances vocabulary development, improves interpretative ability in addition to increasing reading rate. In line with this, Ekah (2000) submits that:

A student who reads newspapers, magazines, novels and other literature for the sake of interest and knowledge is engaged in extensive reading. The reading is done for the gist of the text, that is getting the general idea or picture of the text. It equally involves reading for required information like looking for an answer to a specific question. (p.170)

To meet the demands of the objectives of the millennium development goals project, the teacher of beginning readers especially at the primary school must be involved actively in inculcating the habit of extensive reading in his learners. He should keep a record of his learners' progress in reading; this practice will engender competitiveness among his learners as each class may want to maintain the lead or improve upon their performance by reading as many books as possible (Ahmad, 2004; NTI, 2010).

Reading is one of the basic skills which a learner should acquire in the English language at the primary school level which is the beginning reading level in view of other learning tasks to which the learner will be exposed throughout his academic period at the primary school. It is highly essential to teach the learner the different skills of reading available in English and also the purposes for which we read which include getting pieces of information, understanding the ideas of others, editing our works and those of others as well as acquiring knowledge. At the primary school level, the purposes of getting information and understanding the ideas of others are common in the upper classes. In the lower classes, however, letter identification, word reading and sentence reading are the common features (NTI, 2007). In line with Millennium Development Goals, therefore, primary school pupils or beginning readers must be well groomed in all the skills of reading, and the teacher must equally be able to master the appropriate methods of handling them, e.g. intensive and extensive reading as well as skimming and scanning.

The teacher is an important component of the learning environment called school. Bamgbose (2001) maintains that the competence of a teacher enables him to fulfill the requirements of being knowledgeable with necessary resources and also enables his learners to be familiar with specific techniques which he, as a reading teacher should pass on to the learner as tools for reading achievement. Commenting on teachers' instructional techniques, Etuk (2005) equally maintains that a reading teacher must decide how he wants to get the learners to derive maximum satisfaction and pleasure from the art of reading. The author went on to add that the teacher may decide to begin the reading lesson with the discussion of a picture, a familiar illustration, questions and answers, pattern reading or reading practice.

Furthermore, to encourage beginning readers, the teacher should not allow only good readers to read in class as there would be the tendency that poor readers will become poorer and discouraged and frustrated. The poor readers should also be encouraged to read in class as this will give the teacher the opportunity to know their areas of weaknesses and help them as they learn to read (Bamgbose, 2001). Also, the teacher should always serve as a reading model to the learners by reading the materials first for the learners to listen to. In so doing, the pattern of reading is manifested while he reads covering such areas as correct pronunciation, making right pauses, observing punctuation marks, observing stresses and intonations. By the time the teacher asks the learners to read, they would draw on the teacher's performance and endeavour to read like him thus laying the right reading foundation for the beginners.

Certain authorities condemn poor instructional techniques of reading teachers. For instance, Afolayan in Bamgbose (2001) opines that a good teacher should be able to identify backward readers in the class and group them during reading. He should tolerate their weaknesses by demonstrating a certain degree of understanding. This will help the beginners and steer them in the right direction as they learn to read. Also seen as a poor reading instructional technique

by teachers is the fact that teachers only talk and do not use the chalk to write. These poor instructional techniques impede effective achievement of young learners at the primary school (Bamgbose, 2001; Etuk, 2005; Omojuwa, 2005; UBE, 2011). In a reading class, the authors advise that it is not enough to give oral explanations to new words, phrases, sentences and certain ideas expressed without writing them out on the board; after all, the teaching profession has been described as a profession of "talk and chalk" and not talk alone. This study is therefore poised to investigate how reading skills development enhances academic achievement of beginning readers in the present era of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

II. The Study

Research and experience have demonstrated over and over again that there is a close relationship between language competence and educational attainment. The implication of this is that learners' mastery of the language of classroom communication is a basic requirement for effective learning. This includes the ability to decipher meaning from print whether on the board, paper, classroom walls or note books. But as Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) note, "reading is one area that is particularly problematic for children within the school system. A great majority of them are failing to learn to read and many more are unable to read to learn" (p.16). This pathetic situation could easily be attributed to ignorance of what reading is, poor methodology of teaching reading as well as inadequate preparation of reading teachers, among many other factors.

What then is reading? Reading is one of the four language skills that exist. The others are listening, speaking and writing. The language skills are further sub-grouped into oracy and literacy skills. Whereas listening and speaking are oracy skills, reading and writing are literacy skills. It is little wonder then that one is described as literate only when he can read and write.

Again the four language skills are further categorized into productive and receptive skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills, that is, avenues or means by which we take in or receive information. Speaking and writing on the other hand are productive skills, that is, avenues or means by which we produce information for others to consume (Enighe, Galadima & Surma, 2013). According to Enighe, Galadima and Surma (2013), listening is "paying attention with the intention of having or producing the desired or intended result of communication while speaking is producing meaningful sounds" (p.98). On a general note then, reading is simply making meaning out of print and writing is producing meaningful print.

In the view of Enighe (2010), reading is a process by which information is obtained from print and which involves interaction or negotiation between the reader and the material being read. The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension; therefore reading without comprehension is like "eating without digestion". In the words of Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999),

Reading is a meaning searching and meaning getting activity where the reader is never passive. Rather, he is actively constructing information making use of textual cues in conjunction with the information (about language, context of text and knowledge of the word generally) stored in his head. (p.19)

Furthermore, Oyetunde (2015) elucidates on the concept of reading by stating that

Reading is a process of meaning construction. …the reader uses the information in the text and in his head…The information in the text refers to the three basic language systems namely, the graphophonic system, the syntactic system and the semantic system. The information in the reader's head refers to the reader's conceptual experience and his language knowledge or proficiency. (Pp.8-9)

Reading therefore is an indispensable tool of learning in the various hierarchies of today's educational systems. The implication of this is that if one fails to read, he has failed to learn as proficiency in reading is a success indicator in the learning process.

III. Importance of Reading

Reading is an activity that sets one apart as literate; it is thus a literacy skill. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a "survival tool" as one has to read sign posts, road signs, symbols and even facial expressions that tell what cannot be spoken or written. We read time, we read attitudes and behaviours, judging them as good or bad; we read meanings to actions or inactions and we also read relationships. But specifically, reading is an activity of the literate for whereas symbols, prints, signs and other forms may make meaning to the illiterate, printed words will not be meaningful to them as they will only make the intended meaning to the literate who reads them. We read examination questions in order to understand what is expected of us by the examiner and after putting down what we assume is the correct or expected responses, we read what we have written to ensure correctness.

It is also through the skill of reading that we get to know the dosage of medications we purchase off the shelf of pharmacies in cases of self-medication. The medium of reading also is a high way for information to move from print into our minds. It is therefore a great door opener for true enquirers into the world of knowledge. Many people have wondered why reading is important. According to these people, reading is very time consuming so why engage in it when there are so many other things one can do with one's time? Reading is a determinant of fundamental functionality in today's society. Filling out application or other data providing forms is a basic requirement for the literate. How then

can this be done without reading? Day to day activities, chores or functions that literate people engage in (and which many people often take for granted) will become sources of frustration, anger, anxiety or fear for the one who cannot read. This will then make life meaningless or unbearable.

The educated or literate would often use their certificates to search for well paying jobs that will guarantee future comfort and ease for one's self and other dependants. The big issue here is that today, many such well paying jobs require reading as part of job performance as there will be reports and memos which must be read and attended to. Inability to read would therefore disqualify one even when skills, experiences and other certificates seemingly qualify him.

Furthermore, it is through reading that we discover new things and gain access into other people's thoughts and opinions. We live in an age that over flows with information but reading is the main way we can take advantage of these information. Reading can also help to develop one's creative side. This is why after reading a book, the reader's creativity is awakened and given a little time, the reader becomes the read, because creativity is a virtue that boosts one's self esteem or self-worth. Reading which ignites it, is therefore fundamental in developing a good self image for the more constructively creative one is, the more sense of accomplishment he would have and the better will be his self-esteem.

Reading also helps to expand one's vocabulary as reading new words puts them in our minds for later use. In addition, good reading skills, especially in a phonics reading program, improves spelling. As one encounters new words in his reading experience, he does not only grow his vocabulary account, but he also learns how to spell the new word(s) and how to use it (them) in context.

Finally, a person who knows how to read can educate himself almost totally, in any area of life they are interested in. Self-tuition, distance learning and the open-university systems are all possible and only available to readers as non-readers cannot survive in these endeavours. As they say. "reading maketh a man" and the converse is equally the case - non-reading unmakes a man or non-reading does not make a man.

IV. Problems of Reading

Reading as a concept and as a skill is bedeviled with many problems. The problems are so many that no one writing can effectively accommodate all of them. However, a few of the problems will be discussed here. The first problem is the lack of understanding of the fact that there is a world of difference between teaching English as a school subject and teaching reading. This confusion makes some English language teachers to think that they are teaching reading when they teach English. In fact, in a great majority of Nigerian primary schools, reading does not feature on the time-table. If it is not on the time-table, the grave and sad implication is that it is never taught. The reason why it is not taught is because many people believe it can be 'caught' in the course of general English language teaching. As such, they believe that anybody who has gone through a general English class should not just know how to read but be an excellent reader. The assumption is that anyone who can speak English can read it.

Associated to the lack of distinction between teaching English and teaching reading is ignorance of what reading is. To understand what reading is, one needs to understand first what reading is not. Reading is not mouthing words; it is not head-turning; it is not finger pointing nor is it explicit eye movement. It is not vocalisation or sub-vocalisation. Reading is constructing meaning from printed matter using the information in the text and in one's head as building blocks. Reading may also mean the ability to correctly pronounce words in a printed material in order to make meaning out of the material.

When reading is misunderstood, it will be wrongly taught. The misteaching of reading is reflected in reading instructional activities tending to be "an exercise in 'reciting' passages from books with little or no comprehension" (Umolu, 1997). According to Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999), the problem of wrong reading as a result of misunderstanding of what reading is may be observed in

memorizing and reciting the letters of the alphabet, letter naming and blending to pronounce words (a feature of alphabetic spelling method), choral reading after the teacher and some form of phonics (phonemic awareness) instruction. These essentially represent teachers' approaches to helping children learn to read. (p.17))

The misunderstanding of what reading is, is also what is responsible for misteaching reading as testing teaching. This is reflected in the English teacher asking the students in his class to engage in silent reading after which he asks them questions after explaining what he thinks are words that are beyond his learners' vocabulary level.

The fall-out of teaching reading in the ways described is that instead of instilling in learners a love for reading, a strong hate for reading will be cultivated, making wrong methodology or approach to the teaching of reading counter-productive. The few learners who may not completely hate reading may find it very frustrating as no clear effort is made by their teacher to develop in them specific reading skills or making reading a gainful exercise.

Furthermore, not many educated Nigerians read or love to read. As such, children who desire to imbibe the skill of reading find no models to copy from. Where they find one or two people who encourage them to read, the reading materials are not entirely available or where they are available they are grossly insufficient in quality and quantity to go round. Yet the basic objective of formal education to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) is to develop "permanent literacy and ability to communicate effectively" (p.11).

For reading to be effectively taught and learnt, teacher training curricula for all the levels of Nigerian educational systems, should deliberately include courses on reading geared towards equipping would be teachers with not just the principles of teaching reading but workable and result oriented approaches to the impartation of the skills of reading.

Teachers should also be motivated and re-motivated as against the de-motivation being experienced presently. Motivation and re-motivation can come in the form of in-service training opportunities, professional development programmes, prompt payment of salaries, promotion when due and better working conditions, among other things.

Again, the old system of supervision and monitoring should be brought back. This is because when supervision and monitoring are not effective, the expected outcomes of a programme will be elusive no matter how well intended or planned. What obtains today is a near or total absence of effective supervision of teachers' real classroom activities as what teachers put down in their lesson notes is not really what happens in class. Supervision and monitoring are the heart of implementation; so for teachers to effectively teach reading, they ought to be supervised and closely monitored.

To effectively teach reading, teachers must also have a good understanding of what reading is as well as clearly defined goals and objectives for every reading lesson they teach. The teacher should also ensure that he is a reader and therefore a model to his students for only readers can effectively teach reading – one cannot give what one does not have.

V. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate how reading skills development at the primary level relates with the academic achievement of beginning readers in primary schools. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the relationship between wrong reading approaches and pupils' academic achievement;
2. Examine the relationship between learners' involvement in extensive reading and academic achievement at the beginning reading level.
3. Determine the relationship between teachers' instructional techniques and the academic achievement of beginning readers.

VI. Research Hypotheses

At 0.05 level of significance, the following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between wrong reading approaches and the academic achievement in reading of beginning readers in the primary schools.
2. There is no significant relationship between pupils' involvement in extensive reading and their academic achievement at primary schools.
3. There is no significant relationship between teachers' instructional techniques and competence in reading of beginning readers in primary schools.

VII. Method

The study employed a simple survey design, while the area of study was Abak Local Government Area (L.G.A.) of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population comprised all primary 4 – 6 pupils in public primary schools in Abak L.G.A. A sample of 200 pupils were drawn through a stratified random sampling technique from a total population of 815 pupils from 15 schools. The instrument used for data collection was developed by the investigators, and comprised a 12-item questionnaire and measured pupils' wrong reading approaches, pupils' involvement in extensive reading approaches and teachers' instructional techniques. Respondents were required to rate their responses on a four-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The instrument was administered personally by the researchers to the respondents during school hours with two schools covered each day.

Result

TABLE 1:
RESPONSES OF WRONG READING APPROACHES AND PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN READING

Variables	♠x_1♠y		♠$x^2$1♠y^2	♠xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Involvement in Wrong Reading Approaches (y)	567		1825	13573	0.260	0.1965	*Significant
Pupils' Achievement (x)		4869		127867			

N = 200, level of significance = 0.05, df = 198

The results on Table 1 show that for wrong reading approaches, the calculated r-value is 0.260 while the critical r-value is 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate. This means that there is a significant relationship between wrong reading approaches and the academic achievement in reading of beginning readers in primary schools.

TABLE 2:
RESPONSE OF PUPILS' INVOLVEMENT IN EXTENSIVE READING APPROACH AND THEIR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Variables	♠x_1♠y		♠$x^2$1♠y^2	♠xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Involvement in Wrong Reading Approaches (y)	677		1903	14578	0.476	0.195	*Significant
Pupils' Achievement (x)		4869		138676			

N = 200, level of significance = 0.05, df = 198

The values in Table 2 indicate that the calculated r-value is 0.476, while the critical r-value is 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom. The calculated r-value is noticed to be greater than the table value; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate. The study therefore concluded that learners' involvement in extensive reading approaches significantly relate with their academic achievement in reading.

TABLE 3:
RESPONSES OF TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES AND PUPILS' COMPETENCE IN READING

Variables	♠x_1♠y	♠$x^2$1♠y^2	♠xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Involvement in Wrong Reading Approaches (y)	542	1782	13073	0.257	0.195	*Significant
Pupils' Achievement (x)	4869	127171				

N = 200, level of significance = 0.05, df = 198

Table 3 shows that the calculated r-value is 0.257, while the critical r-value is 0.195. Since the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate at 0.05 level of significance. This means that teachers' instructional techniques significantly relate with pupils' competence in reading.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Results of the data analysis on Table 1 revealed that there is a significant relationship between reading approaches and beginning readers' academic achievement. This implies that pupils who apply wrong reading approaches while learning to read, stand the risk of non-mastery of the content of all subjects across the curriculum. The result is consistent with the findings and submissions of Soneye (2000), Uya (2000), Etuk (2005) and World Wide Web (2014) that wrong reading techniques such as vocalization and sub-vocalization, excessive eye fixation, regression and word pointing constitute serious inhibitions to reading achievement and affect learners' academic achievement.

Furthermore, results of findings on Table 2 confirm that learners' involvement in extensive reading have a significant relationship with their academic achievement at the primary school level which is the beginning reading level. The result establishes that learners' non-involvement in extensive reading paves a way to very poor academic achievement at any level. The results are also in support of earlier findings by Ahmad (2004), Ekah (2005), Udofot (2007) and NTI (2010), who concluded that extensive reading develops communicative competence, enhances vocabulary development, improves interpretative ability in addition to increasing reading rate, and therefore enhances effective academic achievement among young learners.

Finally, the results of findings on Table 3 indicate that there is a significant relationship between teachers' instructional techniques and pupils' competence in reading. This means that young learners who are taught by a reading teacher who diversifies his strategies to accommodate good and poor readers stand the chance of better academic achievement at any level, especially at the foundation level which is the level at which they begin to read. The findings agree with the conclusion of Bamgbose (2001), Etuk (2005), Omojuwa (2005), NTI (2007) and UBE (2011), that poor instructional strategies impede effective academic achievement of young learners at the primary level.

IX. DEVELOPING READING SKILLS IN BEGINNING READERS

To effectively and successfully develop and sustain reading in beginning readers, reading should be taught in stages and not lump sum. Oyetunde (2015) suggests five stages as follows:

(a) Oral language foundation stage which is the foundation of reading success. At this stage, beginning readers are first of all given an opportunity to understand and speak the English language preparatory to meaningful reading and writing.

(b) Print awareness stage: This is the stage where children who are beginning readers are taught that graphic symbols are meaningful and that books give meaningful and enjoyable information. Beginning readers are also taught that the pages of books are to be turned over from right to left and that books have a top and a bottom.

(3) Word recognition stage: At this stage, beginning readers are helped to acquire sight words. In Oyetunde's (2015) words,

sight words are individual words that pupils can recognize instantly at sight – this means that they can pronounce these words and they know their meanings. (p.95)

(d) Phono-phonemic awareness stage: At this stage, beginning readers are taught that letters represent sounds that are blended together and that individual sounds and groups of sounds can be combined to form words.

(e) Comprehension stage: At this stage the learners are no longer learning to read but reading to learn. They are thus helped to understand and acquire specific comprehension skills such as understanding main ideas, making inferences, summarization and the use of context clues. This way, the learner will be helped to appreciate reading as communication.

X. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the investigators concluded that for effective achievement of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals at the basic education level, variables like proper reading approaches, learners' involvement in extensive reading and proper teaching strategies are significantly of utmost importance.

It is also the conviction of the authors that if the steps presented in this paper are followed, developing reading skills in beginning readers will no longer be a walk in the dark. The learners will love to read and the teachers will rejoice at the fruit of their travail.

XI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Teachers need to adopt diversified instructional strategies in their approach to teaching reading and this should be done at an early stage or primary school level, which is the stage of beginning reading.
2. The conventional classroom method of teaching reading should be discouraged through the provision of reading materials and objects that stimulate learners' interest in reading.
3. Teachers of beginning readers, especially at the basic education level should eschew wrong reading practices and quickly correct them in learners.
4. Individual differences in children's reading ability should be identified and properly addressed through variation of reading techniques.
5. Beginning readers should be encouraged to read materials outside the recommended classroom texts by parents and teachers as well.

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Oral Portfolio in Spanish as a Third Language: Harnessing the Potential of Self- and Peer-Assessment

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***Abstract*—Even though research in second language acquisition has demonstrated the importance of oral production and interaction, there is a growing tendency toward distance learning. Therefore, in order to include oral practice and evaluation in an online course, a new pedagogical tool was designed, namely the oral portfolio. This article describes and analyzes an oral portfolio which included learner production and self- and peer-assessment. Combining these aspects provided data on both linguistic and metalinguistic abilities. The results revealed a relationship between oral competency and self- and peer-assessment abilities, suggesting a beneficial role of metalinguistic reflection in the development of oral communication skills. Moreover, this study explored how self- and peer-assessment could be better implemented in a language course. Based on the observations gathered throughout the study, we believe that learners need to be trained and to develop the formative assessment competency, in order to maximize the benefits, for assessment to be as sustainable as possible.**

***Index Terms*—oral portfolio, metalinguistic reflection, self- and peer-assessment, online/distance learning, Spanish as a third language**

I. Introduction

Over the last decades, learner involvement, reflection and independence have taken on a growing importance in the field of language education. Few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping language learners gain in independence, but there remains a good deal of uncertainty about applications for language education. Dickinson (1992) "associates independence with active responsibility for one's own learning" (cited in Benson & Voller, 2013, p. 2). This is a problematic concept because it carries meaning that can be applied differently depending on particular circumstances of language education. For instance, we explore learners' independence from an online computer-mediated Spanish as a third language university course and observe the link between metalinguistic reflection and oral production competency in language learning using an oral portfolio including a self- and peer-assessment. More specifically, the current research project describes the use of an oral portfolio and a self- and peer-evaluation in the development of oral competency. With the exception of Woll and Paquet (2017), we cannot recall any mention in the literature of the use of self- and peer-assessment specifically on oral competency.

The use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to facilitate language learning has become commonplace in both face-to-face and distance learning, given its various affordances (see for example Thorne, 2008). CMC appeals to a broad language learning audience due to its perceived connections to 'real life' and contributes to the development of many features of language learning, including authentic language use, target language production and target form use (Thorne, 2008). That said, CMC does have its specific limitations, especially in regard to the challenge of observing oral competency in an online setting (Woll & Paquet, 2017; Lin, 2014). In light of a decade worth of second language acquisition (SLA) research emphasizing the need for maximum learner involvement in order for acquisition to occur, combined with the abovementioned constraint of CMC, our investigation explores the use of an oral portfolio, such as the one used in Woll & Paquet (2017), with the addition of a combined self- and peer-evaluation. This brings us to investigate not only the implementation of a pedagogical intervention, the oral portfolio to observe oral competency in a CMC course, but also to explore the potential benefit of metalinguistic reflection with regard to oral communication skills (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005; Woll & Paquet, 2017; Tsang, 2017).

II. Background

Various researchers suggest that the practice of metalinguistic reflection in the language classroom encourages and maximizes second language development (eg. Swain, 1995; Simard, French & Fortier, 2007; among others). Moreover, they consider metalinguistic reflection to be an observable manifestation of language awareness and define it "as any

conscious act of reflection about language, including learners' planning of how they will process it linguistically" (Simard, French & Fortier, 2007, p. 510). According to Bialystok (2001), "metalinguistic awareness implies that attention is actively focused on the domain of knowledge that describes the explicit properties of language" (pp. 126-127). In other words, a prerequisite to metalinguistic reflection is attention. Moreover, as stated by Woll & Paquet (2017), "the more occasions learners have to reflect on the language, the more they become aware of their own learning process, allowing them to better adapt to different kinds of communicative situations" (p. 99). Alternatives to promoting reflection and metalinguistic reflection are self- and peer-assessment, which further learners involvement and critical thinking. Combining them into a portfolio format should allow learners to demonstrate critical analysis and reflectivity about the language itself and the materialization of language learning achievements.

Even before any student involvement takes shape, the task of planning content and assessment sits squarely with the teacher. Subsequently, as teachers assess learners' performance and/or knowledge related to the given subject, the acquisition of curricular-specific content for the sake of the course is foremost in their mind, but teachers also want learners to be prepared for what comes next, and to relate their teaching to what learners are going to experience in the real world. From this point of view, Boud & Soler (2016) state that one of the major questions in higher education is "[…] whether educational provision equips learners effectively, not just for immediate educational requirements, […] but also for whether it prepares them for what might be required in the future whether that be in educational institutions or beyond" (p. 401). In keeping with the abovementioned, Boud & Soler (2016) suggest that teachers should provide learners with opportunities to develop their informed judgment. Here, we choose to highlight a number of Boud & Soler's (2016) suggestions as they relate the present study. As previously mentioned, learner involvement plays a crucial role in language development, and equates with active learning, which is observed by way of commitment and the level of reflexivity. More importantly, learners should be aware of their own level of knowledge and the resulting gaps in order for them to set realistic goals.

In other words, to make learning significant and lifelong, and to develop the learners reflective practice, which is defined as sustainable assessment, must be put forth, namely using pedagogical tools such as self- and peer-assessment. These two are promising alternatives, with benefits such as helping learners reflect on their own progress and so, at different stages of learning. Indeed, self- and peer-assessment research is well documented in the field of second language education (eg. Boud & Soler, 2016; Wanner & Palmer, 2018; Magin, 2001; Osmond, Merry & Reiling, 2000; among others). The potential of self- and peer-assessment will be further discussed in the following sections.

Self-assessment as a learning tool

Andrade & Du (2007) define self-evaluation as a:

process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly. (p. 160)

In other words, this process is a way of increasing learners' involvement in their own learning by having them make judgments about their achievements and outcomes. Moreover, in order for self-assessment to be effective, learners need to first learn how to develop their critical thinking, which occurs over time (cf. Dochy, Sluijsmans, & Segers, 1999; Mogessie, 2017).

The use of self-evaluation in the classroom primarily benefits the learner, who is the main decision maker in the process. For their part, teachers are able to share responsibility for the learning and teaching process with each of their students. Based on Spiller (2012), there are many advantages in using self-assessment as a learning tool, which can be divided into three broad categories: The first broad category relates to recognition-based reflection. By using this strategy, learners build on their learning after taking stock of what needs to be learned. This actually encourages learners' reflection on their own learning and pushes them to set realistic goals for themselves in terms of "where to go next". The second category concerns taking responsibility for learning, including the development of independence on the part of the learner. Moreover, this pedagogical tool inspires learners to take an active part in their own learning, as well as to promote a learning partnership instead of a compulsory assignment imposed by the teacher. In addition, it provides learners with the formative aspects of assessment, which makes them more reflective about the language, which was previously defined as metalinguistic awareness. Ultimately, the use of self-assessment allows learners to develop a competency which will help them beyond the classroom. The third and final category relates to inclusionary partnership, or how self-assessment is reflective of learner background, experience and readiness. Furthermore, self-assessment aligns with the recent paradigm shift away from teacher-centered performance in favour of a more student-centered model. (see also Wanner & Palmer, 2018; Chen, 2010; Boud & Soler, 2016)

Implementing self-evaluation requires the consideration of several elements, including a clear rationale, explicit procedures, reassurance of a safe environment, and the confidence that other students will do likewise (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Wanner & Palmer, 2018; among others). Students should be aware of the assessment criteria, and be absolutely clear about the standards of work expected.

Peer-assessment as a learning tool

In the first version of the current study written by Woll & Paquet (2017), numerous conference participants mentioned the value of adding a peer-assessment to the equation. Peer-assessment is a classroom-based collective and evaluative strategy, which involves one or more students providing feedback to other students on a task. According to

Falchikov (2007) peer-assessment "requires students to provide either feedback or grades (or both) to their peers on a product or a performance, based on the criteria of excellence for that product or event which students may have been involved in determining" (p. 132). However, it is sometimes difficult to predict the fairness and the accuracy of the learners' judgment, which explains why peer-assessment necessitates constant innovation and improvement in the way it is implemented (cf. O'Toole, 2013). Moreover, according to Hanrahan & Isaacs (2001), formative assessment is not taken seriously and students find it too time consuming since no mark is attached. To prevent these situations from happening, the combination of self- and peer-assessment used not only as formative but also as summative assessment is highly recommended.

Peer-assessment has many advantages including student involvement, authentic feedback and the opportunity for metalinguistic reflection. To ensure the quality of peer assessment, Tillema, Leenknecht & Segers (2011) outlined three criteria that must be present in order for the assessment process to be meaningful: Authenticity (actively engaging students), transparency (clear and precise instructions) and generalisability (the outcome can be generalised to other tasks). More specifically, peer-assessment allows learners the opportunity to clarify, review and edit their thoughts, which will be enhanced with time and practice.

The principles of implementation of peer-assessment are basically the same as those for self-assessment. Taking all of the above into consideration, it is necessary to acknowledge the benefits of learners involvement, ability to reflect and analyse their learning process and capacity to set realistic goals, which would fill their knowledge gap. More specifically, these tools create a distance between the classic, teacher-centred summative assessment tools where learning was measured quantitatively without any input relevant to the progression of learning. In essence, portfolio and self- and peer-assessment is a sustainable assessment method that promotes independent and autonomous learning.

III. Statement of the Problem

The present contribution aims to provide a comprehensive description of the oral portfolio and its implementation in an advanced Spanish course at the university level, which was taught in a computer-mediated communication format. Moreover, this study seeks to establish the usefulness of this assessment tool in the measurement of oral competency. Subsequently, learners submitted a self- and peer-assessment of their oral portfolio. The resulting summative assessment aimed at providing insights on the learners evaluating and not on the evaluees, which affords a vantage point in regard to the development of their metalinguistic knowledge. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on the potential benefits of these pedagogical interventions in the L3 learning process. To sum up, the objectives of this article are:

(1) To explore the relationship between oral production competency and level of metalinguistic awareness.

(2) To describe the oral portfolio assessment tool in the development of learners' oral competency;

(3) To explore how to best implement metalinguistic reflection within a self- and peer-evaluation in an advanced Spanish as a third language university course.

This research project, which is outlined in the following sections, is characteristic of classroom-based research in that the resulting observations are descriptive in nature.

IV. Methodology

Participants

Given the importance of having the students engaged in their own learning process and to develop their L2 metalinguistic knowledge, as mentioned in the preceding section, an oral portfolio was designed and implemented to 25 Spanish L3 learners. The observations, which are described in this study, were gathered during the fall semesters of 2015[1] and 2017. At the end of the course, students in the 2015 group completed a self-evaluation of their portfolio whereas in 2017, a peer-evaluation was added to the assignment. All participants in the project were enrolled in either an online or a hybrid[2] advanced Spanish course at a Quebec university. The participants (17 females, 8 males) were enrolled in two broad areas of study: translation (n = 13) and second language education (n = 9), in addition to three non-program students. With the exception of three (3) graduate students, the majority (n = 22) were pursuing a bachelor's degree. They all met the requirements to take this course and were ranked as advanced learners of Spanish. Table 1 specifically illustrates the learners' proficiency level, term of study, program of study and learning context.

[1] Data gathered in 2015 were previously published as proceedings from the Meeting on Language Teaching by Woll & Paquet (2017).

[2] This project was conducted through three different learning contexts: (1) online exclusively, (2) hybrid including 14 hours of online oral workshops using a virtual classroom platform, and (3) hybrid including 22 hours of classroom oral workshops.

TABLE 1:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE L3 LEARNERS OF SPANISH

Learning context	Proficiency level	Number of participants / term of study	Areas of study
Online exclusively	Advanced	2015: n=8 2017: n=3	L2 teaching: n=0 Translation: n=9 Others: n=2
Hybrid (online oral workshops)	Advanced	2015: n=8 2017: n=0	L2 teaching: n=4 Translation: n=4 Others: n=0
Hybrid (classroom-based workshops)	Advanced	2015: n=0 2017: n=6	L2 teaching: n=5 Translation: n=0 Others: n=1

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of learners come from two broad areas of study, namely translation and teacher education. Therefore, instrumental motivation to learn Spanish, not only from a practical point of view, but more importantly from a metalinguistic standpoint, is seemingly foremost in their approach to learning Spanish. As for the other three students, their motivation could have arisen from a variety of sources, but they were nonetheless rounding out their usual face-to-face program with an online learning format.

Implementation

For this research project, one methodological constraint was that the course *Advanced Spanish* was taught and administered in a computer-mediated communication format. Consequently, we needed to develop an observation tool to (1) assess participants' oral communication skills, (2) record their production on a user-friendly platform that would be easy to access for both participants and researchers, and (3) measure their development of metalinguistic knowledge. Although there are many different platforms that could have been used, we decided to use Facebook, which participants were already familiar with. For confidentiality purposes, participants were required to create a Facebook page specifically for the course.

The oral portfolio consisted of four oral entries on topics related to current affairs for the students enrolled in the 2015 course or related to the units from the Spanish textbook C de C1 (Acquaroni et al., 2017) for the 2017 students. Participants had one week to read on the topic, develop their argument and prepare a response. The participants in the hybrid course format developed their argument during the workshops and were asked to refer back to their group discussion, whereas the participants from the online exclusively format were requested to find information from various sources and reference it in their oral production. At the end of the week, they needed to record a video comment and upload it onto their Facebook page. Learner productions were assessed and analyzed for breadth of vocabulary, content (argumentation), grammatical accuracy and fluency in line with the linguistic objectives of the modules.

Self-assessment[3]

Each participant, from both terms of study, completed a self-assessment at the end of the course. Learners had to go back to their oral portfolio entries and listen to them carefully. This self-assessment took into consideration three main aspects, which will be described in the following paragraphs: (1) general impression of their language abilities, (2) sensitivity to violations of grammatical concepts, and (3) ability to set realistic goals. While all of these were aimed at involving participants in their own learning process, the second aspect also provided the instructor with a trace of what learners actually knew about the language in relation to how they used it.

First of all, to share their general impression of their abilities, learners had to respond to two descriptors aimed at self-assessing their fluency and their breadth of vocabulary. Since students were experienced L2 learners, the descriptors were written in Spanish. They were formulated to leave the participants room to provide an extensive overview of their performance and reflected the self-assessment scales of the CEFR listed below.

- (1a) I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 27)
- (1b) General: I can express myself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 28)

The second aspect to be self-assessed was related to another important component of the course, which required learners to analyse the grammatical accuracy of their language production. By adding the self-assessment to this course objective, participants had to analyze their grammatical accuracy, notice their strengths and weaknesses and further examine how the language works after extracting positive and negative evidence from their portfolio. As for the negative evidence, participants were asked to provide the source of the error and to correct it with proper Spanish.

Finally, with regard to the third aspect, learners had to set realistic goals for the future. More specifically, participants had to conclude their portfolio stating what concepts they believed were acquired entirely, and what concepts were only partially acquired and needed more work.

[3] This section is widely taken from Woll & Paquet (2017).

In the 2015 term of study, students were asked to submit a written self-assessment as well as an oral one, which was uploaded into their portfolio. Whereas quality, accuracy and depth of reflection were rated with respect to the learners' production, the instructor also evaluated the quality of the language used in the self-assessment. The latter was of the greatest interest since the way they expressed themselves in their self-assessment sometimes contradicted their analysis. In turn, participants whose projected goals mirrored their stage of development (in that their goals were realistic) were identified as independent learners, even if they lacked certain linguistic skills. As for the 2017 term of study, learners only completed a written self-assessment because of time constraints.

Peer-assessment

Each participant from the 2017 term of study completed a peer-assessment of one of their classmates at the end of the course. Learners were asked to visit the oral portfolio of a classmate, to listen carefully to the entries and evaluate their language use. Learners were told, right from the beginning, that this practice would not affect their peers' final grade in any way and that this task was only used to assess the evaluators' metalinguistic reflection and their level of Spanish. The peer-assessment took into consideration three main aspects, which will be described in the following paragraphs: (1) critical and constructive reflection on their classmate ́s language abilities, (2) grammatical control and peer correction, and (3) specific language use. For each aspect, learners needed to rate their classmate's performance on a scale from one to five. While all of these were aimed at involving learners in their own learning process, the second and third aspects also provided the instructor with a trace of what learners actually knew about the language and of their level of metalinguistic awareness.

First of all, to reflect and share their constructive criticism of their classmate ́s portfolio entries, learners had to respond to two descriptors aimed at peer-assessing fluency and coherence. As in the self-assessment, the descriptors were written in Spanish. Additionally, descriptors were formulated to leave the evaluator room to provide an extensive overview of their classmate ́s performance.

- (2a) Fluency: My classmate "can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural smooth flow of language" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 28).
- (2b) Coherence: My classmate "can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 28).

The second aspect to be peer-assessed was related to another important component of a language course: lexical and grammatical accuracy, and self-correction. Student-evaluators were asked to assess their classmates' accuracy and ability to self-correct their mistakes. For each entry, they needed to select some positive and negative evidence of language use and to analyse it. The main objective of this aspect was to observe the evaluator's level of metalinguistic awareness and reflection. In order to correct their classmate's production, they needed to be aware and to notice the incongruencies in the entries. More specifically, student-evaluators needed to rank their classmate on a scale from one to five based on the following descriptor:

- (3) Accuracy: My classmate "consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 28).

With regard to the third aspect, student-evaluators were provided with a grid where they were asked to take some parts of the production, transcribe them and analyse them. Concretely, they needed to analyse their classmate's portfolio production taking into consideration the following elements: breadth of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, spontaneity and content. At the end of this section, student-evaluators had to state the strengths and weaknesses of their classmate according to their analysis.

Scoring

As previously stated, the oral portfolios were analyzed with respect to four aspects of oral competency, namely vocabulary, content, accuracy and fluency. However, since fluency was potentially influenced by the learners preparation for the task, this aspect was not considered in the present study, so that results obtained would be largely comparable. Each of the four independent entries was globally assessed with respect to descriptors, taking into account the remaining three aspects mentioned above. Letter grades were assigned for each portfolio entry based on the levels of attainment. These were then converted into percentages based on the departmental scale. As for the self- and peer-assessment, the evaluation was based on the above-mentioned criteria.

In the following section, we describe the results and observations of the assessment tool put forth. We first take a look at the relationship between learners' oral competency and their capacity for metalinguistic reflection, using self- and peer-assessment as a starting point. Subsequently, we share our observations on the use of self- and peer-assessment.

V. Results and Discussion

The first part of this section explores the relationship between oral production competency and level of metalinguistic awareness, which corresponds to our first research objective. The overall results of oral performance ranged from 48% to 100% and self- and peer-assessment[4] scores were between 45% and 100%. As illustrated in Table 2, means and standard deviations for both measures were also largely comparable, suggesting that both types of performance might be in some way related to each other.

[4] For the sake of combining 2015 and 2017 terms of study, results from the 2017 term of study self- and peer-assessment were averaged.

TABLE 2:
ORAL COMPETENCY AND SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORES

	Min (%)	Max (%)	Mean (%)	*SD*
Oral competency	48	100	84.6%	0.14
Self-assessment	45	100	81.8%	0.15

A closer look at the individual scores obtained on each measure provides further support for this assumption. However, two learners seemed to contradict this tendency. On one hand, there is a learner from the 2015 term of study who failed to comply with the deadlines and requirements for the portfolio assignment, which greatly affected his overall oral competency mark. Similarly, a learner from the 2017 term of study admitted to not having invested the time and effort to submit a thorough and effective self and peer assessment.

This study does not include the sample size nor the statistical power to suggest the presence of a relationship between oral competency and level of metalinguistic awareness with certainty. However, in view of an exploratory interpretation of the results, the scatterplot in Figure 1 demonstrates the potential tendency toward the above mentioned relationship.

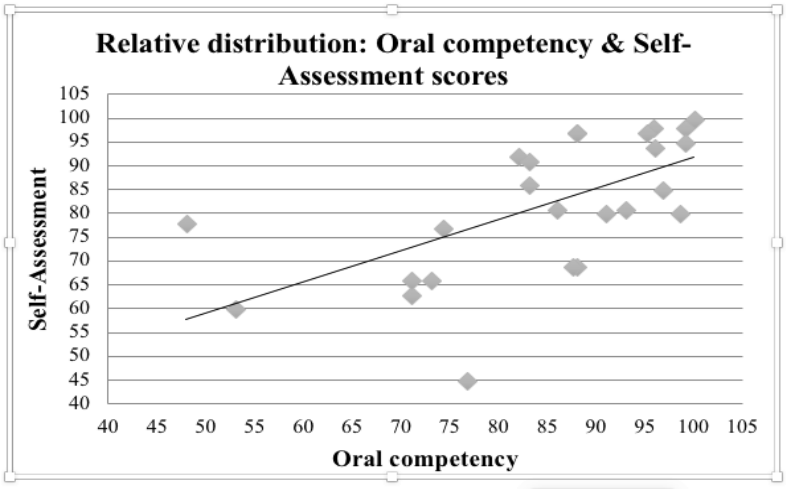

Figure 1: Relationship Between Self-Assessment And Oral Competency Scores

As illustrated in Figure 1, despite the heterogeneous make up of the participants in this study, learners who scored high on oral competency generally also attained high self-assessment scores. This was confirmed by statistical analyses, which revealed a strong correlation (Pearson ś r = .615, p = 0.002). In summary, our results indicate that the type of oral skills targeted in the oral portfolio is positively in line with the nature of metalinguistic reflection skills developed in the self- and/or peer-assessment.

Based on the results gathered in Woll & Paquet (2017) and the ones from this research project, there may be different ways of interpreting the data previously presented. According to Woll & Paquet (2017), "advanced L2 learners in an academic setting have already acquired a set of analytic skills enabling them to reflect on different target language uses, and therefore able to judge their own production in a critical manner" (p. 96). Moreover, as previously mentioned in Tillema et al. (2011), in order to have quality of feedback and analysis, learners must develop quality criteria, such as generalisability, which makes transfer across any task possible. Generalisability would support the premise that advanced learners have previously accessed reflective skills which enable them to apply the latter to any learning condition. For our part and taking the above into consideration, we posit that self- and peer-assessment may help our language learners notice and become aware of Spanish syntactic structures. More specifically, we believe that metalinguistic awareness may be the impetus for their ongoing oral competency development.

The second objective of the current study was to describe the oral portfolio assessment tool in the development of learners' oral competency. Recall that one of the main challenges specific to CMC in a second language learning reality is the means of including an oral competency requirement, which was an imperative in the given context. The authenticity of the portfolio content as an incentive for student involvement and progress is also worthy of mention. In the 2015 version of the course, some of the current issues examined included endangered languages and the plight of Syrian refugees, both of which were highly visible headlines at the time. In the same fashion, the 2017 term of study included themes from Acquaroni et al. (2017) such as the use of seduction in publicity and cultural stereotypes. For their respective use in each of the two course iterations, both series of topics aimed to elicit student willingness to explore the topics in-depth.

Moreover, the tripartite combination of evaluated elements, namely, fluency of speech, accuracy of speech in terms of the unit's and the course's grammatical objectives, and breadth of specific vocabulary related to the task gave

students ample opportunity to develop and perfect the recognized hallmarks of oral competency. An additional strength of the portfolio is that learners received direct feedback throughout the entire semester, which they could proceed to implement in the form of improvements to the subsequent oral portfolio entry. From a teaching perspective, the use of the oral portfolio tool was advantageous because the trace of any progression was evident over time, i.e. the entire semester. This last aspect is especially helpful in providing a global assessment. With the growing movement toward online and distance learning, the use of an assessment tool such as the oral portfolio, breaks down some of the barriers both teachers and learners previously experienced in regard to oral competency.

Ultimately, with the addition of a self- and peer-assessment at the end of the semester, this platform afforded learners the opportunity to become aware of the gaps in their learning. More specifically, as learners were listening and commenting both their own and their classmate's portfolio, they were confronted with positive and negative evidence of Spanish use. For some learners, the resulting inquiry would be sufficient for them to construct a more accurate oral production. Although this last benefit can only be considered as a possible contributing factor, the process may nonetheless have positive repercussions on their oral competency.

In keeping with the abovementioned, the third and final goal of the present study was to explore how to best implement metalinguistic reflection within a self- and peer-evaluation in an advanced Spanish as a third language university course. It is a useful way for learners to examine their overall proficiency and to reflect on their language related knowledge. As results from the first research objective have shown, learners with higher oral competency also demonstrate higher metalinguistic awareness. A learner from the 2017 term of study thought it appropriate to include a comment at the end of the assignment:

¡Muchísimas gracias Pierre-Luc, este ejercicio de reflexión metalingüística permitió que me diera cuenta de algunos de mis puntos débiles, que son bastantes! [Thank you Pierre-Luc, this metalinguistic reflection exercise allowed me to notice some of my weaknesses, which are numerous!]

This comment demonstrates the impact of self- and peer-assessment on metalinguistic reflection. This learner, who is a highly proficient speaker of Spanish, showed the ability to reflect in a metalinguistic manner in regard to the perceived weaknesses. The learner's perceived strengths were related mainly to the macro-text features (content, structure of the talk, etc.), which could be explained by the more traditional idea of assessment where teachers mainly focused on learners' weaknesses. This said, as stated by Mogessie (2017), learners still need to be trained and to develop the formative assessment competency, in order to maximize the benefits, even in the case of highly proficient language learners.

Using and observing the self- and peer-assessment led us to a question for future research: Is one of the tools more pertinent or more constructive than the other? Based on numerous observations from the present study, learners' assessment seemed to be more relevant for their peer-assessment than their self-assessment. This could be explained by different factors such as a figurative "blind spot" in self-assessment. In essence, learners may need to turn their focus to peer-assessment in order to better perceive their own gaps, which in turn makes self-assessment more proficient. It may prove interesting to compare self-assessment to peer-assessment because in the latter, learners serve as consultants, and therefore may be less anxious about being either judged or perceived as irrelevant. Consequently, to achieve the optimal metalinguistic reflection, one should consider using both self- and peer-assessment in order to fulfill the training and the reflective need of a deeper and more relevant reflection.

Taking into consideration everything put forth in the current study, we nonetheless must return to the essence of what Boud & Soler (2016) mention as the main takeaways of self- and peer-assessment, namely, learner involvement and commitment, active learning and reflexivity, and awareness of the gaps in knowledge. When teachers mobilize all three with the express purpose of developing informed judgement and sustainable assessment in their students, they contribute to learners' independence and lifelong learning.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, we have juggled with many suggestions and interpreted many observations, which could be considered as subjective. However, the main aspect to mention is the importance of having our learners involved in their own learning process. Learning through CMC may not be the optimal way for language development. However, if the course integrates the development of oral competency through a tool such as the oral portfolio, and affords learners with the opportunity to develop linguistic knowledge by means of metalinguistic reflection such as self- and peer-assessment, we manage to have independent learners, who are involved and committed in their learning process.

There are some limitations in the current study, such as the lack of training in the use of self- and peer-assessment or emphasis on the use of metalanguage in sustainable assessment. That being said, there is a need for future research into sustainable assessment in the field of second language development. More specifically, future research should tap into how to develop learners' ability to judge, reflect and think critically. By doing so, learners would be better prepared to self-assess their third language performance and therefore concentrate on bridging the gap in their knowledge. Another limitation relates to the assessment timeframe, in that self- and peer- assessment only occurred at the end of the semester, after students concentrated on their productions which were uploaded to individual oral portfolios. The self- and peer- assessment process would gain in student involvement through it taking place over the course of the semester.

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Image-text Relations in Junior High School EFL Textbooks in China: A Mixed-methods Study

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***Abstract*—This study seeks to test the applicability of Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework of image-text relations in school textbook discourse, and adopts mixed methods by combining quantification of thirteen categories in Martinec and Salway's analytical framework with interpretations of the relations between visual images and verbal language in the six junior high school EFL textbooks to generalize multimodal trends in pedagogical discourse. The findings shed some light on cultivating students' multimodal literacy in the pedagogical context of Mainland China.**

***Index Terms*—image-text relations, EFL textbook discourse, multimodal literacy, systemic-functional multimodal discourse analysis**

I. Introduction

Past decades have witnessed the trend of multimodality which involves multiple semiotic modes such as visual image, verbal language, and acoustic sound in human communication, as well as the mushroom development of SF-MDA (Multimodal Discourse Analysis) inspired by Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics. SF-MDA views diverse semiotic resources in terms of representational, interactive, and compositional tri-meta-functions, i.e., modeling visual representations of material world, constructing the relations between viewers and what is viewed, and creating visual coherence, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Pedagogical materials cannot escape from this multimodality trend. Nowadays, textbooks (especially primary and secondary school textbooks) are full of colorful pictures, cartoons, and highlighted texts. Some are even equipped with multimedia supplementary materials (such as DVDs), which draw students' attention more easily, due to the synchronization of multiple modes.

Inter-semiotic relations or inter-semiosis (i.e., the interactive communication power achieved by different semiotic resources in multimodal texts) are key aspects of MDA study (Jewitt, 2009; O'Halloran, 2011). Barthes (1977) first put forward three kinds of image-text relations, i.e., illustration, anchorage, and relay, which were applied to the analysis of newspaper photographs, moving images, and dialogue in film. Focusing on the ideational aspect of image-text relations, and drawing on the earlier version of the framework, Martinec and Salway (2005) integrated Barthes' (1977) categorization of image-text relations with Halliday's (1994) logico-semantic relations of expansion and projection to create a generalized framework of image-text relations. Most systemic-functional semioticians started to probe into intersemiotic relations in the late 1990s (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996/2006; Lemke, 1998; Royce, 1998, 2002, 2006; O'Halloran, 2008; Stockl, 2004; Martinec & Salway, 2005; Kong, 2006; Unsworth, 2006, 2007; Matthiessen, 2007; Liu & O'Halloran, 2009; Painter & Martin, 2011). Previous multimodal studies on EFL textbooks in diverse contexts mainly adopted Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) visual analysis framework such as Chen (2009) in China, Nordensvard (2010) in Sweden, Tahririan & Sadri (2013) in Iran, Weninger & Kiss (2013) in Hungrary, Salbego et al. (2015) in Brazil, and Torres (2015) in South Korea. Whilst other multimodal EFL textbook discourse studies have incorporated Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) visual analysis model with other frameworks such as Royce's (1998) intersemiotic complementarity framework (e.g., Liu & Qu, 2014 in China), or Kong's taxonomy (2006) (e.g., Vorvilas, 2014), Kress and van Leeuwen's (2005) text-image relations framework (e.g., Yassine, 2014 in Algeria). However, the comprehensive framework of Martinec and Salway (2005) has not been adopted in these pedagogical materials studies on image-text relations to quantify categories in a series of textbook corpus to generalize trends and findings.

In light of the afore-mentioned, the research question is formulated below:

What are the multimodal relations between verbal language and visual images, as well as their appraisal meanings in junior high school EFL textbooks in Mainland China (with Guangzhou as a featured case)?

In order to address above issues, this study adopts mixed methods, in other words, for one thing, selects some representative examples for qualitative case study, and codes the data based on relevant theoretical or analytical frameworks to offer a snapshot of multimodal analysis of EFL pedagogical materials and their appraisal meanings; for another thing, quantifies kinds of image-text relations to generalize research findings in the six EFL textbooks. The data of the current study consist of six junior high school EFL textbooks in Mainland China, edited and published by the Shanghai Education Press in 2002 and 2012, which are currently used in junior high school of Guangzhou. These series of textbooks are officially recommended by Guangzhou Education Bureau, and about 90% of public junior high school students are using them. To be more specific, two volumes for Junior 1 (Year 7, Y7, hereafter) were newly published in

2012, two volumes for Junior 2 (Year 8, Y8, hereafter), and two volumes for Junior 3 (Year 9, Y9, hereafter) were published in 2002.

I first present the distribution of visual styles in these textbooks. It is followed by the distribution of verbiage-image relations in the six textbooks, and a discussion of the thirteen categories, namely, image & text independent, image & text complementary, image subordinate to text, text subordinate to image, exposition (i&t same generality), exemplification: text more general, exemplification: image more general, extension, enhancement (temporal), enhancement (spatial), enhancement (causal/reason/purpose), locution (wording) and idea (meaning) in Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework (see Figure 1). Finally, this paper is concluded with a summary and pedagogical implications for multimodal literacy.

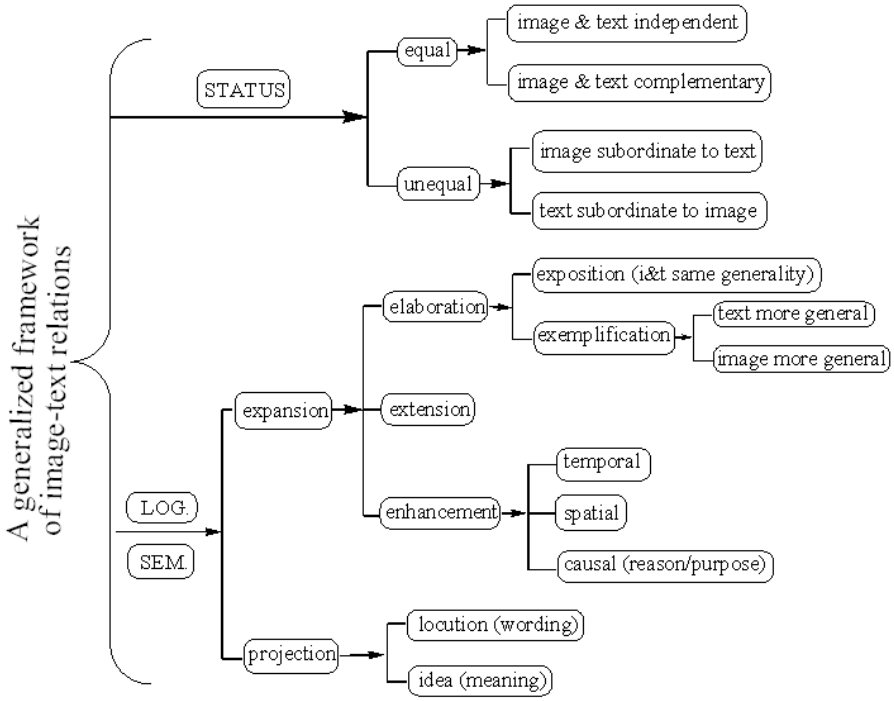


Figure 1: Network of combined status and logico–semantics (Martinec and Salway, 2005, p.358).

II. The Distribution of Visual Styles in the Six Textbooks

In total, there are 43 teaching units covering verbal texts together with visual images in the six textbooks, and all units have visual images. To put it in another way, visual images are indispensable for junior high school students to scaffold to understand verbal texts. According to Chen's (2009) classification, visual styles can be categorized into three types: cartoon, photograph, and portrait. The distribution of visual styles in junior high school EFL textbooks is shown in Table 1, and Figure 2 displays the percentages in the form of a histogram.

Table 1:
The Distribution of Visual Styles in the Six Junior High School EFL Textbooks

English (Shanghai Education Press) Books		Codes	Cartoon	Photograph	Portrait	Total
Year 7, Book I	1st Volume	Y7-1	162 (59.1 %)	112 (40.9 %)	0 (0 %)	274 (24.8%)
	2nd Volume	Y7-2	154 (67.2 %)	75 (32.8 %)	0 (0 %)	229 (20.8%)
Year 8, Book II	1st Volume	Y8-1	160 (80.0 %)	40 (20.0 %)	0 (0 %)	200 (18.1%)
	2nd Volume	Y8-2	130 (75.1 %)	41 (23.7 %)	2 (1.2 %)	173 (15.7%)
Year 9, Book III	1st Volume	Y9-1	94 (70.7 %)	34 (25.6 %)	5 (3.7 %)	133 (12.1%)
	2nd Volume	Y9-2	65 (69.1%)	29 (30.9%)	0 (0%)	94 (8.5%)
Total			765 (69.4%)	331 (30.30%)	7 (0.6%)	1103 (100%)

Cartoon is the most popular visual style among the three, which accounts for 69.4% of the visual images used in the six textbooks, whereas photograph covers about one third (331/1103 = 30%) in the three visual styles of the six textbooks. Portrait is the least used visual style in the six textbooks, which only covers 0.6% of 1103 images. On the other hand, the distribution of visual styles decreases accordingly with the escalation of students' proficiency level and cognitive maturation, as indicated by the total number of the visual styles in each textbook. The higher the students' proficiency level, and the more cognitively mature the students, the fewer visual images and the more verbal texts in these textbooks.

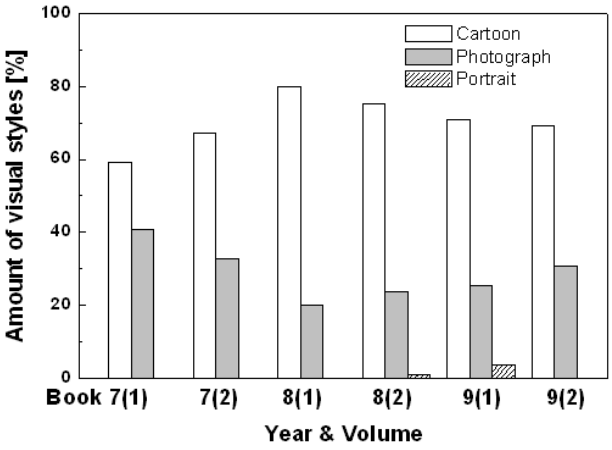


Figure 2: Distribution of visual styles in the six textbooks

This initial finding suggests that cartoon is the most acceptable and favoured form for junior high school students due to its low cognitive demand. To put it in another way, junior high school students like cartoon most because cartoon is not difficult to understand, and the cute pictures are easy for cognitive processing (Myer & Moreno, 2003). This is consistent with Paivio's (1986) limited capacity assumption. Paivio (1986) posits that visual and verbal channels are two sensory channels for humans to process information. The limited capacity assumption states that each sensory channel (either visual or verbal) has limited capacity to process cognitive information at any one time. Therefore, the juxtaposition of visual images and verbal texts in junior high school textbooks functions complementarily (Royce, 1998, 2002) to compensate for students' limited cognitive capacity of each sensory channel. Whereas, photograph covers second major proportions of visual styles in the six textbooks. As photograph captures the reality and is related to students' daily life, which may help students to understand situated contexts of verbal texts. Furthermore, with the advancement of students' grade and English proficiency, as well as cognitive maturation, the amount of cartoons and photographs reduces, while the number of portraits increases, and the portraits are about celebrities such as Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein, which promotes positive moral education for more cognitively developed students in later years.

There are also a large number of tables and graphical representations in the six textbooks which present teaching contents directly via the visual mode. Adapted from Vekiri's (2002) classification of graphical representations, the graphical representations in the present study consist of diagrams (e.g. schematic diagram such as water cycle), maps (e.g. geographical maps), graphs (e.g. spider-gram, pie chart, bar graphs, and line graphs), charts (e.g. tree diagrams, flow charts), and tables. But the total amount of these graphical representations does not show any remarkable curve in the six textbooks.

Based on the statistical evidence, visual images play a vital role in junior high school EFL textbooks in Mainland China, and understanding the inter-semiotic relations between visual images and verbal texts accords great significance to multimodal literacy (Chen, 2009). Students should understand intermodal relations to develop their multimodal literacy, and to understand teaching contents in a multimodal way.

III. The Distribution of Verbiage-image Relations in the Six Textbooks

With reference to the aforementioned general picture of the distribution of visual styles in the six textbooks, the distribution of verbiage-image relations in these textbooks is presented with a more in-depth statistical analysis of the 13 categories of verbiage-image relations in Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework, as illustrated in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2:
THE DISTRIBUTION OF VERBIAGE-IMAGE RELATIONS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEXTBOOKS

Verbiage-image relations \ Books						Book I (Y7-1)	Book I (Y7-2)	Book II (Y8-1)	Book II (Y8-2)	Book III (Y9-1)	Book III (Y9-2)	Total
Status	equal	image & text independent				2 (1.2%)	3 (2.3%)	2 (1.6%)	5 (5.6%)	4 (5.4%)	2 (3.6%)	18 (2.8%)
		image & text complementary				48(28.7%)	30(23.0%)	43 (35.2%)	7(7.8%)	7(9.5%)	7(12.5%)	142(22.2%)
	unequal	image subordinate to text				45(26.9%)	54(41.2%)	34 (27.9%)	42 (46.7%)	34 (45.9%)	33(59.0%)	242(37.8%)
		text subordinate to image				3 (1.8%)	/	/	1 (1.1%)	2 (2.7%)	/	6 (0.9%)
LOG. SEM.	expansion	elaboration	Exposition (i&t same generality)			6(3.6%)	14(10.7%)	1(0.8%)	2(2.2%)	2(2.7%)	2(3.6%)	27(4.2%)
			exemplification	text more general		23(13.8%)	9(6.9%)	14(11.5%)	3(3.3%)	3(4.1%)	4(7.1%)	56(8.8%)
				image more general		9(5.4%)	5(3.8%)	/	/	1(1.4%)	/	15(2.3%)
		extension				3 (1.8%)	/	/	1 (1.1%)	3 (4.1%)	/	7 (1.1%)
		enhancement	temporal			/	/	/	/	/	/	0 (0%)
			spatial			6(3.6%)	/	/	2 (2.2%)	/	1 (1.8%)	9 (1.4%)
			causal (reason/purpose)			1(0.6 %)	2(1.5%)	2(1.6%)	/	/	/	5(0.8%)
	projection	locution (wording)				17(10.2%)	14 (10.7%)	24 (19.7%)	26 (28.9%)	17 (23.0%)	7(12.5%)	105(16.4%)
		idea (meaning)				4 (2.4%)	/	2 (1.6%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.4%)	/	8 (1.3%)
Total						167 (26.1%)	131(20.5%)	122(19.1%)	90(14.1%)	74(11.6%)	56(8.8%)	640(100%)

According to the statistics demonstrated by Table 2, the total amount of instances which present image-text relations in each textbook is 167 (26.1%) in Y7-1, 131 (20.5%) in Y7-2, 122 (19.1%) in Y8-1, 90 (14.1%) in Y8-2, 74 (11.6%) in Y9-1, and 56 (8.8%) in Y9-2 respectively. In addition, Table 3.1 illustrates that percentage of "image & text complementary" decreases from 28.7% in Y7-1 to 12.5% in Y9-2, whilst percentage of "image subordinate to text" increases from 26.9% in Y7-1 to 59.0% in Y9-2. It suggests that textbook designers focus more on texts in textbooks of higher grade. The finding indicates that with the students' grade advancement and improved English proficiency, the amount of verbiage-image relations significantly decreases. These instances are then mapped onto Martinec and Salway's (2005) categories of visual-verbal relations. The frequency and ranking of each category is illustrated in Table 3.

TABLE 3:
RANKING THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF EACH CATEGORY OF IMAGE-TEXT RELATIONS IN THE SIX TEXTBOOKS

Ranking	Categories of image-text relations	Total amount in the six textbooks
1	Image subordinate to text	242(37.8%)
2	Image & text complementary	142(22.2%)
3	Locution (wording)	105(16.4%)
4	Exemplification: text more general	56(8.8%)
5	Exposition (i&t same generality)	27(4.2%)
6	Image & text independent	18(2.8%)
7	Exemplification: image more general	15(2.3%)
8	Enhancement (spatial)	9(1.4%)
9	Idea (meaning)	8(1.3%)
10	Extension	7 (1.1%)
11	Text subordinate to image	6 (0.9%)
12	Enhancement (causal/reason/purpose)	5(0.8%)
13	Enhancement (temporal)	0 (0%)

The following subsections illustrate each of the above 13 categories by drawing on representative examples from the six textbooks in my dataset.

A. Unequal Status in Verbiage-image Relations

According to Martinec & Salway's (2005) classification, when image and text are in an unequal status in verbiage-image relation, it can be in either an "image subordinate to text" relation, or a "text subordinate to image" one.

1. Image Subordinate to Text

Table 3 indicates that "image subordinate to text" makes up a major proportion - more than one third (242/640=37.8%) in the image-text relations of the six textbooks. Image subordination can be defined as an inter-semiotic relationship between visual images and verbal texts "when the image only relates with a part of the text" (Martinec & Salway, 2005, p. 348), but not all of the text. Therefore, the relationship between the image and the text is 'unequal'. Figure 3 below is an example illustrating such an unequal relationship, which is extracted from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume) Unit 1, p.3.

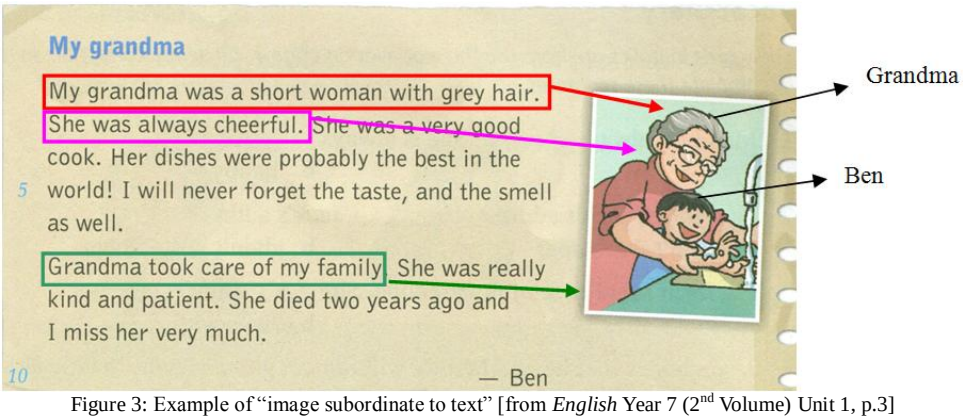


Figure 3: Example of "image subordinate to text" [from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume) Unit 1, p.3]

The picture in Figure 3 depicts two cartoon characters Ben and his grandma, and his grandma assisted him in washing his hands at the wash basin. His grandma was not tall with grey hair. Both of them looked happy. What is depicted in the picture frame relates with three sentences in verbal texts "My grandma was a short woman with grey hair. She was always cheerful." and "Grandma took care of my family." For the remaining texts, there is no picture to illustrate the point. Image subordination plays a dominant role in the image-text relations of the six textbooks. Perhaps due to the limited space and junior high school students with certain-level cognitive ability, textbook editors cannot and do not necessarily print out all pictures of teaching contents, but just provide some vital relevant pictures in the visual-verbal relation type of "image subordinate to text" to sketch out the key theme of certain teaching unit and offer

some background information of teaching contents. In this way, readers can react emotionally to pictures for their low cognitive demand (Barry, 1997), and obtain an idea of what they are going to learn in certain unit whenever they process the pictures in the six textbooks. Thus, the visual images in the inter-semiotic relation of image subordination attract learners' attention, and achieve "immediacy" and "transparency" (Stockl, 2004) in the semiotic communication. They offer some hints or clues of teaching contents, and play a heuristic role in language learning. The facilitating effects of visual images on verbal textual comprehension have been empirically testified by many researchers (e.g., Pan & Pan, 2009).

2. Text Subordinate to Image

Another kind of unequal status in image-text relations is "text subordinate to image". Table 3 displays that "text subordinate to image" ranks eleventh in all verbiage-image relations in the six textbooks, and nearly all the instances of "text subordinate to image" can be further categorized as "extension". Text subordination can be "realized by deixis from text to image, either by reference or present tense combined with material or behavioural process" (Martinec and Salway, 2005, p.348). For example, Figure 4 is extracted from *English* Year 8 (2nd Volume), Unit 3, p.46. The readers, junior high school students, are asked to read the notes below and write a paragraph about Charlie Chaplin.

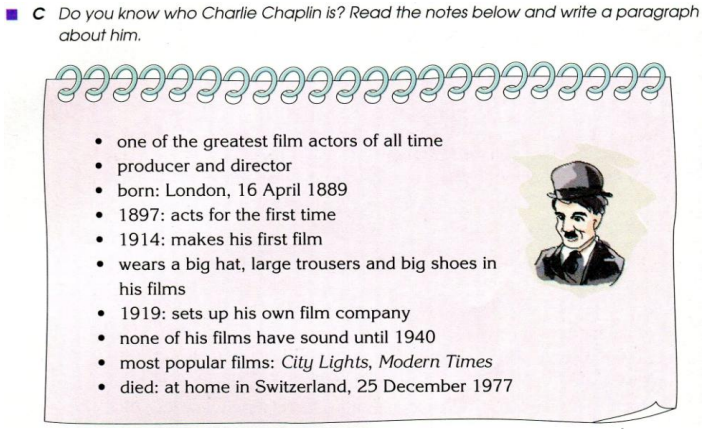


Figure 4: Example of "text subordinate to image: extension" [from *English* Year 8 (2nd Volume) Unit 3, p.46]

In Figure 4, the whole text relates with the portrait of Charlie Chaplin which visually presents his self-image in a comic style that complies with his humorous stereotype to enhance intimacy and cordiality with putative readers. On the other hand, verbal texts brief readers on Chaplin's contributions, occupation, year of birth, typical features, milestones in his life, representative works, and year of death and nationality. "Born: London, 16 April 1889; 1897: acts for the first time; 1914: makes his first film; 1919: sets up his own film company; died: at home in Switzerland, 25 December, 1977" add new, related background information to the content of the image of Charlie Chaplin. Furthermore, the verbal texts of "one of the greatest film actors of all time, producer and director; none of his films have sound until 1940; most popular films: *City Lights, Modern Times*" indicate the context of his life and representative works. What is mentioned above "goes beyond what is represented in the image, and beyond its participants, processes, and circumstances" (Martinec & Salway, 2005, p.350). What the image represented is "wears a big hat", while "wears large trousers and big shoes in his film" goes beyond what is represented in the image. "Text subordinate to image" relationship is "realized by deixis from text to image, either by reference or present tense combined with material or behavioural process" (Martinec & Salway, 2005, p.348), such as using present tense with material or behavioural processes like "acts, makes, and sets up". In the data, the verbiage-image relation of "text subordinate to image: extension" usually appears in the introduction of famous people, mostly in Book II or III, which is in the form of a portrait of celebrities on the right and the verbal text of their glorious history on the left. Although visual images are easier to access for sensory perception and cognition, they fail to offer a historical account for celebrities. The weaknesses of visual images are thus compensated with verbal texts. Both visual images and verbal texts simultaneously play a complementary (Royce, 1998, 2002) role in multimodal meaning-makings and create a semiotic harmonious landscape in junior high school EFL textbooks (Chen, 2009).

B. Equal Status in Verbiage-image Relations

While the previous subsection illustrates how words and images in textbooks may be unequal in status, there are also instances where they relate with each other in an equal manner, either independently or complementarily.

1. Image & Text Independent

From Table 3, we can see that there are not many "image and text independent" relations in the six textbooks, which ranks sixth in all verbiage-image relations of these textbooks. According to Martinec & Salway (2005), "image and text independent" is an inter-semiotic relation between an image and a text in which the whole image relates with the whole text in an equal and independent manner. For instance, Figure 5 was taken from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume), Unit 5, p.58.

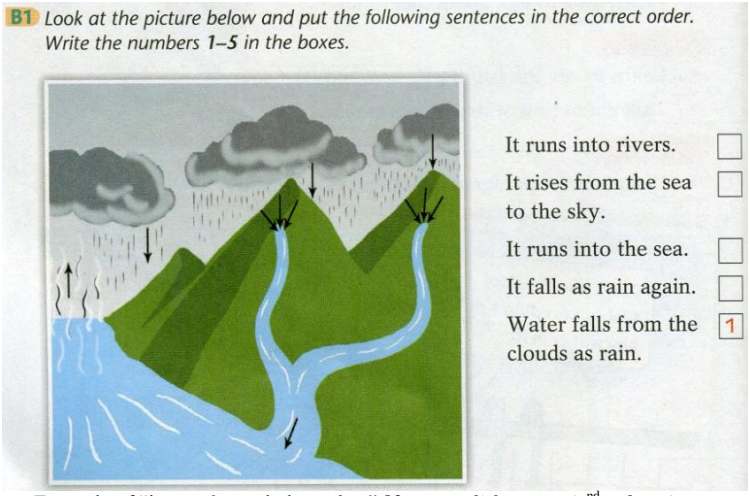


Figure 5: Example of "image & text independent" [from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume), Unit 5, p.58]

The whole image in Figure 5 relates with the whole text "It runs into rivers. It rises from the sea to the sky. It runs into the sea. It falls as rain again. Water falls from the clouds as rain." in an equal and independent way. This kind of image-text relation usually appears in the units which elaborate on how a natural phenomenon happens such as the recycling of water. The juxtaposition of visual images and verbal texts co-deploys allows the readers to easily understand the abstract principle of the nature. Images in textbooks can shape students' sensory perceptions of the represented world with their more "topological meaning potentials" (Lemke, 1998), which is distinguished from the way languages work. Halliday (1978) states that "semiotic resources such as images and language are systems of meaning potentials" (p.39). However, images and language differ in their demanded cognitive operations, because "images are based on simultaneous and holistic gestalt-perception", while "language is a linear mode that calls for the successive integration of signs into phrases" (Stockl, 2004, p.17). Therefore, image is perceived as a quick mode than language which needs parsing.

2. Image & Text Complementary

Another kind of equal status in verbiage-image relations is called "image and text complementary". Table 3 shows that "image & text complementary" ranks second. According to Martinec & Salway (2005), the complementary image-text relation should be on the condition that the whole image relates with the whole text in an equal manner.

On the contrary, all kinds of expansion (see Table 2) can be categorized as "image and text complementary". In the multimodal analysis of verbiage-image relations in the six textbooks, nearly all image-text relations of "exposition (i&t same generality)", "exemplification: text more general", "exemplification: image more general", "extension", "enhancement: spatial", and "enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)" could be categorized as "image and text complementary" (Royce, 1998, 2002; Martinec & Salway, 2005). This is because simultaneous activation of readers' two or more sensory channels (i.e., visual and verbal) can be an effective way to reduce readers' cognitive load and to achieve pedagogical purposes, which is proved by some psychological experiments that "images are far more likely to be attention-getters in perception than language and can also be memorized much more easily and effectively" (Stockl, 2004, p.17). Because pictorial perception is considered to be much more easily accessible for its "simultaneity of gestalt formation" than language perception, without much parsing, "images directly tap into the emotions and provide immediate sensory input" (Stockl, 2004, p.17).

Martinec and Salway (2005) extend Halliday's (1994) functional account of logical-semantic relations in terms of experiential meaning into the analysis of visual-verbal inter-semiotic relations. In terms of more specific inter-dependency, the bi-modal logical-semantic relations at the grammar stratum perform the function of relating images with texts via relations of elaboration, extension, and enhancement, which will be discussed in the following sections.

C. Elaboration in Logical-semantic Image-text Relations

According to Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework, logical-semantic image-text relations consist of projection and expansion. The first kind of expansion in logical-semantic image-text relations is elaboration. In elaborating image-text relations, "some part of the main text, caption, or label may expand an aspect of an image or vice versa by restating or representing the same thing in a different semiotic resource, specifying an aspect in greater detail, refining it or making something more specific" (Zhao, 2011, p.146). Elaboration comprises exposition and exemplification. If images and texts have the same kind of generality, the image-text relation is exposition (i&t same generality). If image and text have different kinds of generality, the image-text relation is exemplification, either 'text more general' or 'image more general'. Table 3 demonstrates that "exposition (i&t same generality)" ranks fifth (27, 4.2%) in all image-text relations of the six textbooks. Exposition can be defined as a relationship between an image and a text in which they each plays a role in a relational identifying process (Halliday, 1994), and each has the same levels of

generality or abstraction. Martinec and Salway (2005) further state that the text has the tendency to be realized by a nominal group while the relational identifying process tends to be implicit. Whereas, "exemplification: text more general" accounts for 8.9% in all verbiage-image relations of the six textbooks. It suggests that textbook editors take junior high school students' cognitive features into consideration, and they provide concrete examples to illustrate abstract concepts or terminologies in order to reduce cognitive demand for targeted readers (Myer & Moreno, 2003).

D. Extension in Logical-semantic Image-text Relations

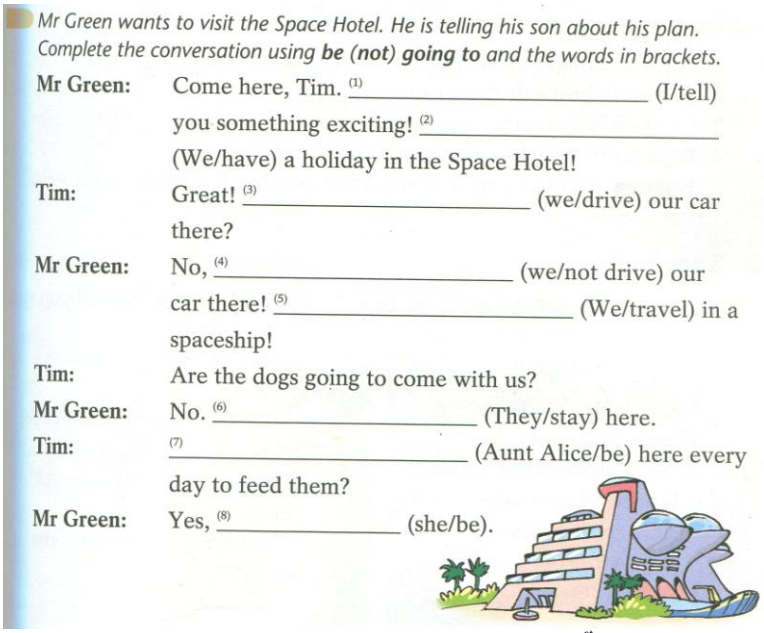
The third kind of expansion in logical-semantic image-text relations is extension. Table 3 illustrates that there are only a few examples of "extension" (7, 1.1%) among all verbiage-image relations of the six textbooks. Extension can be defined as a relationship between an image and a text in which "one mode extends or adds new information to the other mode, because it goes beyond what is represented in the image, and beyond its participants, processes, and circumstances" (Martinec & Salway, 2005, p.350). For example, Figure 4 illustrates the verbal text of Chaplin's historical events and drawing of his image are semantic and semiotic complementarity, which fall into the category of "semiotic division of labor" (Matthiessen 2007, p.46).

E. Enhancement in Logical-semantic Image-text Relations

Another kind of expansion in logical-semantic image-text relations is enhancement which is further distinguished by temporal, spatial, and causal (reason/purpose).

1. Enhancement: spatial

Table 3 indicates that "enhancement: spatial" ranks eighth in all image-text relations of the six textbooks. Enhancement can be defined as a relationship between an image and a text in which "one mode enhances the other mode by referencing it with circumstantial information like a time, a place, a reason, and a purpose" (Martinec & Salway, 2005, pp.350-351). A text enhancing an image or an image enhancing a text should be associated with its ideational content. To illustrate, Figure 6 was taken from *English* Year 7 (1st Volume) Unit 5, p.65.



Mr Green wants to visit the Space Hotel. He is telling his son about his plan. Complete the conversation using ***be (not) going to*** *and the words in brackets.*

Mr Green: Come here, Tim. (1) _____ (I/tell) you something exciting! (2) _____ (We/have) a holiday in the Space Hotel!

Tim: Great! (3) _____ (we/drive) our car there?

Mr Green: No, (4) _____ (we/not drive) our car there! (5) _____ (We/travel) in a spaceship!

Tim: Are the dogs going to come with us?

Mr Green: No. (6) _____ (They/stay) here.

Tim: (7) _____ (Aunt Alice/be) here every day to feed them?

Mr Green: Yes, (8) _____ (she/be).

Figure 6: Example of "enhancement: spatial" [from *English* Year 7 (1st Volume) Unit 5, p.65]

In Figure 6, the image of "space hotel" relates with the text by enhancement, and the image of "the Space Hotel" qualifies the text circumstantially. To be more specific, the image of "the Space Hotel" enhances the text by space, and the image specifies the place where Mr. Green wants to visit. There are a few other examples of "enhancement: spatial" in all of image-text relationship of the six textbooks, and they usually appear in the 'speaking' section of some units.

2. Enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)

Only a small proportion (5, 0.8%) of "enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)" image-text relations have been identified in the six textbooks. Figure 7 demonstrates the image-text relation of "enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)" which is extracted from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume) Unit 6, p.84.

Figure 7: Example of "enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)" [from *English* Year 7 (2nd Volume) Unit 6, p.84]

In Figure 7, the image enhances the text by way of 'causal (reason/purpose)', as the visual image depicts that people turned their lights off for one hour but burned the candle in order to show that they cared about climate change. This enhances the meaning denoted by the verbal text of 'Earth Hour'. This is one example to counter-prove Stockl's (2004) statement on some semantic limitations of visual images that "some meaning relations like causality cannot be expressed by images" (p.18).

3. Enhancement: temporal

From Table 3, there is no "enhancement (temporal)" image-text relation in the six textbooks, perhaps because time is an abstract concept and it is less than easy to display physically.

F. Locution (Wording) vs Idea (Meaning)

"Locution (wording)" and "idea (meaning)" are two kinds of projection in logical-semantic image-text relations. Table 3 shows that "locution (wording)" ranks third (105, 16.4%) among 13 categories of verbiage-image relations in the six textbooks. In the image-text relations in Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework, "locution (wording)" is one of two kinds of projection which repeats or projects the information in one mode from the other mode via "talking bubble" linking with a sayer, and another kind of projection is information transmission inter-modally via "thinking cloud" linking with a thinker. Two respective examples were extracted from *English* Year 7 (1st Volume) Unit 2, p.15, and *English* Year 8 (1st Volume) Unit 5, p.71.

Figure 8: Example of "locution (wording)" [from *English* Year 7 (1st Volume) Unit 2, p.15]

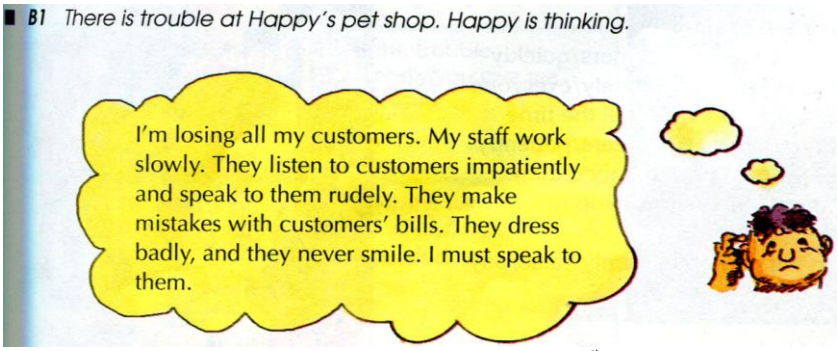


Figure 9: Example of "idea (meaning)" [from *English* Year 8 (1st Volume) Unit 5, p.71]

The image-text relation in Figure 8 exemplifies locution (wording), because information transmission from the visual mode (speaker) to the verbal mode (utterance) is achieved through "speech bubble", while Figure 9 performs the function of information projection from the visual mode (thinker, usually a person using his/her finger to scratch his/her head) to the verbal mode (what the thinker is thinking) via "thought cloud". From Table 3, we can see that "locution (wording)" is the third major type in the verbiage-image relations of the six textbooks, and they are especially evident on the 'herald' page of each unit to predict what is going to be learned in this unit. Textbook editors use cartoons to elicit the theme of a unit and to present the locution (wording) via "speech bubble" in order to catch readers' attention on the theme and make it easier for student readers to process verbal texts through visual images. On the contrary, there are a total of only eight "idea (meaning)" image-text relations, which ranks ninth in all verbiage-image relations of the six textbooks. This is perhaps due to the fact that for junior high school students, their cognitive ability is neither too low as primary pupils nor too high as senior high school students. Thus, textbook editors would be in no position to impose too many "thought cloud" on junior high school EFL textbooks.

IV. Summary

This study has attempted to answer the research question, "What are the multimodal relations between verbal language and visual images in junior high school EFL textbooks in Mainland China (with Guangzhou as a featured case)?" by referring to Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework of 13 categories of verbiage-image relations, namely, image & text independent, image & text complementary, image subordinate to text, text subordinate to image, exposition (i&t same generality), exemplification: text more general, exemplification: image more general, extension, enhancement (temporal), enhancement (spatial), enhancement (causal/reason/purpose), locution (wording) and idea (meaning).

After presenting the distribution of visual styles and verbiage-image relations in the six textbooks, and illustrating the 13 categories of image-text relations one by one, the findings demonstrate that the total amount of instances which present image-text relations in each textbook is 167 (26.1%), 131 (20.5%), 122 (19.1%), 90 (14.1%), 74 (11.6%), and 56 (8.8%) respectively. These figures suggest that with students' grade advancement and improved English proficiency, the amount of verbiage-image relations significantly decreased, and textbook design changes gradually from image-based to text-based. "Image subordinate to text" (242, 37.8%), "image & text complementary" (142, 22.2%), and "locution (wording)" (105, 16.4%) are the three major types among the 13 categories of image-text relations in the six junior high school EFL textbooks. The visual-verbal inter-semiotic resources not only have distinctive "functional specification" (Bezemer & Kress, 2008), but complement and co-instantiate (Chen, 2009) with each other, which maximize this bi-modal "epistemological potential" (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). Dialogue relations are visually presented via dialogue balloons or locution (wording), which is a more acceptable form for junior high school students.

There is, however, no "enhancement (temporal)" image-text relation in the six textbooks, perhaps because time is an abstract concept that is not easy to display physically. There are a small number of remaining types of image-text relations such as exemplification: text more general (56, 8.8%), exposition (i&t same generality, 27, 4.2%), image & text independent (18, 2.8%), exemplification: image more general (15, 2.3%), enhancement (spatial) (9, 1.4%), idea (meaning) (8, 1.3%), extension (7, 1.1%), text subordinate to image (6, 0.9%), and enhancement (causal/reason/purpose) (5, 0.8%). These figures suggest that EFL textbooks for junior high school students need visual images to assist them in understanding verbal texts due to their immature cognitive ability (Myer & Moreno, 2003), relatively low English proficiency, and interest in visual images. The current textbook design of image-text relations facilitates students' learning and development of multimodal literacy based on students' English proficiency and cognitive maturation. Visual images play a vital role in junior high school EFL textbooks. Better understanding of image-text relations is not only beneficial for foreign language learners, but helpful for EFL professionals and textbook designers to cultivate students' multimodal literacy and design user-friendly multimodal textbooks. Comparatively speaking, textbook designers focus too much on the intermodal relations of "image subordinate to text", while other types of image-text relations such as "exemplification: text more general", "exemplification: image more general", "enhancement: causal (reason/purpose)", and "idea (meaning)" should be used more, as junior high school students' immature cognitive ability, they need more examples and visual images to scaffold to understand abstract concepts, logical reasoning, and implicitly articulated meanings.

The present study has made the first attempt to test the applicability of Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework to detail visual-verbal relations into 13 categories in a mini-corpus of the six junior high school EFL textbooks in Mainland China, and adopted quantitative measurement of various types of visual-verbal relations to evaluate findings in a theoretical way. It is a general trend that with students' grade advancement, improved English proficiency, and their cognitive maturity, the total amount of various types of visual styles, image-text relations, decreased accordingly, and junior high school EFL textbooks changed gradually from image-based to text-based. It can be inferred that students' grade, English proficiency, their interest in visual images, and their cognitive maturity play decisive roles in the design of EFL multimodal textbooks.

V. Pedagogical Implications for Multimodal Literacy

In light of the above discussion of major findings, we can infer that visual images play subsidiary and complementary roles in students' verbal text understanding, and provide some background information or direct sensory perception for students to understand verbal texts. Visual images are conducive for easy sensory processing and representing physical objects and space. Visual images act as emotional motivator and "attention-getter" (Stockl, 2004, p.17) to engage readers in targeted texts before verbal texts can be cognitively understood. The effects of visual images are empirically measured by many scholars. Pena and Quilez (2001) found that the use of visual images improved students' memorizing verbal texts. For second language learners, even though they do not know the meanings of some new words in their reading, the images offer some hints for them to guess the gist of the texts. The visual images facilitate or enhance textual comprehension for EFL learners (Pan & Pan, 2009). This is also consistent with Johnson-Laird's (1983) theory of mental models which states that visual images facilitate the construction of mental structure, and they "present basic information more concisely than equivalent textual statement and reduce the cognitive load in complex tasks" (p.66).

On the other hand, verbal texts have the advantages of depicting states-of-affairs and events. Verbal texts usually further specify "what is conveyed via images" in the verbal mode. Some verbal texts uttered by interlocutors are presented via speech bubbles, and these more acceptable cute pictures function to arouse young viewers' attention (Stockl, 2004), engage readers in targeted texts, and achieve "immediacy" and "transparency" (Stockl, 2004). In addition, with the upgrading of students' grade and English proficiency, in general, the amount of verbiage-image relations generally decreased. With this statistical evidence, assumption can be put forward that with the maturation of students' cognitive ability, the upgrading of their English proficiency, and their interest in visual images, students' understanding of verbal texts can be achieved without the help of visual images, they less rely on visual images to understand verbal texts.

Both visual images and verbal language "co-contextualize" (Liu & O'Halloran, 2009) to achieve multimodal meaning-makings in their distinctive and complementary (Royce, 1998, 2002) manners in the six textbooks. Visual and verbal modes have their relatively distinctive role in meaning-makings, meanwhile, they are also inseparably intertwined with each other in harmonious forms of visual communication -"mode mixing" (Stockl 2004, p.18). The appropriate arrangements of visual images and verbal texts are conducive to reducing cognitive demand (Myer & Moreno, 2003), which is especially suitable in the design of EFL textbooks. Better understanding of the inter-semiotic relations between visual images and verbal texts helps textbook designers to design more suitable textbooks, helps teachers better elicit teaching contents, and helps to scaffold learners' acquisition of multimodal literacy (Chen, 2009).

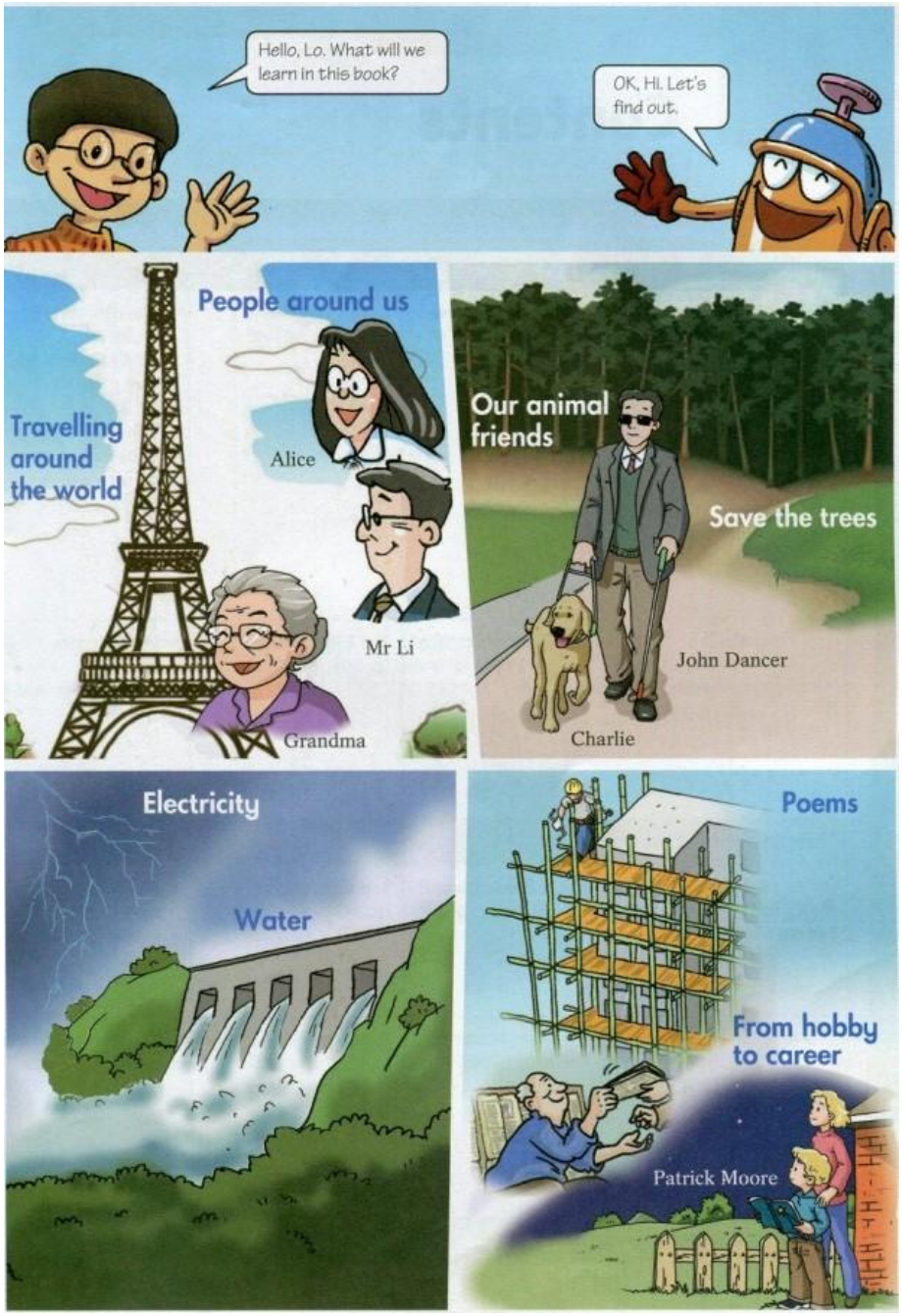
To summarize, the study of visual-verbal inter-semiotic construal in EFL textbook discourse has some pedagogical implications.

First, EFL teachers should provide tier guidance or affordance for students based on their English proficiency. For instance, for Junior 1 students, teachers can elicit the teaching content with more pictures, while for Junior 3 students, due to their higher English proficiency, more mature cognitive ability, and less interest in visual images, teachers can introduce more abstract terms without the help of visual images.

Second, textbook designers should be aware of multimodal literacy and different image-text relations, and take students' cognitive maturation, English proficiency, and their interest in visual-verbal modes into consideration while arranging visual images and verbal language of the textbook in an appropriate way. In this way, they won't add images just for the sake of adding images. They should optimize the inter-semiotic affordances of visual-verbal "functional specification" and "epistemological potential" (Bezemer & Kress, 2008).

APPENDIX I. MAIN CARTOON CHARACTERS IN *ENGLISH* YEAR 7, 1ST VOLUME

APPENDIX II. MAIN CARTOON CHARACTERS IN *ENGLISH* YEAR 7, 2ND VOLUME



APPENDIX III. THE OUTLINE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEXTBOOK (*ENGLISH* YEAR *7*, 1ST VOLUME)

Module	Unit
1 My life	1 Making friends
	2 Daily life
Project 1 Our new classmates	
2 The natural world	3 The earth
	4 Seasons
Project 2 Our home town	
3 Travels	5 Visiting the Moon
	6 Travelling around Asia
Project 3 A travel plan	
4 Fun time	7 School clubs
	8 Collecting things
Project 4 A survey about free time activities	

APPENDIX IV. THE OUTLINE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEXTBOOK (*ENGLISH* YEAR *7*, 2ND VOLUME)

Module	Unit
1 People and place	1 People around us
	2 Travelling around the world
Project 1 Cities of the world	
2 Man's best friends	3 Our animal friends
	4 Save the trees
Project 2 Planning green activites	
3 Natural elements	5 Water
	6 Electricity
Project 3 Saving water and electricity	
4 Colorful life	7 Poems
	8 From hobby to career
Project 4 Who has the same hobby as me?	

APPENDIX V. THE OUTLINE OF REMAINING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL TEXTBOOKS (SHANGHAI EDUCATION PRESS)

English	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7
Year 8, 1st Volume	Newspaper	Detectives and crimes	Modern machines	Historical stories	Strange creatures	Jobs	Environment
Year 8, 2nd Volume	Success stories	Cartoons and comics	All about films	Educational exchanges	Family life	The Adventures of Tom Sawyer	Mind and memory
Year 9, 1st Volume	Body language	Hair care	Health and food	What should I do?	Going to the theatre	Great minds	Plants
Year 9, 2nd Volume	Consumer society	Sports	Fashion and style	All about learning	Friends or enemies	Entertainment	_____

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A Quality Chinese-English Bilingual Education Program: Defining Success

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***Abstract*—This study aims to provide an in-depth case study of a Chinese-English bilingual program in the largest ISD of a Southwestern state, in the hope of shedding light on what makes a bilingual education program successful. Few research studies have systematically delved into an English-Chinese bilingual program as this one. The study illuminates that children in this immersion program have benefited from "additive bilingualism" in that they have learned a second language at no cost to their first language and also out-scored their non-immersion peers in state standardized exams. Employing qualitative methods, narrative inquiry in particular, this research study offers a compelling case that bilingual education does not hinder students' English language acquisition. Instead, it accelerates students' English proficiency development while promoting students' second language acquisition, overall academic achievements, and sociocultural integration.**

***Index Terms*—Chinese-English, bilingual program, second language development, academic achievements**

I. Introduction

This study aims to provide an in-depth case study of a Chinese-English bilingual program in the largest ISD of a Southwestern state, and the 7th largest school district in the U.S, in the hope of shedding light on what makes a bilingual education program successful. This school is the first 100% dedicated Mandarin language immersion school in this state. It is a two-way immersion or dual language immersion—strong additive bilingual education program, with bilingualism and biliteracy as the aim for the students.

Data from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) suggest that immersion education has been steadily increasing in the United States since the 1970s. However, language education in general is actually declining across the country, especially in the lower grades (Freemark & Smith, 2014). "The number of American students who learned a language other than English decreased by about 100,000 between 2009 and 2013, according to research by the Modern Language Association" (Noack, 2015). The majority of the studies on bilingual education examined elementary Spanish-English programs; there is not much research on Chinese-English bilingual education. This study intends to add to this body of research by unpacking this particular Chinese-English bilingual program, grounded in Cummins' argument that "(t)he accumulation of such case studies presents a rich and robust picture of bilingual education that can benefit practice and influence policy (Cummins, 1999, p. 8)." It is hoped that it will make the educational efficacy of bilingual/immersion programs clearer to a wider policy and public audience.

II. Background of the School

When opened in August 2012, this school served only grades PK-2. Since then, it has gone up to a grade level each year in the past five years, and is currently serving students from PK through the 7th grade. This school is a magnet school, which means, unlike regular public schools where students are zoned to, the parents at this school need to apply for the limited spots. Students in the prekindergarten and kindergarten grade levels are not required to have previous experiences with Chinese. Those entering the 1st grade and above must demonstrate proficiency in Chinese as evaluated by the teachers to be included in the lottery process due to the limited availability. Since it opened, this school has become one of the district's most popular magnet programs, with more than eight applications for every available spot. With a $32.2 million fund appropriated by the district, a brand-new building and campus were completed in Aug 2016 that allows the school to fulfill its ultimate goal of developing into a well-rounded middle school immersion program in the coming years. As stated on the school website, its vision is "to immerse students in a culture-rich environment that allows them to become balanced bi-cultural and bi-literate citizens for the global economy."

As illustrated in Table 1, the school has a highly diverse student population. Asian take up almost 1/3 of the student body, and African American, Hispanic, and White students each constitute approximately 1/4 of the student population. The school was ranked on the Public School Review "Most Diverse Schools in the U.S."

TABLE 1
STUDENT INFORMATION (2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR)

	Campus	District	State
Attendance Rate (2014-15)	97.2%	95.6%	95.7%
Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity			
African American			
African American	17.9%	24.4%	12.6%
Hispanic	18.3%	62.0%	52.2%
White	20.6%	8.5%	28.5%
American Indian	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%
Asian	34.5%	3.7%	4.0%
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	8.7%	1.0%	2.1%
Enrollment by Student Group			
Economically Disadvantaged			
Economically Disadvantaged	21.5%	76.5%	59.0%
English Language Learners	16.8%	30.3%	18.5%
Special Education	2.3%	7.2%	8.6%

To some extent, this school is a two-way bilingual program. Though the numbers of the students speaking the two languages are not equal, both Chinese-speaking and English-speaking students serve as "models" in their first language for their counterparts. On the other hand, this school is also a foreign language immersion program. If we look at the percentage of the English Language Learners (ELLs) (See Table 1), only 16.8% of students speak English as a 2nd language, which means most of the students are from the language majority population. They are placed in content-area classes in this program in which a foreign language— Chinese—is the medium for communication and instruction.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different bilingual education models that exist: transitional bilingual education programs, maintenance bilingual education programs, dual language programs, foreign language immersion programs, and heritage language programs. The most commonly found in the field today is early-exit, transitional model in which students receive instruction in their mother tongue for only two or three years and then transition to English-only instruction with the expectation of being completely adjusted to the mainstream classrooms. When comparing the various bilingual program models, the dual/two-way bilingual education is deemed most effective. The next most effective is one-way, late-exit maintenance model. Less effective are transitional one-way programs.

"Dual language models have grown in popularity with increases in federal support and the growing demand of ELLs' parents and parents of monolingual English speakers who want their children to be bilingual" (Wright, 2015, p. 102). The students who enroll in dual bilingual programs include language minority students who are learning English, and language majority students who already speak English but who want to learn a foreign language. In most cases, these programs are voluntary and require parental permission.

"Student and community demographics have led to innovative variations in dual language programs" (Wright, 2015, p. 102). Whereas the original dual language model seeks equal numbers of ELLs and native English speakers, more and more dual language programs have unequal distribution of native and non-native English speakers, and students from various linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, as in the program under study. Unlike in ESL classes where the goal is to prepare students to function effectively in mainstream content-area classes, the goal of two-way bilingual programs is developing proficiency and literacy in both languages. When comparing students in the two-way bilingual program with students in ESL without bilingual education program, controlling for ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, grade level, and the differences in pretest scores, researchers found that students in the two-way bilingual program did significantly better at all levels tested (Richard-Amato, 2010).

The foreign language immersion program model was developed in Canada, where native English speakers were immersed for language and content-area instruction in French. Extensive research has demonstrated the effectiveness of these programs. "In the United States, the bilingual immersion model is commonly implemented with English speakers wishing to learn a high-demand world language" (Wright, 2015, p. 103), and are most commonly found in elementary schools and usually last up to 5th or 6th grade. "In foreign language immersion programs, the new language is additive and generally has the support of the parents and the community" (Richard-Amato, 2010, p. 419). According to Richard-Amato, a major difference between a foreign language immersion program and a second language immersion program is that in second language immersion programs non-English-native students are considered part of the non-dominant groups in the community, even though their numbers may be greater than those of the dominant group, whereas in foreign language programs all students, regardless of their background, are placed on a pretty much equal footing.

Over the last few decades, research studies have constantly demonstrated that the students achieving bilingualism and biliteracy are more likely to achieve educational success. Those losing one language or replacing one language with another language tend to exhibit far lower level of educational success over time. In spite of the clearly and consistently articulated benefits of bilingual education, its value continues to be overlooked in the wider public domains.

The high-stakes testing policies that attach great importance to English language achievement are damaging to bilingual programs. Knowing that children must soon be assessed in English, "the pressure is growing to phase out

bilingual instruction as rapidly as possible, before children become fully bilingual and biliterate" (Tinajero, 2005, p. 18). "As a result of this pressure, more and more districts across the country are eliminating native-language instruction in the false hope that this will speed up English acquisition" (Tinajero, 2005, p. 18).

Nevertheless, Tinajero (2005) also pointed out that "while rancorous political debates are raging elsewhere, with confusing claims and counterclaims about the value of bilingual education, Texas is poised to be the model, a paradigm of what is possible when children's cultural and linguistic diversity are treated as the assets they are" (p. 17). Situated in such historical and contextual backdrop, this study intends to provide an in-depth case study of a successful Chinese-English bilingual education program in order to deliver a message that compels the public to listen: "Being proficient in two or more languages is now and always will be a tremendous advantage to successful members of our society" (Richard-Amato, 2010, p. 428).

IV. Methodology

Narrative inquiry

This research employs narrative inquiry as the methodology, which uses stories as the portal through which human experience is interpreted and made meaningful both individually and socially. Reduced to its essence, narrative inquiry is "the study of experience as story" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 22), which is also termed as a "personal experience method" (Clandinin &Connelly, 1994). Most of the research studies on bilingual education programs either compared with English-only programs or evaluated particular types of bilingual programs, including little or no narrative account of the program that explores the complex, lived experiences of the educators involved in them, as an important angle to examine the effectiveness bilingual education. Utilizing narrative inquiry allows a greater potential of presenting an in-depth case study providing a more complete and thorough profile of a Chinese-English bilingual program in context.

Data Collection

The participants of the study include Mr. Chuang, the school Principal, and Mr. Reid, Assistant Principal. Each participant took part in an interview based on an interview protocol, which lasted approximately 1 hour. The interview time and location were determined according to the participants' preferences. Both interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim with the participants' written consents, and the transcripts constitute an important source of the data. Other types of data include informal communications with the participants, thick piles of school observation fieldnotes, and a large number of documents accessed from school and district websites.

Data Analysis

Three analytical tools characterized by narrative inquiry—broadening, burrowing and storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)—were used for "narratively cod(ing)" the "lived stories" of the participants. During this process, the "internal and existential conditions" simultaneously inherent in the experience of the participants were paid special attention to, which will be reflected in four directions according to Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p. 417). These directions include inward, which means the internal conditions of participants' feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions; outward, which means the existential conditions, the environment, or reality the participants are situated in; backward and forward, which means seeing stories occurring in an ever changing life space in the past, present, and future (See Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 417). Finally, the emerging themes were identified through narrative coding, which were then subsumed under categories and elaborated on in the section of "results."

Credibility

Conle (2000), in constructing "some criteria that would keep narrative inquiry within the bounds of rationality and not conflate it with fictional narrative," provided concrete guidelines by drawing on Habermas's four validity claims. He asserted that narrative inquirers should claim that

- they truthfully represent their feelings, intentions, etc;
- their stories are socially acceptable;
- the contents of the narratives are true with regard to what they describe;
- the language is comprehensible (Conle, 2000, p. 56).

All the four criteria served as guidance in enhancing the rigor of this narrative inquiry.

During the interviews, I tried to let the interviewees take the lead while I sought for clarification and expansion of what the interviewees said. Immediately after each interview was transcribed and translated, I read through it over and over again to ascertain whether there were any confusing points or eminent points needing further clarification through follow-up emails or additional face-to-face communication. Additionally, to check for researcher bias and partiality, the observation fieldnotes and interview transcripts were sent to the participants in order to confirm or disconfirm the authenticity of the content and render it as close as possible to the meanings indicated by the participants. Member checking was also used to verify the meanings drawn by myself against the perspectives of colleagues. Throughout the inquiry, I constantly shared my writing on a work-in-progress basis with the participants as well as "the response communities" by asking them to read my work and responding in ways that helped me discover other meanings that might lead to further retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 60). All these efforts contributed to ensuring the credibility of the study.

V. Findings

Curriculum Model

"Dual language programs vary considerably in the amount of time spent for instruction in each language and which subjects are taught in which languages" (Wright, 2015, p. 101). At this school, students start with the 50/50 model from Pre-K, which means 50% of the instruction is in Chinese and the remaining 50% is in English. The researchers and practitioners who developed the idea of dual language programs advocated a rigid separation of the two languages for instruction. In this program, the Chinese-side teachers teach Chinese Language Arts, as well as Math and Science in Chinese. English-side teachers are responsible for English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math and Science English reinforcement. The teachers are native speakers of each language, and students swap midway through the day.

Sharing equal teaching responsibilities for the students, teachers on both sides in the same grade level have joint planning time on a weekly basis. They coordinate the curriculum closely in order to provide for content reinforcement without repetition in any language. Content-area instruction is taught in sheltered English and in a sheltered version of Chinese, for the purpose of making instruction comprehensible for the non-native speakers of the two languages. This practice is based on the premise that language is best learned when it is taught as "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985). To ensure teachers have the skills necessary to implement the best practices, the school regularly sends teachers to rigorous training in sheltered instruction and foreign language teacher development.

In this program, the foreign language, "Chinese" in this case, is not taught as an isolated subject matter. The aspects of language development do not take place in isolation, but in a context in which the teaching of Chinese is integrated with academic content and uses all language modes (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The content teaching using the two languages is very effective for teaching both English and Chinese when delivered by trained teachers in second language acquisition and sheltered instruction who clearly have both language and content objectives in each lesson.

An important end goal of this school is for students to graduate high school with course credit to approximate a Minor in Chinese Language. To attain this goal, the school is committed to designing the entire curriculum to help students obtain advanced-level Chinese proficiency by the 8th grade, and become prepared for Chinese AP classes in the 9th grade. In this process, the school administration has reached a consensus on maintaining the integrity of the 50/50 immersion model throughout the curriculum so as to allow the benefits of two-way programs to fully play out.

Chinese Language Proficiency and Literacy

This research reveals a finding that has been repeatedly supported by previous research studies: When second language acquisition occurs in early childhood, students develop their language proficiency rapidly (Ovando & Combs, 2012; Patricia, 2010; Peregoy & Boyle, 2017; Wright, 2015). In this study, students have acquired Chinese language proficiency and literacy remarkably. According to the benchmark established by the school to gauge students' Chinese learning outcome, students are assessed in the beginning, mid-year, and end of year. The Principal Mr. Chuang proudly announced that "85% of students achieved 75% in the first try. All students except two passed in the second try. So students are meeting our expectations."

The school started measuring students' reading ability with 100-200 high frequency Chinese characters covered by the textbook. It is found that students have gained a great success in character recognition. From there they introduced CCCC (Children's Chinese Competency Certification) to assess students' Chinese proficiency level in the domain of listening and reading. Starting in 2015, the school has begun to refine their benchmark further by adopting the Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) test which follows the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines. The AAPPL test will allow students to perform tasks such as participating in a virtual video chat, creating wikis, e-mailing, and using apps to demonstrate language ability, and thus resulting in a more holistic understanding of students' Chinese proficiency in all four language domains.

Therefore, though the school has been around for only four years, students' Chinese proficiency and literacy have been closely monitored from the outset. Moreover, the assessment tools have been modified constantly to identify more effectively students' current level of Chinese development, so that teachers can adjust instruction accordingly and help students to progress further.

Accompanying the development of Chinese proficiency and literacy is students' appreciation of Chinese culture. Immersed in a culture-rich environment, students are engaged in various events and learning activities: learning Chinese proverbs during morning assembly, singing teacher-made Chinese songs connected to curriculum, learning about 12 Zodiac animals, celebrating Chinese New Year Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, building sister school relationship with two elite elementary schools in China, exchanging greeting cards and letters with the students in sister schools, etc. These experiences have not only strengthened students' understanding about Chinese culture, but also cultivated a deeper respect for diversity. Students' increased multicultural perspective and competence will undoubtedly give them an edge in today's globalized and pluralistic world.

Student Performance on State Standardized Tests

Students in this school have demonstrated higher performance in State testing compared with their monolingual peers in regular schools. Table 2 extracted from 2014-15 State Academic Performance Report reflects the academic achievements made by the 3rd and 4th grade students in the program (The program was up to the 4th grade in 2014-2015 year.).

TABLE 2
STATE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT
2014-15 CAMPUS PERFORMANCE

		State	District	Campus	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Special Ed	Econ Disadv	ELL^
STAAR Percent at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard or Above														
Grade 3														
Reading	2015	77%	71%	**95%**	*	93%	100%	-	100%	-	-	*	93%	*
STAAR Percent at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard or Above														
Grade 4														
Reading	2015	74%	64%	**95%**	78%	100%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	80%	*
Writing	2015	70%	64%	**88%**	78%	88%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	80%	*

It shows that 95% of the 3rd Grade students passed Reading test in comparison with 71% district and 77% state rate. In terms of the 4th Grade student performance, 95% passed Reading and 88% passed Writing, both far higher than the district and state rates too. Additionally, what is worth special mentioning is that Mr. Chuang disclosed that the school ranked 5th in reading and 9th in Math among approximately 170 elementary schools in the school district in the State Standardized Tests in 2014-2015.

The school continued to progress steadily in the State Standardized Tests in 2015-2016 as table 3 indicates. Student results across grades and subjects are all well above the district and state rates.

TABLE 3
STATE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT
2015-16 CAMPUS PERFORMANCE

		State	District	Campus	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Special Ed	Econ Disadv	ELL^
STAAR Percent at Level II Satisfactory Standard or Above														
Grade 3														
Reading	2016	73%	67%	**91%**	84%	86%	89%	-	100%	-	100%	*	89%	90%
Mathematics	2016	75%	70%	**93%**	84%	79%	100%	-	100%	-	100%	*	79%	80%
STAAR Percent at Level II Satisfactory Standard or Above														
Grade 4														
Reading	2016	75%	69%	**88%**	*	67%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	82%	*
Mathematics	2016	73%	70%	**98%**	*	92%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	100%	*
Writing	2016	69%	64%	**86%**	*	67%	93%	-	100%	-	*	*	91%	*
STAAR Percent at Level II Satisfactory Standard or Above														
Grade 5 **														
Reading	2016	81%	73%	**95%**	88%	100%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	89%	-
Mathematics	2016	86%	80%	**95%**	88%	100%	100%	-	100%	-	*	*	89%	-
Science	2016	74%	68%	**92%**	88%	100%	100%	-	92%	-	*	*	78%	-

These data compellingly unfold that children in a bilingual education program have not only developed their proficiency in a second language but also outperformed their monolingual peers in English and academic content.

Another academic achievement manifested in Table 4 displays that students in 2014-2015 had a 10% increase in total pass rate in both Reading and Math than 2013-2014. The Assistant Principal Mr. Reid added that in 13-14 18% of the students were at the advanced level in reading and in 2014-2015 40% were identified at the advanced level. When accounting for the improvement, he drew on the research that suggests that there can be a lag in language students comparing to their peers at the beginning, but by the second school year when the dual language benefits kick in students will exhibit equal or better performance than their peers.

While interpreting student performance on the Standardized Tests, Mr. Reid made another good point, In 2014-15, students have only been in the program for two years. They started as 2nd graders, then 3rd graders, then they had one more year, then they took the test. It's going to be different from students who started in PreK or K. By the time these students are tested in their fourth or fifth year in dual language program, hopefully it will show more impact. (Mr. Reid, Associate Principal)

Researchers found little difference between programs in the very early grades. "It was not until the content became more demanding in the later grades that difference among programs became significant" (Richard-Amato, 2010, p. 425). The longer students are in a dual language program, the greater academic achievements they tend to demonstrate comparing with the students in regular education programs. This study has presented a powerful counterargument to the prevalent misconception among the public that bilingual education impedes English language acquisition and academic achievement.

TABLE 4
STUDENTS _% SATISFACTORY ON STAAR

	Reading			Mathematics			Writing			Science			Social Studies		
	12–13	13–14	14–15	12–13	13–14	14–15	12–13	13–14	14–15	12–13	13–14	14–15	12–13	13–14	14–15
Grade 3	85	85	95		90	100									
Grade 4			95			98			88						
Grade 5	85	85	95		90	99			88						

A Balanced Chinese-English Dual Language Curriculum

As the first school-wide mandarin immersion program in the State, in the circumstances that there is a scarcity of resources and materials, the school has successfully established a balanced Chinese-English dual language curriculum. Beginning in pre-Kindergarten, all students spend 50% of the instructional day in a Mandarin class and the remaining 50% in an English class, swapping midway through the day. As in other bilingual programs, it uses one language for one set of subjects and the other language for a separate set. Every curriculum area develops language competence. All subject areas contribute to the growth of children's language, and likewise, the acquisition of language promotes the mastery of subject areas. The teachers are native speakers of each language, and can fully understand children speaking one language but speak to them almost entirely in the other language. Both sets of teachers serve as important language models for children, identifying the language skills that need to be improved in both languages.

Enacting a balanced approach to curriculum, the school has not only developed students' Chinese proficiency and taught academic content in Chinese, but also made every effort to "push the rigor on the English side," to quote Mr. Reid. He termed this approach "a balanced literacy pedagogy," in which, students' English proficiency is never let fall between the cracks. Students receive differentiated reading instruction that allows them to read at their own level and well-structured reading and writing workshop where students' English reading and writing get addressed to the fullest possible degree.

As stated on the school website, it "prepare(s) students for the rigorous STAAR test…" while also "charged with the same mission to educate children in all the TEKS (administered only in English) necessary to be college and career-ready." Following a balanced dual language curriculum, the school has indeed achieved this goal. Currently, the school administrators are planning to adopt a new Chinese literacy curriculum that helps students to read at a higher level and place more emphasis on English writing skills. When asked to name one most desired advancement the program can make in the future, Mr. Chuang responded the following, "I hope students will become balanced bilingual, and do equally well in English and Chinese. When they reach the 8th grade, they can be AP ready, and move forward from there. This is my goal." It can be foreseen that if students keep making the same strides, the goal will be reached beyond any doubt in the near future.

A Positive School Environment

Key to the success of this program is an affirming sociocultural environment, which is most likely to occur in two-way and foreign language immersion programs. The two languages are given equal status, thus creating self-confidence among all students. For Chinese-speaking students, this program functions as a developmental bilingual model that helps them to maintain their home language and develop a positive sense of their cultural heritage and ethnolinguistic identities. For native-English-speaking students, the program functions as a foreign language immersion model that enables them to have an academically and personally enriching experience of being exposed to different languages and cultures.

When instruction is in Chinese, the English speakers must seek help from their Chinese-speaking peers, just as the Chinese-speaking students must count on the English speakers when instruction is in English. Language majority and minority students "play a mutually important role with each other as linguistic and sociocultural models" (TESOL, 1993, p.1) Both thrown into a language they are not familiar with, they experience the same frustration and uncertainty, and share a strong desire to learn, therefore tend to better understand and accommodate each other, their language, and culture. In two-way bilingual programs, "accommodation is no longer a one-way street, with the language minority students doing all the adjusting" (Richard-Amato, 2010, p. 425). Both language-majority and language-minority students affirm and respect their language learning counterparts more. All these factors contribute to high student self-esteem found in this program. A similar affective advantage was also "found in the Spanish/English two-way language in Valley Center, California, and the Cantonese/English two-way language program in lower Manhattan" (Richard-Amato, 2010, p. 424).

Not only a positive relationship between students is clearly displayed, a close bond is also established between parents and the school. The parents have been instrumental in promoting and advancing this program. Recognizing that the immersion experience is not only new for students, but for parents as well, the school has regular parent meetings

and trainings. The parents are advised on how to help their children through an initial period of frustration and discomfort when exposed to an unfamiliar environment, how to facilitate their children's acquisition of Chinese more effectively, and many other important issues. Additionally, the school offers a free Rosetta Stone license to parents who want to learn Chinese, and after-school conversational classes for parents who are interested in learning alongside their children. With continued support both at home and at school, students flourish linguistically, academically, cognitively, and socioculturally.

VI. Discussion

Evidence in this study has overwhelmingly indicated that students participating in this program benefit from becoming proficient in two languages and are not at a disadvantage academically by learning content through another language. Young children are remarkably adaptive, with the cognitive and linguistic capacity to pick up a foreign language quickly. When spending a large percentage of their day immersed in a foreign language, they adapt to the language and culture and begin using the language comfortably in classroom and social situations. Moreover, the bilingual students develop cognitive and academic advantages over, and outperform, monolinguals on standardized tests. As students learn the content in both Chinese and English simultaneously and learn to read and write in both languages, their linguistic and academic needs are both met adeptly.

There are many factors that have contributed to the success of this Chinese-English bilingual program. First and foremost, the school curriculum characterized by two-way and foreign language immersion provides students with access to the core curriculum, development of both languages, and opportunities for classroom interaction. Researchers have persuasively suggested that language instruction is best delivered through context-embedded experience. In other words, the content-area study provides an optimal context for second language acquisition to happen. This curriculum model is more effective than foreign language programs in which students are involved in the target language as a subject matter for only a small portion each day/week.

Sociocultural and affective factors such as high levels of students' self-esteem and parent involvement is another essential element in this program's success. It enriches students' sociocultural experiences and raises personal satisfaction in both language majority and minority students. This program has helped change the view of bilingual education as a remedial program to being viewed as an enrichment program. It has also underscored the growing importance of seeing bilingual education as a national resource of all students. Just as Richard-Amato (2010) proclaimed, "Bilingualism is an appropriate goal not only for our schools, but for our country as a whole," and "this goal becomes more and more critical as our nation becomes increasingly more diverse"(p. 429).

VII. Concluding Remarks

This study brings to light an important implication that an effective bilingual education program develops students' language and literacy proficiency, leads them in successful academic achievement, and nurtures sociocultural integration. Influenced by the current educational policies, bilingual education has been marginalized to a great extent due to the high stakes attached to English language achievement tests. Consequently, more and more school districts across the country have phased out bilingual education in the false hope that this will speed up English acquisition. This research study offers a compelling case that children in bilingual programs consistently outperform those in all-English programs on standardized tests. Bilingual education does not hinder students' English language acquisition. Instead, it accelerates students' English proficiency development while promoting students' second language acquisition and overall academic achievements.

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Good and Poor Summary Writers' Strategies: The Case of Japanese High School EFL Learners

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***Abstract*—Despite general belief about the importance of summary writing in foreign language education, and in the field of teaching Language for Academic Purposes (LAP) (e.g., Swales, 1981; 2000), it is shown that the development of this skill is one of the most difficult skills for learners (e.g., Brown and Day, 1980; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Shi, 2012). This study is part of a larger project and its main purpose is to open the black box by exploring the relationship between performances of summary writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the strategies used for summary writing in EFL. A total of 74 Japanese high school EFL learners were asked to write a summary of one-third of approximately 230 word-long English passage and were subsequently asked to respond to the summary strategy inventory adapted partly from Li (2014). The data analysis showed that there was indeed a relationship between the quality of the students' summaries and the frequency of their implemented strategies. In this study, along with the results of in-depth analyses, various implications are offered to EFL education as well as future research studies.**

***Index Terms*—writing a summary, EFL learners, summary writing strategies**

I. Introduction

A. The Nature of Summary Writing

Summarizing a text is the integrated skill of reading and writing, and it is known as one of the most difficult skills for learners (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Shi, 2012). It is also considered a highly complex, recursive reading-writing activity involving constraints that can impose an overwhelming cognitive load on students, thereby adversely affecting performance (Kirkland and Saunders, 1991).

Many of previous studies on strategies for summarizing a text drew insight from Kintsch and van Dijk's (1978, 1983) discussions of cognitive processes to derive the macrostructure of the original text. Kintsch and van Dijk's (1978, 1983) proposal of the summarizing process goes through three stages: deletion, generalization, and construction. Further, the stages are revised as following; comprehending individual propositions, establishing connections between propositions, identifying the constituent structure of a story, remembering the information in a story, selecting the information to be represented in a summary, and being concise and coherent (Brown & Day, 1983; Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978, 1983). Following these six process rules, summary writers are required to reproduce a new text with their own words. To write a summary in a foreign language (FL), not only the proficiency in the FL (i.e., knowledge of grammar and vocabulary for reading and writing), but also the skill of summarizing the text are required to complete summary writing.

B. Strategies for Summary Writing

The use of strategy in learning L2 has been the purpose of a large body of research over the last 30 years (Plansky, 2011). However, little research has been conducted on summary writing strategies except for the reports by some researchers (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Brown & Day, 1983; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Keck, 2006, 2010; Li, 2014; Phakiti, 2003a; Shi, 2004), who reported that strategies for summarizing a text in L2 had differences depending on their FL proficiency or their depth of experience in writing. For instance, readers with higher proficiency use various strategies (Anderson, 1991; Phakiti, 2003a) and they are more global (Block, 1986; Carrell, 1989; Koda, 2005). On the contrary, those with lower proficiency use quite a few strategies than those with higher proficiency (Cohen, 1994) and they may use them inappropriately (Plakans, 2009), and they often use strategies such as copying and deleting (Brown and Day, 1983). In this way, various researchers have reported that the strategy used for writing a summary varies depending on the level of learner's EFL proficiency.

Within a few studies on strategies that EFL students reported using for summary writing, Li (2014) observed Chinese EFL summary writers in a university in China, and he reported that the importance of skills of reading and writing were different concerning the overall proficiency to write a summary, and writing strategies played a more critical role than reading strategies.

II. Research Questions

According to the previous studies on summary writing strategy, types and frequencies of strategies reported using by the EFL learners vary depending on the level of learners' EFL proficiency and the depth of their experience in academic writing. However, most participants in the previous studies were university-level EFL/ESL learners. Also, the studies

on EFL summary writers' strategies were examined by conceptualizing the process of summary writing going through the linear stages of completing a summary, i.e., reading and writing, but in this research, four stages (i.e., before reading the text, while reading the text, after reading the text, and while writing a summary) summary writers go through will be asked, focusing on Japanese high school students of mixed levels of EFL proficiency. The common point between the groups is that they had never written a summary from the source text in English. The following two research questions are stated regarding the relationship between their summary performances and strategies they reported using during the four stages of writing a summary.

RQ1. What kinds of strategies do good / poor summary writers tend to use?

RQ2. Is there any difference in the frequency of strategy use between the levels of summary performances?

RQ3. What factors affect summary performances?

III. Methodology

A. Participants

A total of 74 participants in this study were in the 2nd grade at a National Technical College in Japan, and 90% of participants were boys, and only 10% of them were girls. They have three English classes a week, and their English proficiency ranges between beginner to intermediate. For instance, some students have a score of 750 in TOEIC, and others seem to struggle to keep up with English classes. However, all students are unfamiliar with writing a summary in English.

B. Raters

Three raters who had EFL teaching experiences assessed all students' summaries respectively. Their English proficiency was upper intermediate level. For the sake of consistency, a consensus among three raters was set to exclude students who had not written anything or written just one sentence. As a result, 74 students finally remained as the participants of this study. The internal-consistency reliability measured by the Cronbach alpha was as follows: $\alpha = 0.76$ for Main Idea Coverage; $\alpha = 0.83$ for Integration; $\alpha = 0.84$ for Language Use; and $\alpha = 0.83$ for Source Use.

C. Tasks

All students received worksheets with approximately 230-word English text (Appendix A). This text is adapted from the section of reading comprehension of the EIKEN test, Japan's leading English proficiency assessment, at the grade of pre-2. All students were asked to write a summary in English with permission to see the English text within 30 minutes.

D. Rubrics

A scoring rubric to evaluate participants' summary scripts was adopted from Li (2014) (Appendix B). The rubric consisted of four components addressing different aspects of summarization abilities: Main Idea Coverage, Integration, Language Use, and Source Use. The can-do lists of each category were established, and the scores from zero to five were categorized as in Appendix B.

E. Questionnaires

The questionnaire consisted of the items asking if summary writers used the strategies at each stage of writing a summary; before reading the text, while reading the text, after reading the text, and while writing a summary (See Appendix C in detail). Each question was carefully selected from Li (2014), which students can easily imagine the concept. Besides, they were asked to answer the open-ended questions on the task of summary writing because it was their first time to write a summary.

F. Data Collection and Data Analysis

Before starting the data collection, all students were given a quick lecture on how to write a summary in English based on an example prepared by the present author. The instruction emphasized that they write a summary, which is short but detailed for the readers who have not read the source text to help them understand the main idea, that they do not copy any sentences directly from the text but paraphrase them, and that they place the main idea of the source text in the first sentence of the summary as a topic sentence. Subsequently, the teacher distributed a worksheet to students, asking them to write a summary for 30 minutes. They were allowed to look at the source text while they were writing a summary. After they finished writing a summary, they answered the questionnaire including items asking if summary writers used the strategies at each of the four stages to write a summary.

All the data collected by the questionnaire and writing a summary were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics version 23.0. To observe the relationship between their strategy use and the quality of their produced summary, whole students were first divided into two levels of relatively higher and lower based on the ranking of the overall performance of their summary products. Second, strategies students in each group frequently used were chosen to examine what affected their performances.

IV. Results and Discussion

Given their summary performances, Table I shows that performances on students' summary were under the half scores of five full points in all evaluation items, and finding main ideas (Mean = 1.60, S.D. = 1.07) seems to be difficult compared with other skills. Meanwhile, the score of Language Use (Mean = 2.14, S.D. = 1.28) refers to the skill of choosing appropriate grammar and words were higher than any other item. The score overall was 7.64 (S.D. = 4.65), and the best score was 18.33.

TABLE I.
RESULT OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ALL 74 STUDENTS' SUMMARY PERFORMANCES

	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Main Idea Coverage (5.00)	1.60	1.07	4.67	0.00
Integration (5.00)	2.02	1.42	4.67	0.00
Language Use (5.00)	2.14	1.28	5.00	0.00
Source Use (5.00)	1.88	1.25	4.67	0.00
Overall (20.00)	7.64	4.65	18.33	0.00

All students were divided into the top 37 and low 37 students by their overall scores. Tables Ⅱ and Ⅲ show that the mean of top 37 students was 11.36 (S.D. = 2.45) and that in the low proficiency group was 3.93 (S.D. = 3.08). Students in the high proficiency group seem to struggle to find main ideas (Mean = 2.32, S.D. = 1.04) because the score of Main Idea Coverage was lower than any other categories. However, the mean score of Integration (i.e., the skill of rearranging the order of the statements logically and demonstrating the global interpretation of the source text) was higher than any other evaluation item (Mean = 3.19, S.D = 0.81), while that in the low proficiency group was lower than any other evaluation item (Mean = 0.86, S.D. = 0.79).

TABLE II.
RESULT OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF 37 HIGH PROFICIENCY GROUP STUDENTS' SUMMARY PERFORMANCES

	Students in the high proficiency group (n=37)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Main Idea Coverage (5.00)	2.32	1.04	4.67	0.67
Integration (5.00)	3.19	0.81	4.67	1.67
Language Use (5.00)	3.08	0.65	5.00	1.67
Source Use (5.00)	2.77	0.87	4.67	0.67
Total (20.00)	11.36	2.45	18.33	8.00

TABLE III.
RESULT OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF 37 LOW PROFICIENCY GROUP STUDENTS' SUMMARY PERFORMANCES

	Students in the low proficiency group (n=37)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Main Idea Coverage (5.00)	0.93	0.60	2.00	0.00
Integration (5.00)	0.86	0.79	2.00	0.00
Language Use (5.00)	1.19	1.04	3.00	0.00
Source Use (5.00)	0.99	0.89	2.67	0.00
Total (20.00)	3.93	3.08	7.67	0.00

Table IV presents the descriptive statistics of the strategy they used in the four stages, and they tend to use various strategies in the stage of 'before-reading' (Mean = 3.55, S.D. = 1.11), but only two items like Q1 (You understand the task of summary writing) and Q2 (You understand the meaning of the text's title) were set, while a total of 15 items were set in the stage of 'while-reading', four items were in the stage of 'after-reading', and nine items were set in the stage of 'while-writing'. Given the stage of 'after-reading' (Mean = 1.94, S.D. = 0.99), they do not seem to use various strategies, but instead, they seem to use more strategies in the stages of 'while-reading' (Mean = 3.00, S.D. = 0.78) and in 'while-writing' (Mean = 2.60, S.D. = 0.82) than in 'before-reading' and 'after-reading'.

TABLE IV.
RESULT OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STRATEGY USED FOR SUMMARY WRITINGS IN THE FOUR STAGES

	All students (n=72)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Before-reading (2 items)	3.55	1.11	5.00	0.00
While reading (15bitems)	3.00	0.78	5.00	0.00
After-reading (4 items)	1.94	0.99	5.00	0.00
While-writing (9 items)	2.60	0.82	4.56	0.00

Given the relationship between their summary performances and the frequency of strategy use in the four stages, Table V shows the differences between the strategies the students in each group used in each stage, and students in the high proficiency group used more strategies than those in the low proficiency group in all stages. Statistically, there were no significant differences in the frequency of strategy use between the groups in the stage of 'before-reading' and 'after-reading', but in the stage of 'while-reading', $t(72) = 2.75$, $p < .01$, and in 'while-writing', $t(72) = 2.92$, $p < .01$. In this paper, from here, two stages of 'while-reading' and 'while-writing' will be focused to observe.

TABLE V.
MOST FREQUENTLY USED STRATEGIES FOR SUMMARY WRITING IN THE FOUR STAGES OF EACH LEVEL

	High proficiency group students (n=37)				Low proficiency group students (n=37)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Before-reading	3.65	1.22	5.00	0.00	3.45	0.99	5.00	1.00
While-reading	3.23	0.85	5.00	0.00	2.75	0.63	3.73	1.00
After-reading	2.05	1.10	5.00	0.00	1.82	0.85	3.75	0.00
While-writing	2.86	0.65	4.56	1.00	2.33	0.88	3.89	0.00

To examine what kinds of strategies the students in each group used when they read and write (RQ1) and how different was the frequency of strategy use between the groups (RQ2), five strategies the students reported using the most in the stage of 'while-reading' and 'while-writing' were raised in Table VI. Interestingly, students in both groups used same strategies the most, and this finding is different from the view by some references (Anderson, 1991; Block, 1986; Brown & Day, 1983; Carrell 1989; Cohen 1994; Koda, 2005; Phakiti, 2003a). However, as shown in Table Ⅶ, though most strategies which reported as the most used strategies (i.e., those in Table VI) were used the most frequently by students in both groups, the frequency of strategy use was significantly different between groups (See Table Ⅶ in detail). This finding is the same as Cohen (1994).

Some researchers (e.g., Choy & Lee, 2012; Johns, 1985; Keck, 2006; Wichadee, 2013; Winograd, 1984) highlight that the experiences and practicing of writing summaries influence writers' summary performances, and all the students in this study perhaps could not know the effective strategies for writing an English summary because they all had never written English summary. In any case, among the students in this study, those who wrote an excellent summary used the strategies more frequently than those who wrote a poor summary.

To investigate the factors affecting summary performances (RQ3), each group, i.e., the high and low proficiency groups, was divided moreover into half; top 19 students and low 18 students on each. Table VIII shows the descriptive statistics of each group, and Table Ⅸ shows the correlation between the frequency of strategy use and their performance of summaries. According to Table Ⅸ, there was a relationship between them in the low proficiency group (i.e., between 19 higher students and 18 lower students in the low proficiency group): For reading strategy of Q8 (You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text), $r = .33$, $p < .01$; for reading strategy of Q4 (You read while confirming the understanding of the text), $r = .34$, $p < .01$; for writing strategy of Q23 (You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text), $r = .47$, $p < .01$; and for writing strategy of Q30 (You compared the summary you wrote with the original text), $r = .42$, $p < .01$. While there were negative correlations between them in the high proficiency group (i.e., between 19 higher students and 18 lower students in the high proficiency group): For reading strategy of Q12, $r = -.02$, n.s., for writing strategy of Q23, $r = -.06$, n.s.; and for writing strategy of Q30, $r = -.002$, n.s.

TABLE VI.
MOST USED FIVE STRATEGIES IN WHILE READING AND WRITING

		Students in the high proficiency group (n=37)				Students in the low proficiency group (n=37)			
	Strategies the students used the most in while-reading	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Q3.	You read while guessing the approximate meaning.	4.08	1.14	5.00	0.00	3.54	1.02	5.00	1.00
Q6.	You read while predicting the meaning of unknown words and phrases.	3.86	1.03	5.00	0.00	3.30	1.02	5.00	1.00
Q12.	If you could not understand English sentences, you read them again.	3.86	1.29	5.00	0.00	3.16	1.30	5.00	0.00
Q13.	You read while considering the knowledge of the text content you already had.	3.81	1.13	5.00	0.00	3.14	1.29	5.00	0.00
Q 4.	You read while confirming the understanding of the text.	3.73	1.19	5.00	0.00	2.89	1.29	5.00	0.00
		Students in the high proficiency group (n=37)				Students in the low proficiency group (n=37)			
	Strategies the students used the most in while-writing	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Q29.	You looked over the English text to catch some information to be used for writing a summary.	3.86	1.00	5.00	1.00	2.97	1.38	5.00	0.00
Q28.	You wrote while looking over the specific phrases in the English text to be used for writing a summary.	3.70	1.05	5.00	1.00	2.95	1.43	5.00	0.00
Q23.	You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text.	3.70	1.08	5.00	1.00	2.62	1.40	5.00	0.00
Q30.	You compared the summary you wrote with the original text.	2.97	1.36	5.00	1.00	2.35	1.23	5.00	0.00
Q26.	You wrote a summary in Japanese using the diagrams and tables summarized the English text, and translated it into English.	1.57	1.07	4.00	1.00	1.57	1.21	5.00	0.00

TABLE VII.
T-TEST OF THE LARGEST FIVE STRATEGIES WHICH HAS GAPS OF THE FREQUENCY OF STRATEGY USE BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCES OF EACH LEVEL

	Strategy contents of the most used five strategies in while-reading (*n*=74)	*t*	*r.*
Q 4.	You read while confirming the understanding of the text.	2.90**	8.54
Q 8.	You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text.	2.42*	8.54
Q12.	If you could not understand English sentences, you read them again.	2.33*	8.54
Q13.	You read while considering the knowledge of the text content you already had.	2.40*	8.54
Q 6.	You read while predicting the meaning of unknown words and phrases.	2.34*	8.54
	Strategy contents of the most used five strategies in while-writing (n=74)		
Q23.	*You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text.*	3.72***	8.54
Q29.	*You looked over the English text to catch some information to be used for writing a summary.*	3.17**	8.54
Q28.	*You wrote while looking over the specific phrases in the English text to be used for writing a summary.*	2.59*	8.54
Q30.	*You compared the summary you wrote with the original text.*	2.06*	8.54
Q26.	*You wrote a summary in Japanese using the diagrams and tables summarized the English text, and translated it into English.*	0.00	0.00

Note. *d.f.* = 72, *r* = correlation, *t* = t-test, *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

TABLE VIII.
RESULT OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SUMMARY PERFORMANCES IN EACH GROUP

	Students in the high proficiency group (n = 37)							
	Higher students in the high proficiency group (n =19)				Lower students in the high proficiency group (n = 18)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Main Idea Coverage (5.00)	2.84	1.10	4.67	1.13	1.76	0.61	2.67	0.67
Integration (5.00)	3.75	0.63	4.67	2.33	2.59	0.48	3.67	1.67
Language Use (5.00)	3.32	0.58	5.00	2.33	2.83	0.64	4.33	1.67
Source Use (5.00)	3.25	0.75	4.67	1.67	2.28	0.67	3.33	0.67
Total (20.00)	13.11	2.16	18.33	10.67	9.52	0.87	10.67	8.00

	Students in the low proficiency group (n = 37)							
	Higher students in the low proficiency group (n =19)				Lower students in the low proficiency group (n = 18)			
	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.	Mean	S.D.	Max.	Min.
Main Idea Coverage (5.00)	1.33	0.29	2.00	1.00	0.50	0.54	2.00	0.00
Integration (5.00)	1.51	0.45	2.00	0.67	0.17	0.35	1.33	0.00
Language Use (5.00)	2.07	0.57	3.00	1.00	0.26	0.41	1.67	0.00
Source Use (5.00)	1.77	0.46	2.67	1.33	0.17	0.24	0.67	0.00
Total (20.00)	6.70	1.05	7.67	4.67	1.00	1.12	4.33	0.00

TABLE IX.
CORRELATION BETWEEN THE LARGEST TEN STRATEGIES WHICH HAS GAP IN THE FREQUENCY OF STRATEGY USE AND THEIR PERFORMANCES

	While-reading					*While-writing*				
	Q4.	Q6.	Q8.	Q12.	Q13.	Q23.	Q26.	Q28.	Q29.	Q30.
All (n = 74)	.37***	.31**	.37***	.27*	.31**	.47***	.03	.29**	.33**	.31**
Higher (n = 37)	.01	.10	.20	-.02	.04	-.06	.12	.06	.03	-.002
Lower (n = 37)	.34**	.23	.33**	.20	.25	.47**	.01	.13	.16	.42**

Note. *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

Among learners who were not familiar with writing a summary in English, some students could write a summary using strategies effectively, and others could not. However, the reason for the differences in the frequency of strategy use may be different depending on the performance levels. Table X shows their comments in the open-ended question which was asked after they completed the task of summary writing, and the comments presented in the Table X are the most common opinions of the whole.

As shown in the Tables IX and X, firstly, students in the high proficiency group reported that they did not use the strategies such as Q8 (You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text) and Q4 (You read while confirming the understanding of the text) because they could comprehend the text without using them, and they wanted to start to write as soon as comprehending a text instead. On the other hand, among the students in the low proficiency group, some students who wrote a better summary reported that they used these strategies to comprehend the text completely before writing a summary, and others who did not write anything or copied from the source reported that they did not use these strategies because they did not have much motivation to complete the task. Thus, in the case of the students in the low proficiency group, the more they used the strategies of Q8 (You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text) and Q4 (You read while confirming the understanding of the text), the higher score of performances they got even though they could not reach the same level as the students in the high proficiency group.

Secondly, in the case of writing strategy of Q23 (You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text), in the low proficiency group, students used the strategy of Q23 (You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text) obtained better score than those who did not use this strategy. Even though higher students in the low proficiency group could not write the summary as well as the students in the high proficiency group, they could obtain the better score than those who did not write anything or just copied from the source text (i.e., lower students in the low proficiency group) because lower students in the low proficiency

group were evaluated as inappropriate summary writers. However, in the case of students in the high proficiency group, contrary to the students in the low proficiency group, students positively used the strategy of Q23 (You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text) could not obtain better score than those who did not positively use the strategy. Actually, as shown in Table VIII, the mean scores of Language use is not prominently different between higher and lower students in the high proficiency group (e.g., Mean=3.32, S.D.=0.58 for the higher students in the high proficiency group; Mean=2.83, S.D.=0.64 for the lower students in the high proficiency group), therefore, it predicts that students in this level lose the score of Language Use if they actively paraphrase because they do not have enough knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to manipulate paraphrasing.

TABLE X.
RESPONSES OF THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL STUDENTS (N = 74)

	High proficiency group (*n* = 37)	Low proficiency group (*n* = 37)
Q8.	*Higher* (*n*=19) • I did not pay attention to the meaning of the words in the text because I could understand the text. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I did not have much time to pay attention to the meaning of words in the text because I wanted to spend much time to write. • I read the text while guessing the meaning of new words because I could not spend much time to read the text (I wanted to move on the writing process).	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I tried to pay attention to the meaning of words in the text because • I had to comprehend the text to write a summary. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I am not good at English, so I could not understand the text at all. • I am sleepy.
Q4.	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I did not need to use the strategy because I could comprehend the text. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I did not have much time to confirm the understanding of the text. • I wanted to move on the writing process as soon as possible because I am not good at writing.	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I used it because I needed to comprehend the text before writing summary. • I tried to read the text carefully to remember the content of the text for summarizing the text. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I am not good at English, so I could not understand the text at all. • I am sleepy.
Q23.	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I tried to change the vocabularies basically because I could not reconstruct (paraphrase) the English structure. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • Of course, I positively used the strategy because I know that paraphrasing is necessary for summary writing. • I tried to paraphrase the text though I was not good at English (especially, grammar).	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I tried to not copy from the original text, but paraphrase the text. • I tried to change the vocabularies in the sentences of the text. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I am not good at English, so I could not understand the text at all. • I am sleepy.
Q30.	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I could not use the strategy because I did not have much time to use it. (Time was too short to complete the task.) *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I compared my summary with original text to check whether or not I copied from the text.	*Higher* (*n* = 19) • I compared my summary with original text to check my English. • I compared my summary with original text to check my English spellings. *Lower* (*n* = 18) • I am not good at English, so I could not understand the text at all. • I am sleepy.

Finally, students with higher scores in the high proficiency group did not use the strategy of Q30 (You compared the summary you wrote with the original text) even though the students with the middle score (i.e., lower students in the high proficiency group and higher students in the low proficiency group) did positively use it. Some higher students in the high proficiency group reported that they did not have much time to compare their produced summary with the original text. However, students who used the strategy reported that they needed to compare their summaries with the original text in order to correct their spelling/English grammar and even confirm if they did not copy from the source text.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the strategy reported using for writing a summary by students who were enrolled in a general academic course at National Technical College in Japan, of which general English level was deemed to ranges between beginner to intermediate among their peers in regular schools in Japan. In usual classes, they did not receive academic writing course such as paraphrasing or integration of reading/listening and writing, and they were unfamiliar with writing in English. All the students were asked to write a summary in English from the source text written in English, and they also answered the questionnaire on the strategies they used in the process of completing a summary. The study was carried out by dividing the students into two groups; higher and lower depending on their summary performances.

Findings from this study were that students with higher scores (i.e., those in the high proficiency group) and those with lower scores (i.e., those in the low proficiency group) tend to use the same strategies but the frequency of the strategy use was different, though previous studies about EFL/ESL summary writers' strategies (i.e., Anderson, 1991; Brown & Day, 1983; Carrell, 1989; Cohen, 1994) reported that not only the types and the number of strategies they

used but also the frequency of strategy use were different depending on their English proficiency. Therefore, these findings were partly the same as the indications of the previous studies. Given some strategies such as Q4 (You read while confirming the understanding of the text) and Q8 (You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text), students with good scores in the high proficiency group used fewer strategies than those with good scores in the low proficiency group. In other words, higher students in the high proficiency group use these strategies as little as lower students in the low proficiency group, but the reasons why they did not use such strategies were different. The students with good performances in the high proficiency group could comprehend the text without using these strategies, while the students with poor performances in the low proficiency group did not use them because they did not have motivation enough to attempt to complete the task.

Other findings on writing strategies from this study were that the students who obtained higher scores did not positively use the strategy of Q23 (You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text) because they may have tried to complete the task as well as possible. Therefore, they tried to change the vocabularies instead of reconstruct the structures because they knew they did not have enough knowledge of grammar to paraphrase without grammatical errors. Also, the participants in this study must have struggled to complete the task because writing a summary was an unfamiliar and complex task for them, and they probably could not afford to plan their time to complete the summary task and compare their produced summary with the original text (i.e., Q30. 'You compared the summary you wrote with the original text').

This study is a seminal work, and it raised more questions than settled. As a future research should be carefully conducted, the present author would like to suggest as follow. In order to observe the quality of summaries EFL students produced, the same environment on reading comprehension should be established, therefore, all students are required to comprehend the text before writing a summary. Students with low English proficiency in this study suffered from comprehending the text, but it is the premise for writing a summary from the text source. Kato (2018) suggested in her study that provision of L1 glossary to the target words in the text source is a prominently effective instruction for the students who were not familiar with writing summary, and she mentioned that the support has to be given to learners in a way in which they may be able to capitalize on it at the appropriate stage of writing a summary. To be sure, lower students in the low proficiency group in this study did not seem to have much motivation to comprehend the text for writing a summary, but if they were received some L1 glossary in their unfamiliar words, they might have tried to use some strategies for reading comprehension.

Furthermore, some educational implications were raised through the findings of the present study. First, the teachers teaching summary writing to the students with non-proficiency or who are unfamiliar with writing a summary require to instruct the students how to use particular routines (e.g., strategies, like taking notes efficiently while reading the text, and reduce the activity occurred a cognitive load by reading the text back and forth). Second, they also need to positively instruct the students how to paraphrase or use synonyms in English before starting to practice a summary.

APPENDIX A. ORIGINAL TEXT FOR SUMMARY

Racing as Equals

Dog sledding is one of the toughest sports in the world. A driver stands on a sled* and guides a team of dogs that pulls the sled through the snow. Both the driver and the dogs must be very strong in order to compete. The most famous race is a 1,600-kilometer dog-sledding race in Alaska. In the past, most teams took nearly a month to finish. However, in recent years, teams have become faster. In fact, nowadays, the winners usually complete the race in just eight or nine days.

Dog sledding has traditionally been a men's sport. However, it is now becoming more popular with women. In 1974, only one woman completed the race. By 2015, though, about one-third of the drivers were women. Some people believe that more women are taking part because they have seen other women win the race. In 1985, Libby Riddles became the first woman to win, and Susan Butcher won four times between 1986 and 1990.

In fact, dog sledding is one of the few sports where women and men compete together. Interestingly, animals are a part of most of these sports. For example, horse riding is another sport where males and females compete together. Men and women also compete against each other in fishing tournaments. Some people believe that men and women should take part in more sports together in the future.

*sled: そり

Notes:

1) Do not bulleted.
2) Do not copy the text as it is.
3) Make it one-third length of the original text (approximately 110 words).
4) Write a summarized text in short and detail in order for readers who do not know the content of the text to understand it.

APPENDIX B. SCORING RUBRIC

(1) Main Idea Coverage

5. EXCELLENT: A response has complete coverage of main ideas.

4. VERY GOOD: A response has coverage of most main ideas.

3. GOOD: A response has moderate coverage of main ideas.

2. MODERATE: A response has some coverage of main ideas.

1. POOR: A response has coverage of very few ideas.

0. NO: A response has no coverage of main ideas.

(2) Integration

5. EXCELLENT: A response rearranges the order of the statements logically, displays excellent examples of integration and connectives, and demonstrates global interpretation of the source text.

4. VERY GOOD: A response rearranges the order of the statements logically, displays good examples of integration and connectives, and demonstrates global interpretation of the source text.

3. GOOD: A response rearranges the order of the statements logically, displays moderate examples of integration and connectives, and demonstrates global interpretation of the source text.

2. MODERATE: A response basically follows the order of source text with few cases of re-ordering and integration, and is not global in the interpretation of the source text.

1. POOR: A response follows the original order of the statements in the source text, shows rare instance of proper integration and connectives, and is not global in their interpretation of the source text.

0. NO: A response has no instances of integration or connectives at all.

(3) Language Use

5. EXCELLENT: A response displays consistent facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety, appropriate word choice; it is within the word limit as required.

4. VERY GOOD: A response displays facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional noticeable minor errors in structure, or word form that do not interfere with meaning; it is basically within the word limit.

3. GOOD: A response demonstrates inconsistent facility in sentence formation and word choice that may result in lack of clarity and occasionally obscure meaning; and/or it exceeds the word limit to a noticeable degree.

2. MODERATE: A response has a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms, an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage; and/or it exceeds the word limit to a large degree.

1. POOR: A response has serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage, the text shows a lack of control of vocabulary and/or grammar; and/or it exceeds the word limit to a large degree.

0. NO: A response is totally incomprehensible due to language errors, or because the response is left blank.

(4) Source Use

5. EXCELLENT: A response is predominantly in the summarizers' own words and sentence structures, in addition to the accurate use of the information from the source text.

4. VERY GOOD: A response is mostly in the summarizers' own words and sentence structures, in addition to the accurate use of the information from the source text.

3. GOOD: A response is basically in the summarizers' own words and sentence structures, in addition to appropriate use of information from the source text.

2. MODERATE: A response has some use of the summarizers' own words and sentence structures, in addition to the adequate use of the information from the source text.

1. POOR: A response is predominately verbatim copying the source text.

0. NO: A response demonstrates completely verbatim copying from the source text.

APPENDIX C. QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions:

This questionnaire is to ask you what kind of strategy you used for completing summary writing. Please fill the corresponding number following choices in the blanks part on the right of the number of each item.

5. Always true of me
4. Usually true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
2. Usually not true of me
1. Never or Almost true of me
0. I do not know.

Before-reading:

1. ___You understand the task of summary writing.
2. ___You understand the meaning of the text's title.

While-reading:

3. ___ You read while guessing the approximate meaning.
4. ___ You read while confirming the understanding of the text.
5. ___ You skipped an unintelligible part of English sentences.
6. ___ You read while predicting the meaning of unknown words and phrases.
7. ____ You used linguistic knowledge (such as morphological analysis) as a clue to infer the meaning of unknown words.
8. _____ You read while paying attention to the meaning of the words or phrases in the text.
9. ___ Even if you had not understood the contents of English sentences, you tried to infer and understand them from the context.
10. ____ You took notes in English when you catch the point you want to write as a summary later.
11. ____ You took notes in Japanese when you catch the point you want to write as a summary later.
12. ____ If you could not understand English sentences, you read them again.
13. ____ You read while considering the knowledge of the text content you already had.
14. _____ To produce a summary later, you tried to read the text while searching for the most important part of the English text and underline them.
15. ____ You concentrated on reading the English text without thinking about producing a summary later.
16. ____ You read the English text while looking for the important part of each paragraph and underlining them.
17. _____ You made a plan to produce a summary while reading the English text.

After-reading:

18. _____ When you wrote a summary, you underlined or circled to identify the important part of the text.
19. _____ After reading the English text, you made a plan to produce a summary.
20. _____ To reconfirm the content of English text and to organize what to write, you drew to summarize them in diagrams and tables.
21. _____ You summarized the text in Japanese in advance.

While-writing:

22. ____ You copied the part of the text to be written in summary.
23. ____ You wrote a summary in your own words after selecting some parts from the English text.
24. ____ You translated the note summarized in Japanese into English.
25. ____ You wrote a summary in English with diagrams and tables.
26. ____ You wrote a summary in Japanese with diagrams and tables, and translated it into English.
27. ____ You wrote summary while repeating to read the English text.
28. ____ You wrote while looking over the specific phrases in the English text to be used for producing a summary.
29. ____ You looked over the English text to catch some information to be used for producing a summary.
30. ____ You compared the summary you wrote with the original text.

Open-ended Questions:

1. How did you feel to produce a summary? _____.
2. What did you pay attention to while reading comprehension? _____.
3. What did you pay attention to in the process of writing? _____.

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Fostering Narrative Post-writing through Authentic Designed Learning Objects

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***Abstract*—One of the challenges language teachers face is how to engage learners to empower their writing skills. Teacher's feedback is a key feature when developing writing, but it seems not to be effective when learners remain having the same difficulties. It is imperative to examine pedagogical actions for motivating and tackling learners post writing difficulties. This action research study states a new alternative in which students autonomously learn and experience strategies to become better writers. The analysis focused on the influence that the process writing approach, focalized on the monitoring strategy of the post-writing stages, and the implementation of authentic designed learning objects (LOs) had on young adult learners' short narrative compositions. Outcomes indicate that students improved their writing since the tasks responded to their cognitive and affective profiles. Findings also suggested that the PRWRITE LOs clearly guided learners in the developmental process of writing. Students perceived those technological tools as interesting, applicable and motivating for their learning. This pedagogical experience promotes the design of innovative tools based on learners' needs and goals, which motivate and engage them in an improving process.**

***Index Terms*—autonomy, awareness, learning object, process writing approach, writing strategies**

I. Introduction

Developing writing skills is not always prioritized in language syllabi at educational institutions. To effectively foster this production skill, teachers should look for strategies and sometimes extra time for succeeding. Since the writing process involves complex cognitive operations, authors such as Flower and Hayes (1981) have described components and stages to help teachers guiding this process. From the cognitive process perspective, the important components of writing development are planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating in a feedback loop, which can be completed by students autonomously. Understanding writing as a cognitive process means, as Zamel (1983) affirms, that writing is a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (as cited in Hyland, 2002, p.20). This cognitive writing process allows students to be responsible for their own tasks and requires them to continuously correct or pay attention to teacher´s and/or peers' corrections in their writing.

This study integrates the use of technology as a writing skill development support. When implementing technology in the EFL classroom, learners' motivation is key. Dörnyei (1998) states that "the teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness" (p.119). In this study, technology was also used by teachers as a motivational factor to enhance learners' interest for learning English as a foreign language (Castellano, 2016; Masaeli & Chalak, 2016). However, using technology requires teachers to have certain technical abilities to create innovative learning materials. Designing materials, as opposed to using already designed materials (e.g. course books), means adjusting them to students' learning needs, styles, preferences, and interests, which can also integrate different kinds of resources (Kamariah, Husain, Atmowardoyo, & Salija, 2018). LOs represent a new way to design innovative materials, since they are created with the purpose of supporting educational practices. They are "a new type of computer-based instruction which can be any digital resource and can be reused to support learning" (Willey, 2000, p.3).

II. Review of Literature

Pedagogical interventions implemented as alternatives to tackle learners' difficulties in language learning have been the focus of interest of many researchers and teacher-researchers (Ariza, 2005; Lo & Hyland, 2007; Baroudy, 2008). In the first place, this review explores the literature in regard to the approach selected to tackle learners writing difficulties; in the second place, it explores the theory and literature about the use of technology in the educational field, specifically the design of learning objects in the EFL classroom.

Process-Writing Approach (PWA)

Here in, writing is not only considered as a cognitive process, but also a problem-solving activity influenced by the task-environment (Tang, 2016). This writing model considers important features such as writer's goals, writing structuring processes (planning, drafting, revising, and editing), evaluation through feedback, and constant monitoring

(Hyland, 2002). This model also considers the writer's experience, knowledge, rhetorical structure, and the audience. These elements become meaningful when designing engaging writing tasks for learners (Ellis, 2003). Ariza (2005) has demonstrated that the use of PWA helps learners generate ideas in the first stages of writing and its implementation creates a willingness to learn.

From the PWA approach, writing is a developmental process because learners explore and discover ideas to write (Raimes, 1983) and they are not evaluated on their final products but on their improvements during the process (Hyland, 2002). The PWA has also proved to positively influence learners' writing skill and increase their motivation to write in the foreign language (Ariza, 2005, Zuniga & Macias, 2006; Lo & Hyland, 2007; Baroudy, 2008; Onozawa, 2010; and Vijaya & Shahin 2016). In a step-by-step writing process, students are provided with opportunities to improve through constant feedback and become better writers (Zuniga & Macias, 2006).

When developing PWA, the teacher's role is to be a guide and facilitator who provides learners with clear instructions and appropriate models (Ariza, 2005). This approach encourages teachers to help students develop viable strategies at each writing stage; these strategies empower learners with tools for them to improve, and gain knowledge and experience when writing (Zuniga and Macias, 2006). Teachers as motivators need to propose writing tasks, having in mind that learners' motivation is influenced by their feelings of control over the learning activities and their interest on it (Lo and Hyland, 2007).

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

The fact that technology literacy increasingly becomes more necessary has influenced teachers to integrate computers as a tool in their pedagogical practice. CALL emerged as a way to direct the implementation of computers for pedagogical purposes, and activities developed with CALL are described to be interactive and to provide the presentation of information, guidance to the learner, practicing moments, and learning assessment. They also favor students' autonomous learning, allowing them to vary the amount of time taken in a learning activity, which normally depends on individual performance (Chapelle, 2008).

CALL opens different possibilities for improving different skills in the language learning process, but it tends to benefit writing development more directly because of its use in everyday communication. Interactions in most computer-mediated communication often occur through writing. According to Chapelle (2008), "written interaction helps direct learners' attention to important linguistic features" (p. 23), thus, learners increase their abilities for communicating effectively through writing.

Virtual Learning Objects (VLO)

Learning Objects (LOs) are a new computer-based instructional technology, defined as digital sources used to support learning (Wiley, 2000). LOs are also pedagogical sources that foster students' participation in their own knowledge construction and cognitive development. Thus, for the LOs design to be successfully used in a classroom, teachers should have certain technological skills and must consider several factors such as technological, epistemological, methodological, and visual requirements (Behar, Frozi, and Bernardi, 2008). It is also important to consider learners as the main component when building a LO. Aspects such as learners` role, knowledge, preferences, motivations, and performance should also be taken into consideration in the design process. Smith (2005) has figured out that in order to make LOs learner-centered and enhance their motivation, aspects such as learners' cognitive level, appropriate goal-setting, among others, may be considered.

LOs have become research instruments in different knowledge fields, author-researchers such as Behar, Frozi, and Bernardi (2008), Leal (2008), Díaz (2010), Watson (2010), Fallon, Janson, and Janson (2010), and Ramirez, (2009) have evinced advances in global and local stages in structure, design, and implementation of LOs.

LOs, as a learning support tool, are a way for learners to access to information and to develop activities independently and autonomously (Behar, Frozi and Bernardi, 2008). LOs have also been tools that provide students with a motivating and engaging learning experience since they have been linked to learning goals (Janson, 2010). Diaz (2010) found out that LOs stimulate learners to look for new ways to study and reinforce what they have learnt in the classroom. In the language teaching and learning field, LOs have also been explored and developed. Watson (2010) conducted a case study in which VLOs, organized in sets based on language skills, were developed to support face-to-face language learning environments. Those LOs had a positive role in helping students learn since they had an explicit pedagogical design.

Many of the studies presented in this literature review have provided insights for implementing the PWA and designing LOs as strategies to strengthen and motivate learners' writing competences.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants and Curriculum

Fourteen adult second language (L2) learners, between the ages of 17 and 35, coursing their second Adult Education first-cycle studies semester, in a higher education institution in Bogotá, Colombia, were involved in the study. Most of them have completed only high school or some vocational studies, and have had limited English instruction. All of them were, upon admission, placed at the A1 English level as described in the Common European Framework (CEFR, 2002).

According to the institution's English curriculum, these students were required to attend one four–hour classroom sessions and complete seven hours of independent learning each week. For this reason, the curriculum emphasizes oral

production and oral comprehension in the face-to-face sessions and written production and written comprehension in the autonomous learning time. Students are expected to self-direct their learning (Merriam, 2001) regarding the tasks that relate reading and writing skills. The corresponding syllabus for the second semester of the English course requires students to develop narrative writing skills (Caro, 2014).

Needs Analysis and Method

This research project started with a needs analysis in which a problem in the writing performance of the target group was confirmed. Students presented difficulties when revising and editing their compositions during the post-writing stage, and as a result, they repeated errors in the final drafts of their compositions. A survey permitted their teacher to confirm her pedagogical concern on the problem. Students expressed their difficulties with writing, including the lack of work on their compositions after drafting them. Hence, this research project aimed to unveil how the implementation of the PWA and the PRWRITE LOs (the virtual learning object tool: Process Writing Learning Objects) might guide students to overcome these difficulties. Accordingly, this research attempted to examine how learners' short narrative compositions might change by implementing PWA revision and editing strategies and understand how students' autonomous actions were influenced by PRWRITE Los (Caro, 2014).

For this qualitative study, framed in an Action Research kind (Burns, 2010), the teacher-researcher selected the Grounded Theory method as the framework of analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2008) claim that this approach is developed through a systematical process of gathering and analyzing data. The analysis process requires researchers to review numerous times the data gathered, developing a cyclical analysis. Through the process of comparing, contrasting, interpreting, or connecting, researchers identified relevant information that led to answer the research questions.

Data Collection Instruments

During the pre-implementation stage, data was collected with a checklist which diagnosed strengths and weaknesses in student's narrative compositions. In the while-implementation stage, the same checklist was used to compare students' written performance and verify possible improvements. In the post-implementation stage, a survey was applied with the purpose of corroborating data (Appendix C).

The checklist was filled out with a check (✓) when the good use of the feature was displayed in the student's composition, and a cross (X) to refer to a wrong use of the aspect (Appendix A). Data collected was totaled per each student, based on how many checks and crosses he/she had. Afterwards, the researcher analyzed the quantitative checklist results based on the open coding procedure in which main tendencies were grouped and based on that, interpretations of the data were made. Predominant tendencies were identified after a process of comparing and contrasting the results. Finally, the tendencies were interpreted and qualitatively analyzed in a new chart (Caro, 2014).

For the second instrument, the researcher followed the same procedure, but this time it was done based on the analysis of students' narrative compositions during the editing stage of the PWA. The checklist was filled in and the data collected was totaled (Appendix A). Afterwards, a chart was filled in with both the checklist results from the diagnosis narrative compositions and the results from the editing stage of the writing process. Based on the open coding procedure these results were compared and analyzed. Improvement in students' difficulties and possible changes on their writing strengths in each one of the aspects are interpreted and determined (Appendix B) (Caro, 2014).

Data Collection Procedure

In the implementation period, students developed tasks that focused their attention on the post-writing stage, especially the revising and the editing processes. In the post- implementation period, the impact of the project on the learners' writing process was assessed and they reflected about it.

In the project, the teacher-researcher instructed students on process writing and on the technical management of the learning object tool: PRWRITE. In addition, the teacher-researcher followed-up on and provided feedback to students about their writing process. Finally, the teacher observed, analyzed, and interpreted students' tasks to collect data on their possible progress in their post-writing process.

TABLE 1
ACTIVITIES AND PRWRITE LOS IMPLEMENTED

Stage	Activities	PRWRITE LOs Use
Pre-implementation	Instruct in narrative rhetoric	
	Instruct in the writing process and VLO use	PRWRITE 1
While-implementation	Instruct in Post-writing process	PRWRITE 2
	Task No 1 Writing a story	
	Instruct in revising strategies	PRWRITE 3
	Task No 2 Revising my story and reflecting	
	Task No 3 Peer-revision and Peer-feedback	PRWRITE 4
	Task No 4 Editing my story	
	Teacher's revision and feedback	
	Task No 5 Publishing my story	
Post-implementation	Task No 6 Reflect about the writing process	
	Provide feedback about the writing process	

• **Pre-implementation:** in this stage, learners were trained in narrative rhetoric. They analyzed a story and described its structure (beginning, conflict, and development). In a different session, learners were trained in process writing and the steps for writing. After, students had loop training in how to use PRWRITE LOs when learning about the writing process.

• **While-implementation:** in this stage learners worked on five tasks and used three more PRWRITE LOs; four of the tasks were done autonomously in virtual asynchronous sessions. The first task involved writing a story on a self-chosen topic following the structure for a narrative. After that, learners used a PRWRITE LO to be trained in two revising strategies (symbol correction and comment correction). That second task on self-revision took the students longer than two hours as it was their first experience using the strategies and analyzing their own compositions for errors.

In the third task, students provided one of their classmates with peer-feedback, employing the same revision strategies from the self-revision process. In this activity learners showed they had good enough management of the use of revision strategies as a result of the previous self-revision experience. Task four was directed toward the editing of their own drafts based on the necessary adjustments that came up in the self-revision and the peer-revision processes. After having a clean draft, the teacher-researcher proceeded to revise students' stories and provided written and oral feedback. Learners showed a positive attitude toward the teacher's oral feedback, and they felt confident to ask questions and discuss possibilities for considering revising their stories. Finally, learners published their stories to accomplish the fifth task (Caro, 2014).

• **Post-implementation***:* during this stage, learners were encouraged to develop a sixth task in which they reflected about their own writing process and showed to their peers their portfolios with the work from each task of the process. They analyzed the artifacts and shared their perceptions with their classmates. Although most of the comments were directed to highlight positive aspects of the learning process, some of them reflected about what else they could have done to produce even better products. Finally, learners completed the survey (Appendix C).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing PWA and PRWRITE LOs with 14 adult L2 learners showed to positively impact learners' post-writing difficulties when writing short narrative compositions. A Grounded Theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was implemented during the data analysis process and as a result, a core category with two categories emerged (Table 2).

TABLE 2
RESEARCH CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Core category	Categories	Sub-categories
Improvement of post-writing by means of applicable designed LOs	Improvement in learners' post-writing skill awareness	Improvement in the confidence when writing
		Improvement in the use of writing strategies
		Improvement in mechanics, grammatical competence and rhetorical structure
	Finding an applicable support source to scaffold writing	Applicability of PRWRITE LO

Results showed that the process of raising awareness of the post-writing skill was possible through the improvement in 1) learners' confidence in writing; 2) learners' use of writing strategies; and 3) mechanics, grammatical competence, and narrative as a rhetoric structure.

Improvement in Learners' Post-Writing Skill Awareness

Strategies like self-revision, peer-revision, and group-revision provided learners with tools that fostered consciousness about their autonomous actions (Benson, 2001, p. 15; Cook, 2008 in Caro, 2014). This kind of writing process development encouraged learners to assume the role of the writer having purposefully in mind an intended reader, which is identified as audience awareness (Han, 2017).

Improvement in the Confidence When Writing.

Results demonstrated that the PWA positively influenced learners' self-confidence and reduced their anxiety when writing, since it clearly stated the process and the goals students were expected to achieve in their compositions at each stage. Consequently, learners became more confident on how to write.

Having open access to PRWRITE LOs, specially designed to introduce the PWA, helped students remember the goal at each stage. In the post-writing stage, learners were able to pass from one stage to the other after experiencing a practice on strategies in the LO. After practicing how to identify errors in written samples, learners were able to self-revise their narrative stories with successful results (Caro, 2014). Evidence of that influence from the learners' point of view can be read in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1: … before it was difficult for me to start elaborating a writing since I didn't know where to start. With the class writing methods revised, it has been easier for me and my compositions are better structured. (S:JZ) [Author's transcription]

The revision process also influenced learners' affective factors since they had never experienced self-revision and peer-revision practices before. After employing those revising strategies, learners expressed their positive attitudes about the suggested corrections.

Excerpt 2: I read my classmate's comments and I tried to improve in the aspects that based on mine and my classmates' criteria I had to improve. I mean, to work on the suggested corrections. (S: GT) [Author's transcription]

The participant found his classmate's suggestions useful in revising his composition during the peer-feedback stage.

Improvement in the Use of Writing Strategies

Writing as a process offers strategies to be developed in each one of the writing stages, and learners are meant to discover which ones work best for them (Brown, 2001). Since this study was focused on the post-writing process, the strategies implemented were related to the stages of revision and editing. Learners found valuable the use of strategies like self-revising, peer-revising, group-revising and self-editing. They changed their pre-conception of writing revision: before the study learners believed that the teacher was the only person in charge of providing feedback; after the implementation learners found out that they were able to self- and peer and group-revise the class writing compositions. One of the students commented on this in the survey administered.

Excerpt 3: …before I used to write my story and I didn't know if it was well structured or coherent, I expected the teacher to correct my writing but now it is possible to self-correct my story before handing in it. (S:JT) [Author's transcription]

In general terms, learners found that they could apply the strategies they had developed in the PWA to writing assignments in other subjects.

Improvement in Mechanics, Grammatical Competence, and Rhetorical Structure.

In the post-writing stages of the PWA, the teacher's main role was "to help students develop strategies for revising: adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas" (Silva, 1993, p.662), which corresponds to content, "and for editing: attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics" (Silva, 1993, p.665), which respond to form in writing. Learners in this study showed improvement in both content and form in their narrative compositions (Caro, 2014).

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF GRAMMAR, MECHANICS AND VOCABULARY ON STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS

Aspect of analysis		Diagnostic composition		Final composition		Percentage of Improvement
		With errors (Absolute frequency)	With errors (Relative frequency)	Error free (Absolute frequency)	Error free (Relative frequency)	
Grammar	Sentence structure	9	0.69	8	0.61	88%
	Tenses use	13	1.00	10	0.76	76%
Mechanics	Punctuation	9	0.69	9	0.69	100%
	Spelling	8	0.61	7	0.53	87%
Vocabulary		11	0.84	9	0.92	81%

Impact on form: Grammatical competence, mechanics and vocabulary. The results obtained from the analysis of the learners' compositions after the implementation (Table 3) demonstrate that eight of the nine students (88%) who evinced difficulties at the beginning improved in sentence structure and ten of the thirteen (76%), improved in the use of correct tenses. Learners' improvement is attributed to the revising and editing strategies worked during the process of post-writing, and to practice exercises completed on identification of mistakes in sentence level.

Excerpt 4: … I have improved on the correct use of grammar tenses and I have focused more on it. (S: LB). (S: GT) [Author's transcription]

Excerpt 5: …I improved on the form of writing sentences, on word order and spelling, too (S:PO) [Author's transcription]

Regarding mechanics, in the diagnostic composition, students committed errors in punctuation and spelling because they tended to overuse commas in order to separate ideas, instead of periods. Based on the comparison with the final narrative composition (Table 3), all of students (100%) improved in the use of punctuation marks and most of them (87%) showed complete improvement in spelling (Caro, 2014).

Finally, regarding the use of vocabulary, the checklist analysis (Table 3) showed that almost all students (11 over 13) demonstrated to have 3- 15 mistakes in word choice in their diagnostic narrative compositions. Results from the final composition indicate that most of students (81%) improved in the identification of appropriate vocabulary. The 2 students (19%) who did not improve totally and still presented mistakes in the use of vocabulary, had between 1 and 5 vocabulary mistakes which also shows partial improvement.

Impact on content: Narrative rhetoric. In this study, students were stimulated to write their narrative compositions based on their own topic choices. They were trained in how to structure a short narrative composition, but they were not limited in what to write about. In this case, learners could explore their own ideas and use the L2 (English) to convey their messages.

In terms of content, aspects such as coherence and narrative rhetorical structure were worked by developing learners' narrative compositions. Learners could not only identify the rhetorical organization of a narrative composition, but they could also appropriately apply it to their own written story. Results indicate that all students (100%) who found it difficult to write an appropriate beginning, conflict, and development of a story improved in it. They were able to include time, characters, setting, and a starting point of the story, conflict and resolution of the conflict in their narrative structures. The following table illustrates the improvement:

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF CONTENT ON STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS

Aspect of analysis		Diagnostic composition		Final composition		Improvement Percentages
		With errors (Absolute frequency)	With errors (Relative frequency)	Error free (Absolute frequency)	Error free (Relative frequency)	
Content	Beginning	13	1.00	13	1.0	100%
	Conflict	6	0.46	6	0.46	100%
	Development	7	0.53	7	0.53	100%

Learners also demonstrated their improvement and awareness of the rhetorical narrative structure incorporation in their compositions. The main features to structure the story were a beginning, a conflict and a development, and through their inclusion learners demonstrated that their narratives followed a logical sequence (Caro, 2014).

Excerpt 6: …a chronological sense is given to the ideas and there is a better connection with the management of the narrative time (S:PA) [Author's transcription]

Excerpt 7: …I could recognize a text structure in my own compositions (S:GT) [Author's transcription]

Figure 1 illustrates one of the student's artifacts and his usage of self-revising strategies. Learners used codes to categorize the mistakes of form and comments to suggest improvements regarding content.

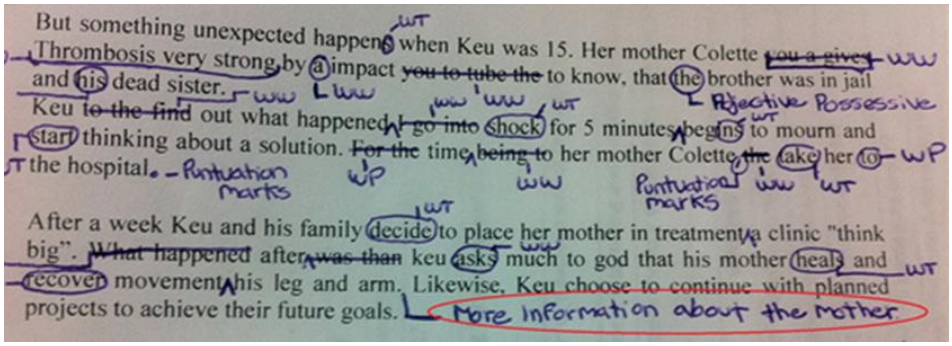

Figure 1 Self-revision Artifact. (S:CM)

The use of strategies for improving coherence helped most of students to progress in the organization of ideas; hence their paragraphs were better structured. All students (100%), who presented difficulties when structuring paragraphs in the diagnostic, showed improvement by the end of the study. This was identified in the sequence and connection among ideas in a paragraph and the division of paragraphs in the text.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE ON STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS

Aspect of analysis		Diagnostic composition		Final composition		Improvement Percentages
		With errors (Absolute frequency)	With errors (Relative frequency)	Error free (Absolute frequency)	Error free (Relative frequency)	
Paragraph structure	Sequence of ideas	7	0.53	7	0.53	100%

Finding an applicable support source to scaffold writing.

In this study, PRWRITE LOs were used to support students' narrative process of writing. In the implementation of PRWRITE LOs students did not show any technical problems with their use. It proves that the training done on the tool management represented a meaningful part for learners to succeed in its use. Learners expressed to have benefitted from the use of PRWRITE because they found it functional to improve their writing.

Applicability of the PRWRITE LOs.

PRWRITE LOs were designed by the teacher researcher based on the learner's English level, their writing learning needs and their learning styles (Kamariah et al., 2018). Those adjustments permitted students to benefit in different ways.

PRWRITE LOs: learner's insights. According to the findings, PRWRITE LOs were an innovative tool that facilitated student's learning because those helped them to clarify and understand important concepts for the process of writing. In addition, PRWRITE LOs supported students writing learning process since they provided instruction and a clear sequence on how to write. Learners highlighted PRWRITE aspects such as its interactivity and practicality, which made it a motivating and interesting tool to learn.

PRWRITE LOs were also interesting, interactive and innovative ways of learning and making learning easier. These are some comments made by students about their perception on the usefulness of PRWRITE LOs.

Excerpt 8: ...we have been given a guide to use better a methodology for writing, so that everything is clearer and consistent (S:LR) [Author's transcription]

Excerpt 9: … [the PRWRITE learning object] is something that innovates our writing process, giving an extra motivation (S:WR) [Author's transcription]

Excerpt 10: … [the PRWRITE learning object] is something interactive and new (S: MV) [Author's transcription]

Excerpt 11: … [the PRWRITE learning objects] are tools that facilitate the learning. (S:JR) [Author's transcription]

Awareness on autonomy in PRWRITE LOs.

In the process of learning to write, autonomy is fostered and becomes an engaging process when learners have clarity over the goals to be achieved through the writing task. Those tasks goals become personal goals when the learner finds at each stage new challenges and new opportunities for improving. Improvement in the post-writing stages of revision and edition goes hand in hand with the learner awareness about the required aspects to improve. In this study, students were trained in revision and edition strategies by using PRWRITE LOs, which not only encouraged awareness on possible aspects for improving their narrative compositions, but also provided to be a useful tool for learners to work autonomously their writing. PRWRITE LOs contributed to rising students' autonomy by providing them with a structured methodology on how to develop their narrative compositions, consequently the expected goal at each stage was clearly understood.

Excerpt 12: these virtual objects have helped us to discipline our way to do things, well done and in less time. (S:WR) [Author's transcription]

It is important to consider that most of the tasks in this study were carried out autonomously by students with the guidance of PRWRITE LOs. That confirms that students were required to be autonomous and to actively participate in

the writing process. At each writing stage, the learners' products evinced that the PRWRITE LOs could appropriately guide them in the process of achieving each writing goal. One of the advantages of using LOs remained on its accessibility because at each stage of the process students could go back and clarify what the stage was about, its importance in the writing process, how it could be achieved, and what was expected (Caro, 2014).

That advantageous access to the tool at any moment of the process, fostered learners' autonomy, since learners independently accessed to it according to their individual learning needs and purposes. Figure 2 illustrates part of a PRWRITE LO used to train students in the PWA. This part included the definition and importance of the revising stage, the expected actions and a reflection exercise to enhance comprehension on self-revision.

Figure 2 PRWRITE learning object sample

V. Conclusions

This action research study states a new alternative for developing L2 writing skill in the language teaching-learning field. This is a way to tackle student's post writing difficulties by engaging learners in a process in which they autonomously experience strategies to become better writers (Asri, 2015; Raoofi, Binandeh, & Rahmani, 2017). The findings of this study confirm what other studies inform about the power of the PWA for developing the writing skill (Vijaya & Shahin, 2016). Learners in this study increased their confidence when writing and their improvement in the proper use of grammar, vocabulary, narrative rhetorical structure and paragraph structure. In addition, learners showed a better use of writing strategies, which also caused an increase of awareness on how their autonomous actions benefited their own improvements. Further research can be directed to the influence or motivation in learners' topics choices for writing. The influence of the PWA could also be explored in writing tasks set for academic courses different from English as a foreign language.

Results also show that PRWRITE LOs positively influenced learner's motivation and engagement in the autonomous development of writing tasks, which is consistent with findings by Suriaman, Rahman and Noni (2018). The tool was mainly applicable because it provided instruction and a clear sequence on how to write, which helped learners clarify and understand concepts about the writing process. Other technological tools for scaffolding writing in order to verify different ways of motivating and fostering language learning could be explored. Furthermore, LOs impact on the development or improvement of other language skills could be revised.

In relation to language teaching, this study invites teachers to get involved in designing applicable tools that not only fit learners' needs and goals (Kamariah et al., 2018), but also that motivate and engage them in an improving process, which cyclically fosters learning awareness.

APPENDIX A. CHECKLIST

CONVENTIONS FOR THE DATA ANALYSIS

✓ = Well use of the aspect

X = Wrong use of the aspect

DATA ANALYSIS INSTRUMENT No 1 and 2

AIM: To identify students' level of performance about writing short narrative compositions before and after the implementation.

STUDENTS' WRITING PROCESS CHECKLIST (After revision and edition)

ASPECTS		STUDENTS																																	
		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12		13		Total A			Total B		
A:Pre- implementation B: while-implementation		A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	✓	X	Np	✓	X	Np
Grammar	Sentence structure	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	4	9	0	12	1	0
	Tenses use	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	0	13	0	10	3	0
Paragraph structure	Sequence of ideas	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	6	7	0	11	2	0
Mechanics	Punctuation	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	4	9	0	10	3	0
	Capitalization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13	0	0	12	1	0
	Contractions	✓	✓	✓	✓	Np	Np	Np	Np	Np	Np	Np	Np	Np	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Np	✓	Np	✓	✓	✓	Np	8	0	5	6	0	7
	Spelling	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	5	8	0	7	6	0
Vocabulary		X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	2	11	0	11	2	0
Content	Beginning	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	0	13	0	13	0	0
	Conflict	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	7	6	0	13	0	0
	Development	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	7	0	13	0	0
Students' names		Jessica Tatiana triviño		Marla Vargas		Johanna Ramos		Catherin Moreno		Laura Rubiano		Paula Ochoa		Lorena Borja		Milady Gutierrez		Katherine Rodriquez		Wilson Rodriguez		Carlos Pava		Gloria Tellez		Diego Cucaita		13			13		

APPENDIX B. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHECKLIST RESULTS

ASPECTS		INSTRUMENT No 1 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS				
		Total A			Interpretations	
A:Pre- implementation B: while-implementation		✓	X	Np	Difficulties	Strengths
Grammar	Sentence structure	4	9	0	Most of the students (69%) presented difficulties when structuring sentences; it was mainly evinced in the sentences word order and the length of the sentences.	
	Tenses use	0	13	0	All students (100%) presented difficulties on the appropriate use of tenses based on their	
Paragraph structure	Sequence of ideas	6	7	0	More than half of the group (53%) presented difficulties on sequencing the ideas. It was evinced	
Mechanics	Punctuation	4	9	0	The majority of the students (69%) presented difficulties when using punctuation marks. Most of them tended to overuse commas in order to separate ideas, instead of periods.	
	Capitalization	13	0	0		All students (100%) demonstrated a proper use of capitalization through their stories.
	Contractions	8	0	5		A large quantity of students presented an appropriate use of contractions throughout their compositions. The rest of the group did not include any contractions and any of the students use them incorrectly.
	Spelling	5	8	0	Most of the students' compositions (61%) presented some spelling mistakes.	
Vocabulary		2	11	0	Almost all the students (84%) presented between 3 -15 wrong vocabulary mistakes. The latter evinces learners' difficulties to identify the appropriate words according to the context.	
Content	Beginning	0	13	0	All students (100%) found difficult to write an appropriate beginning of the story, since the story rhetoric structure suggests including aspects like: Time, characters, setting and a starting point of the story.	
	Conflict	7	6	0		More than the half of the learners (53%) showed a proper development of the story, by including how the conflict started and describing what happened with it.
	Development	6	7	0	More than the half of the learners (53%) demonstrated difficulties when structuring the development of the story. The latter was evinced in the lack of resolution of the conflict presented, or the weak description on	

APPENDIX C. SURVEY

Dear student,

This survey aims to collect confidential and anonymous information about your experience with PRWRITE learning objects. Data collected is only for academic and research purposes. It will take you 15 minutes to complete the survey. Thanks for your participation.

• Research Question: How does the implementation of process writing approach through PRWRITE learning objects impact learner's short narrative composition?

Survey Questions:

1. What do you do after you finish a writing composition?

_____

2. Describe the changes you have done to your compositions. If any.

3. What do you do after receiving feedback on your drafts?

4. What aspects have you improved about your writing skill? If any.

5. Number from 1 to 4 the following aspects being 1 what you have improved the most when writing compositions and 4 the one you have improved the least.

____ Vocabulary
____ Content
____ Sentence structure
____ Paragraphs structure

6. Did you find useful the implementation of PRWRITE learning object for your writing improvement?

a. Yes
b. No

Why?

7. What did you learn about your writing process from the use of PRWRITE learning object?

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Differentiating Instruction in the Language Learning Classroom: Theoretical Considerations and Practical Applications

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***Abstract*—Differentiated instruction (DI) is a topic that has attracted the attention of in-service and pre-service teachers, teacher educators and educational authorities in the last few decades, because of its great importance and several different affordances for better student learning. In this sense, this article attempts to provide content-area, classroom teachers and English language teachers with a solid understanding of what DI entails by learning about its key characteristics and fundamental reasons for the use of DI within the classroom context. Moreover, the importance behind modifying content, process, and product is not only analyzed in this paper but also the value of adjusting the learning environment is examined as well. Then a brief narrative of a teaching situation in an EFL context is highlighted in order to set the stage and explain the necessity of the implementation of a DI model into the classroom, so that students can experience meaningful and successful language learning. Afterwards, practical applications, based on meaningful and varied ways to differentiate instruction are included, so that language teachers find it easier to help students achieve learning standards. It is concluded that DI helps teachers be responsive to leaners' needs, interests, ability and language proficiency levels, and learning styles, as DI puts students at the center of teaching and learning, promotes equity and academic excellence, and acknowledges student uniqueness**

***Index Terms*—education, language instruction, standards, English, foreign languages**

I. Introduction

Differentiated instruction (DI) is an instructional strategy intended to help educators succeed their diverse student population along the process of teaching and learning. Before DI is incorporated into the classroom, it is key for teachers to identify learners' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. By doing so, teachers will be able to employ DI effectively during the course of instruction, which consequently will enhance teaching, support and improve learning for all learners. It is important because in today's world there is a need to enhance teaching and student learning due to the many differences students bring with them to the teaching-learning process and the several factors that have a significant impact upon the ways students make sense of the intended input, approach the learning process, and demonstrate their gained knowledge and skills. Therefore, teaching needs to be responsive to these differences so that learners can receive appropriate support, guidance, and meaningful learning experiences in order for students to become successful and reach their potential at school.

With the aim of making informed teacher decisions and enhancing classroom instruction through the use of DI, this paper starts by providing a review of the literature on the topic at hand, which is concerned with defining differentiated instruction, characteristics of DI, a rationale for using DI in today's classroom, and adjusting content, process, and product in the differentiated classroom. This part of the paper is intended to provide a good understanding of the conceptualization and key components of DI as well as its importance in the field of education. Later a narrative of a teaching situation in our home country is provided, which highlights language learners' needs and interests and acknowledges a shift in classroom practice. Lastly, a critical learning opportunity where theory meets practice is discussed, where we reflect on the ways content, process, product, and the learning environment can be differentiated within the Ecuadorian teaching-learning context. In so doing, we engage ourselves in creative and critical thinking to create a differentiated classroom instruction and to help students accomplish established standards.

II. Understanding Differentiated Instruction

There are various definitions of differentiated instruction in the literature; across definitions some important things are given special emphasis, such as an acknowledgment of students' varied background knowledge, language, culture, readiness, preferences in learning, interests, needs and learning profiles. Differentiated instruction (DI) cannot be viewed as an instructional strategy but as an approach for teaching and learning. Such approach is intended to be used with students who are academically diverse within the same classroom setting. Differentiated instruction attempts to maximize each student's growth and individual success by making adjustments or modifications in the content, process, and product. This instruction model also intends to meet each student where he or she is on the learning continuum (Heacox, 2012; Rock et al., 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003).

According to Pham (2012), differentiation is an approach that involves "identifying students' readiness levels, modifying instruction, applying collaboration and autonomy in learning, and integrating teaching and practice to enhance learning" (p.18). Pham (2012) went on explaining that such approach must include various teaching methods and activities, several assessment procedures, and an ongoing needs analysis in order to "maximize academic success based on student readiness" (p.18).

Tomlinson and colleagues (2003) presented a definition of differentiated instruction that encompassed consistently the various ideas on the kind of instruction discussed above. The definition, given by the scholars, focuses on making adaptations, addressing learners' needs, and maximizing learning for all students. In other words, DI is a teaching approach in which "teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom" (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p.121).

A. Key Characteristics of Differentiated Instruction

Characteristics in common were identified in the reviewed literature. Knowing the characteristics of differentiated instruction is key in order to have a better understanding of how a classroom that uses this kind of instruction looks like. According to Tomlinson et al. (2003), differentiated instruction is characterized by providing students with classroom instruction that suits to their varied readiness levels, interests, learning necessities, and preferred modes of learning. In this way, learners can experience meaningful opportunities for effective learning and growth as well. Pham (2012) added that teachers need to know about cognitive development and readiness levels because they have a big impact on student learning and performance.

When differentiated instruction is employed, it is critical to make careful, informed decision making in order to support student learning and improve academic performance along the teaching-learning process. In this respect employing appropriate instructional techniques and strategies are key in the classroom setting (Pham, 2012). Subban (2006) pointed out that DI is responsive to student populations as these become culturally, socially, and academically diverse over time. In the increasing student diversity classroom, DI promotes meaning and engaging learning across learners in the same learning environment. As stated in Smit and Humpert (2012), characteristics of a differentiated classroom were incorporated into DI, and they read as follows: students' differences are closely paid attention, formative assessment has a central part for determining subsequent instruction, the teacher and students work collaboratively along the learning process, and teachers make suitable adjustments to the content, process, and according to learners' needs.

Kalbfleisch (1998) emphasized that differentiated classrooms are "responsive to students' varying readiness levels, varying interests, and varying learning profiles" (as cited in Lawrence-Brown, 2004, p.37). Additionally, Lawrence-Brown (2004) stated a differentiated classroom needs an instructional planning that views the classroom as a community where individual learners are nourished. "All students benefit from the availability of a variety of methods and supports, and an appropriate balance of challenge and success" (Lawrence-Brown, 2004, p. 37). As a result, DI is significantly relevant for both students who find school easy as well as for those who struggle in the learning process. Put it more simply and from a differentiated instruction point of view, a classroom is a learning environment where all students – struggling and advanced students – benefit on a daily basis towards academic success.

B. A Rationale for Using Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom

After various definitions of DI and its characteristics were presented above, it is now important to know the reasons behind the incorporation of DI at the school setting. First and foremost, there are student populations that are culturally, socially, and academically diverse in today's classrooms. Thus, classrooms are typified by learners who underachieve and excel, students whose first language is other than the language of instruction, students from diverse cultures and socio economic backgrounds, students from different sexual orientations, motivated and unmotivated learners, and students of varied interests and modes of learning (Sapon-Shevin, 2000/2001). In addition to the existing need of using a classroom instruction aims to addressing the characteristics of today's student populations, schools' efforts towards helping students to overcome reading problems as well as actions towards enhancing literacy instruction in the regular classroom have been identified (Allington, 2003).

With the before-mentioned ideas in mind, it is imperative to take into account that schools require teachers to make adjustments on curriculum, materials, and assessment. In addition to this, teachers hold accountability in ensuring that all students have access to high-quality learning. Thus, differentiated instruction comes in handy to support and guide the task of teaching and schools' efforts to reach all learners within a challenging and diverse classroom context so that

"students [can] receive instruction suited to their varied readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences, thus enabling them to maximize the opportunity for growth" (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p.120).

C. Adjusting Content, Process, and Product in the Differentiated Classroom

As stated by Pham (2012), differentiated instruction includes modifying the content, the process, and the product. Making modifications on these three areas can support and improve student learning because students "grasp key aspects of instruction in the most effective way, as well as evaluate student performance accurately" (Pham, 2012, p. 17). According to Bigge and Shermis (2004), the intended content should be challenging but controllable for the learners. On the contrary, students will fall behind and feel discouraged. This principle relates well to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. Therefore, it is important to modify the content by adjusting learners' developmental progress and their range of development. Additionally, Pham (2012) stated that "content modification should emphasize key dimensions of instruction for desired learning outcomes" (p.16). It is imperative to focus on the essentials of instruction; this is a principle that teachers should take into account for effective differentiation (Pham, 2012). Heacox (2012) agreed that by focusing on the most crucial concepts, processes, and skills teachers differentiate instruction. Heacox (2012) went on explaining that teachers differentiate content when pre-assessment is conducted, so that they can learn about their "students' skills and knowledge [in order to] match learners with appropriate activities according to readiness… [,] give students choices about topics to explore in greater depth… [, and] provide students with basic and advanced resources that match their current levels of understanding" (p. 10).

Pham (2012) pointed out that modifying the process involves employing distinct activities, tasks, teaching techniques and strategies aimed at helping students obtain the new learning. Ideally, teachers should plan instruction in a logical sequence so that students can move from easy to difficult and/or from concrete to abstract. Pham (2012) noted that "the main objective of modifying the instructional process is to make every single lesson meaningful and applicable to learners in an academically enriched context" (p.16). Heacox (2012) asserted that in a differentiated instruction model our students' learning profiles and preferences are reflected in the way teachers conduct their instruction. In this respect process can be modified "by adding greater complexity, or abstractedness to tasks, by engaging students in critical and creative thinking, or by increasing the variety of ways in which you ask them to learn" (Heacox, 2012, p. 11).

Lastly, modifying the product of instruction is concerned with allowing learners to demonstrate in various modes their attainment of the new learning. Pham (2012) commented using different forms of assignments is key because learners are more likely to demonstrate the things they have learned by putting the acquired learning into practice. Therefore, teachers should look for assessment procedures that reflect what things learners have been instructed, and such procedures should ideally be performed every day. After assessment is conducted, effective feedback must be provided to all students before further instruction is delivered. Heacox (2012) eloquently added, "Products reflect what students have understood and been able to apply. They show learning in use and may reveal new thinking or ideas" (p. 11).

Smit and Humpert (2012) conducted a research project in rural and alpine small schools in the eastern part of Switzerland. The purpose of the project was to obtain an overview of DI within the above-mentioned research context. A total of 1180 students and 162 teachers responded to the questionnaires used in the study. Several participating teachers reported that they often employed strategies of DI in their classrooms. Through an in-depth analysis it was revealed that certain teachers had a better understanding of DI than others. Teachers applied DI strategies mostly once a week, while those who were involved in further responsibilities, including coaching and teaching staff, used these strategies every day. In general, the study teachers mainly practiced DI by making modifications on the content and process. For instance, teachers differentiated tasks and goals, adjusted the allotted time for tasks, varied the number of tasks, and individualized student learning. Another finding revealed that only a few teachers diagnosed their students' prior knowledge and employed formative assessment. The study concluded that the participating teachers do not yet employ a significant, effective practice of DI. An evident lack regarding making modifications on the product was more evident than adjusting the content and process.

In a study conducted by Logan (2011), 141 middle school teachers from southeast Georgia were administered a survey with the aim of determining their level of knowledge in applying differentiated instruction in the classroom setting. The survey included 16 questions that were concerned about the essential principles, the essential components and the common myths surrounding differentiated instruction. The participating teachers' responses demonstrated that there was an understanding of and an agreement on the key principles of DI. Regarding the essential components of DI teachers manifested that making modifications on processes, products, content, and materials is crucial in a differentiated instruction model. With regard to myths surrounding differentiated instruction, teachers do not agree on two important myths according to the researcher. First, teachers disagreed at over 90% on the myth that there is one single way to differentiate instruction. This finding aligns with the notion that there is no established rules for differentiated instruction rather this instruction approach "is about understanding the developmental level of students and differentiated practices" (Logan, 2011, p. 9). Second, teachers disagreed at over 85% on the myth that every student needs to demonstrate mastery of learning on the same day of grading. According to Logan (2012), this finding is quite important because it indicates that teachers may start beginning to modify their thinking about their task of grading. Logan (2012) added that "it does not matter when students demonstrate mastery if they sincerely work along the way" (p. 9).

Reis and colleagues (2011) carried out an experimental study intended to examine the effect of a differentiated, enriched reading program on students reading fluency and comprehension. The authors noted that it was the first research project that explored the use of differentiated instruction in contrast with whole or small group reading instruction in five elementary schools. The sample included 63 teachers and 1,192 students in second to fifth grades. The study concluded that differentiated instruction and the employed teaching methods (i.e. high interest and self-selected books) were effective for a higher level of reading fluency and comprehension in some students. Scott's (2012) study results also indicated that differentiated instruction did not have an impact on the academic achievement in mathematics of all the participating subjects from three second grade classrooms. In the study, differentiated instruction had a significant impact on students with a higher academic ability.

III. Contextualizing a Teaching Situation before the Implementation of DI

In Ecuador, there are people who come from three major ethnic backgrounds—mestizos (mixed Amerindian and Spanish), indigenous people from 12 distinct communities, and Afro- Ecuadorians. Jackson (2007) claimed, "The biggest groups of ethnic minorities in Ecuador are the indigenous Amerindians and the Afro-Ecuadorians" (para. 1). This information is in accordance with the 2010 nationwide census, conducted by the Ecuadorian Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), in which the following information about the country's ethnic groups was found: Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Spanish) 71.9%, Montubio (mixed heritage of Spanish, Indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian culture) 7.4%, Afro-Ecuadorians 7,2%, Indigenous (Amerindian) 7.0%, Spanish and Other 6.5%. Such statistics lead us to picture how a classroom may look like in some parts of Ecuador.

On the basis of our teaching experience, we have not had yet a diverse classroom in terms of varied ethnic groups and nationalities. Thus, we have not experienced a classroom consisting of students from Qechua-speaking and varied cultural backgrounds, and countries, especially from countries, such as Colombia, Peru, and Cuba. However, there were few students from different Ecuadorian regions, namely Pacific Coast Region, Amazon Region and Highlands Region, in our classrooms. On the other hand, we are well aware that Ecuadorian teachers sometimes have in their classrooms students from these countries because they come along with their families to our country as a result of migration. In addition, when we taught in private schools, our classrooms were a little more diverse. We had a few students from other countries, including England, Ireland, India, and China. We were not the English instructor of these international students for a long time, but a couple of months only. We also experienced a classroom where there was an autistic student and other students who were below grade level. As stated above, at the public schools where we have taught our classrooms were not culturally and linguistically diverse. Additionally, at public schools, we have not carried out any kind of procedure for identifying whether or not students had learning disabilities. We could notice that few students had dyslexia at the moment they were required to work on a certain task that require the use of their native language, that is, Spanish (L1).

For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on our last teaching situation before we pursued graduate studies. We taught six high school senior classes at a school located in the district 1 in the Azuay Province. We taught English as foreign language (EFL), not any content-area subject, for over thirty class hours per week. All the students were male and their ages ranged from 16 to 18 years old. Most of the students were from the city area, while some students were from the countryside. About 80% of the students were from the city and 20% from places outside it (known as parroquias rurales). The main economic status was middle class; there were very few students who were either poor or and upper middle class. Their parents' highest level of education achieved was high school. Additionally, some students showed high levels of misconduct. Some students were also engaged in drinking and drug habits. Sometimes, students stuck around after classes and fought at a square near school.

At high school, our students pursued three different vocational specializations, including electrical work, automobile mechanic, and industrial mechanics. We learned that most of them enjoyed these specializations, and that was why they chose to study at a vocational school. This vocational school was popular because of soccer and because its graduates were able to work effectively in their specialized fields in local businesses of our home city. In fact, the school has won many soccer championships in the city's school soccer league, and some students have become professional players. In addition to soccer, our students enjoyed playing Ecuavolley (a variation of volleyball where three people play on each side) at every free moment. We enjoyed playing that with them as well. They even kind of instructed us how to play well; they were much better than us. Students could play sports at the school itself because there were some sports courts, or they could go to a nearby, big park to do so.

Most of our students did not do well in English class. They were at the last grade of high school, and usually these grade-level students are supposed to have a good understanding of the basics of the English language as well as to use the target language for basic written and oral communication effectively. Through the administration of a diagnostic test we learned that most of students were below grade level. And through daily teacher-student interactions we also learned that 80% of the students did not have a good command of the English major skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Between 10% and 20% of the students were able to complete the learning activities successfully. Probably, most of the students were struggling because of previous not-so-good English learning experiences, as well as unidentified learning disabilities and needs along the course of our instruction, their time spent and greater commitment towards classes of their specialization and sports, and their lack of interest in learning the English language.

Finally, we want to wrap up this section of the article by pointing out that some of the struggling students and average students did well on their classes towards their school specialization. For instance, they enjoyed being able to work on a car engine and help doing electrical work activities around the school. In short, they loved using their hands to fix and create things. On the other hand, honestly we do not think we did a good job in identifying our students' needs or working on meeting the needs that we were actually able to identify during the course of instruction. In order to meet some of the needs of our students, our instruction should have been based more on an approach consisting of hands-on learning, kinesthetic intelligence, and above all, differentiated instruction lessons.

IV. Where Theory Meets Practice: DI in the EFL Ecuadorian Classroom

A. EFL Standard – English Education at the High School Level

Summarize and give their opinion about a short interview, documentary, book, film, discussion, etc., and answer further questions of detail. This standard entails three major skills—summarizing, giving opinions, and providing detailed information about written and spoken sources of information. This requires students to engage carefully in reading and listening activities in order to extract key information needed for summarizing, giving opinions about, and answering information questions about passage content. This standard is written for high school senior grade level. On the basis of our experience, we have learned that high school seniors do not feel confident to use the target language for communication, both in oral and written manner. They struggle conveying their opinions, feelings and thoughts in their L2. They usually mention that it is much easier for them to understand spoken language during conversations rather than producing the language needed to interact with others around them outside the classroom. Usually, there are only few students who are able to use the English language for communicative purposes in the classroom, but they are not proficient speakers. They are able to function in basic communicative situations that involve exchanging their own and their families' information. Therefore, we strongly believe that using differentiated instruction (DI) will be key in helping language learners accomplish the aforementioned standard by meeting the varied English proficiency levels present in the classroom.

We will first employ different procedures to make informed decisions during instructional practice at the moment of differentiating the content, process, product and learning environment at our classroom setting. To incorporate a differentiated instruction model in the classroom, an inventory or learning styles questionnaire will be administered early in the year so that we can use that information for grouping students into groups and differentiating the content, process, and product (Levy, 2008). We will also use formative assessment with the aim of identifying students' proficiency level of the four major English language skills through observations, informal interviews, checking students' works. The criteria for grouping students into groups for classwork will consist of the interests, readiness levels, and learning profiles we will find out during the course of instruction. By making modifications, we will support and improve student learning because learners will grasp key aspect of instruction in the most effective way (Pham, 2012).

In short, in this paper EFL Ecuadorian teachers can find key information and the necessary tools to better help their students accomplish standards established for the enhancement of English education by implementing DI in the English classroom setting. The first part of the chosen standard (for illustrative purposes) is concerned with summarizing different sources of information, such as a short interview, documentary, book, film, discussion, etc. The second and third part of the standard, giving opinions and providing detailed information when asked respectively, may be addressed in subsequent lessons.

B. Differentiating Instruction through Content

The input provided needs to be challenging but manageable for all learners. If the input does not have these characteristics, learners will fall behind in the learning process and feel unmotivated (Bigge and Shemis, 2004). With this key notion in mind, we will differentiate the input by giving special emphasis on the most relevant and essential components of the intended standard for learners to accomplish (Theisen, 2002). Providing learners choices will be key in our efforts to meet their needs. In addition, if our students need more time and further practice to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish the standard, our teaching will be remained flexible and intended to suit their needs.

A learning-center approach will be employed to introduce students diverse learning materials. This approach consists of a classroom containing a collection of materials or activities aimed at teaching, reinforcing, or extending a particular concept or skill (Theisen, 2002). We will have students choose from various learning centers consisting of a movie center, historical event center, biography center, travelling center, entertainment center, and interview center. In each center students can both read and listen to a passage featuring a story. One of the learning center activities involves having students make notes of the main ideas and essential details from either the reading passage or the listening passage. After that, students will be assigned to groups of three to share their key notes. Again students will be required to choose another learning center that interest them. They will need to choose a new learning center that provides them with a different input experience; this means if they first choose a learning center that featured a reading passage, they will now need to switch to a learning center that has a listening passage. In their new learning center, students will also

need to make notes about the essential information of the passage. They will be assigned new groups where they will share their notes again. After the students experience two different learning centers, we will ask them to choose the learning center that they feel more comfortable with. Finally, we will have students choose one more learning center; they will be encouraged to choose the new learning center based on their interest and preferred learning styles. In others words, each student's final learning center will be the center that was reported to be the one in which she or he feels more comfortable with. To wrap up this learning experience, the ticket-out strategy will be utilized. Students will need to write between two and four sentences that summarize the content of the last passage they work on, which requires them listen for the gist, listen for specific details, share notes, discuss the key points of the passage content, and write a mini-summary.

In the aforementioned learning centers, students were able to encounter multiple opportunities to read and listen to input, practice skills needed for writing a summary, and engage in cooperative learning. This is quite important because learning centers are intended "to provide differentiated learning experiences for [all] students" (Watts et al., 2012, p. 307).

C. Differentiating Instruction through Process

As stated by Pham (2012), modifying the process in a differentiated classroom involves using varied activities, techniques, and teaching strategies and organizing instruction from easy to difficult levels of understanding. These help students make sense of meaning and engage in the instructional process. With this in mind, we are interested in expanding the learning experiences students had in the learning centers by using pair work. The criteria we will use to pair up students will be based on the different learning styles we found in the inventory administered. Moreover, another criterion will be pairing up students according to their preferred learning center (grouping by learners' interest). we will hand each pair a set of slips of paper with key sentences outlining the passage content from the pair's preferred learning center. After that, the pairs will need to put the slips of paper in order to complete a summary of the passage they either listened or read, and wrote notes about when they participated in the learning centers. Each pair will then discuss if their key notes are in the summary they arranged from the previous activity. In an oral manner, each pair will report their completed summaries to the whole class.

The activities we had students do above help us conduct formative assessment of our students' learning and needs. In this way we will have a better idea where our students are with regard to skills needed for summarizing as well as their reading and speaking levels. Thus, we will adjust our teaching to reflect our students' identified needs. At this point of instruction, we will help students build on their prior knowledge, as well as we will help them improve their language skills and meet their needs with the aim of advancing their learning towards summarizing (Levy, 2008). Modifications to the process will involve adding greater complexity to the learning activities, engaging students in creative thinking, and increasing the variety of ways students experience learning (Heacox, 2012). To differentiate the process, a choice menu could be designed (as the one below), that is, a differentiated strategy that "provides options for learners to practice skills, try new products, and work with a variety of resources as they learn" (Theisen, 2002, p. 4).

1 Practice: Identifying the main ideas (skimming) • Go to this Y or X website. Read carefully the tips and do the exercises.	**2 Practice:** Extracting the essentials details (scanning) • Read the tips, and then choose an interview and listen to it. Write the essential details of it in the table provided.	**3 Practice:** Working on **s**entence connectors • Complete exercises 3 and 4 in the workbook.
4 Practice: Synthetizing information • Do the exercises on synthetizing information on pg. 58.	**5 Practice:** Paraphrasing ideas in your own words • Work on a worksheet—exercises 9, 10, and 11.	**6 Practice:** Note taking • Watch this Y or X video and practice this skill.
Choose 3 boxes. Choose skill activities that will help you improve summarizing. Student's name: ……Class: …… Signature: ……..Date: …….		

Note. The above menu in the form of a table was elaborated by the authors with the aim of helping readers gain a better understanding of learning activities of a language lesson based on DI.

This menu contains common problems our students had when working on a summary before in class. In order for students to be better prepared to write and present summaries, they will need to make at least three choices that provide them with practice aimed at improving their weak areas. In this activity, students have a sense of autonomy to select what they need to in order to be able to write a summary effectively and accomplish partially the intended standard discussed previously. They also become responsible for their own learning and enjoy a sense of freedom as well.

D. Differentiating Instruction through Product

Students will be allowed to perform different forms of assignments. The assignments will reflect what students have learned and how they can apply the new knowledge and skills gained to practical situations (Pham, 2012). In order to differentiate the product, students will be encouraged to produce a piece of work that summarizes the content of a written or spoken source of information in multiple ways. Their final products will match their learning strengths, reflect student learning styles and abilities, and encourage learners to take on challenging work. Students' products will involve variety, creativity, and learning in use (Heacox, 2012; Levy, 2008; Thiesen, 2002).

Students can choose to summarize a listening or written text. Either way, they will need to employ the strategies and skills they have practiced along the lesson. Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory will be applied to the differentiation of products. In this respect students will come up with a summary in one of the following ways: acting out a role-play, creating a song, making a collage, preparing a speech, preparing a multimedia presentation, and creating a story. In any product students choose to work on, they will need to provide the main ideas and essential details from the source of information they have chosen to summarize. For instance, if a student chooses to elaborate a collage about a documentary, s/he will present a work that includes pictures or drawings representing the main points and critical details. The student will be encouraged to include key words that help him/her share the summary verbally. Therefore, students will have visual aids and key words as support for presenting the summary to the whole class. Another option is to act out a role-play, where a small group of students prepare a script based on their summary of a passage. Then they will present a role play convening the main ideas and important details from their summarized source of information. Preparing a speech is another way to differentiate the product; here students present their summaries in a form of a speech. They will need to keep eye contact and use clearly audible voice when presenting summaries in a speech version. A scoring rubric for grading students' final product should be elaborated. We need to make sure that students clearly understand our expectations. In Heacox' words (2012) the criteria for a rubric need to be clear and concise, yet specific, in students' language, a reflection of high expectations, written as positive statements, and encouraging effort and not setting limits.

E. Differentiating Instruction by Adjusting the Learning Environment

Despite the fact that at public schools we, language teachers, do not have our own classrooms, we should strive for making a learning physical environment appealing and helpful for our students, so that they can engage in and get the most out of each lesson. Therefore, with the aim of preparing a classroom setting for differentiated instruction, modifications on seating arrangements are needed to better allow students engage in diverse learning opportunities, including individual work, collaboration, pair work, groupwork, and whole-class instruction. As a matter of fact, from a differentiated instruction point of view, not all students learn in the same way so that different modes of teaching are needed to help students make sense of the new leaning (Thiesen, 2002; Pham, 2012). With this in mind, Gibson (2010) suggested that students need to be assigned to small groups for guided practice and direct instruction (if this is needed). Daily class sessions should include short minute time periods for whole class and small group instruction. Whole class activities should be used for introduction, overview, and quick review as well. Independent work should be completed when students work alone at their desks.

In a differentiated classroom it is pivotal to arrange the teaching-learning space and include some student work areas. For instance, to carry out more effectively the learning activities aimed at helping students produce summaries, one or two areas in the classroom will be needed for small group and teacher-led instruction (also known as the teaching table). According to Gibson (2010), teaching tables entail a performance expectation to the student. When students take part of teaching tables, they experience new and more challenging content along with teacher direct participation and constructive feedback provided. "Teacher-led, explicit, student-focused instruction, differentiated and specific to needs, occurs at the teaching table" (Gibson, 2010, p. 2). Furthermore, areas will be needed for workstations where students gather and work collaboratively. Before my instruction begins, we should create a few small group/partner work areas in the classroom. To do that, we can push desks together to form larger table spaces or have sometimes students work on the floor as well. If students need hard surfaces for writing tasks, they should be provided with clipboards. When students need to work on activities independently, such as reading, listening, and making notes, they will use the designated space to complete their independent work.

Within a differentiated classroom environment, we, teachers, need to allow students to begin their homework assignments in class. This will provide students with accessible support while they are still in the classroom. In this way, students will be more likely to complete assignments at home with ease and confidence. The designed assignments will be intended to give students further practice and reinforcement on the essential components of the content previously instructed and practiced over the course of my instruction (Gibson, 2010). In addition to these, further practices can be implemented into the classroom to help us run daily teaching practice smoothly: we can discuss and practice procedures used to break the class into groups. We should discuss expected behavior for collaboration, participation, pair/group work, sharing ideas and listening carefully. We could also talk with our students about the learning activities designed to provide different, meaningful learning experiences for all students based on the fact that we all learn differently. The different learning activities are intended to help all the learners to accomplish the same goal or standard; for instance, being able to summarize a short interview, documentary, book, film, and discussion, which was highlighted above. We may make arrangements for appropriate group work through the use of workstations, where students can have access to supplies and resources so that they do not waste valuable time moving around to get what they need to complete a task. We can use boxes where students can put their works, in case they need to complete them next class. Finally, we should use bulletin boards to post directions and students' work samples (Heacox, 2012).

V. Conclusions

After we have explored differentiated instruction in an enriching and in-depth manner, we reflected upon instructional practice along the completion of this paper and have become aware that one size does not fit all. Furthermore, we have realized that we have utilized differentiated instruction in the classroom to a certain degree, but not in a systematic manner. We have not made modifications on all the major areas that need to be differentiated *as a way to response to student needs* as effectively as possible, which is in line with Heacox' work (2012). We become aware that a differentiated classroom does not only involve giving struggling students more time to work on an assignment and using different types of assessments but, most importantly, experiencing a true differentiated classroom involves planning in mind with our students' different backgrounds, needs, interests, range of ability levels, and variety of learning profiles. Because in a true, actual differentiated instruction model students are given opportunities to reach their potential and succeed by putting them at the center of teaching and learning, fostering equity and excellence, and acknowledging each student's uniqueness.

Upon the completion of this paper, we feel equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to make future classroom instruction more responsive to our students' needs, ability levels, and learning styles, as well as recognize student voice as central in the teaching-learning process in the language learning classroom. As a systematic approach to differentiation of the content, process, product, and learning environment is incorporated into classroom practice, lessons will be more effective and consistent, which in turn facilitate student language learning. As a matter of fact, language classroom instruction needs to consist of tiered lessons including homework assignments, learning activities, readings, materials, and assessments that better reflect students' needs, readiness levels, and leaning profiles. In doing so, we will be more likely to meet our students where they are in the learning continuum and move them forward toward meaningful and successful educational experiences.

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Exploring EFL Writing Assessment in an Egyptian University Context: Teachers and Students' Perspectives

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***Abstract*—The study identified the assessment practices used in an Egyptian EFL writing course at university and explored teachers and students' perspectives of these assessment practices. The focus was on the assessment practices to inform and propose appropriate implications. This study is informed by social constructivism where knowledge is constructed socially through the perceptions of different participants. Eight students and eight EFL writing teachers were interviewed, and three EFL writing classes were observed. Findings revealed that writing assessment is important to both teachers and students. Diagnosing students' writing was done rarely and superficially, using a non-standardised assessment. Reported formative assessment practices include attendance, homework, samples of students' writing, class participation, assignments, and oral presentation. Stereotypical final exams were reported as the only summative assessment practice. Finally, the assessment criteria and the analytical scoring method were not communicated to students. Observed EFL writing classes mostly confirmed students' perspectives about the reported practices. Implications and suggestions are provided.**

***Index Terms*—assessment practices, EFL writing assessment, Egypt, students' perspectives, teachers' perspectives**

I. Introduction

Research highlighted the need to assess students' skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing in more informative, accurate and effective ways (Weigle, 2012). Assessing writing is important not only for teachers and students but also for programme administrators and stakeholders in language learning (Jones, 2002; Cumming, 2004). Assessment is closely connected to the learning process as changing methods of assessment will contribute to a change in students' learning (Brown, 1997). Assessment helps students identify their points of weaknesses and strengths in writing to take the appropriate remedial action (Hyland, 2004, p. 213). For students, assessment defines the curriculum that they study (Ramsden, 1992). In other words, assessment informs students about their mastery level of specific skills and their achievement of the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). In reference to teachers, they view writing assessment as a continuous process that involves both teachers and students (Crusan, 2010).

The authors were motivated to explore perspectives of both Egyptian EFL writing teachers and their students about writing assessment in Egypt, as it is actually practiced, based on three compelling reasons: the exam-oriented culture, lack of attention to the interrelationship between writing instruction and assessment, and filing in the gap in the literature and contributing to the field of EFL/L2 writing by broadening our understanding of the writing assessment practices in different contexts (Cumming, 2004). First, the educational system in Egypt operates as an exam-oriented culture and one that favours summative assessments of student learning (Hargreaves, 2001; Hartmann, 2008; Ahmed, 2010; Gebril & Brown, 2014; Ahmed, 2016, Ahmed, 2018). Second, writing instruction and assessment are not highly prioritized in Egypt, so those teaching writing may well lack sufficient training and might be assessing student writing without any focus on formative assessment of writing, (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 214; Crusana, Plakansb, Gebril, 2016) that is highly established in the EFL/L2 writing field. Therefore, the authors wanted to find out what happens when Egyptian EFL teachers assess students' writing. In addition, it could be argued that this type of situation is common in other EFL/L2 contexts such as Japan (Hyde, 2002), China (Reichelt, 2009), Tunisia (Athimni, 2018), Egypt (Ahmed, 2018; Sadek, 2018; Shabana, 2018), Morocco (Abouabdelkader, 2018), Qatar (Weber, 2018), Yemen (Ghalib, 2018) and so there is value to the field in examining it.

It is important to understand writing teachers and their students' perspectives of teaching and assessment of L2 writing. Despite the challenge to investigate teachers' views about assessment practices (Baird, 2014), they are important for two reasons (Matsuda, Saenkhum and Accardi, 2013). First, it helps to understand the context within which L2 writing is taught and assessed. Second, it helps identify L2 writing teachers' views and concerns and informs

their professional development needs. Students' perspectives about L2 writing assessment are also important as they help teachers understand students' reaction to feedback (Zhang, 1995; Cumming & So, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Therefore, the current study explores the assessment practices in an EFL writing course at the university level in Egypt from the perspectives of both teachers and their students. This will help understand the Egyptian university context in which EFL writing is taught and assessed as well as giving an opportunity to Egyptian university teachers and students to voice their concerns about EFL writing assessment.

II. Forms of Writing Assessment in EFL/L2

This literature review discusses five main strands relating to writing assessment. The first strand attempts to shed light on the purposes of assessment in Egypt. The second strand seeks to define diagnostic assessment focusing on its purposes and significance to EFL writing. The third strand reviews formative assessment, with a particular reference to self-assessment, and peer assessment. The fourth strand examines summative assessment, with a particular reference to exams and rating criteria. The last strand highlights some factors that account for teachers' assessment practices. This section concludes with the current study's potential contribution to the literature on writing assessment in an under-represented EFL context.

A. Assessment in Egypt

Research about assessment in Egypt revealed that purpose of assessment has shifted to better learning (Hargreaves, 2001; Gebril & Brown, 2014). Hargreaves (2001), in her review of assessment in Egypt, highlighted that the government aimed to improve assessment to improve the educational system and individual learning. However, the use of formal written examinations based on memorisation and rote learning drifted away from any individual learning. In addition, Gebril & Brown (2014) identified Egyptian teachers' beliefs about three assessment purposes: improvement, school accountability and irrelevance. Moreover, research revealed that feedback practices in Egypt in EFL writing courses are rare and the assessment practices are traditional (Ahmed, 2010b, pp. 214-219).

B. Diagnostic Assessment

Research suggests that diagnostic assessment guides learning, identifies students' strength and weaknesses, improves instruction and evaluates students' progress and helps teachers design teaching materials that help students develop their skills (Hyland, 2007; Jang, 2009). For example, Ferris & Roberts (2001) asked 72 university ESL students to take a diagnostic test to identify their level of ESL writing before their experiment. Similarly, Storch (2009) used a university-designed diagnostic test with 25 international students to identify their need for extra language support and recommend an appropriate intervention. However, diagnostic assessment does not provide students with diagnostic feedback about their points of strength and weaknesses in the assessed skills (Nichols, 1994; Snow & Lohman, 1989; Alderson, 2005; Gorin, 2007). Therefore, part of this study is to explore the perspectives of Egyptian EFL writing teachers and their students on the current diagnostic assessment practices.

C. Formative Assessment

On the other hand, formative assessment is specifically intended to generate feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning (Sadler, 1998). In addition, Hyland (2004, p.213) describes formative assessment as "any assessment designed to identify the learner's strengths and weaknesses to effect remedial action". Lee (2011) pinpointed that formative L2 writing assessment can be used to enhance teaching and learning provided that teachers: (1) believe in the need for change, (2) persist to innovate and improve their practice, and (3) work within a supportive system, (4) collaborate, reflect critically and engage in continuing professional development (ibid). In line with this, Graham, Hebert & Harris (2015) examined the impact of formative writing assessment on enhancing students' written performance and found out that feedback received on students' writing from teachers, peers, self and computers has proved effective in enhancing students' writing performance with effect size of (0.87, 0.58, 0.62 and 0.38) respectively.

Self-assessment as a formative assessment practice in writing courses is concerned with judging, evaluating and considering the qualities of one's own academic work or abilities (Kasanen & Räty, 2002). Research reported that experienced teachers who used Student Self-Assessment (SSA) in the writing classroom viewed it as a positive experience; whereas, novice teachers viewed it as ineffective. For example, Panadero, Brown & Courtney (2014) explored 944 Spanish teachers' beliefs about SSA and results indicated that 90% of teachers reported positive experiences about it. On the other hand, Belachew, Getinet & Gashaye (2015) investigated the perceptions and practices of 10 EFL teachers and 50 English majoring students towards self-assessment. Findings revealed that most teachers did not have any experience of using self-assessment in writing classrooms and felt that students did not have the potential to make an honest assessment of written tasks. Most students who overrated their written performances decreased from 56% in the first phase to 44% during the last session. Few other students who genuinely rated their writing increased from 30% in the first phase to 40% in the fourth phase.

Peer assessment, as another form of formative assessment, is believed to be beneficial for both students and assessors (Brown, Rust & Gibbs, 1994; Zariski, 1996; Race, 1998; Bostock 2000). Irrespective of the benefits and challenges of peer assessment, inconsistent findings were reported about students' perspectives (Saito & Fujita, 2004; Matsuno, 2009;

Wang, 2014). For instance, Saito & Fujita (2004) conducted a study to measure students' self, peer and teachers' rating of the same essays. Forty-seven Japanese college students in an English writing course wrote two essays. Two teachers, three peers and the writers themselves gave feedback on each essay. Results revealed that peer and teacher ratings correlated considerably and students had favourably liked peer rating. In another study, Matsuno (2009) investigated how self- and peer-assessments work compared with teacher assessments in university writing. Findings indicated that many self-raters assessed their writing lower than expected, which was particularly true for high-achieving students. Peer-raters rated high-achieving writers lower and low-achieving writers higher. Self, peer and teacher-raters assessed *Grammar* severely and *Spelling* mildly. Moreover, teacher-raters assessed *Spelling, Format*, and *Punctuation* differently from the other criteria. Moreover, peer assessment was somewhat peculiar and of limited benefit as part of the formal assessment. Wang (2014) explored students' perspectives of peer feedback on EFL writing, the factors which affected its usefulness and students' views about using a rubric while giving peer-feedback. Findings showed that five factors affected the usefulness of peer feedback: knowledge of writing topics; attitudes towards the practice of peer feedback; time constraints; limited proficiency of English; problems with interpersonal relationships.

D. Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is the third form of assessment discussed here. Hyland defines it (2004, p.213) as "any assessment concerned with summing up how much a student has learned at the end of a course." To this end, many writing teachers use tests to measure students' achievement in writing (Assad, 1985; He & Shi, 2008). For instance, a study investigated 16 EFL international students' perceptions and experiences of two English writing tests: Test of Written English (TWE) and the essay task in English Language Proficiency Index (LPI) (He & Shi, 2008). Findings showed that memorisation of writing samples helped students pass TWE; however, the same participants failed LPI due to lack of skills needed to construct texts. Students did not fully understand the expectation of the LPI task and their complaints about the complexity of writing prompts raised questions about the test validity.

E. Factors Impacting Assessment

Research showed that some factors account for teachers' assessment practices: teachers' specialisation, assessment literacy, lack of teaching qualification, teacher-student power relations, high-density classrooms and marking load and some socio-cultural issues. First, research indicated that teachers' specialisation affects effective teaching and learning (Hailu & Rustaman, 2012). For example, students who studied courses with specialised teachers scored higher than those who did with unspecialized teachers (Winnaar, Blignaut & Frempong, 2011). Second, assessment literacy influences teachers' knowledge of the skills, purpose and mechanism of assessment. Therefore, assessment-literate teachers become aware of any negative consequences (Stiggins, 1995).

Another important factor is teachers' lack of teaching qualification. In Egypt, along with other similar EFL contexts, many EFL writing teachers lack knowledge of learning, teaching and assessment due to not obtaining a teaching qualification/training in assessment of EFL writing (Yang, 2007, Mertler, 2009; Seliem & Ahmed, 2009). This leads to difficulty in making solid assessment decisions and conducting competent assessment of students' writing (Mertler, 2009).

The issue of teacher-student power relation is believed to affect the teaching and assessment practices. Teacher-student interaction can either promote power relations or support collaborative relations Cummins (2009). Research within the Egyptian context pointed out that teacher-student interaction appears to enhance strong power relations (Ahmed, 2010a, p.509) and restricts students' ability to argue or negotiate meaning or interrogate teachers' authority (Ahmed, 2016).

Teaching in high-density classrooms is another issue that does not nurture a favourable learning environment (Faour, 2012). Research revealed that large classes require teachers to exert extra efforts and allocate much time to read students' work and assess their writing performance (Billington, 1997; Race, 1998; Davies, 2000). In the Egyptian context, large classes (i.e. 100-200 students) reduce the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of EFL writing (Ahmed, 2016).

Teaching/marking load is another hindering factor related to large classrooms. Research showed that teaching load limits teachers' skills in planning and applying productive pedagogy (Gore, Griffiths, & Ladwig, 2004). It is claimed that workload/marking load could cause stress for university teachers (Boyd, & Wylie, 1994; Yang, 2007).

The socio-cultural context affects the educational system in Egypt where more emphasis is given to writing to pass exams which reduces EFL writing to a mere grade. In addition, stereotyped EFL writing exams at the university level in Egypt require much attention as they encourage memorisation and discourage learning how to write. (Ahmed, 2016; Ahmed & Myhill, 2016). In Egypt, research showed that the teaching of EFL writing is characterised by traditional topics of writing, prohibited topics of writing, formulaic expressions, rote learning, competitive learning, lack of reading and exam culture (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016).

The above literature indicates that teachers and their students' perspectives about the different assessment practices converged in many respects. First, both teachers and their students believed that assessment closely connects to the teaching and learning processes (Brown, 1997); precisely defines the curriculum (Ramsden, 1997), and identifies students' points of weaknesses and strength in writing and proposes appropriate intervention (Hyland, 2004). Second, teachers and students believe that the benefits of self-assessment outweigh its disadvantages. Despite being reported as

exhausting and time-consuming (Mires, Ben-David, Preece, & Smith, 2001), self-assessment was revealed to improve students' self-regulation (Klenowski, 1995; Ramdass & Zimmerman, 2008; Brown & Harris, 2013; Panadero & Romero, 2014); enhance achievement (Panadero & Romero, 2014); improve students' performance in final exams (McDonald and Boud, 2003); identify and correct more errors when enhanced with teacher feedback (Taras (2001); criticise students' own work in a more structured way (Orsmond, Merry & Reiling, 1997). In addition, peer assessment yielded more benefits than encountered challenges such as developing students' sense of responsibility, ownership and evaluation skills and a deeper approach to learning (Brown, Rust & Gibbs, 1994; Zariski, 1996; Race, 1998; Bostock 2000). However, more guidelines and support to teachers about how to implement it in class is needed (Yuen, 1998). Some factors were reported to influence teacher assessment practices such as perceived competency, teachers' beliefs, assessment education, knowledge of language learning and teaching, contextual milieu and socio-political factors (Lee, 2003; Yang, 2007; and Troudi, Coombe, and Al-Hamly, 2009).

The current study seeks to contribute to the assessment of EFL writing in two ways. First, it focuses on the Egyptian university context, a population that has not received the due attention in the literature. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no previous studies in the field of EFL writing in general and in the Egyptian context, in particular, have addressed assessment practices from both teachers and their students' perspectives using interviews and observation. Second, it compares teachers and students' views about EFL writing assessment practices to (1) shed light on some of the beliefs underlying teachers' assessment practices; (2) provide a greater understanding of how these assessment practices address students' EFL writing needs; and (3) offer research-based evidence about the professional development needs of EFL writing teachers.

The above-reviewed literature informed and framed the current study in three ways. First, it helped the researchers develop the research questions to explore the gap between teachers and students' views about EFL writing assessment. Second, it helped the researchers select and develop the semi-structured interviews and the semi-structured observation. Finally, it helped the researchers have a dialogic relation between the reviewed literature and the discussion of the findings.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the current study:

1. How do Egyptian EFL teachers of writing view their assessment practices in an Egyptian university context?
2. What do Egyptian undergraduate students think of the assessment practices employed by their EFL teachers of writing?

III. Methodology

This study is situated within the interpretive qualitative research approach which aims to understand the context within which participants act, the process within which actions happen to tell us from an insider's view why things happened in the way they did (Maxwell, 1996, Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Cumming (2004) highlighted that the different forms of qualitative research would help gain insights into language assessment issues through accommodating the interests of practitioners, educators and researchers who explore language assessment issues. Therefore, the current study adopts a case study methodology where two data collection methods are used (i.e. semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observations).

Social constructivism informs this study's theoretical framework where knowledge is constructed socially through the perspectives of different participants (Burr, 1995; Andrews, 2012, p.39). As a learning theory, social constructivism "emphasises the role of culture and context in developing personal and shared interpretations and understanding of reality" (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010, p.9). The Egyptian educational and cultural contexts play a role in reducing English writing for exam purposes. The educational context seems to be competitive, reliant on spoon-feeding and exam-oriented; while the Egyptian socio-cultural context restricts freedom of expression, lacks opportunities to argue about views, encourages the use of traditional and non-controversial writing topics, and rote learning (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016).

A. Participants

Eight English majors (see table 1) and eight EFL writing teachers (see table 2) voluntarily took part in the current study at a Faculty of Education in Egypt. The teachers and their students are Egyptian and are selected based on the accessibility criterion (Silverman, 2001) at the English Department, Faculty of Education in an Egyptian public university.

TABLE (1)
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF EGYPTIAN ENGLISH MAJORS

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Year of Study	Age	Department
1.	Khalid	Male	First Year	18	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
2.	Rami	Male	Sophomore	19	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
3.	Mahmoud	Male	Junior	20	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
4.	Banan	Female	First Year	18	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
5.	Azza	Female	Sophomore	19	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
6.	Amal	Female	Senior	21	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
7.	Khadiga	Female	Senior	21	English Dept., Faculty of Education.
8.	Asmaa	Female	Junior	20	English Dept., Faculty of Education.

Table (1) shows that eight Egyptian English majors participated in the current study: three males and five females. Participants' year of study varied across the four-year teacher education programme. They are full-time students at the English Department, Faculty of Education in Egypt, whose age ranges from 18 – 21 years old.

TABLE (2)
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF EGYPTIAN EFL WRITING TEACHERS

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Academic Affiliation
1.	Mostafa	Male	3 yrs.	M.A. in English Literature	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
2.	Alaa	Male	5 yrs.	PhD in English Linguistics	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
3.	Mohammed	Male	7 yrs.	MA English Linguistics	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
4.	Atiyat	Female	10 yrs.	PhD in English Literature	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
5.	Lara	Female	4 yrs.	M.A. in English Literature	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
6.	Reem	Female	5 yrs.	PhD in English Literature	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
7.	Lamiaa	Female	9 yrs.	PhD in English Linguistics	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.
8.	Esraa	Female	6 yrs.	PhD in English Linguistics	English Dept., Faculty of Arts.

Table (2) shows that eight EFL writing teachers participated in the current study: three males and five females. Three teachers are holders of M.A. degrees while the other five are holders of PhD degrees in English Literature/Linguistics. They work as full-time teachers at the English Department, in a Faculty of Arts in Egypt, and are seconded to teach essay writing at the Faculty of Education. Male writing teachers have 3-7 years of teaching experience; while, the female ones have 4-10 years of teaching experience.

Most Egyptian students, who join the English department at Faculty of Education, are holders of General Certificate of Education (GCE) with a high score. In reference to the admission criteria at Faculty of Education, students must obtain no less than 85% in the GCE, as well as a score of 85% in the final English exam.

The essay writing course is compulsory for all undergraduate students in the English Department. It does not have a unified syllabus with specific textbooks; therefore, it differs from one teacher to another. The following three different books are used among different teachers of writing: "*Weaving It Together: Connecting Reading and Writing*", *TOEFL Preparation*, *Introduction to Academic Writing*. Two assessment methods are used: formative (20%) and summative assessment (80%).

B. Data Collection and Analysis

Two data collection methods are used in the current study: semi-structured interviews with eight English majors and eight EFL writing teachers, and a semi-structured observation of three essay writing classes. Using semi-structured observation along with the semi-structured interviews complemented and triangulated data collection and analysis.

1. Semi-Structured interviews

The researchers designed two semi-structured interview schedules for teachers and students (nine questions each). To check the validity of the semi-structured interview schedules, a trial run was conducted (Dornyei, 2007) with two writing teachers and three English majors. Some modifications were made based on their feedback to produce the final versions of the semi-structured interview schedules as shown in appendices (1 & 2). Then, semi-structured interview sessions were arranged with eight EFL writing teachers and eight English majors. Teachers' interviews lasted for 20 – 30 minutes; whereas, students' interviews lasted for 15–22 minutes. These interviews were transcribed and returned to interviewees for validation. All interview transcripts were checked for respondent validation (Randor, 2002) as they agreed to the transcripts.

Analysis of interview transcripts was guided by data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Holliday, 2002; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2008). Data was prepared for analysis using three excel sheets as informed by the interview schedules and the observation sheet: one for students' responses to the interview questions, another for teachers' responses and the third one for observational data. All responses to each interview question were grouped into categories and sub-categories as guided by the interview questions and observation constructs. After that, data extracted from the interviews and the observation was analysed to come up with thematic charts, themes and sub-themes, along with their quotes and codes.

2. Semi-Structured Classroom Observation

Semi-structured observation is one of the three observation types to which Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) referred. It captures what actually takes place *in situ* (Ruane, 2005). Guided by the research questions along with the

preliminary analysis of the interviews, a semi-structured classroom observation was designed focusing on identifying and exploring diagnostic, formative and summative assessments, and assessment criteria (See appendix 3). Permission was granted from three EFL writing teachers and their students to observe their classes. Nine lectures were observed, each of which lasted for ninety minutes. Bryman (2008) suggested the use of two observers and cross-checking observation notes enhances investigator triangulation and enriches the validity of the observation as a research instrument, resulting in a more credible data. The two observers cross-checked their descriptive notes and ensured a consensus was reached on any difference in views.

Field notes of both observers were categorised and coded under the following themes: diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, and assessment criteria. These themes were matched against the data extracted from the semi-structured interviews. Thus, to answer the research questions, researchers combined and presented data from the semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observation to form an argument, where appropriate.

C. Ethical Issues

BERA (2004) ethical considerations guide the current study. First, researchers informed the participants about the purpose of the study and asked them to sign an informed consent form before their voluntary participation. Second, researchers ensured participants' anonymity, confidentiality and privacy by using pseudonyms and keeping their information in a secure place. Third, researchers told participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study for any reason and at any time. Finally, researchers returned the interview transcripts to participants to do member checking to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Given, 2008).

IV. Findings & Discussion

Data analysis revealed that Egyptian EFL writing teachers and their students' perspectives of the assessment practices evolved around the following themes: the importance of writing assessment, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment and assessment criteria.

A. The Importance of Writing Assessment

Analysis of students and teachers' interview data showed that assessing writing is important for some reasons: teacher objective assessment of student writing, analysis of students' weaknesses and strengths in writing, and design of activities that enhance the under-developed writing skills. Five teachers highlighted the importance of assessing students' EFL writing. Mostafa shows us a sample example as follows:

Assessing students' writing helps me to give them a fair score. It also helps me to reveal students' points of strengths and weakness in EFL writing and design some activities tailored to develop these under-developed skills.

Six students reported that assessing writing is useful. Banan explains as follows:

At university, English writing professor can adequately assess my writing level and pinpoint my weak points and areas for improvement. Writing professors focus on content, ideas, organisation, and the genre of writing such as descriptive or narrative. This is really helpful.

B. Diagnostic Assessment Practices

Analysis of teachers and students' interviews as well as observational data revealed that Egyptian writing teachers diagnose their students' writing skills based on their personal experience as students. For example, Alaa justified his diagnosis of students' writing skills as follows:

In Week (1), I ask students to write one or two paragraphs on a certain topic, and I do correct these paragraphs attentively to identify students' problems in writing. However, I do not have time due to large class sizes that exceed 100 students and the many classes I teach.

In addition, Atiyat related the purpose of diagnostic assessment to planning her writing syllabus thus:

At the beginning of the course, I give students an essay, which is full of drastic mistakes, to correct these mistakes and I am surprised that they cannot find any mistakes. This indirectly gives me an idea about the skills I should focus on when I develop my writing syllabus.

With regard to students' views about diagnostic assessment, six students said that they have never had their writing skills diagnosed. For example, Khalid said:

The teacher, in the first week, always asks us to buy a particular book from the bookshop and prepare the first few pages. The teacher never asks us to write about any topics.

On the other hand, Azza described what her teacher asked them to do in the first class as follows:

Our writing teacher asked us to write a paragraph on one of three topics. However, we did not get any oral or written comments from the teacher or even had our marked papers back.

Observation data showed that teachers diagnosed students' writing superficially thus:

The teacher asked students to write an essay on a topic of their choice. He did not inform students of the purpose of this exercise. The teacher said that he would mark only a sample of the whole class and discusses comments as a whole in the next few weeks.

The findings reveal that teachers diagnose students' writing; however, these assessments seem to be not standardised or unified. Moreover, teachers do not have the time to mark students' writing due to their teaching overload and the large classes. Research showed that teaching load could hinder teachers' skills to plan and apply productive pedagogy (Gore, Griffiths, & Ladwig, 2004). Moreover, teaching/marking load was also shown to cause most stress among occupational groups at the university level (Boyd, & Wylie, 1994; Yang, 2007). This is particularly true of the EFL writing teachers in the current study as more than 100 students in class denotes a marking load, especially in EFL writing courses.

Large classes constitute a big problem when it comes to assessment, as it requires teachers to exert great efforts and assign lots of time to assess students' performance in writing (Billington, 1997; Race, 1998; Davies, 2000; Faour, 2012). This leads students to compete for fewer resources and receive fewer tutorial support sessions with their teachers to get feedback on their writing. Large classes in Egypt are also evident as it influences the quality of teaching and learning of EFL writing (Ahmed, 2016).

C. Formative Assessment Practices

Analysis of interview and observation data showed teachers and students' concerns about the following formative assessment practices: attendance, homework, samples of students' writing, class participation, assignments, and oral presentation. For example, five teachers reported collecting samples of students' writing and marking them at home. Alaa, for example, stated:

I collect samples of students' essays to mark and return them to my students. Due to my teaching load, I cannot mark 120 pieces of writing in each class.

In addition, Lara commented on her lack of training and resources about the assessment of students' writing thus:

Honestly, I need to be trained in how to assess students' writing. Even when I try to visit the university library to access resources, I only find very old resources that go back to the 1980s.

However, other teachers rely on participation, assignments, and discussion in their formative assessment. As an example, Reem justifies her use of these practices as follows:

Students' class participation, assignments, and discussion are the basis upon which I assess students' writing. I actually resort to class participation to identify those who have prepared the lesson, did the homework, and give them grades to encourage them to do their homework regularly.

Research highlighted that assessment-literate teachers know what skills to assess, why to assess these skills and how to assess them effectively (Stiggins, 1995). EFL writing teachers in the current study, like others in similar contexts, lack knowledge of EFL teaching, learning and assessment as they do not have a teaching qualification or did not receive training on assessing EFL writing (Yang, 2007, Mertler, 2009; Troudi, Coombe & Al-Hamly, 2009). We can argue that this applies to the Egyptian context under investigation where teachers do not have a teaching qualification and are therefore unable to conduct a sound assessment of EFL writing (Mertler, 2009).

In the current study, EFL writing teachers are not specialised in teaching EFL writing. Research showed that students of specialised teachers scored higher than did those of unspecialized teachers (Winnaar, Blignaut, & Frempong, 2011). Also, the courses given by unspecialized teachers had little impact on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning (Hailu & Rustaman, 2012). We can argue that this is true as EFL writing teachers in the current study are not specialised in teaching EFL writing.

Lack of training, time and incentives constitute barriers to pedagogical change and teachers' assessment (Henderson, Beach & Finkelstein, 2011; Yang, 2007). The effects of peer assessment training on teachers' assessment performance helped them define performance criteria, give feedback and write assessment reports. (Sluijsmans, Brand-Gruwel, & Van Merriënboer, 2002). Research showed that inadequately trained Egyptian EFL teachers negatively influence the quality of teaching EFL in Egypt (Fareh, 2010). Moreover, Egyptian teachers lacked time to read students' written essays and give them feedback (Seleim & Ahmed, 2009). Therefore, Brownell & Tanner (2012) call for training, time and incentives to improve faculty teaching practices. We can argue that this applies to the Egyptian context under investigation where EFL writing teachers need to be trained on the latest trends in EFL writing assessment (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 214; Ahmed, 2016).

With regard to students' views about formative assessment, three students highlighted that their teachers' assessment is inappropriate as it does not measure the different writing skills, but instead focus on decontextualised vocabulary. For example, Amal said:

The teacher gave us a list of words to look up in the dictionary. This is the only assessment we underwent during the course.

Asmaa criticised her teacher for not giving feedback as follows:

The teacher asked us to write a descriptive essay, and he did not provide any feedback on our essays.

In addition, Rami commented that the teacher does not seem to be able to assess the different levels of students, as she does not use an assessment rubric:

My EFL writing teacher does not specify any criteria to assess my homework or assignment. I do not know how my writing is assessed.

Observational data analysis revealed in-class writing as another assessment practice that EFL teachers use. An example of this is shown below:

After teaching students how to develop a topic sentence, he asked them to develop one of five topic sentences into a complete paragraph. In the next class, the teacher returned the papers among students with no marks, but some underlining of problematic sentences in red.

With regard to the homework and class discussion as other assessment practices, observational data describes how the teacher dealt with this assessment:

The teacher assigned a task worth 2% of the course. In the next class, she randomly selected some tasks to be checked orally. In the next class, she wrote down in her notebook the names of students who completed the homework and discussed it orally with her.

In reference to students of the current study, it is important to understand why they hold these views about assessment practices in the EFL writing class in Egypt. First, as (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016) highlighted, the Egyptian educational system stresses writing to pass exams which reduces EFL writing to a mere product and a grade. In addition, it was reported that teachers at a specific Faculty of Education do not use clear assessment criteria (ibid). Second, large class sizes of over 100 students made it difficult for students to learn how to write and for teachers to assess them accurately. Students started to compete for fewer resources and fewer individual tutorial sessions with their writing teachers to receive teachers' feedback (Ahmed, 2016). In addition, students' previous experiences with the assessment of writing with other teachers at the university made them very keen on getting the highest marks possible. Students held negative views towards assessment since their assessment experiences have been primarily high-stakes and exam-oriented. They might have obtained a low grade in a previous writing course that made them only think of the exam and the final mark irrespective of learning experiences. Another issue that justifies their views might be employability after graduation, as the Ministry of Education in Egypt does not appoint teachers whose overall evaluation is less than "Merit" in their B.A. degree. This intensifies the competition among students to survive in an environment fenced with limited opportunities to succeed and work.

D. Summative Assessment Practices

All teachers reported using the final exam as the only summative method of assessing students' EFL writing skills. Concerning the components of the final exam, it differed from one teacher to another. For some teachers, it only meant assessing students by writing an essay on a certain topic and answering some reading comprehension questions. A sample example of this is shown in Lamiaa' extract below:

Because I always teach reading and writing within the same course, I get students a reading comprehension text of medium difficulty level, but a bit lengthy. I ask some questions reading comprehension questions. The second part of my exam asks students to write an essay on one of three topics and punctuate a paragraph that lacks punctuation marks.

For other teachers, the final exam means testing students' essay writing skills covered in the syllabus. Esraa's words below shed light on her lack of a teaching qualification and experience in designing exams, as is the case with many other teachers, as follows:

I am a PhD holder in Linguistics, and I do not have a teaching qualification, like most writing teachers. Also, I do not have enough knowledge and experience to design writing exams, but I just look at previous exams designed by other colleagues and try to design a similar one. Usually, the exam consists of an essay, to which students should write an outline, an editing question, a lexical question and an introduction/ a conclusion to write for a written essay.

All students confirmed that the final exam was the only summative assessment practice used by their teachers. Students believe that final exams are stereotyped and repetitive. Banan illustrates this point:

The final exam is the only assessment worth 80% of the course. The exam is the same type of questions every year. It consists of two parts: A reading comprehension passage with some questions and writing about one of three writing topics. The final exam questions are stereotyped; writing about one topic of writing, answering a vocabulary exercise, answering an editing question, or a punctuation question.

Stereotyped EFL writing exams are another barrier to effective assessment in Egypt. Research pinpointed that stereotyped writing exams at the university level in Egypt need due attention as undergraduate students rely on these repetitive and stereotyped exams to succeed (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016). This is true of the current study where teachers referred students to exams of previous years available in the library. Therefore, researchers recommend using valid and reliable formative and summative assessments that do not depend on memorisation or stereotyped exam questions (ibid).

The observers confirmed what students reported about stereotyped final exams.

In another lecturer, some students asked the teacher about the types of questions in the final exam, and the teacher said, "Look at copies available in the library, and the types of questions will be the same, but about different topics".

In addition, the three observed teachers referred to the final exams as students compete for the high marks during their university study:

The teacher told her students to study this exercise thoroughly because it is similar to the one in the final exam. Students were all ears when the teacher started talking about the final exam.

Data analysis indicated that students view their teachers as assessment illiterate, with authority and are afraid to be challenged. Teachers do not relay the assessment criteria or the marking scheme to students. For example, Asmaa, among three other students, said:

I do not even think that the teacher knows how to assess our writing. She did not tell us about her criteria for marking our written essays. All of us got excellent on our final exam although we are of different levels. Most of us

completed the exam in half its time. I do not dare to say this to my teacher in class or privately as she could easily fail me in the course or take my university ID and dismiss me from attending her classes.

An important factor that most likely justifies some perspectives that L2 writing teachers hold relates to the issue of power relations. In this regard, Cummins (2009) pinpointed that the nature of the micro-interactions between teachers and their students is not neutral; they either enhance power relations or reinforce collaborative relations. Interview and observational data analysis reinforce what Cummins (2009) described as "…constrict the interpersonal space of classroom identity negotiation and contribute to the disempowerment of culturally-diverse students and communities" (p.263). This applies to the current study as we can argue that the Egyptian context seems to enhance strong power relations between students and teachers where it is scarce for students to argue, negotiate meaning or question teacher's authority (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 509; Ahmed, 2016).

1. Assessment Criteria

Findings of teachers' interviews indicated that six teachers confirmed that they often use some assessment criteria to mark students' essays. For example, Atiyat depended on general criteria to mark students' writing: good and relevant ideas, and clear English.

The criteria I use for marking students' writing are good ideas that are to the point and in good English. I do not give very high marks to students to be realistic about their level.

Similarly, Mostafa indicated in the following quotation that he assesses students' essays based on organisation, planning, mechanics, vocabulary and language.

In the final exam, I give some scores to the technical skills of writing, organisation, planning, mechanics, vocabulary and language.

When asked about her assessment criteria, Esraa referred to her use of assessment symbols to mark students' writing:

I use assessment symbols to help students understand their mistakes when they reread their work.

The above data shows that teachers' knowledge of assessment criteria is limited. In addition, it clear that teachers are not using any rubrics in their EFL writing assessment. The different foci of assessment criteria for different teachers indicate that they need training tailored to their needs to be assessment literate.

1.1 Scoring Method

Analysis of teachers' interviews and observation data showed that teachers follow the analytical scoring method. For example, Atiyat said:

I give 2 marks for content, 2 marks for punctuation (i.e. I give ¼ a mark for each correct punctuation mark) and 2 marks for grammar and so on.

Analysis of observational data showed how teachers assess their students' writing:

A teacher informed students about how she scores their writing (2 marks for language use, 2 marks for mechanics, 4 marks for organisation and 2 marks for ideas).

In reference to the study participants, it is important to understand why students hold these views about assessment practices in the EFL writing. First, the Egyptian educational system stresses writing to pass exams which reduces EFL writing to a mere product and a grade (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016). Second, teachers at a Faculty of Education lack assessment criteria (ibid). In addition, large class sizes of over 100 make it difficult for students to learn how to write and be assessed properly. As previously stated, students started to compete for fewer resources (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016). Moreover, students' previous experiences with the assessment of writing at university made them very keen on getting the highest marks possible. Students held negative views towards assessment as their assessment experiences have been primarily high-stakes and exam-oriented. They might have obtained a bad grade in a previous writing course that made them only think of the exam and the final mark irrespective of learning experiences. Another issue that justifies their views might be employability after graduation, as the Ministry of Education in Egypt does not appoint teachers whose overall B.A. evaluation is less than "Merit". This intensifies the competition among students to survive in an environment where there are limited opportunities to succeed and work.

V. Implications and Conclusion

Despite our small sample size, the findings of the current exploratory research are important to the field of EFL writing in general and to the Egyptian and similar EFL contexts in particular. The current research contributes to a better understanding of EFL writing assessment practices of in Egypt from teachers and students' perspectives. Using semi-structured interviews and observation as data collection tools add robustness and credibility to the findings of the study.

Based on the research findings and discussion, we propose some implications to enhance EFL writing assessment in Egypt. First, Colleges of Education need to recruit specialised and qualified EFL writing teachers to enhance students' learning/assessment experiences of EFL writing (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016). Second, class sizes need to be fewer than 100 to effectively teach and assess students' EFL writing (Ahmed, 2016). In addition, EFL writing teachers need to be assigned reasonable teaching load that commensurates with their job ranks and experience to ensure the quality of teaching and assessment. This will have an impact on EFL writing assessment as teachers will have more time to mark students' writing and provide feedback to each student and more time for office hours where they can discuss their

feedback with their students. Therefore, research recommends EFL writing lecturers in Egypt to combine oral and written feedback, give prompt feedback to students, and give critical and constructive feedback (Ahmed, 2010b, p.219).

Rewarding excellent teaching and reducing the power relations are two important considerations in EFL writing classes in Egypt. Departments and colleges need to reward teachers for their excellent teaching performance through financial incentives and promotion. These rewards encourage instructors to continue their journey of effective teaching. Furthermore, university regulations need to play an important role in reducing the culture of power relations of university teachers to help students learn in a positive learning environment where they negotiate and argue without fearing the authority of the teacher.

In reference to collegial interactions, it will be useful to organise some formal and informal meetings where teachers can exchange and disseminate knowledge and contribute positively to reform initiatives (Ingvarson, 1998; Mertler, 2009). These meetings will identify teachers' points of strength and areas for improvement in EFL writing assessment. Teachers need to become literate in diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment, rating scales, methods of scoring (i.e. analytical, holistic), self-assessment, peer assessment, and methods of marking students' writing (i.e. comprehensive vs selecting marking) (Ahmed, 2016).

In terms of resources and facilities, the university administration needs to exert all efforts to provide sufficient resources for both teachers and students to enrich the teaching and the learning experiences. This will minimise students' competition for learning and jobs. A follow-up plan should also be in place to ensure accountability among university teachers. Finally, a course syllabus, with clear EFL writing objectives, student learning outcomes and varied assessment tools, needs to be designed based on the latest trends in EFL writing assessment (Ahmed, 2011).

APPENDIX (1). INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH EFL WRITING TEACHERS

1. Is assessing students' writing important? Why?/Why not?
2. Do you use diagnostic assessment in your writing course? If yes, why?
3. What formative assessments do you use in your writing course?
4. How do you view your formative assessments?
5. What summative assessments do you use and why?
6. How do you score your students' writing?
   Probes: Holistic vs. analytical scoring?
7. Do you use a rubric to assess your students' writing?
   Probes: - assessment criteria - a ready-made rubric or your own rubric? Why?
8. How do your students use the rubric?
9. How do you mark students' errors? Why?
   Probes:
   • Correct every single mistake (Comprehensive marking).
   • Correct specific mistakes (Selective marking)
   • Give comments – If yes, what type of comments do you give? Why?

APPENDIX (2). INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH ENGLISH MAJORS

1. Is your teacher's assessment of your written work useful? Why? Why not?
2. Does your teacher use diagnoses your writing skills before the start of the course?
3. Do you self-assess your writing? If yes, what do you think of it?
4. Do you review your classmates' writing? If yes, what do you think of this peer review process?
5. How does your teacher mark your writing?
   a. A mark on your writing without comments.
   b. A mark on your writing with comments.
6. Does your teacher use a rubric (assessment criteria) to assess your writing?
   - What do you think of it?
7. Does your teacher give feedback on your writing? If yes, what do you think of it?
8. How does your teacher correct your errors in writing? Why?
   Probes:
   • Underline/circle the mistake
   • Use self-correction symbols
   • Add a question mark next to the error to self-correct
   • Rewrite the sentence correctly
   • Leave a comment.

APPENDIX (3). SEMI-STRUCTURED OBSERVATION SHEET

Year of Study:……Teacher's Name: ……..……
Place of the Lecture:……..……

The objective of the Lecture:……..……..
Teaching/ Learning Materials:……...

No.	Main Category	Descriptive Notes	Preliminary Analytic Notes
1.	Diagnostic assessment		
2.	Formative assessment • Self-assessment • Peer assessment • Teacher assessment		
3.	Summative assessment		
4.	Assessment criteria		

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Conjunctive Adverbials in Chinese ESL Postgraduates' Expository Writing

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***Abstract*—Conjunctive adverbials perform important cohesive and connective functions in discourse. Logically linking sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into an essay might impose great challenge for ESL learners. This paper investigated the use of conjunctive adverbials in the expository writings of Chinese postgraduate students. Learner corpus of 365 pieces of writings was compiled for analysis. The findings indicated that the participants tended to use additive and sequential types of linking adverbials than adversative and causal types. The results also showed that the students relied more heavily on a limited set of conjunctive adverbials and were not aware of the writing registers.**

***Index Terms*—conjunctive adverbials, ESL learners, expository writing**

I. Introduction

Conjunctive adverbials serve a connective function and make explicit the relationship between two units of discourse, rather adding additional information to a clause (Biber, et al., 1999). Proper and sensible use of conjunctive adverbials, and connecting ideas to enhance cohesion and coherence, may ease the process of understanding from the readers' perspective, but might be a difficult task and a potential problem for learners of English as a second language. Previous research showed that second language learners of English tend to overuse, underuse or misuse linking adverbials in second language writing (Milton and Tsang, 1993; Bolton, et al. 2002; Chen, 2006; Lei, 2012).

Previous research on conjunctive adverbials has been carried on among English learners from different language backgrounds, including French (Granger & Tyson, 1996), Swedish (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998), Korean (Yoon & Yoo, 2011; Park, 2013), Chinese (Zhang, 2000; Chen, 2006; Lei, 2012). Zhang (2000) reported that Chinese undergraduate learners of English fail to construct logical and cohesive discourse, because they are found to have inadequate knowledge of logical connectors. Chen (2006) found that some conjunctive adverbials are overused, and some are not used appropriately, in MA TESOL students' writing. Lei (2012) claimed that Chinese linguistics doctoral students overuse, underuse and misuse adverbials in their doctoral dissertations.

However, little is known about how the postgraduate learners of different academic backgrounds in China are doing their writing, and what the causes of the potential problems are. This study compiled a learner corpus of 365 pieces of postgraduate learners' writings for analysis. It aims to work out the overall frequency of conjunctive adverbials, based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's taxonomy. Built on the quantitative data, qualitative analysis will be conducted to investigate the reasons behind the overall situation of the problem found in the investigation process.

II. Literature Review

A. Definition and Taxonomy of Conjunctive Adverbials

Previous research on adverbials serving the purposes of linking discourse have adopted different terms as "conjunctive adjuncts" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), "adverbial conjuncts" (Yeung, 2009), "linking adjuncts" (Carter & McCarthy, 2006), "connectives" (Sanders et al., 2007), "linking adverbials" (Conrad, 1999; Biber et al., 1999; Lei, 2012; Yin, 2015), conjunctive adverbials (Chen, 2006). Though these terms may not overlap completely with each other, what the terms refer to are basically cohesive devices, specifying the relationship among sentences, hanging together the semantically related clauses (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Celcer-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman classified these cohesive devices into three types — coordinating conjunctions, adverbial subordinators, and conjunctive adverbials (e.g. therefore, however and thus). This paper will adopt the term "conjunctive adverbials", classified by Celcer-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman as one type of the cohesive devices.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification, simplified and divided conjunctive adverbials into the four types: additive, adversative, causal and temporal (1999), as is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
CELCE-MURCIA AND LARSEN-FREEMAN'S TAXONOMY OF CONJUNCTIONS (1999, P.530)

Additive	Emphatic: in addition, moreover, furthermore, besides, also
	Appositional: that is, in other words, for instance
	Comparative: likewise, similarly
Adversative	Proper adversative: however, nevertheless, despite this, in contrast
	Contrastive: in fact, actually, however, on the other hand, at the same time
	Correction: instead, rather, on the contrary, at least
	Dismissal: in any case, anyhow, at any rate
Causal	General causal: therefore, consequently, for that reason, thus
	Causal conditional: then, in that case, otherwise
Sequential	then, next, first, second, last, finally, up to now, to sum up

B. Previous Studies

The investigation of cohesive devices started from the publication of Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English in 1976. In the 1990s, with the development of corpus linguistics, more and more experimental and corpus-based studies have narrowed down their research focus specifically to 'connectors', and herein conjunctive adverbials adopted by the present study. Therefore, research of connective conjunctions in ESL context will be reviewed.

Milton and Tsang (1993) compared the use of logical connectors in Hong Kong students' writing in a four-million-word learner corpus in Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, with that of three native corpora: the Brown Corpus, the London Oslo/Bergen Corpus, and another self-compiled corpus of computer science textbooks. They claimed that students tend to overuse some logical connectors in their writing. Quantitative results show that frequently overused connectors were sequential (eg. lastly, secondly, firstly), additive (eg. besides, moreover, furthermore), causal (eg. consequently, therefore). Their further qualitatively analyzed the usage of *moreover* and *therefore* and they claimed that students' difficulty lay in redundant use and misuse.

Granger and Tyson (1996) compared the frequency of connector usage in a French sub-corpus of the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) with a comparable native speaker corpus, the Louvain Corpus of Native Essay Writing (LOCNESS). Their result suggested that of the investigated 108 connectors, connectors like *however* and *therefore* were underused, while *moreover* and *for instance,* and *on the contrary* are overused. The students' misuse of some connectors were credited to their insensitiveness to the style of writing, and suggested that stylistics needed to be addressed in writing class.

Altenberg and Tapper (1998) examined the use conjuncts in Swedish students' writing by compiling 86 learners' untimed essays. The Swedish learner corpus was compared with a control native speaker corpus consisting of 70 essays by third and fourth year students from the University of Surrey, England. Their hypothesis that advanced Swedish learners of English tended to underuse linking adverbials in their writing, was supported by the quantitative results. Their further qualitative analysis suggested that students tended to overuse some conjuncts (e.g. *moreover, for instance* and *on the contrary*), and to underuse some conjuncts (e.g. *hence*, *therefore*, *thus* and *however*). Further analysis revealed that the underuse of some conjuncts were due to students' unawareness of the register in the target language. Swedish learners tended to use the informal words (e.g. but) rather than the appropriate formal alternatives (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998, p.91). Hence, register awareness in teaching writing was recommended in their research.

Bolton et al. (2002) examined the frequency of use of connectors in three sets of data, part of Hong Kong component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-HK), the corresponding data from the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB), and data from a subset of published academic writing taken from ICE-GB. They reported that both non-native and native learners tend to overuse connectors than professional writers.

Chen (2006) investigated the use of conjunctive adverbials in MA students' writing in Taiwan. The author compiled a learner corpus with 23 MA TESOL students' final papers, and compared learner corpus with control corpus, with a selection of 10 journal articles from two top international TESOL journals. Results showed that the students overuse some conjunctive adverbials slightly and inappropriately.

Yoon and Yoo (2011) focused error analysis of English conjunctive adjuncts in Korean college students' writing, by analyzing a learner corpus of 102,632 words written by 399 Korean college freshmen. The results showed that Korean English learners preferred to use sentence-initial coordinators, even when not appropriate. Also, sentence fragments account for the most frequently made grammar mistakes in sentence writing. Finally, correct use of punctuation marks is another problem.

Lei (2012) examined Chinese doctoral students' use of linking adverbials in their academic writing. The comparison is also based on two self-compiled corpora. The learner corpus contains 20 applied linguistics doctoral dissertations. The control corpus is made up of 120 journal articles in six international applied linguistics journals. The study found that the Chinese doctoral students overused and underused linking adverbials and misused some of the linking adverbials (e.g. besides). The most problematic linking adverbials for the doctoral students were the adversative adverbials. Furthermore, the students relied on a limited set of linking adverbials in writing.

Liu (2013) explored the Chinese EFL learners' mental processes in the use of adversative, causal and temporal logical connectors in writing, and dipped further into the factors influencing the writers' choices of the logical connectors. The author reported that students would think in Chinese before they established a logical concept and

chose one from several available repertoire of linking adverbials.

Leedham and Cai (2013) adopted a corpus approach to study both Chinese and British students' writing in UK universities. They found that Chinese ESL students tended to overuse adverbials, like *besides, on the other hand*, than their British counterparts. They argued that Chinese students preferred to use sentence-initial adverbials, and favored some particular linking adverbials and had little awareness of the register of writing.

Park (2013) studied how Korean EFL students use conjunctive adverbials in argumentative writing. The author divided the learner corpora into three different subcorpora based on students' English proficiency levels, and compared them with a reference corpus of American students' writings. The results revealed that all different levels of English learners overused conjunctive adverbials in their writing. Sequential and additive types were more overused, accounting for six times more than those of native writers. Moreover, sentence-initial adverbials were more used by learners, especially by the lowest-level learners.

Ha (2016) is almost the most updated study in linking adverbials in ESL context. The author explored the frequency and usage patterns of linking adverbials in Korean English writing, by comparing them with American LOCNESS sub-corpus. She compiled a corpus of 105 essays written by first-year university students in Korea. The author found that the distribution of different semantic categories was similar in both groups, but Korean learners exhibited a tendency of overuse of adverbials in writing. Noticeably, Korean English learners overuse sequential and additive categories of adverbials.

Crossley et al. (2016) is another by far the most updated and relevant study in cohesive devices and L2 writing. They assessed the development of cohesion development in L2 writers and investigated relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the judgments of L2 writing quality. They found that L2 learners' cohesion of writing might develop during one semester of learning.

All the above-reviewed studies claim that second language learners tend to "over/under/misuse" linking adverbials. When the terms such as "over/under/misuse" are used in previous literature, they indicate that there is a bench mark against which the frequency of linking adverbials should be examined, but which frequency standard should be the ideal model remains a question.

III. Methodology

The present study aims to investigate the use of conjunctive adverbials in English essay writing, by postgraduate learners from different academic backgrounds in Dalian University of Technology. It intends to find out how the English learners would use the conjunctive adverbials by compiling a learner corpus of 365 essays. It is hypothesized that the learners of English may use some certain groups of conjunctive adverbials inappropriately. Then the causes of the improper use might be investigated.

A. Data Collection

The participants in the present study are postgraduate learners of English, all placed in Reading and Writing class, but grouped into six different classes based on their availability during the time of English lectures. There are approximately 30-32 learners in each English class. They are all first-year postgraduate learners and have all passed the National English Test Band 4. They come from different academic backgrounds, and English is a compulsory course for the first-year postgraduate learners.

The teacher assigned two topics and asked them to finish up writing in an online writing lab within deadline of two weeks for each essay. The first topic was "Media and Culture" and students were required to write 100-150 words and illustrate their point of views. The second topic was "Do you think it is important to spend time and money on looking good? Why or why not?" and students were required to write no less than 100 words and illustrate their point of views. The essay writing process was quite independent and the participants might choose anytime that fits their time schedule. There were altogether 182 and 183 writings collected for the first and second topic respectively.

B. Identification and Taxonomy of Conjunctive Adverbials

Corpus analysis toolkit AntConc was used to analyze the text and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's taxonomy of conjunctions (1999) was adopted to explore the use of each category of conjunctive adverbials. All the conjunctive adverbials and concordances were extracted from the text using AntCorc. Raw frequency of each category of conjunctive adverbials was calculated, reported and analyzed based on the four logical functions, namely additive, adversative, causal and sequential, in the text.

IV. Results and Discussion

Based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's taxonomy of conjunctions (1999), with a few more adverbials identified from the learners' writing, altogether, there were 44 conjunctive adverbials identified and calculated with AntConc. The hits of each conjunctive and the total hits of each subtype of conjunctive adverbials were calculated and reported in Appendix I.

Further analysis of the data revealed that the participants in the study used more additive and sequential conjunctives, with a total of 500 hits and 444 hits respectively, which accounted for larger percentage of use than the other two types.

Adversative conjunctive adverbials accounted for 208 hits, and causal 104 hits. The percentage of each type and the subtypes among the total identified conjunctive adverbials was shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
PERCENTAGE OF USE OF CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBIALS BY CATEGORY

Types of CA	Total Hits	Percentage	Subtypes	Hits	Percentage
Additive	500	39.81%	Emphatic	400	31.85%
			Appositional	97	7.72%
			Comparative	3	0.24%
Adversative	208	16.56%	Proper adversative	96	7.64%
			Contrastive	64	5.10%
			Correction	48	3.82%
			Dismissal	0	0.00%
Causal	104	8.28%	General causal	80	6.37%
			Causal conditional	24	1.91%
Sequential	444	35.35%	Sequential	444	35.35%

A. Most Frequently Used Conjunctive Adverbials in Learner Corpus

Among the highly frequently used conjunctive adverbials, the additive and sequential subtypes together constitute 75.16% of the total. Further calculation of the most used adverbials showed that the 10 most frequently used conjunctive adverbials accounted for 70.86% of the total, which were listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY USED CAS IN LEARNER CORPUS

CA	Hits	Percentage	Type
also	279	22.21%	additive
first(ly)	179	14.25%	sequential
however	82	6.53%	adversative
for example	73	5.81%	additive
last(ly)	71	5.65%	sequential
then	45	3.58%	sequential
second(ly)	44	3.50%	sequential
therefore	43	3.42%	causal
finally	38	3.03%	sequential
on the other hand	36	2.87%	adversative

Noticeably, “also” was mostly used to show additive relationship between different units of language, either in initial or middle positions in texts. Furthermore, the result also revealed that students tended to use “first(ly)”, “second(ly)”, “then”, “last(ly)”, “finally” to set up the sequential relationship in their writing. Among adversative conjunctive adverbials, “however” and “on the other hand” were most preferred. Only one causal type adverbial “therefore” was on the list of most frequently used conjunctive adverbials. The result echoed Chen’s study in 2006 that students would rely on a limited set of conjunctive adverbials in creating the discourse.

B. Least Frequently Used Conjunctive Adverbials in Learner Corpus

In contrast to the most frequently used ones, the least frequently used conjunctive adverbials were calculated. Among the additive category, “additionally”, “in fact”, “that is”, “in other words”, “similarly” were least found in students’ writing. To show the adversative aspect, students rarely used “in/by contrast”, “instead”, “at least”. “Consequently” and “in that case” were least used causal type. Due to high reliance on some previously found highly frequently used sequential type, “next” and “to conclude” were found with lower frequency.

Beside, several conjunctive adverbials, namely “likewise”, “despite this”, “in any case”, “anyhow”, “at any rate”, “for that reason”, “up to now”, were never found in students’ writing, as classified and listed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999).

The least frequently used conjunctive adverbials, with hits from 0 to 4 out of the 1256 hits altogether, amounted to 20, which outnumbered the top 10 most frequently used ones. Again, this revealed that students would prefer to choose the most popular and acquainted set of conjunctive adverbials in their word repertoire.

C. Learner Corpus Analysis

Previous research claimed that second language learners tended to overuse, underuse or misuse linking adverbials in second language writing (Milton and Tsang, 1993; Bolton, et al. 2002; Chen, 2006; Lei, 2012), usually based on the comparison of corpora between native speakers and non-natives. However, Chen (2006) argued that there was no precise definition of “overuse” or “underuse”. Therefore, this study will explore the use of some most and least preferred conjunctive adverbials by the learners, and hopefully the findings might shed light on the teaching practice.

Based on the calculation of the most and least frequently used conjunctive adverbials, further detailed analysis needed to be carried out to see how students construct the discourse. Excerpts of some students’ writing were taken for detailed examination.

Learner corpus Excerpt 1

Along with computer technology unceasing development, the various media playing a main role in enriching people's acceptable information resources has contributed to a great change in our life.

First of all, the media have changed the way of contact between people. Secondly, the media broaden the personal information and expand the personal knowledge. Convenient platform, massive information and timely updates allow each individual to be involved in the whole world. Various categories of media make us gain an insight into what we are interested in quickly. Besides, the media accelerate the process of democratization in our country and the solution of social problems. Individuals are free to express their opinions on the incident which can have an impact on the behavior of decision makers. Finally, the media enrich the cultural life of the individual. We can enjoy our leisure by watching a variety of cultural products, from the show to the Opera.

In short, the rise and development of the media affect all aspects of individual life. Only we improve the ability of our own judgment, can we receive a good influence.

Generally, *Excerpt 1* is a typical example of most of the students' writing. The first paragraph introduces the point of view of the writer and the last paragraph is an echo of the introductory paragraph. The body paragraph typically consists of two to four supporting ideas, listed by sequential adverbials "first/firstly/first of all", "second/secondly, third/thirdly", "finally/lastly" etc., as calculated as most frequently used adverbials in learners' writing. The conclusion paragraph ends with "in a word", which is more informal than formal. This echoed previous studies which claimed that students should be instructed to be aware of the writing register differences (Granger & Tyson, 1996; Chen, 2006).

Learner corpus Excerpt 2

The love for beauty is common to all men. Nowadays, in order to become beautiful, more and more people like to dress themselves. Looking good is not just women's patents. I think it is important to spend time and money on looking good.

First of all, social environment makes people pay more attention to outward appearance. In the modern society, young and beautiful become a kind of wealth, which can create opportunities and advantages in the competition. Secondly, pursuing beautiful is people's inner needs. Physical beauty through dressing can obtain immediately, and it can satisfy people's craving. Thirdly, looking good can enhance self-confidence, experience happiness, and conducive to success. The last and the most important is that looking good can attract girls' or boys' attention, getting more job opportunities. Even though it is important to look good, we shouldn't spend much more money or time on that. On the one hand, as a method to become beautiful, plastic surgery is risky. Examples of plastic failure are countless, some of which lost their lives, this is a tragedy indeed. On the other hand, as a student, if we spend a lot of energy on dressing ourselves, it is not conducive to our study.

In a word, the physical beauty can make us more confident to face the difficulties in our lives. It can strengthen our hearts and makes us happier lives. So it is important to spend time and money on looking good.

Generally, *Excerpt 2* also exhibits a commonly used structure of expository essays, with the introductory, body and conclusion paragraphs. In the three-paragraph writing, 7 conjunctive adverbials are used, with 5 belonging to sequential type, and 2 adversative type. The sequential adverbials, are used in the body paragraph to list and link the supporting ideas. However, in the second part of the body paragraph, the writer switched to the opposite opinion that "Even though it is important…", and adopted the adversative conjunctive adverbials "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" to link his/her points. According to the definition in Cambridge Dictionary, "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" are used to "compare two different facts or two opposite ways of thinking about a situation", but the two points the writer included are not contrastive, but additive. "In a word" is again used in this conclusion paragraph, which is quite common in learners' writing.

V. Conclusion and Practical Implications

The present research studied the use of conjunctive adverbials in expository writings by postgraduate learners from different academic backgrounds in Dalian University of Technology. The results showed that learners used a total of 44 different conjunctive adverbials, belonging to 4 types as classified by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999), in their writings.

The data revealed that the participants in the study used more additive and sequential conjunctives, 500 hits and 444 hits respectively, than adversative conjunctive and causal adverbials, with 208 and 104 hits. Among the highly frequently used conjunctive adverbials, the additive and sequential subtypes together constitute 75.16% of the total.

Remarkably, "also" was mostly used to show additive relationship between different units of language. Furthermore, the sequential conjunctive adverbials, e.g. "first(ly)", "second(ly)", "then", "last(ly)", "finally", were highly preferred in students' writings. Among adversative conjunctive adverbials, "however" and "on the other hand" were most preferred, with a proportion of misuse with "on the other hand". "Therefore" was the only one causal type of adverbial detected in writing samples, on the list of most frequently used conjunctive adverbials. Contrastively and noticeably, conjunctive adverbials like "likewise", "despite this", "in any case", "anyhow", "at any rate", "for that reason", "up to now", were never found in students' writing, as listed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999).

The sample analysis of the learners' writings showed that they commonly used structure of expository essays, with the introductory, body and conclusion paragraphs. The body paragraph typically adopted sequential adverbials as links

of discourse. However, the conclusion paragraph ends with "in a word", which is more informal than formal.

The results showed that learners would rely on a limited set of conjunctive adverbials in creating the discourse and. Furthermore, the learners are not conscious of the writing register differences, and thus choosing inappropriate adverbials in their writing. Therefore, in teaching practice, learners should be exposed to quantity of appropriate use of conjunctive adverbials, and register awareness should be raised explicitly in instruction.

For future research, and for more practical teaching implications for EFL practitioners, larger-scale corpus-based studies on EFL learners' essay writings should be carried out to gain a more comprehensive look at the learners' writing and academic exchange capability.

APPENDIX

Conjunctive Adverbials in Learner Corpus

Types of CAs	Subtypes	Total Hits	Conjunctive Adverbials	Hits
Additive	Emphatic	400	in addition	28
			additionally	3
			moreover	19
			furthermore	8
			besides	32
			also	279
			at the same time	28
			in fact	3
	Appositional	97	that is (to say)	4
			in other words	3
			for instance	17
			for example	73
	Comparative	3	likewise	0
			similarly	3
Adversative	Proper adversative	96	however	82
			nevertheless	7
			despite this	0
			in contrast	4
			by contrast	3
	Contrastive	64	in fact	8
			actually	13
			on the other hand	36
			at the same time	7
	Correction	48	instead	2
			rather	28
			on the contrary	17
			at least	1
	Dismissal	0	in any case	0
			anyhow	0
			at any rate	0
Causal	General causal	80	therefore	43
			consequently	3
			for that reason	0
			thus	27
			as a result	7
	Causal conditional	24	then	8
			in that case	2
			otherwise	14
Sequential	Sequential	444	first (firstly)	179
			then	45
			next	3
			second (secondly)	44
			third (thirdly)	12
			last	71
			finally	38
			up to now	0
			to sum up	8
			in conclusion	11
			to conclude	4
			in summary	6
			all in all	23

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Is Scoring Helpful Feedback for Writing Tasks? An Examination of Teachers' Beliefs

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***Abstract*—Understanding teachers' beliefs about scoring procedures can be beneficial for educators in order to understand factors including challenges the teachers face when dealing with writing evaluation. This study investigated teachers' beliefs about scoring procedures through the narrative approach. Their stories were revealed through repertory grid interviews based on the Personal Construct Theory. The method encouraged teachers to think more critically when expressing their beliefs, so their genuine voices and experiences could be revealed. Two native and two non-native English-speaking teachers at the university level were interviewed about their methods of assigning scores when evaluating an essay. The interviews revealed that several factors, such as learning, practicality, experience, objectivity, and confidence could influence teachers' beliefs when deciding which scoring procedures to use. The challenges that educators might face when giving feedback were also discussed.**

***Index Terms*—teachers' beliefs, scoring, repertory grid interview**

I. Introduction

Written feedback is crucial for both teachers and students as it contributes to students' growth as writers (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011). It is also a method that allows writing teachers to interact with their students, which is an important part of the learning process. Teachers may employ different forms of written feedback according to their beliefs about teaching and learning. Of all forms of written feedback, perhaps the most common form is a scoring rubric, which is used either as an element of in-class assessment, or end-of-course assessment.

The scoring rubric includes descriptors that help teachers judge students' proficiency level on their written work, given that the rubric is reliable, unbiased, valid, and with sufficient details provided for the descriptors provided (Ghalib & Al-Hattami, 2015). Scoring is considered one of the most common procedures in evaluating students' writing, and there are several types of scoring that a teacher can choose from. The typical ones are holistic scoring, analytic scoring, or multiple trait scoring – all of which are viewed differently by teachers. Some teachers may feel comfortable using holistic scoring; some may be keen on using analytic scoring; while others may not consider scoring to be useful.

Researchers have also taken an interest in scoring rubrics. For instance, although holistic scoring has been used widely and is seen as convenient to many teachers, its value has been challenged by Hamp-Lyons (2016a, 2016b). In her editorial, "Farewell to Holistic Scoring Part 2: Why Build a House with Only One Brick?", Hamp-Lyons argues that even though holistic scoring can judge the overall quality of writing, it neglects the complex nature of the task. As such, she suggests that teachers cease using holistic scoring and switch to the multiple-trait scoring method instead. Nonetheless, some teachers continue to apply holistic scoring together with other types of scoring. The use of different types of scoring may be the result of many factors such as classroom constraints, or teachers' experience, preferences, and/or beliefs. Therefore, this study aimed to elicit teachers' beliefs about scoring methods on students' writing tasks. Understanding their beliefs may allow us to explain different scoring practices, as well as reasons for–and problems regarding–scoring methods.

A. Teachers' Written Feedback and Scoring Rubric

Teachers' written feedback could be seen as a means to provide comments on students' writing task and to help them develop their writing skills, as well as to "consolidate learning" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 206). Teachers consider it their responsibility to provide helpful comments (Hyland, 2003), as well as evaluate how well their students have done.

Teachers' feedback can have several forms. Written commentary is one of the most common types of feedback, in which a teacher responds to students' writing by offering individualized comments, instead of evaluating their work (Hyland, 2003). As discussed earlier, scoring rubrics are also a commonly used method of giving feedback since they

assess students' writing performance by giving numbers to reflect students' performance in their written tasks. This makes it easier for teachers to report students' grades at the end of the course.

In literature on feedback, different scholars have categorized several scoring approaches. Weigle (2002) divides them into three scoring approaches: holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and primary trait scoring. Holistic scoring refers to the approach in which teachers give a score based on the overall quality of the writing task. For analytic scoring, the writing is rated according to several aspects related to the objectives of the writing task. The scale may include features such as "content, organization, register, vocabulary, grammar, or mechanics" (Weigle, 2002, p. 114). Primary trait scoring refers to the method of evaluating a piece of writing according to a rubric specifically designed for that task. It can have several aspects according to the objectives of that writing assignment (e.g. the use of transitions, or strength of argument).

Similar to Weigle, Hyland (2003) categorizes scoring into four approaches: holistic, analytic, primary trait, and multiple trait scoring. Hyland separates trait scoring into primary trait and multiple trait scoring. For him, primary trait scoring focuses on only one aspect of evaluation, while multiple trait scoring considers writing as multifaceted, so teachers may give scores for more than one category. Hamp-Lyons (2003) categorizes scoring into three approaches: holistic scoring, multiple trait or analytic scoring, and primary trait scoring. Hamp-Lyons treats multiple trait and analytic scoring similarly, as both of them treat writing as multidimensional and sensitive to specific pieces of writing.

In this study, we categorize scoring rubrics into three approaches: holistic, analytic, and multiple trait. Following Hyland's (2003) definition of scoring approaches, holistic scoring is based on a teacher's impression of the overall quality of a writing task. It is convenient, but cannot pinpoint the specific aspects that a student may need to improve. In addition, a teacher requires experience in order to have consistency in evaluating the writing as a whole. Analytic scoring sees writing as multifaceted, but in more general aspects. It covers the general aspects of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, and format. However, there are both benefits and drawbacks to analytic scoring. This type of scoring allows teachers to diagnose students' weaknesses in several aspects by using clear and understandable descriptors. However, it takes a longer time compared to providing scores based on a holistic scale. Multiple trait scoring is a specifically designed rubric for a specific writing task. This type of scoring can provide resourceful data as it can also inform students about their weaknesses in a specific writing task. Nevertheless, teachers need a considerable amount of time to apply multiple trait scoring.

With the plethora of approaches, the choice of selecting a rubric depends on teachers' purposes and it is considered to be context specific (Ghalib, & Al-Hattami, 2015). It is also a complex process as a teacher's belief towards the use of feedback or scoring approaches may be challenged by what is deemed practical for the learning task or manageable by the students (Min, 2013; Junqueira & Payant, 2015). When teachers make decisions in evaluating a piece of writing, there are several choices they can make in assigning scores. First, they can decide to look at writing in general aspects (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, organization, etc.) through either holistic or analytic scoring. In addition, they can evaluate the piece of writing according to the specific task objective by using either primary trait or multiple trait scoring. Finally, they can focus on the methods of providing a score to a specific piece of writing. They can give a score as an overall impression (holistic scoring), by looking at criteria that are based on general aspects of writing (analytic scoring), or based on the criteria adapted from the objectives of the specific assignment (trait scoring). Aside from the context, individual writing teachers may apply certain approaches that they think work well for them. Different approaches to scoring practices may reflect teachers' beliefs about learning and language (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2008), and reflect their beliefs about what it means to be an effective teacher (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Hence, it is necessary to reveal teachers' beliefs which guide their scoring approach (Lee, 2008).

B. Identifying Teachers' Beliefs

The beliefs a teacher holds can influence their classroom practices (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Borg, 1999; Pajares, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Woods, 1996). An individual's beliefs are quite challenging to investigate due to their complex nature. Beliefs can be implicit and may be difficult to state explicitly (Van der Schaff, Stokking & Verloop, 2008). Some teachers may not know what they believe in since their beliefs are subconscious (Donaghue, 2003). The complex nature of teachers' beliefs then necessitates appropriate methodology when they are studied.

The most common data elicitation techniques used in early studies on teachers' beliefs were questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires are popular among researchers because they allow them to collect large amounts of data in a short period of time. However, questionnaires cannot provide a deep understanding of the complex beliefs a teacher holds (Borg, 2006). Interviews, on the other hand, allow participants to freely state what they believe and can allow researchers to capture more elaborate data. However, they have been criticized for containing the researcher's bias, especially within the interview questions. Furthermore, although the questions may guide the participants to talk freely during the interview, uncovering beliefs may still be difficult if the participants themselves are not aware of their own beliefs. Data gained from these instruments is usually criticized as being reported beliefs, not genuine beliefs (Borg, 2006; Phipps & Borg, 2009).

C. Repertory Grid Interview

To overcome the criticism over questionnaire and interview tools to collect teachers' beliefs, this study employed the repertory grid interview, which encourages teachers to think critically and verbalize what they believe. The interview is based on George Kelley's Personal Construct Theory (1955). This theory posits that a person gives a specific meaning to a certain object according to their experience of the world. The meaning given to the object is considered as their belief about that certain object. In order to explore the belief, a respondent is required to make a comparison and contrast among other objects, which demands more critical thinking and justification. The procedure is believed to help tap into the deeper thought process of the participants. Due to the efficiency of this approach, we believe that employing the repertory grid interview will encourage teachers to think critically, leading to the revelation of their real beliefs.

In addition, we believe that drawing on one teacher's emic perspective by narrating their stories can provide rich data to uncover beliefs. Narrative stories can help reveal unique trajectories and beliefs that may be lost in other types of data collection. Therefore, this study aims to elicit teachers' beliefs through the use of repertory grid interview and to report the data through the lens of narrative inquiry. It is hoped that the combination of these two methods will allow researchers to better understand what teachers bring into their scoring practices.

II. Method

A. Participants and Context

Data from this study was taken from a larger study investigating teachers' beliefs about written feedback on students' writing tasks. The four types of written feedback included scoring procedure, focus of feedback, corrective feedback, and written commentary. In the larger study, ten participants (five native English-speaking teachers, and five Thai teachers) were interviewed.

In this paper, data from two native English teachers and two Thai teachers from the larger study was highlighted. These participants were selected because these four teachers mentioned scoring methods throughout all stages of their interviews. Data obtained from these participants could lead to the understanding of their beliefs concerning functions, challenges, and benefits in providing scores as writing feedback. They were given the pseudonyms John, David, Ubon, and Somsak. Both Thai teachers were teaching at a public university in northeastern Thailand, and the two native teachers were teaching at different universities in Bangkok. All of them had more than one year's experience in teaching writing at the university level.

B. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in three stages: preparation stage, elicitation interview, and repertory grid interview.

1. Preparation Stage

In the preparation stage, a piece of argumentative writing task was selected from a fundamental English course offered at a university in Bangkok. It was written by a student whose English was in lower intermediate level. The writing was about whether gambling in Thailand should be legal, and the length of the composition was around 190 words. The reason for choosing this piece of writing was because it contained certain amount of errors, both grammatical and lexical. There would be several aspects that the teachers could focus on when they mark and provide feedback.

The participants were asked to freely evaluate the essay. Each participant received the same essay to mark and was allowed to grade, mark, score, and/or provide feedback. From observing the feedback that the participants used in evaluating the student's work, five types of scoring were revealed. The five types of scoring that were found among all participants were holistic scoring, analytic scoring, multiple trait scoring, point deducting, and commentary feedback.

2. Elicitation Interview

The purpose of this elicitation interview was to elicit possible "elements" and "constructs" that could be used in the repertory grid interview since in a repertory grid, meanings given to elements (types of scoring) are based on a bipolar construct. In general, elements and constructs used in a repertory grid interview can be taken from the literature or through elicitation from the participants. Since the aim of this study was to gain the real beliefs from the teachers without imposing any concepts or ideas upon them, we used the elicitation method. The elements were obtained from their feedback types they used in the preparation stage.

In the elicitation interview, the main purpose was to elicit the bipolar constructs to be used in the repertory grid interview e.g. clear or unclear. Specifically, the participants were asked to differentiate one element from the other two elements through triadic presentation. For example, they were given the triad of holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and multiple trait scoring. They also had to provide reasons for comparing and contrasting the elements or types of scoring. In this stage, the participants provided in-depth information of what they feel about and perceived each type of scoring. These constructs obtained from the elicitation interview were then used for the next stage of the interview.

3. Repertory Grid Interview

In the repertory grid interview, the elements and the constructs from the elicitation interview were used to conduct a more complex process of triadic comparison based on a bipolar construct and a rating scale. In this interview, the teachers were required to differentiate one type of scoring from the other two according to the bipolar constructs (clear-unclear justification) which emerged from the earlier interview. At the same time, they had to provide a rating of 1 to 5,

1 = unclear justification, and 5 = clear justification, to each type of feedback (element) according to the constructs (meaning), and they had to clarify their rating by using reasons or explanations for their judgment. For example, they might explain, *"I think A is different from B and C. I rate A as 1, and B and C as 5."* The rating task acts as a stimulus for the teachers to express their thoughts towards each type of scoring. It also helps the researchers to clearly see the participants' judgment of how each element relates to each construct.

C. Data Analysis

This study also employed narrative inquiry in reporting data from the repertory grid interview. According to Gibbs (2007), through their stories, the participants may be able to share and make sense of their experience. If we pay attention to people's stories, we may be able to gain insights into what is perceived as important to them as teachers, and "understand how they experience life" (Gibbs, 2007, p.58). Data from the interview was reported based on important themes that appeared in their talk during the repertory grid interview. Useful information from the other stages of the interview would also be narrated in the findings.

III. Results

This section gives the description of four teachers' different views on using scores as the way to give feedback. The story of each teacher narrated during the repertory grid interview cast light on each individual's beliefs and experiences, as illustrated below.

John

The first story belongs to John, a teacher trainer and a researcher. He has a PhD in applied linguistics, and has a research interest in teachers' feedback. John did not seem to favor scoring, but preferred commentary feedback. His experience as a student was mentioned a lot during the interview. He said that throughout his learning period, receiving constructive feedback has helped inform him to become a systematic researcher and autonomous learner.

This one, I, as a PhD student, I like it when my supervisor writes this kind of comment because I can look at it, read it, put it down and think about it later on. (Excerpt 1)

In addition, through the interviews, John revealed how his experience shaped his belief about providing comments on students' work. His experience of what worked best for him influenced his belief about the practicality of his feedback and made him become a selective marker. He chose to give comments to specific points that would lead to writing improvement.

Usually, yes. I've tried…What I found in the past is that, if I read the first time and I mark as I go, I marked a lot. I marked everything and then it's very difficult for the student to see what's important and what's not very important. So I read it first once, and then I decide, I tried to decide what I think the students have made a lot of mistakes about. (Excerpt 2)

Because John strongly favored commentary feedback, he did not seem to believe in scoring. In the first interview, John explicitly stated that giving a score could actually distract the students instead of helping them to focus on how to improve their writing. To him, feedback should function as a thought-provoking response to students' work, because he would like students to be curious and try to learn autonomously, and according to John, a score does not seem to be helpful in promoting better writing when compared to commentary feedback.

I prefer not to give the score because I find that the score overwhelms the feedback. If they see the score, let just say I put eight out of ten here, they'll look at the score and say well, why did I only get eight and they won't look at the feedback for its value. If I don't put it there and then they come to see me and ask me what is this worth and I might say well, you lost the point here and you lost the point there. (Excerpt 3)

In the elicitation interview, John was asked to think critically and compare and contrast commentary feedback, holistic, and multiple trait scoring. John further clarified his point about his belief in commentary feedback. He seemed to be aware that commentary feedback could have both advantages and disadvantages for students. Although he thought it was useful, he also thought the students may not know how they should improve their writing. He also said that commentary feedback could potentially hinder students' understanding if it were too detailed and lengthy.

When comparing holistic scoring, multiple trait scoring, and commentary feedback, I think giving comments instead of scores is too complicated and detailed for students. If a student could understand all of that, it's good. But I think that for the student, there's too much here for it to be useful or for learning purposes. I mean, they wouldn't know where to begin. (Excerpt 4)

When John was asked to compare point deducting, holistic scoring, and commentary feedback in terms of consistency in marking, and judge each element on a Likert scale, he seemed to provide a clearer justification for using commentary feedback. He believed that this approach to feedback would be more consistent than using scoring rubrics. He provided reasons that having a clear objective in mind would help him to be consistent in his writing feedback.

So point deducting is 2 [less consistent]. And holistic scoring is 1 [not consistent]. I mean my content on my feedback wouldn't be consistent. I'm going to commentary feedback as 4 [rather consistent]. It's fairly consistent because what I'm going to do is pick out three things from everybody and comment on them. And my comments will be feedback for their development. (Excerpt 5)

Although John believed that written commentary could help the students to improve their writing, he viewed it as a demanding task when he was asked to think more critically about its practicality. When he was asked about the practicality of providing each type of scoring (multiple trait scoring, point deducting, and written commentary), John said that providing written commentary required the most effort from teachers.

OK, I would say that written commentary is different from the other two [multiple trait scoring, point deducting]. It demands an incredible amount of effort, so I'm going to give written commentary as 1 [most demanding]. For multiple trait and point deducting, you don't have to scribble it out, so they are quite easy. So these two should be 4 [less demanding]. (Excerpt 6)

From the excerpts, it can be seen that John highlighted the importance of using feedback in learning by crafting useful comments that are not too complicated for the students, and as an evaluator he needs to be consistent and fair. In John's interview, it can be seen that he has revealed different angles of applying commentary feedback. He expressed concern about the "incredible amount of effort" involved in written commentary, while valuing its benefit in terms of being helpful to students' learning.

David

The second story was from another native English teacher called David. He has been teaching English in Southeast Asian countries including Thailand for more than 10 years. Prior to his current teaching job, David taught in high schools in Bangkok for eight years. He was responsible for teaching general English courses at bilingual schools. When he became a university teacher, David was given the opportunity to teach international program students.

David seemed to believe in applying an analytic scoring rubric as a criterion to help him assess a piece of student work. He also applied the rubric he used in his previous work for university students. He has used similar rubrics repeatedly, to the point that it has become automatic. David saw scoring rubrics as a way to provide his students clear explanations for the scores he assigns.

And I think it's more useful for the students in that it's essentially the rubric I found online and I've just simplified the terminology. It was made for high school students and I've just simplified it. I find the score that I would just pick out of my head is similar to the rubric anyway. If the students ask me why, this is something I can point to. (Excerpt 7)

In the preparation stage interview, when David marked the essay according to his preference, David assigned scores to the writing task. In contrast with John, David highlighted his preference for using a rubric in marking students' writing, as he noticed that a rubric could help both raters and learners to see specific scoring criteria. To him, having clear criteria was vital in making students understand where their scores came from.

OK. Well, I have my rubrics. There are four categories here. The first one is accuracy, and it usually relates to grammatical accuracy, syntax. And there's a format to check whether they follow the instructions, guideline. The organization, do they use things such as transition devices, do they have the beginning, middle, and end, and, cohesion and unity, again relates to sort of like transition. Does it make sense, is it logically flowing? Do they have pronoun consistency throughout? (Excerpt 8)

When he was asked about the use of written commentary, David mentioned that because his students are not very proficient, they may be confused and not be able to improve after seeing written comments.

I wouldn't use commentary feedback in my class, simply because most of the students in my class wouldn't be able to understand the comments. (Excerpt 9)

At the elicitation stage, David was asked to separate two elements from the group of three. He further provided reasons for using the analytic scoring rubric as a tool to allow meaningful feedback in multiple dimensions since the rubric provides clarification of each criterion in detail. Furthermore, having analytic scoring was unique because the way of assigning scores tends to be more consistent across students, especially with the low-achievers. He pointed out that using analytic scoring, as opposed to holistic scoring, makes it easier for the teacher to share with students about certain strengths and weaknesses.

At the last stage of repertory grid interview, David rated analytic scoring three out of five, as he was unsure of whether the method could help students to better understand the quality of their work.

With the writing grading rubric, I think it's very clear for them in analytic scoring as to what the problem was. However, I don't know how much it helps them. They understand when you explain to them. They don't know what to go on when they're writing the next time around. So it would be neutral, I'd give it a 3 [neutral in terms of helping the students to improve]. (Excerpt 10)

When David had to compare practicality among the three types of feedback, holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and written commentary, he clarified his point in using analytic scoring. Although he believed that analytic scoring could enhance learning and improvement, he also viewed that this type of scoring was somewhat demanding, when compared to holistic scoring and written commentary.

Holistic score, many teachers will simply read it and go, good or bad, and give a score within two to three minutes. So holistic scoring is 5 [least demanding]. Analytic scoring, I would say, once you familiarize yourself with the descriptors, you have to go back and look at each descriptor sometimes, so it's a 3, somewhere in the middle. And for written commentary, not giving a score, I'd give it a 4 [less demanding] because you do have to read carefully. (Extract 11)

The extracts from the interviews showed David's preference for analytic scoring. He emphasized consistency in scoring and marking, and being accurate. He also mentioned his experience in using analytic scoring rubrics, and that it made him a confident rater. When he had to compare it with other types of scoring, David critically considered this type of scoring as he seemed to think about both the pros and cons of this approach. He carefully thought about learners' factors as he mentioned his uncertainty in whether analytic scoring could promote better writing in the long term. However, considering the fact that teachers like him might have a large amount of writing to mark, David added the issue of practicality in selecting the approach he would use in case he had a different number of writing tasks to deal with.

Ubon

Ubon has been teaching English in a university in northeastern Thailand for more than seven years. She is responsible for teaching general English. She mentioned that she did not have a lot of experience in teaching English, since she specialized in teaching Thai language to foreigners. Despite having taught in the university for more than five years, Ubon often referred to herself as an inexperienced teacher. This embedded belief appeared to affect her way of giving corrective feedback, as seen in the following excerpt:

Well, actually I haven't thought of giving scores. If I was told to give scores, then I probably would give this student scores. (Excerpt 12)

In the preparation stage, when she was asked to freely mark a student essay, she asked for more clarification of the writing. She simply gave written comment, without giving scores. Since she perceived herself as an inexperienced teacher, she said that she did not have the courage to provide scores. She mentioned that she needed guidance to follow. Thus, she chose to provide only commentary feedback.

When participating in the second stage of repertory grid interview, she clarified her cautious stance in using commentary feedback when compared to other elements. At this stage, she chose analytic and multiple trait scoring as her preferred methods of scoring because both methods allowed her to be objective. Compared to David, who used analytic scoring with confidence and employed it to aid students' learning, Ubon saw analytic and multiple trait scoring as a way to keep teachers on a consistent marking track and as a way to provide specific guidance for her students to improve their writing. The data from this stage revealed the beliefs of Ubon as an inexperienced teacher who felt more confident with the guidance from a rubric.

Sometimes when you give commentary feedback, the teacher may overlook some points and tend to emphasize certain points. It gives feedback as a whole, so the teacher may neglect the point the students already did well in their writing. If you give analytic or multiple trait scoring, the teacher will be more specific on what they expect from the students. (Excerpt 13)

Her belief about using a rubric as a guideline became clearer when participating in the third stage of repertory grid writing. When asked to rate the elements, she started giving reasons behind her choices. Ubon explained that rubrics might be useful for a teacher, but did not seem to be beneficial for students since they may not know exactly what to modify in their writing in order to improve their quality. However, she took students' improvement into account when rating for written commentary, which she rated five. Ubon always mentioned the aspect of student's writing improvement when rating in the last stage. It was because she considered her students as having a low level of English proficiency, so any scoring methods that make them understand clearly what they have done wrong and how they could improve were preferred by Ubon.

Comparing between analytic scoring, multiple trait scoring, and written commentary, I think written commentary can lead to improvement that I give a rating of 5 [helps students to improve]. I think the students will read it and feel like the teacher is talking to him or her directly and they will go back and look at what they have done wrong. Analytic scoring and multiple trait scoring, they have criteria and have clear rubric, but the students may not know how they can use that rubric to revise their writing, so I give these two types a 3 [neutral in terms of helping the students to improve]. (Excerpt 14)

Ubon further explained that her rating of five for written commentary as the way to help students learn from feedback was also dependent upon her teaching context. When there are a lot of students submitting their writing assignments at the same time, and they also expect to receive feedback from their teachers, the issue of time also became vital in her decision to use a certain marking method.

In terms of practicality, holistic scoring will definitely be the fastest. If we have 40 papers to mark, it can be done very quickly. Analytic scoring will also take less time to do, so I give holistic scoring and analytic scoring a 5 [least demanding]. Although holistic scoring does not provide any descriptors, I believe that the descriptors are already embedded in teachers' mind. But for written commentary, it is the most demanding because the teachers need careful consideration. It will take a large amount of time. (Excerpt 15)

The interview data showed that Ubon preferred to start with some guidelines, as she considered herself an inexperienced teacher. Therefore, she preferred using rubrics as the guidelines for her evaluation of students' writing. But later on, it seemed that she preferred written commentary because she was concerned more about learners' improvement. She believed that communicating with the students through her feedback would help them to improve.

Somsak

Somsak is a part-time teacher at a university in northeastern Thailand. He had been teaching at the university for almost four years at the time of the study. Similar to Ubon, he is responsible for teaching general English courses for first- and second-year students, whose proficiency levels were considered beginner to lower-intermediate.

In the preparation stage, Somsak explained his method of using negative scoring as his approach. Somsak viewed this method as a useful tool to lead the students to language accuracy. In addition, Somsak believed that Thai teachers were not as fluent as native-speaker teachers. He felt that focusing on accuracy, which is more objective, would be less risky for him.

In practice, I think my experience of being a teacher, I deduct 0.25 to 0.5 in students' work as I feel that it suits the nature of Thai teachers. I mean, we always focus on grammar and I feel more confident when deduct points on grammatical errors. So when I have to mark the essay, I would use this as it will have less effect on me as a teacher. (Excerpt 16)

Somsak clarified his belief about grammatical correctness in the later interview. At this stage, he was asked to differentiate among analytic scoring, multiple trait scoring, and point deducting. He became aware that the method that he kept using was not the answer for overall writing components. He started questioning his own practice since he could see that focusing only on grammar when deducting from students' scores could not lead to future writing improvement.

I would say that analytic scoring, and multiple trait scoring can be grouped together, but point deducting is different. Analytic scoring and multiple trait scoring give overall elements in writing because they cover the areas of unity, accuracy and organization. When teachers use clear criteria like that, they can be sure that they have covered all aspects of writing which students should be aware of. For point deducting, however, it focuses only on the grammatical aspect. When I think about point deduction that I have done so far, I only focus on deducting score when my students write ungrammatical sentences. It did not cover all aspects like analytic scoring and multiple trait scoring. (Excerpt 17)

During the elicitation interview, Somsak stressed his awareness of the limitations of point deducting, as he rated the method at three. For him, point deduction only tells students their weaknesses in writing rather than showing them their strengths. He said that giving feedback should be multifaceted because students should know several components of writing in order to be effective writers.

In terms of writing improvement, commentary feedback gives a clear comment for most aspects of writing. It also depends on each teacher, whether they tell the students what they expect. But for point deducting, I give this a 3 [neutral in terms of helping the students to improve] because it only tells the students their weakness, not their strength. When the students receive this type of scoring, they'll probably be curious about which point they need to improve. (Excerpt 18)

Not only did students' writing improvement become prominent in his decision to choose certain corrective feedback; practicality was another criterion in his mind when having to explain the differences of each approach when rating.

Written commentary is the most difficult among the three types of feedback. It requires time to read, so I think it's the most demanding. For holistic scoring and multiple trait scoring, you have some guidelines to look at from the descriptors, so they are easier. So I would say these two are the least demanding. (Excerpt 19)

Data from the interviews showed that Somsak believed in providing a single score by deducting marks for grammatical mistakes from students' writing. He tried to focus on multiple aspects of grammar specific to the piece of writing as to have confidence in his feedback. However, when he thought critically about other factors such as students' learning, he seemed to prefer commentary as it was more helpful to provide guidance for improvement. When the the issue of practicality was involved, he seemed to believe that holistic and multiple trait scoring were rather helpful for teachers who have a lot of writing pieces to evaluate.

IV. Discussion

The findings suggest that native and non-native teachers have shared beliefs about scoring feedback. The themes that concomitantly appeared throughout different stages of the repertory grid interviews were students' learning and improvement. Every participant felt that the ultimate goal of giving feedback is to promote learning (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), and this strong belief about the role of feedback has guided their decisions in selecting appropriate approaches of giving feedback. Even though the participants' preferred feedback types seemed to vary, they all supplied the same underlying reasons for using them. The common core of beliefs about feedback seemed to be rooted in the roles that feedback plays in learning, while the approaches used or types of feedback employed seemed to be the result of interplay among different factors. These reflect the complex construct of teachers' beliefs. The participants' deep thought processes elicited from the triadic comparison of different elements of feedback types revealed that they went through intricate steps in deciding what to do. For instance, giving scores seemed to emerge not solely because the method is likely to be simple. It, however, is derived from the teachers' intention to draw students' attention to learning, which starts by providing an overall level of performance in a single number in order not to immediately overwhelm them with complicated details. Interestingly, this similar belief about promoting learning appeared in the reasons of the participants who stated that they believed in commentary feedback. They share the common goal of suggesting ways to improve students' learning and writing performance. This seemed to be the reason why those who supported the use of commentary feedback were worried that detailed feedback may lead to a negative effect when compared to other approaches.

This intricate construct of teachers' beliefs makes it difficult to judge whether we should eradicate holistic scoring as suggested by Hamp-Lyons (2016a, 2016b), as the feedback types seemed to be the tip of the iceberg of teachers' beliefs. Beliefs are personal constructs that play important roles in a teacher's decision to do different things in and outside classes (Kelly, 1955). The narrative stories that native and non-native teachers in this study revealed through the repertory grid interviews suggested that the ways that they employed different feedback types to assess students' writing seemed to involve the interplay of different factors. The major ones include attempts to balance issues (learning and practicality), objectivity of the feedback, personal experience as teachers and learners, and teachers' confidence.

A. Balancing between Learning and Practicality

From the findings, it becomes apparent that teachers who participated in this study believe that the major role of providing feedback is to enhance students' learning, and writing improvement. With their focus on helping the students, the teachers tried to provide feedback that allows students to clearly see the points they need to improve. They seemed to prefer written commentary as the feedback approach which can be used to provide information about what the teachers think about students' writing. Teachers use this method to respond to students' work rather than evaluating it (Hyland, 2003). Therefore, the teachers could pinpoint multiple aspects that need to be improved, and let the students think and be able to revise their writing by themselves. This is in accord with the idea of Hamp-Lyons (2016a, 2016b), who urged teachers to focus on the complex nature of writing, and not only on a single score.

However, when the issue of practicality comes into consideration, teachers may not be able to conform to their beliefs in providing commentary feedback. Previous literature on writing feedback has found that teachers seem to struggle to balance the aim of helping the students to learn, and practical constraints (Ferris, 2014; Junqueira & Payant, 2015; Lee, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Two issues of practicality that come into play when the teachers make decisions to provide feedback involve students and the teachers themselves. For students, the practicality issues relate to their ability, and for teachers, the issues relate to their time and effort in providing feedback. Our study found the proficiency level of the students is one of the major factors. Because the teachers are aware of their students' proficiency level, they are worried that providing commentary feedback may be too complicated and could simply confuse the students. Concerned that learning may not take place if the students cannot understand teachers' feedback, the teachers may try to avoid giving commentary feedback. Instead, they may use simpler feedback approaches such as scoring. What this revealed is an incongruence between teachers' beliefs and practice.

In addition, the amount of effort needed in providing feedback can be seen as a factor that prevents teachers from acting in line with their beliefs. The workload makes them unable to focus on individual writing problems. In addition, classes which are very big (more than 30 students) encourage teachers to select methods that are the most workable for them. As seen from the findings, the teachers seemed to view holistic scoring as the easiest method, even though they believe that commentary feedback is more helpful for the students. Therefore, providing a single score through holistic scoring is still employed by the teachers, even though its effects contradict their beliefs.

B. Enhancing Objectivity of Feedback

The findings revealed teachers' beliefs and concerns about reliability and consistency of their feedback. The teachers attempted to provide clear and understandable feedback, and they tried to use scoring rubrics that provide clear and understandable descriptors. From doing this, they can maintain consistency when marking a lot of essays at the same time. This may be why teachers mentioned analytic scoring and multiple trait scoring as methods that could provide clear guidance. With the explicit descriptors, teachers can give scores and feedback that match the content they have taught, and can enhance the objectivity of their feedback (Hyland, 2003).

C. Influence of Prior Experiences

Experience as both learners and teachers also reinforces teachers' beliefs about effective feedback and guide their decisions. Some teachers had direct positive experience that commentary feedback had worked well for them, and seemed to believe that providing commentary would also work for their students. This supports the idea of Hyland and Hyland (2006) and Lee (2008) that scoring practices may reflect teachers' beliefs about learning and language gained from previous knowledge. Some teachers experienced commentary feedback in their writing while they were learners. Others did not like to have their errors pointed out, as it was discouraging and demotivating to receive papers awash in red ink. For this reason, they tended to avoid using the same approach when they became teachers themselves.

Experience of what works best as a teacher could affect their feedback practices. The use of scoring rubrics can be an effective approach to tell students how well they have performed in a writing task (East & Cushing, 2016), and it could draw students' attention to teachers' feedback. Some students even compare their own score with others in the same class. Knowing that providing scores has appeared successful for them as a teacher, they seem to apply the scoring approach as their method of providing feedback.

D. Lacking Confidence When Giving Feedback

Interestingly, individual confidence can affect teachers' beliefs when deciding to use particular types of feedback. In the present study, non-native teachers mentioned a lack of confidence when providing feedback to students, similar to the study by Junqueira and Payant (2015). For them, the point-deducting type of scoring for language accuracy

(grammatical points) seemed to work best, as they gave teachers more concrete guidelines to refer to when providing feedback, and thus they felt more confident in marking. Their lack of confidence may be related to not having an educational or linguistics background. Therefore, they prefer to play safe when providing feedback. This self-doubt led them to select an approach that has specific guidelines to follow when marking students' writing, and to focus on localized errors, which are more concrete than global errors. Even though they believed that students should be told what they have done wrong in all aspects of writing in order to improve their learning and writing, the teachers' lack of confidence seemed to prevent them from going beyond discrete grammar points in their feedback. They did what they felt certain of, rather than risking themselves by focusing on the use of language when giving feedback. While this may set the non-native teachers apart from their native counterparts, their approach in providing feedback could be what students are able to manage, since the students of the participants are largely local Thais.

V. Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate teachers' beliefs about their scoring feedback through the use of repertory grid interview. The findings revealed that teachers' beliefs were complex, and that factors such as students' learning, teachers' practical considerations, and teachers' personal experience could reinforce their beliefs. It is impossible to consider only one factor without paying attention to the other factors. Teachers' feedback in practice may not reflect their innermost beliefs, and in turn teachers' beliefs may not be reflected in their practice.

Therefore, the repertory grid interview allowed us to tap into teachers' beliefs as it encouraged them to think more critically, and allowed us to see the dimensions that could influence their beliefs. Beliefs about scoring show that teachers employ feedback chiefly as a tool to aid student learning. Although other people may see scoring as only a single number, for teachers, that single score may have many underlying rationales since they have considered several factors, such as students' learning and practicality, in order to reach their decisions in assigning scores. While scoring may seem to be less useful in enhancing students' writing development, it may be useful for teachers as an attention-getter to lead students to their additional comments which can enhance learning.

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Advancing Academic English Teaching and Learning in China: A Meta-analysis

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***Abstract*—Learning Academic English (AE) has been gaining importance day by day globally but China is still lagging behind in this race of Academic English learning and teaching. China is behind the world in teaching and learning English due to many problems that have been creating challenges for Chinese students. This study used the meta-analysis approach to identify the challenges created by the poor academic teaching and learning and the possible solutions to eliminate these challenges. The study uses the correlation and regression analysis to identify the impact of poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity on the challenges faced by the Chinese students. After the identification of the challenges, policy recommendations have been made based on the qualitative data analysis of the previous studies.**

***Index Terms*—Chinese students, Academic English teaching, Academic English learning, meta-analysis, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, language complexity, challenges**

I. Introduction

Background

Learning English as an academic language and in general has become important these days as English is the world's second most spoken language (McKay, 2002). However, Chinese people are still having problems in learning AE language. The AE language impacts their learning level in terms of test design, textbooks in China, curriculum design and teaching methods. All these ideas and designs are borrowed from the USA and UK due to Chinese not fulfilling the requirements in terms of linguistic context (Chen, 2015). Both personal and macro-level factors are the main contributors for this problem. In addition to this, the reason also lies in the less practice and problems arising in listening and speaking English. According to Crystal (2012), before 1980, the importance of English as an academic language was low and it was not considered as the global language. After 1980, the importance of AE language was in a increasing trend and it was considered as the global language (Pan and Block, 2011). It has become essential for students to learn AE as most of the learning material on website and in books are given in the English language.

This world of global commerce, IT, banking, and marketing industries linguistically are dominated by the English globally regardless of the development and protection of local culture, identities, and language. According to Arrighi (2007), China has now become a dominant economic power, so, it is now equally important to evaluate the Chinese people thinking about the AE language learning and teaching in China. However, Chinese traditional teaching methods are not reliable to provide an optimal solution to learn AE. In this study, firstly the current status of AE teaching methods and learning level is discussed. In the end, it is recommended to use effective AE teaching methods which will make it easy to listen and learn the AE language. Moreover, all methods are taken from previous studies to evaluate which method is best for English language teaching and learning. The methods involve steps to follow such as teaching AE writing and reading, teaching English as a cultural value and teaching listening and oral skills in general. This study is an attempt to investigate the reasons behind the limitations of teaching and learning AE as an academic language for Chinese students. After analyzing the extensive literature, case studies, and papers, this study aims at building a model of different styles and features to promote the teaching and learning of AE for Chinese students.

Problem Statement

The problems are: the current status of AE language Learning in China; the standards of AE language learning and teaching at the academic level and the effect of above-mentioned findings on the choice of English norms.

Research Questions

- What is the status and problem of academic English teaching and learning in China?
- How do previous studies deal with these problems?
- What measures does this paper suggest for academic English teaching and learning in China?

Research objectives

- To find the current status of academic English teaching and learning problems in China.
- To find the possible solutions to the problems based on previous research works.

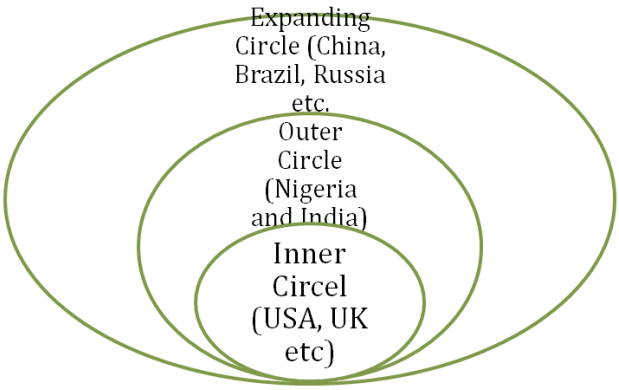
• To find the possible suggestions to enhance the level of academic English teaching and learning in China.

The significance of the Study

This research is to give an idea of the current status of AE language from social, political, educational and economic aspects. The study will give an analysis and overview of Chinese English at an academic level. With respect to this perspective, Chinese English will be seen from different aspects then results can assist in developing new teaching techniques and ESL pedagogy at an academic level.

II. Literature Review

Kachru's Model



(Kachru, 1985)

There are three terms used to speak English in three circles; in outer circle as a second language, in the inner circle as a native language and in expanding circle as a foreign language (Chen, 2015). The inner circle is based in UK, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The outer circle involves Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, and the Philippines. The last expanding circle includes China, Japan, Nepal, Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea, Israel, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and USSR. This model is given by Kachru (1985). China is included in the expanding circle and the English Language is considered as a foreign language in this country due to which Chinese people find it so difficult. Chinese English involves a variety of mixed elements including vocabulary, Chinese culture relevant aspects, pronunciation and sentence structure. Chinese speakers used this English as a bilingual and English in both contexts.

Crystal (2012), discussed the varieties of World English languages which are spoken almost in 75 territories as a first or second language. In addition to this, it is very difficult to obtain the number because the varieties are still growing in the world. Kachru et al. (2009), stated that new Englishes are continuously emerging. In future, it would be challenging to define a world language because Englishes will diverge into unintelligible languages. There is a history of the existence of English language in China. In 1949, China opened to the outside of the world when British English was dominant as a foreign language, however Russian was adopted for some time. The first reason was that the Soviet Union had influenced Chinese education and had British English features. The second reason was that US and China had less contact while the US became politically, socially and economically strong. The third reason was the number of British people in the Chinese editorial field.

In the 1980s, when Chinese industries have become strong and successfully developed, the need for English has been stimulated. Due to development in modernization of industries, trade perspectives, globalization and international reforms, China felt the need to learn AE language for their international relations. A large number of people began to learn American English because of the gradually influence by American entertainment industry including internet, radios, movies, and music. From the history of the development of English in China, it was concluded that social and political contexts have brought English in China (Chen, 2015). Moreover, over 300 million people are learning and using English and this number is continuously increasing according to the requirement of national policy and other relevant policies. For example, English examinations are compulsory for entering universities, schools, and colleges. There are many other motivations to learn AE in China such as acquiring well-paid jobs more easily than those who know Chinese only. Furthermore, English has become essential for those top-ranking universities with bilingual teaching method for science and engineering subjects. Summing up this all means English is growing rapidly in China as well as people are going to international universities to get proficiency in English.

In the Chinese society, there is a strong need to get AE Language training for Chinese students due to increasing migration to oversea institutions for study. According to a research of British Council, AE language training has increased and are the greatest among all the Asian countries (Li, Chen, and Duanmu, 2010). Currently, the English Language has witnessed substantial growth in China due to political and social reforms. In a report, it has been revealed that there are almost 400 million learners of AE language in China due to increases in English language teaching in

schools and colleges. According to China Daily (2010), the importance of AE language in China has increased after the policy reforms which has opened China to the outside world. This has helped the country to enhance trade relationships and has also helped students in the future who have planned to study abroad. However, due to lack of English language learning, it has been found that the Chinese students have faced difficulties in international universities because of lacking proficiency in academic English (Yang and Duan, 2016).

Academic English Learning and Teaching

It is important to understand English for the academic purposes because it has been used extensively by the book writers, researchers, and websites. Most of the academic materials of all subjects are available in the English language on the websites and can only used be used by someone who has a command on the English language (Crystal, 2012). In addition to the availability of academic material in English language, there is another point that makes it necessary for the students to learn AE. For most of the academic degrees internationally, the universities require the students to complete their own research papers as a requirement of degree completion and to publish them in an international journal. The AE language is the first and most important requirement of the journals for a paper for acceptance. The international journals accept the journals written in English language only (Wiley Online Library, 2018).

In learning the AE language, the teachers play a vital role by explaining the grammar rules and analyzing the students' learning outcomes. In addition to the importance of AE language at international level, knowing English as a language has also gained importance globally. There have been a lot of complaints from the teachers and students that the opportunities available to learn English are not enough in their country (Gil, 2008).

The trends of English language teaching began with the formation of Peoples Republic of China back in 1949. Since then Chinese education has been faced with a situation of ups and downs in learning AE as a foreign language. With an increase in the demand of English language, the commitment of both teachers and learners has increased. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1996), the number of English language teachers and students is greater in China than in any other countries. According to Hildebrandt and Liu (1991), the political, economic, and social forces play a crucial role in the expansion of AE Language teaching and learning. Apart from these things, it has been found that there are many problems related to AE language teaching in China creating challenges.

Why is Learning AE important for Chinese Students?

English is an international language which needs to be learned with proficiency for getting higher education in many countries. However in most countries, the increasing trend of learning AE as a second language is significant. In countries like China where educational institutions follow the Chinese language for graduation, learning AE is very difficult for students (Gorsuch, 2011). Students who are going abroad for their higher education have faced many issues during class time to understand teacher's accent and do not score high as expected. There are many personal learning problems due to which Chinese people are unable to learn the English Language. The demand for the English language in China has increased with the globalization of Chinese economy. The globalization of the economy demands the good communication. China has been focusing on promoting the English language after policies and reforms to communicate with other countries in the world. The English Language plays a very important role in all fields including education, business, and media. As an acceptance of the importance of AE language, the Chinese Ministry of Education has come out with policies regarding the English tests and the status of English learning changing since then (Zhang, 2017).

With an increase in the use of English language in academic institutions globally, the importance of learning AE as an language has also increased. Also, the number of Chinese students pursuing further education abroad in well-developed countries i.e., UK and USA has increased. According to a research of British Council, the number of immigrants to the well-developed countries will reach almost 5.8 million by the year 2020. The number of immigrants from China is the largest of the Asian countries (Li, Chen, and Duanmu, 2010). A very large number of Chinese students have migrated to the USA in the past decade. However, it has been found that Chinese students have been facing difficulties in international universities due to lack of proficiency in AE (Yang and Duan, 2016).

Before going for education in the international universities, Chinese students are required to pass the English language tests i.e. TOFEL, IELTS etc that analyze the students' capabilities related to their proficiency in the English language. Chinese students have reported multiple problems related to English learning and speaking. Most of the students reported the scenario to be frustrating for them (Edward, Ran, and Li, 2007).

Students have been facing this problem because AE they have learned from their country is not good enough to compete in the international institutions. From a academic point of view, learning AE means learning the correct sentence structure and tenses of the AE language (Schunk, 2012). It has become essential for Chinese students to learn AE because as it has been affecting their education performance at international institutions. According to Wardlow and Johnson (1999), learning courses in English for students with lack of proficiency in English speaking can affect their educational performance. Li et al., (2010) investigated the relationship between the proficiency in English and academic achievement of Chinese students in US university. It has been found that the lack of proficiency in academic language likely affected negatively on the Chinese students as English is not their major and there is limitied proficiency in their English speaking and understanding. There have been many studies focused on highlighting the issues faced by the Chinese students during their study in an international university (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006; Turner, 2006a; Ding, 2009; Tian and Lowe, 2009).

American and British English language have powerful impact on English teaching in Chinese education sector in

terms of teaching methods, curriculum design, textbooks, and assessment. For instance, English translation in English teaching system is not enough to achieve the goal of making students able to speak English fluently. In previous studies, various authors discussed that English teaching methods should be different from other methods which are adopted in other countries including those in an inner and outer circle because Chinese are in expanding circle where English is neither a second and nor a native language. In addition to this, Chinese cultural environment is not good for practicing English because there are limited people who speak English. Meanwhile, English curricula designs should not be adopted in Chinese educational institutions because Chinese learning abilities are different from those from countries involved in the inner circle. In addition to this, curricula design should also involve speaking and listening courses while previous courses involve only writing and reading courses.

Current Status of Academic English teaching and learning in China

During the past decade, a tremendous shift has been seen in the status of AE language in China as it seems to have replace the Russian language. As a result of the official policy of the government of China in the National Education System, the importance of AE language in China has increased (Adamson, 2002). Considering the new policy reforms, the Chinese government has giving increased attention to recovering the position of English language teaching. In addition, Chinese parents are also aware of the importance of AE language now being advertised by the Chinese government. After this reform, there are so many institutions opened in China to meet the demands of parents. According to a report, the number of such institutions in China has reached 50,000 (Zhang, 2017).

In 1978, the Chinese government adopted opening up policy and reform due to which English education has entered into China (Li and Moreira, 2009). With respect to population, Chinese English learners are largest in the world. As stated by Bolton and Graddol (2012), since 2010 more than 400 million people have been involved in English learning. It is compulsory at a primary level until college graduation to learn English. The growth level has not reached the maturity level but the Chinese government has taken powerful actions to implement AE learning and teaching effective actions in the education department. Despite all the efforts of the government, college learning level is not sufficient to improve student's English listening and speaking and does not foster their interests to learn English with proficiency. Due to which new methods and techniques are needed to develop and monitor the Chinese Education sector (Chen, 2015).

Additionally, there is a lack of policies by the government for promoting the English language. The Chinese people consider it of no importance that they learn English. In their opinion, it is completely alright because foreigners also don't know the Chinese language. Currently, the government of China has made some policies for the improvement of AE to overcome the problems Chinese students have been facing in Education and the working field. However, the impact of poor policies of the past still affects the Chinese system. The trends seemed to be changed very quickly for the education of foreign language after the formation of P.R.C. The policies related to foreign language in China changed very quickly between the 1950s and 1990s. According to Gil and Adamson (2011), in the era of 1950s, the Russian language was promoted in China and the English teachers were also changed to Russian teachers. Later in the early 1960s, the policies were changed and the English teachers again got some value and replaced the Russian teachers. Again from the late 1960s till the half of seventies, the English Language was banned and restricted in the educational institutions. The whole discussion shows that there is an improvement in Chinese learning by the Chinese students but there still needs to be development as students have been facing challenges in the foreign countries.

The Development and motivation for Using Chinese as a Second Language

According to Cook (2016), most people globally learn a second language other than their national language. This generates an issue on how the second language can be learned effectively. Generally, in most of the countries, the second language is taught as a separate subject in the classrooms. According to Lyster & Ballinger, (2011), in this process, the primary concern is to teach the students a second language with the help of their first language. This helps the teachers to communicate the second language to the students in a very meaningful way (Genesee, 2006). The effectiveness of such programs related to the learning of English has been supported by many hypotheses of English learning. According to (Krashen, 1982), when the teachers deliver the content in the English, the learners certainly gives the content more attention which results in better learning of English. It has been observed that the students learn more about English through interacting with their peers and teachers. This is because it allows a high level of interaction due to better input and feedback from the peers and teachers about the language. According to Long (2005), these comprehensive scenarios help the individuals in learning the English language. Considering all these points, it will be possible for the students to use the English language as a mode of integration in the classrooms and in the outside world.

III. Methodology

The study adopts both qualitative and quantitative data analysis and also uses both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected using the past literature, case studies, and surveys. The secondary data was collected using a questionnaire that was distributed among 330 respondents consisting of Chinese students and teachers.

Selecting the past studies for qualitative analysis

In terms of both qualitative and quantitative approaches for the analysis of the topic, the first task was to select the appropriate studies to support the data analysis and discussion. This study focused to get the most recent research as the

purpose of the study to evaluate the current situation of AE language learning in China and the reforms that are required. For this, the study accesses the reviewed journals and dissertations to evaluate the difficulties of Chinese in the field of English. The study has recognized and reviewed the studies published in 1980 or afterward. The previous studies are identified and reviewed to identify if they are appropriate enough to be included in the meta-analysis of this study. During the identification process, the studies with irrelevant data were avoided.

Data Collection and Techniques

In addition to the qualitative data analysis, the study also includes the quantitative data analysis. In this study, we collected primary data through the questionnaire. Initially, the questionnaires were distributed among 330 respondents. Total 315 complete questionnaires in all aspects were received back that have been included in the study to do a quantitative analysis. The samples for the data collection purposes were selected randomly. The respondents made sure about the secrecy of their responses. Regression and correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between variables. Given below is the questionnaire distributed among the respondents to collect responses.

IV. Results and Analysis

Results

To estimate the effects of poor English teaching facilities (PETF), worse intelligibility (WI), grammatical issues (GI), poor communication skills (PCS), and language complexity (LC) on the challenges (C) faced by the Chinese students, this study estimates the reliability, regression, and correlation.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.832	6

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha test is used. According to Zacks (2012), the range of reliability is decided according to the measures used in the study. According to Ellis (2013), the value of Cronbach alpha more than 0.7 shows the reliability of the variables. In this study, the Cronbach alpha is used to check the reliability of variables included in this study.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation test is estimated using the SPSS software to analyze the relationship between the variables included in this study. If the P-value of the correlation will be less than or equal to 0.05, this means that there is a significant relationship and a p-value less than or equal to 0.01 shows a highly significant relationship. The coefficient of correlation shows the intensity of the relationship between two variables and a value of more than 0.80 can generate the problem of multicollinearity. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the intensity and trend of relationship between two variables can be estimated through the correlation analysis.

The degree, trend, significance, and strength of the bivariate relation between all the variables can be estimated using Pearson correlation (Sekaran, 2003). The Person correlation is used to determine the relationship between two variables and the value of correlation coefficient lies between +1.0 and -1.0. The +1.0 value means that association is perfectly positive and the value -1.0 means that the relationship is perfectly negative. The absence of any relationship is shown by 0 value of the correlation coefficient.

Table 2
Correlations Analysis

		PETF	WI	GI	PCS	LC	C
PETCF	Pearson Correlation	1	.664**	.120*	.245**	.336**	.389**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.034	.000	.000	.000
WI	Pearson Correlation	.664**	1	.329**	.350**	.531**	.613**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
GI	Pearson Correlation	.120*	.329**	1	.624**	.501**	.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
PCS	Pearson Correlation	.245**	.350**	.624**	1	.542**	.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
LC	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.531**	.501**	.542**	1	.538**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
C	Pearson Correlation	.389**	.613**	.622**	.493**	.538**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

The challenges are found to have positive and highly significant relationship with all the independent variables. The correlation coefficient between Poor English Teaching Facilities and Challenges is .38 with P-value less than 0.01 means there is positive and highly significant relationship between Poor AE Teaching Facilities and Challenges. This means that the Poor English Teaching Facilities will increase the challenges for Chinese students in learning English language. The correlation coefficient between Worse Intelligibility and Challenges is .61 with P-value less than 0.01 means there is positive and highly significant relationship between Worse Intelligibility and Challenges. This shows that the poor intelligibility of Chinese students will increase problems for them in learning English Language. The

correlation coefficient between Grammatical Issues and Challenges is .62 with P-value less than 0.01 means there is positive and highly significant relationship between Grammatical Issues and Challenges. This shows that the Grammar of Chinese students will increase problems for them in learning English Language. The correlation coefficient between poor communication skills and Challenges is .49 with P-value less than 0.01 means there is positive and highly significant relationship between Grammatical Issues and Challenges. This means that the students with the poor communication will face more challenges in AE language learning. Lastly, the correlation coefficient between language complexity and Challenges is .53 with P-value less than 0.01 means there is positive and highly significant relationship between language complexity and Challenges. This clearly means that if the students will have a language complexity, it will be difficult for them to learn AE Language.

All the independent variables included in the student are also positively and highly significantly correlated with each other except the grammatical issues and poor teaching facilities that are positive but significant at 0.05 levels. The significant and positive relationship of the independent variables shows that any of one of these problems can generate the other problems as well and then can lead to problems in learning the AE.

Regression Analysis

The regression model is used to estimate the relationship between dependent and independent variables. SPSS software was used to estimate the regression model. Primary data was collected through the questionnaire for the Chinese students in learning the AE.This study involves 5 independent and one dependent variable. In the table below, is a regression analysis to find the impact of poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity on Challenges faced by Chinese students in learning AE.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.763[a]	.582	.575	.58206

The value of R in this study is .76 which shows the total variations in poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity. R square in the model is called coefficient of determination and shows the fitness of the regression model to the regression line (Zikmund et al., 2013). The value of R square in this model is .582 and shows that the total variations in the challenges faced by the Chinese students are due to poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity. The value of adjusted R Square in the model shows the degree of the fitness of the variables. according to Munir et al., (2013), with an increase in the number of variables in the study, the value of adjusted R square decreases. The closeness between the R square and adjusted R Square shows the presence of useful variables in the study. The value of adjusted R Square in this study is .575 close to the value of R Square which means that the independent variables involved in the study are true determinants of the dependent variable.

TABLE 4:
REGRESSION ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	145.497	5	29.099	85.891	.000[b]
	Residual	104.688	309	.339		
	Total	250.185	314			

The value of F-Statistics in the model shows the significance of the overall model. The value of F-statistics can be compared with the standard significance value. A value of significance below 0.05 shows the significance of the model. The value of significance of the above model is 0.000 which means that the impact of poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity on Challenges faced by Chinese student is highly significant.

TABLE 5:
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Constant	.737	.200		3.685	.000
	PETF	.076	.044	.086	1.739	.038
	WI	.031	.045	.035	.698	.048
	GI	.384	.045	.425	8.599	.000
	PCS	.329	.048	.384	6.922	.000
	LC	.037	.040	.046	.920	.035

According to Saunders (2011), the B in the model is unstandardized coefficient and shows the change in the Challenges with one unit change in poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility, grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity. The value of the constant in the model in .737 and this shows the average value of challenges faced by the Chinese students when poor English teaching facilities, worse intelligibility,

grammatical issues, poor communication skills, and language complexity will be zero.

The B value of poor English teaching facilities is .07 with a significance value .03 < .05 means that one unit increase in poor teaching facilities will increase the challenges by .07 units. The B value of worse intelligibly is .03 with a significance value of .04 < .05 means that with one unit increase in worse intelligibility, the challenges will increase by .07 units. The B value of grammatical issues is .34 with a significance value of .00 < .01 means that one unit increase in grammatical issues will increase the challenges by .34 units. The B value of poor communication skills is .32 with a significance value of .00 < .01 means that with one unit increase in poor communication skills there be .32 unit increase in the challenges. The B value of language complexity is .03 with a significance value .03 < .05 means that one unit increase in language complexity will increase the challenges by .03 units.

V. Discussion

The results show that the poor English teaching facilities in China are one of the main causes that create challenges for Chinese students in learning AE. The problem has been explained by many studies considering different factors. There is lack of AE teachers in China and this is due to lacking English speaking practice on the routine basis. The opportunities to learn AE are limited resulting in reduced demand for English teachers. The available English teachers go to the bigger cities to get higher paid jobs and this creates a gap for English language teachers (Gil, 2008). One of the resources they have beenunderutilized is their own students studying in foreign countries. The reason for the shortage of teachers can be related to the underutilization of the English teacher resources produced in the form of university graduates or postgraduates from the UK or any other international countries. The underutilization means that they can't get the equal salaries as paid to the English teachers from foreign countries; therefore, they prefer to stay abroad and get higher paying jobs. They can be proven as a gem for the Chinese students, but most of the times this is wasted.

The students also suffer from the teaching styles of the English teachers. AE language teachers while teaching mostly focus on accent and try to speak in speed and this creates the problem for the Chinese students (Yang, 2017). Holmes (2004) investigates the issues by collecting the data from 13 Chinese students studying in New Zealand and found that the learning abilities of students was affected by the speed of their lecturer. It has been observed that the students have been facing a problem because the English speed they are used to listening to consists of 160-180 words per minute, but, the normal speed of speaking English in international universities generally lies between 220-240 words per minute (Yang, 2017). In addition to speed, the accent of teachers is also found to be a reason behind the difficulties faced by Chinese students. According to Shi (2007), due to differences in accent, students find it difficult to understand their teachers and peers and hence difficult to communicate with them.

Another possible resource for English language learning is by approaching the foreign teachers. This resource, however, is found to be costly in case of China due to high salary demands. Due to the very high cost, it is not possible for the Chinese government to approach a large number of foreign teachers. As an alternative to foreign teachers, the local native teachers can be approached and can be utilized after a short-term training (Rao and Yuan, 2016). They seemed to be a better option because the student may face problems in understanding the accent of foreigner teachers. The situation, sometimes, leads to serious issues when the students fail to learn the AE even from a high paid teacher.

The results of the study found that the worse intelligibility is another major cause that creates challenges for the Chinese students. The reason for finding difficulty in AE learning is the lack of spoken intelligibility and unfamiliarity with the correct English accent. The results are consistent with Yang and Yuen (2014), which states that the problem of unfamiliarity with accent further leads to lack of proficiency in Chinese English language learners. Also, it has been found that the Chinese students hold the worse spoken intelligibility of the English language as they try to understand English in Chinese accent (Harding, 2012). According to research by Yang and Yuen (2014), this problem occurs due to the inefficiency of teachers in teaching AE. Chinese teachers also use Chinese English rather than the Standard English during the training sessions. This makes the students confident for the time being but then they face difficulties when communicating with the outside world. This problem can be solved only by practicing the English language to enhance the spoken skills. This will increase the communication and will then increase the English learning capabilities (Jin and Liu, 2014).

According to the results of the study, grammatical issues are the important factors that lead to generating Challenges for the Chinese students in learning the language. In support of the results, Huang (2005), discussed that native Chinese speakers find the English language difficult to learn such as sounds and grammar issues. Compared to English, in the Chinese language, there are limited numbers of sounds one needs to learn. In Chinese, a single word is used to convey the whole message sometimes, and compared to this; the English language has so many words and further include many characters. Another problem is the poor grammar of Chinese people. Bao and Sun (2010) focused on the grammatical issues Chinese people have in learning English as an academic language. The basics of Chinese language are entirely different from the English language and don't include tenses or any grammatical aspects. For the Chinese students, learning English as an academic language means learning all the new rules of the grammar and tenses. Vocabulary also seems to create the problem for the Chinese students. New words used by the teachers and unknown expressions are likely to create the problem for the students. The problem related to vocabulary likely occurs in case of incompetency of the students' existing vocabulary knowledge of the English language. It has been observed that the students feel uncomfortable in the classrooms when they come across unfamiliar words and also when they can't find the words to

communicate their point of view (Yang and Yuen, 2014).

The poor communication skills are also found to create issues for the Chinese students in learning the English language. As stated by Holmes (2004), the oral communication problems, the Chinese students have reported are mainly due to inablilty to understand the teacher's viewpoint and at the same time they feel uncomfortable in asking questions as they have no proficiency of the English language. The Chinese students in the Chinese education environment are reported to be restricted to a lecture dominated environment that doesn't allow them to contribute in the classroom. Contrary to this, the American universities have developed an environment of interacting with the students during the lecture to enhance their understanding of the topic through a question-answer session. The Chinese students seem to face difficulties in this environment. The only thing suggested, in this case, is to focus on the English academic learning of Chinese students.

Lastly, the results have found that the complexity of English language compared to Chinese is another main cause of hurdles in English language learning. As stated by Huang (2008), some of the problems and challenges the students face in learning English are that the English language has too many sounds and words. According to Harwell, Chinese have limited syllables, exactly 412 only. It is very easy for English speakers to learn Chinese because there are few new sounds. On the other hand, when Chinese students learn English they are confronted with a complete suite of sounds with which they are not familiar. The reason for a huge number of sounds is that words have been taken from Dutch, French, German and Latin to form a set of vocabulary in the English language. The second problem is spelling of english. This is due to Chinese students lack of understanding the complexity in sentences. There are many apps and computer software which enable the students to learn English but those are also not programmed to understand native speakers' communication style. These apps and software translate the simple sentence for developing understanding (Harwell, 2016). Moreover, Chinese are confused about silent words for example; they pronounce "Know" as "keh-Now" and "Damn" as "Dam". In addition to this, they cannot differentiate Qu from Qw and Gu from Gw. The third problem is related to grammar which is discussed above by Aiguo (2007). The fourth problem is tenses which are a new concept for students in China. Finally, it is evaluated that the Chinese language does not have rules and regulation that's why it is easy to learn. However, English language rules related to tenses, vocabulary and pronunciation make it difficult for them to learn.

VI. Conclusion

The empirical evidence of the study indicates that there are multiple factors that have been generating challenges for Chinese students in learning the English language in China It has been observed from the literature that the policy reforms have been implemented to improve the English language teaching and learning. The government of China has been focusing on bringing policy reforms and has directed the Chinese Education System about the improvements that are needed. The teachers, students, and even the parents of the students are found to be very motivated towards learning English language as the Chinese people are lagging behind due to the English language when it comes to interacting with the outside world.

It has been found that the English teaching facilities in China are relatively poor. It was found there is a lack of local English teachers in China and foreign teachers have been found to be too costly for the country. Additionally, the teaching style of local English teachers is also creating issues. Lack of intelligibility also seems to create a problem for the Chinese students. This means that the poor English accent unfamiliarity with English accent doesn't allow the Chinese students to become quick English learners. Chinese students are having more grammatical issues at a greater extent in terms of tenses, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The involvement of tenses in the English language compared to Chinese is a big issue. Additionally, the vocabulary of English language is much more than the Chinese language making it a difficult language to learn.

The poor communications skills are found to create challenges as Chinese students who want to study abroad face many difficulties in interacting with peers and teachers. The complexity of English Language is found to be the main cause of poor AE learning of Chinese students. There are so many sounds and words in the English language and there are so many other requirements for completing a sentence. All these problems have made it difficult for the Chinese students to learn the English language.

VII. Implications

To solve the problems Chinese students are facing in AE learning, some policy reforms are recommended for the Chinese system. The Ministry of Education is suggested to take strict decision related to English language testing of students as a condition for the entry in college or university. The government has made some policies about this and included a English component with Math and Chinese test to get admission in the college or university. However, the process needs to be stricter to solve the problem of students in the future (Bolton and Graddol, 2012).

The government of China is suggested to introduce new programs related to English language learning and teaching. In China, a 9-year program has been introduced recently and according to this program, the English language learning will be completed in 9 levels. It is expected to change the style of teaching completely and will also give importance to the grammar and vocabulary development. This new program will help the ability of Chinese students to use the

English language in their daily lives and will also help them to increase their communication abilities. The program will help Chinese students get proficiency in English to help them in understanding their courses and doing their own research work. What needs to be done now regarding this is to make sure that the level 9 should be completed with the high standards to ensure the better state of students related to AE (Lin, 2002).

The government also needs to make policies to enhance the reading abilities of the students. It is necessary to increase the reading abilities as well because most of the study material in form of books and online material is available in English language. This requires the students to have an ability to read the English language easily. Regarding this, it should be targeted that the students can read English fluently in order to communicate and to express their opinion (Lin, 2002). Following all these suggestions, policies, and ways, it can be possible to solve the problem of AE learning issues at the national level and in international education institutions.

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The Effects of Topic Interest and L2 Proficiency on Writing Skill among Iranian EFL Learners

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***Abstract*—This study investigated the effect of topic interest and l2 proficiency on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. To fulfil this objective, 60 (30 pre-intermediate and 30 intermediate) learners from two high schools in Zarindasht, Fars, Iran were selected based on administering an Oxford Quick Placement Test. The selected participants were then non-randomly divided into two equal experimental groups; namely Pre-Intermediate High-Interest Topics group (PHIT group) and Intermediate Low-Interest Topics group (ILIT group). After that, the topic interest questionnaire was given to the students to assess their interest level in each topic. When the students' level of interest was specified, the PHIT group received five high-interest topics and five low-interest topics were given to the ILIT group. Then, the researcher measured the participants' English writing skill by administering a researcher-made writing pre-test. In both groups' classroom, the interested topics were taught to learners in 12 sessions and learners wrote on each topic. After the instruction, a writing post-test was administered to the both groups and finally the data were analyzed by using paired and independent samples t-tests. The obtained results indicated that there was a significant difference between the post-tests of PHIT and ILIT groups. The findings indicated that the PHIT group significantly outperformed the ILIT group ($p < .05$) on the post-test. The implications of this study can make the teachers aware that topic interest plays an important role in improving writing skill.**

***Index Terms*—interest, topic interest, writing skill, Iranian EFL learners**

I. Introduction

Learning a second language includes the involvement of four pivotal skills; listening speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a definitive and final ability that students should learn. It is an essential communication skill that cannot be gained; it can be socially transmitted or can be learned through formal direction. Among the four skills of language, writing and speaking are productive skills (Bristow Evans, 2018). Of course, there are notable differences between them. All normal people learn to speak while writing should be instructed to them. In contrast with talking, composing forces more noteworthy requests on the students since there is no quick criticism in composed collaboration. The writer needs to prognosticate the reader's interaction and create a text which comport to Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. Based on this principle, the writer should attempt to compose a reasonable, important, honest, useful, fascinating, and paramount content. The reader, then again, expounds the text regarding the writer's assumed purpose if the essential pieces of information are accessible in the content. Phonetic exactness, lucidity of introduction, and association of thoughts are on the whole basic in the adequacy of the informative demonstration, since they give the essential pieces of information to understanding.

Considering the fact that the objective of writing teaching is urge students to impart adequately, through writing, it is of significance to discover why a few students are reluctant to get associated with composing exercises in the classrooms. Such unwillingness, which may be credited to their discernments and demeanors, as a rule influences student to lose their enthusiasm for writing. Gradually, they would conclude that they are not able to make any development in their writing classes. The problem is earnest in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting where there is little introduction to the objective language outside the classroom. In accordance with the hypothesis of contemplated activity, investigation in instruction proposes that learner discernments and states of mind toward a subject result to scholarly achievement (Popham, 2005; Royster, Kimharris, & Schoeps, 1999). Therefore, appropriate consideration should be paid to the impact of learners' cognitions and attitudes toward their classroom writing.

To date, rare studies have been done on investigating the nature of the interaction between the factors of topic interest and L2 proficiency on writing improvement. Moreover, the existent study on the different components listed above has mostly been carried out with adult writer participants, including writing enhancement as the consequence variable of interest (e.g. Carrell & Wise, 1998). Yet numerous L2 students in educational settings are children and adolescents. The

addendum part emphasizes the pertinent discoveries in the extant literature on L1 and L2 reading comprehension, writing development and vocabulary acquisition and identifies the existent gaps and impediments, which legitimize the present examination trying to reveal new insight into student inclusion in L2 writing process.

A. Objectives and Significance of the Study

This study follows two crucial aims; the first one is investigating the effects of topic interest on improving Iranian EFL learners' writing improvement. The second one is inspecting if L2 language proficiency has any effect on enhancing writing skill.

This study provides some implications for language educators in simplifying L2 writing process. The important positive effect of topic interest on L2 writing ability for learners of all proficiency levels supports teachers' and material developers' endeavors to equip the students' selective topics to increase their writing ability. The students can maximize their vocabulary knowledge unintentionally through writing texts. Findings from this investigation can ensure L2 writing specialists as well as educators that one source of L2 writing troubles is the lack of interest to topics. Given the proper pattern and most loved themes, writers may be able to perceive texts and dominate their inadequately improved linguistic information.

B. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study was designed to find answer to the following questions:

RQ 1. Does topic interest have any significant impact on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill?

RQ 2. Does L2 proficiency significantly impact Iranian EFL learners' writing skill?

The following null hypotheses were tested:

H0 1. Topic interest does not have any significant impact on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill.

H0 2. L2 proficiency does not significantly impact Iranian EFL learners' writing skill.

II. Review of the Literature

A. The Impact of Topic Interest, Reading Proficiency, and Gender on L1 Reading Comprehension

Previous studies on L1 reading has shown that different parts of the reading procedure were significantly facilitated through topic interest. For example, Ainley, Hidi, and Berndorff (2002) operationalized the mental procedures that interceded interest and learning and, through basic condition demonstrating, they detailed that topic interest affirmatively impacted students' affect, which expanded the level of learners' determination, the next straightforwardly affecting reading comprehension.

L1 research has likewise demonstrated that topic interest communicates with other student factors, for example, reading proficiency, verbal capacity, and gender. For instance, early examination by Walker, Noland, and Greenshields (1979) explored the joined impacts of L1 reading capacity and topic enthusiasm on reading understanding. The investigation detailed noteworthy impacts of theme enthusiasm on reading comprehension in that members better understand sections portraying more intriguing points than those delineating less fascinating subjects. Furthermore, contrasts in perception over the fluctuating topic interest conditions were more noticeable in less capable readers than in more capable readers. However, an examination by Stevens (1980) revealed that more capable readers perceive more from the more intriguing texts than less fascinating ones, however no distinctions in understanding because of topic interest were acquired for less capable readers.

More recently, in an examination on L1 perusing perception evaluation, Bray and Barron (2004) explored the connections between topic interest, verbal capacity, and another applicable reader- based factor (i.e. sexual orientation). Their outcomes uncovered a reliably solid positive connection between verbal capacity and reading comprehension for all members paying little respect to their level of enthusiasm for the reading materials. What's more, they revealed better perception by young ladies contrasted with young men, and a more grounded positive connection between interest level and appreciation for young ladies contrasted with young men. In other words, topic interest affected girls' performance more than boys' performance. Yet, different examinations considering the double impacts of sexual orientation and theme enthusiasm on L1 perusing cognizance got diverse outcomes (Ainley, Hillman, & Hidi, 2002; Walker et al., 1979), whereby perception was fundamentally influenced by subject intrigue, yet just for young men. In these examinations, young men scored altogether higher on high-intrigue writings contrasted with low-intrigue writings, though young ladies' understanding execution stayed steady paying little heed to their level of enthusiasm for the topics. Ainley, Hillman, et al. (2002) additionally showed the component of the impacts noted above utilizing a PC program to analyze the connections between sex, topic interest, and comprehension. This examination acquired a 'dynamic evaluation' (p. 417) of topic enthusiasm by not only chronicle intrigue levels through a Likert-type scale, yet by likewise recording students' online full of feeling reactions to entries (i.e. selection of emotions to speak to sentiments evoked by a content), constancy in reading (i.e. choices to keep reading, time spent reading, and number of entry areas read). Comprehension was additionally evaluated on the web. Through way investigations, they presumed that the level of topic interest was essentially connected with full of feeling reactions to writings, which added to the level of industriousness in reading, the last being corresponded with perception. Apportioning the higher-from the lower-interest messages, the specialists additionally detailed an immediate impact of sexual orientation on topic interest and

determination, whereby just the girls persevered with less fascinating writings. This examination features the instrument by which topic interest may differentially influence reading understanding in light of different elements, for example, sex.

Generally, the L1 literature done mainly with children and adolescents has administered sturdy impacts of interest on reading comprehension as well as remarkable interactions with gender and reading or verbal capability. The L1 research results are important because this research is additionally concerned with grade school students' writing skill.

B. The Impacts of Topic Interest, Reading Proficiency, and Gender on L2 Reading Comprehension

L2 reading research has generally centered on post-pubescent and adolescents and has been less fruitful in acquiring critical impacts of topic interest and sexual orientation on reading understanding. For example, Carrell and Wise (1998) and Joh (2006) found no noteworthy impacts of topic interest on their measures of L2 reading comprehension. Nonetheless, there were methodological confinements to these examinations. For instance, Carrell and Wise's estimation of interest had flawed legitimacy in that students rank requested their enthusiasm for 10 reference book-based themes, paying little respect to their genuine interest for every subject. In spite of the fact that this measure may have shown learners' enthusiasm for the given topics with respect to others, it didn't mirror their total enthusiasm for every subject. Carrell and Wise found no huge primary impact of sex on reading comprehension in their examination, supporting reports by Young and Oxford (1997) and Brantmeier (2003). Interestingly, Young and Oxford found that females more regularly than guys utilized local techniques, for example, lexical inferencing to determine the importance of new words. Subsequently, it is conceivable that there are differential impacts of topic enthusiasm on L2 reading comprehension in light of the sexual orientation of the readers.

However, in independent examinations, LeLoup (1993) and Er çetin (2010) got huge impacts of topic interest on L2 reading comprehension. These examinations exhibited that students reviewed fundamentally more data from high-intrigue passages contrasted with low-intrigue passages. LeLoup (1993) additionally discovered huge impacts for the factors of L2 capacity and sex (females reviewed more data than guys). Through regression modeling, LeLoup's examination ascribed most of the watched fluctuation in L2 reading comprehension to the variable of L2 capacity (28%– 41%), trailed by topic interest (9%), and sexual orientation (6%). LeLoup inferred that females might be more encouraged by high-intrigue topics than guys, and that guys might be more prevented when reading low-intrigue subjects contrasted with females.

C. Empirical Studies

Ebrahimi and Javanbakht (2015) examined the impact of topic interest on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. With a specific end goal to achieve this point, an experimental method was intended for data collection. Ten EFL students were arbitrarily chosen keeping in mind the end goal to discover how much the students are occupied with reading texts. They answered an interest survey which was designed for this objective. Based on students' responses regarding their interests in reading texts, three most interested topics were given to the control group and three least interested topics were given to the experimental group. The reading texts were taught to learners in three sessions and learners answered their comprehension questions. The students' scores were gathered and submitted for data analysis. The consequence of t-test demonstrated that there is a significant difference between experimental and control group in their performance on reading comprehension texts.

Lee and Pulido (2016) examined the impact of topic interest, as well as L2 proficiency and gender, on L2 vocabulary acquisition through reading. A repeated-measures design was utilized with 135 Korean EFL students. Participants read both high- and low-interest topic passages and took vocabulary posttests (word-form recognition, translation recognition, and translation production) immediately and four weeks after reading. Analyses indicated significant impacts of topic interest and L2 proficiency, and a significant interaction between topic interest and gender. These outcomes were maintained over time. The article deduces by discussing the reinforcing role of topic interest, developing on the motivational factor considered in the involvement load hypothesis.

III. Method

A. Participants

The participants of this study were 60 (30 pre-intermediate and 30 intermediate) language learners who were selected among 90 junior high school students at two high schools in Zarindasht, Fars, Iran based on Oxford Quick Placement Test. Their level of English language proficiency was determined on the basis of their scores on the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The participants' age range was 14 to 18. Only males were participated in the current study. They have been studying English as a foreign language for at least three years. The learners were randomly divided into two experimental groups (Pre-Intermediate High-Interest Topics group (PHIT group) and Intermediate Low-Interest Topics group (ILIT group)). There were 30 participants in each group.

B. Instrumentation

The first instrument is a proficiency test, Key English Test (KET), which was given to the students to measure their English language proficiency. KET examinations reflect a view of language proficiency in terms of a language user's

overall communicative ability; at the same time, for the purposes of practical language assessment, the notion of overall ability is subdivided into different skills and sub-skills. Four main skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are recognized, and each of these is assessed within the three test papers (Ramshaw, 2010). This test determined whether the participants are at high; intermediate; or low level.

The second instrument was a topic interest inventory consisting of a 5-items questionnaire was used to assess learners' level of interest in the passage topics. Students were instructed to rate their level of interest in each topic on a scale of 1 ('not interesting') to 7 ('very interesting'). Some reading topics were included in this questionnaire and participants were wanted to rate their level of interest in each topic. Four of them were selected- two highest interest and two lowest interest. The topics were chosen from those which students like the most such as sport, fashion, cosmetic, cooking, and plastic surgery. These topics were selected with the help of supervisor.

The third and the most important instrument for gathering the needed data to reply the research question was a researcher-made writing pre-test. It was based on the students' course book. It included two topics which the students were required to write about one of them arbitrarily. The researcher asked the participants to write a composition on a selected topic. The respondents should write a composition with at least 100-150 words. The pre-test was administered in the class under the supervision of the researcher so as to make sure that the students do it by themselves. After writing about the topic, all the compositions were collected and graded by two English teachers according to the same criteria. The raters considered the students' grammatical correctness, the meaningful of the sentences and the length of each composition while measuring the students' writing skill. The students' errors in (grammatical correctness, the meaningful of the sentences and the length of each composition) were counted and then scored. The validity of the pre-test was confirmed by two English experts and its reliability was computed through using inter-rater reliability by means of Pearson correlation analysis and it was 0.817 (r=0.817).

Finally, a researcher-made writing post-test was used in the present study. The post-test was based on the topics which were taught to the groups. The post-test included two topics and the students should write about one of them. Two raters rated the students' compositions. The post-test was run to measure the impact of the treatment on the participants' writing improvement. It should be noted that the validity of the post-test was confirmed by two those English experts who validated the pre-test and its reliability was calculated through using inter-rater reliability by means of Pearson correlation analysis and it was 0.986 (r=0.956).

C. Data Collection Procedures

To conduct the present study, the researcher administrated the OQPT to 90 Iranian junior high school students to determine their level of English proficiency. The researcher selected 60 intermediate and pre-intermediate students and randomly divided them into two experimental groups (PHIT group and ILIT group). After that, the topic interest questionnaire was given to the students to assess their interest level in each topic. When the students' level of interest was determined, five high-interest topics were given to the PHIT group and five low-interest topics were given to the ILIT group. Then they were pretested through the researcher-made writing pre-test. Before writing on the topic, the teacher used prewriting activities including brainstorming technique to collect the students' ideas and information about the topic. This was done to activate and prepare the students to write. In each session, one topic was given to the students to write a composition about it. Their compositions were collected and graded at the end of each session. This procedure continued to teach all the topics. After teaching all the topics, a writing post-test based on high-interest topics was given to the experimental group and a writing post-test based on low-interest topics was given to the control group. Finally, the data were analyzed by following the next section.

D. Data Analysis Procedures

In order to answer the research question, data analysis was carried out by using SPSS software version 25. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used to check the normality of the gathered data. Secondly, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation were computed. Thirdly, to examine the impacts of l2 proficiency and topic interest on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill, independent and paired samples t-tests were run.

IV. Results

At first in order to find out whether the gathered data were normally distributed, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run on all scores of pre and post-test.

TABLE 1.
ONE-SAMPLE KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST (GROUPS' PRE AND POST-TESTS)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
PHIT Group Pretest	.148	30	.091
PHIT Group Posttest	.152	30	.076
ILIT Group Pretest	.137	30	.158
ILIT Group Posttest	.128	30	.200*

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 1 shows that the scores of both groups in pre and post-test were normally distributed, that is the Asymp significance level was less than the observed value (.091, .076, .158, .200> .05), and accordingly the criteria for running parametric statistics like *t*-test were met. Descriptive statistics of the pre-test of both groups is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
GROUP STATISTICS (PRE-TEST OF BOTH GROUPS)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	PHIT group	30	18.0667	1.43679	.26232
	ILIT group	30	17.5333	1.71672	.31343

Table 2 shows the performance of both PHIT group and ILIT group in the pre-test. The mean score of the ILIT group (M = 17.5333) was greater than the mean score of the PHIT group (M = 18.0667). This difference does not seem to be a significant one, but to ascertain whether it is or not, Independent Samples *t*-test is run in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST (PRE-TEST OF BOTH GROUPS)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	2.154	.148	1.305	58	.197	.533	.408	-.284	1.351
	Equal variances not assumed			1.305	56.25	.197	.533	.408	-.285	1.352

Table 3 shows that since the *Sig.* (2-tailed) value is greater than the alpha level (.05 < .197), it could be argued that there was not a statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores of the learners in the PHIT group (M = 18.0667, SD = 1.43679) and the participants in ILIT group (M = 17.5333, SD = 1.71672). Therefore, it was concluded that the difference between the two groups was insignificant at the beginning of the treatment. After the treatment was done, the participants in both groups sat for writing post-test. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics related to these analyses.

TABLE 4.
GROUP STATISTICS (POST-TEST OF BOTH GROUPS)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	PHIT group	30	25.4667	1.54771	.28257
	ILIT group	30	18.7333	2.08332	.38036

On the post-test, the mean score of the PHIT group (M = 25.4667) was more than the mean score of the ILIT group (M = 18.7333). To check the statistical (in-) significance of these differences between the post-test scores of the two groups in their post-test scores, one needs to consult the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column in the *t* test table which follows.

TABLE 5.
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST (POST-TEST OF BOTH GROUPS)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	2.459	.122	14.21	58	.000	6.73	.473	5.78	7.68
	Equal variances not assumed			14.21	53.53	.000	6.73	.473	5.78	7.68

Table 5, shows there was a statistically significant difference in post test scores for PHIT group and ILIT group. This is so because the *p* value was less than the specified level of significance (.028< .05). The conclusion to be drawn from this part would be that the two groups were at roughly the same level of writing proficiency prior to the experiment, but after the experiment, the PHIT learners succeeded to show a significantly better performance. The difference between the pretest scores of the PHIT and ILIT was very small, but their difference on the post-test was considerable. This led to the rejection of the first research hypothesis.

TABLE 6.
PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS (PRE AND POST-TESTS OF BOTH GROUPS)

Pair 1	PHIT Group Posttest	25.4667	30	1.54771	.28257
	PHIT Group Pretest	18.0667	30	1.43679	.26232
Pair 2	ILIT Group Posttest	18.7333	30	2.08332	.38036
	ILIT Group Pretest	17.5333	30	1.71672	.31343

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics on the pre-test and post-test of both groups. The results show that there is a difference between the mean of pre-test (9.4000) and post-test (18.2667) of the PHIT group. The students of PHIT group had development on their post-test in comparison to their pre-test. Moreover, the results show that the means of the ILIT group on the pre-test and post-test are 17.5333 and 18.7333 respectively which means that the control group had a little improvement on their post-test.

TABLE 7.
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST FOR BOTH GROUPS

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PHIT Group Posttest – PHIT Group Pretest	7.40000	1.49943	.27376	6.84011	7.95989	27.031	29	.000
Pair 2	ILIT Group Posttest – ILIT Group Pretest	1.20000	2.00688	.36641	.45062	1.94938	3.275	29	.003

Table 7 depicts that Sig is .000 which is less than 0.05, therefore; the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the PHIT group is significant at (p<0.05). Moreover, Sig is .005 which is less than 0.05; therefore, there is a difference between the pre-test and post-test of the ILIT group (p<0.05), but it is not of great importance.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding the first research question of this study, after collecting the data, the researcher used paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test to analyze them in order to find out the effectiveness of topic interest on the students' writing skill. The findings showed that topic interest has a significant positive effect on students' writing skill. The results statistically revealed that PHIT group significantly did better than the ILIT group (p < .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis of the study "Topic interest does not significantly impact L2 writing skill" was rejected.

For the second research question, these results tell us that as pre-intermediate in PHIT group performed better on post-test than intermediate ones in ILIT group, so L2 proficiency did not significantly impact L2 writing skill.

The outcomes of the current study are consistent with the results of some of the studies reported in the review of literature. However, some of the findings seem not to be in line with the results of other scholars.

The results of the present study in one case seem to be inconsistent with those of the other scholars. That l2 proficiency did not have any significant effect on the writing skill partially contradicts the findings of Lee and Pulido (2016) who reported a significant effect of L2 proficiency on the writing skill.

Generally, the discoveries of the current study are in line with previous qualitative and quantitative studies demonstrating that enriching the EFL students with academic choices would help them in their conflict for EFL learning. Specifically, the results confirmed the idea that providing EFL learners at all levels with self-selected topics would result in a satisfactory performance on EFL writing.

Outcomes of the present study put more stress on the importance of interest in writing skill. This is in line with previous studies that claim teaching methods are not provided in accordance with the necessities of students so that these methods do not open up superior opportunity for students to develop their writing skill. Hence, it is crucial to expand more interesting topics to assist learners with their writing improvement. The major limitation of this research was the number of respondents. This study, with regard to the lack of time, could not involve a large number of participants. It may impact the generalizability of the findings.

The present study checked the impact of topic interest and l2 proficiency on writing improvement. It is proposed for further studies to precisely scrutinize the usefulness of topic interest on other language skills such as speaking, listening, and reading.

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A Study of the Development of Generative Grammar from the Perspective of Changes in the Movement Pattern

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***Abstract*—Movement plays an important role in generative grammar. This paper expounds characteristics and motivation of the development of generative grammar theory by analyzing and contrasting the movement pattern in different periods of generative grammar. From Move-α to the feature checking, and then to the matching of the probe and the target under agreement feature, a series of changes in movement pattern indicate that generative grammar is exploring the principled interpretation of the language from the perspective of biolinguistics, the explanation of the characteristics and general principles of the interface system, ultimately to the goal of going beyond the explanatory adequacy.**

***Index Terms*—movement pattern, generative grammar, Move-α, feature checking, GB Theory, MP**

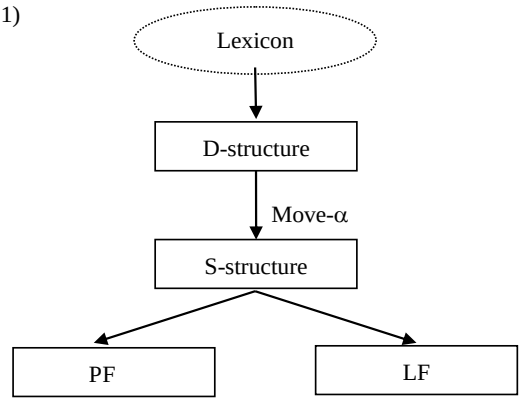
I. Introduction

Since generative grammar was founded, every development has involved changes in the theoretical framework and specific analytical techniques. Movement is a case in point and it plays an important role in generative grammar. By analyzing the movement pattern in different periods of generative grammar, we can trace the trajectory of generative grammar development, explore the characteristics of generative grammar development and its motivation, and look forward to the future development direction of generative grammar.

II. Movement in GB Theory

The syntactic derivation model of GB Theory is shown in (1) (Wen, 2002):

(1)



The process of derivation from D-structure to S-structure is called transformation. In its subsequent development, the word "transformation" is gradually replaced by "move", which is now the reason why the transformational generative grammar is called generative grammar. In GB theory, Chomsky (1978, 1980) used one rule-Move-α to decompose and merge all kinds of transformational rules in the early stage of the transformational generative grammar, such as Pronominalization, Passivization, Relativization, Equi-Deletion and Dative Movement. The intention of Move-α is to say that any component can participate in the movement, any pattern can be used as a means of movement, any structural position can be the destination of the movement. But this rule does not actually mean that any component can be moved to any position, rather the movement must be limited by various conditions. There are two types of movement:

NP movement and wh-movement.

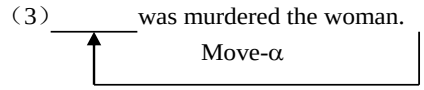
A. NP Movement

We take the passive sentence as an example to investigate the derivation process of NP movement.

Passive sentences are generally believed to be derived from active sentences. For example:

(2) a. The man murdered *the woman*.
agent patient
b. *The woman* was murdered.
patient

We can use (2b) as the S-structure, which is transformed from the D-structure, which is represented by (3) by "Move-α".



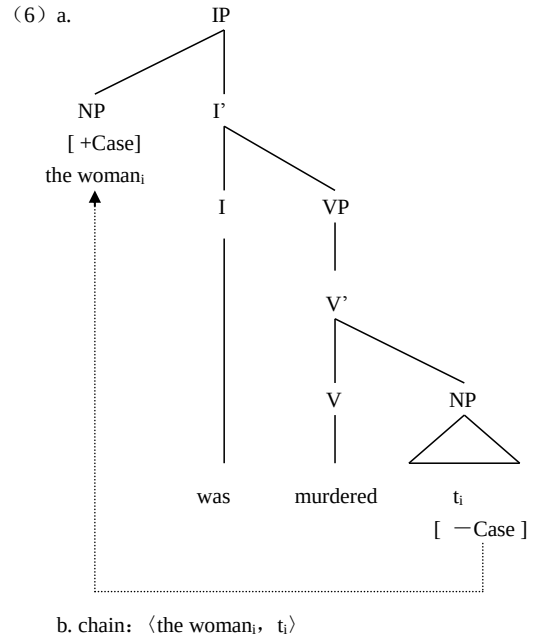
In (3), the moved object is the noun phrase "the woman", and the landing site is the blank subject position. Let us take a closer look at the derivation process of the passive sentence. (4b)＝(2b) is derived from the D-structure in (4a).

(4) a. [$_{IP}$ *e* was murdered the woman].
b. *The woman* was murdered.

The *e* of (4a) represents that the subject position in the D-structure is an empty position. According to the theta criterion, the verb murder is used as a two-place predicate, which has two theta roles to be assigned. In (4a), the patient role is assigned to the woman, but because the subject position in the D-structure is an empty position, there is no external argument to assume the role of agent. However (4b) is a grammatical sentence, showing that the role of "agent" in (4a) must be assigned in some way, and thus (4b) does not violate theta criterion. According to Jaeggli (1986) and Roberts (1987), the reason why there is no overt element in the D-structure of the passive sentence to assume the role of agent is because the verb of the passive sentence has undergone a morphological change. The passive morphological change of the verb makes the verb lose the ability to assign the external theta role, that is to say, the passive morphological change of the verb absorbs the role of "agent". Since the subject position in (4a) cannot obtain the theta role, an empty subject position indicated by *e* is left. According to the Extended Projection Principle (EPP), a sentence must have a subject. If the internal argument in (4a) does not move, we can fill in the expletive "it" in the empty subject position, as shown in (5), but the sentence is not grammatical. Therefore, the movement of the internal argument in the D-structure of the passive sentence is the only way out.

(5) *It* was murdered the woman.

In (5), "the woman" is the complement of the verb. According to Case Theory, the noun phrase at the position of the complement can get the structural Case from the verb. But if "the woman" gets the structural Case in place, there is no need to move. Obviously, after the passive morphological change of "murder", it not only absorbs the role of agent of the subject, but also absorbs the Case of the complement, so that the verb "murder" loses the ability to assign the structural Case to the complement. "The woman" does not get Case in the complement position, it fails to pass the Case Filter, and the whole sentence is ungrammatical. Therefore "the woman" must move to the position where the Case can be obtained in order to pass the Case Filter. (6) shows that the empty subject position just provides such a condition. The inflection I in the sentence can assign a structural Case to the subject position. Then the internal argument "the woman" is moved to the subject position, and the Case is obtained, which satisfies the EPP and passes the Case Filter, thus ensuring that the entire sentence is grammatical.



b. chain：〈the woman$_i$，t_i〉

After “the woman” moves to the subject position, it leaves a trace in place, called the trace (represented by *t*). The moved element is co-indexed with the trace, forming a chain. In terms of the relationship between the Case and the theta role, it can be standardized by the Visibility Condition: noun phrases can get θ-role on condition that they have Case. In (4a), due to the change of passive form, the verb loses the ability to assign a Case to a complement, and “the woman” does not get a Case in the D-structure. According to the Visibility Condition, the noun phrase cannot obtain θ-role in the D-structure. In the S-structure (4b), “the woman” gets the Case, but at this time the woman is outside the governing category of the verb “murder”, and the θ-role should not be obtained. However, (4b) is grammatical. The concept of the chain helps to solve the above problems. The elements of the chain have an inseparable connection and are an integral whole. As long as an element has a Case in the chain, the whole chain is regarded as a visible position; the θ-role is not directly assigned to a certain theta position in the chain, but is assigned to the entire chain. In (6), the chain 〈the woman$_i$，t_i〉 the head of the chain-“the woman” gets the Case, so the whole chain becomes a visible position. The verb “murder” assigns the internal theta role to the entire chain. “The woman” at the beginning of the chain obtainsθ-role through the chain. Therefore, (4b) conforms to the Visibility Condition, and the entire sentence is grammatical.

B. Wh-movement

In regard to wh-movement, Subjacency Condition specifies the limit imposed by the wh-movement on the movement distance, and Empty Category Principle limits traces left after wh-movement. Let us take (7) as an example to analyze the case where Move-α is restricted during wh-movement.

(7) * [$_{CP1}$ *Who$_i$* did [$_{IP1}$ John tell you [$_{CP2}$ *when$_k$* [$_{IP2}$ *t_i* bought it *t_k*]]]]?

The reason why (7) is ungrammatical is that the wh-word “who” moves from the position *t* where is located in the D-structure to the beginning of the sentence, and crosses two “IPs”. Because the position of the first “IP” is occupied by “when”, CP2 constitutes a wh-island, causing “who” to cross two "IP" nodes, violating Subjacency Condition, so the sentence is not grammatical. The trace t_i in (7) is in the subject position of IP2, and cannot be theta-governed. It can only rely on the antecedent-government to obtain proper government. The nearest governor is the when$_k$ at [Spec, CP2], but because of when$_k$ does not co-indexed with ti and it cannot be the antecedent to properly govern ti. Who$_i$ is the antecedent of t_i, but because “When” is the possible governor of t_i between Who$_i$ and t_i, Who$_i$'s proper government of t_i cannot comply with minimality, so t_i is not subject to any proper government and violates ECP.

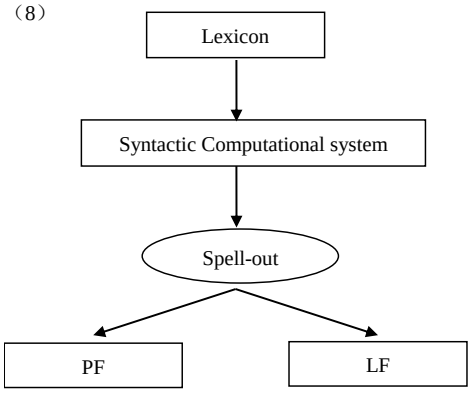
In summary, the basic assumption of movement in GB theory is strict entry and tolerant exit, and Chomsky attributes many of the various transformational rules in the early transformational-generative grammar to Move-α, but this does not mean any element can be moved to any position, but movement must be limited by various conditions, such as theta criterion, Case Filter, Visibility Condition, Subjacency Condition, Empty Category Principle, etc. to eliminate the ungrammatical structure. However, GB simply lays emphasis on the result and regardless of the movement process will

result in some syntactic elements are eventually eliminated by other theoretical modules after movement, leading to a half-effect. Then the generative grammar repositions movement in MP. The movement of MP is quite different from the movement of GB in terms of concept and operation.

III. MOVEMENT IN MP FRAMEWORK

The grammatical model of MP is shown in (8) (Xu, 2009):

(8)



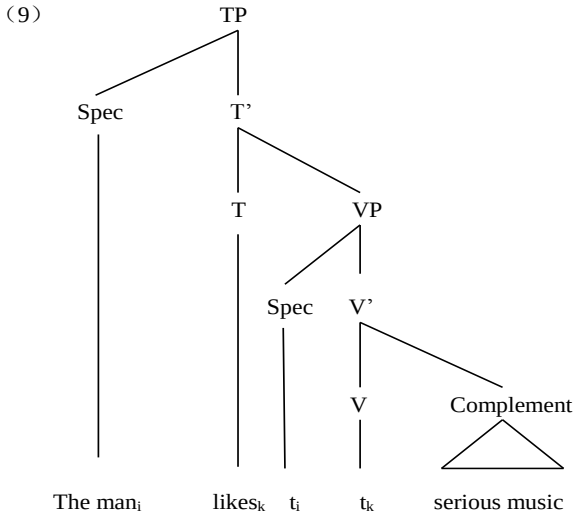
The grammatical model of MP simplifies the production process based on the grammatical model of GB. The grammar model in MP shows that the language consists of two components: lexicon and syntactic computational system, D-structure and S-structure are eliminated, and PF and LF are preserved. In the MP framework, movement becomes internal merge and becomes a means of merging. Movement has evolved from the use of feature checking as a motivation to the use of feature-driven motivation in MP.

A. Movement Motivated by Feature Checking

During MP, Move-α is removed, claiming that movement is an internal merge (Chomsky 2004). The movement of the initial stage of MP is based on the feature checking. All morphological features in the lexicon, such as Φ features (person, gender, and number) and Case features, must be checked by some functional category at appropriate positions after entering the sentence. The derivation that passes the checking of a functional category can "converge" to the interface. Feature checking mainly involves semantic uninterpretable features that are deleted after checking and eventually eliminated. The singular and plural characteristics of nouns in English belong to the semantic uninterpretable features and need to be checked. The singular and plural characteristics of English verbs can check the singular and plural characteristics of nouns, as shown in example (9):

(9) The man likes serious music.

(9)



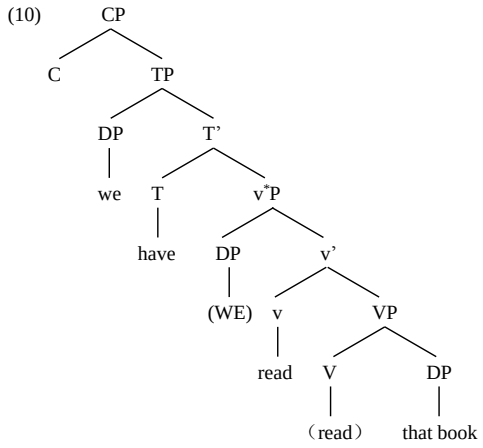
In (9), "the man" at [Spec, VP] position has a semantic uninterpretable singular feature. "Likes" moves to "T" to form [T, likes], which has the ability to check the semantic uninterpretable singular feature. So "the man" must be merged with [T, likes] to the [Spec, TP] position, accepting the checking of [T, likes]. In the end, the singular third-person semantic uninterpretable singular feature of "the man" and the singular third-person semantics of the verb

"likes" are mutually checked, satisfying the requirements of the checking theory.

B. Movement of Feature-driven Motivation

Later movement becomes a feature-driven one, and the agreement relationship established between probe and goal plays an important role. Agreement relationship is the consistent relationship between entity category and functional category in formal features and its role in operation. The operation of movement is a combination of merge and agreement (Wu, 2006). Take (10) for example.

(10) We have read that book.



The basic structure of a sentence is [CP > TP > v*P > VP], and CP and v*P are phases (Chomsky 2004). All syntactic operations are determined by the head of phase: C and v*, and the syntactic derivation is performed by phase. There are two phases in (10): CP and v*P. The derivation of the structure begins with VP. Lexical items participating in the operation are first extracted from the lexicon to form a lexical array {we, have, read, that, book}, and the lexical array contains the lexical items required for a sentence derivation. Then "read" and "that book" form a lexical sub-array {read, that book}, and the lexical sub-array contains only necessary lexical items for one phase derivation. Then "read" and "that book" are merged to form a new syntax object VP. VP then merges with the core functional category v to form a v*P. v*P has the external argument structure and a complete agreement feature. According to the Feature Inheritance Hypothesis proposed by Chomsky (2007): the inheritance of agreement features is the common feature of the phase heads, C conveys the agreement feature to T, and the phase head v* is also transmitted agreement feature to V. After the light verb *v* and VP are merged, the agreement feature (Φ-feature) of *v* is passed to V, so that V has the ability to assign an accusative Case. The accusative Case of "that book" is assigned, taking on the role of patient of V. Chomsky (2007) assumes that any type of notional verb is moved to the position of the light verb *v*, so that V "read" moves up to the position of *v*. In (10), the elements in parentheses indicate the copies remained in situ and the merged copy forms a chain; after the phase operation is completed and spell-out is performed, the elements in parentheses often do not have phonetic realization. Then DP "WE" and *v'* are merged to form a phase *v*P, and DP "WE" assumes the agent role of V. After the V*P phase is completed, the complement VP of *v* is transferred to the phonetic and semantic parts to process further, and VP and its contained elements are no longer involved in the operation of the next phase. It is not detected by the probe in the next phase, which is the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) proposed by Chomsky (2004).

The derivation proceeds, T merges with *v*P, and then merges with C, and C passes the agreement feature to T. T has tense feature (present tense), agreement feature (Φ-feature), and EPP feature. The agreement feature of T and the Case feature of WE are semantically uninterpretable features, so both T and WE are active. The semantic uninterpretable agreement feature of T is used as a probe to detect WE in the Spec-v*P position. The agreement feature of WE is semantically interpretable, and T and WE establish an agreement relationship, so that their semantic features are valued. The agreement feature of T is valued with the plural first person, the final form of the item at T is "have", not "has" or "had", because the tense feature of T is present tense, the agreement feature is plural first person. WE gets the nominative Case from T, and determines that the final form of the item is "we", not "us" or "our". The EPP feature of T makes "we", which is located at the Spec-v*P position to the specifier position of TP, enabling internal merge. After the CP phase derivation is completed, the complement TP of C and the rest of the components are handed over to the phonetic and semantic parts, and the derivation of the entire sentence is over.

IV. Discussions

Movement is a major feature of generative grammar. Different periods of generative grammar deal with movement differently. The in-depth study of movement pattern changes can provide a deeper insight into the development and change law of generative grammar and grasp the development direction of the generative grammar in the future.

A. Beyond Explanatory Adequacy

Generative grammar always insists that human language is a biological phenomenon. The language system, like other biological systems, is also a natural thing. Chomsky (2005, 2007, 2008) frequently uses the term "biolinguistics" to emphasize the biological properties of contemporary generative grammar research. Biolinguistics is a cross-disciplinary field. It is a combination of biology and linguistics. It also involves related disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience. Generative grammar has become an important part of biolinguistics. The linguistic view of Chomsky's biolinguistics holds that language faculty is like other organs in the body. It is determined by heredity and can grow, develop and mature in a suitable environment. From Move-α to the feature checking, and then to the matching of the probe and the goal under the agreement feature, a series of movement patterns indicate that the generative grammar is exploring the principled interpretation of the language from the perspective of biolinguistics, exploring the explanation of the characteristics and general principles of the interface system, ultimately to the goal of going beyond explanatory adequacy.

B. Different Movement Patterns between GB and MP

From the perspective of universal grammar research, the study of GB is mainly to fully explore the role of universal grammar in language acquisition, and thus many principles and parameters are proposed. The research focus of MP is that how small scope the universal grammar can be limited to. The goal of MP is to simplify the linguistic theory, guided by the "economy principle", and the syntax derivation reduces unnecessary expression levels and derivation steps. The generative grammar takes the semantic uninterpretable agreement features as the motivation of movement. When the language is used by the external system, the semantic uninterpretable feature is eliminated, and the interface condition (IC) is satisfied, so that the SM and CI systems respectively obtain effective sound and meaning information to ensure that the syntax operation is successfully derived.

C. Imperfection of Language Design

Chomsky pointed out that "displacement" is the ubiquitous phenomenon in human language. It is considered to be the expression of language imperfection, and language has its own way to deal with this seemingly imperfect phenomenon. Movement motivated by features is the way to solve this problem. Therefore, the language design may be perfect from the perspective of getting along between language and other human brain cognitive organs.

D. Internal Merge and Language Design

In MP, movement becomes "internal merge" and a way of "merging". "Merge" is a universal operation of human language, "costless" (Chomsky 1995: 226), which can be used repeatedly and at no cost. Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch (2002) published an academic paper on language evolution "The faculty of language: what is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?" and Chomsky believes that "merge" may occur on biological individuals. The result of genetic mutation is the original source of human language. Chomsky believes that "merging" should have a corresponding expression on its genetics. Therefore, movement in MP is internal merge, It is the exploration of genetic inheritance, which is one of the elements of language design from the perspective of biolinguistics.

E. Reflection of Functional Categories

The development of generative grammar reflects people's deep understanding of the differences in language structure. On the research platform of MP, movement must have a motivation. From the initial attributing language structure differences to verb movement, and the movement of nouns in order to obtain the Case, to the concept of the core functional category in the latest framework, it shows that the grammar can reflect people's understanding of language into the model of syntactic operation in time. The structural differences between languages are mainly in the functional categories.

F. Latest Advances in Movement Patterns

The generative grammar focuses on the theoretical interpretation of linguistic phenomena, while the traditional grammar focuses on description. If we only satisfy the description and induction of the superficial differences in language, we will not be able to further understand the facts reflected in the language. From the unconstrained Move-α; to the movement by the feature checking motivation, the purpose of movement is to delete and finally eliminate the semantic uninterpretable features, and finally to ensure the successful derivation of the syntactic derivation; then to the agreement f of phase theory: the matching of the probe and the goal, the agreement semantic uninterpretable features of the phase head (Φ-feature) plays a central role in the syntactic derivation, making the probe in an active state. It is the driving force of the operation, and also the motivation of movement. Latest advances in movement patterns have demonstrated that generative grammar focuses on theoretical interpretation of linguistic phenomena.

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The Students' Needs in Maritime English Class at Ami Aipi Makassar, Indonesia

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***Abstract*—This paper reports the students' needs in developing a GME instructional course with the following research questions: 1) What is the present level of students' oral communication apprehension? 2) What are the students' needs (the learning and the language needs) in learning General Maritime English? The research was conducted at the *Akademi Maritim Akademi* Indonesia AIPI Makassar. There were 150 students of the nautical department in the academic year 2016-2017 as the primary subjects of this research. The researchers administered questionnaires, conducted interviews and observed exams to collect the data. The results found that the students' level of oral communication apprehension was high, based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It was also found that there was a high demand for materials that could prepare the students to have good communication skills, in order to be equipped to work in international maritime industries. Most of the students assumed that the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English are crucial, but they placed productive skills (writing and speaking) as their highest priority. It is concluded that the results of this investigation should be taken into account in developing teaching and learning materials for maritime academy students.**

***Index Terms*—students' needs, students' level of oral communication apprehension, Maritime English (ME), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Akademi Maritim Indonesia (AMI AIPI)**

I. Introduction

Related to the Indonesian government's goal for seafarers to speak English fluently, lecturers have a need to use textbooks or materials which are suitable for the students' needs and that ensure speaking activities are dominant. Since it is an international curriculum, each educational institution must modify their current materials so that this goal can be achieved.

As such, the limited and irrelevant GME (General Maritime English) materials in Indonesia are becoming a hindrance in the process of teaching and learning to achieve the goals in the IMO (International Maritime Organization). Previous research has shown that this has caused an adverse effect on the students. Some of them are less motivated to learn English and their vocabulary is limited to the technical vocabulary related to their major as seafarers (Dirgayasa, 2014; Aini, 2017; Bin-Tahir et al., 2017). As a consequence, they will find it difficult when they are communicating with international staff on board in the future.

Specifically, in AMI AIPI Makassar the IMO Course 3.17 is used as a guidebook in teaching which has been widely recognized as needing to be modified, or replaced, based on the students' needs and characteristics. Based on this objective, the researcher intended to do some investigation on the learning needs of maritime students, especially for the nautical department.

II. Literature Review

A. English for Specific Purposes

Robinson (1991) defined that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are generally constrained by a limited time period in which their objectives have to be achieved and are taught to adult in homogenous class in terms of work that the

students are involved. ESP teaching should always reflect the underlying concept and activities of the discipline. The ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the students, it is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

In addition, ESP is designed for specific discipline, it may use in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from General English. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level; most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Finally, the ESP curriculum and its syllabus have to be a learner-centered, which means all the teaching and learning activities are focused on the learners' needs and progress or achievement. The ESP teachers are true facilitators who are expected to facilitate learning and not only lecturing,

B. Maritime English

According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (2015), Maritime English has two main courses namely; General Maritime English (GME) and Specialized Maritime English (SME). There are two sections in the course model for General Maritime English: Core Part 1 and 2, both of which contain separate syllabus. This system allows students to enter the classroom at a point corresponding to their English level. It is recommended that the instructor perform a pre-course assessment to assess the level of language that is present of each student. The syllabus in Core 1 is designed for students who have the lower level of English while the syllabus in Section Core 2 is designed for students who have lower secondary or Middle English level. The definition of language level and entry requirements required for students/cadets is given in part A of both sections of the course.

For effective language teaching to take place, lecturers/ instructors need an understanding of the Communicative Approach methodology to be able to create tasks appropriate to their students' learning needs, to develop the students' communicative competence and to implement a syllabus that meets the requirements defined by the STCW Code.

C. Students' Needs

Communication needs lead the way when it is believed that what is taught to students must be in accordance with what they will need to apply, and therefore, it must determine the course content of ESP (Munby, 1978). The definition of 'needs' depends on the perception of those making the judgement. The difference between what learners can presently do with the language and what they should be able to do cannot be looked at from one standpoint.

In order to get and to know the students' needs, the researcher need to conduct need analysis as the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum, syllabus, and course materials which meet the learning and language needs. Once identified, it can be stated in terms of goals and objectives which can serve as the bases for developing tests, materials, teaching activities, and evaluation strategies.

D. Students' Level of Oral Communication Apprehension

Leary (2013) has categorized three levels of apprehension, namely: low, moderate, high. Low anxiety relates to difficult situations happening in daily life. Low apprehension can motivate learning. The symptoms of low anxiety can be exhaustion, irritability, or ability to learn, depending on the situation. Meanwhile, moderate or reasonable apprehension can enable someone to focus on the crucial problem and turn aside from other problems (Salikin et al., 2017; Panggua, 2017). At this level of apprehension, symptoms include the faster heartbeat, quicker breathing, quicker speaking with a higher volume, and can cause decreasing concentration, so it is easy to forget something, become angry or cry.

The next level is high apprehension, which hugely reduces someone's perception. Someone with high-level trepidation tends to focus on details. Someone who is on this level of anxiety needs more guidelines to focus on the topic. Symptoms include headaches, insomnia, and ineffective learning. Critically, their fear can prevent them from saying anything at all.

Horwitz (1978) states that the level of oral communication apprehension/anxiety is based on the result of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). To determine a student's anxiety level, add up their responses to all the questions, remembering to first reverse-score the items that need reverse-scoring, then divide the total by 33 (the total number of questions). Students with averages around 3 should be considered slightly anxious or moderate level, while students with averages below 3 are probably not very anxious or low level. Students who average near 4 and above are fairly anxious or high level. Ortega (2013) also states that foreign language anxiety is occurring when people feel confused, freeze up, and cannot say anything in speaking foreign language.

In conclusion, the researcher applied Horwitz scale as the guidance to determine the cadets or students' level of oral communication apprehension/ anxiety because it is not difficult to apply. It is measurable as well.

E. Akademi Maritim Indonesia AIPI Makassar

According to the Ministerial decision of Transportation Ministry No. 28, 2010, Akademi Maritim Indonesia (AMI) AIPI is an educational institution which offers vocational education programs in the maritime field. There are three departments, namely: deck, engineering, and port and shipping management. In this institute, the graduates from deck and engine departments receive a Diploma III certificate. In addition, the graduates from deck and engine departments

receive a certificate of nautical/ technical class III. Then, they may also pass several training certifications to become a seafarer according to IMO requirements.

Akademi Maritim Indonesia (AMI) AIPI Makassar is an educational institution which holds such a vocational education program. Its curriculum is based on the IMO Model course. The characteristics of the learners of Indonesian Maritime Academy AIPI Makassar are various. Therefore, the researcher conducted needs analysis as one of steps to know better who the students are and what materials would be most appropriate for them to achieve communicative competence in English relevant to their field.

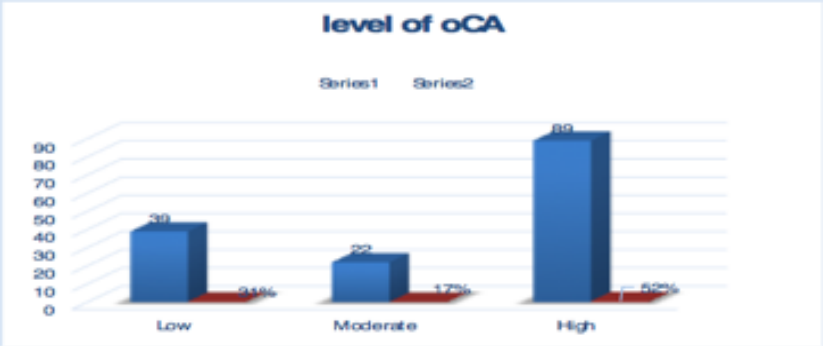
III. Method

This research investigated the students' needs by an applied survey method. Interviews were conducted and a questionnaire was distributed to students, lecturers, and alumni. There were two questionnaires used in this research, namely: the Needs Analysis Questionnaire and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (hereafter referred to as FLCAS, adapted from Horwitz, 1988). The data sources were multiple, by involving students, lecturers, and the employees from marine or nautical department. Purposive sampling was adopted. There were 150 students from the first semester of Akademi Maritim Indonesia (AMI) AIPI Makassar involved for this research to gather information about the present situation (the students' level of oral communication apprehension), the students' needs, the existing materials that they used during learning general maritime English course, and their expectations of the course. They all were given the questionnaire to fill in as well as 5 alumni who have worked in the International trade or company. Data were analyzed using the descriptive statistical method.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Results

1). The students' level of oral communication apprehension



The FLCAS result showed that the students of the nautical department had a high apprehension level. 89 students felt anxiety in their English class especially when they had an upcoming speaking activity. Many reported trembling beforehand. This phrase refers to the analysis of students' present situation, students' proficiencies and difficulties to English language skills, students' needs, the existing materials, the objectives of learning English as General English course as well as the identification of the results of the analysis.

2). The frequency of students practicing English language skills

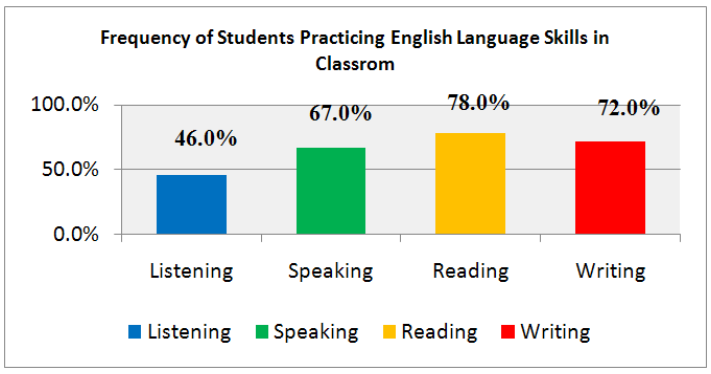


Chart 4.1 Frequency of Students Practicing English Language Skills in Classroom

The frequency of practicing listening skills delivered by teachers is an average score of 1.85 with a percentage of 46. Thus, it can be interpreted that the frequency of students practicing listening skills in English is unfavorable to developing proficiency in aural comprehension. In speaking skills, the data showed quite a high intensity of practice,

with the average score of 2.69 and a percentage of 67. In writing skills, the data also indicated quite a high intensity of practice with the average score of 2.88 and a percentage of 72. Among all the English language skills practiced in the classroom, reading was the most frequently practiced with the average score of 3.11 and a percentage of 78. Overall, the data showed that the frequency of English language skills practiced in the classroom was quite high, with an average score of 2.63 and a percentage of 65.8.

3). The Level of Students' Difficulty with English Language Skills

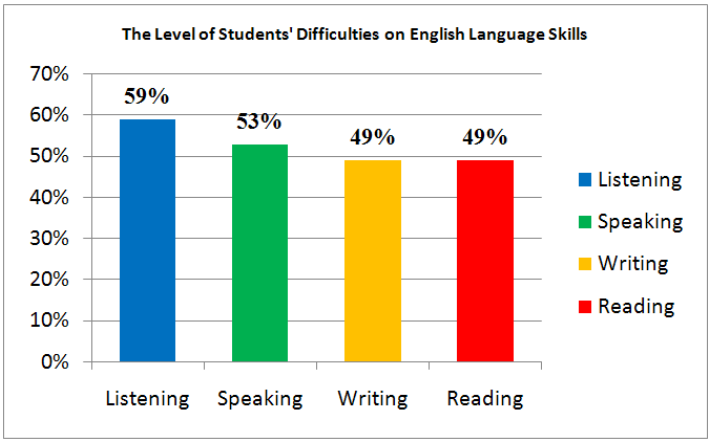
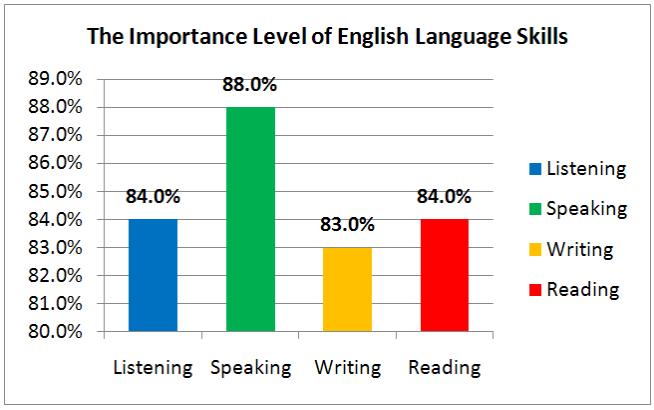


Chart 4.2 The Level of Students' Difficulty with English Language Skills

The data from chart 2 demonstrates that most of the students found all the language skills quite tricky and mainly found listening to be the most difficult. The data indicated that listening is very complicated with an average score of 2.35 and a percentage of 59. The speaking skill was also considered quite difficult with the average score of 2.12 and a percentage of 53. The writing skill and reading skill proved to be quite difficult as well with the average score of 1.97 and a percentage of 49. Overall, the level of students' difficulty toward English language skills was quite high with the average score of 2.10 and a percentage of 52.6.

4). The Importance Level of English Language Skills



Chat 4.3 The importance level of English Language skills

The importance level of all the four language skills is considered very high according to the data acquired. Chart 3 describes the average score of all language skills in English at 3.39 with a percentage of 84.7%. However, the highest rated skill was speaking with a percentage 88%.

5).The participants believed that the main objectives of learning English as a general course are as follows:

Statement	Score	Percent (%)
To improve students' readiness to be able to continue their studies abroad	45	69.2%
To improve students' ability to communicate in English	44	67.7%
To improve students' capability to comprehend English literature/resources	20	30.8%
To fulfill a curriculum requirement	14	21.5%
To enhance the likelihood of students finding a job after graduation	42	64.6%

6). The medium of instruction in the learning process

When asked what was should be the medium of instruction during the learning process, the students responded most strongly that English should be - either partly, or wholly. Meanwhile, students thought that it is less crucial for the materials to be produced in *Bahasa Indonesia* either entirely or partially. Most students tended to believe that it is essential to use both languages interchangeably. The data below shows students' perception of the language used in the learning process:

7). The level of importance of learning method or activities

Every student had their preference on how to acquire knowledge and learn:

Learning Preference	Average	Percent	classification
Self-learning	3.08	76.9%	Important
Learning in couple	3.03	75.8%	Important
Small group learning	3.11	77.7%	Important
Large group learning	2.82	70.4%	Important
Audio learning	3.09	77.3%	Important
Learning by reading	3.23	80.8%	Important
Learning by listening and speaking	3.37	84.2%	Very important
Learning by listening and speaking reading material while writing	3.14	78.5%	Important
Learning by repeating what is being listened	3.11	77.7%	Important
Learning by memorizing the conversation	2.92	73.1%	Important
Learning through games and quizzes	3.03	75.8%	Important
Learning through role plays	2.97	74.2%	Important
Learning through western songs	2.94	73.5%	Important
Average score of respondents' reactions	**3.06**	**76.6%**	**Important**

From the above data, we can see that all the 13 learning methods and activities are proven to be important to students with the percentage of 76.6, and in particular, learning by listening and speaking, to be very important to students with the percentage over 80.

8). Reasons for the unsatisfactory attitude towards the existing materials

Statement	Score	Percent (%)
Boring materials	12	18.5%
Irrelevant to the students' needs	17	26.2%
Irrelevant to the field of study	8	12.3%
The teaching method is boring	19	29.2%

There are quite a few reasons why students considered the existing materials used to be unsatisfying or to fail to meet their expectations. The highest frequency of 29.2% blamed it on the annoying teaching method, followed by the irrelevance of the materials to the students' needs (26.2%). Meanwhile, 18.5% of students expressed that the materials used in teaching General English were boring and 12.3% students stated that the materials were irrelevant to the field of study. From the table above, it can be concluded that the reason why students found the materials used currently unsatisfying is due to the university method of teaching and the irrelevancies of the materials.

9). Topics of General Maritime English

Learning Topics	Average	Percent	Category
Asking for and giving personal data	3.22	80.4%	Important
Discussing navigational routes	2.94	73.5%	Important
Naming type of vessel	3.06	76.5%	Important
Describing the location and purpose of safety equipment	2.88	71.9%	Important
Understanding commands in emergency situations on board	3.05	76.2%	Important
Naming position on boards; giving directions on board	3.28	81.9%	Very Important
Dealing with health and safety on board	3.32	83.1%	Very Important
Telling about what's happening on board and around you	3.40	85.0%	Very Important
Talking about sport	1.83	45.8%	Unimportant
Describing crew roles and routines	3.03	75.8%	Important
Discussing food on board; ordering meals; reporting damage to food cargoes	3.32	83.1%	Very Important
Movies	1.83	45.8%	Unimportant
Society	1.82	45.4%	Unimportant
Talking about holidays	1.68	41.9%	Unimportant
Fashion	1.38	34.6%	Unimportant
Other Topics: Music (Western Songs) and expressing personal likes and dislikes	2.77	69.2%	Important
Average score of respondents' reactions	**2.67**	66.9%	Important

Students were questioned on their preferred English learning topics and were asked their opinions on 16 learning topics as to whether they considered them important or unimportant. The results reveal that there are 4 topics that students consider very important as the percentages are over 80 as follows; (i) discussing food on board; ordering meals; reporting damage to food cargoes, (ii) telling about what's happening on board and around you, (iii) naming position on boards; giving direction on board, and (iv) dealing with health and safety on board.

Asking for and giving personal data, describing crew roles and routines, understanding commands in emergency situations on board, naming the type of vessel, discussing navigational routes, and others like music and free time activities (expressing likes and dislikes) were the learning topics students considered to be important as well. However, there were 4 topics including fashion, talking about holidays, society, and talking about sport that were considered to be unimportant to students with percentages below 50%.

B. Discussion

A students' needs analysis is essential to the feasibility of a product that should be measured by the demands and needs of the users. It was started by measuring the students' level of oral communication apprehension, because this is an important part of needs analysis. It is one aspect that should be identified by the researcher to inform the development of General Maritime English materials. Gardner, et.al (2005) revealed that the students' anxiety or oral communication apprehension could be minimized by certain teaching materials and learning strategies that the teachers apply in their teaching and learning process. In addition, learning English by using games and role plays was also found to be an important consideration in designing activities in the course design., for all of the respondents categorized these activities as 'important' to be used in teaching and learning English.

A modified FLCAS questionnaire is used to investigate whether students are in a high, moderate, or low apprehension classification. After the participants filled out the questionnaire, the researchers then gave them an assessment score for each question from each participant. After reviewing each participant FLCAS questionnaire, the answers to all questions were compiled to create an overall apprehension assessment using the Likert Scale described in the previous section to assess survey questions as to whether they were positive or negative.

Based on the FLCAS result, there are 89 students who felt really anxiety toward English class especially when they had speaking activity. They trembled when they knew they were going to be called in maritime English class (Aeni, 2017). It is in line with the item number 3 "I trembled when I know that I am going to be called on Maritime English class". During observations and based on the result of the questionnaire, there were two students who were indicated to be low apprehensive, supported by FLCAS results. They experienced the symptoms of apprehension only at the first time they spoke, then they could manage and control their communication in order to get a good performance. Ortega

(2013) also states that foreign language anxiety is occurring when people feel confused, freeze up, and cannot say anything in speaking foreign language. Gibson and Hanna (2003) found that public speaking apprehension can be showed in many ways, namely: blood pressure, hand trembling, feeling apprehensive, forgetting the prepared materials, and avoiding looking at the audience. The students still showed the symptoms of apprehension such as many fillers and mumbling. Although they looked very anxious at the beginning of speaking test, they still can mitigate their anxiety with some strategies such as smiling, pause, deep breathing, and some gestures.

In this stage, the researcher analyzes the students wants, necessities and lacks. She also analyzes the existing syllabus, lesson plan, course materials used in teaching Maritime English at Akademi Maritim Indonesia AIPI Makassar. The researcher tries to find the present condition of students' ability in learning English and their expectation as well. This includes, their goals in learning English, how they think English materials should delivered in terms of language orientation, the learning topics, and their learning preferences.

The current condition of the teaching of the General Maritime Course at Akademi Maritim Indonesia AIPI is very important. Current teaching methods show that the students English language skills in the classroom is still low, especially in listening and speaking skills. However, students are aware of the importance of developing these particular language skills (percentage of 84.7). However, the results show that current teaching methods and materials have not yet improved students' achievement in four sufficient language skills. Proven by the fact that many students still consider the four language skills to be too complicated. Most of teaching and learning processes are dominated by teachers' talking about grammar or asking students to write, and the lack of motivating the students to speak. Moreover, students' needs and expectation toward the comfortable and interactive teaching and learning process are being ignored. As shown in the students' needs analysis, they are expecting the materials designed to involve them and give them more opportunities for speaking activities. Students stated their primary objective in learning English was for enhancing their ability in communication, as one of the essential qualifications for seeking jobs. If they had more opportunity to practice speaking in the classroom, it would likely lead to less anxiety and better performance when their speaking skills were precisely tested. However, currently, they are being tested for something that they have not been adequately prepared.

V. Conclusion

The present condition of the students' level of oral communication apprehension is generally high. This is connected to the present teaching and learning method in the General Maritime English course implemented at the Akademi Maritim Indonesia AIPI Makassar which shows inadequacy in fulfilling students' needs and expectations. Most of the students assumed that the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English are crucial, but they put productive skills (writing and speaking) as the highest priority. Based on the data, the students requested materials that can prepare them to have good communication skills. This would not only prepare them for their oral tests, but more importantly to be able to work effectively in the international maritime industry once graduated. One immediate result of this research was the primary researcher's subsequent development of new teaching and learning materials such as a syllabus, lesson plans, and a course book designed specifically for the Maritime students of Makassar, South Sulawesi.

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An Empirical Study on the Influence of PBL Teaching Model on the Critical Thinking Ability of Non-English Majors

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***Abstract*—This study combines the PBL teaching model based on cooperative learning autonomous learning and inquiry learning with the intensive reading course of college English with the aim to test whether this model is conducive to promoting the critical thinking ability of students. Ability of second language acquisition (L2) is measured by language test and questionnaire survey among 95 subjects. The results show that the teaching model of PBL has a positive effect on improving students' critical thinking ability and second language acquisition ability.**

***Index Terms*—critical thinking ability; problem-based learning; language ability**

I. Introduction

A. Critical Thinking

*Facione (1992) defines critical thinking (CT) as an ability "*to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based*." The cultivation of critical thinking ability is not only the foundation of information processing ability and autonomous learning ability, but also the precondition of innovative thinking. Therefore, presently, the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability has become an important goal of teaching.*

B. PBL Teaching Model

PBL (Problem-Based Learning) is a teaching strategy, originated from School of Medicine at McMaster University in Canada in the middle of 1960s, was firstly intended to improve the teaching quality by replacing the traditional teaching model. Since then, it has been widely extended to the fields of engineering, construction, business education and social work. Up till now, there is still no widely accepted definition of PBL teaching strategy, but all researchers agree that PBL is a student-based teaching conception, which provides real problem situations and allows students to solve problems and construct knowledge in a learning environment that is both autonomous and cooperative. Nelson (2008) puts forward a more comprehensive definition: PBL is a teaching strategy, which begins with a question to students, asks students to work in groups to solve a complex and chaotic problem that may be encountered in real society; the process of problem solving allows students to actively participate in the analysis of the problems, to review the knowledge they have acquired, and to identify the relevant facts, finally new knowledge is constructed On the basis of learning activities above. Students collectively decide which problems need to be discussed jointly by the group, and which problems can be carried out by the individuals. At the same time, they may design plans to solve the problems. In terms of cultivation of critical thinking, Almost all the studies have shown that the teaching of critical thinking should be based on problem-solving strategies, and the ultimate purpose of problem-solving is considered to be the core of PBL learning model. In PBL teaching model, learners can produce critical thinking and creative thinking by coping with various difficult problems. ZhiYongbi (2014) defines PBL teaching model as an excellent container for promoting thinking.

C. Effects of PBL Teaching Model on SLA

First of all, the PBL teaching model, which is characterized by interaction, provides students and teachers with a wide range of information exchange platforms, where the meaning negotiation and formal negotiation between students and learners with stronger language proficiency is carried out in different forms of interaction in classroom learning. This kind of effective negotiation is undoubtedly beneficial to promote the development of second language acquisition (Zhao, 2015), secondly, The PBL teaching model based on cooperative learning can effectively reduce the anxiety of students and provide a safer and more favorable psychological environment for foreign language learning. Furthermore,

The problem-based PBL teaching model enables students to transfer from passive learning to a positive discovery learning model, thus enhancing their learning interests and motivation. Therefore, PBL teaching model provides a new platform for the improvement of second language acquisition ability.

D. Literature Review

In the past 10 years, the research on critical thinking has been paid more attention by domestic researchers. There have been numerous related works in the field of second language acquisition and educational psychology. on the CNKI(Chinese National knowledge Internet), the biggest and the most popular research and paper database in China, The author searches the papers with the key words "critical thinking ability/speculative ability" and "English Teaching", 370 papers are found, with 79 in key journals and 58 theses for mater' degree, which indicates that the cultivation of critical thinking with the aid of foreign language teaching has been paid more and more attention to in recent years, especially in the teaching of college English reading and writing. This study attempts to explore the effects of PBL on critical thinking and second language acquisition by constructing a curriculum model of combining PBL teaching model with intensive reading course.

II. Research Methodology

A. Research Questions

1) Is the PBL teaching model helpful to improve the critical thinking ability of learners?
2) Is PBL teaching model helpful to improve learners' language competence?

B. Subjects

This study was conducted in two English classes randomly selected from Tianjin Polytechnic University in 2017, one of class with 48 students was used as the experimental group; The other class with 47, was taken as the control group, each class had an average age of 18.2 and 18.5 respectively. And the average scores of college entrance examination English were 112.6 and 110.9 respectively. The two groups had the same teaching hours for 16 teaching weeks, offering the same college English courses, enjoying the same learning and living environment in the teaching experiment. The experimental group adopted the PBL teaching model, the control group adopted the traditional teaching model. As a whole, there was no significant difference in language proficiency between the two groups, and the experimental environment was similar. the basic conditions to carry out the comparative teaching experimental research were fully equipped.

III. Research Procedures

A. Preparation Stage

The preparation process of the experiment included grouping, role assignment, group leader selection,and establishment of assessment system

Grouping in the experimental group was in accordance with the voluntary principle, and a harmonious community was established to provide a good basis of cooperative learning for members in the group. Members in each group were assigned to six characters respectively: data searchers, material analyzers, translators, proofreaders of the translated materials, multimedia producers, team spokesmen and leaders who were responsible for the overall planning of tasks. They were encouraged to choose the roles based on their strengths, and to take turns to assume different roles.

The success of the PBL model depends largely on whether the students are adequately prepared to take on new roles, such as being a curious knowledge seeker and a cooperator of the tasks (Boud, 1997). therefore, in order to ensure the smooth progress of the experiment, four weeks before the experiment, Students participating in the PBL model were trained to become fully familiar and gradually (see Table 1) adapt to their roles and responsibilities in the PBL model, where teachers are constantly reinforcing the concept of cooperation and organizing students to reflect and evaluate the learning activities.

TABLE I.
THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A COOPERATIVE MODEL

Stages	Measures	Efficiency	Evaluation strategy
Beginning	In order to cultivate students' cooperative mind, some simple classroom cooperative tasks, such as mutual evaluation of composition, and cooperative dictation, are assigned to students at the beginning.	Reinforcement of Group leader's sense of responsibility: Organization of group activities; supervision of other members to learn and give help to other students; shift from self-centered learning model to focus on group members and group honor;	Formative evaluation of students' group activities in class, emphasis on the basis of group activities, and leading students into the track of cooperative learning gradually.
Forming	Strengthening self-evaluation in the implementation of PBL model	Cooperation on track: with the development of the PBL model, problems arise and continue to be solved. The team members constantly understand and adapt to each other's characteristics in the process of cooperation. The team leaders will also develop a mechanism for team cooperation according to the characteristics of the team members, avoid conflicts effectively and maximize cooperation	Reflection from group leaders: When, where and how to start a panel discussion? How do you describe the characteristics of your team? How do you handle conflicts in cooperation? How to strengthen group cohesion? Team reflection program: How do you benefit from PBL model? How do you break through yourself in this new model? What will you do to make sure the team can work together?

After a period of training, students have gradually developed the cooperation model as is shown in figure 1:

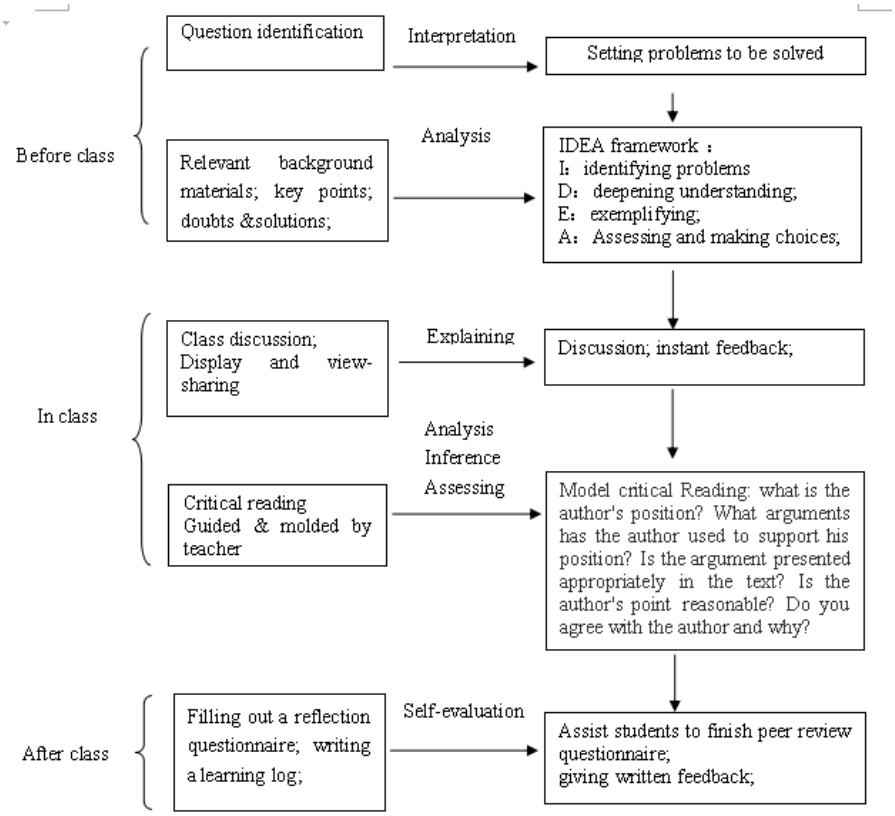

Figure 1: The cooperation model of students

B. Implementation of the Research

The PBL teaching model is officially launched. Teachers create Domino Effects to stimulate students' research-oriented learning actions, provide resources and methods to solve problems, promote students to use critical thinking to discover and master new knowledge through evaluation and assessment, and develop thinking ability by solving practical problems. PBL teaching process involves three sectors: group activities before class, cooperative learning in class, reflection and evaluation after class (see figure 2).

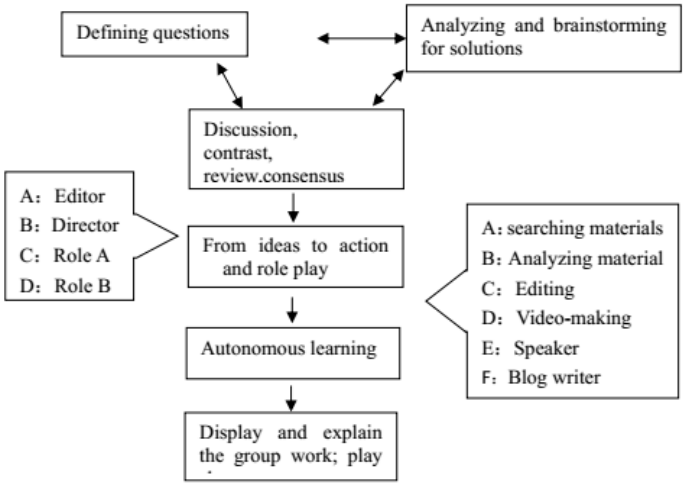

Figure 2. The process of experiments

In the phase of group pre-class activities, the teacher firstly sets up a real-life problem for students that is relevant to the topic of the unit they are going to learn, but the problems are unstructured without a fixed solution. They are intended to arouse students' interests and to form a multifaceted solution through discussion. Besides, students are provided with a framework for measuring critical thinking skills to guide and test whether or not they have applied critical thinking to the problem-solving (Facione, 2013). When students are faced with complex problems, they can use the skills of classification, identification, clarification, differentiation, interpretation and other critical thinking to sort out the context of the problem in a relaxed and orderly manner, consider the various restrictive factors comprehensively and finally find the best solution by measuring all kinds of solutions.

In class activities, teachers are supposed to provide students with the time and stage to display the results of group activities in the classroom. At the same time, teachers should provide targeted and individualized feedback to each group of students after students' report. In addition to measuring the fluency of the students' language expression, Teachers can adopt the comprehensive evaluation of critical thinking skills and temperament of students in the process of solving problems. It is suggested that teachers adopt the criteria provided by Wen Qiufang, etc in the theoretical models of critical thinking ability. Besides offering time and stage for students to display, In order to improve students' critical reading ability and the effect of extra-curricular reading, teachers need to demonstrate the process of critical reading to students in the classroom based on textbooks. By asking questions step by step, the teacher leads students to understand the theme of the article, analyze and evaluate the logical thinking of the author, and then help students to gradually understand and master the concept and skills of critical thinking in the interpretation of an article.

It is usually possible to use the question strategy shown in figure 2 (Payne, 2006) to ask students to conduct a self-evaluation in the reflection and evaluation stage after class to test whether they have applied critical thinking skills to the process of problem-solving or not. Meanwhile, teachers should also evaluate whether students have displayed the temperament of critical thinking and ask students what problems have been encountered in the process of solving problems and acquiring new knowledge, whether they have actively faced and sought solutions to problems by building an environment of questioning and inquiring. Students can use logical ideas and reflect on the whole process of thinking, they are becoming more and more willing to reflect and modify their thinking.

IV. Research Tools & Data Collection

A. Research Tools

The present study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach is designed to investigate the critical thinking skills and tendencies of students and to check whether there are significant differences in their second language acquisition abilities before and after the experiment. To investigate the attitudes of teachers and students towards the PBL teaching model, the main research tools are questionnaires and language tests. The test designed is based on the National College English Test 4 of 2016 (CET-4), covering the examination of listening, reading,writing and translating. The questionnaire includes questions on critical thinking skills and students' disposition. The questionnaire employs the professor Wen Qiufang's adapted version based on the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory(CCTDI) (Facione, 1992), which Includes eight dimensions: analysis, truth-seeking, curiosity, self-confidence, tenacity, openness, maturity, and fairness, were reduced from 75 to 54 items, and the dimensions of fairness are tested. The total reliability of the questionnaire is 0. 810, and the reliability of each dimension is between 0.51 (justice) and 0.73 (tenacity), so the reliability of the questionnaire is much higher than the acceptable value of 0.4.

The questionnaire of critical thinking ability, which is based on critical reading skills, adopts the form of the Richter scale, which consists of 28 options and 6 dimensions, and is tested by SPSS 17.7 statistical software for its reliability

and validity. The total reliability of the scale was 0.913, and the reliability of each dimension was between 0.496 (analysis) and 0.791 (self-regulation). The results of KMO and Bartlette's tests showed that KMO = 0.864 > 0.5, which indicates that the validity of the questionnaire is good.

B. Data Collection

The experiment includes pre-test and post-test. Two groups of students are tested by language tests and questionnaires before the beginning of PBL teaching model. By the end of PBL teaching model, two groups of students are also given language tests and questionnaires as the basis of the post-test. 180 questionnaires were sent out by the teacher in the beginning and the final period. The recovery rate is 100%, and then the language test data and the questionnaire data were entered into SPSS 17.7 to analyze. An interview for students is also carried out.

V. Results and Discussion

A. Analysis on the Results of Questionnaire of the Critical Thinking Disposition

In order to compare whether there were significant differences in the use of critical thinking tendency and critical skills between the two groups after one semester's training and study, we use an independent sample T test in pre-test and post-test. At the same time, in order to verify that each group of students have made significant differences in their own learning, paired samples are used to test the results of T test, such as Table 2 and Table 3.

TABLE II.
AVERAGE SCORES OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST IN EACH DIMENSION OF CRITICAL THINKING TENDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Items	Average scores of pre-test	Average scores of post-test	P values
Analysis	38. 62	40. 13	. 002
Curiosity	45. 13	45. 60	. 411
Tenacity	34. 56	35. 17	. 319
Confidence	38. 82	41. 13	. 008
Truth	37. 46	40. 07	. 028
Maturity	38. 57	40. 33	. 011
Openness	39. 89	42. 07	. 024
Justice	38. 65	43. 64	. 000

TABLE III.
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST RESULTS IN CRITICAL THINKING TENDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

Items	Pre-test		Post-test	
	T values	P values	T values	P values
Analysis	.038	.970	2.641	.010
Curiosity	1.104	.272	1.957	.053
Tenacity	.947	.346	1.676	.096
Confidence	.362	.718	2.425	.017
Truth-seeking	.667	.507	2.283	.024
Maturity	.149	.882	2.150	.034
Openness	1.079	.284	2.187	.031
Justice	1.162	.248	4.341	.000

In the questionnaire of critical thinking, the scores for each dimension ranged from 10 to 60, 40 or more is with a positive tendency; 30 or below is with a negative tendency; scores between 31and 39 is with a swaying tendency. as it can be seen from Table 2, before participating in the PBL teaching experiment, the students in the experimental group have shown a positive tendency of curiosity. Although the other dimensions are not negative, they still did not reach the ideal state of positive tendency, among which, the tenacity was the least ideal.

in Table 3. The P values of critical thinking tendency in each dimension are 0.970, 0.272, 0.346, 0.718, 0.507, 0.882, 0.284, 0.248, 0.05 respectively, which indicates that there is no significant difference in critical thinking tendency between the experimental group and the control group before and after the experiment. The P values of analysis, confidence, truth-seeking, maturity, openness and justice are 0.010, 0.017, 0.024, 0.024, 0.034, 0.031, 0.000, p<0 05 respectively, which indicates that there are significant differences between the two groups in the dimensions above. but in dimensions of curiosity and tenacity, there are significant differences between the two groups. P values are 0.053 and 0.096 respectively, indicating that there is no significant difference between the two groups in the two dimensions. The results show that PBL teaching methods have a positive effect on the development of critical thinking of students. Compared with traditional teaching, PBL teaching model is more helpful to promote students' ability to solve problems and develop critical thinking.

Burris, Garton (2007) did not find significant changes in critical thinking in the subjects in his experiment. He attributed it to the short period of the experiment, which lasted only two weeks compared to 10-16 weeks in previous studies. The experiment must have a long enough period to adapt students to the new teaching and learning model to verify the effectiveness of PBL. Tiwariet al (2012) conducted three stages of experiments with Hong Kong students, China. The results showed that there were significant differences in the dimension of truth-seeking, analysis and self-

confidence in the first stage of the study. However, in the third stage of the experiment, there is significant difference in the dimension of tenacity. Therefore, in this experiment, the tenacity tendency of the experimental group needs a longer experimental period to make a significant difference. Besides, there is no significant change in the dimension of curiosity. But before the experiment, the students have shown a strong positive tendency, so we believe that it is difficult to change significantly when the subjects reach a positive tendency.

B. Analysis on the Results of Questionnaires about Critical Thinking Ability

TABLE IV.
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST RESULTS IN CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE BETWEEN TWO GROUPS

Items	Pre-test		Post-test	
	T values	P values	T values	P values
Interpretation	.723	.457	2.140	.038
Analysis	.037	.967	2.150	.034
Evaluation	.074	.947	2.666	.009
Reasoning	1.420	.133	.425	.671
Explanation	.324	.436	2.592	.011
Self regulation	.165	.566	.652	.516

TABLE V.
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST IN CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY QUESTIONNAIRES BETWEEN TWO GROUPS

Items	Experimental group		Control group	
	T values	P values	T values	P values
Interpretation	8.504	.020	.580	.566
Analysis	9.356	.002	.425	.671
Evaluation	9.478	.000	.652	.516
Reasoning	4.853	.321	.822	.312
Explanation	7.584	.026	.764	.436
Self regulation	3.760	.483	.712	.467

In the T test of independent samples of pre-test, The P values of the two groups of students in the dimensions of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, explanation and self-regulation are 0.457, 0.967, 0.947, 0.133, 0.436, 0.566 respectively, ($p>0.05$), indicating that there is no significant difference between two groups of subjects in the dimensions above. In the post-test, the P values of each dimension were. 0.038 0.034 0.009 0.671 0.011 0.516, which indicated that the two groups showed significant differences in interpretation analysis, evaluation and interpretation ($p<0.05$). However, there was no significant difference between the two groups in the dimension of reasoning and self-regulation ($p>0.05$). in the following paired sample T-test, The P values in each dimension of the experimental group are 0.020 0.0020 0.0020 0.000 0.000 0.321 0.026 0.483 respectively, which indicates that the students in experimental group have made a significant change in interpretation, analysis, evaluation and the use of explanation skills after one term of study ($p<0.05$). However, there is no significant change in the dimension of reasoning and self-regulation ($p>0.05$). The results of paired sample t-test show that the P value of each dimension is greater than 0. 05, indicating that the traditional teaching does not have a significant impact on students' critical thinking ability. in comparison, the PBL teaching model has provided students with abundant pre-class and after-class activities, which have offered students a wide range of space to develop and use their critical thinking ability through defining problems, analyzing materials, demonstrating programs, presenting results, self-evaluating and peer evaluating. The research result is very similar to the conclusion of Albanese Mitchell (2009) that the introduction of PBL teaching model has a significant effect on the improvement of students' meta-cognitive ability with manifestation in the improvement of students' ability to understand concepts and apply knowledge.

C. Analysis of Language Test Results

TABLE VI.
TWO SETS OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TESTS IN LANGUAGE TESTING

Pre-test of listening	11. 0000	2. 18143	10. 4667	2. 01260	0. 5333	. 984	. 329
Post-test of listening	13. 7000	2. 84241	11. 5667	2. 22344	2. 1333	3. 238	. 002
Pre-test of reading	26. 3333	3. 15500	25. 6000	3. 27225	0. 7333	1. 018	. 313
Post-test of reading	30. 000	2. 97113	26. 333	1. 94641	3. 667	5. 695	. 000
Pre-test of writing	9. 4000	1. 27577	9. 0000	1. 25945	0. 4000	1. 222	. 227
Post-test of writing	11. 4667	1. 19578	10. 0333	1. 32570	1. 43333	4. 397	. 000

In the pre-test, The P values of the two groups in listening, reading and writing are 0.329, 0.313, 0.227 respectively, all of which are greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test of listening, reading and writing. In the post-test, The P values are 0.002, 0.000 and 0.000 respectively, $p<0.05$, indicating that the average scores of the two groups show an upward trend in the language test after one term of study, but there were significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in terms of language competence. Therefore, it is suggested that the intensive reading course combined with the PBL teaching model can

promote the improvement of students' language ability. Through interviews, teachers and most of the students agree that the PBL model plays a positive role in English learning. In addition to developing the habit of finding evidence on the basis of research and increasing the sense of teamwork. From activities before class and in class, students have made full use of the platform to train their language ability. the forms of language output, such as oral reports and performance, have strengthened students' phonetic correction, and indirectly have promoted the level of listening comprehension. in terms of reading skills, Students are required to do critical reading based on textbooks, and problem-solving is considered as the core to constantly stimulate them to find answers in extracurricular reading. In terms of writing, high-quality oral reports come from high-quality written output. Classroom presentations in each unit give them plenty of opportunities to write, thereby helping students to activate their reserves of vocabulary and grammar, and to constantly revise and improve their ability to make sentences and form discourses. A large number of exercises over time have reduced students' fear of English learning and have gradually formed the habit of expressing in English. Therefore, in the PBL teaching model, the students' language ability has been comprehensively improved.

VI. Conclusion

The research indicates that PBL teaching model can promote the development of students' critical thinking ability and improve their second language acquisition ability compared with the traditional teaching, so that students can autonomously construct the new knowledge while achieving the development of the ability at the same time. But the experiment has also faced with unprecedented challenges, it is fundamental to the success of the experiment that teachers can actively and effectively change students from traditional passive knowledge receivers to active knowledge builders. The systematic and strict examination system is the guarantee of the experiment. The evaluation standard of critical thinking ability is the main criteria to examine the students' learning achievement. Some students have not fully adapted to the new learning model because of the short period of the experiment. Therefore, the development of some critical thinking ability and disposition requires a longer period in research and teaching practice. In addition, the limitations of measuring tools have also led to the inability of the experimental data to fully reflect the development of the subjects' abilities. Therefore, a variety of evaluation and testing methods should be applied in future research.

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Communicative Activities in Saudi EFL Textbooks: A Corpus-driven Analysis

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***Abstract*—This paper investigates the speaking and communication tasks in EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia by means of corpus analysis. This analysis explores the extent to which the speaking tasks provided in Saudi EFL textbooks are communicatively incompetent, and is important due to the unsatisfactory, limited levels achieved by many learners of English at most educational stages, specifically primary, intermediate, and secondary. The reason for the poor oral skills among many EFL learners is due to the absence of authentic language learning tasks in a wide range of situations. The techniques used to detect the range of communicative tasks are based on sketching and retrieving the n-grams of *in pairs* and the verbal collocates *say, talk, tell, ask,* and *discuss* in a span of $n = 2 \leq \geq 2$. The experimental analysis driven from the intended textbooks shows that speaking tasks lack reasonable distributions of everyday communication examples and speaking/communicative situations.**

***Index Terms*—speaking tasks, communicative competence, intercultural competence, Saudi EFL textbooks, corpus-driven analysis**

I. Introduction

Language textbooks are an essential part of the language learning process itself. In fact, textbooks are regarded as the second core requirement when learning English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) after a teacher/instructor (Riazi, 2003). By the same token, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) emphasize the role of textbooks in innovating and modernizing language learning. Furthermore, within textbooks, there are normally a number of speaking and communication tasks which are carefully designed to promote language learners' ability to express ideas, opinions and feelings in meaningful and skillful ways. Speaking is one of the productive skills and a communication tool, which is composed of systematic verbal utterances for the sake of delivering specific meanings and exchanging thoughts through language (Mart, 2012).

In the same vein, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach is seen as a stimulus for creating or fostering speaking and communication skills in a target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 2004). CLT also puts the emphasis on English language teachers' and stakeholders' (instructors, material developers, syllabus designers) responsibility to prepare language learners well to ensure they can speak effectively and communicate meaningfully with their target audience through the use of well-grounded tasks designed in a way that reflects reality and current issues based on real-life situations (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Reiser & Dempsey, 2012).

Due to the prominence given to relevant speaking and communication tasks in ESL/EFL textbooks in general and in the Saudi context in particular, this research aims to extract and classify the kinds of tasks (or activities) which are included in EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia, and examine whether there are differences between them in the textbooks given. It was decided to investigate the nature of speaking and communication tasks in an entire series of EFL textbooks used in general education across three st ages: primary, intermediate and secondary. The textbooks selected fall under the categories of beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Through corpus-driven analysis, the focus will be on the status of tasks currently used and will also explore how other common communicative-oriented tasks would conform, specifically discussions, role-playing, problem solving, simulations, information gap and brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion reporting, playing cards, picture narrating/describing and finding the difference (Oradee, 2012).

The objective is to compare the status and category of such tasks with other task types internationally used to help improve language learners' speaking and communication skills such as imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional, interpersonal and extensive monologue-related tasks (Nunan, 2003). It takes the quantitative analysis approach. Canale and Swain (1980) showed the positive effect grammar knowledge has on speaking and communication skills in the target language. Vocabulary is also considered an important aspect of learners' speaking and communication ability since words are the building blocks for literacy development (Silverman, 2007).

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, a very limited number of studies have investigated this phenomenon since speaking is a skill often overlooked by many language teachers and instructors. This may be because it is time-

consuming and requires high-level linguistic competence and verbal proficiency along with other personal characteristics such as self-confidence. Therefore, this research addresses three questions:

- What are the communicative competencies/proficiencies served in Saudi EFL textbooks?
- How are they distributed? And to what extent are EFL textbooks used in Saudi schools covering speaking tasks?

II. Reviewing the Literature

A. An Overview of Speaking Teaching/Learning

The domination of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) is undoubtedly increasing worldwide. Yet, when it comes to its use, the English language remains a hurdle for many learners, particularly in settings that require speaking and oral communication. Numerous theoretical perspectives have become supportive of the teaching and learning of speaking and the spoken genre. Two of the principal voices in this field belong to Vygotsky and Bruner, particularly in terms of so-called scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf, 2000). According to the Vygotskian's socio-cultural theory, human cognitive development is a socially positioned activity which allows mediation to occur (Vygotsky, 1978a). Mediation underlines the assumption that knowledge is processed through negotiation and the facilitation of others to develop cognitive and problem-based learning abilities (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). Scaffolding is a joint mutual engagement of action that aims to achieve collaboration and interaction (Wood, 1988). Machado (2000) confirmed the constructive role of peer-to-peer and expert-to-novice (with the expert often the instructor) scaffolding during the practice stages of spoken tasks. Indeed, scaffolding contributes to the establishment of meaning and dialogue with the self and others (McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004), and the aim of speaking practice is to improve learners' oral production along with maximizing their linguistic skills.

In traditional methodology approaches such as the grammar-translation method, there is a clear emphasis on reading texts, which are translated from the first language to the second language and vice versa. However, Bygate (2009) shows that speaking can also be a channel between learners and instructors through which learners can practice language by using imitation for language development. This means that speaking is the avenue to articulate emotions, ideas, requests and apologies in order to illustrate the various functions of language. Talley and Hui-ling (2014) reported that learners should be informed that speaking and communication are of greater importance than simply having knowledge of the grammar when conversing with other learners. Having a conversation is often considered synonymous with developing one's speaking skill. Furthermore, speaking is a socially oriented process aimed at creating meaning through the phases of producing, receiving, and processing information. In this regard, Gilakjani (2016) highlighted speaking as the pathway to interact with others everywhere and every day.

The term "speaking" can be defined in various ways, depending on whether the focus is on its form, in other words the grammar, or whether it is understood more broadly by its communicative function apart from its syntactic or prosodic features. Chaney and Burk (1998) argue that speaking is the development of sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different settings. In fact, speaking is a demanding skill as it involves vowel reduction, elision, slang, and idioms along with other phenomena such as stress, intonation, and rhythm, all of which can make the production of good spoken language difficult to process (Lazaraton, 2001).

Speaking remains a crucial skill, as shown by Leong and Ahmadi (2017), since it cannot be separated from other language skills and contributes to helping learners to enhance their lexical, grammatical, and writing skills. Furthermore, practicing speaking in language learning classes usually adheres to the following stages: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation, and finally extension. It seems that speaking usually seeks a balance between fluency and accuracy. Fluency relates the use of linking words and phrases in sentences to ensure that language production is coherent, whereas accuracy focuses on the precision of which the language is produced, including grammatical structure and pronunciation (Hedge, 2000). Cognitive complexity has also been considered as a determiner for uttered spoken production (Robinson, 2001). Yuan and Ellis (2003) emphasize the role of deliberate planning prior to speaking as a promoter of accuracy and complexity. Furthermore, engagement in small talk in the target language to create a sense of social communication is a practical step for the development of spoken interaction (Shumin, 2002). The reason for this is that such interactional negotiations can result in valuable output/speaking; i.e., explaining views, defending opinions, or contributing ideas to certain phenomena.

In the field of teaching and learning, speaking involves numerous cognitive processes that are more than simply expressing words, but also include conveying meaningful messages orally (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Speaking tasks may result in negative side effects, as second/foreign language learners may feel nervous when speaking in the target language. Sources of this anxiety when speaking in the target language include the fear of criticism by others in contexts such as in-class participations and also a lack of confidence in their ability to communicate with others, also known as communication apprehension (Yalçın & Incecay, 2014). For that reason, Richard-Amato (1996) proposed four strategies for language learners wishing to enhance their speaking abilities in English: learners should carefully think about what they are going to say beforehand; learners should consider the structures they will use in advance; learners should not be too worried about making mistakes; and learners should use repetition, gestures, synonyms, and definitions when they are not understood by others.

B. EFL Textbooks and Culture

A textbook (or coursebook) is a guide map used for the study of a particular subject. A textbook represents the crucial component of the teaching process and functions as a standard model for classroom practice (Nunan, 1988). Richards (2014) also considered the coursebook as the main resource used by numerous language teachers worldwide, with the analysis of textbooks affording instructors the opportunity to make a decision regarding appropriate and inappropriate materials. English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks direct L2/FL instructors through various stages of pedagogy to achieve their educational and linguistic goals. As far as the tasks in textbooks are concerned, Granger (1998) states that textbooks should be based on authentic native English. Teaching materials may include events, incidents and actions that embody certain experiences, as this will help learners to construct cognitive and linguistic knowledge. A textbook that includes a teacher's guide and student's workbook save instructors' time, since these resources contain various ideas for the incorporation of the text into classes and the kinds of supplementary tasks or homework that can be given, as well as a sample of tests and quizzes (Nordlund, 2016).

The analysis of EFL textbooks has become an integral part of the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The purpose of textbooks analysis is to examine the effects of the teaching materials, including tasks and how suitable they are for learners (Tomlinson et al. 2001). This was supported by Ellis (1997), who drew attention to the value of predictive analysis (before the implementation) and retrospective analysis (after the implementation) of the course. Generally speaking, effective textbooks feature specific qualities: stimulating learners' interest, recapping previous learning, preparing for what will be learned later on, explaining new content, providing clear and relevant strategies for learning, providing learning tasks, and supporting learners to monitor their progress (Richards, 2014). Furthermore, Harwood (2010) highlights two fundamental issues related to the analysis of EFL textbooks: the authenticity of the language used and the representation of the content provided.

One of the critical issues relevant to EFL textbooks is culture. Nieto (2010) defines culture as a joint worldview of common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion. It is also seen as mutual agreement between the members of a certain society who share similar values, rules, role expectations, and meanings. Accordingly, Aldera (2017, p. 221) formulated his thoughts on culture as "the relationship between its beliefs, values, behavior, and communication" and also as "a collective achievement of the arts and manifestations of the human intellect". Such textbooks should reinforce the root culture among learners, so to avoid any kind of division of local culture. Gray (2010) found that reaching a consensus on the amount of cultural content to be included in textbooks should be decided by the locals as well as considering learners' backgrounds and their native norms and values. Prodromou (1992) supported the so-called cross-cultural approach in EFL textbooks, which emphasizes a comparison and contrast between the native "local" culture and the target "other/international" culture. Several EFL textbooks which are widely used have been criticized for the language used in general and for speaking tasks in particular (Nordlund, 2016). Such criticism extends to describing speaking tasks as lacking in authenticity and naturalness (Tyler, 2012) and also lacking in satisfactory models for spoken grammar and realistic language use (Gilmore, 2007).

Not only does the lack of authenticity and naturalness affect the quality of speaking tasks, but there are also other factors that have an impact on tasks aimed at improving oral skills. There is no doubt that there is a constant need to explore factors that affect the teaching and learning of speaking and the potential ways that low-level English language learners can enhance their spoken language abilities. Ur (1996) argued that there are several factors that cause difficulties in the practice of speaking and communication; these include lack of motivation, unwillingness to accept personal mistakes, and unequal opportunities for participation among learners. Motivation plays a key role in overcoming such difficulties. Littlewood (1998, p. 53) confirmed that motivation is "the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres". Dil (2009) also found that anxiety and unwillingness during the process of speaking in English are considered among the biggest constraints affecting the learning of speaking and communication in English.

Al-Seghayer (2014) identified four constraints affecting English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia. Such constraints include: beliefs constraints, such as an inadequacy in learners' preparation in English; curriculum constraints, such as limited learning materials; pedagogical constraints, such as inappropriate teaching methods; and administration constraints, such as limited local and international partnerships with specialized centers. Similar factors have been observed by Tuan and Mai (2015), whose findings showed that lack of topical knowledge, use of mother tongue (first language), and low or limited participation are all issues that have a negative impact on learners' speaking ability. This is consistent with the work of Gani et al. (2015), who found that successful students put most emphasis on four areas to enhance their speaking skills: stating ideas and opinions, making requests and questions, responding to other people's perspectives, and supporting their arguments.

C. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT has become a major language teaching approach due to the fact that it centers on speaking and communication practice. Consistent with socio-cultural theory, CLT is regarded as a social tool and a meditational technique to help individuals to practice speaking and communication (Vygotsky, 1978b). Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that the CLT approach seeks to develop meaning among language learners as well as their competence in using linguistic knowledge in real-life situations. This approach considers linguistic competence as a sub-component, along with the ability to

convey meaning appropriately according to various social settings. Initially, CLT started as a theory of communication, but later became incorporated as an approach in EFL textbooks. Since 1988, Nunan has asserted that CLT should be reflected not just in syllabus plans, but also in classroom tasks, classroom interactions and tests. From a CLT perspective:

language learning success is to be assessed neither in terms of accurate grammar and pronunciation for their own sake, nor in terms of explicit knowledge of the rules, but by the ability to do things with the language, appropriately, fluently and effectively' (Cook, 2003, p. 36)

CLT emphasizes the use of communicative language, including knowledge of language functions and appropriateness of expressions, for authentic tasks (Johnson and Johnson, 1998). In light of this view, there is a focus on authenticity, spontaneity, and using functional language so as to augment learners' communicative fluency (Chambers, 2012). This argument is supported by Wong (2005), who advocated that a CLT approach contributes to practice and participation in a second or foreign language in realistic speaking contexts, and also argued that patterned practice and explicit grammar knowledge should be minimized. In view of that, the approach aims to boost learners' communicative competence and performance (Richards and Rodgers, 2014), and learners are expected to be accountable for initiating, responding, managing, and negotiating during conversation (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014).

As far as speaking skill is concerned, Nunan (2003) suggests six categories of speaking performance in EFL settings: imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional, interpersonal, and extensive. The last three categories aim to establish dialogue and monologue (interaction) with instructors and peers. This indicates that rote learning, which includes imitation and memorization, should be minimized, and further concentration should be placed on extended monologues and communication. It is supported by Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016), who confirms that speaking is the pathway to interacting every day and everywhere. Informative speaking and communicative tasks are those socially oriented and meaningful tasks which focus on input, production, and information processing/feedback (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014). Accordingly, it is suggested to design various types of interactive communicative speaking tasks, including small-group or team-based oral work, full-class discussion, in-class debates, and individual or group reflection.

The designing of tasks should be based on three criteria: authenticity of topics, language level, and cognitive needs of learners. Current EFL textbooks may have also more problem-based, information-gap, role-play, or opinion-exchange tasks. Speaking tasks should focus on cultural elements, as culture is the carrier of language; they should be designed based on what is known as a cross-cultural approach (Prodromou, 1992). Gray (2010), in his analysis of EFL textbooks, has found that some textbooks are mostly lacking in cultural elements for speaking and communicative tasks. Such cultural elements need to be determined by instructors and local learners and by considering their needs.

Speaking tasks should also achieve linguistic competence along with intercultural competence (Byram, 2009; Yang & Fleming, 2013). As a result, speaking demands a communicative approach that targets successful integration of implicit and explicit learning tasks, along with teaching methods, into the EFL textbook. In EFL communicative settings, it is strongly recommended that learners be placed in situational transactions and role-play tasks; consequently, learners are expected to deal with others through output, that is, speaking (Crookall & Oxford, 1991). This output is usually composed of united words, phrases, and sentences so as to achieve meaningful discourse. Thus, the changes in such environments may affect humans' thought processes, which are reflected in the development of language acquisition involving communication and its relevant speaking skill.

The notion of communicative competence has been extensively described by Canale and Swain (1980) in their influential model. They argue that communicative competence comprises four categories: grammatical competence, referring to learners' knowledge of various linguistic aspects; sociolinguistic competence, which involves several linguistic uses in their social contexts; discourse competence, which implies the ability to use language adequately for forming meaningful utterances; and strategic competence, the ability to navigate and deal with communication properly. Weir (1990) contends that communicative language consists of language competence, strategic competence, and psychological mechanisms.

Furthermore, the communicative approach has put significant emphasis on target language learning and culture, i.e. "foreign language learning as enculturation" (Alptekin, 2002). As stated earlier, Kramsch (1993) clarified that learners construct expectations based on their actual experiences, which are often formed by local cultures. Accordingly, Alptekin (2002) argues that communicative competence is based on authenticity and representation of reality; nevertheless, this is encompassed by two challenges: teaching the English language is always inseparable from its main culture, leading to minimizing the role of the native language culture, and there is a constant preference for monolingual native speaker norms.

In fact, the role of teaching the English language has been dramatically transformed, from its limited focus on linguistic competence to communicative competence, and finally to intercultural competence (Yang & Fleming, 2013). Byram (2009) invented the model of intercultural competence, which consists of knowledge, attitudes, skills of discovery, skills of interpreting, and critical cultural awareness. Several studies have found that intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is effective for the development of linguistic choices (Borghetti, 2013). Reid (2015) indicates that ICC can be enhanced through actual practice-related tasks which clarify identity and other comparable aspects of culture. Although ICC in the national curriculum is considered crucial, Europublic (2006) found that such

materials, and the tasks included, are designed according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), with less emphasis on the development of ICC.

III. Tools of Processing EFL Textbooks: Which of Which?

Saudi EFL textbooks analyzed in the present study were designed in 2016 onwards. EFL is taught from the 4th grade. The number of textbooks designed for the Saudi K-12 schools from the 4th grade to the 12th grade is 57, each of which is provided in print and in a readable and searchable PDF format. The latter allows for resaving the files in other formats in order to process them in any computer software tools built for processing. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the titles of the textbooks, the number of pages, and the basic statistics of words.

TABLE 1
PROCESSED EFL TEXTBOOKS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS (LAST THREE GRADES)

Series type	Series name	No. of books	Size in pages	Size in words
Exercise book	Smart Class	6	799	Tokens: 120,803 Types: 4185 Type/token ratio: 3.46
Student book	Get Ready	6	567	
	We Can!	3	322	

TABLE 2
PROCESSED EFL TEXTBOOKS OF INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS (THREE GRADES)

Series type	Series name	No. of books	Size in pages	Size in words
Work/grammar	Full Blast	6	1062	Tokens: 453,960 Types: 11,820 Type/token ratio: 2.60
Student book	Life Off	6	922	

TABLE 3
PROCESSED EFL TEXTBOOKS OF HIGH SCHOOLS (THREE GRADES)

Series type	Series name	No. of books	Size in pages	Size in words
Not specified	Traveller	12	1363	Tokens: 957,974 Types: 25,959 Type/token ratio: 2.71
	Flying High	12	860	
	Mega Goal	6	552	

The stand-alone corpus processing tools found in the literature and applications of corpus linguistics are as follows: Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, Rychly, Smrz, & Tugwell, 2004), aConCorde (Roberts, 2014; Roberts et al., 2006), AntConc (Anthony, 2014), WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2012), and IntelliText (Sharoff, 2014). These tools are open sources, except the web-based Sketch Engine and IntelliText tools. The ACPTs (version 4.6) were being enhanced further, but they are still a mishmash computationally (Almujaiwel & Al-Thubaity, 2016).

In processing Saudi EFL textbooks for the purpose of the present study, we use GraphColl (version 1.0.0). It has built-in LancsBox tools (Brezina et al., 2015), which are also used to extract the collocates that identify the types/topics of the nodal item in pairs in the speaking tasks. For the purpose of this study, the technique used to detect the communication tasks in the Saudi EFL textbooks was to process all 57 files by detecting the phrase *in pairs*. This phrase is used in textbooks in all the tasks that ask learners to use English practically (See appendices 1, 2, and 3 for the top 30 results of the key word *in pairs*). Any symbols and pronunciation marks were removed from the texts in the Saudi EFL textbooks, via R programming language, in order to gain better results of the word frequencies relevant to the speaking tasks. This justifies the absence of the apostrophes as in "I m" and "Andys," which are "I'm" and "Andy's" in the original texts. After these steps, the data were regarded as solid enough to be thoroughly analyzed, and will be discussed in the next section for the purpose of answering the questions formulated in this article.

IV. Results and Discussions

The results were extracted by GraphColl tools (appendix 4), allowing for the detection of the collocates that are relevant to the task of *in pairs* designed to practice speaking skills in the Saudi EFL textbooks. These verbal collocations are *say* (Table 5), *talk* (Table 6), *tell* (Table 7), *ask* (Table 8), and *discuss* (Table 9), which were found to be associated with the node *in pairs* in a span of $n = 2 \leq \geq 2$ (Table 4). The next step was to detect the content words collocated with those verbal collocations in order to identify the types/topics of speaking activities.

As shown in Table 4, the collocate *say* is ranked at the top, which means it has the strongest association of the various collocates (2559.0). A comparison of the target verbal collocations indicate that there are more occurrences of *say*, *talk*, and *ask* than *discuss* and *tell* in this type of corpus of EFL textbooks.

TABLE 4
RESULTS OF THE RELEVANT KEYS COLLOCATED WITH THE TASKS WITH INSTRUCTIONS *IN PAIRS*

Target verbal collocations	Stat
Say	2559.0
Talk	1675.0
Tell	849.0
Ask	1502.0
Discuss	935.0

As demonstrated in Table 5, the majority of tasks related to the collocate *say* in fact deal with skills irrelevant to speaking and communication, such as listening and reading. Other tasks seem to concentrate more on linking saying with other general skills, such as drawing or coloring something and repeating the basic phrases: *hello*, *goodbye*, and *sorry*. The main topics of such tasks are concerned with food, computer numbers, and names.

Generally speaking, primary EFL textbooks appear to focus on tasks which are centered on memorization, repetition, and drill-and-practice. Bygate (2009) argued that such behaviors may result in learners' gaining improved speaking competence. Consequently, it is evident that using communication tasks from the early stages of learning English is crucial to enhancing a learner's speaking performance.

TABLE 5
THE COLLOCATE SAY AND ITS TASKS WITH THE STATISTICS OF FREQUENCY (WITHIN)

Collocates	Stat	Collocates	Stat	Collocates	Stat
listen	773.0	I m	18.0	Food	8.0
read	203.0	goodbye	18.0	letter	8.0
what	184.0	photographs	12.0	phrases	7.0
sentences	59.0	Draw	12.0	may	7.0
how	57.0	Word	11.0	refuse	7.0
why	53.0	Verb	11.0	names	7.0
words	37.0	chant	10.0	alphabet	6.0
when	34.0	Yes	10.0	sentence	6.0
something	33.0	Sorry	10.0	fish	6.0
no	33.0	numbers	9.0	three	6.0
hello	27.0	whats	9.0	computer	6.0
again	25.0	might	9.0	story	6.0
where	23.0	pm	9.0	anything	6.0
which	21.0	must	9.0	all	6.0
who	20.0	please	8.0	whatever	5.0
things	19.0	colour	8.0		

The second target verb in this analysis is *talk*. As shown in Table 6, there are various collocations. In alignment with this analysis, it is clear that there are tasks which have tackled authentic topics that are relevant to the learners and their past and future experiences. Those topics include holidays, free time, career, and shopping, and the tasks place the emphasis on talking about specific events, situations, feelings, places, issues, habits, dreams, and pictures. Yet, most of the tasks demonstrated the least frequent collocates. Gilmore (2007) and Tyler (2012) claim that speaking` tasks will lose meaningfulness when naturalness in language use and authenticity are disregarded.

The analysis has shown that several speaking-related tasks in intermediate and higher-level EFL textbooks focus on requesting EFL learners to talk about, and sometimes to describe, things such as a picture and house. The analysis has also exposed the need for more opportunities to keep learners engaged in interactive speaking situations.

TABLE 6
THE COLLOCATE *TALK* AND ITS TASKS WITH THE STATISTICS OF FREQUENCY (WITHIN)

Collocates	Stat	Collocates	Stat	Collocates	Stat
about	871.0	Friends	10.0	issues	7.0
Your	92.0	Them	10.0	pictures	7.0
Time	44.0	Jobs	10.0	places	6.0
things	42.0	Riting	10.0	clothes	6.0
past	41.0	Shopping	9.0	habits	6.0
future	25.0	Work	9.0	travel	6.0
him	23.0	Or	9.0	space	5.0
people	22.0	Saudi	8.0	nature	5.0
experiences	21.0	Animals	8.0	peoples	5.0
how	20.0	family	8.0	dreams	5.0
something	19.0	someone	8.0	careers	5.0
school	16.0	events	7.0	free time	5.0
imaginary	13.0	situations	7.0	ailments	5.0
food	12.0	feelings	7.0	holidays	5.0

The third target verb is *tell*. The collocates of this verb are much fewer than of the previous two verbs (only 17 collocates). The data have shown that relevant collocates refer to sound speaking and communicative tasks that involve telling stories/news to friends or other people, but occur at low frequencies (ranging between 32.0, 7.0 and 8.0). Such task types encourage learners to tell others about a certain experience or tell a story to their friends and/or general audience. Such tasks also seem to motivate the learners to speak at the limited level of short conversation and small talk, without it being necessary to interact. In the same sense, Talley and Hui-ling (2014) agree with the usefulness of speaking tasks which are personally oriented and give learners the opportunity to play the following roles: listener, performer, interactor, and negotiator.

TABLE 7
THE COLLOCATE *TELL* AND ITS TASKS WITH THE STATISTICS OF FREQUENCY (WITHIN)

Collocates	Stat
what	59.0
him	45.0
story	32.0
them	21.0
taught	20.0
people	13.0
anyone	13.0
his	13.0
friend	12.0
something	9.0
stories	8.0
more	8.0
truth	8.0
news	7.0
her	7.0
someone	7.0
their	6.0

The most frequent collocations of the fourth target verb, *ask*, are shown below in Table 8. Such tasks comprise the following: asking about specific information, asking for advice, asking for clarification, etc. Those tasks have been identified as situational yet infrequent across the textbooks (with low frequency statistics: 27.0, 22.0, and 6.0, respectively). In line with Nunan (2003), such tasks could also promote transactional and interactional types of speaking tasks and communication skills.

TABLE 8
THE COLLOCATE *ASK* AND ITS TASKS WITH THE STATISTICS OF FREQUENCY (WITHIN)

Collocates	Stat	Collocates	Stat
about	112.0	him her	21.0
questions	102.0	Help	19.0
teacher	45.0	requests	16.0
him	37.0	Her	16.0
me	32.0	yourself	14.0
what	31.0	Like	14.0
how	29.0	Them	14.0
something	29.0	question	12.0
information	27.0	Who	10.0
someone	27.0	many	10.0
friend	25.0	groups	6.0
when	25.0	somebody	6.0
advice	22.0	clarification	6.0
permission	22.0	where	6.0
again	21.0	whats	5.0

The collocate *discuss* is the fifth target verb in this research, as presented in Table 9, and is considered the least frequently occurring verb. The results show that it is included in tasks which tackle issues related to the engagement of EFL learners in speaking and communication including discussing ideas and sharing opinions, feelings, plans and habits and habits. In this regard, Oradee (2012) suggests that communicative competencies could be achieved through discussion, problem-solving, and storytelling. Nonetheless, such tasks remain inadequate, as their frequency did not exceed 28.0, compared to, for example *say* (773.0) and *talk* (871.0).

TABLE 9
THE COLLOCATE *DISCUSS* AND ITS TASKS WITH THE STATISTICS OF FREQUENCY (WITHIN)

Collocates	Stat
Plans	28.0
Future	27.0
Ideas	19.0
Opinion	10.0
Photographs	8.0
Habits	8.0
Problems	7.0
Pictures	7.0
World	6.0
Feelings	6.0
Technology	5.0
Issue	5.0

V. CONCLUSION

Corpus-driven analysis has shown that the collocate *say* has the highest level of frequency, compared to the collocate *discuss*, which has been found to be the lowest. It has been found that a few tasks are constructed based on a communicative and situational basis. Most speaking tasks seemed to be distributed randomly, without fully taking into account the scenes of situational performance and also without considering the logical consequences of the Englishes-world ontology. Furthermore, based on the Saudi EFL textbooks that have been investigated, it was evident that there is a need for the inclusion of more communicative tasks to ensure EFL learners to interact and communicate their ideas with peers in English and a wide variety of topics. Lastly, the data also revealed that the majority of tasks are built as one-way rather than reciprocal.

APPENDIX

TABLE 10.
TOP 30 RESULTS OF CONCORDANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS' EFL TEXTBOOKS

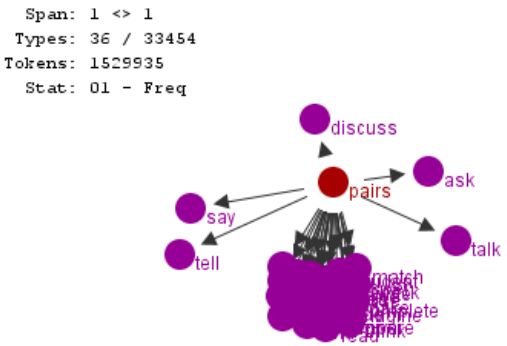
Preceding words	**Node**	**Subsequent words**
and repeat Then talk in	pairs	Hello My names Salim This is
He a book Talk in	pairs	SA chooses a photo from
Greetings Listen and say in	pairs	Listening speaking practise formulaic language
you Read and say in	pairs	Listen and match are thanks
Read and say in	pairs	Listen and say Listening reading
short simple questions Read in	pairs	Ask and answer Listen and
questions Read and say in	pairs	Read and draw Write Lesson
Read and say in	pairs	Read Listen and find Read
Read and say in	pairs	Lesson Read and match Write
Read and say in	pairs	Lesson Read and write Reading
school Read and say in	pairs	I have Its my calendar
Read and say in	pairs	Reading understand and complete short
say Read and say in	pairs	Listen draw and write a
you Read and say in	pairs	Listen and match Writing reading
complete Read and say in	pairs	I m late No you
b Read and say in	pairs	a Read Listen and number
Read and say in	pairs	Mum please pass me some
simple questions Listen Say in	pairs	Listen and find Read and
and Read Say in	pairs	Wheres the Thank you Its
to Read and say in	pairs	go on a picnic make
check Read and say in	pairs	a Read and complete Lesson
number Read and say in	pairs	understand short monologues
questions Read and say in	pairs	Where are you going Im
colour Read and say in	pairs	a Revision Read and find
routine Read and say in	pairs	Ask and answer I have
Read and say in	pairs	understand specific information Speaking
b Read and say in	pairs	What animal did you see
do Practice the talks in	pairs	Practice with actions Unit My
hands Practice and do in	pairs	Unit My Body PM
say Practice the talks in	pairs	Act out the talks in

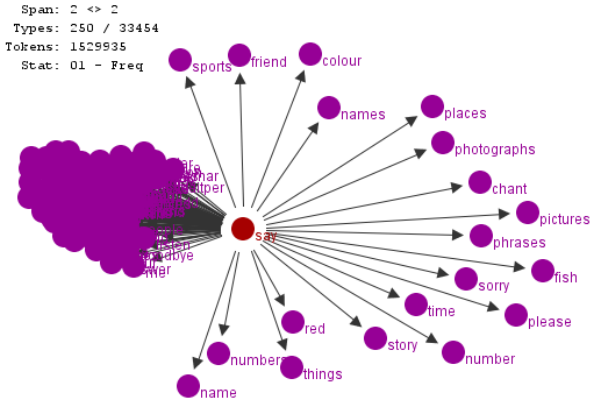
TABLE 11.
TOP 30 RESULTS OF CONCORDANCE IN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS' EFL TEXTBOOKS

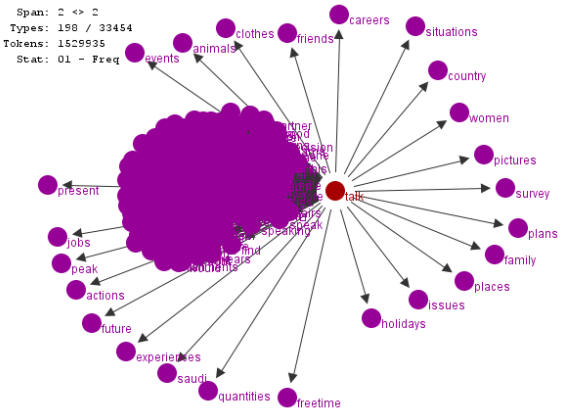
Preceding words	Node	Subsequent words
your name B Talk in	pairs	Hi Im Whats your name
I cant A Talk in	pairs	Look at the picture find
and repeat B Talk in	pairs	C Listen and repeat D
and repeat D Talk in	pairs	How old are you Im
each colour B Talk in	pairs	Point to different objects in
at the board Talk in	pairs	Read the text Write Speak
you Not bad Talk in	pairs	peak Talk in pairs A
in pairs peak Talk in	pairs	A Listen and repeat Whats
Then read it out in	pairs	GUESSING GAME Find the clock
Find the clock Talk in	pairs	B Read again and complete
favourite player athlete B Talk in	pairs	D Use the notes below
SCORE GUESSING GAME Talk in	pairs	Student A Read the cards
at Science B Talk in	pairs	about your best friend Whos
has got peak Talk in	pairs	Look at the pictures and
check your answers Talk in	pairs	about your daily routine peak
doesnt B Now talk in	pairs	Yes very much Its OK
questions A Talk in	pairs	peak Write sentences about what
Amal Julie Kelly Talk in	pairs	about the chores you do
the week Then talk in	pairs	When What Who with Whats
Spot the differences Talk in	pairs	Look at the two houses
her favourite peak Talk in	pairs	Ask each other about the
not Im tired Talk in	pairs	Take turns to ask for
your house flat Then talk in	pairs	Where do you live I
out there peak Talk in	pairs	Whats your dream house like
to Paul please Talk in	pairs	Student A Look at the
Speak Stand up Talk in	pairs	What colour is What does
that please a Talk in	pairs	I dont understand c
the answers below Talk in	pairs	Ask and answer personal questions
PM Work in	pairs	Student A points to something
PM Talk in	pairs	Ask and answer questions about

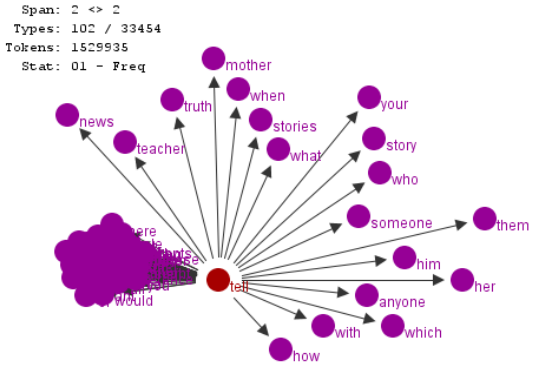
TABLE 12.
TOP 30 RESULTS OF CONCORDANCE IN HIGH SCHOOLS' EFL TEXTBOOKS

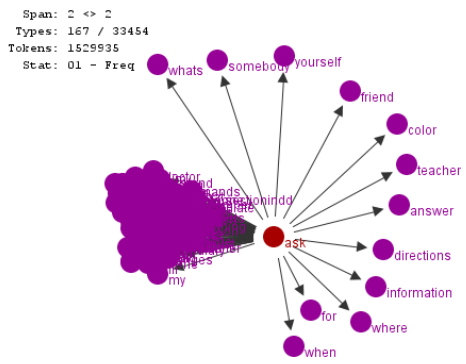
Preceding words	Node	Subsequent words
and read B Talk in	pairs	as in the example Male
surname NOTE B Talk in	pairs	as in the example Hello
Zealander Moroccan B Talk in	pairs	Where are you from Im
eight nine B Talk in	pairs	Whats your phone number for
nine NOTE C Talk in	pairs	How old are you Im
B Read then talk in	pairs	about objects in your classroom
High School SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Exchange personal information
shoes and they have about	pairs	Men like cars and their
words SPEAK GAME Talk in	pairs	Student A go to page
shoes Mohammed has Hana has	pairs	of shoes This is Hanas
are quite expensive I have	pairs	of shoes High heels are
possible PRACTICE SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Read the advertisement below Imagine
a b SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Make plans for today or
about nine SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Student A Use the prompts
you do Then talk in	pairs	as in the example and
a friend SPEAK Talk in	pairs	SUMMER JOB SURVEY STUDENT B
lets go SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Make plans for today Read
check your answers Talk in	pairs	Think about how often you
about yourself Then talk in	pairs	Ask and answer questions Sun
show you SPEAK Talk in	pairs	about your likes and dislikes
the study SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Go to page POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS
for False SPEAK Talk in	pairs	about your as in
usually Its usually SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Discuss the weather in the
your house flat SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Ask and answer questions using
SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Student A Imagine you have
few PRACTICE SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Student A go to page
SPEAK ROLE PLAY Talk in	pairs	Student A Imagine that you
the sentences SPEAK Talk in	pairs	Read about Andys problem below
the situations and talk in	pairs	Complete the dialogues
in brackets SPEAK Talk in	pairs	about a day out Last

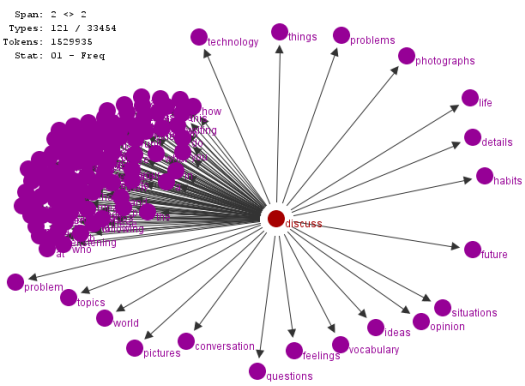


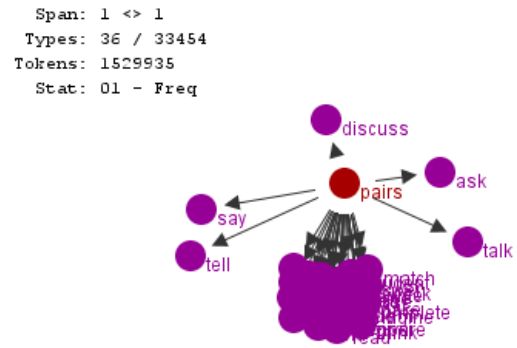


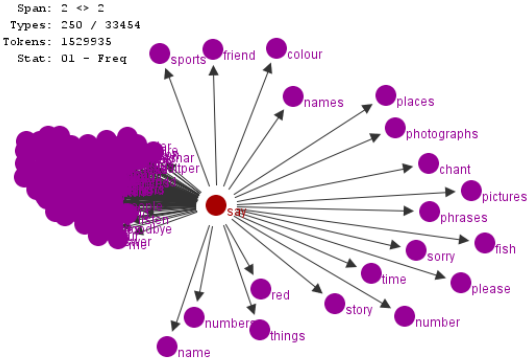












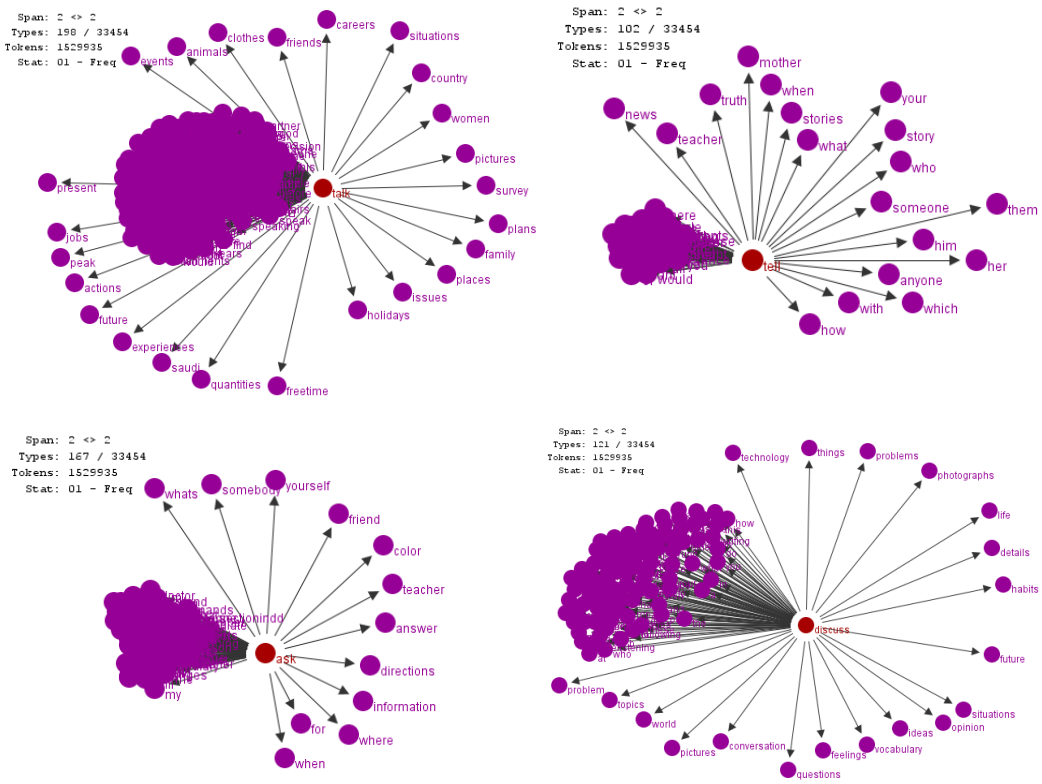


Figure 1. Extracting the collocates *say*, *talk*, *tell*, *ask* and *discuss* associated with *in_pairs* by GraphColl.jar (Brezina et al., 2015) version 1.0.0.

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Spiritual Journey of Protagonists in Saul Bellow's Fictions: Search-Escape-Regeneration

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***Abstract*—Saul Bellow, the author of Herzog, became first American Jewish writer who won the Nobel literature prize in 1976. His works changed the dominant American literature led by Hemingway and Faulkner and opened up another new era of American literature. There are many discussions among critics in the literary world, and the conclusions reached were not all the same. Some critics started with his writing techniques and believed that his novel inherits and integrates the two traditions of modernism and realism and want to classify it as a category of Western Marxism. Some apply to ethical literary criticism and make an analysis of human-nature and human-self relationship in his works. Even some critics believe that this novel distorts the image of women from the feminist point of view. This paper aims to analyze three of Saul Bellow's famous fictions, Herzog, Henderson the Rain King, More die of heartbreak from the perspectives of the spiritual evolution of the protagonists. David Galloway (1996) suggested that Bellow had only written one book from six different points of view which convey the common psychological journey of the protagonists in his works. (P138)**

***Index Terms*—spiritual, protagonists, Saul Bellow, Search-Escape-Regeneration**

I. Introduction

After Saul Bellow's first short novel *The Hell It Can't* was published on the American publication *The Beacon* in 1936, he never stopped his writing career. Throughout his life, he has created and published 11 novels, three novellas, four short stories, and a drama. He has won a total of 11 major awards in his entire life, among which he won the National Book Award for Fiction three times. In 1976, he reached the highest peak of the year. While receiving the Pulitzer Prize, he also won the Nobel Prize for Literature this year. Afterwards, he was also awarded O. Henry Award, National Medal of Arts, PEN/Malamud Award, Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award and Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Undoubtedly, he is a landmark figure in the history of American literature.

Saul Bellow's novels reflect the influence of American urban modernization process on the character and destiny of Jewish immigrants and their descendants. The city depicted not only the physical space where the story takes place, but also its particular cultural background. His novels are mostly based on the background of the chaotic urban life in form of diary bodies, homeless narratives, and stream of consciousness to reflect the perplexities of contemporary Americans in their search for self. Like Dickens, who made the great record of urban change, Bellow truly described the abundance of material wealth and the emptiness of people's spiritual life in the United States after World War II. In the late 1960s, when the United States entered the post-industrial society, individualism and money worshipism were rampant, and instrumental rationality dominated every aspect of this social life. In his works, he repeatedly compared the urban chaos and the countryside peace, showing us the strong pressure that the external world where individualism prevails to people and the threat to modern people's self-identity and moral values. Those protagonists Henderson in *Henderson the Rain King*, Herzog in *Herzog* and Professor Benn Crader in *More die of heartbreak* unexceptionally followed the same spiritual journey of "Search-Escape-Regeneration".

II. Search

Bellow's works are like a new sound, searching for human dignity and value. His protagonists are usually depressed, lonely, but take the task of quest, seeking for his own destiny included in the human beings' and looking for a realization of the dignity and morality. The Elderly Eugene Henderson, twice-married and about 50-year-old millionaire, at the very beginning of the novel *Henderson the Rain King*, manifested the reason why he alienated from the meaningless materialism, left his family and went along to Africa.*"What makes me to take this trip to Africa? There is no quick explanation. Things got worse and worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated."(HTRK.P1)*

In Henderson's inner world he felt quite lonely and fell into a deep spiritual desperation, although Henderson was lucky to receive millions of dollars and had lived a prosperous life. After reading a lot of books he longed for searching meaningful world and got rid of the strong pressure which made him feel that life is empty and painful. Therefore, for the sake of escaping such crisis and pursuing the peace inside his mind, he chose to explore the wild world. At the same time, due to his conflict with himself, his wife, his father, his son, his sister, even his neighbors, the sound of inner voice "I want, I want" was always ringing in his ear and surrounded him continuously. Henderson tried every means to get rid

of it, but this cry had been following him forever, and no matter how much effort he made, it lingered around him. Moreover, the chaotic mood hit him from all directions. He was overwhelmed and there was a serious crisis in his spiritual life. What was bad was that it was a condition that Henderson couldn't tell and was unclear and tortured, and he even couldn't find a reason for this. Therefore, with all these phenomena occurred, he had no choice but to escape that world and adventured to the remote tribes in Africa so as to search the real meaning of life.

The protagonist of the novel *Herzog*, Herzog, scholar and womanizer, is working in the rarefied atmosphere of the intellectual uplands and he is a complex person full of contradictions and self-disintegration. He is innocently romantic but also sophisticated, passionate but passive, introspective but impulsive, mentally sound but sometimes insane, emotional, and elusive. At the beginning of the novel, Herzog was on a train between Grand Central Station and Woods Hole where he is writing about 24 letters to his relatives, friends, mistresses, philosophers, historians, politicians, to the dead as well as the living, finally event to God, but never sent out. All his thoughts and preoccupations about his past, about his marriage and his other relationships, as well as his concerns about history and contemporary civilization, are exposed in these letters and in flashbacks and meditations relating to them. This approach shows that he wants to communicate freely with the outside world despite his weakness and failure in real life. Although Herzog's letter has not been published or even completed, we find that Herzog's letter is a way to search the meaning of life.

Herzog, a professor teaching in New York who specializes in the history of culture, is at his dilapidated country-house in Ludeywille, Massachusetts trying to recover from his divorce from his second wife, Madeleine, who is living in Chicago with their daughter June and Valentine Gersbach, once Herzog's best friend. Herzog considers the events of the past few days that have led him to this place. They began with his attempt to avoid the emotional pressure put on him by his mistress Ramona Donsell; he fled to the home of a friend in Vineyard Haven, but found himself too disturbed to remain there, so he return to New York and spent a night with Ramona. On the following day he visited the courthouse to meet his lawyer, Harvey Simkin. While he was there, however, he overheard a court case in which a young man and woman were being tried for the murder of the woman's child, and this generated in him a sudden fear for the safety of his own child. He flew to Chicago and, overwhelmed by an urge to kill Madeleine and Gersbach. However, his murderous urge left him when looking through a bathroom window, he saw Gersbach bathing June and suddenly realized the comic absurdity of his situation,

In *More Die of Heartbreak*, It superficially describes the emotional life of the narrators Kenneth and his uncle Benn suffering from setbacks and traumas, but in fact represents the spiritual dilemma faced by Western social intellectuals with advanced material civilizations. In the fiction, People have all kinds of desires: sexual desire, erotic desire, material desire, sexual desire, desire for power, greed, desire for consumption, desire to die, etc. The protagonist, Professor Benn Crader, a botanists who loves his careers and he seems to have a special relationship with plants. He not only studies their forms, understands their structure and growth cycle, but also has a special connection with them. Benn seems to be able to enter the interior of the plant and treat them as living individuals and communicate with them. It can be said that the relationship between Benn and the target plants he studied is not only the relationship between research and being researched, but also a certain kind of spiritual connection. But in addition to being in touch with plants, he also desires to communicate with people, to get love, and to establish a close relationship with people. In the fifteen years he lived alone, he found himself becoming too self-reliant, becoming needless of anyone, under the temptation of love, but also in order not to lose his lustful abilities, he began to search for a life partner.

III. Escape

Halldorson Stephanie S.(2007) argues that literature in the 1950s continued to follow modernist antecedents in portraying the hero as a victim of the mechanizing forces of society in a spiritually exhausted world. In Saul Bellow's fiction, the protagonists of different works all suffer a journey of torture of different query of the life, they have no choice but only escape from the real world. There is an anthropological view that humans originated in Africa. Both Conrad and Hemingway saw Africa as a place where humans discovered themselves. Similarly, Bellow who obtained an anthropology degree arranged Henderson's self-exploration in Africa as the "birthplace" of mankind, allowing him to return to the origin and examine what constitutes the essence of human nature. The two tribes he went to were metaphors for different stages of human development, with different quality and value standards. Arnewi is a symbol of the matriarchal society, and the tribe of Wariri is the epitome of modern civilization. They all have important inspiration for Henderson's wisdom in searching for a true life and discovering himself.

Henderson felt the innocence, naturalness, gentleness, and primitive beauty in the Arnewi tribes, and felt harmony, identity, and peace in their Queen. As soon as Henderson entered the Arnewi tribe, he felt that he had returned to ancient times before the birth of mankind. When Henderson kissed the queen's belly in accordance with etiquette, he immediately felt a force in her body. The queen is a symbol of stability, tranquility and balance and represents harmony and unity, which Henderson lacks. Some of the truths the Queen told Henderson made Henderson more aware of himself. However, the wisdom he obtained is not sufficient to promote his complete transformation. He has no idea how to handle it effectively in the face of the frog disaster. As a result, he blew up the frogs with homemade bombs, and at the same time he destroyed the reservoirs on which the Arnewi people lived. If Arnewi is an innocent boyhood, Wariri is more like his chaotic adulthood, which is full of pain, violence, injustice and hostility. The journey in Wariri was actually a process of healing the disease of the soul. It could be divided into three major stages. The first stage was until

Henderson became the King of Rain Sungo; The second stage was a deep conversation with the King Dahfu and imitation with the Lion Atti; The last stage was to hunt the lion who represent the dead father Gemmero. This lion-hunting activity further purified his soul and contributed to his transformation and return.

The beginning of this fiction *Herzog* was Herzog's escape. At the hottest time of the summer, Herzog's "*stayed away from the crowd in Berkshire"*, and cut off all contact with the outside world, completely immersed in his own thoughts. He kept asking himself if his mind was normal. *"If I'm really crazy, nothing, I don't care."* he began to reflect on his own experience, but he examine his problems from his own perspective without taking into account of other people's feelings, in this case, he could not completely get out of this dilemma. He felt that everyone around him was against him: Madeleine and Valentine had affair; Madeleine's mother also opposed them; His psychiatrist and policeman did not help him. He even suspected that Ramona, the woman who deeply loved him, wanted to find someone else to marry. He felt isolated from the world and was abandoned by the entire world. Since no one can talk to, he can only write to others. These letters seem to be written to others, but actually it is the reflects on the outside world from Herzog himself and he expresses his thoughts in writing. With such a feeling, he gradually put into the embrace of nature and let everything go with. Having endured this sense of loss and disappointment in the external world, Herzog began to find a way out for himself through self-reflection and understanding of the world. In this process, he contacted the outside world as much as possible. In addition to his own pain, he also tried to think about other things, such as the meaning of human existence, death, childhood, etc. There are many philosophical, political and other aspects of thinking and monologue in the fiction. Herzog repeatedly thought about modern philosophy, thinking that modernity is a wasteland and a place where people are alienated from each other. Human beings are trapped in this dilemma, and there is no other way out than to reflect on personal knowledge. In the search for the future of mankind and the true meaning of life, he could not help but asking, "Who am I? What is the meaning of my life? Where is my future?"

The protagonist in *More die of heartbreak*, Benn, who is single for 15 years, is lonely and intend to seek emotional sustenance. He is known as a good candidate for many women as a lover or husband. In the search for true love, because of the lack of ability to reject women, his pure self-space was disturbed by the outside world, he had no choice but to escape. When Della Bedell, a highly constricted and obese woman, sought sex for him, he dared not refuse. After a night stand, Benn regret and tried to escape and fled to Brazil to join a plant morphology lecture, which not only caused her great pain but Della even died of cardiac arrest, and he couldn't get over it.

At the seaside luxury casino hotel in Puerto Rico, he met Caroline Bognier, who was tempting. She symbolizes beauty, sexuality, and needs and becomes another intruder in Benn's life. When asked by her proposal and when she gave him the flight number and her arrival time, Benn fled to Tokyo immediately. He insisted that marriages without true love are cages and shackles, and the naked sexual needs of women make him confused and disgusted.

After many years of "flirting, pursuing, craving, obsession, abandonment, insult, torture, sexual slavery, etc.", he decided to end all tempt with marriage. Believing that Matilda can give him true love and a peaceful marriage, he chose her. However, in the marriage life, he gradually realized that she is only really loved by money worship. Her wife's desire for money and reputation, her father's conspiracy to calculate, Benn wants to escape this cold and cruel world. In order to escape Della, who baited Benn with sex; Caroline, who took control of him by marriage, and Matilda, who forced to oppress him by money, he fled to Brazil, Japan and the Arctic respectively.

IV. Regeneration

Freud (1949) believed that human psychology could be divided into two parts: the conscious and the subconscious. Awareness of the subconscious can not be by me, which includes the original blind impulse and instinct. Through self-analysis, Herzog slowly understands himself and discovers his inadequacies. He is no longer obsessed with self-complaining and begins to be down-to-earth, focusing on the positive aspects of the surrounding people and real life. In this way, he began to forgive and even fall in love with his enemies - Madeline and Valentine. He gradually became aware of his own problems: the time of immersion in himself and his isolation from the outside world; Living in the life mode with his own imagines.

At the end of the novel, Herzog and his lover Ramona lived a pastoral life in the village of Rud in the countryside, eliminating the inner anxiety with the love of lovers and the beauty of nature. Bellow clearly inherited the ideas of Rousseau and other romantic writers in this respect, and he advocated that mankind should return to the nature from a modern civilized society because he believed that modern cities such as Chicago were squeezing the living space of human beings and gradually became the alienated forces of human existence. The simple nature is the home of human poetic inhabitation, and it is only in nature that people do not lose themselves. Herzog in the novel grasped the essence of life from nature and gradually got rid of the spiritual crisis caused by cultural conflicts.

In this respect, Bellow's novel *Henderson Rain King* seems more enlightening than Herzog. The hero Henderson's experience in the novel is exactly the opposite of Herzog's. After returning from the African wilderness to the real world, Henderson is determined to serve as a nurse to bravely assume his social responsibility and life mission.

In order to find the value of self-existence and peace, he was on the way of searching like "Pilgrim" in the same insight in a difficult journey of life. He had got an access to new power seedlings until he eventually discovered the salvation of the soul. Dahfu's attitude toward death gave Henderson a great education. Dahfu acknowledges that one must die. In the flesh, man is subject to death. However, he also believes that human soul can not die, and can be

independent from death. Therefore, one need not fear death. The calmness and serenity of the King Dahfu before death, and his faith in the immortality of the soul, made Henderson's heart once more shocked and brought him unexpected truths. Henderson accepted it and he was no longer afraid of death. Later he risked his life to escape from the Wariri tribe and walked out of the shadow of death that had been severely imposed on him.

He decided to go back to practice the benefit of mankind. His heart's love was also revived. This can be seen as Henderson's lofty ideal of mediocrity. After all the hardships he experienced the heart came out of loneliness through recognizing the link between self and others. He made it to understand the meaning of life. And ultimately he was able to meet the spiritual over the material things cross-flow of the community. On the flight from Paris to London, Henderson was so excited to look out of the window to appreciate the scenery, while the other passengers were reading. Comparing with the former Henderson, who never cared for the things around and led a meaningless and aimless life, current Henderson had completely changed. He cared for everything. When a stewardess asked him if he can take care of a kid, instead of his former rude behavior to the little baby taken by his daughter, Henderson started to show his love to the little baby and he took good care of the baby. It obviously symbolized Henderson's rebirth. In the last chapter, Bellow demonstrated Thanksgiving Day, a lovely baby, the lion cub and so on to symbolize the renewal and mental regeneration of Henderson. We can easily feel Henderson's excitement with happiness, strength, and hope surrounding him, and he realized that only love can create the power.

Similarly, *More die of heartbreak*'s protagonist Benn is determined to get rid of unbearable sexual devils through marriage, but he was in a moral dilemma. His second marriage was a conspiracy. Benn wanted love, while Mathilde pursued fame and fortune, and their values were completely different. In order to seek warmth, care and love, to integrate into the modern American society, Benn had to sell his personality and betray his conscience. He fought together with the Layamon and opposed his ethical will to threaten his elderly uncle Harold Vilitzer, a multi-millionaire, which is the price he paid for. In the end, Benn realized that he was just a tool that the Layamon family used to earn fame and fortune, and he was just a stepping stone, a promotion step, and an admission ticket for an ideal life for them. The novel finally wrote that Benn was ready to fly to the Arctic to study lichens in order to obtain spiritual salvation, which shows that he still has not lost his confidence in life and is still seeking the meaning of life. When he was asked about the radiation level in plants, he got the idea with the statement that offered this novel with its title: "*I think more people die of heartbreak than of radiation.*"

V. Conclusion

It is often said that great authors write only one book. Miller (1991) draws the Bellow novel as a "peripatetic journey through events that are lost to him."(P34)The concern of human civilization and the memory of humanistic values run through almost all of Bellow's works, especially his several major works, which makes the author contemplate. In the flows of nowadays' consumer and materialistic world, people pursue money, enjoyment, success, lose their self, even lose their faith. Money worship has penetrated into every cell of society. The concern for the present reality shows the conscience and responsibility that Bellow has as a writer is also the most important and valuable system of his works. Meanwhile, his works truly reflect the spiritual emptiness of intellectuals, their pursuit of lofty rationality and exploration, and the contradictions between people and society in the era of highly developed capitalist material life. The three works *Herzog, Henderson the Rain King, More die of heartbreak* all demonstrated a profound reflection on intellectual crisis in this rich society, the protagonists in these works all experienced a long spiritual journey: Search-Escape-Regenaration. They all get lost and at mess at the very beginning, and in order to pursue the true meaning of life and the value of self-existence and peace, they all suffered alienation and escaped from their current surroundings to a new place to search solutions. Bellow's novels express a highly developed post-industrial society with material civilization. People enjoy the pleasure brought by luxury goods in the abundant material life, while the deep feelings of happiness are absent, and more people are not happy, satisfied, but "dead to heartbreak".

With the expansion of modernization and the natural deterioration caused by over-acquisition of natural resources, mankind has created a large amount of material wealth at the cost of nature's severe destruction. However, humanity realizes that we are only an integral part of nature and should not be self-centered. Nowadays, people began to return to nature, and humans began to rethink the relationship between man and nature and the human spiritual ecology. Henderson, Herzog and Benn, the protagonists of Bellow's works, were completely disappointed and frustrated with the entire world from the very beginning. After self-analysis and self-reflection, through the journey of "Search-Escape" they reached to Regeneration. The heroes' spirit has been sublimated, and the cornerstone of life has been re-founded after their spiritual sufferings, spiritual alienation, pathological problems and other problems emerged to the end. To soothe the wounds of people, to heal the soul, and also to provide a way out of the ecological predicament, the protagonists of Bellow's work break through the alienation and separation between humans and nature through harmonious relations, and express that humans must respect nature, return to nature so that they can reach self-regeneration eventually.

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Self-efficacy and Online Language Learning: Causes of Failure

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***Abstract*—The study reported in this article examined why some highly efficacious learners failed in an online foreign language course based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. The study was conducted as part of a project investigating the self-efficacious foreign language learners in an online writing course. The motivation behind the study was that the success rate of online learning in Thailand is low. The learning performance of six highly efficacious distance language learners at a recognised English language tutorial school in Bangkok, Thailand was analysed. The data collection included an online questionnaire and individual telephone interviews. The findings suggested that goal setting, shift of attribution and insufficient feedback are factors that might decrease the efficacy of online learners' and affect their decision to withdraw from a program. The implications of this study provide recommendations on support to help online language learners succeed.**

***Index Terms*—self-efficacy, online language learning, performance, goal orientation, attribution**

I. Introduction

Distance learning has become widespread in world education (Harper, Chen, & Yen, 2004). Distance learning, which follows the model of online course, is a useful form of education for students (Butler-Pascoe, 1997). This mode of learning is flexible and valuable for learners. It aims to provide opportunities for students to make decision on, control, and assess their own learning independently outside a traditional classroom setting and it leads to lifelong learning (Olson & Wisher, 2002; Richardson & Swan, 2003). Consequently, the learners are able to study their selected learning courses at home. Thus, this learning mode is widely used in many countries including Thailand.

For online learning in Thailand, quality and equity in education are key principles of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Thailand. Ministry profile: vision and mission, 2010). Based on the key principles of education, Thai people in all areas would have an equal chance for education regardless of their economic status (Thai Cyber University, 2004). Thai education nowadays uses online technologies to support teaching and learning. Due to the demand of students to learn more at their own time and pace, many institutions offer distance education by using various technologies to provide online learning courses. Those courses offer students educational opportunities and the flexibility of when and where they access their courses. Because of the accessibility and lower costs, education institutions adopted the Internet and used it as the tools to reach many students around the country (Wattanapanit, 2015). Consequently, the students are able to study their selected learning courses at home. Thus, this learning mode is widely used in many disciplines including English language learning.

Online learning is popular throughout the world. However, in Thailand, Tanchaisak (2015) pointed that the success rate of online learning is quite low. While online distance learning is popular, its effectiveness was still remained questionable. Despite the increasing enrolment percentages, the online learners drop out of the course. It was found that they fail to complete their courses. This is an important problem for distance learning educators. To reduce the dropout rate and ensure the development in online courses, it is important to conduct a research to understand the changing behaviours of online learners as understanding the learners may help the educators provide the practical support of online learning.

Online learners' failures or dropout have received much attention from educators because the dropout rate is an indicator of the success of an online course (Willging & Johnson, 2004). Based on a learner-centered nature of distance learning, a considerable number of studies on online learning failure have paid attention to learner related factors. Legault, Green-Demers, and Pelletier (2006) studied why high school learners lacked motivation and found those learners' beliefs about not being able to complete a task or low-ability beliefs were associated with intentions to drop out. Research has revealed that learners' self-beliefs are strong predictors of academic achievements so educational psychologists are calling for attention to learners' self-beliefs related to their academic pursuits (Pajares, 1997). Of all the beliefs, self-efficacy belief seems to have the most influential power in human agency and helps explain why

people's behaviours differ widely when they have similar knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1986). Hardré, Sullivan, and Crowson (2009) studied learners' characteristics and motivation especially perceived competence or self-efficacy and they found perceived self-efficacy had a direct impact on intention to success. Therefore, self-efficacy is one of the factors that are linked to dropout. Nonetheless, despite an interest in the learners' self-efficacy and their effects on the distance learners' learning, no study has considered self-efficacious learners who dropped out. Hence, understanding self-efficacious learners' experience of participation in the course as well as their problems and then finally reason for dropping out is considered essential. Thus, this study aims to provide an insightful explanation of experience, which highly efficacious learners go through before they decide to drop out.

II. Literature Review

A. Self-efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy, a personal belief in one's capability to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances, has its origins in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. The concept recognises the powerful influence of self-efficacy on human cognition, motivation, and behaviour (Ouweneel, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2013). According to Bandura (1997), levels of self-efficacy come from four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological states. The first source of self-efficacy is the learners' successful experiences or mastery experiences that influence their beliefs about their abilities and lead to greater feelings of self-efficacy. Mills, Pajares, and Herron, (2007) note that students' self-efficacy beliefs strongly affect their academic performance in many ways. Students with high levels of self-efficacy are willing to carry out challenging tasks, expend greater effort, show increasing persistence in the presence of difficulties, and experience lower anxiety levels. Therefore, previous studies have been investigated self-efficacy as an essential affective factor and a predictor that relates to academic achievement (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013; Putwain, Sander, & Larkin 2013; Tilfarlioğlu & Cınkara, 2011).

B. Self-efficacy and Online Learning

Self-efficacy theory has specific importance to online learning. Puzziferro (2008) states that learners' self-efficacy is influenced by personal factors and that the consequential efficacy beliefs affect learners' decision to persevere in an online course. According to learners' self-efficacy and effects on learning in the online environment, the studies over two decades show that self-efficacy is strongly related to online learning and performance (Bolt, Killough, & Koh, 2001; Tsai & Tsai, 2003). For example, Tsai and Tsai (2003) explored students' information searching strategies in Web-based science learning activities and further examined the influence of students' Internet self-efficacy on these strategies. The study was carried out with 8 participants who were selected from 73 college freshmen based on mixed genders and Internet self-efficacy levels. The findings of this study indicated that learners with higher Internet self-efficacy perform better than those with lower Internet self-efficacy in the Web-based learning task. Moreover, some studies show a strong and positive impact of efficacy on many aspects of learner motivation and achievement (Joo, Bong, & Choi 2000). Joo, Bong, and Choi (2000) studied the influence of self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, academic self-efficacy, and Internet self-efficacy on learners' performance in a web-based learning context. This study revealed that computer self-efficacy is an important and influential variable in success with distance learning, which is a type of learning format where the learners and teachers are separated by distance and technology is used to decrease the distance obstacle. Womble (2007) measured the relationships among learner satisfaction, self-efficacy, and usefulness within an e-learning context with 440 government agency employees in the South western United States. The study found a significant positive relationship between computer self-efficacy and learner satisfaction in online learning environments. In addition, Jan (2015) investigated the relationships between academic self-efficacy, computer self-efficacy, prior experience, and satisfaction with online learning with 103 graduate students enrolled in purely online courses at a university in USA. The researcher used online survey and found a positive and significant relationship between computer self-efficacy and prior experience with online learning, and between academic self-efficacy and prior experience with online learning, and between academic self-efficacy and student satisfaction.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that self-efficacy is closely related to success in learning in the online environment, this relationship does not hold for every learner, and there are self-efficacious learners who fail. Hence, understanding self-efficacious learners' experiences when participating in an online course, as well as the problems they face and their reasons for dropping out, is essential. Thus, this study aims to provide insights into the experiences of highly efficacious learners before they decide to withdraw.

Therefore, this study investigated why and how highly efficacious learners failed in an online foreign language course. It focuses on six main aspects that reflect how self-efficacy works in distance language learning: goal orientation, attribution, resilience, self-confidence, strategy, and persistence (Yantraprakorn, Darasawang, & Wiriyakarun, 2013). Goal refers to the learners' reasons for engaging in the distance language learning course and in a writing task. Goal setting is a powerful process for distance language learning and for motivating the learners to learn by themselves. There are two types of goals: performance and teach (Locke & Latham, 2002). Attribution refers to the perceptions of success or failure from previous learning experiences while the learners are engaging in distance language learning or tasks. The most commonly inferred causes of success and failure are ability, effort, luck and task

difficulty (Weiner, 1985). Resilience is defined as the learners' capacity to adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, and challenges to achieve goals. They are behaviours that people use when faced with stresses or setbacks, life events, and external commitments (Kemp, 2002). Self-confidence is a feeling of trust that learners have in their abilities, qualities, and judgements. Strategy refers to the methods that the learners use to engage in distance language learning successfully. Persistence is the action in which learners continue studying until completing the course.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, which interprets human functioning as a sequence of shared interactions or the product of the dynamic interplay among personal influences (e.g., self-efficacy), environmental features, and behaviours (Bandura, 1986).

III. The Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate highly self-efficacious learners when they engage in an online writing programme to answer the research question. '*Why do some highly efficacious learners fail in an online language learning environment*?' In this section, we provide a background to the context of the study, participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

A. Context of the Study

This research study was conducted in a recognised English language tutorial school where distance language learners voluntarily worked on the course outside of their regular schools. Thus, it was expected that the learners were motivated to learn independently. The selected course was an online writing course which allowed learners to practise writing types of essays that are taught at the university level such as the comparison essay and the report. The course content was delivered through pre-recorded streaming video lectures and textbooks. To learn writing online, learners had to access the school website to study the content after registering for the course, paying tuition and fees, obtaining course materials, and getting student ID cards. There were 15 lessons, and each lesson began with an overview of the topic followed by exercises and assignments in the writing and vocabulary books that were related to the content. There were three main stages in the course that were designed to gradually teach the online learners academic writing.

Stage 1: Input session. This stage was intended to teach the learners certain strategies necessary for writing effectively. Each lesson began with an overview of the topic, followed by exercises and assignments in the writing and vocabulary books that were related to the content. The course also provided sample essays to help learners understand the components of good academic writing and writing processes that could be used to complete the writing assignments in stage 3.

Stage 2: Practice session. After the input session, at the end of each lesson, learners had the chance to gain more practice in employing the writing strategies learned in this course. Here, they selected exercises in the writing and vocabulary books according to their own abilities and interests, after which they checked the possible answers in the videos.

Stage 3: Assignment completion session. In this stage, they performed writing at a higher level than in stage 2. Learners had to complete 9 writing assignments after they demonstrated an understanding of the format through studying the input and completing the exercises. First, learners worked individually after finishing each lesson and completed each assignment by choosing from the provided topic choices. They had to follow the following sequence of tasks: 1: completing an outline, 2: describing graphs, 3: writing an introduction, 4: writing the body, 5: writing the conclusion, 6: writing a process essay, 7: writing a complete essay on a topic from a provided writing prompt, 8: writing a compare and contrast essay, and 9: writing an argumentative essay. After finishing each task, they submitted it to the instructors online to obtain feedback. Feedback was given within a week in the form of correction symbols and written commentary. After the learners completed all of the tasks and course requirements within six months, they obtained a certificate of course completion.

B. Participants and Subject Selection

The subjects in this study were 114 learners who enrolled in the writing course. They were asked to fill out a web-based questionnaire to assess their self- efficacy level. Then, 6 of those who rated themselves as having high level of self-efficacy were selected as the participants. All of them had high level of self-efficacy (High 2.41-4.00), studied at upper secondary school level, had no experience in distance learning, and were willing to be interviewed. The participants were informed that their involvement in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any stage. The six subjects were asked to suggest a pseudonym for themselves that the researchers could use. They are Jim, Pam, Ann, Bell, June, and Kim. Then, the researchers began the data collection. Midway through the data collection period, two participants dropped out of the study, but they responded to the researchers' request for further interviews. As a result, the participants were separated into completers because they completed the writing course within the time provided and non-completers or highly efficacious learners who were regarded as unsuccessful because they could not complete the course. The table 1 shows the demographic data and self-efficacy level of participants who took part in the qualitative part of the study.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND SELF-EFFICACY LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS

Subject/Name	Sex /Age	Self-efficacy Level (High 2.41-4.00)	Hometown	Status
Subject 1/Jim	Male/18	3.94	Chachoengsao	Completers
Subject2/Pam*	**Female/17**	**3.82**	**Bangkok**	**Noncompleters**
Subject 3/Ann	Female/18	3.94	Bangkok	Completers
Subject 4/Bell*	**Female/17**	**3.82**	**Kanchanaburi**	**Noncompleters**
Subject 5/June	Female/18	3.88	Songkhla	Completers
Subject 6/Kim	Female/18	4.00	Chiang-Rai	Completers

C. Instruments

The research instruments used for data collection were a web-based questionnaire and semi-structured telephone interviews. The web-based questionnaire was used for selecting highly efficacious distance language learners and was administered to the learners before beginning the course to assess their self-efficacy (Yantraprakorn, Darasawang, & Wiriyakarun, 2013).

Individual telephone interviews served as the main source of information for revealing students' self-efficacy as well as their distance language learning experiences. To validate the instrument, interview questions were piloted with a small group of students. Based on the results of the pilot, minor revisions were made to address instrument validity issues, including rewording and adding or removing questions. All of the interviews were conducted in Thai. They were recorded and transcribed afterwards.

D. Data Collection Procedures

After the researchers obtained permission from the school to collect data, the data collection procedures were set systematically and ethically. The participants were debriefed before the administration of the questionnaires to explain the purpose and procedures of the research. The selected participants were given consent forms to fill out before the interviews were conducted.

Data collection was divided into three stages: pre-, while-, and post-learning interviews, which were conducted at different times throughout the study. The interviews were conducted to gather the participants' background information, how they observed themselves as language learners, their past language learning experiences, and their language learning goals. The interviews were also used to explore students' self-confidence, resilience, strategies, attributions and persistence.

E. Data Analysis

The interview data were coded into 6 main aspects that are indicators of self-efficacy: goal orientation, attribution, resilience, self-confidence, strategy, and persistence. The researcher analysed the keywords that reflect the 6 categories. Goal orientation includes participants' statements about their reasons for engaging in the distance language learning course and in a writing task. 'Attribution' includes participants' statements about the perceptions of success or failure from previous learning experiences. 'Resilience' includes participants' statements referring to their capacity to adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, and challenges to achieve goals. 'Self-confidence' includes participants' statements about a feeling of trust in their abilities, qualities, and judgements. 'Strategy' includes participants' statements referring to the methods that they use to engage in distance language learning successfully. 'Persistence' includes participants' statements about the perseverance of the students in studying until completing the course. To increase the reliability of the qualitative data analysis, an inter-rater reliability check was used. A coder was asked to code 20% of the transcribed interviews using the same criteria as the researcher, and the Kappa coefficient was 0.86.

IV. FINDINGS

The findings relating to the research question is provided. The subjects' self-report on their self-efficacy and performances are presented to answer the research question.

Research question: Why do some highly efficacious learners fail in an online language learning environment?

The interviews data showed that a decreased level of self-efficacy was the major reason for the learners' dropout from the online course, and the main findings of this study highlight the importance of the six indicators of self-efficacy. These indicators consist of goals, attributions, resilience, self-confidence, strategies, and persistence. The indicators are presented in a self-efficacy pattern of highly efficacious distance language learners while engaging in the course in terms of the non-completers; Bell and Pam. Bell lives in Kanchanaburi. Her self-efficacy is 3.82. Although she stood out as the girl with the high level self-efficacy on the quantitative measure, in interviews she is a quiet, self-conscious girl who seems to overthink her answers in the interview. She had been learning English for many years and she felt that her listening, speaking and reading abilities were quite good. She stated that English is one of the languages most required in applying for many university programs, so certifying her English writing level would make her stand out from the other students. Pam lives in Bangkok. She is involved in numerous after-school activities, including playing guitar, swimming, and dancing. Pam is a serious girl, and she takes time after each of questions to consider her answer

before she speaks. Her self-efficacy is 3.82. She works very hard in school and is proud to earn good grades, and is also proud of her status in the Science-Mathematics program.

In order to ensure a deep understanding of the process of failure, figure 1 illustrates the dynamic change of self-efficacy in distance language learning. Based on the data, withdrawing from the course in this study was a process and did not occur overnight. There were factors that may have led the non-completers to decrease their high level of self-efficacy gradually. The figure shows how the participants approached the online courses.

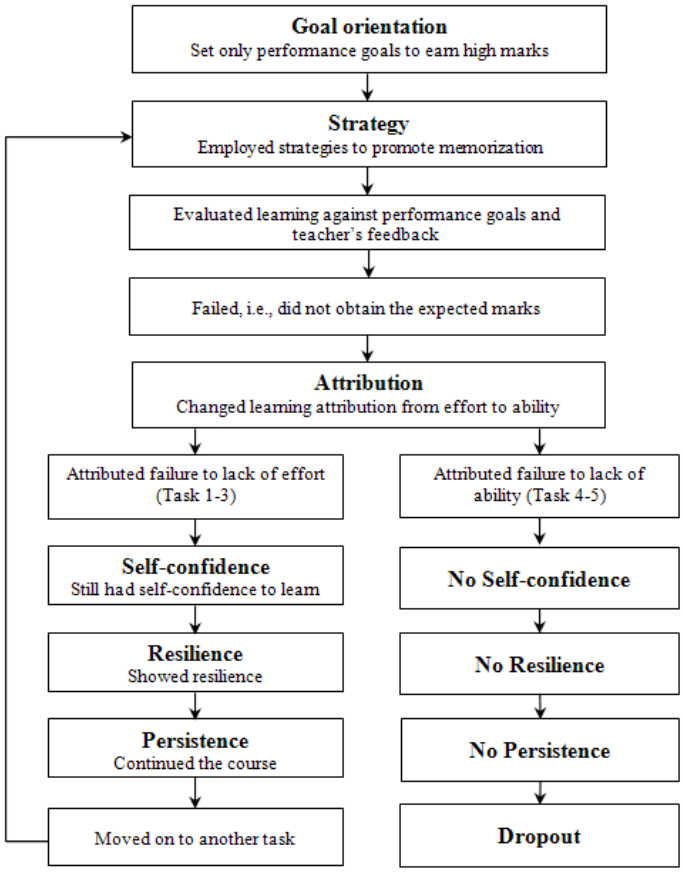

Figure 1. Self-efficacy Pattern: Non-completer

The non-completers started their learning by setting goals to learn **(Goal orientation)**. They emphasized only performance goals to pass the course and to get high scores in order to prove that they have writing ability, while the completers reported using different types of goals to learn. The completers focused more on mastery goals to improve their writing competence. Bell started to learn by setting short term performance goals for herself. Her goals in learning writing online are to study with the famous tutor and to get the best score.

"At the very beginning of the course, I have no idea what this course is going to be about and what activity I am going to do online. The reason I chose this web class was also really simple, one of my friends told me the teacher is the best. She can help me to get good writing scores as I want."

(Bell- Before learning-Performance goal orientation)

Pam, another non-completer, also linked her performance goal with extrinsic motivation to show her ability; i.e. she wanted to get a certificate to please her mother.

"My goal in learning writing online is to get the best score and get a certificate from the school. I think my mother will be satisfied with it."

(Pam - Before learning-Performance goal orientation)

Consequently, setting only performance goals to get the highest scores might have had a negative effect on the non-completers' distance language learning because they could not finish the course.

In order to achieve their goals, both non-completers and completers reported that they employed many learning strategies to accomplish online writing tasks and to control their own learning **(Strategy).** The non-completers mentioned more memory strategies to achieve their performance goals; however, those could not assist them to learn successfully. In contrast, completers reported more strategies that supported the metacognitive perspective of self-regulated learners. They used different learning strategies that were systematically directed towards the achievement of their learning goals. They used information seeking, assistance seeking, goal setting and planning, self-evaluating, organizing and transforming strategies. The completers truly wanted to learn and were more likely to use strategies to

help them to actually master the online writing materials, whereas the non-completers wanted to display competence so they used strategies only to achieve good grades. Bell, for example, chose more memory strategies to learn seen from her extract.

"I attempted to remember unknown words that I learned in the provided vocabulary book by using them in my writing."

(Bell - While learning - Memory strategy)

According to the data, the participants attributed their failures differently **(Attribution)**. The non-completers changed their failure attribution from effort to ability, while the completers attributed their success and failure to their own efforts. At the beginning of the course, the non-completers mostly placed the primary cause of their low marks on their lack of effort, which is a controllable cause as seen from Bell's report:

"I did not study well for this one. I'll just make sure that next time I'll study more and obtain a better score……..I understand that the only thing that prevented me from writing my essays as well as I can was the lack of effort. I worked hard to remember new words and practice my writing abilities."

(Bell - While learning – Attribution, lack of effort)

However, after a repeated failure, the non-completers were not motivated to learn because they believed that their repeated failure was due to inability or the causes they could not control, as seen from Bell's extract.

"I think my failure in this course is due to my own inability to learn how to write. My writing score was not good. Although I understood the lesson, I could not apply what I had learned in my writing essay…After putting more effort into my work, the result was still unsatisfactory. The score did not change much even after the third task. The cause is my ability. I think that I will not be able to improve with my next task."

(Bell - Post learning – Attribution, lack of ability)

Pam, the other non-completer, also blamed her inability to learn:

"The scores from the exercises and previous tasks showed what a bad student I am. I think nothing is going to change. Additionally, it means I will be bad at the other tasks in this course as well. I'm not going to do well in the online course".

(Pam- Post learning – Attribution, lack of ability)

Pam also said:

"Recalling what I have learned, it made me understand that the more time I spent, the worse the result would be. I saw the gap between my score compared to other students. My friend is a good learner and writer. I felt bad about my writing ability."

(Pam- While learning – Attribution, lack of ability)

Bell blamed her inability to learn as she reported,

"After putting more effort in my work, the learning result was still unsatisfactory. The mark did not change much even after the third task. The cause is my ability. I think that I will not be able to improve my next task."

(Bell - While learning – Attribution, lack of ability)

They thought that they could not express and write their ideas due to limited language proficiency as seen from Pam' excerpt,

"The general problem for me is I think I …do not have language ability. I mean I have to write English and I could not express what I think properly."

(Pam- While learning – Attribution, lack of ability)

Therefore, the shift of attribution of their failure may cause the non-completers to give up or dropout. This perception seems to be critical for their distance language learning.

At this stage, they made their own decision as to whether they wanted to continue learning. The non-completers decided to return to the engagement stage with decreased self-efficacy. However, while the completers showed resilience to achieve their mastery goals, in the middle of the course, the non-completers did not show resilience (**Resilience**) and persistence (**Persistence**) in their performance. According to their failure attributions, they did not adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, and challenge in order to achieve goals. Pam avoided learning and gave up when difficulties arose. The non-completers believed that they lacked and could never develop the ability to write.

"I realised that writing is a painful process. When writing in English, the problems are greater, even when writing on a simple topic. I hope what I wrote was perfect, but I got low scores over and over again. Writing academic essays… is a problem to me. I am really weak in writing. I feel really tense when I need to write an essay now"…"for me, the major challenge is organizing myself because this is the first time I have taken an online course. All of my online lessons and tasks were messy, and because I have poor language abilities, I decided to quit."

(Pam- Post learning – Lack of Resilience and Persistence)

"I am not able to study and do well. I am weak in English grammar and writing. ……No, I could not deal with this problem. I tried to solve the problems, but it did not work. Why does this always happen to me!"

(Bell- While learning – Lack of Resilience and Persistence)

Both completers and non-completers evaluated their own learning by checking if they have reached their goals. In this online writing course, the course instructors gave the learners corrective feedback by indicating corrective symbols and let the learners figure out and then correct their works based on the symbols by themselves. Moreover, the non-

completers viewed errors as a sign of failure and incompetence. The implicit feedback from the instructor may not be sufficient especially in distance learning context where the learners need more scaffolding. The feedback and unsatisfied marks made the non-completers demotivated to achieve their own performance goals, as Pam said,

"I got a low score again, and I was not satisfied with the result of this essay. I got the teacher's feedback, and I had made many grammatical errors. After receiving feedback and a mark that I did not expect, I really felt a sense of failure. I am not sure if I can complete the next task and finish this course."

(Pam- While learning – Lack of Resilience and Persistence)

The implicit feedback from the instructor may not have been sufficient, especially in a distance learning context, where learners need more scaffolding. Pam and Bell also showed a desire to have all their errors corrected. Bell said,

"I got a low score. My teacher did not provide me with the correct answers, and I was not sure what I wrote was correct. Grammar is difficult, and my teacher should have helped me by correcting all my grammatical mistakes."

(Bell- While learning)

Pam also reported that

"I was not given the correct answer, so I spent long time thinking and finding how to correct my errors based on the teacher feedback. I think it is motivating to see feedback on my work that is not only about grammatical errors."

(Pam- While learning)

They saw the indirect corrective feedback as punishment rather than something useful. They preferred written direct feedback because this was easier to understand and they thought they would gain more understanding from the direct feedback.

". I am confused with the feedback; it is like the teacher is punishing me. To study online successfully, I'd like the teacher to correct my work or tell me directly how to do the task because it will be easier to understand, and I think I will gain more knowledge from the feedback."

(Pam- While learning)

The feedback also affected their motivation to learn, as Bell said,

"It took time to correct my errors by checking the key in this online course. I found the feedback confusing. It was complicated, there were so many errors, and I could not correct them myself, such as prepositions and punctuation. I do not know how to use tenses. I had too much feedback on my errors, and I felt discouraged."

(Bell- While learning)

In the middle of the course, the non-completers lacked confidence **(Self-confidence)** and did not want to participate in learning at a higher level. Lack of confidence in their capabilities had affected their success in the online course. They did not trust themselves to study, and complete the tasks and the course. For example, Pam confessed that she did not feel confident enough to complete the tasks and the course,

"I am not confident that I will to complete the tasks and the course. No matter how much I practice, I am not able to study and do well".

(Pam- Post learning – Lack of self-confidence)

They lacked resilience to learn and then they gave up. They did not try to deal with the problems and no longer persisted to finish the course. This led to weaken their resilience to learn. They did not re-engage in the course and dropped out in the middle of the course and left their tasks undone.

V. Discussion

The data from this study showed that factors affecting non-completers' failure may come from two potential sources: inappropriate goal orientation and the shift of their failure attributions.

A. Inappropriate Goal Orientation Led to Ineffective Learning Strategies and Unsuccessful Performance

According to the data, distance language learning success was not only in setting goals but setting appropriate types of goal. Performance goals focus on how well the learners accomplish the tasks at a particular time, whereas mastery goals focus on how well they finally learn or master the material regardless of how long it may take. Therefore, adoption of both types of goals may promote both short-term and long-term resilience and persistence towards learning writing online. According to the data, the focus on performance not only demotivated the non-completers but also affected their attribution. Pam and Bell did not achieve their performance goals as expected even though the scores they obtained were not lower than those of the completers. They interpreted failure as a sign of low ability, and they also viewed the teacher's feedback or their own errors as a sign of failure and incompetence, which in turn affected their confidence to learn successfully, and they finally they gave up attempting to complete the course. Moreover, the completers who had mastery goal were able to engage in more effective learning strategies than the non-completers who had performance goal. They reported that they had minimal self-regulated learning strategies for writing The non-completers wanted to display competence so they used strategies only to achieve good grades, whereas the completers truly were more likely to use strategies to help them to actually master the materials. Therefore, the development of a learning goal orientation was required for improving distance language learning because it affected the learners' long-term performance and learning strategy.

B. Lack of Mastery Experiences and the Insufficient Feedback Led to a Shift of Attribution, Low Resilience and Decrease of Self-efficacy, Self-confidence and Persistence

The participants' failure occurred when the non-completers, who had high levels of self-efficacy to complete the online course before learning, gave up attempting because of consistent failure to achieve their performance goals. Bandura (1986) stated that performance accomplishment is influential because individuals can relate it to their mastery experiences. Lack of mastery experience affected their self-efficacy because after attempting many times to obtain the expected marks and failing, they began to feel that failure was inescapable. This led to negative learning performance and its effects (e.g., lack of resilience and self-confidence).

After encountering failures repeatedly or experiencing a lack of mastery experiences, the non-completers decreased their level of self-efficacy and shifted their failure attributions from a lack of effort to a lack of ability. This was a cause for setbacks, which made the attribution destructive. There were dimensions of attribution that related to academic performance: locus of control and stability dimensions (Weiner, 1985). The dimensions of locus of control help to explain the consequences of attributions whether the locus is under a person's control because it is related to the intensity of a performer's personal emotions (Weiner, 1985). The stability dimension refers to whether the causes the learners give for their success or failure were relatively stable or unstable over time. Ability is seen as a stable factor because it does not change. The non-completers attributed their failure to lack of ability, so they expected failure in similar tasks in the future. Therefore, a stable cause such as a lack of ability affected the way they approached their future tasks, resulting in learned helplessness. In this study, Pam and Bell were not motivated to learn because they believed that their experiences of repeated failures were due to causes out of their control. Bell blamed her inability to learn. The excerpt from Bell reveals that failure attribution played a role in forming future confidence expectations. The mastery experience was a critical source of self-efficacy. Based on these findings, the non-completers blamed themselves for failure; they believed that they had low ability and viewed their limited language proficiency and teacher's feedback as confirmation of this belief.

In addition, a possible factor that caused the non-completer to attribute their failure to ability might be the lack of satisfaction in the teacher's feedback. In this study, the teacher gave the learners feedback by coding the errors that the learners produced and identifying the types of errors (e.g., subject-verb agreement). This type of feedback required the learners to mentally process the errors and make a correction by reviewing the grammar rules they had previously learned. According to the data, indirect feedback may not be appropriate for the non-completers who had the performance goals of obtaining high scores and viewed errors as a sign of failure and incompetence.

To further clarify why some highly efficacious learners failed in the online foreign language course, Bandura's social cognitive theory is used to summarise their learning performance. According to Bandura's reciprocal determinism model, distance language learning performance can be explained by a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between personal factors, behaviours, and environment. Figure 2 illustrates that a decreased level of self-efficacy may be caused by internal and external factors such as consistent failure and lack of appropriate goals.

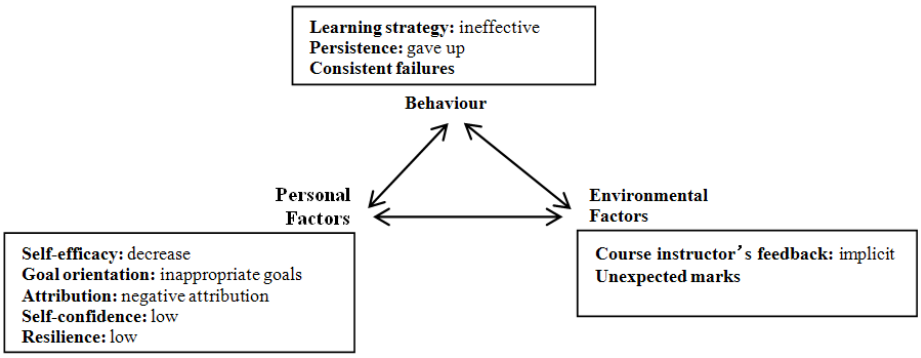

Figure 2. The reciprocal relationship between personal factors, environmental factors and behaviour of the non-completers

According to Figure 2, the reciprocal relationship of the three factors can be exemplified by the findings of the non-completers whose personal factors showed that they were self-efficacious and highly motivated before learning **(Personal factor)**. They set the inappropriate goal of obtaining high scores and focused only on scores. The goals led them to employ more memory strategies (behaviour); however, these strategies could not help them learn successfully. The strategies led to unexpected marks and lack of satisfaction in the teacher's feedback **(Environmental factor)**. The marks and the feedback affect their learning attribution, self-efficacy, self-confidence and resilience (personal factor). Based on their performance goals to obtain high scores, they interpreted their learning as a failure and then developed negative attribution. They shifted their learning attribution from lack of effort to lack of ability. They attributed the unexpected scores to their inability to learn writing. The perceptions of failure from previous learning experiences demotivated them and may have caused the students to have low self-efficacy, self-confidence and resilience. These personal factors affected their learning persistence **(Behaviour)** and led them to withdraw in the middle of the course. The findings of this study suggest that learning behaviour or performance depends not only on self-efficacy beliefs but

also on feedback and on the behaviour itself. Therefore, according to Bandura (1997), the decreased levels of the learners' self-efficacy may come from mastery experiences, and social persuasion. The findings of this study suggest that mastery experiences and social persuasion have an important influence on distance language learners' self-efficacy and their learning performance.

VI. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study seem to suggest that learners still need support even though they were identified as highly efficacious learners. The results of this study about online learners' self-efficacy in Thai online learning environments may help the educators provide the practical support of online learning based on the key principles of Thai Ministry of Education. The findings of this study suggest two ways of maintaining or developing a strong sense of self-efficacy of distance language learners: mastery experience can be enhanced through learning goal-orientation, and effort attribution can be maintained through social persuasions or sufficient feedback.

A. Mastery Experience Can Be Enhanced through Mastery Goal Orientation

This study found that lack of mastery experience affected participants' self-efficacy. As mentioned earlier, the experience of mastery or performance accomplishment is the strongest and most durable contributing factor of self-efficacy. Enhancing mastery experiences or performance accomplishments can be attained through having an appropriate goal orientation because perceptions of self-efficacy are partly based on the result of goal completion. To maintain or enhance learners' self-efficacy, the instructor may divide up tasks into smaller steps to ensure that the first step includes a task that the students can do so that they experience success early, which can help maintain or increase their self-efficacy. Although the learners need challenging work to learn, failure may set in quickly if the learners do not experience frequent success. The instructor should provide scaffolding when needed.

In addition, according to the findings of this study, it is important to help the learners acquire distance language learning skills in order to complete their online writing tasks. In this study, the learning strategies that the non-completer possessed and employed in their learning were not sufficient for them to learn by themselves and to deal with the writing tasks because they did not have any online language learning experiences. This might have led to the decrease in their self-efficacy. Therefore, online learners need to be supported and trained in necessary learning strategies to be able to successfully engage in an online learning context.

B. Effort Attribution Can Be Maintained through Social Persuasion or Sufficient Feedback

This study illustrated that the shift of their attributions may be the essential reason why they failed in the course and led them to unsuccessful learning performance. According to the data, the non-completers blamed themselves for their failures and viewed their errors as an indicator of inability. They also responded negatively to failure and instructor feedback. In fact, indirect corrective feedback is helpful in assisting learners through a discovery procedure and may result in deeper learning. However, in this study, the instructors provided feedback in the form of marking errors with the expectation that students would self-correct, but the non-completers did not understand the errors.

To avoid learner confusion and enhance self-efficacy, instructors should understand the strengths and weaknesses of types of feedback familiarise learners with the feedback they are giving, and make it clear to students what the feedback means and what they are expected to do with it. Therefore, with online learners, feedback should be clear, and all incorrect responses should be accompanied by informative feedback, not simply a corrective symbol. Feedback should be optional as the learner becomes more experienced and more proficient. The instructor may provide an online tool as a set of tutorials teaching the basics of self-correction. Each tutorial could be provided through data files so that the learners are able to follow the tutorials at their own pace.

Sufficient feedback should be used to assist learners in maintaining their self-efficacy beliefs by attributing their successes and failures to the correct causes, especially in online writing courses. Initially, feedback should be frequent to ensure that learners have early positive experiences. Moreover, the instructor should assist the learners in viewing errors as a natural part of the learning achievement process and acknowledge that repeating previous mistakes is not uncommon in language writing.

Teachers can exploit this to promote learning by focusing on effort as the critical factor for success. Therefore, the teacher may help the distance language learning understand that their academic performance is due primarily to factors that they can control and improve. Thus, instructors should provide learners with feedback linking learning result with effort because this attribution is under the learner's control, which can help them develop self-efficacy beliefs and enhance performance. Moreover, the teacher may help the learners understand that lack of ability is not the problem because the problem lies in using an ineffective strategy to motivate themselves to learn. They should be trained to find a better strategy motivating themselves to learn.

In conclusion, this study attempted to explain why some highly efficacious learners failed in an online foreign language course and the factors that influenced the learners' decision to withdraw from the course based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. The findings of this study showed that a decreased level of self-efficacy was the major reason for learner dropout. This might have come from changes in learning attributions and the types of goals they set for themselves, which lowered their self-efficacy levels. This study also recommends support tools that can be incorporated

into an online language learning environment to help students develop knowledge by themselves and increase their self-efficacy for lifelong learning experiences in an online environment.

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Analysis on Informatization Assistance in Deep Learning of College EFL Teaching*

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***Abstract*—In the context of education informatization, it is imperative to realize deep learning in college EFL teaching. The connotation of deep learning coincides with that of critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching. Therefore, optimizing the learning support function, optimizing the structure of learning environment, stimulating topic-related resources interaction, optimizing the use of multiple assessment methods and optimizing the organic link between shallow learning and deep learning in terms of critical thinking competency will be conducive to the cultivation and development of critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching assisted by information technology and effective to the implementation of deep learning in EFL teaching.**

***Index Terms*—deep learning, information technology, critical thinking competency, college EFL teaching**

I. Introduction

Under the background of education informatization, the deep integration of information technology and education has become an important task to promote the education reform. Through the process of application, analysis, evaluation and creation, we can transform knowledge into skills, improve learners' ability to construct knowledge actively and solve real problems, and then carry out meaningful learning. Visibly, in the information age, learners' simple memory and understanding of knowledge can no longer satisfy people's desire to explore knowledge. Only when the learners have the ability of active searching, the deep information processing, the active knowledge construction, the critical high-level thinking, the effective application of knowledge transformation and transfer, and the solution of the problems, can they have the ability of active learning, lifelong learning and the ability of knowledge innovation, and can they realize the meaningful individualized construction of knowledge. Here, memory and understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creation are not only learning styles, but also learning processes. Memory and understanding belong to the learning styles in the process of shallow learning, and belong to the level of low-level thinking. The application, analysis, evaluation and creation of the latter belong to the deep learning process, the process of learners' participation and thinking, and the high-level of thinking (He & Li, 2005). The above-mentioned learning styles and learning processes are the application and practice of shallow learning and deep learning in the field of education and teaching, while the division of low-level thinking and high-level thinking is the understanding and expression of learning objectives from the perspective of psychological cognition. Therefore, concerning the way of learning, learning process and learning objectives, shallow learning and deep learning which are based on the teaching practice are an organic unity to promote the development of education and teaching. In order to understand the necessity of deep learning in the information age, the correlation between deep learning and EFL teaching, and how to promote the development and realization of deep learning by means of information technology, the following are discussed.

II. Discussion

A. Deep Learning and EFL Teaching

The concept of deep learning originated from abroad. In the 1950s, Fairlance Marton and R Roger Saljo proposed two learning styles, shallow learning and deep learning. In 2005, Professor Li Jiahou of Shanghai Normal University summed up the typical characteristics of deep learning and put forward the concept of deep learning for the first time. Since then, a series of related academic research on deep learning has been carried out in China, from deep learning theory research, deep learning methods research to deep learning application research, and the general conclusions that have been reached are: (1) The deep learning is a learning process based on the progressive learning development of understanding, criticizing, transferring and association, which finally benefits learners to make decisions and solve problems. (2) The deep learning emphasizes information integration, promotes knowledge construction, advocates

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heuristic, exploratory and participatory teaching, advocates active learning and lifelong learning; (3) The deep learning can improve the learning ability, reflect the initiative of learners, and make the high-quality and efficient group cooperation; (4) The deep learning does not exclude shallow learning, and they are separate continuum.

The above literature research and conclusion make the synthesized review on deep learning respectively from the interpretation of deep learning process, the progressive development of deep learning process, the effects of deep learning progress on learning ability, and the independent phrase but organic unity between shallow learning and deep learning during the learning. With the comprehensive research and understanding, deep learning helps to promote learners' active learning, emphasizes the relevance between knowledge and details, and stresses the understanding and construction of meaning. Deep learning is conducive to the cultivation and development of high-level thinking (application, analysis, evaluation and creation).

The cultivation of high-level thinking ability appears frequently in the educational documents and related reports of different levels in our country, which is similar to developing learners' innovative thinking and paying attention to the cultivation of students' ability to analyze and solve problems. The Outline of China's Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Program recently published in China also puts emphasis of education and teaching on the combination of learning and thinking; and it advocates heuristic, exploratory, discussing, and participatory teaching to help students learn to learn. It can be said that the concept of education and teaching in our country pays attention to cultivating college students' high-level thinking ability, which coincides with the elaboration of high-level cognitive skills in the field of psychological cognition and the goal of college EFL teaching . In the domain of Benjamin Bloom's Theory of Taxonomy, memorizing and understanding are designed as simple cognitive abilities according to the degree of difficulty in cognitive processes, while application, analysis, evaluation and creation as high-level cognitive skills. The latter is the core skill of fostering critical thinking competence in college EFL teaching.

At present, the literature investigation and its reviews on college EFL teaching and the cultivation of critical thinking competence can be concluded as follows: (1) The critical thinking competence in EFL is inseparable from college English language competence. In the framework of college English language competence, social competence (speculative competence) is incorporated with cognitive competence (language knowledge), functional competence (language skills) and strategic competence (learning strategies). The critical thinking competence has become an indispensable part of college English language proficiency, and it is also an important link. (2) The theory of fostering foreign language critical thinking doesn’t have practical impact on the practice of college English curriculum. Theoretical research on the cultivation of college English critical thinking competency is fruitful, and a theoretical consensus on the role of foreign language curriculum in fostering critical thinking competence has reached from the theoretical point of view. The definition of critical thinking competence, the formulation of measuring the critical thinking competence and the macro-training strategies have been basically formed. However, the effectiveness of the strategies for fostering critical thinking competence based on the combination of language skills courses is lacking. (3) It is imperative to cultivate the critical thinking competence of college English curriculum with the help of information technology. The study on critical thinking competence of college English is more in traditional classroom, but fewer in technical applications. Network environment and information technology not only bring convenience to EFL teaching, but also provide many possibilities and opportunities for promoting critical thinking-oriented EFL teaching under the information technology environment. Language learners in the era of information bombardment, not only are flooded by information, but also are required to analyze, to judge and to process the large amount of information. Therefore, in EFL teaching, it is necessary to encourage students to find and solve problems by means of information technology, to collect data by logical thinking and to analyze and judge them, so as to promote the development of critical thinking competence and to prove its effectiveness by empirical methods.

Up to now, the development and cultivation of critical thinking competence in college English curriculum is not only to keep pace with the times, but also to promote the deep learning of college foreign language.

B. EFL Teaching and Cultivation of Critical Thinking Competency

A Summary of 20 Years' Studies on the Cultivation of College English Thinking Competence in China (1998-2017) (Wang, 2017) finds that: “For a long time, college English teaching has attached importance to the training of language competence in terms of knowledge structure and teaching methods, with emphasis on discourse analysis, long-difficult sentence patterns and explanation of difficult words.” (p.94). Students' learning is also often confined to the memorization of lexical sentence patterns and the correct use of grammar. This kind of teaching one-sidedly emphasizes the mastery of language skills, but neglects the cultivation of students' critical thinking competency. Therefore, the learners' learning strategies of mechanical, passive learning and memorizing knowledge and details, as well as the teaching methods of repetitive practice and mechanical memory in foreign language education generally result in the shallow, inefficient and absence of critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching. At the same time, it is pointed out in Commenting on the Problems Existing in the Cultivation of Critical Thinking Competency in Foreign languages teaching in Colleges and Universities that foreign languages teaching should not over-emphasize the training of critical thinking competency while neglecting the cultivation of language-oriented ability, and foreign language curriculum in college should become an important carrier for the cultivation of critical thinking competency. At the same time, language-oriented ability of foreign language learning is the prerequisite to cultivate the critical thinking competency. Therefore, the development of foreign language proficiency must be based on the language-oriented knowledge of

pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Meanwhile the cultivation of critical thinking competency should be based on language–oriented ability, but this does not mean that students with poor language proficiency can not develop critical thinking competency. In fact, any language material, as long as the teacher –carefully- designed material, could push the students' level of critical thinking to a higher level (Wen & Sun, 2015). Research on the problems of fostering critical thinking competency in EFL teaching and their results enlighten us: (1) The premise of fostering critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching is clarified. Language skills are the prerequisite and basis for the development of critical thinking competency in college English curriculum. Therefore, language skills training is indispensable and cannot be crossed; (2) The carrier of fostering critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching is confirmed. College English curriculum is an important carrier for the cultivation and development of students' critical thinking competency. Therefore, relying on the content of college English curriculum, teachers who carefully design language materials and language activities can and will promote the development of learners' critical thinking competency. (3) It points out the guideline of fostering critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching. The shallow learning style and its related teaching strategies in college EFL teaching will only result in the absence of critical thinking competency. Both reasonable treatment of shallow learning style and deep learning style and organic integration of the two styles in the language skills training and critical thinking competency training can and will train and develop students to learn passionately, explore daringly and question courageously. (4) The individual equality of the cultivation of learners' critical thinking competency in EFL teaching is confirmed. The learners of college EFL teaching, regardless of their language proficiency, can and will improve their critical thinking competency through college English course.

From the above, it can be seen that emphasizing and carrying out the following principles are conducive to the cultivation and development of critical thinking competency in EFL teaching, and helpful to accomplish the educational goal of EFL teaching from shallow learning to deep learning. These guiding principles are individual equality in EFL teaching, the basic but solid function of language skills, the support of language content, the guarantee of language activity design and the organic combination of shallow learning and deep learning.

III. Analysis

Concerning what have been discussed above, it should be noted here, that is, the auxiliary application of information technology in fostering critical thinking competency in deep learning of EFL teaching.

In the "Internet +" era, there is no absolute knowledge authority on the Internet. Everyone is not only the input of information, but also the disseminator and output of information. A large number of Internet applications and platforms provide communication and cooperation between different users, which makes the amount of Internet information increase geometrically. Therefore, if learners want to form independent opinion among massive information, they must have the ability of analysis, reasoning, judgment and selection. In order to gradually understand the truth and avoid misleading and to make fair and rational judgments, it is a realistic problem to cultivate the ability of critical thinking competency in EFL teaching.

Literature research shows that, mobile Internet technology is conducive to the development of critical thinking competency. Innovation of the blended learning mode which combines the traditional learning mode with the network learning form by flipping classroom, as well as optimization and utilization of resources and technical means which are from inside to outside of the classroom as well as from online to offline are to encourage students to locate problems, solve problems, to use logical thinking to collect data to analyze and judge, which can ultimately promote the development of critical thinking competency. For example, the rich information on the Internet gives learners the access to inquiry of learning, virtual learning community is constructed in cyberspace and visual learning is carried out with teaching video resources or software tools, or simulation exercises are carried out in virtual setting (Wen, 2017). However, literature research also shows that there still exist problems of the mixed learning mode that combines traditional learning with online learning, such as the lack of students' initiative while online learning, the failure to achieve the desired learning effect without effective supervision, etc.. The above problems leads to the occurrence of "breeding hotbed of shallow learning", which results from learners' passive performance and shallow level of communication in network learning space, such as looking through information or online chatting (Zhang, 2015).

Therefore, how to optimize the auxiliary effect of information technology on the deep learning of foreign languages, to effectively accomplish the deep learning of foreign languages assisted by information technology, and to cultivate and develop foreign language learners' critical thinking are of great importance. At present, literature research on deep learning in e-learning environment demonstrates from different perspectives the components of deep learning in promoting information technology environment: setting, interaction, experience and reflection (Zhang, 2014). Setting, which is the core and foundation, refers to the field of activity; interaction, experience and reflection are the key elements of knowledge construction, knowledge transfer and application, problem solving and creation. They interact with each other to promote learners' deep learning activities. As far as foreign language learners are concerned, the process of foreign language learning is a process in which learners construct knowledge, develop skills, enliven thinking, exhibit individuality and broaden their horizons under the guidance of teachers. Combined with the characteristics of EFL teaching and second language acquisition, the following optimization can be carried out:

A. Optimize the Learning Scaffolding Function of IT Means

Under the learning environment involving students' activities, achieving the students' deep learning goal doesn't depend on the self-study in daily learning, but on the guidance and help from teachers in daily learning (Guo, 2016). Under the network environment, autonomous learning platform and learning software provide learners with opportunities and possibilities of autonomous learning in the form of in-class, out-of-class, on-line and off-line, To pay close attention to learners' learning process by means of information technology, to guide learners at any time, to answer questions at any time and to act as the necessary knowledge and emotion scaffolding for learners will reduce the risks and make up for shortcomings of individual differences in EFL teaching , deepen learners' cognition of language and things through cooperative interaction between teachers and learners, and ensure the effectiveness of learners' learning process in coordination, management and supervision.

B. Optimize the Learning Environment of Meaning Construction as a Process by Means of IT

The Dynamic Theory of Second Language Acquisition points out that learners are constantly approaching the ideal state of language acquisition in the cycle of input, interaction, output and feedback. The input of language is for the purpose of understanding the meaning, and the output of language is for the purpose of conveying meaning that can be understood by others. The acquisition of meaning is a process of construction, which is connected, contrasted and discussed with different texts, different sources of information and different people. The construction of meaning is a process of deep learning and a dynamic process. There is a need for participation and consultation. Therefore, the interactive platform and learning community created under the assistance of information technology provide infinite possibilities for students to share their views and communicate with each other, and provide students with the goal of knowledge construction and with the environment set-up. At the same time, communication and sharing between learners, through reading, thinking about the views of others and expressing their own thinking, enhance the learners' ability of language expression as well as their ability of thinking, judgment and evaluation. Therefore, learning based on comprehension, in-depth exploration, seeking meaning, learning to apply and reflective learning makes learners present deep level of cognitive expression, obtain positive learning emotion and develop effective learning interaction, which is the ultimate embodiment of deep learning.

C. Optimize Interactions between Resources and Learners to Stimulate Their Interest by Means of IT

In the era of network information bombardment, individual selection and individual interest greatly influence the screening of individual learning. At the same time, it also shows that textbooks are not the only way for students to obtain information. Under the massive network information, only choosing the topic-related resources that suit students' interests can promote effective interaction, active communication, and positive language learning. At the same time, the classroom learning involves the use of language and the social concern of the language use, instead of just staying at the level of language knowledge. It has demonstrated in the literature review that language is a social phenomenon. Language skill, at least speaking, is preferably acquired in interesting interactions with others. And the topic that arouses learners' interest and attention is of the utmost importance. Learners who are free to choose any material on the same subject in accordance with their own interests, concerning society, livelihood, studying and emotion etc., not only enhance the autonomy and enthusiasm of learning, satisfy their inquiring desires, but also fully mobilize their participation in learning, stimulate their curiosity and desire for cooperative communication, so that they will naturally and willingly pay attention to and make use of the correct language form to express the authentic meaning. The communication environment constructed between teachers and students and between students and students, which originates from interaction of topic-related resources, will encourage students to jump out of the confinement of textbook context and be free from the constraint of the subject or the topic. By combining interested topics and materials in daily life with the development of comprehensive language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, language learning habits of speculating, analyzing, discussing and evaluating are gradually cultivated and trained to foster learners' critical thinking.

D. Optimize the Use of Multiple Assessment Means under IT

The traditional evaluation means is test, which aims at the acquisition of students' knowledge, while the alternative evaluation means aims at the construction of knowledge. The former leads to shallow learning, while the latter leads to the use of deep learning methods. Therefore, learners' daily performance in foreign languages teaching, participation statistics, analysis reports and reflection reports, which belong to formative evaluation methods, are all shown in the form of visualization and data processing with the help of information technology to provide learners and teachers with the most direct and most immediate information for observation, feedback and reflection, and to play a role of information recording and interpretation of the evaluation of the deep learning process and its effect.

E. Optimize the Organic Connection between Shallow Learning and Deep Learning by Means of IT

Basing on learners' interest, we promote the interaction aiming at the construction of meaning. Setting the goal of developing learners' critical thinking competency, we promote the parallel development of language knowledge, comprehensive language skills and critical thinking. Thus, language activities are gradually extended from the shallow level practice of words and sentences, the practice of language skills to the meaning construction and internalization of language in the form of question-and-answer, dialogue and elaboration. For EFL teaching with emphasis on the

development of language comprehensive skills, memory and understanding are regarded as the main learning strategies, repetition and mechanical memory as the main teaching methods, which keep foreign language learning staying at the shallow level of learning. But learners, with the help and guidance of their teachers, who are assisted by the network-based autonomous learning platform and learning software, spontaneously make the acquisition, comparison, judgment and evaluation of language learning, for example, whether the vocabulary, the sentence and the paragraph are appropriate or not, whether the discourse is logic or not. Such process of individualized speculation, discussion and questioning can not only improve the efficiency of learners' self-learning, promote deep learning, but also effectively foster their critical thinking on knowledge construction in foreign language learning.

IV. Conclusion

Fisher (2008), an English scholar, points out that language teaching is facing a shift from the focus on language accuracy and fluency to the focus on critical understanding and expression of language. The shift of attention in language teaching coincides with the target interpretation of critical thinking competence of college foreign language and the connotation of deep learning in the field of education and teaching. What is imperative is to realize the deep learning in college EFL teaching, and what should be done now is to pay attention to the cultivation of critical thinking competency in college EFL teaching. Under the background of educational informatization, it is not only a move to keep pace with the times, but also an inevitable action to deal with the college foreign language reform in the information age, that is, to cultivate and develop the critical thinking competency of college foreign languages teaching by means of information technology and to achieve the goal of deep learning in college EFL teaching effectively.

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Self-directed Learning in L2 Acquisition: A Review of Theory, Practice, and Research

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***Abstract*—Emphasis on second language (L2) learner as the most significant agent responsible for the process of L2 acquisition has had significant implications for the both fields of L2 leaning and teaching. As L2 learning is concerned, we now know that learners should be helped to take responsibility for their own L2 learning and thus they should move towards independence in the process of L2 acquisition. As L2 teaching is concerned, teachers are now more preoccupied with facilitating the process of L2 learning rather than 'teaching' in its traditional sense of the term. These implications have presented themselves in what is called *self-directed L2 learning*. The purpose of this paper is to present a review of *self-directed learning*, discussing the improvements that this line of innovation has brought to L2 learning and even L2 teaching. The review is presented with respect to both theoretical underpinnings and research of self-directed L2 learning. Further, the practical implications of self-directed learning for both L2 learning and teaching are discussed.**

***Index Terms*—self-directed learning, L2 acquisition, theory, practice, research**

I. Introduction

Behaviorist approaches to L2 learning and teaching were characterized by the proposition that learners begin the process of L2 learning with no presupposition of what a second language (L2) is composed of and how it should be learned (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). More importantly, the proponents of these behaviorist approaches (those of Audiolingualism in particular) contended the teacher is the director of the symphony of L2 learning as he/she was considered responsible for providing the appropriate learning materials in the classroom and making sure that the materials would be learned as intended. In technical terms, this was done through the process of stimulus-response association in which the learners were required to provide the appropriate responses to the stimuli presented to them. In a similar fashion, L2 teacher were encouraged not to let their learners commit errors in the L2 because it was thought that deviations from the standard form of the L2 would create 'bad L2 habits' in the learner's L2 behaviors. According to the proponents of Audiolingualism, these deviations would be hard to eradicate and they usually would result in L2 fossilizations in the learners' interlanguage system (Celce-Murcia, 1991). This proposition was another obstacle to the learner's freedom allowed by the Behaviorist approaches to L2 learning and teaching as learners were denied to try L2 creativity. It was believed that L2 learner creativity is the context in which learners were more probable to male L2 errors (see, Celce-Murcia, 1991; Hammerly, 1971).

Later researchers and theoreticians came to argue that denying learner creativity and freedom is not desirable and that L2 errors should not be seen as capital sin; rather, it is a sign that L2 learning is actually happening (Canale & Swain, 1980; Corder, 1981). In addition, focus on individual differences in L2 learning has made teachers and researchers aware of the fact that the same instructional path does not necessarily lead to L2 proficient attainment; rather, learners should be helped to invest in their own strengths and overcome their weaknesses so that the best is achieved (Skehan, 1991). On the other hand, with the advent of technological advances in late 1980s, teachers saw an opportunity to minimize the teaching burden by outsourcing the process of generating L2 input for their student to computers (Levy, 1997), which allowed the teachers to focus more on the psychological and social aspects of L2 learning and teaching. This could not be done if the learners were not autonomous in their learning efforts. These changes since the behaviorist approaches to L2 learning and teaching have called for *self-directed learning* (SDL) programs, which is defined as the programs designed to empower L2 learners so that the outcomes of L2 learning and teaching can be attained both inside and outside the instructional context (Benson & Voller, 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to present a review of SDL as theorized, practiced, and studied in the realms of L2 learning and teaching. For this purpose, the theoretical underpinnings of SDL in L2 learning are discussed, particularly with reference to the contribution that different schools of thoughts and different areas of research have made to our current understanding of what L2 SDL is intended for. Then, the review goes to discuss some of the techniques usually

taught in SDL programs. Finally, some of the research studies of the effects of SDL on L2 acquisition are reviewed to see if the positive effects claimed for SDL are supported by empirical data or not.

II. Theoretical Underpinnings of Self-directed Learning

Different Schools of thoughts and research areas have contributed to the formation of SDL. Cognitive psychology and Sociocultural Theory have been effective in the movement towards SDL while research on individual differences in language learning have provided hints as to how technology and learner variations would necessitate pushing L2 learners towards SDL.

A. Cognitive Psychology

Researchers are not unanimous about what the theoretical bases of SDL are as it seems that different schools of thoughts have contributed to our current understanding of SDL as practiced in the fields of L2 learning and teaching. However, it is rather well-accepted that cognitive psychology paved the path for recognition of SDL as an effective tool for having L2 learners acquire L2 structures efficiently (e.g., Victori, & Lockhart, 1995; Wenden, 1998). As stated earlier, cognitive psychology is based on the premise that learner-internal variables are determinants of learning achievements and thus, we should see the learner as the only one responsible for the process of learning outcomes. Specifically, cognitive L2 researchers contend that autonomy and appropriate cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the platforms required for effectiveness of SDL. According to the cognitive psychologists, autonomy is one of the most important concepts that define the extent to which a person is ready to invest his time and resources into learning materials. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, compromise the set of assets most required to put SDL into motion.

1. Autonomy

As defined in the literature of cognitive psychology, autonomy refers to the extent to which a person sees himself as capable of learning materials and performing tasks (Benson & Voller, 2014). There is abundant evidence in the literature that L2 autonomy is one of the most significant determinants of L2 acquisition (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Littlewood, 1996). In fact, the early SDL programs were designed based on the proposition that the most important purpose of L2 teaching should be to help learners become autonomous in their efforts to acquire an L2. The argument was that the extent of L2 input learners would receive in L2 classrooms is limited in both quantity and quality and thus, learners should be empowered to seek L2 input outside of the institutional context where the teacher or other instructional resources are not available to provide the learner with L2 input (see, e.g., Dickinson, 1995; Little, 1995). An extreme version of this position is that L2 acquisition has happened when the learner has become autonomous in L2 learning. In other words, this version contends that L2 teaching is not about teaching the L2; rather, it is about making learners independent in their L2 learning attempts (e.g., Benson & Voller, 2014).

A more moderate version is based on the argument that there is a bilateral relationship between autonomy and L2 learning achievements and thus, teachers should try to enhance both in the classroom (Rubio, F. D. (2014). This version has been vigorously welcome by the proponents of SDL programs. The difficulty of teaching English as a foreign language prompted teachers to search for alternative approaches to the task of English language teaching and they came to the conclusion that "a self-directed scheme providing a reasonable variety of methodological and linguistic resources can help learners find their way through any foreign language" (Gremmo & Riley, 1995, p. 155). Thus, in the area of L2 teaching approaches and methods, early 1990s to 2000s is characterized by an emphasis on such constructs as self-confidence, engagement, cognitive and affective learning, learning strategies, and learner factors, among others. Of these, autonomy proved itself as the most promising construct and the focus on the construct continues to remain today when it is believed that L2 learning autonomy would serve a number of purposes for language teaching and learning as the following.

- Autonomy helps learners feel responsible for the outcomes of their learning attempts. Such feeling of responsibility is deemed necessary as L2 learners need to be aware of the objectives, expectations, and routes of L2 acquisition beforehand.
- Autonomous learners are better input-seekers in that they know how to target the appropriate materials for learning the L2 and how to make use of these materials to achieve the best of his L2 learning efforts.
- L2 autonomy impinges on every aspect of L2 learning as all these aspects are finally internalized in the learner's interlanguage system and thus, it is the learner should feel confident enough to be able to accommodate L2 structures in his interlanguage system. In other words, language acquisition is not only about having access to good teachers, classrooms, and materials but it is also about having an image of himself as an efficient input processor who would be strategic in the process of L2 acquisition.
- Autonomous L2 learners are more motivated for learning the L2 as they feel in more control of their learning achievements.
- Autonomy raises the level of the L2 learner's conscious awareness which is usually considered as the gate to the process of the incoming L2 input.

• Finally, autonomous L2 learners can perform self-assessment of their own L2 strengths and weaknesses. In SDL, learner self-assessment is preferred over teacher assessment because the latter could be often invalid, unreliable, and time and money consuming.

In conclusion for this section, autonomy is part of the premise of SDL programs that learners should be empowered to take charge of their L2 learning agenda and this requires that they feel confident about their own abilities to learn the L2. Part of this mission is accomplished by using appropriate metacognitive and cognitive learning strategies effective learners would employ to process the L2 input, an issue discussed in the next section.

2. Metacognition and Cognition

Another important cognitive issue that has been part of discussions of SDL in L2 teaching and learning is concerned with the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies in L2 classrooms. The argument posed in the previous section pointed to the fact that L2 learner autonomy plays a significant role in his willingness to engage in SDL. However, it is contended that autonomy has no causal effects on learning achievements; rather, it exerts indirect effects on L2 achievement through the use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies that the L2 learners employs to approach the task of L2 acquisition (see Rivers, 2001; Vandergrift, 2002). In simple terms, metacognition refers to the higher-order mental resources the responsibility for which is to manage, plan, organize, monitor, and evaluate the process of learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Thus, metacognitive strategies would help the learner raise his awareness of how an L2 should be learned and how much energy, time, and other resources should be invested in the endeavor so that the optimal outcomes would be achieved. Thus, it is not surprising that metacognition is usually called as the *seventh sense* in learning (Nisbet & Shucksmith, 2002) as it is assumed that it is metacognition which ushers the learning process to the intended destination. In the same way, L2 researchers have targeted metacognition and cognition as two factors that would have significant implications for learners' ultimate L2 achievements.

Metacognition would help L2 learners be more autonomous in their efforts to learn an L2. For instance, Wenden (1998) poses the argument that metacognition plays a key role in autonomous language learning and thus, particular attention should be focused on teaching metacognitive strategies to language learners in the classroom. This proposition has been taken seriously by researchers in the field. Some researchers have gone to suggest that particular language programs should be designed for teaching metacognitive strategies to L2 learners. Instruction of metacognitive strategies is also usually an indispensable component of programs developed to foster SDL for language learners. In the realm of L2 listening comprehension, Vandergrift (2002) poses the argument that teaching metacognitive strategies would enhance learners' motivation for listening in the L2, which, in the long run, would result in better L2 performance if the learner would see more L2 listening input to develop his interlanguage system. In a similar vein, Wong (2005) argues that there is a bilateral relationship between the use of L2 metacognitive strategies and L2 self-confidence in the sense that the higher levels of L2 self-confidence would lead learners towards more effective metacognitive strategies which, in return, boosts their self-efficacy in learning the L2.

On a par with metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies comprise one important aspect of SDL programs when teaching and learning the L2. Cognitive strategies comprise the moment-to-moment skills and techniques that the learner employs to process L2 input (Vandergrift, 2003). In this sense of the term, it goes without saying that successful language learners are those with the most effective repertoire of L2 learning strategies (Rubin, 1975). Thus, we see a growing interest in Strategies-based Language Instruction (SBLI) in the field of language teaching in which the purpose is to have learners use the effective L2 learning strategies. Designers of SDL programs have borrowed SBLI techniques to help their learners move towards the kind of learner independence intended in SDL. This has led Oxford (1990) to discuss that, in the area of L2 learning, the acquisition of appropriate learning strategies would ''make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations'' (p. 8). The proposition in Oxford's (1990) preceding quotation that effective strategies would enable learners transfer the acquired L2 knowledge to new L2 learning and use situations is a premise that is strongly defended in SDL programs. As mentioned earlier, one of the main purposes of such programs is to help learners seek more L2 input outside the classroom context. This search for more L2 input can happen either through targeting materials prepared for instructional purposes or through communicating via the L2. There is abundant argument and evidence that strategic L2 learners are more successful in both (e.g., Cohen, 2014; Rubin, 1975; Vandergrift, 2003).

To sum up this section, L2 SDL invests in the proposition that learners are active processors with the assets of metacognition and cognition which are operationalized through the strategies they use to either seek or process L2 input. The more sophisticated these strategies are the more the better these purposes are served. Thus, SDL programs are, in part, launched to help L2 learners achieve this level of sophistication in the use of L2 learning strategies, resulting in more achievement in L2 acquisition.

B. Sociocultural Mediation

A sociocultural version of SDL has been more popular in the field of L2 acquisition (SLA) than a purely cognitive version. The cognitive stance denotes that the L2 learner is the only agent responsible for internalizing the L2 in his mind (Macaro, 2006). This position was adopted by the cognitive theoreticians as a response to the rival behaviorist position that it is only the teacher who is responsible for the learner's L2 acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, a second position has emerged which argues that the L2 learner and teacher should not be dissociated in the process of L2 learning as both are try to achieve the same purpose. According to the sociocultural theory of L2 learning

and teaching (e.g., Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015), the learner's cognitive resources are responsible for acquiring the L2 but these resources do not act in void; rather, they are put into motion in particular social contexts in which a novice (learner) and an expert (teacher) collaborate interactionally to provide the optimal situation for the novice to learn the L2. In this sense, the responsibility of the teacher is to scaffold the learner's interlanguage knowledge through the constant feedback that he provides to the process of learning. In other words, the teacher would mediate between the learning materials and the L2 learner's interlanguage system. As the other party (i.e., learner) is concerned, he has to regulate his cognitive resources to assimilate and accommodate the learning materials into his interlanguage system. The sociocultural theory of L2 learning and teaching contends that this type of cognitive regulation is what L2 learning requires and thus, we should help language learners to move from the state of being completely dependent on the teachers to being completely autonomous in the process of L2 acquisition. The sociocultural theory of L2 learning prefers the term 'self-regulated learning' rather than SDL to denote the proposition that learner independence in L2 acquisition is a continuous process of the learner decreasing his reliance on external agents and trusting his own faculties. As Lantolf et al. (2015) depict the concept, "[s]elf-regulation refers to individuals who have internalized external forms of mediation for the execution or completion of a task. In this way, development can be described as the process of gaining greater voluntary control over one's capacity to think and act either by becoming more proficient in the use of meditational resources, or through a lessening or severed reliance on external meditational means" (p. 209).

The sociocultural theory and the concept of self-regulation have significant implications for how we understand and operationalize SDL in L2 teaching and learning. First, the gradual and continual process of self-regulation means that teacher do not need, and should not, leave learner on their own from the beginning of L2 learning. In other words, an SDL program for beginning levels of L2 acquisition may be not only unhelpful but it can be debilitative in some particular ways. This hypothesis is consistent with the research findings which have provided evidence that better outcomes are gained when L2 learners are instructed on SDL once they have achieved certain levels of L2 proficiency (e.g., Gan, 2004). Second, when we look at SDL from a sociocultural perspective, the role of the teacher in the process of L2 acquisition is back in the game. It seems that a cognitive conceptualization of L2 SDL has been a threat to the professional identity of language teachers who may feel being left out in the process of L2 instruction (see Johnson, 2006). Finally, the sociocultural concept of scaffolding denotes that the process of knowledge co-construction in the learner's mind happen during social interaction through the language. Thus, in contrast to the earlier conceptualization of L2 SDL which put emphasis on the significant role of cognitive and metacognitive strategies for moving towards independence in learning, a sociocultural stance assumes that communication strategies would be of more help to learners following SDL than cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Communication strategies are those strategies the learners would employ when he observes breakdowns in his interlanguage system (i.e., being unable to verbalize the L2 knowledge) or gaps in his L2 knowledge (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). The logic is that communication strategies would compensate for these breakdowns and gaps so that the learner is able to continue social interaction through the L2. This would let the learner participate in expert-novice interaction with his teacher and peers which prepares the learner for the time when he is ready to claim full control of his L2 learning. This aim is the final purpose of SDL.

C. Individual Differences

Variations among language learners have appealed to the interest of a large group of L2 researchers in the field. This area of research is commonly known as 'individual differences in language learning', which is concerned with the psychology of the L2 learner as a dynamic and

The pedagogical significance of theoretical and empirical research on individual differences in language learning is that learners vary in their intellectual, cognitive, and affective predispositions and thus, the same approach or method cannot be universally applied to teach L2s to learners (Dörnyei, 2005; Skehan, 1991). This is where individualized L2 learning is recommended, meaning that language programs should be designed in ways that the programs would be responsive to the differences among language learners. There seems to be a paradox in order here. How could we design such programs if language learners varied in almost infinite possible ways? In addition, the agenda requires that we compile portfolios of learners' different individual differences, a mission that is rather difficult, if not impossible, even in the case of small language classrooms. So, some researchers have proposed SDL as a solution to the problem (e.g., Oxford, 2003; Rivers, 2001). Oxford (2003) discusses that learner is the most immediate evaluator of his own personality characteristics and cognitive and affective faculties and thus, he should be engaged in planning L2 instruction. Discussing that L2 education in 21st century would involve consultation with learners to design individualized L2 instruction, Ehrman and Leaver (2003) state that such consultation comprises of four stages; i.e., a) inviting the learner to a meeting with their teacher to discuss his learning styles and preferences, b) administering diagnostic learning styles and preferences questionnaires to the learner to measure their weaknesses and strengths, c) interpreting the results of the questionnaires with the help of the learner, and d) choosing and designing appropriate instructional materials and methods which would match the individuality of the learner. These recommendations have been strongly taken into account by programs designed for helping L2 learners achieve autonomy in the process of L2 acquisition (Benson, 2013).

Some individual differences are more at the center of SDL programs than others, including autonomy, motivation, self-confidence, creativity, and learner beliefs. The importance of autonomy in SDL programs was earlier discussed in

this paper. The other aforementioned individual differences are interwoven with each other as far as their influences on L2 learner independence, a premise of SDL L2 programs, are concerned. For instance, Dörnyei (2005) contends that L2 learners who are driven by more intrinsic motivational forces to learn the L2 are more probable to be creative in their production of L2 structures. Dörnyei (1998) and Oxford and Ehrman (1995) argue that learners with higher levels of L2 self-confidence hold more positive beliefs and attitudes towards their teachers, their L2 learning abilities, the classroom, and the process of L2 acquisition in general. In the same way, Rivers (2001) contends that the learner's metacognitive approach to L2 SDL and self-assessment is a function of his learning styles and personality characteristics that would determine the extent to which he would show eagerness to participate in SDL L2 programs. This idea has been also pointed out by other research, including Holec (1996), Pemberton and Cooker (2012), and Wielgolawski (2011).

The point of the above argument for the present review of SDL in L2 teaching and learning is that SDL is seen as a context in which these positive individual differences can be fostered in L2 learners. For instance, Rivers (2001) recommends a program of self-assessment and self-management for L2 learners based on the evaluation of their affective and cognitive learning styles. Pemberton and Cooker (2012) pose the argument that, when the learning materials and methods match the personality characteristics and faculties of L2 learners, learners have more chance to achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency. These opportunities are only possible when learners are given a chance to exert control over their learning. Finally, research on individual differences is one of the fast growing areas in the realm of L2 acquisition research. So, the proponents of SDL in language education should keep an eye on the findings of this trend in order to be able to benefit from these findings to improve the efficacy of their programs.

III. Practice of SDL

The range of the techniques that are used in SDL programs in L2 teaching and learning is widespread and it is rather impossible to give a comprehensive presentation of these techniques in a selective review which in intended in this paper. However, the most widely used of the techniques in the current SDL programs in the fields of L2 teaching and learning include experiential learning, cooperative learning, problem-solving, computer-assisted L2 SDL, diary journals, and self-assessment checklists. Experiential learning includes such techniques as group work, role plays, narrative task performance, project work, and field trip, among others. Experiential learning is based on the premise there is a close link between learning and action. The proponents of L2 SDL assume that this link is the medium that helps L2 learners move towards independence in their future L2 learning by boosting their self-perception and self-confidence in learning the L2 and using the acquired L2 knowledge to serve their own communicative purposes. As Knutson, (2003) states, one "valuable component of experiential learning linked to investment is its contribution to the learner's positive self-perception and increased confidence with the target language" (p. 59). Thus, it is not surprising that, along with prevalent emphasis on SDL as an effective strategy for instructing the L2, we now observe proliferation of the courses that claim an experiential approach to L2 instruction all over the world (Knutson, 2003). Alongside with experiential learning, cooperative learning is also encouraged in SDL programs designed in the realms of L2 teaching and learning. The difference between cooperative learning as conceptualized in L2 SDL and cooperative learning as conceptualized in communicative approaches to L2 teaching is related to the role that the teacher plays in each type of conceptualization of the technique. In L2 SDL, learner would plan, execute, and monitor their own performance on the cooperative, with the role of the teacher usually being the facilitator of these processes. In communicative approaches in L2 teaching, the teacher is usually involved in all the levels of cooperative tasks performance and thus plays a more intervening role in these processes (see Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The use of technology in language learning from the perspective of SDL is discussed from three different views; i.e., self-initiated, self-constructed, and self-monitored use of L2 technology (Lai, Shum, & Tian, 2016). Self-initiation is concerned with the extent to which the learner is able and willing to use technology outside the classroom to enhance his L2 learning experiences (Lai et al. 2016; see also Dias, 2000). With the widespread use of mobile technologies, this requirement seems to be easily satisfied in the realm of L2 learning. Self-construction is concerned with the strategies to either find or generate L2 input which would be appropriate to the current statues of the learner's L2 knowledge (Beatty, 2013; Groß, A., & Wolff, 2001; Lai et al. 2016). This requirement seems more challenging than the other two issues (i.e., self-initiation and self-monitoring) related to the use of computer-assisted language learning. In fact, this is the requirement that SDL programs in L2 instruction try to satisfy in order to make technological advancements suitable for the purposes of L2 SDL. This is usually done through the ideas posed by the Sociocultural Theory of L2 acquisition, which was reviewed above. Finally, the requirement of self-monitoring needs that the learner move towards the state of independence in his use of technology via the constant evaluation of his purposes for L2 learning against the extent to which these purposes are served by the use of technology (Lai et al. 2016). Since these requirements match completely with the aims of SDL in L2 instruction, it is not surprising that we witness growing interests in the application of computer and other technological advancements in L2 programs designed to develop L2 learner autonomy (Kessler & Bikowski, 2010; Liu et al. 2002).

The last two SDL techniques to be reviewed in this section are diary journals and self-assessment checklists. Diary journals have been long popular in the field but they have been mainly used for researcher proposes whereby the researchers wished to get access to the mental processes of L2 learners so that they can explain the L2 phenomena (e.g., Goh, 1997; Rivers, 1979). Diary journals have also been an effective data collection tool in research on L2 teacher. In

recent years, however, diary journals have proved themselves fruitful for pedagogical purposes as well. These journals are now used as a consciousness-raising toll for increasing learners' conscious awareness of the factor affecting their L2 acquisition. Learners are required to write down an introspection of the events happening inside the L2 classroom or L2-related events happening outside the classroom. The responsibility of the learner is to contemplate on these events so that he can notice the obstacles to his L2 learning and plan the future direction in the path. As it is clear, such contemplation would help the learner notice the gaps in his L2 interlanguage system, identify his weaknesses in the process of L2 learning, and invest in his strengths to overcome the weaknesses. Like diary journals, self-assessment checklists are an evaluative tool. The difference is that self-assessment checklists are more systematic in the sense that they are prepared beforehand by the teacher or the language institution to direct the learner's mind to what is of significance in the undertaking of L2 acquisition. Another difference is that, as mentioned above, checklists are evaluative in nature. Thus, information obtained from self-assessment checklists can be formally used to make decisions about whether the learner should be allowed to go to higher levels of L2 education or, otherwise, he needs more practice with the his current L2 knowledge. Though the reliability and validity of such information may be the place of argument (Ross, 2006), the proponents of SDL in L2 education defend the use of self-assessment checklists as it is believed that the learner's self-evaluation of his L2 learning achievements is consistent with SDL premise that learners should reach total self-reliance in their learning and so, sacrifice of issues of assessment technicality (i.e., reliability and validity) can be compensated for by the benefits that self-assessment would have for the long-term purposes of L2 learning (see Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000; Harris, 1997).

IV. Research Studies

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the role that L2 SDL and autonomy would play in the process of L2 acquisition. A group of these research studies have been concerned with the question of whether L2 autonomy, which is ultimate purpose of SDL programs for L2 learning, would have more positive effects on L2 attainment. Although the experimental studies reviewed in this section have not investigated the influence of SDL on L2 learning directly, their findings provide evidence that autonomy and self-concept are powerful predictors of success in L2 acquisition. This is good evidence for claiming that SDL programs are effective in helping learners achieve higher levels of L2 acquisition since what these programs aim for is to develop the sense of autonomy of self-reliance in learners and make them independent in their L2 learning attempts. Such indirect conclusion about the influence of SDL programs on L2 learning achievements is inevitable since, to date, no studies have been carried out to examine the effects of SDL programs on L2 acquisition.

For instance, Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2007) investigated the influence of self-efficacy and motivational self-beliefs on the achievement of L2 French by college students. For this purpose, the researchers asked 303 college students of L2 French to complete a number of questionnaires measuring the independent variables; i.e., French grade self-efficacy, French learning anxiety, French learning self-concept, self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, and perceived value of French language and culture. The participants' achievement in L2 French learning was also operationalized via semester grades. The results of the study indicated that those independent variables which had close relationships to the learners' autonomy and independence (i.e., self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-efficacy for self-regulated learning) had more influence on their L2 French achievement. Though L2 anxiety was also a significant predictor of the participants' achievement in L2 French learning, its influence on the dependent variable was less than that of self-efficacy and self-concept. Mills et al. (2007) interpreted these results as showing that the participants with higher levels of L2 self-efficacy and self-concept are more strategic in their process of L2 French acquisition. As Mills et al. (2007) stated, the participants with higher grades in L2 French were these "who perceived themselves as capable of using effective metacognitive strategies to monitor their academic work time effectively were more apt to experience academic success in intermediate French" (p. 434).

In a similar study, Zhou (2016) studied the effects of autonomy and a number of related variables on L2 acquisition success through structural equation modeling analysis. The participants of the study included 303 fifth-grade students of English as a foreign language in China. The participants were requested to complete a questionnaire that measured a number of independent variables (i.e., social anxiety, autonomy, and collaborative learning orientation) and they were also asked to report their score English scores in their last exam administered. The results of Zhou's (2016) study indicated that the participants who had high level of autonomy were more strongly orientated toward collaborative learning and gained a higher score in the their last English exam. According to structural equation modeling analysis in Zhou's (2016) study, "[c]ombined with the significant path from collaborative learning orientation to English achievement (H6), the results showed that students' autonomy had both a direct and an indirect effect on language learning performance". This finding is of paramount importance for the discussion on the role of L2 learner autonomy and independence in L2 learning success. The interpretation is that autonomy is not just a variable that affects L2 acquisition success on a par with other significant variables, it can claim a superordinate role in that the effects of some other variables of L2 acquisition is dependent upon the level of L2 autonomy and independence that the learner experiences during the process of L2 acquisition. This interpretation is supported by the findings of the study showing that the effects of independent variables of the dependent variable of L2 acquisition is mediated by the levels of L2 learner autonomy (e.g., see Oxford, 2008). The above review of the experimental studies on L2 learner autonomy points

to the promising prospect of SDL in L2 instruction since, as mentioned earlier, one of the main purposes of SDL is to foster autonomy in L2 learners.

Some other studies have dealt with the attitudes that L2 learners would hold towards SDL in the institutional context. Learner attitudes towards pedagogical methods and techniques are of paramount importance since these attitudes determine the extent to which learner is willing to consider pedagogical options seriously and to spend his time on them. Seen in this way, attitudes would influence the learner's ultimate achievements in the process of learning. For example, Gan (2004) investigated SDL attitudes and strategies among EFL learners in a Chinese context. The results of Gan's study indicated that the participants held generally positive attitudes towards SDL in their EFL classrooms but the attitudes were mediated by a number of factors. The most important of these factors was English language proficiency; i.e., learners with high and medium English proficiency were more probable than those with low English proficiency to defend the use of SDL as a principal strategy for learning the L2. According to Gan (2004), this was to be expected as SDL would work better with those who have the prerequisite intellectual and linguistic resources to handle the burdens of SDL. The findings obtained by Gan (2004) have been supported by other studies investigating learners attitudes towards SDL in language learning (e.g., Hsiao & Broeder, 2014; Wong & Nunan, 2011; Yan & Xiaoqing, 2009).

V. Conclusion

The present paper was intended to present a review of SDL as theorized, practiced, and studies in the fields of L2 leaning and teaching. It was discussed that SDL would provide a platform for L2 teaching to help learners become independent in their L2 learning attempts. In this way, the burden of L2 teaching would be mitigated as, in SDL programs, learners are required to adopt more responsibility for their own L2 learning outcomes. It was discussed that L2 SDL is based on idea from different theories and research agendas, including cognitive psychology, sociocultural theory, and individual differences. On the other hand, though it is based on a set of common theoretical frameworks, SDL is variably practiced in the realm of L2 instruction. However, the most usual techniques for L2 SDL include experiential learning, cooperative learning, problem-solving, computer-assisted L2 SDL, diary journals, and self-assessment checklists. Finally, it was argued that, L2 SDL does not only appeal to L2 practice, but also research on the topic supports the efficacy of this tradition for helping L2 learners achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency. Research has also shown that those involved in the process of L2 teaching and learning would hold positive attitudes towards L2 SDL. So, it is predicted that the current proliferation of SDL programs in the field of L2 instruction would continue to grow, though modifications are needed to be able to respond to the innovations in general education, technological education, and L2 acquisition research.

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A Study on the Improvement of English Writing Competence for College Students

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***Abstract*—English writing has long been viewed as a challenge to most Chinese college students because of their weak language foundation, limited expanse of ideas and inadequate targeted practice for the production of satisfactory written work. Attention has constantly been directed to the low efficiency in the writing teaching. By adopting some widely used approaches, this paper tries to explore efficient ways to integrate writing into the whole process of English learning and teaching. The focus of this paper is put on the suggested solutions to writing problems and the improvement in the efficiency of English writing learning and teaching.**

***Index Terms*—approaches, improvement, college students**

I. Introduction

Writing is not only one of the four basic language skills in English learning, it is also an important means of exchanges of ideas in social lives. It is usually considered to be a sign of one's language competence and comprehensive quality. But for most Chinese learners, English writing is still a big problem. Students at university level suffer from a limited lexicon and weak language foundation though they work hard and do well in reading exam. Further, they often have difficulty in organizing their ideas in proper ways, or even they are usually short of ideas for a given topic.

As far as some students are concerned, Winer (1992) revealed that producing a piece of writing has always come after a period of suffering and they are experiencing complete and total anxiety over writing. To get students out of the plight, to improve their writing power and efficiency in writing teaching, here in this paper it is suggested that different approaches be introduced to play different roles to produce a combined effect.

II. A Research into the Causes of Students' Weak Performance in Writing

For majority of Chinese students, English is a second language that is taken as a compulsory course in both high school and university. In spite of the fact that much time and efforts have been devoted to English learning in their secondary school, they still cannot make proper use of English to express themselves in college. Possibly I suppose the following may be the causes:

First, many college students come from the local areas relatively backward in the development of economics and education, especially from the isolated areas in the countryside, where there is always an urgent need for the qualified teachers of English, which greatly affects the English level of new students in college.

Second, students have seldom been instructed and required to carry out real writing tasks before getting higher education though they have studied English for more than six years since. Neither have they been specially trained with specific writing skills. Mostly, their writing task was only the translation of sentences or paragraphs as required, necessary the structured sentences translation and practices are, still, there is a long way to go for teachers to guide students to produce satisfactory written works and to be skilled writers.

Third, because of exam-oriented teaching objectives and schedules, students do not have much independent time at their disposal to read wide, read and think for themselves, They have not gone through many different lives and developed much their own views either. Further, what they have acquired from text learning alone cannot meet the requirements of different writing tasks. Therefore, weak awareness of thinking and limited expanse of ideas pose a more serious problem than language foundation and skills, thus the cultivation of students' awareness of thinking and improvement of their mind should be an essential component of English writing course.

For the above–mentioned causes, students often run into difficulty in writing and such unsuccessful experience discourages them from writing competently and with confidence. It is quite easy for students to give English writing up or put it in a position secondary to the other language skills. This is what this paper is mainly concerned about.

III. Literature Review on Process and Product Writing

Process Writing. Donald M. Murray(1972) published a brief manifesto titled "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product", which attracted wide attention from many writing teachers all over the world. Ten years later, Maxine Hairston(1982) argued that the teaching of writing had undergone a "paradigm shift" in moving from a focus on written products to writing processes.

Mahon(1992)pointed out that process writing approach involves teaching pupils strategies to help them express themselves in writing through the act of writing. Students go through five interrelated phases before they produce the final products. The five important steps in process writing include pre-writing phase, brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing, finished product.

From what has been introduced in the previous paragraph, we can see that the process of writing can be divided into manageable parts and it involves the practice of speaking, reading and writing in an intended writing target. It helps students to work together and share ideas and develop ideas and finally achieve their task in a easier and more efficiently way.

Product writing. Product writing is usually considered to be a long established way for teaching writing. Traditionally, students are encouraged to model after a text, which is usually studied and analyzed before writing job is assigned. Usually, model texts are carefully read with much attention to the type of reading, language, paragraphing and techniques used in organizing sentences and paragraphs. More focus is placed on the organization of ideas and the control of language practice. Production of ideas and free mind is much neglected and cultivation of mind is thus missed.

Another problem in product approach lies in the fact that writing is simply taken as a way to the controlled practice of language fluency, writing acts as a mirror to reflect how well students can use the vocabulary and the writing technique they have been taught to produce the desired composition In product writing, more emphasis is put on the end result of the required composition rather than on the improvement of mind and collaboration of team work.

IV. Addressing the Common Writing Problems

According to the modern FLT theories, the language learning process is the combination of input, intake (processing and memorizing in listening and reading) and output (speaking and writing). Two basic elements-- comprehension and production are always contained in English teaching, which can be regarded as two stages: input and output. FLT in China aims to cultivate students' language application based on enough comprehensible input material. Two objectives are usually to be desired in listening and reading classes: one is to improve comprehension through the comprehensible input; the other is to present usage of language for students to imitate in speaking and writing.

A. Building Language Foundation through Reading

Reading, as one of the essential skills of language practice, has long been recognized to play a significant role in the overall acquisition of any language, the same is true of its role in the development of students' writing ability. As Gebhard (1996) pointed out that the useful things in writing are word choice, use of appropriate grammar, syntax, mechanics and organization of ideas into a coherent and cohesive form. In in-school and out of school situation, reading and writing works as an essential processes in learning new information, in translating message, in making sense of new ideas and for exchanging those new ideas with others. It is chiefly through reading process that students can accumulate vocabulary, build solid language foundation and grow familiar with the organization of an essay, all of which makes the completion of a piece of good writing possible.

In terms of linguistic competence, poor command of vocabulary and inability to use it properly may be one of the major obstacles in the preparation for written work for Chinese college students. Vocabulary is often more important and challenging than grammar in that vocabulary is very infinite and words are often more complex than they appear to be, for words are not isolated from but associated with a certain type of context or situation. thus they behave differently in different context. Therefore, special attention has to be directed to the meaning and usage of words and expressions in text reading.

Further, it is important to recognize that students do not learn well from the only first presentation of the new language items alone. They need to be introduced or even reintroduced to the new items until they can have a full command of what they have learnt and produce them automatically when required. To reach this goal, students are often asked to practise a certain number of language models, such as word substitution, sentence patterns, structure of paragraphs, etc. In many English textbooks, there are always such items of exercise " replace A with B", "reorganize the following sentences after the models" or "compose a paragraph on the provided structure", etc. The repeated phrases and structures are usually the most often used ones. To be familiar with them is really a great advantage for students to be fluent users of English in writing.

It has been acknowledged that vocabulary learning, directed practice of language patterns, model writing and reading are essential to students if they are expected to make a steady progress in writing skills. Frequent exposure to different readings facilitates the capacity of students in using the language forms functionally. Yet, a balance must be kept carefully between the controlled language practice and the cultivation of creativity intended for the writing process.

B. Organizing Oral Activities

Speaking, like writing, has been regarded as an important means of language production, a means of communication . Here I am not dwelling on its general function in human communication, but only on its specific role as an introductory stage to writing. Judged from the types of speaking tasks, the activities purposefully designed in class are the controlled or semi-controlled ones.

For example, after a detailed study of texts, students finally come to deal with certain learning tasks where students are required to take a combined practice of speaking and writing. Often it is organized as follows: students are divided into small groups to discuss the questions in English, most of the questions are connected with the theme of the text. Group activities sometimes vary depending on the type of the text, so speech contest, role play and mock debate are often brought to classroom as an alternative to group discussion. After the discussion or play, they are required to write an article on the basis of their discussion with the questions serving as a framework.

From this arrangement of classroom activities, we can expect that writing can be facilitated to some degree when preceded by theme-related oral activities. In this way, students are less likely to be short of language and supporting details needed in expressing themselves. Another equally important point is that this arrangement is in agreement with the principle of process writing approach that group prewriting discussion is introduced as an important component of writing instruction. In the process, students can make up for each other's deficiencies, learn from each other and meet each other's needs.

C. Exploring Knowledge and Cultivating Creativity

In reading of my students' papers, I always find students are rather weak in expanding paragraphs with different ideas or from different perspectives. It seems that they can not venture beyond the instruction of teachers and textbooks for their limited absorption of knowledge and fixed ways of thinking, thus their writing can be very dull and dry, let alone free creation. To solve the problem, I think exploring reading and cultivation of creativity are much valuable.

Generally, the value of an excellent piece of writing does not only fully lie in its correct use of words, grammar and coherent organization, but equally lie in the ideas it produces and feelings it conveys. Those masterpieces that have inspired or shaped generations of readers are mostly originated from the minds that do so much reading, thinking and exploring that they gain the unique perception of the world inaccessible to ordinary people. Then it follows that value of a writing also depends on what a writer can communicate or share with a reader.

In the course of text reading, teachers can not be much satisfied that students have understood what words seem to convey to them. We should go further to ask students to explore what is hidden under the lines, what is most instructive and enlightening to them. After class, mind-improving books will be introduced as a supplementary reading task to push back their horizon and improve their mind, for these readings are treasure of learning and a rich source of human civilization. from which young students can constantly learn beauty, wisdom and life and will then cherish it all their lives. A student writer nurtured with such education is expected to create a piece of compelling work.

To nurture creative spirit in learners is one of the fundamental goals of quality-oriented education and also the contributing factor for attainment of originality in writing (Chen QingSong, 2005) .Writing, like the art of painting, is a type of creative mental activity. Originality is highly valued in the process of creation of written work. A writer is usually as much appreciated for his creativity in his work as a painter is in his art work. Because of the important role that creativity plays in the production of written work, teachers should include fostering of creative power in the whole process of writing teaching, in students' life experience, even in every aspect of their life.

To have curiosity about an unknown world, to have dream about future and to have imagination over what they long for are the common traits among young people. It lies heavily on teachers' shoulders to awaken, activate and satisfy all these to promote life-long creative spirit in them. It is also a teacher's duty to encourage students to try out new approaches to familiar topics or to view them from different perspectives, or even to question what has been long established. Being constantly guided to this direction, students will gradually learn to think for themselves and develop new, free ways of thinking. Then he will no longer find the completion of a piece of creative work threatening or forbidding.

D. Providing Supportive Environment

Ann Ramie's (1983) says that for second language learners, who need more time and opportunity to keep using the language with others, group work is especially beneficial. For teachers, working in a co-operative way is an valuable way of instruction and it helps much in professional development. Likewise, for students, the co-learning practice facilitates mutual growth and sharing experience. It helps to produce an expected effect. For example, in the important steps of writing, such as pre-writing, brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing and finished product, group work plays an important role. In brainstorming stage, students can freely associate and exchange ideas with their peers in groups, they can make up for each other's deficiencies, learn from each other and meet each other's needs. Their imagination can be inspired by so many different ideas from peers that they no longer worry about inadequacy of ideas. As a result of sharing ideas, students do not fear their ideas will be rejected by teachers, for they would have the whole group to back themselves up, which promotes confidence and interest to write and also improves quality in writing.

In revising and editing stages, students are often asked to read each others' works, either in pairs or in groups, and give comments to each other for revision before the final draft is handed in and assessed by the teacher. Students like to incorporate the exchanging of drafts to become the readers of each others' works. Qian Xinyu (2010) observed that this is an important part of the writing experience as it is by responding as readers that students develop an awareness of the fact that they are producing something to be read by someone else. Peregoy and Boyle (1993) commented that a great deal of excitement is generated when they know that they will share their final product with others. As the students see their writings read by others, the sense of achievement is great and this will encourage them to write more. Displays and

sharing their works make their writing authentic and it is a good way to promote writing.

Ferris (1995) remarked that teacher feedback is also considered to be a crucial factor that can improve students' writing competence and grammar knowledge. However, in the context of Chinese higher education, teachers regard writing instruction as a time-consuming and unrewarding task due to various factors like large class size, heavy workload and exam-oriented teaching background. In the previous study, Zamel (1985) considered that L2 English writing teachers have often viewed students' writings as the final product, thus they gave comments mostly on language forms and ignored the importance attached to the idea development, organization and logic in students' writings. Zamel (1985) assumed instructors who focused on accuracy were more likely to be a language teacher but not writing instructor.

The feedback from teacher can be taken as direct one and indirect one. Former deals with errors that are considered as difficult and thorny problems for students to comprehend or revise. Hence teachers would directly give accurate response to correct students' errors. Whereas, latter is given by utilizing circle, underline or other special marks to indirectly point out students' errors. It is argued by scholars like Ferris (2003) and Lee (2008) that indirect comment would be beneficial for learners to improve long-term writing skills and enhance their independent problem-solving capacities. When teachers provide indirect comments, students are more likely to revise their draft by themselves rather than only take a look at teachers' direct and explicit feedback.

Zamel (1985) supposed that if writing instructor mark all the errors, the result would turn writing teachers into merely grammar lecturers due to extreme emphasis on students' language errors. It is argued that selective comment on students' errors would be effective for teachers and learners because it is impossible to create an errorless written piece.

What's more, in terms of teachers' written comment, Lee (2008) advocated that written commentary, which includes both surface level (referring to linguistic errors) and global level (regarding comments on idea development and organization), need to be unambiguous, specific and comprehensible statements related to the draft. When written commentary is addressed, both criticism and praise statements need to be taken into consideration.

E. Integrating Product Writing and Process Writing

Both product writing and process writing are equally important, the two approaches are not necessarily incompatible, they have respective strength and weakness, the choice as to which one will be employed is determined by such important factors as the type of student, the studied text type and many other factors.

Generally, for Chinese college students, English is a second language, in which they receive insufficient specialized training and little regular practice in language production. According to Carroll (1984), the process approach is believed by many teachers to be inappropriate for students whose English is limited. Gebhard (1996) suggested that it is essential that teachers be strict with students in word choice, use of appropriate grammar, syntax, mechanics and organization of ideas into a coherent and cohesive form. Teachers have to emphasize the production of neat and grammatically correct pieces of compositions by using structured sentence patterns and controlled vocabulary so that later students can go on writing smoothly. Such a product-orientated approach prepares students technically for the start and completion of composition and then for error correction in a final revised form of writing.

But on the other hand, process writing has a tendency to organize target-aimed classroom activities which help students to be better language users: brainstorming, group discussion, editing and re-writing. In the whole course of process writing, the most important thing is the flow of ideas, the teacher needs to wake up students' desire to get them into thinking how to get to a writing topic: how to generate ideas by brainstorming and discussion; how to extend ideas, and judge quality and usefulness of ideas; how to organize ideas into drafts: how to revise drafts based on peer feedback. It is a complex mental activity and collaborative work, which contributes much to the improvement of writing quality.

Both product and process approach play a shared role in the promotion of progress in the writing power of college students. As Raimes (1985) observed that writing teachers should consider the need to attend to product as well as process. Conner (1987) advised that our students should be taught not only heuristic devices to focus on meaning, but also heuristic devices to focus on rhetorical and linguistic features after the ideas have found some form. In other words, it is not a matter of adopting one approach for certain students, but rather a matter of marrying the two.

V. Conclusion

To sum up, learning to write is a long, complex and creative process in which a series of language skill practice and the related activities are involved and interrelated. On the one hand, practice of every other language skill helps to bring about improvement in writing proficiency, well-targeted and extended reading and speaking helps to bring about proper, fluent and well-organized creation of writing. On the other hand, constant exposure to different sources of thoughts through different designs works to improve the mind of students. With guiding principles in terms of peer feedback rubric and adequate teacher scaffolding, students tend to revise their drafts more successfully, based on the constructive feedback. Therefore, writing practice, like the practice of the other language skills, is a part of language learning and a part of quality-oriented education. If English teachers have a deep understanding of the interrelation between writing and the contributing factors, place equal stress on language form and content, integrate writing into the whole process of teaching and learning, then all the efforts made by both teachers and students will be much rewarded.

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Strategy of Diffusion and Its Impacts on the Translation of Meditation Text

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***Abstract*—This research concerns with the strategy of diffusion applied in the translation of Indonesian meditation text into English. Applying SFL of Halliday (2014), translation as re-contextualization (House, 2015) and translation strategies (Malone, 1988), it focuses on the impacts of the strategy of diffusion upon the target text transitivity structure and clause types. The result of this research shows that the strategy of diffusion causes shifts of transitivity structure which include dematerialization, expansion and the shift from mental into non-mental clause. When there is dematerialization, the clause type changes are: (a) material clause of event to relational clause of identification; (b) material clause of event to relational clause of attributive; (c) material clause of event to relational clause of attributive with Attributor; (d) material clause of action to relational clause of attributive; (e) material clause of action to relational clause of attributive/possessive; and (f) material clause of action to relational clause of identification. In the expansion, the nominalization construction turns into material clause, relational clause of attributive and mental clause of desiderative and cognitive. In the shift from mental into non-mental clause, mental clause of cognitive and desiderative becomes relational clause of attributive.**

***Index Terms*—translation strategy, diffusion, re-contextualization, transitivity structure, clause type**

I. Introduction

Meditation text contains language of mental building and its goal is to persuade people to act in a certain way as suggested by the speaker. This type of text can guide people to have a mentally happy life. Text of meditation is as important as other texts, such as those of religious texts and it concerns with culture. Since the meaning of this text is influenced by culture, problems may arise to understand it when the text is translated into different language. This is because of the different ways to convey the persuasive meaning of meditation among languages. By this phenomenon, research on the translation of meditation text needs to be explored.

This present study concerns with the translation of meditation text from Indonesian into English. This text is composed of some types of clause. Based on *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) proposed Halliday (2014), clause type deals with transitivity structure and transitivity refers to how meaning is represented to express experience of the world in the form of a clause (p. 219). Transitivity structure consists of three components which include participant, process (Pro) and circumstance (Circum). The types of clause are categorized based on the type of process used in a clause, whether it is material, verbal, mental, behavioral, relational or existential. This transitivity structure can describe who does the action, what action someone does and when, where and how the action is done. This indicates that the persuasive meaning of a text can also be analyzed from the realization of the process types being used (Darani, 2014, p. 179).

When the persuasive meaning realized by a particular transitivity structure in meditation text is translated from Indonesian into English, it causes problem in translation. It is due to the difference between Indonesian and English which are linguistically and culturally different. Adjustment by re-contextualizing the source text (ST) must be made in order that the English text is accepted as natural language for the speakers of English. Re-contextualization in translation includes all aspects and varies depending on the types of text to be translated. For instance, to translate English movie titles, the aspects to be considered among others are faithfulness, cultural awareness, combination of merchant and aesthetic quality, artistic quality and appropriate translation strategy (Bai, 2018, p. 124). Since the translation strategy applied in translation also can influence the target text, this becomes an important object of research to be concerned.

Numerous researches on translation strategies have been conducted by the previous researchers, but their works were mostly on the translation strategies of other text types, among those are movie titles, legal text (Bai, 2018; Aghagolzadeh, 2012). This study concerns with other text type and focuses on the translation strategy of diffusion as one of the strategies applied in the translation of meditation text from Indonesian into English. This strategy is used by the translator to bridge the cultural and linguistic differences between Indonesian and English. Nine translation strategies can be applied in translation (Malone, 1988, p. 15). The strategies are used by the translator as a method to achieve the translation equivalence, so the result of the translation is influenced by the strategy applied. Translation strategy of diffusion as a repacking strategy using more expansively target text construction can also impact on the target text. Applying *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) by Halliday (2014), House's translation as re-contextualization (2015) and Malone's translation strategies (1988), this study is to answer the following questions:

a. What shifts of transitivity structure occur in the translation of meditation text from Indonesian into English when the strategy of diffusion is applied?

b. What are the impacts of the shifts on the English text?

II. Theoretical Framework

The translation of meditation text concerns with how language in the field of meditation is structured in Indonesian and how it is re-expressed in English. The language used in meditation text is influenced by the context of the source and target text (TT). The contextual factor plays an important role in using language and this means that besides translation theory, this translation study also needs a functional linguistic theory which can define the use of language in context. The functional linguistics applied in this study is Systemic Functional theory proposed by Halliday (2014) and the translation theories include House's translation as re-contextualization (2015) and Malone's translation strategies (1988).

A. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

As translation concerns with language in use, the text to be translated and its equivalent must be analyzed with its context. Language and context cannot be separated since they coherence each other. The translator as the producer of the target text must work with this concept. The language used as the equivalent of the source text must be in accordance with the meaning to be transferred and to what purpose the language is used. This shows that translation deals with language as choice. *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) proposed by Halliday (2014) is a theory which also defines language as a choice. The grammatical structure someone uses must depend on the functions of the language, whether the language used is to convey ideational, interpersonal or textual meaning and whether it is used to express experience of the world, to make interpersonal relation or to create textual chain.

When the language is used to express experience of the world, it is realized by transitivity structure in the form of a clause. Transitivity structure is composed of three components. They are participant, process and circumstance. There are six types of process which include process of material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relation and existential. The type of clause is categorized based on the type of process used. The types of clause based on SFL include clause of material, mental, verbal, behavioral, relation and existential. Transitivity structure is a configuration of the three components and this structure can inform the reader what is the text about, who involves in it and how, when and where it is done. The functional equivalence in translation can also be analyzed from the transitivity structures of the source and target texts.

B. Translation Equivalence and Translation Strategies

Translation does not only concern with linguistic forms, it also deals with how the linguistic form is used for a particular context. House (2015) mentions that translation is considered as the replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language (p. 23). Based on this opinion, an adequate translation text is a text which is semantically and pragmatically equivalent. To achieve a text which is equivalent as mentioned by House (2015), adjustment must be made by the translator in all ranks and transitivity structure is no exception to this connection. In the process of adjustment, there is possibility that shifts of transitivity structures occur in translation and the shifts can be obligatory or optional (Baker, 2001, p. 228). Shifts in translation if seen from its transitivity structure include the changes from material clause into non-material, from material into material clause, from mental clause into non-mental, and some other changes. Pérez (2007) mentioned some cases of translation shifts, such as a) dematerialization: material clause in the source text to non-material clause in the target text; b) materialization: non-material clause in the source text to material clause in the target text; c) expansion: no process in the source text to clause with process; d) contraction: clause with process in the source text to no process in target text; and shifts from one type of material clause to another type of material clause (p. 152).

The types of changes which occur in translation depend to some extent on the translation strategies applied. Malone (1988) suggested nine strategies in translation (p. 15). The strategies include equation, substitution, divergence, convergence, amplification, reduction, diffusion, condensation and reordering. The first eight strategies are grouped as: matching which includes equation and substitution; zigzagging (divergence and convergence); recrescence (amplification and reduction); and repacking (diffusion and condensation). Quoted from Malone (1988), diffusion as the

focus of this present study refers to repacking strategy by which a source element or construction is in some sense rendered by a more loosely or expansively organized target text (p. 55).

III. Research Method

The data of this study were taken from an Indonesian book of meditation entitled *Butir-Butir Kebijaksanaan: Titian Hidup Sehat dengan Meditasi Bio-Energi Ratu Bagus* (Ida Pandita Mpu Nabe Parama Daksa Natha Ratu Bagus, 2012) which functions as the source text and its translation in English entitled *Pearls of Wisdom: The Path of a Healty Life with Ratu Bagus Bio-Energy Meditation* (Stacey, 2014). This study is a descriptive qualitative study and carried out in some steps.

Firstly, functional grammatical analysis method was applied to analyze the types of clause found in the data source. The clauses found in the SL were divided into their constituents referring to transitivity structures of Halliday (2014, p. 213) to identify their types of clause. The transitivity structure was determined by identifying the type of process used in the clause. Secondly, the types of clause of the ST and TT were compared to identify whether there are differences in their transitivity structures. The translation strategies applied to translate the clauses of the ST were then examined. When there is a kind of repacking through expansion in the translation analyzed, this shows that the translation applied is the strategy of diffusion. All clauses which are translated by strategy of diffusion were marked. The last procedure is identifying the impacts of the translation strategy of diffusion. The impacts were evaluated from the changes of the types of transitivity shift and the kinds of clause types which occur. The types of transitivity shift were examined by identifying the changes of its transitivity structure and the changes of the clause types were examined by identifying the type of process used in the clause under study.

IV. Result and Discussion

The translation strategy of diffusion as a repacking strategy to some extent affects the TT construction. This strategy makes the TT have a more expansively organized construction when compared to the ST without changing its meaning. In terms of the translation at clause level, there are some data which show the impacts of the strategy of diffusion on the TT. Some clause types change and some shifts of transitivity structure occur. The types of shift affected by the strategy of diffusion include shift of dematerialization, expansion and shift from mental into non-mental clause. The types of transitivity shifts and changes of clause types are elaborated in the following data.

A. Diffusion and Shift of Dematerialization

The strategy of diffusion causes the occurrence of dematerialization shift in translation. Dematerialization refers to shifts of transitivity in translation by which material clause is rendered by non-material clause as seen in the following data.

(1) ST: *Sepanjang ada kemauan untuk selalu berpikir positif, maka* ***kemauan tersebut yang akan membimbing kita*** (p. 88).

TT: As long as we always have the desire to think positively, **it will be our guide** (p. 88).

The dematerialization shift resulted by the strategy of diffusion causes the change of clause type. The change is seen from the type of process used. In this datum, material clause of event (Mat/event) in the ST changes into clause relational clause of identification (Rel/ident) in the TT. The source process represented by '*akan membimbing*' as found in the following example is translated by repacking it using more words in the TT without changing its semantic content. The TT is represented by '*will be one's guide*' in the TL. The process in the ST realized by *verb* is realized by *be plus noun* in the TT. By this changing, the translator wants to make the TT more categorical by directly mentioning the role of the subject. That is as *a guide*.

(1)	ST	*kemauan*	*tersebut*	*yang*	*akan*	***membimbing***		*kita*
		Actor			Pro: Mat/event			Goal
	TT	it			will	**be**	**guide**	1st Person pl. (POSS)
		Token		ø	Pro: Rel/ident		Value	

The same case also happens to the following data. There are shifts of dematerialization as a result of the diffusion strategy.

(2) ST: *Organ tubuh kita akan memberikan yang terbaik untuk kita sepanjang* ***tubuh tersebut tidak tertekan*** (p. 117).

TT: Our physical organs will give us the best when **the body is not under stress** (p. 117).

(3) ST: *Kalau* ***jiwa kita bekerja****, maka itu artinya kita sudah berada dalam frekwensi spiritual* (p. 125).

TT: If **our Soul is at work** it means that we are ready in the spiritual frequency (p. 125).

The material clause of event (Mat/event) represented by processes of '*tertekan*' and '*bekerja*' is rendered by relational clause of attribute (Rel/attrib) in the TT. More words are also used to translate the source process which is in one word, but in these data the process of the ST is realized by *be plus adjective* in the TT represented by '*is under stress*' and '*is at work*'. The ST is repacked by the translator in the TT to make the TT more static. The change of the process used is elaborated in the following.

(2)	ST	*tubuh*	*tersebut*	*tidak*	***tertekan***
		Goal		Pro: Mat/event	
	TT	body	Art. DEF	**is** not	**under stress**
		Carrier		Pro: Rel/attrib	Attribute

(3)	ST	*jiwa*	*kita*	***bekerja***	
		Actor		Pro: Mat/event	
	TT	Soul	1st person pl. (POSS)	**is**	**at work**
		Carier		Pro: Rel/attrib	Attribute

The example below elaborates that to translate material clause of event/operative by the strategy of diffusion, a participant functioning as Attributor is needed and the process realized by a verb is translated into a verb having meaning of causing and adjective form.

(4) ST: *Oleh karena itu, marilah kita latihan secara serius dan **api suci itu akan membersihkan diri kita**, ...* (p. 92)

TT: Let's therefore train seriously so that **the sacred fire can make us (be) clean** ... (p. 92).

In this datum it is found that '*membersihkan*' is repacked using more words into '*make clean*' in the TT and the TT is in the form of relational clause of attributive (Rel/attrib). In this translation the translator softens the message by presenting an Attributor in the TT and this makes the the TT more static.

(4)	ST	*api suci*	*itu*	*akan*	***membersihkan***		*diri*	*kita*	
		Actor		Time(future)	Pro: Mat/event/operat		Goal		
	TT	sacred fire	Art. DEF	ø	can	**make**	1st person pl.	(be)	**clean**
		Attributor			**Pro-**		Carrier	**-cess**: Rel/attrib	Attribute

The following data use material clause of action/ receptive (Mat/action/recept) and action/operative (action/operat) to realize experience of the world.

(5) ST: *Vibrasi ini juga dapat **digunakan** untuk menghindari pertikaian* (p. 132).

TT: This vibration **is** also **useful** for avoiding conflicts (p. 133).

(6) ST: *Mereka akan selalu **menolong*** (p. 163).

TT: They **are** always **helpful** (p. 163).

When they are rendered by applying strategy of diffusion, more words are used. The processes of both types of clause represented by '*digunakan*' and '*menolong*' are rendered by *be plus adjective* which is realized by '*is useful* and '*are helpful*' in the TT. This is also a kind of a repacking process by turning the ST into relational clause of attributive (Rel/attrib) and the TT becomes more static by this construction. This also shows that the speaker gives more emphasize to the result and not to the action.

(5)	ST	*Vibrasi*	*ini*	*juga*	*dapat*	***digunakan***		*untuk*	*menghindari*	*pertikaian*
		Goal		Circum.	Pro: Mat/action/recept			Circum		
	TT	Vibration	Art. DEF	also	ø	**is**	**useful**	for	avoiding	conflict
		Carrier		Circum	Pro: Rel/Attrib		Attribute	Circum		

(6)	ST	*Mereka*	*akan*	*selalu*	***menolong***	
		Actor	Time(future)	Circum	Pro: Mat/act	
	TT	They	ø	always	**are**	**helpful**
		Carrier		Circum	Pro: Rel/Attrib	Attribute

Strategy of diffusion also can turn material clause of action/operative (Mat/action/operat) into material clause of relational/attributive/possessive (Rel/attrib/poss) as found in the following data.

(7) ST: *Jika **kita bisa hidup bahagia**, maka matipun `kita akan bahagia* (p. 122).

TT: If **we have a happy life**, then our death will also be happy (p. 122).

'*Hidup*' which is in one word is repacked by a more expansively construction. Metaphorical construction represented by '*have a life*' is used as the equivalent of '*hidup*' in the TT. The TT is considered to be more metaphorical since incongruent form is used in the TT. '*Live*' which is verb and is congruently construed as process is used to construe entity of '*life*' in the TT.

(7)	ST	*kita*	*bisa*	***hidup***		*bahagia*
		Actor	Pro: Mat/action/operat			Circum
	TT	we	ø	**have**	**a life**	happy
		Carrier		Pro: Rel/Attrib	Attribute	

The following data are in the forms of material clause of action (Mat/action) using process of '*membimbing*' and '*berguru*'.

(8) ST: *Ratu akan membimbing kita dengan baik* (p. 96).

TT: Ratu then becomes our good guide (p. 95).

(9) ST: ***Dengan berguru kepada Ratu**, kita akan melihat diri kita seberapa banyak gumpalan yang membelenggu diri kita* (p. 128).

TT: **When Ratu becomes our teacher**, we will see for ourselves how many handicaps we have (p. 128).

(8)	ST	*Ratu*	*akan*	***membimbing***		*kita*	*dengan*	*baik*
		Actor	Pro: Mat/action					
	TT	Ratu	then	**becomes**	**guide**	1st person pl. (POSS)	ø	good
		Actor	Circum	Pro: Rel/Attrib	Attribute			

(9)	ST	*(kita)*	***berguru***		*kepada*	*Ratu*
		(Actor)	Pro: Mat/action		Circum	
	TT	1st person pl. (POSS)	**teacher**	**becomes**	ø	Ratu
		Attribute		Pro: Rel/Attrib		Carrier

In the data above, relational clause of identification (Rel/ident) is used in the TT as the equivalent of the ST. The ST processes represented by '*membimbing*' and '*berguru*' are rendered by '*becomes guide*' and '*becomes teacher*' in the TT. This shows that one word of the ST is elaborated into more words in the TT. By this more expansively construction, the translator gives more emphasize to the function, *as a guide* or *as a teacher*, and not to the action, as *to guide* or *to teach*. More categorical TT is resulted by this construction.

B. Diffusion and Shift of Expansion

Expansion is a kind of translation shift in which a construction which has no explicit process is translated into a construction with a process. The following are data with nominalization forms in the ST and translated by drawing strategy of diffusion.

(10) ST: ***Dalam persaingan***, *maka kita akan secara terus-menerus melihat kelebihan dan kelemahan kita dan ...* (p. 60).

TT: **When we compete,** we can constantly monitor our strength and weakness, as well as ... (p. 61).

(11) ST: ***Seperti perjalanan naik gunung*** *kita merasakan kehausan dan kelelahan* (p. 71).

TT: We feel thirsty and tired **when we climb a mountain** (p. 71).

(12) ST: ***Dengan latihan Bio energi Ratu Bagus secara aktif***, *maka kita akan bisa menghidupkan mesin alami kita di dalam diri* (p. 153).

TT: **When we actively train with Ratu Bagus Bio-**Energy we can start up our natural engine (p. 153).

The ST in nominalization form has metaphorical construction since the process is not overtly stated. By the strategy of diffusion, the TT comes with process construction. The following data show the change of nominalization construction by material clause of action/operative. '*Persaingan*', '*perjalanan* and '*latihan*' which are in one word are translated into more words. They become '*we compete*', '*we climb*' and '*we train*' which are in the forms of material clause of action. Explicit agency arises by this construction and the TT becomes more dynamic by making the process more explicit.

(10)	ST	*Dalam*	***persaingan***	
			Nominalization	
	TT	When	**we**	**compete**
			Actor	Pro: Mat/action

(11)	ST	*Seperti*	***perjalanan***	***naik***	*gunung*
			Nominalization		
	TT	when	**we**	**climb**	a mountain
			Actor	Pro: Mat/action	Scope

(12)	ST	*Dengan*	***latihan***		*Bio energi Ratu Bagus*	*secara aktif*
			Nominalization			
	TT	When	**we**	**train**	with Ratu Bagus	actively
			Actor	Pro: Mat/action	Circum	Circum

Nominalization construction is also found in the data below.

(13) ST: ***Tanpa kekuatan***, *kita tidak akan bisa menolong orang lain* (p. 162).

TT: **If we don't have power**, we cannot help others (p. 162).

(14) ST: ***Di dalam keheningan hidup***, *kita pasti bisa tertawa* (p. 60).

TT: **When our life becomes clear**, we can laugh all the time (p. 60).

By the strategy of diffusion this construction turns into clause of relational. The types of relational clauses resulted are relational clause of possessive (Rel/poss) and relational clause of attributive (Rel/attrib). '*Kekuatan*' and '*keheningan*' are in nominalization construction in which adjective '*kuat*' and '*hening*' are construed as noun. In its translation this adjective is construed as quality and more words are needed in the TT. Explicit agency occurs represented by '*we*' and explicit noun by '*our life*'.

(13)	ST			*Tanpa*	***kekuatan***	
			Nominalization			
	TT	If	**we**	don't	**have**	**power**
			Carrier	Pro: Rel/Attrib		Attribute

(14)	ST	*Di dalam*	***keheningan***			
			Nominalization			
	TT	When	**1st person pl. (POSS)**	**life**	**becomes**	**clear**
			Carrier		Pro: Rel/Attrib	Attribute

Another kind of nominalization is found in the following data.

(15) ST: *Dari **keyakinan** inilah spiritual akan berkembang* (p. 69).

TT: Once **we believe**, our spirituality unfolds (p. 69).

This example shows that the verb '*yakin*' is construed as entity represented by '*keyakinan*'. In this translation, it is also rendered by a clause. That is mental clause of cognitive represented by process '*believe*'. By repacking the ST with more expansively construction, the translator makes the agency more explicit.

(15)	ST	*Dari*	***keyakinan***		*inilah*
			Nominalization		
	TT	Once	**1st person pl.**	**believe**	ø
			Senser	Pro: Mental/cognitive	Phenom

C. Diffusion and Shift from Mental into Non-mental Clause

Strategy of diffusion also results in the shift from mental into non-mental clause. Mental clauses of cognitive represented by process '*sadari*' (or '*menyadari*') and '*ketahui*' (or '*mengetahui*') are found in the data below.

(16) ST: *Bagaimana kebesaran Tuhan itu kita **sadari***? (p. 3).

TT: How can we become conscious of the mightiness of God? (p. 3).

(17) ST: ***Tapi ketahuilah**, itulah sebenarnya bentuk perubahan yang ada di dalam diri* (p. 71).

TT: **But be aware** that this is really a sign of internal change (p. 71).

These types of clause turn into relational clause of attributive (Rel/attrib) in the TT if the strategy applied is strategy of diffusion. The TT uses more words to translate clause of mental, '*sadari*' is rendered as '*become conscious*' and '*ketahui*' as '*be aware*'. This construction makes the TT more static.

(16)	ST	*Bagaimana*	*kebesaran*	*Tuhan*		*kita*	***sadari***	
			Phenom			Senser	Pro: Mental/cognitive	
	TT	How	the mightiness	God (POSS)	can	we	**become**	**conscious**
			Circum			Carrier	Pro: Rel/Attrib	Attribute

(17)	ST	*Tapi*	*(kamu)*	***ketahuilah***	
			Senser	Pro: Mental/cognitive	
	TT	But	(you)	**be**	**aware**
			Carrier	Pro: Rel/attrib	Attribute

To summarize, the strategy of diffusion applied to translate the meditation text from Indonesian into English results in some consequences. One of the impacts is that material clause in the Indonesian text becomes non-material clause in English. By this change, the English text becomes more static and categorical since the process used does not indicate an action. Clause with relational process using process of '*becomes*' followed by noun '*teacher*' will be more static compared with the clause having material clause of '*berguru*'. The strategy of diffusion also makes the English text more explicit. It is when the translation concerns with nominalization construction in the Indonesian text. The nominalization construction is repacked without the change of meaning and the agent and process become explicit in its translation. '*When we compete ...*' is more explicit than '*dalam persaingan, ...*'. Another consequence of the strategy of diffusion is that a clause with mental meaning is expressed by using relational clause, such as found in the translation of '*kita sadari*' becoming '*we become conscious*'. This change also results in the change of meaning of the English text. The English text is more static compared with its Indonesian text.

V. Conclusion

The strategy of diffusion in the translation of meditation text from Indonesian into English results in the shifts of transitivity structure. The shifts of transitivity structure induced by this translation strategy include dematerialization, expansion and the shift from mental into non-mental clause. These shifts make the clause types of the Indonesian texts change in their translation. The strategy of diffusion also affects its translation. The English text becomes more static, more categorical and more explicit.

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Interpretation of Humor between Chinese and Americans from the Angle of Culture in *Friends*

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***Abstract*—Humor is a kind of language art that permeates every corner of people's life. It can relieve pressure, regulate atmosphere and it is an important tool for interpersonal communication. However, due to different cultures, interpretation of humor between Chinese and Americans has their own characteristics. In recent years, researches on humor have mainly been done from the psychological and sociological perspectives. In the guidance of Nida's classification of culture, this thesis makes a contrastive study of interpretation of humor between Chinese and Americans by analyzing the fragments of humor in Friends. It aims at helping to interpret different humors between Chinese and Americans, thus promoting cultural exchanges and interpersonal communication.**

***Index Terms*—interpretation of humor, Chinese, Americans, Friends**

I. Language, Culture and Humor

Humor is a kind of verbal art, which permeates almost every corner of people's life. A sense of humor is a person's ability (Tan, 1997). It plays an inestimable role in social life with a unique artistic sense, especially in interpersonal communication. The significance of humor can be seen: It adds much happiness and pleasure to life and promotes positive attitudes towards life. Furthermore, it helps people out of trouble in communication.

However, humors are diverse and have their own unique cultural characteristics. Obstacles in interpreting humor between Chinese and Americans can be easily noticed because people lack cultural knowledge which is involved. Owing to the universality and diversity of culture, it is difficult to interpret and get humor when the content is connected with culture. Meanwhile, people are apt to treat things in their own stereotyped thinking or views.

There are many obstacles when people from different cultures interpret humor, so it's necessary to probe into interpretation of humor between Chinese and Americans. Here are the main purposes of this thesis. Firstly, it is expected to help readers establish an awareness of cultural differences in interpretation of humor. Secondly, some proposals are put forward to avoid embarrassments in intercultural communication when concerning humor. It is conducive to facilitate communication from people to people and culture to culture.

Language, culture and humor are three critical objects of study in this thesis. Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols (Sapir, 1921). Culture, broadly speaking, means the total way of life of people, including the patterns of belief, customs, objects, institutions, techniques, and language that characterizes the life of human community (Dai & He, 2002). Humor is a spiritual phenomenon that appeals to sensible fun (Hu, 1987). They are closely related with and inseparable from each other. At the same time, language is, in general, the primary vehicle of acculturation, of learning one's culture (Schiffman, 2002). Every language is a part of culture and it serves and reflects cultural needs (Dai & He, 2002). It is used to sustain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas spring from different language use within one's culture. Language is not only closely related to culture, but also has an intimate relationship with humor. It is an output both verbal and physical. Due to this characteristic, language is a significant carrier and the medium of expressing humor. Humor adheres to language, and its existence without language is hard to imagine. The relationship between humor and culture is quite tacit. Humor demonstrates the accumulation of a nation's culture. Furthermore, it is a production in civilization era, also a representation of highly developed culture. Owing to the diversity of culture, humor also behaves in a various and abundant way. Since culture is a very broad term, it is difficult to define culture accurately or precisely. There are various visions of the definition and classification of culture. But Eugene A. Nida's specific classification of culture is believed to have a more feasible guiding significance to this thesis. Nida, an American translator, divides culture into ecological culture, linguistic culture, religious culture, material culture and social culture (Nida, 1993).

Ecological culture focuses on values, the spiritual power to balance human society and nature.

It solidifies in the form of culture and inherits excellent results of human cognition of nature and transformation of nature. Linguistic culture refers to the study of all language sets. Linguistic culture mentioned in this thesis especially refers to a linguistic phenomenon: idioms. Religion is a special cultural phenomenon in the development of human society, and is firmly embedded in culture (Loewenthal, 2007). It is a kind of ideological belief of a particular form, and it

is also a universal cultural phenomenon, inclusive of rich cultural connotations. It affects people's ideology, living customs and so on. Material culture is, chiefly, something portable and perceptible by touch and therefore has a physical, material existence that is a component of human cultural practice. It also includes things which are perceptible by sight (Woodward, 2007). Social culture refers to the total amount of material wealth and spiritual wealth created by mankind in the course of human social and historical practice. It has the characteristics of region, nationality or group, the general term of various cultural phenomena and cultural activities that exert a wide influence on social groups.

II. Different Sense of Humor between Chinese and Americans

In different cultures, sense of humor differs from each other. China is located in the hinterland. Its feudal society is longer than that of any other country in the west, which has shaped the Chinese characters of self-control, introspection, humility, and patience. Confucianism emphasizes virtue and ethical concept. China's traditional education highlights family and country, sacrificing individual interests for public benefits. To a certain extent, all these influence modern Chinese people's sense of humor. Chinese humor emphasizes more on morality as well as on social education. Humor is always used to satire or preach or facilitate social harmony.

Example 1:

Guo: Is there a lobster 2 feet long?

Yu: Sir, wait for a moment please, and I will reply to you later. I'm sorry, sir, there is only a lobster 2.2 feet long.

Guo: Hum! What a broken restaurant it is, not even having a 2-foot-long lobster. Give me a dish of shredded potatoes!

(from *I Want to be Happy*)

This dialogue is a crosstalk. In fact, the protagonist Guo can't afford the lobster. However, he orders a big lobster deliberately pretending to be wealthy. Though there is a much bigger lobster, he complains that the restaurant can't serve him a 2-foot-long lobster. It is an irony used by Guo who cannot afford to eat the lobster but purposely makes difficulties for Yu only to maintain his own face. On this occasion, humor is closely connected with face culture. The irony used in the dialogue is not only to create a humorous atmosphere but also to provide social education, suggesting that people should not care about their face excessively. Chinese people are apt to combine sarcasm with humor. Likewise, they are good at using irony which has both the effect of humor and the function of preaching.

America is located in coastal areas, and the adventurous spirit has become an important part of the American traditional spirit. It facilitates the formation of their open and bold personality. American religious traditions emphasize enterprise and affirm personal value, which makes individualism obvious. The idea of equality of all people becomes prevailingly accepted. Whether he be the president or God, he is equal to the ordinary people. The life of ordinary people can be the material of humor, with no exception to the God. Generally speaking, different from Chinese humor, American humor plays its role in relieving mental stress and establishing superiority. Just as Freud said, humor was the release of latent emotional energy (Gong, 1991). The topics of American humor are much wider than those of Chinese humor.

Example 2:

Mother (in a low voice): Tommy, your grandfather is very sick. Can't you say something nice to cheer him up a bit.

Tommy: Grandfather, would not you like to have soldiers at your funeral?

(from *Humorous story selection*)

This dialogue shows a good presentation of American humor. Tommy wants to cheer his grandfather up a bit. He uses grandfather's funeral to create humor. In American culture, a funeral is more ceremonious if soldiers can attend. It reflects the style of American humor, focusing on the effect of humor not the content of humor. They use humor to take pleasure in themselves or people around them. Compared with Chinese humor, American humor has a wider range of topics. It stresses the function of humor to relieve mental stress.

The role of humor in people's life can't be underestimated. Humor is one of the most interesting, infectious and universal language art. It ennobles people's spirits and extends their love to others (Streiker, 1998). Humorous language can make social atmosphere relaxing and harmonious, which facilitates communication. When the content of humor involves culture, it becomes difficult to interpret. Hence, failure to interpret humor is frequently seen in daily communication. Moreover, failure to interpret humor will bring lots of inconvenience. In some cases, it can even make trouble. When having instant exchange of information, people need to make a response in a short time. On this occasion, failure to interpret humor can be detrimental. On one hand, conversation is hard to continue or it will proceed in a direction which is not anticipated. On the other hand, people may be regarded as indifferent and not friendly at all. Once it happens, it is tough to make up for it. The inconvenience still exists when there is no instant exchange of information. It can be seen while people are reading, watching videos, etc.. Though there is no bilingual communication, it has a major impact on us. Not interpreting humor in an appropriate way, people will fail to acquire the correct information others send or their real intention.

III. Humor Represented in Friends

Friends is an American sitcom directed by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, which was aired on NBC from September 22, 1994 to May 6, 2004. It consists of 236 episodes of 10 seasons. It has been watched by 52.5 million American viewers. The series has won many awards and was nominated 63 Primetime Emmy Awards (Liu, 2011).

Friends is a long-running American television situation comedy, centering on the lives of six twenty-somethings (eventually thirty-somethings) (three males, three females) who share neighboring apartments in Manhattan (Zhou, 2005). It fully describes their life, laughters, troubles, friendship, love, contradictions and work. The friendship and affection are greatly cherished by them. They trust and encourage each other. It is their positive and optimistic attitude to life that encourages millions of people in the world. Positive reviews are received throughout the world. *Friends* becomes one of the most popular sitcoms of all time.

With its popularity, more people start to know American culture.

As a milestone of the American sitcom, *Friends* is full of intellectual and cultural art. Relying on ingenious plot structures, humorous characters and exaggerated expressions, it shows American humor vividly. Humor concerning cultural factors can be easily found in their talks and conversations. As for foreign audience, this is the most difficult to interpret, since lots of non-native culture is absent in their minds.

A. Humor with Ecological Culture

Many philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, historians and linguists have been trying to define and classify culture from the perspective of respective disciplines. It is believed that Nida's specific classification of culture has a more feasible guiding significance to this thesis. Dialogues extracted from the aspect of ecological culture, linguistic culture, religious culture, material culture and social culture are to be analyzed.

Ecological culture is a kind of spiritual power to balance human society and nature. It is also a deduction and expression of the relationship between human and nature, which occurs and develops in certain regions. There are differences in the natural ecosystem of different regions. It naturally produces the ideological consciousness with regional environmental characteristics and creates an ecological culture with regional characteristics. In *Friends*, ecological culture, an indispensable part of culture, plays an important role in creating humor and bringing happiness to the audience.

Example 3:

[Scene: at Monica's, Rachel just got out of the wedding.]

……

Ross: So Rachel, What're you, uh...What're you up to tonight?

Rachel: Well, I was kinda supposed to be headed for Aruba on my honeymoon, so nothing!

Ross: Right, you're not even getting your honeymoon, God... No, no, although, Aruba, this time of year... talk about your... big lizards.

(from Season1 Episode1)

Aruba is a Caribbean island surrounded by sea. Influenced by the trade winds of the Atlantic, it has a tropical, oceanic climate. Temperature there keeps at around 28 C all year around. There are many tropical animals on the island, such as lizards, tropical rattlesnakes, red-tailed tropical birds and so on. The pleasant temperature and beautiful scenery make Aruba's tourism industry thrilling. A large number of tourists flood to Aruba for a holiday every year.

Ross firstly says Rachel can't even spend her honeymoon. That's a brutal truth. But Ross realizes he should have said it diplomatically. Then he tries to be sad, wanting to show his sympathy to Rachel. Americans think that Ross is going to say something to comfort Rachel. However, 'big lizards', unexpected words just make them burst into laughters. To interpret humor in this dialogue, the critical part is to know the knowledge of ecological culture, Aruba and big lizards. Humor here can be easily caught by Americans. Nevertheless, it is difficult for Chinese audience to get it. The main reasons are as follows. Aruba and big lizards involve the knowledge of ecological culture, which Chinese audience are short of. They can't get the relationship between the big lizards and Aruba. What they know is the literal meaning of the two words. Undoubtedly failure to catch the humorous point may occur.

B. Humor with Linguistic Culture

In this thesis, linguistic culture especially refers to a linguistic phenomenon: idioms. As the name implies, idioms are namely habitual expressions. They are linguistic chunks consisting of fixed phrases and short languages which have unique cultural features and connotations. A good mastery of connotations of English idioms is helpful for Chinese audience to interpret humor in *Friends*.

In general, English idioms have their own distinct semantic features. They cannot be arbitrarily added or deleted or replaced, especially in written English or formal situations. For example, "kick the bucket" can't be changed into "kick the big bucket" or "kick bucket" or "kick the pail". However, spoken English is more flexible, and people want to have a more relaxing atmosphere when talking with their friends. In order to add a humor flavor to language, they sometimes deliberately create some idioms.

Example 4:

[Scene: Monica and Rachel's, Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe are there.]

Rachel: Can you believe what a jerk Ross was being?

Monica: Yeah, I know. He can get really competitive.

Phoebe: Ha. Ha, ha.

Monica: What?

Phoebe: Oh, hello, kettle? This is Monica. You're black.

Monica: Please! I am not as bad as Ross.

(from Season1 Episode18)

In this scene, friends are playing poker together. Girls often lose, especially Rachel. She is dissatisfied with Ross's behavior in playing poker. Monica also believes Ross is competitive. But as audience who have seen *Friends* know, one of Monica's characters is competitiveness. So it means that a competitive person is complaining about another person's competitiveness. When Paul laughs at it, the audience guess she may directly say Monica is also competitive. Nevertheless, Phoebe pretends to make a telephone call, "Oh, hello, kettle? This is Monica. You are black".

American people will find that the expression is an idiom variant, deriving from an idiom --- "It's like the pot calling the kettle black". Originally, it is a response often given when someone criticizes another for a fault they also "the pot calling the kettle black" have themselves. The American audience soon realize that "pot" is used to allude to Monica and Phoebe cleverly uses Ross and competitiveness to replace kettle and black. They get the humor quickly and precisely. But it is hard for most Chinese audience to get it. First, the idiom is not familiar to Chinese audience. There are so many English idioms that even native speakers and advanced English learners find impossible to know them all. Furthermore, the sentence here is an idiom variant, which makes it more challenging for Chinese audience to interpret the humor. Chinese audience are always accustomed to focusing on the subtitle translation when watching *Friends*. One of its harmful effects is that they may interpret the main plot at that moment but forget it soon. As a result, it is not conductive for them to have a good mastery and interpretation of the characters.

C. Humor with Religious Culture

The United States is a multi-religious country, and almost everyone has his religious belief. About 80% of Americans are Christians, which determines the role of Christianity in American culture. Many English humorous words are related to it to some extent. Only 8% of U.S. citizens are non-religious (Joas, 2009).

Example 5:

[Scene: at Monica and Rachel's]

……

Joey: Hold it, hold it. I gotta side with Chandler on this one. When I first moved to the city, I went out a couple of times with this girl, really hot, great kisser, but she had the biggest Adam's apple. It made me nuts.

Chandler: (to Ross) You or me?

Ross: I got it. Uh, Joey, women don't have Adam's apples.

Joey: You guys are messing with me, right?

All: Yeah.

(from Season 2 Episode 3)

"Adam's apple" here is allusion from the Bible Story, referring to male's laryngeal prominence. According to Genesis of the Old Testament, Adam and Eve were the ancestors of human beings. God built a garden in Eden for them to live a carefree life. In the garden, there was a tree with many desirable fruits: apples. God told them that they could not eat the fruit because it was a "forbidden fruit". However, giving in to the temptation of the snake, they ate the forbidden fruit. Just as they were enjoying the delicious apple, God found it. Frightened, Adam ate it in a hurry, and a piece of apple flesh stuck in his throat, leaving a lump, called "Adam's apple": laryngeal prominence.

In America, most people are familiar with this story which is from the Bible. They know Eve", "Adam", "Eden" and "forbidden fruit", of course laryngeal prominence, which only males have. Joey's utterances that females have laryngeal prominence deviate from people's presupposition. It is obvious that Joey knows nothing about the story. Joey's words show his ignorance. It is just his silly words and his ignorant image makes them laugh. Nevertheless, Chinese audience who does not know the story can hardly feel the humor in this dialogue. Some Chinese may know "Eve", "Adam" and "Eden", but most of them only have simple understanding of the story. Their interpretation of religious culture is not in-depth. Religious culture itself has a long history and profound cultural heritage is conserved through history. From architecture to diet, from religious beliefs to variety of religious activities, it can be seen that religious culture has a wide scope. They all increase the difficulties of interpreting American religious culture for Chinese people. When humor involves religious culture, it is easy for Chinese to feel at a loss.

D. Humor with Material Culture

Material culture mainly refers to the material products created by human beings. It includes production tools, labor objects and the technology to create material products. These items not only reflect the way people live, but also affect people's attitude to life. They have a rich cultural significance, and are often reflected in verbal communication.

Example 6:

[Scene: at Rachel and Joey's, Rachel, Joey, Monica and Phoebe are there. Thanksgiving Day is coming.]

……

Monica: Just so you know, I'm not gonna make a turkey this year.

Joey: What?

Monica: Phoebe does not eat Turkey.

Joey: Phoebe!

Phoebe: Turkeys are beautiful, intelligent animals.

Joey: They are not. They are ugly and stupid and delicious.

(from Season 8 Episode 9)

In the United States, roasted turkey is a must for Thanksgiving Day. With fierce competition in their work, people have a fast pace and a simple diet in daily life. However, it's different on Thanksgiving night. On that night, families will have dinner together, and the main food is roasted Turkey. So, Thanksgiving is also called "Turkey day". In this conversation, Phoebe chooses not to eat turkey with his ridiculous reason "Turkeys are beautiful and smart". It is strongly opposed by Joey, creating a funny effect. Absolutely, Turkey is not unfamiliar to Americans. The humor is quite easy for them to interpret. However, the humor can be tough for Chinese to interpret. Even though many Chinese people know the importance of turkey to Americans, they may still feel confused about the dialogue between Phoebe and Joey. They will wonder if turkey is beautiful or ugly, intelligent or stupid. They don't know that's a ridiculous reason of Joey and can't interpret humor in the dialogue. The turkey is common and crucial to Americans. Chinese people are inclined to produce inertial thinking that everyone in America should like eating turkey. They tend to think so because they take it for granted that Americans like turkey very much.

E. Humor with Social Culture

Social culture exerts a wide influence on social groups. It covers people's different ways of life in different societies. In *Friends*, a large number of utterances and expressions are related to famous brand, movies, literature, history, music and so on. They are all different aspects of social culture.

Example 7:

Music:

[Scene: Sting's Apartment, Phoebe has come to talk about Jack and is waiting for Sting's wife, Trudie Styler, to enter.]

……

Trudie Styler: Are you here for tickets?

Phoebe: Oh, thank you. Four would be great.

Trudie Styler: I'm not giving concert tickets to someone who'd use their son like this!

Phoebe: Oh good! Then you're in luck! Ben's not my son!

Trudie Styler: (stands up) Look, I've just pressed a button, triggering a silent alarm. Any minute now, the police will be here!

Phoebe: The Police? Here? A reunion?! (She gets out her camera.)

(from Season 8, Episode 10)

Sting is a leader singer in America. He also has a famous band "the Police". Although the band has left the stage, Sting still adheres to his musical career. Furthermore, he is recently preparing for his new concert. Phoebe is a big fan of Sting, but now she is upset about not getting tickets for his concert. She is surprised to find out that Sting's son and Ross's son are classmates. Ben is Ross's son. Hence, she just comes to Sting's home for tickets by pretending to be Ben's mom. However, she fails and Sting's wife wants to call police to drive her out. But as a big fan of Sting, Phoebe's first reaction to "the Police" is to take out the camera and naively thinks she will see the band again.

Being acquainted with Sting and his band, Americans can easily interpret this dialogue and get humor. It is because they have the basic information of material culture. However, the humor is hard for Chinese audience. When Chinese audience see the word "the Police", they may just think of the police officers, policeman and so on. They have no idea that "the Police" is a name of Sting's band. The material culture of the United States develops rapidly. Chinese people can't immediately follow the speed of the updating material culture.

IV. Proposals for Removing Obstacles to Humor Interpretation

Through the analysis of the above episodes extracted from *Friends*, the characteristics of five American cultures are generally revealed. Considering Chinese people's difficulties in interpreting American humor, a few proposals are made, to lessen the chances of misunderstanding, to strengthen their sensitivity to cross-cultural differences and awaken their cultural consciousness.

A. Increase of Cultural Input

Judging from the above analysis, it is concluded that it is difficult for Chinese to interpret American humor when it involves culture. Increasing cultural input not only helps people to interpret more about American culture, but also encourages their humor output because there is no output without enough input. There are various ways to increase cultural input. Watching classic comedies is a kind of useful input. American culture is well embodied in these classic comedies, like *Friends*, *The Big Bang Theory*, etc. By watching classic comedies, Chinese people can have a better interpretation of American culture and their humor. Thus they have chance to share humor with others. Likewise, reading newspapers, perusing literature and knowing something about the Bible are beneficial. The Bible is an abundant source of numerous idioms, religious stories and their customs. It is safe to say that you are learning culture when reading the Bible. Apart from this, since religious culture is an essential part, it is critical for Chinese to gain religious knowledge through a variety of ways.

B. Decrease of Inertial Thinking

Inertial thinking is a great obstacle for Chinese to interpret American humor. Inertial thinking hinders Chinese from correctly interpreting American humor. It's not easy for most people to avoid inertial thinking because they are inclined to treat things in their own stereotyped thinking naturally. Past experience or gained knowledge is helpful, but they are not appropriate for everything. When thinking or judging, they should learn to think from multiple angles. It is suggested that cross-cultural education should be done when people are in their early ages. An influence and indoctrinization of fixed and stereotyped thinking in this period will make a premature formation of people's brain cells and thus hold back the development of creative thinking capability. Such fixed thinking habits as customs and conventions gradually influence the cross-cultural consciousness. It is essential to try to decrease inertial thinking in people's mind.

V. Conclusion

All in all, it is found that the sense of humor between Chinese and Americans is really different. The Chinese humor emphasizes more on morality, social education etc. They tend to use humor to satire or preach or facilitate social harmony. The topics of humor are more restrictive than American humor. Compared with Chinese, Americans use humor to relieve their mental anxiety or to establish. It is further discovered that failure to interpret humor will bring lots of inconvenience in communication. By analyzing some episodes in *Friends*, it can be seen, to some extent, people's failure to interpret humor is closely relevant to their cultural consciousness. Culture involves a wide range of factors and accumulates constantly through the long history, and culture may develop quickly, like material culture, which makes it quite difficult for foreigners to follow and understand.

Due to the wide range of cultural factors and the difficulty in classifying it, this thesis does not contain many other perspectives. The number of extracted episodes is limited, and the analysis may not be complete or perfect enough. It is expected that further study on this thesis can be continued and the theoretical research is hoped to put into practice one day.

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An Investigation of the Impact of Task Complexity on ESL Learners' Spoken Language Performance

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***Abstract*—This study investigates the multiple effects of task complexity on language performance and production in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Through its qualitative design, the present study aims to gain well-founded insights about the potential influence the degree of task complexity has on actual oral productions by ESL learners. In particular, this study construed how the increasing task complexity affected students' oral production. Given that 'oral production' is a notion that involves an intricate web of variables, the present study sought to come to grips with three major components of oral production, which are fluency, vocabulary and grammar. The researchers used the IELTS speaking band descriptor to benchmark the learners' productions. In essence, the study sought to answer three research questions: 1) What is the impact of task complexity on the quality of high achievers' and mid achievers' speech production?, 2) What is the relationship, if any, between learners' language proficiency and their performance in monologic and dialogic tasks?, and 3) Does increasing the cognitive complexity of the task impact oral language performance? The findings revealed that high achievers' grammar, lexical resource and fluency aligned variably with the task complexity, whereas the three elements dropped markedly among mid-achievers.**

***Index Terms*—task complexity, oral production, language accuracy, fluency, language production, ESL classrooms, IELTS speaking**

I. Introduction

This part provides an overview of the present paper, hence dwelling upon the notion of task complexity and its relationship to the production skills, particularly speaking. This part also identifies the research questions that the present investigation sought to answer. Also outlined in this part are the significance and the scope of the present paper.

A. An Overview

Focus on speaking as a language skill to be learned and taught in classrooms has been the cry in an ample body of second language acquisition research. This inclination has, quite understandably, led to the rise of new teaching and learning methods within pedagogical approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). For the latter, a host of scholars (e.g., Skehan, 2003; Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009) believe that syllabus designers and teachers involved should understand the nature of the tasks that students will perform in order to plan a lesson with effective instructions to support learning and second language acquisition (SLA). Task analysis is probably the most important part of instructional design for L2 learners. It is rightly believed that TBLT achieves important pedagogical objectives like helping learners to negotiate and comprehend the meaning of language inputs through task instructions or other classmates' interaction with the same task (Baralt & Gomez, 2017) and to negotiate the form (Batstone, 2016). Also, tasks provide a great opportunity for positive corrective feedback from teachers or task partners. ESL teachers gain a reflective benefit by observing the difference of the learner's language input and his/her output; that can help the teacher as a means of formative assessment to help stress the areas of weakness that need more reinforcement.

Theoretically, the cognition hypothesis explains the extent to which task complexity affects the language performance, interaction, and learning that underpin it. The main pedagogic objective of the cognition hypothesis is to know how to design and arrange tasks gradually in order to promote students' learning and language performance. Specifically, the cognition hypothesis, states that there are likely to be positive effects on speech production when tasks are made complex; learners will consequently have an increased accuracy and complexity in order to cope with the complex level of the task. The Cognition Hypothesis agrees with Charles Reigeluth's (1999) 'Elaboration Theory' of how to have a 'holistic approach' to identifying and 'sequencing' the units of instruction. Reigeluth says "The paradigm shift from teacher-centered and content-centered instruction to learner-centered instruction is creating new needs for ways to sequence instruction (p. 427).

At the other end of the scale, Skehan's (1998) 'Limited Capacity Hypothesis' claims that more cognitively complex tasks "consume more attentional resources...with the result that less attention is available for focus on form" (p. 97), therefore, language output like grammar rules, spelling, and punctuation can be less accurate. Due to scarcity of attentional resources, tasks can lead either to increased complexity, or accuracy of production, but not to both. Skehan (1998) therefore recommends that tasks should be sequenced by choosing those with characteristics that lead to fluency, accuracy and complexity, at an appropriate level of task difficulty, as determined by three factors: (1) code complexity, which is described in 'fairly traditional ways', as in descriptions of structural syllabuses, or developmental sequences (p. 99); (2) cognitive complexity, which is the result of the familiarity of the task, topic or genre, and the processing requirements; information type, clarity and organization, and amount of computation required; and (3) communicative stress, which involves six characteristics including time pressure, number of participants, and opportunities to control interaction. These characteristics, Skehan (2002) argues, can be manipulated during task design, and by teachers using tasks "to orient learners away from simply focusing on meaning, but also push them to extending and at the same time achieving greater control over the language" (p. 293).

Looking at the broader context, it does not seem much to claim that public speaking skills and debating skills are gaining an increasing momentum in English language classrooms owing to their importance for learners whose journey outside the educational system lends itself in no small part to a good level of speaking proficiency. Examples of life endeavors that call for appropriate speaking skills include job and immigration applications.

The main focus of the present paper, which is the relationship between task complexity and the speaking skill, was not absent from previous research (e.g. Hyun & Lee, 2018; Vasylets, Gilabert & Manchon, 2017). However, the findings of the previous studies on task complexity were noticeably incompatible. Among the factors responsible for this incompatibility, primacy was given to language proficiency, age, anxiety, the task's cognitive complexity and task familiarity (Cho, 2018; Gilabert, 2005; Rahimpour, 1997; Robinson, 1995; Skehan, 1998). More discussion on this will be presented in the literature review section of this paper.

B. Purpose of the Study

This study generally purports to explore the impact of task complexity on the language production and performance. To do so, this study is set to answer the following research questions:

- What is the impact of task complexity on the quality of high achievers' and mid-achievers' speech productions?
- What is the relationship, if any, between learners' proficiency and their performance on both monologic and dialogic tasks?
- Does increasing the cognitive complexity of the task impact oral language performance?

C. Significance of the Study

Although copious studies have investigated the notion of task complexity in teaching and learning environments, the present study builds on and contributes to the literature in a number of ways. This study examines the relationship between task complexity and the oral production of learners across two academic levels, namely mid-achievers and high-achievers, a tendency that has so far been present at a scanty level in the literature. Similarly, the dearth in the studies that explore dialogical tasks, a major component of the present paper, is also evident in the literature.

D. Scope of the Study

This exploratory study was conducted in a high school that follows the American curriculum in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. on four female participants; the participants were four grade 12 female students. Two of the participants were high achievers, while the other two were mid-achievers; the participants were selected based on their school grades, IELTS scores, and teacher's evaluation and feedback. This would facilitate gaining more insight about the impact of task complexity on two different levels of students.

II. Literature Review

This section reviews the literature on Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as it accounts for the theoretical framework of the present investigation. In addition, this section will cover Interactional Competence which is related to the nature of task 3, the mini-debate. The literature will also introduce the general findings of studies about the effects of task complexity on language production or performance by students.

A. Task-based Language Teaching

Bygate et al (2001) define task as an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to achieve an objective. In essence, most researchers and linguists agree that the task in SLA has the function of a vehicle to transport learners through stations of linguistics, that skills, and activities are in ascending level of complexity, that meaning takes a priority over form and that the completion of the task is the criteria for assessment. Ellis (2003, p.16) provides the following definition of a pedagogical task in TBLT:

A task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it

requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose a particular form.

However, some argue that form and meaning are like two wings for the language bird to fly and soar high and therefore both form and meaning should be the center of teaching and learning in SLA. In other words, they believe in the marriage between form and meaning; a marriage that is based on equal responsibilities and duties. For instance, Skehan (1998) and Long and Norris (2009) believe that task based language teaching is an attempt to harness and integrate the benefits of a focus on meaning via adoption of an analytic syllabus while simultaneously, paying attention to language learning in terms of form to deal with its unknown shortcomings, particularly rate of development and incompleteness where grammatical accuracy is concerned (Long & Norris, 2009, p. 599).

The main objective of TBLT is language acquisition, compared to sole successful communication; language learning is a priority in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. There are some famous models of TBLT among which is Willis's model that includes a pre-task, a task, and a post task or language focus that focuses on the language objective. The task phase is mainly engaging for the learners taking advantage from the teacher being in a passive mode. Another model is Long's model which employs real life tasks to teach the language. The models include a needs analysis to identify task targets and accordingly task types. Based on these task types, pedagogic tasks are designed and sequenced (González-Lloret, 2015). The present investigation is very close to this model as it is a task based assessment of students' speaking performance through three tasks similar to IELTS speaking test.

B. Interactional Competence

Closely relevant to the exploration intended in this study is the work of Walsh (2011), who defines interactional competence as "teachers' and learners' ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning" (p. 158). Walsh criticized the fact that teachers and examiners focus only on the individual performance in terms of accuracy, fluency, and lexical resource and neglect the importance of negotiating meaning and clarifying points of view; the interactive aspect of speech is not a priority.

The notion of interactional competence was first coined by Kramsch (1986) who argues that teachers' focus should be on interactional competence to enhance learners' ability of competent communication that involves mutual understanding between interlocutors.

In essence, Interactional Competence is relevant to 'Confluence', which was defined by McCarthy (2005) as the act of making spoken language fluent together with another speaker. Spoken confluence is highly relevant to the third task of this study, the mini debate which involves interaction by two interlocutors who express points of view and refute opposing ones. In accordance with this view, Markee (2008) states that interactional competence in a second language involves learners "co-construct[ing] with their interlocutors locally enacted, progressively more accurate, fluent, and complex interactional repertoires in the L2" (p. 3).

Acknowledging the role of context, Young (2008) offers the following definition of interactional competence: "a relationship between participants' employment of linguistic and interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed" (p. 100). Due to the salient attention to interactional competence, it can be rightly predicted that this type of competence might soon mount to become a fifth skill (Walsh, 2012) added to the pool of the four known skills: speaking, reading, writing and listening.

C. Research on Task Complexity

Most of the studies conducted in this regard revealed that language learners tend to be slow when they produce language in response to tasks that are more complex (Gilabert, 2005; Rahimpour, 1997; Robinson, 1995). As far as lexical complexity is concerned, most studies show that language learners produce more advanced and varied levels of vocabulary when the language tasks are more complex. With narrative tasks, both Robinson (1995) and Gilabert (2005) exhibited an impact of increased task complexity on lexical complexity. Révész (2012) and Michel et al.(2008) confirm the same in their studies that added more elements required for reasoning like the number of features in mobile phones and the number of instructions in a task that focuses on decision making strategies.

Conversely, structural complexity almost witnessed no impact of task complexity on L2 learners' language production. Many researchers like Robinson (1995), Rahimpour (1997) and Gilabert (2005) found no significant effects for increasing task demands on structural complexity. As for Studies manipulating the number of elements in the spoken language production (Michel, Kuiken & Vedder, 2007), and in written performance (Kuiken & Vedder, 2007; Kuiken, Vedder & Mos, 2005), researchers did not find any effect of increasing cognitive complexity on structural complexity. The latter two studies manipulated the task complexity in written tasks by increasing the number of instructions given to participants. There was only one exception to these findings; Révész (2012), who found substantial impacts for increased numbers of elements and amount of reasoning on the structure of produced language.

As for accuracy, the studies found contrasting results; whereas Robinson (1995), Ishikawa (2007), Iwashita et al. (2008) and Gilabert (2005) have shown that learners tend to be more accurate, Rahimpour (1997) and Révész (2012), confirmed no effects have been detected for increasing task complexity on the accuracy of learners' production. Most of these contrasting results can be justified due to the different assessment criteria and tools in addition to the difference in setting and samplings.

Dialogical tasks, though, have received much less attention. Michel et al. (2007) investigated the increase of task complexity on learners' individual and interactive performance by increasing the number of features in a task that required a decision-making process. The findings showed that learners tended to slow down the pace of their speech and they became more accurate; their linguistic complexity was not affected. In addition, substantially higher levels of fluency and accuracy were found in the dialogical interactive tasks than the individual tasks. Robinson (2007) used a series of three narratives from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R) which increased in the amount of intentional reasoning. Robinson found very few effects of task complexity on production as measured by general measures, while he found a significant effect with more specific measures such as the number of psychological state terms. Generally, most of the studies related to the impact of task complexity on monologic tasks have shown a strong inclination for fluency to become less, and for lexical complexity to rise, yet no effects have been found on structural complexity. As for accuracy, the picture was not clear as mixed findings have shown. On the other hand, dialogic or interactive tasks were shown to cause fluency to increase while they caused accuracy to decrease. Both lexical and structural complexity have been influenced. The various proficiency levels of learners participating in these different studies is one main reason for the differences in in findings. Another reason may be the use of one single task type with some groups while using different task types with other groups in different studies. Finally, maybe the measures used to trace the impacts of task complexity were not reliable or accurate.

III. Research Methodology

A. Approach

The researchers espoused the qualitative approach, which is very suitable for the present study as it helps to gain detailed insights based on the actual task-based speech production by L2 learners. Grounded in anthropology and sociology, the qualitative approach derives from social constructivism which contends that knowledge is constructed during interactions in the real world (Creswell 2013). Interest in this epistemological perspective led researchers to found the principles of qualitative methods compatible with research adopting the social constructivist philosophy. The goal of qualitative research is to explore certain human interactions in particular social settings. Marshall and Rossman (2011) recommend investigators access the real world of the participants, wherein they understand the meanings introduced by the participants to the settings during their interactions.

B. Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in an American-curriculum-based school in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The appropriate school permission and parents' consent were obtained to conduct the study. The students were very excited to participate in this study because of the similarity between the tasks and the IELTS speaking test that they must take to graduate and enroll in universities. The participants were tested in a classroom with the presence of one of the researchers; participants were individually tested in the monolog task and in the dialog/discussion task. The 3rd task, the mini debate, was conducted with the presence of two participants once and one participant and another non participant student once.

The participants in this study were students in grade 12 from the above mentioned school; the number of students who participated in the study was 4 girls: two high achievers with an actual IELTS scores of 7.5-8.5 and two above average with scores of 6.5 each. Participants were informed that they would be asked to perform a speaking test similar to the IELTS speaking test with its three tasks: a monolog, a dialog, and a debate-like discussion. All the four participants were aware of the IELTS test procedures, and they were familiar with the test as achieving an Academic IELTS band of 5.5 was a requirement and a prerequisite to enrolling in any university. The participants were well acquainted with one of the researchers being their English teacher. This point was important as it reduced the tension or the examiner-caused stress to almost zero, hence external factors of impacting their speech were greatly eliminated and were only limited to the cognitive aspect and the linguistic complexity. For research ethics, permission was obtained from all four participants as well as their guardians. Participants showed willingness to participate and their guardians showed willingness to cooperate.

C. Instrumentation and Tools

Participants' speech and responses during the three tasks of the study were recorded and transcribed. A Sony Voice recorder (IC recorder), which had a capacity to record up to 90 minutes, was used to conduct the speaking test with its three tasks that range and ascend in complexity from a simple monolog to dialog and finally to a mini debate between two participants. The recordings were listened to several times in order to be able to evaluate each part of the speaking criteria. Special attention was given to listening to and analyzing the arguments in the 3rd task, the mini-debate in order to evaluate the reasoning competence and cognitive skills when increasing task complexity. The second data gathering instrument was semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted with the four participants to investigate their perceptions and attitudes towards different tasks they had to perform. Furthermore, participants' interviews after conducting the study were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Finally, the IELTS band descriptor was utilised as an assessment tool of participants' oral speech production during the three tasks of the study.

D. Research Procedure

The study was conducted in the school premises in one of the classes in the high school building. Students were examined individually for the monological tasks and the interview task. They were paired for the mini debates and they were observed, and audio recorded by one of the researchers. Later, the researcher interviewed the students and asked them about the three tasks. All responses were recorded and transcribed to be processed for analysis using the IELTS band descriptor found in the IELTs official website and handbook. Two IELTS examiners analyzed the speech responses again to insure a very objective and professional feedback and a high rate of interrater reliability.

IV. Research Findings and Discussion

A. Introduction

This chapter presents all the findings and provides explanations and possible interpretations of the findings based on the participants' speech recordings and transcription throughout the three speaking tasks. The 1st task was a monolog in which participants were asked to talk about their experience in the school celebration during the national day of the UAE, December 2016. The 2nd task required participants to describe an unforgettable travel experience that they had had. Both tasks 1and 2 are based on past experiences and require the use of past tenses. The 3rd task is a mini debate between two participants who have to argue for /against wearing school uniform; participants were given a few seconds to think of good reasons to support their arguments. The 3rd task involves more reasoning skills and it includes more cognitive complexity than tasks 1 and 2. The chapter will introduce the findings of each task following the same order they were given to students.

The monolog task is considered to be the easiest as it involves one question that requires narrating an event that was recent and participants have no pressure from an interviewer. This task is the baseline or the foundation on which the assessment of speech production will be built as the other two tasks are designed to be higher in complexity. Accordingly, this may be used as what the researcher calls a 'control task' as it involves a low level of complexity accessible to all levels of learners/participants.

In this task, as expected, the high achievers are evidently very fluent in terms of speed and the number of pauses. They are relevant and their speech production is coherent. Both high achievers spoke with a great deal of accuracy and flexibility in terms of vocab or lexical resource. Grammatical range and accuracy was another area they both scored high and their sentence structures varied to demonstrate their high proficiency level. As for mid-achievers, their level was evidently less in the monolog task as they showed less fluency by being slower and by making more pauses that are language related. Both mid-achievers used simple and average words and their structural complexity was very basic as they used mostly simple sentences and very few subordinate clauses. Also, the grammar mistakes by both participants are common in this level of proficiency unlike the high achievers who had almost no grammar mistakes. This general lower level of performance by mid-achievers naturally reflects their level and similarly it will serve as a good indicator to see how differently they perform in the other two tasks. Figure 1 shows the results of Task 1.

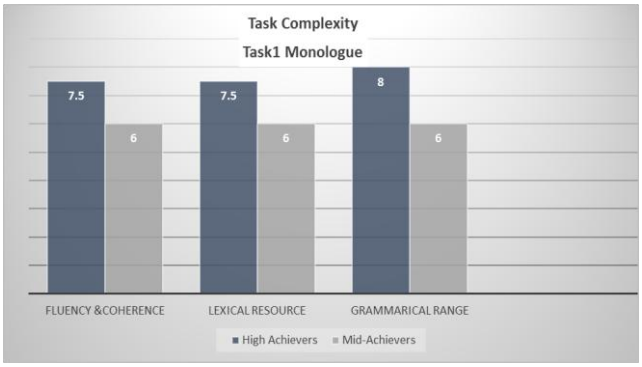

Figure 1. Results of Task 1

B. Research Question 1

The findings of the interview task show that both high achievers were still very fluent and spoke even more in terms of task duration (more than 4 minutes) compared to the monolog task (almost 3). The pausing was limited to only one occasion that is content related. Both participants used a wider range of vocabulary and more highly academic words and sets of collocations. The level of performance of the two high achievers was higher than the monolog task (their band score as per the assessment criteria rose from 7.5 to 8.5 in these two areas of speech production. Their grammatical range and accuracy was slightly affected as they produced very few errors (2 compared to 1 error in task 1) but maintaining a very high structural complexity kept their score at 8.5. These results confirm what (Gilabert, 2007; Gilabert et al., 2009) found before as high achievers naturally increased their lexical complexity level as well as their fluency; they rose to the higher complexity level. Yet, the results contradict what was suggested by (Robinson, 1995;

Rahimpour, 1997) who have confirmed that fluency of learners in spoken tasks declines if participants are asked to perform a task involving narration without looking at a visual. Finally, these findings are in line with the cognition hypothesis which states that there are likely to be positive effects on speech production when tasks are made complex.

On the other hand, both mid-achievers, were slightly affected by increasing complexity in the second task. Their fluency was a bit less as the 3rd participant's speech was slower than that of task one and she had more number of pauses. As for the 4th participant, she was not able to speak as long as the rest of the participants although she was somehow fast; their sore declined from 6 to 5.5 in terms of fluency and coherence. The grammatical range and accuracy was less successful in the speech of the two mid-achievers as it was considerably affected negatively; more grammar and structure mistakes started to appear; errors were various and related to the use of countable nouns, indefinite articles, plurals, and subject-verb agreement. It seems that participants had a trade-off of skills in this area as they focused more on content and not form. The band score achieved in this area declined (from 6 in task one) to 5. The findings in this area of speech production assessed confirm Skehan's (1998) 'Limited Capacity Hypothesis' which claims that more cognitively complex tasks "consume more attentional resources...with the result that less attention is available for focus on form" (p. 97), therefore, language output like grammar rules, spelling, and punctuation can be less accurate. The results of Task 2 can be shown in Figure 2.

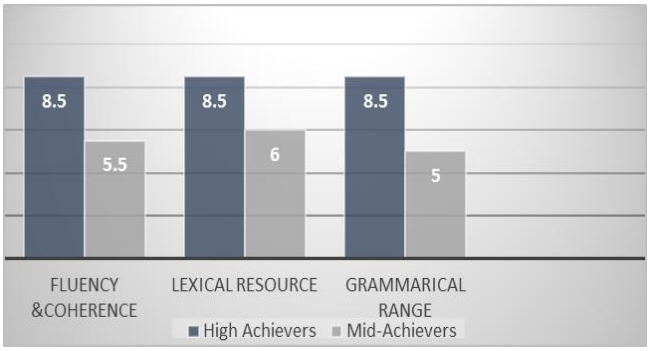

Figure 2. Results of Task 2

In the mini-debate task, both high achievers were evidently very fluent as their speech production was fast enough and greatly coherent; they had almost no pauses or hesitations. Both participants outperformed themselves in the previous task; they received a score of 8.5 compared to 8 in the previous tasks.

In terms of lexical resource, the impact of task complexity was similarly positive as both participants used more advanced level of academic. The score accordingly rose from 7.5 to 9 which is a remarkable progress. Both high achievers, used mostly correct grammar rules (only two errors in 9.5 minutes) and their sentences structures were varied tending to be more complex; in other words, their level of performance also rose to meet the complex demands of this task.

The fourth criteria of assessment, reasoning and argumentation added more cognitive pressure on them. Both high achievers used valid arguments. The interactive nature of dialog and the shared or divided pressure of speaking reduce the stress during language performance because speakers get turns and accordingly time to plan during their partners' turns (Tavakoli & Foster, 2008). When in a monological task, the speaker feels all the stress alone and hesitation is an element that plays a role in speech production. In dialogues, both interlocutors have higher chances of accuracy and fluency in terms of speed and repair as they both have more attentional resources available (Levelt, 1989).

On the other hand, the two mid-achievers level of performance evidently declined as their speech suffered from more unintentional pauses (around 11 times) and they barely lasted for 5 minutes compared to the high achievers who lasted for more than 9 minutes. It is also noteworthy that the 4th participant was not able to continue performing this task of debating due to mental cognitive stress as she translated that into a sentence in L1, 'my mind has been blocked'. The score fell from 6 to 5. The findings in this area of fluency and coherence agree with Skehan's (1998) 'Limited Capacity Hypothesis'. In terms of lexical resource both participants performed with the same level as the previous task; there was no clear impact on their speech production except for the scarcity of high academic vocabulary yet they still perform well as per their level. The stability of performance in this area maybe due to the nature of interactive task. Further, it can be explained in terms of what was stated by Pickering and Garrod (2004) who believe that in dialogical tasks learners borrow and reuse the structures and lexis of each other; this linguistic behavior is called alignment. As for grammatical range and accuracy, mid-achievers underperformed in this area of the task. Grammar errors were many and frequent; new errors appeared like pronoun-antecedent agreement and uneasy shifts in tenses, in addition to some wrong sentence structures that were only simple throughout the entire task. The score declined to reach 4.5, the lowest score throughout all research tasks and areas. The findings in this area contradict those of Michel et al. (2007) who investigated the increase of task complexity on learners' both individual and interactive performance and his research findings confirmed decreased fluency and increased accuracy and structural complexity.

The two mid-achievers' reasons were not enough to support and arguments were not fully refuted. The cognitive stress caused many mistakes in term of language as well as the logical sequence of the debate as the participants kept

repeating their words in some occasions during their task which lasted for only 5 minutes. In general, the evaluation of both external raters confirms the patterns found in the evaluation of the researchers. In other words, high achievers ascendingly received higher scores in terms of lexical resource across the three tasks while the mid-achievers descendingly received lower scores in terms of grammatical range and accuracy across the three tasks. The results of Task 3, the mini debate, can be shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
THE RESULTS OF THE MINI DEBATE

Evaluation criteria	High achievers scores	Mid-achievers scores
Fluency and coherence	8.5	5
Lexical resource	9	6.5
Grammatical range	8	4.5
Reasoning and debating skills	8	6

C. Research Question 2

Evidently, high achieving participants had a better performance in the interview and the mini debate tasks; in fact, both participants scored higher in terms of fluency, accuracy, and most importantly in lexical resource or complexity. such a positive correlation confirms the findings (except for lexical complexity) by Michel et al. (2007) who investigated the increase of task complexity on learners' both individual and interactive performance by increasing the number of features in a task that required a decision-making process. The findings showed that learners tended to slow down the pace of their speech and they became more accurate; their linguistic complexity was not affected. In addition, substantially higher levels of fluency and accuracy were found in the dialogical interactive tasks than the individual tasks. Another researcher Gilabert (2007) found a strong correlation between participants' language proficiency and their performance in dialogical tasks. Accordingly, high achievers' performance demonstrated a noticeably positive correlation between their level and their performance in dialogical, interactional tasks.

As for the mid-achievers, the findings suggest that in dialogical tasks their performance received a negative impact and they scored less than the individual task(monolog) in terms of grammatical range and accuracy in which they scored 4.5 in the mini-debate on the IELTS band score. As for the rest of other language production areas examined, the findings were similar to (Gilabert et al., 2009) weaker correlations found between proficiency and performance in all dialogical tasks.

The positive correlation between high achieving participants' proficiency and their performance in dialogical tasks accords with the suggestions of many researchers (e.g. Schmidt, 1990; Swain, 1985), who found a positive impact of interaction in speaking tasks, dialogs. In addition to those, the Cognition Hypothesis also predicts higher accuracy measures in dialogues (Robinson, 2005, 2007). An illustration of the correlation found in this study between the participants' proficiency levels and their performance is provided in Figure 3.

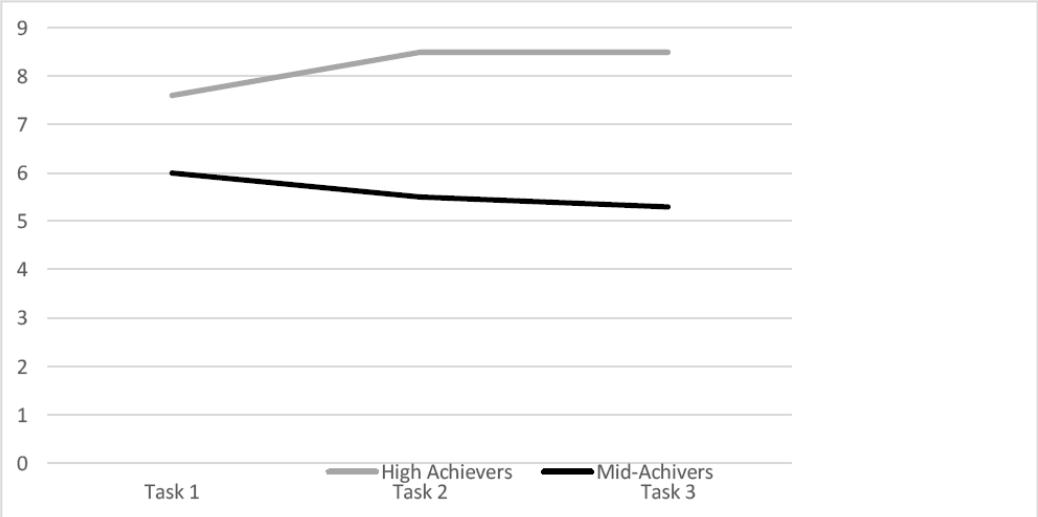

Figure 3: Proficiency Level Correlation with Performance

With regards to the external raters' evaluation, there was insignificant variation from the researchers' findings, and the overall analyses were almost the same in terms of fluency, lexical resource, and grammar. Both raters evaluated the recordings and rated them using the same evaluation criteria; The IELTS speaking band descriptor. The ratings and scores given by both examiners confirm the patterns found in the evaluation by the researcher. To elaborate, the first rater's and the second rater's evaluation of the impact of increasing complexity on lexical resource in high achievers'

production showed a steady increase in vocabulary, compared to a steady drop apropos the grammatical range and accuracy in mid-achievers' productions.

D. Research Question 3

This research question was set to find out whether or not increasing the cognitive complexity of the task would have an impact on oral language performance. The main negative impact was related to the grammatical range and accuracy as all participants' performances were affected; the influence ranged from dramatic (in the case of mid-achievers) and slight (in the case of high achievers). Nevertheless, a positive correlation was found in the lexical complexity area in which both high achievers and mid-achievers scored highest in the debate task that required more reasoning skills and underpinned more cognitive load. To some extent, the findings of this research question merit more consideration as they do not agree with the results of (Gilabert, 2007) and (Gilabert et al., 2009), which concluded that the increase of task complexity had no impact on language performance in the tasks that involved decision making or cognitive reasoning demands.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

A. Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of task complexity on language performance and production in ESL classrooms. Recent literature findings revealed that both negative and positive effects of increasing task complexity on language areas like fluency, lexical complexity, and grammar and accuracy. The researchers chose speaking as the skill to be put under the microscope in this study.

Links were made to the theoretical backgrounding of the present investigation. Relating the present paper to cognition hypothesis was an important one as the study examines the effects on fluency, lexical complexity, grammar and accuracy when the tasks are made more complex. Similarly, the limited capacity hypothesis was importantly relevant as it suggests that task complexity has negative effects due to the consumption of attentional resources.

The findings of the monolog task showed that the high achievers were evidently very fluent in terms of speed and the number of pauses. Their speech production was coherent. Both high achievers spoke with a great deal of accuracy and flexibility in terms of lexical resource. Grammatical range and accuracy was another area in which they scored high and their sentence structures varied to demonstrate their high proficiency level. As for the mid-achievers, their level was evidently less in the monolog task as they showed less fluency by being slower and by making more pauses. Both mid-achievers used simple and average words, and their structural complexity was very basic as they used mostly simple sentences and very few subordinate clauses. Also, the grammar mistakes by both participants were common in this level of proficiency, unlike the high achievers who had almost no grammar mistakes.

The findings of the interview tasks showed that the two high achievers still had a high level of fluency and coherence and only had a slight negative effect that was barely noticeable on the grammatical range and accuracy. The only area that witnessed a very positive impact was the lexical complexity as participants used a broader range of vocabulary and more highly academic words and sets of collocations. On the other hand, the mid-achievers demonstrated a very slight negative effect on fluency and a great negative impact on grammatical range and accuracy.

The findings of the mini-debate task, the highest in terms of complexity, showed that the high achievers were still very fluent due to their speed and owing to the low number of pauses. The positive impact on lexical resource was even higher in this task. As for the grammar, there was a slightly negative impact, but the researchers did not consider it due to the length of the debate task that lasted for 9.5 minutes. The mid-achievers demonstrated less competence in terms of fluency as they spoke less time full of pauses and could not finish the debate. Evidently, the area that witnessed a major negative impact was the grammatical range and accuracy.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, a host of recommendations can be made. Increasing the cognitive demands of tasks merits consideration as part of SLA classroom practices that involve focus on form as increasing the cognitive load demonstrated the direction of learners' attention to form, either to the vocabulary they need to use or to the structures they need to consider. In addition, data about how increasing cognitive complexity impacted performance should inform decisions on how to sequence tasks in a syllabus. Sequencing tasks in an ascending order could be handy as the performance of learners rises gradually. Another important point is that interactive tasks like interviews and debates push L2 learners to greater accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency. Speaking activities or tasks therefore should incorporate pair work or group work to trigger more fluency and lexical complexity. Language teachers and testers however should be aware that L2 learners are often evaluated in a monologic setting, especially in a testing environment. This is likely to mislead/distort the evaluation of learners as they can perform better in a dialogical testing setting. Finally, teachers, and syllabus designers can make use of task manipulation to adjust the level of tasks and instructions to suit the needs and levels of learners.

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