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# Teaching Academic Vocabulary to English Language Learners (ELLs)

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**Abstract**—Confronted with dual learning tasks—learning English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language and grade-level content, English Language Learners (ELLs) in K-12 are often found struggling to become fluent in English and falling behind in academic studies. It is commonly recognized that academic vocabulary is strongly related to academic achievement. Academic vocabulary is of critical importance in content learning and key to classroom interactions as students are engaged in learning activities using academic language. This article will zero in on the challenges students encounter in learning academic vocabulary. It will start with the importance of teaching ELLs academic vocabulary, followed by a classification of academic vocabulary, and an elaboration of the characteristics of academic language. Teacher candidates will explore why sheltered instruction is indispensable for the learning of vocabulary and how the two main sources of word learning—incidental learning and explicit instruction, facilitates vocabulary development. The focus will be placed on the specific strategies to help students develop a rich academic vocabulary inventory. It is hoped that teacher candidates will walk away with some guiding principles on teaching academic vocabulary and find these principles helpful in their classrooms with ELLs.

**Index Terms**—English language learners, academic vocabulary, strategies, principles

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the fastest growing demographic in U.S. public schools over the past decades, English Language Learners (ELLs) are the student population no educators can ignore. In the 2012-2013 school year, ELL students accounted for 9.2% (an estimated 4.4 million) of the total student population nationally (Kena et al., 2015), whereas in the school year 2018 the U.S. Department of Education reported an estimated 5.0 million ELLs enrolled in public schools representing approximately 10.2 percent of the public school enrollment (Irwin et al., 2021). Among the 50 states, Texas has 18.7 percent of ELLs in its public schools, only next to California (19.4 percent) (Irwin et al., 2021). According to Migration Policy Institute, foreign-born immigrants made up 17.0 percent of the Texas population in 2016, compared to 13.5 percent across the United States (Sugarmann & Geary, 2018). By 2025, minorities are expected to account for 50% or more of the population of Texas.

These ELLs are in the process of developing their English language proficiency and in the meantime learning academic content across subject areas. The current education policies require that all ELLs must take English proficiency tests every year until they are “re-designated” as fluent English proficiency speakers. Additionally, they are held to the same language arts, math, science, and other content-area standards, and required to take and pass the same standards-based tests as their native-English-speaking peers.

Therefore, compared to the native-English-speaking students, ELLs are confronted with dual learning tasks: learning English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language and grade-level content in the language they have not been fully proficient in. Both of the tasks can be daunting and ELLs are often found struggling to become fluent in English and falling behind in academic achievement tests. It is reported that ELL students showed reading proficiency levels that were 23% to 30% lower than native-English-speaking students (Kena et al., 2015). Science scores of ethnic minority groups (except Asian Americans) continue to compare unfavorably with their Euro-American counterparts (as cited in Ovando & Combs, 2012). Poor academic performance often associates with the issues of student retention. The ELL students’ school dropout rates are almost double that of their native-English-speaking peers (Espinosa, 2008).

The challenges faced by ELL students may come from many aspects, linguistically, academically, emotionally, and socioculturally, and all these challenges greatly influence their education success. This article will zero in on the challenges students encounter in learning academic vocabulary. It will start with the importance of teaching academic vocabulary to ELLs, followed by a classification of academic vocabulary, and an elaboration of the characteristics of academic language. The focus will be placed on the general principles of teaching academic vocabulary and specific vocabulary development strategies.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY TO ELLS

Academic vocabulary is of critical importance in content learning. Students need to discuss, read, and write about the academic content using academic vocabulary, e.g., the names of important people, places, and events, scientific and mathematical terms, and concepts. Academic vocabulary is also key to classroom interactions as students are engaged

in various learning activities using the language. Students' vocabulary development is strongly related to academic achievement. Students with robust vocabularies are more likely to be successful in school. To be academically successful, it is important that students acquire grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific vocabulary. We cannot overestimate the importance of teaching academic vocabulary. Even for the subject matters like math whose concepts people commonly think translate across languages, students will well struggle with it, if without mastery of the related vocabulary.

Additionally, if you identify with the Lexical Approach, an approach of teaching foreign languages proposed by Michael Lewis in the early 1990s (Lewis, 1993), you must concur on how important vocabulary is for communication. The Lexical Approach rests on the notion that an important part of learning a language consists of being able to understand and produce lexical phrases as chunks. Chunks include collocations, fixed and semi-fixed expressions, and idioms. Fluency does not depend on a set of generative grammar rules or a separate store of isolated words. Instead, it depends on the ability to rapidly access this inventory of chunks. These chunks occupy a crucial role in facilitating language production and are the key to fluency. Native speakers have a large inventory of lexical chunks that are vital for fluent production.

Therefore, according to the Lexical Approach, lexis is central in creating meaning, whereas grammar plays a subservient managerial role. Grammatical mastery is not a requirement for effective communication. The building block of language learning is lexis, not grammar. If you accept this principle, then the logical implication is that we should spend more time helping learners develop their stock of phrases and less time on grammatical structures. Any meaning-centered syllabus should be organized around lexis rather than grammar, and aim to raise learners' awareness of the lexical nature of the language.

### III. CATEGORIES OF ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

There are varied types of academic vocabulary. Typically, we can classify them into three categories.

#### ✓ General academic vocabulary

This type of vocabulary is used in all academic disciplines and includes some high-frequency words used in academic and social conversations.

Examples include and are not limited to “describe,” “predict,” “argue,” “analyze,” “utilize,” “summarize,” “sequence,” “compare,” “infer,” “measure,” “chart,” “model,” “structure,” “symbol,” “effect,” “evidence,” “circumstances,” “source,” “modify,” “classify,” “list,” “debate,” “explain,” etc.

#### ✓ Content vocabulary

This type of vocabulary is subject-specific and associated with a particular topic being taught. It is not very frequently used outside of the classroom. They are often the words highlighted in the textbooks that students need to understand the content.

Examples include and are not limited to: “numerator” and “denominator” in math; “transpiration” in science; “communism,” “socialism,” and “capitalism” in social science, etc.

#### ✓ Word parts: roots and affixes

Learning word parts enables students to defer the meaning of new vocabulary. It also helps students to see that words related by structure are usually also related by meaning.

Examples include and are not limited to:

“Photo”-(light): “photosynthesis,” “photocopy,” “photograph,” “photography”

“Vis”-(to see): “vision,” “visual,” “visualize,” “visible”

For instance, when a science teacher teaches photosynthesis, he/she can help students learn the meaning of photosynthesis by introducing the meaning of the root, “photo” (light). Once students know that “vis” is the root meaning “to see,” they can begin to guess the meaning of words like “visualize” and “visible.” Students can therefore see how these words are related by prefix, root, and suffix.

Another category that carries implications to educators is the three tiers of vocabulary development posited by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013).

#### ✓ Tier 1 words

They are high-frequency words that are most commonly found in written materials, such as simple nouns, verbs, and sight words. Examples are “book,” “girl,” “sad,” “run,” “dog,” and “orange,” etc. These words typically do not have multiple meanings. Most students know these words conversationally, and usually it is not necessary to focus on them instructionally.

#### ✓ Tier 2 words

These are the words important for reading comprehension and academic success. They are across the curriculum and are more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. They are usually high-frequency vocabulary items, which is also characteristic of mature language users. Tier 2 words are academic vocabulary that should be taught explicitly. Examples include “vary,” “formulate,” “specify,” “itemize,” “periphery,” “dignified,” “unabashedly,” etc. Teachers are recommended to focus on Tier 2 words in their vocabulary lessons. A caveat is that for newcomers and emergent speakers, they may need to start with the explicit instruction and practice with Tier 1 words.



✓ Tier 3 words

They are low-frequency and domain-specific vocabulary. Often unique to a particular topic, they are key to understanding new concepts in content areas. These words are typically uncommon, and students learn these words when a specific need arises, such as learning “amino acid” during a chemistry lesson. Tier 3 and Tier 2 words are not clear-cut in some cases, and both should be integrated into the teaching of content.

#### IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Before investigating how to help students develop academic vocabulary, it is essential to illuminate the characteristics of academic language. Different from day-to-day conversational language, academic language contains some special linguistic features at the word, phrase, and discourse levels.

✓ Using common words that take on a new meaning in a particular context

The words with multiple meanings often look simple. However, if not explicitly taught, they are the ones that frequently trick ELLs and struggling readers. For example,

- ▶ “Rational” and “irrational” when referring to numbers instead of mental states
- ▶ “Table” and “chair” vs. data “table”
- ▶ “Legislative power” vs. “electrical power”

✓ Using connectors that show relationships, logic, and sequence

We can understand them as transition words and logical connectors. For example,

- ▶ “therefore,” “although,” “because,” “however,” “similarly,” “in contrast,” “first,” “second,” “finally,” and “next”

✓ Using qualifiers that soften a claim or leave room for exceptions

For example,

- ▶ “generally,” “theoretically,” “seldom,” “often,” “may,” and “might”

✓ Using particular grammatical structures

For example, passive voice is often used to make the message impersonal. Teachers should be aware of the syntax used in their subject areas and bring it to students’ attention to facilitate their learning of both content and language.

✓ Using dependent clauses

A series of dependent clauses may be used, therefore creating long and complex sentences and abstract relationships within and across the clauses. ELLs need the ability to decipher the meaning of each clause to grasp the overall meaning.

✓ Using a variety of discourse structures

ELLs will benefit from understanding different types of writing, such as (a) narrative structures found in telling stories; (b) expository structures that serve to explain, compare and contrast, show cause and effect, or delineate a procedure; (c) persuasive structures that aim to influence audience; and (d) descriptive structures that intend to describe something. Explicit instruction on discourse structures can help students comprehend and produce the texts more effectively.

#### V. SHELTERED INSTRUCTION—INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT

Next, let’s look at how we can more effectively teach academic vocabulary to ELLs. We’ll start with “Sheltered Instruction,” an approach to teaching ELLs that integrates both language and content instruction. In “Sheltered Instruction,” as the name suggests, ELL students are “sheltered” in the sense that they are protected from the language demands of mainstream instruction that is very likely beyond their comprehension. Basically, it is grade-level content instruction used to make academic content understandable to ELLs while promoting their English language development.

With the high-stakes assessment policies, teachers cannot wait till ELLs acquire enough English to start teaching them academic content, neither can they water down the curriculum to compromise students’ levels of English proficiency. Instead, they must provide the grade-level curriculum to ELLs in a manner comprehensible to them. Therefore, language and content must be integrated into the teaching of ELLs, and sheltered instruction, to a large degree, is indispensable in the current educational backdrop. We must realize that sheltered instruction offers an effective framework in guiding ELLs to develop their language proficiency, including academic vocabulary. In traditional foreign language teaching, vocabulary items are usually taught in an isolated way. Many teacher candidates perhaps still remember copying the vocabularies from the board and writing them over and over again to commit them to the memory when learning a foreign language in high school. How effective this method is in teaching vocabulary is highly questionable. Ideally, vocabulary should be presented in context, not in isolation. Isolated vocabulary instruction does not promote vocabulary and language development to the greatest possible extent.

Language instruction is best delivered through context-embedded experience. In other words, content-based instruction provides an authentic and meaningful situation that allows language learning to take place through

interactions and contextualized communication. When language learning is embedded in content instruction, the rich, natural language that is part and parcel of academic instruction best facilitates vocabulary development.

## VI. INCIDENTAL LEARNING & EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Peregoy and Boyle (2017) summarized two main sources of word learning—incidental learning and explicit instruction. Incidental learning refers to learning through exposure to the target language and using the language in communicative contexts. Examples include learning through social interactions, academic instruction, independent reading, guided reading, etc. Explicit instruction involves explicitly teaching the new words (high-frequency words, content-area terms, low-frequency words as needed, etc.) as well as strategies to understand, remember, and use new words (word analysis, using prefixes/suffixes/roots, using dictionaries, etc.) (See Peregoy & Boyle, 2017, p. 260).

### A. *Incidental Learning*

Teachers need to know that just as first language acquisition, most second language vocabulary development is more likely to be implicit or incidental. The “incidental learning” coincides with the Innatist perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory spearheaded by Chomsky (1957, 1965) and Krashen (1985, 2004a). Compared with the Behaviorist perspective believing that children learn a language through repetition, imitation, and reinforcement and the Interactionist perspective believing that a second language is learned through communication and interaction, the Innatist theory believes that human being is born with a natural ability or innate capability to learn a language.

According to Chomsky, children are born with Language Acquisition Device (LAD)—a mental mechanism that enables children to figure out the underlying rules of the language on their own, based on the exposure to the language. The underlying rules are referred to as Universal Grammar. It argues that a great many of the abstract language rules are common to all languages, rather than language-specific. They are genetically programmed into all human children. Once the LAD is activated and children internalize the rules of the language, they can generate an infinite number of unique and grammatically correct utterances. Of course, they will run into trouble when the language used does not fit their hypotheses. However, with time and scaffolding, they will get to figure out some exceptions to particular hypotheses and start modifying their own hypotheses accordingly. Therefore, the implications of the Innatist perspective for teachers are: Children build grammar through a process of hypothesis development and testing; teachers should provide students with abundant language samples and opportunities for this process to happen.

Stephen Krashen's monitor theory is heavily influenced by Chomsky's Innatist perspective. Krashen's monitor model consists of five interrelated hypotheses (1985, 2004a):

- ✓ The Acquisition vs. Learning Hypothesis

Language acquisition is a subconscious process while language learning is a conscious process. Language learning happens primarily in the classroom, whereas language acquisition happens in natural settings. The acquisition allows us to use the language while learning allows us to talk about the language. Krashen argues that the majority of language development comes from acquisition rather than learning.

- ✓ The Natural Order Hypothesis

Language is acquired in a natural order. Though the exact order in which a target language is acquired is not completely known, it reminds teachers that “drilling a student on a grammatical item before he or she is ready to acquire it will be of little use” (Wright, 2015, p. 51).

- ✓ The Monitor Hypothesis

“Monitor” is like leverage that regulates the accuracy of language use. When our focus is on expressing meaning without attention to language forms, we may sacrifice accuracy for fluency. These are the times when the monitor is underused. When we place too much emphasis on language accuracy, the complexity and subtlety of the meaning we can express will be compromised. These are the times when the monitor is overused. A language learner should constantly be self-conscious of his/her language use to assure that he/she is producing conventional and understandable language. At the same time, he/she cannot be too self-conscious, which may prevent him/her from expressing ideas freely. A conundrum for ELL teachers is how to help language learners become optimal monitor users.

- ✓ The Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis is the key to Krashen's monitor model. Krashen uses some formulae to explain what comprehensible input means. When the input is  $i+0$  which means the input contains no linguistic knowledge beyond the learner's current competence, no acquisition takes place. When the input is  $i+10$  which means the input is too far beyond the learner's current competence, no acquisition takes place either because the input “becomes incomprehensible noise” (Freeman & Freeman, 2011, p. 121). Only when the learner receives comprehensible input that contains the language slightly beyond his/her current level of competence ( $i+1$ ) can acquisition happen. Krashen asserts that comprehensible input is the source of all acquired language.

- ✓ The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This hypothesis is concerned with the affective factors in language acquisition, such as boredom, anxiety, lack of interest, or motivation. It maintains that when affective filter is too high, it blocks comprehensible input so

language acquisition cannot happen. This hypothesis explains why learning outcomes may vary among students even when the amount of comprehensible input they receive is the same.

Krashen summarizes the five hypotheses in this fashion, “People acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to allow the input in” (1985, p. 4). You may see that this model has some overlaps with the Interactionist perspective in that language is learned from the environment around them through communication and interaction rather than imitation and memorization. This theory is helpful in informing teachers about the importance of creating a positive, language-rich learning environment where ELL students can grow to be the agents of their own language development.

Besides the monitor model, Krashen (2004b) put forward another concept that has provided valuable insight, that is, “free voluntary reading” or “recreational reading.” “Reading comprehension supports vocabulary development” and “vocabulary development supports reading comprehension” (Lawrence, White, & Snow, 2011, p. 2). “Reading is one of the primary means by which ELLs acquire new vocabulary words” (Wright, 2015, p. 192). Wright (2015) reasoned that students need to know thousands of words to comprehend authentic and complex texts, and it is impossible to provide direct vocabulary instruction for all unknown words. Fortunately, ELLs can naturally acquire the vast majority of vocabulary simply by engaging in extensive reading of all genres. However, teachers should remember that for vocabulary development to happen, it is important ELLs read materials geared to their English proficiency level and reading ability in particular.

Through examining Chomsky and Krashen’s first and second language acquisition theories, it is hoped that teacher candidates can become more cognizant of the importance of incidental learning in helping ELLs to develop vocabulary. Moreover, having read about Chomsky’s LAD and Universal Grammar and Krashen’s monitor model, teacher candidates will benefit from reflecting on what it means to their classroom teaching. In a nutshell, teachers will find themselves doubling the results with half of the efforts when creating opportunities for incidental learning to happen.

### *B. Explicit Instruction*

Apart from incidental learning, explicit instruction plays a very important role in students’ vocabulary development. Paton and Wilkins (2009) claim that through explicit instruction teachers can help learners with the move from unconscious to conscious processing of the language by providing regular teaching of relevant items of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The classroom is an ideal place that provides teaching and repetition in the way that real life outside of the classroom cannot. Teachers can select the linguistic items with an eye on their usefulness and frequency in learners’ real life. Furthermore, the linguistic items taught in the classroom should be contextualized in ways that reflect how they may be actually used by learners in the real world.

Systematic vocabulary instruction is also critical for ELLs’ learning of academic content. A widely agreed-upon difficulty ELLs frequently face in learning academic vocabulary stems from the nature of the language related to specific subject areas. For example, science has a considerable number of terms characterized by everyday-life vocabulary but with different meanings in the science context, which therefore constitutes a big barrier for ELLs in mastering science concepts.

Explicit instruction entails (a) providing direct instruction on the words teachers deem most important for understanding the material under study; (b) teaching word-learning strategies, including word parts, prefixes, suffixes, and roots, (c) helping students to figure out the meaning of the new words they come across and choose the most appropriate words to convey messages in communication, and (d) fostering word consciousness among students. Additionally, teachers need to understand that students know a word at different levels. When a student knows a word by simply recognizing the word and understanding its meanings in different contexts, the student knows the word receptively. When a student knows a word by being able to produce sentences using the word appropriately, the student knows the word productively. For students to know words productively, in explicit instruction, teachers need to employ multiple interactive strategies that allow students to acquire vocabulary through communication in different contexts, and students need to actively engage in the learning activities instead of being passive receivers only. A common pitfall of explicit instruction is the overreliance on rote learning that may result in students’ inability to use the vocabulary for authentic purposes. Rote learning is a necessary part of explicit instruction. However, rote learning alone does not lead to language development, especially communicative competence, nor is it an effective way of vocabulary teaching. Well-designed and student-centered activities should always be the key to explicit instruction.

## VII. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN CONTENT INSTRUCTION

This section will explore in-depth the specific strategies on how to help students develop a rich vocabulary inventory.

### ✓ Reviewing concepts

Teachers should help students to review important concepts whenever necessary rather than automatically assuming that students know these concepts. In reviewing concepts, teach the important terms that may be abstract or confusing to students but the key to their understanding of the content. For instance, the lesson on multiplication of two-digit numbers may require an explanation/ review/teaching of pertinent vocabularies, such as “product,” “sum,” “carry,” “exchange,” and “equal.”

### ✓ Building vocabulary

Before teaching a new topic or content, examine the material to identify the vocabulary that will be new to students or that may create problems hence needing explanations. Teach these vocabulary words and their synonyms and antonyms to assist students in understanding. For the words with multiple meanings, help students develop the nuances of meaning in particular content, and understand how a word is used in different contexts to carry different connotations and what may be appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in another.

✓ **Modeling the correct use of the academic terms**

It is important for teachers to use academic terms appropriately with students whenever they are able, so students can receive as much input as possible for language acquisition to happen. Physical movement is often vital to getting meanings across to students. For instance, when teaching “subtraction,” teachers can act out “taking away” to help students understand the “difference” by discussing an example of subtraction. Having students involved and interact with each other will also be helpful for students to understand the process required for doing subtraction.

✓ **Using the vocabulary commensurate with students’ English proficiency levels**

ELLs may come with varying English proficiency levels. Accommodations and modifications must be provided in every content area for ELLs to develop language proficiency and learn academic content. One thing teachers need to know is that students may not read at the same level as the instructional materials being utilized. Teachers should always be sensitive about and aware of students’ proficiency levels. For the text to be at students’ instructional level or slightly above, and also for providing ELLs with access to increasingly challenging texts, teachers sometimes have to rewrite the text by simplifying the sentence structures to reduce the complexity and/or explaining the content in terms students can more easily understand. An abridged version of the text is an option, too. Teachers can also use read-aloud to read each sentence carefully, one at a time, to decipher the meaning and the key elements from the sentence in a dense text.

Additionally, teachers should carefully monitor the vocabulary and sentence structures they use with ELLs in their instruction so that their language can be aligned with students’ proficiency levels. Avoid using complex sentences or idioms students may not understand, particularly with students at the beginning proficiency level. When giving complex instructions, use simple English, give short and concise directions one step at a time, and repeat them as often as needed. When teaching abstract content, use language that is straightforward, clear, and accompanied by a visual representation. Speak slowly and clearly so students can follow along.

✓ **Building on students’ background knowledge**

Background knowledge plays a significant role in students’ learning of academic vocabulary. Learning becomes easier when it is built on students’ background knowledge. As background knowledge grows, students develop in their abilities to acquire academic vocabulary and understand complex subject matters. Effective use of academic vocabulary requires a growing reservoir of background knowledge in a given subject, as well as an application of thinking skills and sufficient linguistic knowledge to understand and present complex information orally and in writing. Therefore, in teaching vocabulary, teachers should pay attention to relating new words to the words students already know with similar structure or meaning by tapping into students’ prior knowledge.

✓ **Providing multiple exposures**

The fundamentally cyclical nature of language learning requires teachers and learners to regularly revisit language items in order to achieve a long-term memory. There is no exception to vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary development also requires time and multiple exposures for the lexical items to become internalized. Teachers cannot expect students to remember a word or use it appropriately upon first exposure. Students need multiple exposures to achieve deeper processing of words and build a strong vocabulary foundation. Effective teachers present one use or function of a vocabulary word at a time, but review it many times over. They let students see and hear new words repeatedly, preferably in a variety of ways. They enhance students’ understanding through repetition, demonstration, and drawing on multiple sources of meaning. They also engage students in creating examples and using the newly learned words for real-life purposes.

✓ **Providing a language-rich learning environment**

Students should be immersed in a language-rich environment that provides varied language experiences. Exposure to new words, oral and written, in a variety of contexts across the curriculum, provides an important base for word learning.

✓ **Teaching vocabulary learning strategies, including word parts (roots, prefixes, and suffixes)**

There is no way that students can learn all the words they need to know in their lifetime through instruction and memorization. They need to be cultivated into independent learners who are able to tackle an infinite number of new words on their own. It is therefore teachers’ responsibility to help students grasp word-learning strategies. For example, it can greatly help expand students’ vocabulary knowledge if they understand that many English words are formed with roots to which prefixes and suffixes are attached. It will also considerably benefit students if they are taught how to use dictionaries, and how to determine the meaning of unknown words in the textual context.

✓ **Developing word consciousness**

Helping students to develop an interest in and awareness of words should be an important part of vocabulary instruction. Teachers can start with guiding students to chunk the words with those they are frequently used, and advise students to go beyond the word to notice the phrase, clause, sentence, and even the paragraph in which the word is used to better understand the word. Students should be active in increasing their vocabulary and developing strategies for independent word learning. Other strategies teachers can use include (a) helping students recognize, understand, and use new words; (b) encouraging students to choose words they want to know about, manipulate words, and sort words; and (c) allowing plenty of opportunities for students to talk about words and negotiate meanings.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

In today's classrooms characterized by diversity, all teachers have to prepare their curriculum and instruction that include ELLs, keep ELLs on grade level while developing their English proficiency. Language-minority students generally have lower academic performance than their native-English-speaking peers, and the reasons are multi-faceted. The vocabulary unique to each subject matter poses an unneglectable challenge as ELLs read and write academic texts. Not to say ELLs, even English-native-speaking students need time and effort to acquire the highly specialized academic vocabulary. Moreover, ELL students' challenges with academic vocabulary typically become greater in middle and high schools that have more structured and complex curricula with a higher demand on academic language.

This article examines how teachers can help ELL students develop academic vocabulary. After reading this article, teacher candidates should more acknowledge the importance of teaching academic vocabulary to ELLs, and better understand why sheltered instruction is indispensable for the learning of vocabulary and what Chomsky and Krashen's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> language acquisition theories imply to teachers concerning vocabulary teaching. Before discussing the various vocabulary development strategies, the article also illustrates the categories and the characteristics of academic vocabulary. Learning vocabulary is a cumulative process, and vocabulary must be deliberately taught, learned, and recycled. Undoubtedly, we have many excellent teachers who are passionate, devoted, and conscientious. Nevertheless, well-intentioned as they are, if without the knowledge of how to teach ELLs, they very likely will feel challenged, frustrated, and even defeated when working with ELLs who are regularly placed in their classrooms. It is hoped that teacher candidates will walk away with some guiding principles pertaining to vocabulary instruction and find these principles helpful in their classrooms with ELLs.

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# Elementary School EFL Learning Experience: A Needs Analysis

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**Abstract**—Regular curriculum modifications and the shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered paradigm in educational institutions are meant to enhance the teaching-learning process and fulfill learners' needs as successfully as possible. This study aimed to examine learners' attitudes towards learning English, their needs/wants, learning preferences, strategies, and lesson topics. Moreover, it also investigated the differences in learning preferences based on grade level. The data were gathered from a survey administrated to 200 elementary school students in Central Bosnia and Herzegovina. The findings illustrated that the participants generally have a positive attitude towards learning English with more significant extrinsic reasons motivating them to learn it. Regarding students' needs, the analysis revealed that overall, students found writing the most challenging and speaking the most desirable language skill. Furthermore, the majority of the participants reported that they like to learn by reading texts or stories, finding the discussion in the classroom the most annoying classroom activity. While learning vocabulary by translating new words is regarded as the most beneficial method, doing written exercises at school presents the most significant way of acquiring grammar. Moreover, the study identified a significant influence of a grade level on the preferred ways of learning English.

**Index Terms**—need analysis, learners' attitudes, grade levels, learning strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although the intellectual perspective is considered valuable, language learning is still directed by psychological and social features, which rely mainly on learners' motivation and beliefs about learning the target language (Padwick, 2010). In other words, learners' capability to master a target language is not only manipulated by mental competence but also learners' beliefs about the language being learned (Abidin et al., 2012). Thus, interdisciplinary investigation argues that learner attitudes about learning are closely connected with self-concept, self-efficacy, personality, motivation, and levels of expectancy (Bernat, 2004).

The current study focuses on the investigation of learners' attitudes towards EFL learning and the analysis of their needs and preferences. Lawson (1979) describes needs as "something that is recognized but is not in any sense discovered, and its existence derives from whatever criteria are thought to be relevant in making the diagnoses" (p. 37). This implies that in an effort to identify needs, one would have to conduct some kind of evaluation of the current situation, and based on it plan further steps. Therefore, the purpose of a needs analysis (NA) is to plan the aims of a course (Vaghari & Shuib, 2013), develop a curriculum that will accommodate to the needs of a particular group of learners (Iwai et al., 1999). Berwick (1989) defines need as the gap between "what is," referring to the present stage of learners' knowledge and ability, and "what should be," alluding to the target situation criteria (p. 65). Hence, a NA helps in assessing the current situation but with the final aim of reaching the effective course outcomes (Mackey, 1987). In other words, it helps modify the existing course by inspecting and adjusting existing materials according to the needs of learners in a specific teaching condition, but also maximize their learning perspective (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). As such, it contributes to making the learning context more learner-centered, as learners' opinion is taken into account, which might change their overall attitude to the learning process (Fakeye, 2010).

When it comes to classification, needs are mostly classified based on the reason for learning the language. Accordingly, Alderson (1980) distinguished between four categories of needs. First, a formal need, that is the need to fulfill the institutions' requests, for example, passing the course. The second one is an actual need, i.e., what a learner is supposed to do with the language once he/she has acquired it. The next one is a hypothetical goal need, referring to a better career in the future, while the last type is the want. The first and the last are related to the immediate learning context, so they comprise a process-oriented category, whereas the other two belong to a 'future-oriented' category. According to Widdowson (1983), the future-oriented type has to do with program goals, while the process-oriented is related to pedagogic objectives. Supplementarily, Brindley (1989) pointed out two categories of needs, namely objective needs attainable from exact information about learners, the use of language in day-to-day interaction, present language competence, and its difficulties, and subjective needs referring to cognitive and physical needs, such as

personality, belief in oneself, attitude, wants as well as learning expectations. The author also reported that objective needs are more easily obtainable through data gathering such as interviews, tests, surveys, while on the contrary, identifying subjective needs is rather challenging for the sake of the "elusive nature of the variables" (p. 70).

Nevertheless, it is essential to keep in mind that needs are dynamic rather than unchangeable. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding that is likely to occur between learners' needs and school curriculum, it is recommended that curriculum designers analyze learners' needs periodically to determine if they are still the same (Jackson, 2005). Additionally, in order to adjust learning aims as new needs emerge, it is agreed that a NA should be conducted throughout the course. Thus, feedback from learners can be used as a starting point for modifying learning motives.

Even though learners' attitudes, beliefs, and needs are well explored worldwide, in our context they are rather underresearched, and no single study investigating learners' needs in terms of English learning has been conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). This research aims to shed some light on this issue investigating the stances of 200 elementary school students from Central B&H, with the focus on their attitude towards EFL learning, their needs, learning preferences and the differences among them based on grade levels.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bearing in mind that English nowadays enjoys the status of a global language, it is not surprising that worldwide students share positive attitude towards learning it (Dwaik & Shehadeh, 2010; Saheb, 2014). B&H is no exception in this respect (Ahmetović, Bećirović, & Dubravac, 2020; Dubravac & Latić, 2019; Laličić & Dubravac, 2021; Ribo & Dubravac, 2021; Brdarević-Čeljo, Ahmetović, & Bajić, 2021), Bosnian students being highly motivated to learn English so that they can easily communicate with English speaking friends, and get a better job in the forthcoming future. While their positive attitude seems to be evident, their needs and preferred ways of leaning English have not been extensively investigated in this learning context.

However, the majority of studies conducted in various EFL contexts have shown that learners while appreciating all language skills, give primacy to oral and aural skills (Ferris & Tagg, 1996 Ferris, 1998; Hyland, 1997). The least valuable and the easiest appears to be reading (Ogric-Kevric & Dubravac, 2017). Speaking is seen as a core language skill, but simultaneously one of the most demanding language skills (Brown, 2015) because it requires not only the knowledge of language but also the ability to discourse (Ogric-Kevric & Dubravac, 2017). Many studies have also suggested that students experience academic writing difficulties, markedly with respect to style, grammar, and cohesion (Abiri, 2013; Evans & Green, 2007). Listening stands out as one of the most neglected language skills (Tzotzou, 2014). Likewise, more pronunciation, vocabulary and spelling building activities should be constituted to please the learners' needs for further practice in related areas (Davies, 2006, cited in Tzotzou, 2014).

With respect to NA a particularly relevant is the analysis of learners' preferred ways of processing information, i.e., the use of language learning strategies. It has been indicated that appropriate learning strategies might contribute to a more effective and enjoyable learning experience (Oxford, 1990). Being aware of their learners' favorite strategies while learning the target language grammar and vocabulary, teachers can adjust their teaching methods and thus ease the learning process (Bećirović, 2017). Overall, it has been revealed that young learners use strategies in a task-specific manner, which are often simple, while older learners make use of generalized strategies, which are more complex and sophisticated (Brown, 1989). Brown and Carter (1986), for instance, perceived that 'rehearsal' for young learners comprised rote repetition, whereas for older learners, it included "active, systematic, and elaborative procedures" (p. 104).

While paying close attention to the balanced development of key language skills and the use of appropriate teaching methods, teachers should always be careful when choosing topics to be discussed within classrooms, as these should be age appropriate if we want learners to enjoy the activities. Generally, favorite topics selected by younger learners are "entertainment and leisure, interpersonal life and social network; and technology in daily life" (Hui-Chen Hsieh, 2016; p. 126); health, sport, and traveling (Tzotzou, 2014). Teachers usually rely on the textbooks, which might be a wrong idea taking into consideration that sometimes the same textbooks are used by a few generations, and do not always follow the current situation. Therefore, a NA might be useful in this respect as well, as it shows whether the topics covered really present those students are the most interested in.

Taking into account the aforementioned, a NA generally leads to a better coordination between teachers and learners in different aspects of the teaching-learning process. Although it is stated that harmony between learners' and teachers' goals considering task assignment and performance must be supported (Block, 1996), they differ greatly from one another (Barkhuizen, 1998). Thus, a NA would offer useful data as to how much students' needs are satisfied within language classrooms.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Questions

This study will illustrate the attitudes, needs and learning preferences among Bosnian EFL elementary school students. It attempts to answer four main questions as follows:

1. What are elementary school learners' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language?



2. What are elementary school learners' language needs/wants?
3. What are learners' preferences concerning ways of learning, learning strategies, and topics?
4. Is there any significant difference in the participants' learning preferences based on different grade levels?

#### B. Participants

The research sample comprised 200 randomly selected participants attending elementary school. A stratified random sampling approach was utilized, and participants were chosen from different grade levels. Thus, there were 15 (7.5 %) fifth grade students, 66 (33 %) sixth grade students, 45 (22.5%) seventh grade students, 43 (21.5%) eighth grade students and 31 (15.5%) ninth grade students. There were 109 (54.5%) female and 91 (45.5%) male students. The age of selected participants ranged from 10 to 15.

#### C. Instruments and Procedures

After obtaining permission from the schools' administration and participants themselves, the instrument was administered to the elementary school students. The participants were informed that their answers would be anonymous, trusted, and voluntary, and they were provided with suitable clarification whenever necessary. To complete the items presented in the survey, the participants were kindly asked to read the statements carefully and to select the preferred answer (yes/no/no response), which indicated their beliefs about the given statements. Approximately 20 minutes were needed in order to complete the questionnaire.

Three parts were covered in the survey. The first part of the questionnaire constituted background questions such as gender, age, grade, the average grade in the English language, learning English outside class, and so forth. The next three parts presented the instrument designed and authorized by Brindley (1989), investigating learners' attitudes towards English language learning, their needs/ wants (favorite skills, difficulties, need for further practice), and learning preferences generally with respect to favorite learning activities, preferred ways of learning grammar and vocabulary as well as favorite topics discussed during English classes. In all the parts the participants could opt for one of the possible answers: yes, no, and no answer.

#### D. Data Analysis

In order to examine the data, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 was employed. To analyze learners' attitudes towards learning English, their needs, and their preferences regarding the ways of learning, strategies, and topics, frequency statistics were performed. Moreover, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to determine whether there is a significant difference in learning preferences based on the variable of different grade levels.

### IV. RESULTS

With reference to the learners' attitudes towards English language learning, that is the reason for learning English (see Table 1), it is rather surprising that almost all of them (179/200) are learning English to find a better job when they leave school since they are relatively young to stress this future matter. Also, the majority of them show great interest in communication with foreign people or tourists (176/200), followed by the importance of the English language (170/200) and traveling to other countries (169/200). Moreover, a good number of the participants (131/200) enjoy learning English. It is interesting that only a small number of them (38/200) reported that they do not know the reason for learning English.

TABLE 1  
LEARNERS ATTITUDE TOWARDS LANGUAGE LEARNING

Why are you learning English?	Frequency					
	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
So I can travel to other countries	169	84.5	25	12.5	6	3.0
So I can learn about England	109	54.5	80	40.0	11	5.5
So I can understand English songs	140	70.0	44	22.0	16	8.0
So I can understand English films	146	73.0	43	21.5	11	5.5
So I can understand English	135	73.0	38	21.5	27	5.5
So I can understand books/magazines/newspaper	130	65.0	59	29.5	11	5.5
So I can speak to foreign people/tourists	176	88.0	19	9.5	5	2.5
So I can use the internet better	142	71.0	46	23.0	12	6.0
So I can pass English exams	128	64.0	53	26.5	19	9.5
So I can find a job when I leave school	179	89.5	14	7.0	7	3.5
Because English is an important world language	170	85.0	21	10.5	9	4.5
Because I enjoy learning English	131	65.5	44	22.0	25	12.5
Because my parents want me to learn	70	35.0	111	55.5	19	9.5
I don't know why I am learning	38	19.0	135	67.5	27	13.5

As shown in Table 2, the participants' least favorite language skills are writing (134/200), followed by reading (150/200), while they enjoy learning to speak (180/200) and to listen (180/200) in English.

TABLE 2  
FAVORITE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Do you like	Frequency					
	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading?	150	75.0	30	15.0	20	10.0
Speaking?	180	90.0	11	5.5	09	4.5
Writing?	134	67.0	47	23.5	19	9.5
Listening?	180	90.0	14	7.0	6	3.0

Table 3 reveals that learners would like to practice speaking (168/200), pronunciation (168/200), and spelling (156/200) the most. On the other hand, they show the least interest in practicing writing (134/200) and listening (134/200).

TABLE 3  
NEED FOR FURTHER PRACTICE

I would like to practice more in:	Frequency					
	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading	138	69.0	48	24.0	14	7.0
Speaking	168	84.0	23	11.5	09	4.5
Writing	134	67.0	53	26.5	13	6.5
Listening	134	67.0	48	24.0	18	9.0
Vocabulary	136	68.0	41	20.5	23	11.5
Grammar	144	72.0	40	20.0	16	8.0
Spelling	156	78.0	34	17.0	10	5.0
Pronunciation	168	84.0	25	12.5	7	3.5

Considering learning preferences, including the ways of learning (Table 4), the overwhelming majority of the participants (172/200) like to learn by reading texts or stories; what is more, they revealed that discussions in the classroom are their least favorite way of learning (93/200). Other popular ways of learning are: doing oral exercise/practice (159/200); using the internet (157/200); doing homework (153/200), doing written exercises/practice (151/200). Concerning models of work, the participants would rather work in groups (142/200) than in pairs (133/200), as a whole class (133/200) or alone (117/200). Interestingly, more than 50% of the participants answered that they like to learn by studying grammar rules (133/200), while many (98/200) do not actually like listening to the CDs.

TABLE 4  
WAYS OF LEARNING

How do you like to learn?	Frequency					
	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Studying grammar rules	133	66.5	46	23.0	21	10.5
Doing written exercises/practice	151	75.5	37	18.5	12	6.0
Writing short passages	99	49.5	78	39.0	23	11.5
Reading texts/stories	172	86.0	22	11.0	6	3.0
Listening to CDs	98	49.0	88	44.0	14	7.0
Watching videos	149	74.5	41	20.5	10	5.0
Doing oral exercises/practice	159	79.5	29	14.5	12	6.0
Discussing in the classroom	93	46.5	77	38.5	30	15.0
Doing projects	132	66.0	58	29.0	10	5.0
Doing homework	153	76.5	37	18.5	10	5.0
Reading aloud in class	127	63.5	61	30.5	12	6.0
Working alone	117	58.5	70	35.0	13	6.5
Working in pairs	133	66.5	55	27.5	12	6.0
Working in groups	142	71.0	47	23.5	11	5.5
Working as a whole class	133	66.5	56	28.0	11	5.5
Using computers	136	68.0	52	26.0	12	6.0
Using the internet	157	78.5	33	16.5	10	5.0
Playing games	108	54.0	80	40.0	12	6.0

As far as learning strategies are accountable, the majority learn vocabulary by translating new words (174/200) and by hearing new words (173/200). It seems that the least favorite way of vocabulary learning is by copying new words (81/200) (Fig. 1)

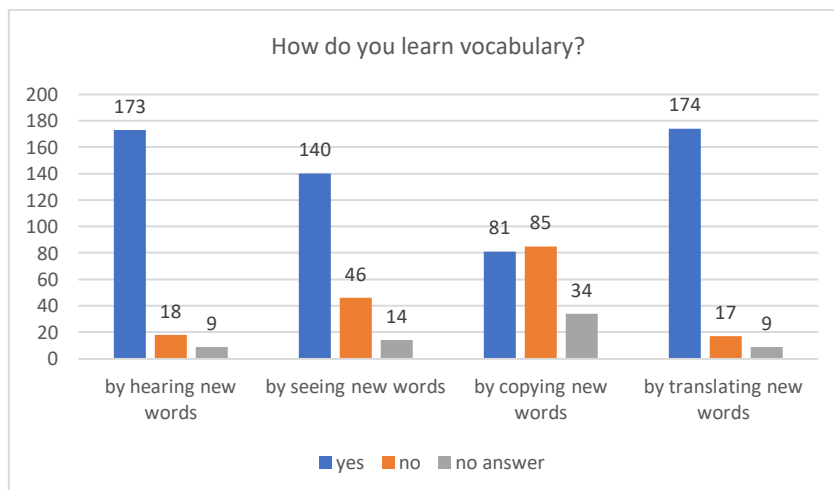


Figure 1. Learning Strategies-Vocabulary Learning

As can be seen in Fig. 2, the participants prefer learning grammar by doing written exercises at school (160/200), followed by oral practice in class (149/200). The next most favorite method is studying grammar rules (143/200), whereas they are the least interested in learning doing written exercise at home (118/200).

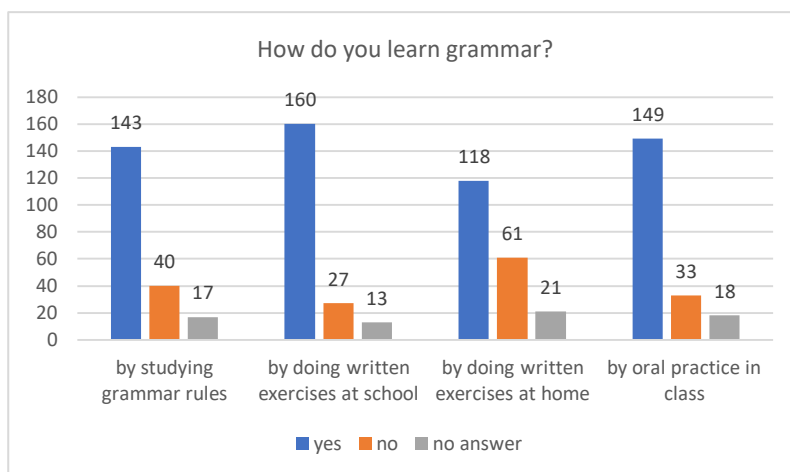


Figure 2. Learning Strategies- Grammar Learning

As illustrated in Table 5, the participants' most favorite topic is traveling (174/200), followed by family/friends/people/relationships (168/200), free time/hobbies (168/200), sports (166), other topics that are not mentioned (163/200), entertainment (156/200). However, the least attention is paid to topics such as advertising/shopping (90/200), geography (103/200) and festivals /celebrations (119/200).

TABLE 5  
FAVORITE TOPICS

What are your favorite topics?	Frequency					
	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Culture / Habits	117	58.5	70	35.0	13	6.5
Geography	103	51.5	84	42.0	13	6.5
Advertising / Shopping	90	45.0	97	48.5	13	6.5
Food / Diet / Cooking	127	63.5	61	30.5	12	6.0
Technology	137	68.5	54	27.0	9	4.5
Environment/Nature	151	75.5	40	20.0	9	4.5
Music	148	74.0	35	17.5	17	8.5
Family/Friends/People/Relationships	168	84.0	25	12.5	7	3.5
Free time/ Hobbies	168	84.0	23	11.5	9	4.5
Traveling	174	87.0	20	10.0	6	3.0
Jobs	125	62.5	61	30.5	14	7.0
Health	152	76.0	40	20.0	8	4.0
Famous people / Celebrities	132	66.0	54	27.0	14	7.0
Drama/Cinema	105	52.5	82	41.0	13	6.5
Entertainment	156	78.0	36	18.0	8	4.0
Internet	149	74.5	43	21.5	8	4.0
Literature/Stories	118	59.0	72	36.0	10	5.0
Sports	166	83.0	29	14.5	5	2.5
Art/Painting	111	55.5	75	37.5	14	7.0
Science	122	61.0	68	34.0	10	5.0
Festivals / Celebrations	119	59.5	63	31.5	18	9.0
Other topics you like?	163	81.5	28	14.0	9	4.5

Furthermore, the differences in favorite topics based on grade level, including grades from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were analyzed (Table 6). The outcomes revealed that the most favorite topic in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade is music (14/15), followed by traveling, entertainment, and sports, all of which were rated the same (13/15). However, the slightest interest they showed for learning about drama/cinema (5/15). In grade 6<sup>th</sup> the most significant attention is paid to topics related to family/friends/people/relationship (60/66), next was travelling (59/66), followed by sports and free time/hobbies (54/66). In contrast, the least attention is paid to advertising/shopping (27/66). The situation is not much different in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade as travelling (40/45), free time/hobbies (38/45), sports (38/45) come to the fore; however, they do not enjoy learning about culture/habits (22/43). When it comes to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the participants gave priority to topics associated with internet/ family/friends/people/relationship and travelling (37/43), whereas the most useless they found advertising/shopping (16/43). In grade 9 the most preferable topic was free time/hobbies (29/31), next were entertainment, Internet (27/31), while festival/celebrities and geography (16/31) were the least favorite.

TABLE 6  
FAVORITE TOPICS BASED ON GRADE LEVELS

What are your favorite topics?	Frequency														
	5 <sup>th</sup>			6 <sup>th</sup>			7 <sup>th</sup>			8 <sup>th</sup>			9 <sup>th</sup>		
	Yes	No	No Ans.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Yes	No	No Ans.
Culture / Habits	11	4	0	38	23	5	22	21	2	26	14	3	20	8	3
Geography	6	8	1	36	26	4	25	17	3	20	21	2	16	12	3
Advertising / Shopping	9	6	0	27	33	6	18	24	3	16	24	3	20	10	1
Food / Diet / Cooking	11	4	0	44	16	6	23	20	2	26	15	2	23	6	2
Technology	10	5	0	48	15	3	27	16	2	34	7	2	18	11	2
Environment/Nature	11	4	0	53	9	4	34	9	2	31	10	2	22	8	1
Music	14	0	1	46	10	10	31	12	2	34	7	2	23	6	2
Family/Friends/People/Relationships	12	2	1	60	4	2	34	10	1	37	5	1	25	4	2
Free time/ Hobbies	12	2	1	54	7	5	38	6	1	35	7	1	29	1	1
Traveling	13	2	0	59	5	2	40	3	2	37	4	2	25	6	0
Jobs	11	3	1	37	21	8	26	17	2	33	9	1	18	11	2
Health	11	3	1	53	10	3	33	10	2	34	8	1	21	9	1
Famous people / Celebrities	8	7	0	43	17	6	28	14	3	33	7	3	20	9	2
Drama/Cinema	5	9	1	38	23	5	26	18	1	19	20	4	17	12	2
Entertainment	13	2	0	51	11	4	34	9	2	31	10	2	27	4	0
Internet	12	3	0	42	22	2	31	10	4	37	5	1	27	3	1
Literature/Stories	9	5	1	44	17	5	25	18	2	22	20	1	18	12	1
Sports	13	2	0	54	10	2	38	5	2	36	6	1	25	6	0
Art/Painting	7	7	1	43	19	4	24	17	4	19	20	4	18	12	1
Science	8	7	0	44	19	3	27	16	2	24	15	4	19	11	1
Festivals / Celebrations	6	8	1	42	18	6	30	12	3	25	13	5	16	12	3
Other topics you like?	13	2	0	55	7	4	37	6	2	34	7	2	24	6	1

A Chi-Square test was conducted to find out the significant differences in the ways of learning based on grade level, the independent variable grade level including five groups (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>) and the mixed dependent variables of preference of ways of learning comprising all the aforementioned ways of learning. The chi-square test outcomes revealed that the grade level had a significant influence on a few variables. The analysis of variance on each dependent variable indicated that the grade level had a significant influence on learning by studying grammar rules ( $p = .020$ ), doing homework ( $p = .004$ ); by using computers ( $p = .003$ ), and playing games ( $p = .003$ ), while on the other variables there was no significant difference.

TABLE 7  
DIFFERENCES IN THE WAYS OF LEARNING BASED ON GRADE LEVELS

How do you like to learn?	5 <sup>th</sup>		6 <sup>th</sup>		7 <sup>th</sup>		8 <sup>th</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>						X <sup>2</sup>	p	Effect size	
	Yes	No	No An s.	Yes	No	No an s.	Ye s	No	No an s.	Ye s	No	No an s.	Y es	No	No ans.			
Studying grammar rules	10	3	2	51	9	6	35	9	1	21	16	6	16	9	6	18.06	.020	.300
Doing written exercises/practice	12	2	1	57	7	2	36	7	2	26	12	5	20	9	2	12.98	.112	.255
Writing short passages	9	5	1	32	26	8	23	18	4	18	18	7	17	11	3	2.92	.939	.121
Reading texts/stories	13	2	0	59	6	1	38	5	2	34	7	2	28	2	1	4.02	.855	.142
Listening to CDs	7	8	0	34	27	5	20	22	3	20	19	4	17	12	2	2.87	.942	.120
Watching videos	11	4	0	45	19	2	35	8	2	32	7	4	26	3	2	8.60	.377	.207
Doing oral exercises/practice	13	2	0	56	5	5	32	10	3	34	6	3	24	6	1	6.98	.538	.187
Discussing in the classroom	9	5	1	29	25	12	20	22	3	20	15	8	15	10	6	6.56	.584	.181
Doing projects	10	5	0	41	21	4	34	9	2	25	15	3	22	8	1	4.91	.767	.157
Doing homework	11	4	0	59	5	2	36	5	4	31	10	2	16	13	2	22.76	.004	.337
Reading aloud in class	10	4	1	40	22	4	32	11	2	24	17	2	21	7	3	4.61	.799	.152
Working alone	9	5	1	45	17	4	29	14	2	17	22	4	17	12	2	10.03	.263	.224
Working in pairs	10	4	1	43	20	3	30	14	1	31	9	3	19	8	4	5.31	.725	.163
Working in groups	9	5	1	50	14	2	30	13	2	35	6	2	18	9	4	9.37	.312	.216
Working as a whole class	8	7	0	43	20	3	30	12	3	32	8	3	20	9	2	5.49	.704	.166
Using computers	6	9	0	38	19	9	33	10	2	34	8	1	25	6	0	23.34	.003	.342
Using the internet	12	3	0	43	16	7	36	7	2	37	5	1	29	2	0	14.86	.062	.273
Playing games	9	6	0	25	34	7	20	22	3	33	8	2	21	10	0	22.96	.003	.339

## V. DISCUSSION

With respect to the learners' attitudes towards English learning, the frequency statistics results revealed differences in the reasons for learning English, with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 1998) being present. Despite being young, learning English to find a better job when they leave school was the most common answer, meaning that they are mainly extrinsically motivated. These findings on behalf of peers are in line with the study conducted by Ahmetović, Bećirović, and Dubravac (2020), whose results also discovered that learners in Central Bosnia were mostly extrinsically motivated to learn English. Although students experience extrinsic motivation, the fact that they enjoy learning English is also evident since a good number of the participants find English enjoyable, which might be an indicator of their intrinsic motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Such positive attitudes towards learning English might be supported by previously done research in this context (Ahmetović, Bećirović, & Dubravac, 2020; Bećirović, 2017; Dubravac & Latić, 2019), but this also seems to be the characteristic of EFL learners worldwide (Dwaik & Shehadeh, 2010; Saheb, 2014). In general, extrinsic motivation (e.g., learning to pass an exam, to find a better job) may hinder learning (Lightbow & Spada, 1993) in the long run, and that is why it should be minimized by enhancing learners' intrinsic motivation. Additionally, as intrinsic motivation is of great importance for learning (Dörnyei, 1998) and benefits learners in both the short and long term, teachers should attempt to stimulate it by reviewing the present curriculum and materials used in the EFL classroom, as meeting learners' needs might be a key to their enjoyment in the classes, which directly leads to intrinsic motivation development.

When it comes to language skills, the findings showed that the learners want to practice writing the least and it is not their preferable skill, so they encounter the most difficulties in writing. This study is in line with the study by Ogric-Kevric and Dubravac (2017), who also found that learners in this learning EFL context, at least in public school, addressed writing along with speaking as the most challenging skill. Such results are somehow expected since writing is generally found to be one of the most troublesome skills (Abiri, 2013; Evans & Green, 2007), and even if learners have remarkable progress in the English learning process, on the whole, writing skills still will be the weakest area in

learning. Showing less interest in reading might be due to the fact that these two skills are interrelated; thus, learners who are deficient in reading also illustrate weak writing abilities and vice-versa (Loban, 1963). Thus, the writing position should be thoroughly investigated and carefully evaluated to make the needed adjustments or enhancements which will balance any weaknesses in writing and sooner or later help learners overcome their challenges as successfully as possible.

On the other hand, they found pleasure in doing speaking and listening activities, though they are not interested in practicing listening as in speaking. The finding might be related to the fact that the majority of language learners want to master speaking skills as quickly as possible, since nowadays "someone's fluency in speaking measures his/her proficiency in that language" (Martin, 2011, p. 237). These findings are in line with a vast number of studies that found that aural and oral skills are learner's priorities (e.g., Ferris & Tagg, 1996; Ferris, 1998; Hyland, 1997). However, although learners prefer one skill over the other to make a balance between them is essential if one wants to succeed in learning. Consequently, learners should be taught all language skills, but the ones they have difficulties with should be at the fore.

When it comes to learning preferences, it is interesting to mention that they like to learn by reading texts or stories, doing oral exercises/practice, using the internet, doing homework, doing written exercises/practice. Noteworthy is that learners reported that their least preferred way is learning by discussion in the classroom, which is somehow surprising since discussion, as one of the active ways of learning, leads to better long-term learning outcomes (Freeman et al., 2014). In spite of not being introverts, students might still find it difficult to deal with learners' social anxiety over the thought of having to communicate in front of the class. Considering models of work, teachers should verify whether the classroom material encourages collaborative learning because the majority of the participants appreciate working in groups or as a whole class.

With respect to the preferred use of vocabulary learning strategies, it is found that the majority of the participants learn by translating new words. Regardless of having different rules in language teaching, most teachers agree that translation is a dominant tool to help learners comprehend foreign words and convey ideas in the target language (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1994). Tankosić and Dubravac (2016) also showed that translation tasks are very common test tasks in this EFL learning context. Although there is no harm in using translation strategies, it is regarded as a poor learning strategy in the value of the communicative language method when the most efficient way for learners is to think in the target language (Husain, 1995). The fact that the participants preferred this way of learning might not be surprising at all, as they are very young and not proficient in the target language. On the other hand, while learning grammar, they prefer doing written exercises at school over the other strategies. In this case, teachers help learners fill voids in their structural use of foreign language grammar, whereas this is not possible while doing grammar exercises at home. However, over time they are expected to become more independent language learners.

As far as their favorite topics are concerned, the frequency analysis showed that their favorite topics are traveling, family/friends/people/relationships, free time/hobbies, sports. In general, the preferable topic is traveling, yet when all learners' books (from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade) are considered none of them offer this topic, though in most of the books, topics related with places and cultures are offered. The next topic linked to the relationship with family/friends/people is mentioned in all the books, whereas free time/hobbies and sports are learned mostly by older peers in the grade 8 and 9. Interestingly, the least attention is paid to topics such as advertising/shopping; geography, and festivals /celebrations, that are also not or are scarcely specified in some of books. Although books provide students with many different topics, still their needs are quite different. For example, in the 5<sup>th</sup>-grade music is the most favorite topic though it is mentioned only indirectly through listening to songs. Their other favorite topics (travelling, entertainment, sports) are not or are rarely discussed in the book *Dip in 5* (Kavazović, Vasić & Mardešić, 2008) they follow. The situation is neither different in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade as their favorite topic is traveling, which is not discussed in the book *Dip in 6* (Vasić, Kazazović, Ban, & Blažić, 2009) nor in *Way to go 7* (Vasić & Breka, 2010). The students' needs are not fulfilled even in higher grades; thus, in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, sport and traveling as favorite topics are not considered in the book *Way to go 8* (Vasić, Breka & Mardešić, 2011) though the situation is a bit different in the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade, where the topics of sport and free time as preferred ones are debated in the students' book *Challenges* (Harris, Mower, Sikorzynska & Mešić, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Generally, teachers should pay more attention to the chosen material, particularly in lower grades, since their books are more than a decade old. That being the case, it is not surprising that their needs are not matched with the books they follow. In order to engage learners physically, intellectually, socially, and enthusiastically in learning English (Vincent, 1984), teachers must enhance the cross-thematic component of the curriculum while taking into account their favorite topics.

To answer the last research question, we investigated the influence of grade levels on the differences in learning preference. The results highlighted that a grade level has a significant influence on several variables, namely learning by studying grammar rules, by doing homework, by using computers, and by playing games, whereas other ways of learning do not have significant influence. Generally, higher grade students show significantly higher scores in their preference for learning by grammar rules and doing homework, whereas learning by using a computer and playing games was significantly greater in the lower grades. The obtained results might be due to the fact that older learners,

<sup>1</sup> The aforementioned textbooks are those which our participants follow in their schools. It does not necessarily mean that they are used in other schools in the country.

being aware of English importance itself, see studying as a serious matter because they prefer studying grammar and doing homework, rather than learning it by playing games or using computers, which is the case with younger learners. These findings are in accordance with the statement that the preference in learning style transforms with experience and age (Kolb & Kolb, 2013).

## VI. CONCLUSION

The examination of the participants' responses recorded that extrinsic motivation for learning English is the greatest, but that they do not lack intrinsic motivation either. Led by present results, teachers can put into practice various strategies with the aim of motivating learners in an attempt to increase results in EFL learning significantly. Trying to achieve this, teachers should find appropriate measures to provoke learners' curiosity and foster learners' interest in learning English.

In order to facilitate learning in general, on the one hand, teachers should accommodate their teaching process and incorporate in curriculum learning activities that are most appropriate for their learners' learning preferences, and on the other, being aware of the importance of some not so preferred ways of learning, they should make them more attractive to their learners. Thus, while promoting group and pair work, teachers should help learners see the benefits of discussion, writing activities, varied strategies used for grammar and vocabulary acquisition. Using a combination of methods has to be put into practice in order to make learning achievable; thus, employing a diverse set of activities and materials which will suit distinctive learning preferences will be of great importance.

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# Qualities of Effective EFL Teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Reflection From Ecuador

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**Abstract**—English Language Teachers (ELTs), to be effective in the teaching and learning process in contemporary society, need to be not only competent with qualities of instructional skills but also with qualities of personal traits. This paper aims to offer ELTs reflection around the most vital qualities of personal traits, which are required to contribute to the design of more effective EFL teaching and learning milieus. To that end, and supported by a pilot study carried out to construct a master's degree program in Teaching Local and Foreign Languages in an Ecuadorian Public University, we gathered, in four major categories, the scattered and unclassified qualities of personal traits which are available in the related literature. In this framework, the qualities of personal traits that ELTs must possess are bound with virtues such as perpetual learning, humanism, instructional-personal communication, and cross-culturalism. In general, this article may be helpful for ELTs to visualize the qualities of personal traits, which are needed to face the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education of the 21st century.

**Index Terms**—Qualities of Personal Traits, Qualities of Instructional Skills, ELTs (English Language Teachers)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nobody casts doubt on the importance of learning English in our contemporary society. After all, this language establishes communication with other people whose native language is not English. In this connection, English language teachers have a tremendous responsibility because, through their expertise, language apprentices consolidate multicultural and linguistic abilities, which permit them to access the acquisition of new knowledge, and consequently to better job opportunities.

This responsibility becomes more complex due to the international standards orienting the English language teaching. In fact, UNESCO (2003) has declared learning a foreign language as a linguistic right of human beings. To that is added the regulations launched by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which stipulates the English level to be achieved, especially by those having an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) background.

The duty of English language teachers (ELTs) is, without a doubt, colossal because solely through an effective teaching and learning process, the success or failure of students in their academic achievement is determined. Under this light, ELTs are to display a wealth of qualities that facilitate the acquisition of effective learning. Ultimately, the academic performance of language learners revolves around ELTs' qualities. According to Alzobiani (2020), ELTs' qualities are divided into instructional skills (academic profile) and personal traits (virtues inherent to the profession).

Seen in this light, the governments, through various knowledge devices such as UNESCO, CEFR, in conjunction with public education policies and the local ministries which regulate elementary, secondary, and university education, are in charge of standardizing the qualities of instructional skills that ELTs are to attain (Alrefae and Al-Ghamid, 2019). These qualities serve ELTs to insert themselves in the labor world. In the Ecuadorian context, the qualities of instructional skills deal with an intermediate proficiency B2 and an EFL or ESL bachelor's degree.

Unfortunately, the qualities of instructional skills, stated by the Governments and knowledge devices, seem to be superficial to what really assures an effective teaching and learning process. In fact, much of the teaching and learning effectiveness is intertwined with ELTs' qualities of personal traits, as they motivate and inspire students to learn (Alzebaree & Hasan, 2020), but aside from the qualities of instructional skills solicited by the aforementioned knowledge devices, what are the specific qualities of personal traits that ELTs should empower themselves with?

Research on effective EFL teachers discloses numerous qualities of personal traits which foster students' language learning success. These qualities encompass communication skills linked to socio-affective skills such as patience,

friendliness, enthusiasm, interest in their career, interest in their students, sense of humor, confidence, cooperation, motivation, caring, flexibility, understanding, among others (Abu-Rahmah, 2008; Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi & Al-Maamari, 2015; Al-Maqtri & Thabet, 2013; Baytur & Razi, 2015; Chen & Lin, 2009; Febriyanti, 2018; Gao & Liu, 2013; Khodabakhshzadeh & Shirvan, 2011; Lee, 2010; Malikow, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Salahshour & Hajizadeh, 2013; Slate, 2009; Taqi, Al-Darwish, Akbar & Al-Gharabali, 2015; Wichadee, 2010).

As observed above, ELTs do not have to be only competent in qualities encompassing the instructional skill but also in qualities of personal traits to guarantee, this way, an effective teaching and learning process. It is true that there are abundant qualities of personal traits in the scientific literature. Nonetheless, these qualities are scattered and unclassified. Therefore, it is confusing to determine which of them are the most pertinent to respond to the challenges that Ecuadorian ELTs face in the 21st century.

In view of the above, and motivated by a feasibility study executed for the creation of a master's degree program in Teaching Local and Foreign Languages in a Public University located in the highlands of Ecuador, we have decided to synthesize, in 4 major categories, the scattered and unclassified qualities of personal traits of the related literature. We pretend, with this synthesis, to offer ELTs reflection around the most vital qualities of personal traits, which are required to contribute to the design of more effective EFL teaching and learning milieus.

To make the analysis useful to teacher educators, we have divided the reflection into the following sections. The first part is about a reflection on ELTs as eternal learners. The second part is oriented to discuss the role of ELTs from a humanitarian approach. The third deals with exploring the profile of highly qualified ELTs. Finally, a meditation about ELTs as effective cross-cultural mediators is conducted.

## II. ELTS AS ETERNAL LEARNERS

The changes that education has gone through in this century are meaningful and, at the same time, convoluted, meaningful in the sense that technological advancements have permitted educational institutions to tailor pedagogy to suit student needs. In the 21st century, there are no longer educationalists presenting information for students to repeat it. On the contrary, educators are just mediators in the teaching and learning process.

The role of mediators is then partly centered on using technological advancements. Now, educators cannot narrow down the teaching contents to what can be solely located in the onsite modality. Conversely, they are expected to utilize alternative online tools such as virtual platforms in order to strengthen the students' cognitive capacities. It is then to foster the critical academic spirit of apprentices by means of a well-balanced switch between the onsite and the online modality.

However, exogenous factors have modified the significance of education to such an extent that the role of mediators is also convoluted, at least from the online one-sidedness. The pandemic COVID-19 has obligated the whole academic community to adopt the online modality as a unique means of epistemological reflection. Against this background, instructors at all levels have encountered students' demotivation due either to their precarious economic conditions or teaching inexperience towards the 100% online modality.

Although training programs on ICT use have indeed been executed before the complete adoption of the online modality, this has not guaranteed the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. And it is that the online modality is never going to overlap the onsite one because face-to-face human interaction is irreplaceable and essentially vital for learning to occur. (Kuhl, Tsao, Liu, 2003).

In this context, ELTs have been genuinely creative in order for the teaching and learning process to go on. Some instructors, actually, have accommodated their teaching methods to what is available in educational institutions. In other words, educators, in the absence of technological facilities such as students' computers with an internet connection or a lack of virtual spaces like ZOOM or MICROSOFT TEAMS, have implemented the use of smartphones with the collaboration of parents, or even onsite visits to students with no internet connection (COMERCIO, 2020).

It is evident that ELTs have found ways for not neglecting the academic wellness of their students. ELTs' preoccupation with finding new paths for efficacious instruction just makes us think that the qualities of personal traits do not have to be taken lightly. To put it differently, ELTs, with advanced instructional skills, but without the socio-affective or the non-academic in nature, are simply instructors incapable of inspiring and motivating students to acquire the target language.

Under this light, ELTs are to be eternal learners. Their passion for learning cannot be static; otherwise, they are doomed to failure. Their learning has to be meaningful in order to impact their students' attention. Capturing the attention of students does not only involve, as ELT, demonstrating advanced instructional skills but to figure out, through empathy, confidence, understanding, etc., the reality of students, which, in the majority of cases, is ignored.

Certainly, the qualities of personal traits comprise human characteristics that are appended to ELTs' professional role. Characteristics, which by the way, can be fostered and reinforced through professional development programs, as well as a personal search. Therefore, ELTs' role as eternal learners is an ongoing pursuit of what makes the teaching ability meaningful towards students' learning, that is, the personal traits.

Wang, Gibson & Slate (2007) classify personal traits into interpersonal traits and intrapersonal traits. On the one hand, interpersonal refers to reading the intentions and wishes of others, even if they are hidden. On the other hand, the

intrapersonal alludes to self-knowledge and all related processes, such as self-confidence and self-motivation. Overall, the combination of both gives rise to emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence covers several no measurable qualities such as confidence, self-esteem, self-control, empathy, enthusiasm, etc. The list was indeed included in the introduction section regarding the qualities of personal traits. As ELTs, sometimes, we are only concerned with the measurable; however, we have forgotten that it is interconnected to the emotional base. And it is that we remember more when something or someone thrills us (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

In this vein, ELTs should develop a new empowered vision about language education, an educational vision involving emotional learning through EFL. ELTs, hence, must never cease to be eternal learners, especially in terms of the qualities of personal traits, as in them, emotional intelligence dwells. ELTs with awareness of emotional intelligence can be the perfect mediators of knowledge, mediators who engage students to seek further learning.

ELTs committed to perpetual learning with qualities of personal traits will be, therefore, practitioners capable of modifying learners' negative attitudes that affect the success of EFL acquisition. ELTs with qualities of personal traits will be the ones that provide extra learning opportunities for students to debug anxiety, low self-esteem, or lack of motivation. In short, ELTs with qualities of personal traits are the ones who teach students how to cope with difficult situations and negative emotions for them to use the target language beyond the classroom.

### III. ELTs FROM A HUMANITARIAN APPROACH

Humanism is an intellectual movement that was developed during the XV and XVI centuries. Humanism aims to exalt in its totality the qualities of human nature by placing the human being as the core thereof. The concept of humanism is somewhat polysomic. However, this polysemy targets the aim mentioned above; that is, the human being is in the center of all reflections either from a theistic or atheistic sense.

Although the concepts around humanism might give the impression that this movement is narcissistic, as it places exclusively human beings in the center of the debate, thus excluding nature, this is not like so because humanism elevates the integration of individuals' human values to the extent of turning individuals into protectors of the environment and its components. True humanism then seeks to produce renaissance in individuals for them to be guardians of life and liberty.

The constant reflection in the social sciences has also brought with it a new intellectual movement called anti-humanism. Such movement is a newfangled trend which is gaining terrain in academics. This movement holds Jewish bases; in turn, it pretends to add a nuance of strength to the ontology and epistemology of the western world. In fact, from the educational-ethical viewpoint, anti-humanism intends to educate individuals from the otherness.

In being a fragment of anti-humanism, the otherness aims to deconstruct anthropocentrism, that is, the sense that considers the human being as the center of all things and the absolute end of creation. Moreover, the otherness takes into account the point of view, the conception of the world, the interests, and the ideology of the other by not taking unilateralism for granted.

The intentions of otherness, in theory, are captivating, as they are more oriented to achieve a facultative acceptance rather than a prescriptive recognition like in humanism. With a facultative acceptance, we mean that the acceptance is not linked to the law but the human condition and love; it is to accept others for the simple reason that they are humans. In contrast, prescriptive recognition refers to recognize others by law, although our sense of good and evil does not allow it.

The power conflict is evident in both humanism and anti-humanism. In both movements, knowledge devices are required to embrace acceptance or recognition so that there is no acceptance or recognition without the other. In this regard, a preoccupying question arises here, if we talk about acceptance or recognition of others, this entails ontology and epistemology, what is the dividing line for not accepting or recognizing fake realities and knowledges?

If the response is the logic, then it is going to exclude the absurd and nonsensical. Approaching the logic towards humanism or anti-humanism implies that in both cases, segregation must exist. Maybe another troubling question appears here, is the logic absolute? That is, are the laws of logic ubiquitous norms present in all cultures? Evidence gathered in distinct cultures shows that the laws of logic are universal (Leech, 2015; Naranjo & Naranjo, 2019).

If the laws of logic are universal, then not everything is recognizable in humanism nor acceptable in anti-humanism. In other words, the logic must be approached to the legality system of humanism, not separated. In the case of anti-humanism, the logic must be present in the facultative acceptance of others; otherwise, any incongruity can be accepted as ontology or epistemology under the excuse of interdependent acceptance.

Drawbacks can be easily located in both movements. However, in anti-humanism, it is possible to visualize concerns which are not answered logically. Such concerns are, for instance, the fact that humanism was always wrong, the fusion between materialism and idealism, or the fact that the individual was always a pre-wired collectivist and not autonomous with free will. The pillars of anti-humanism are weak and need undeniably more exploration to determine its veracity.

The analysis conducted above is worthwhile to understand that humanism is still relevant in the context of the 21st century. Humanism, far from being a pessimistic movement as posited by the anti-humanism, is an invitation to optimism and hope where the individual, in being an end, is the builder of his/her destiny and promoter of his/her own

history with responsible attitudes towards himself/herself and towards others, that is, the individual is fully responsible for his/her existence.

Along these lines, humanism ought to be the space where educators and stakeholders develop a more complete vision of themselves and their world, to be so the only ones responsible for educational quality. In the EFL field, ELTs have to be the substrate of realizable values, such as reason, freedom, empathy, the capacity for action, enthusiasm, cooperation, etc. ELTs should be then autonomous but not individualistic; in turn, this autonomy should be projected in their learners.

Individualism is a confusing word because it can be associated with autonomy; however, both words are different. On the one hand, individualism is grasped as the tendency of a person to act according to their own will, without counting on the opinion of other individuals. On the other hand, autonomy is the person's faculty to act according to their reasoning, with a certain degree of facultative interdependence.

In this respect, ELTs displaying individualism can provoke a collapse of educational quality in terms of rapport. ELTs, without rapport, fall into the category of traditional educationalists, that is, educators only concerned with fulfilling their work hours, but not educators preoccupied with understanding what in essence impacts on the academic performance of their students at school and elsewhere, that is, a harmonious and close relationship between ELT and learner.

ELTs must not, therefore, neglect humanism in their practicum. On the contrary, this movement should encourage ELTs to be more liable with students in terms of qualities of personal traits. It is then about developing a caring and supportive relationship to understand the linguistic and academic challenges which language apprentices face. Humanitarian ELTs, overall, ought to be autonomous practitioners who support students to learn in the classroom and beyond thereof.

#### IV. HIGHLY-QUALIFIED ELTS

Nowadays, globalization of knowledge demands its professionals to be highly competitive, to fulfill the expectations of educational quality. In this sense, defining the profile of highly qualified ELTs is not an easy task, as it requires considering components of both professional and personal domains. With a professional domain, we refer to all qualities of instructional skills. Conversely, the personal domain is attributed to the qualities of personal traits.

The definition of highly qualified ELTs has been a subject of attention for many researchers in the EFL field. After all, defining the profile of effective ELTs might provide a better understanding to the EFL community to invigorate the teaching and learning process. In this regard, a highly qualified ELT is a professional who appropriately dominates the target language, manages teaching methods adequately, and creates a suitable rapport with learners (Borg, 2006).

A highly qualified ELT is then a competitive professional who can wisely balance the qualities of instructional skills and the qualities of personal traits, but is there any proclivity towards instructional skills or personal traits on the part of ELTs or learners? Research conducted in the perceptions of teachers and learners regarding highly qualified ELTs profiles shows that there are indeed significant differences in the perceptions of these two populations.

In fact, while teachers are more concerned with reinforcing their qualities of instructional skills, students are more preoccupied with finding in them qualities of personal traits. Research also claims that even in qualities of personal traits, ELTs and learners come across a substantive differentiation; for example, while ELTs prefer to limit their communication skills, learners are more in favor of such communication skills gain territory in the classroom (Metruk, 2021; Mohammaditabar, Bagheri, Yamini & Rassaei, 2019).

In the face of the above, research results remain inconclusive, considering the fact that perceptions of both teachers and learners are dynamic and flexible. With this antecedent, there are always opportunities to add more nuances of analysis to what has already been explored, like in this case, to the profile of highly qualified ELTs. In doing so, ELTs' insights on the practices of effective language teaching may be stimulated.

So far, it has been said that highly-qualified ELTs are those balancing in their practicum qualities of instructional skills and qualities of personal traits. If we focus our attention on instructional skills, we might say that a highly qualified ELT is someone that demonstrates grandiose and personal academic achievements. Now, if we look at the personal traits, a highly-qualified ELT would be a professional compromised in seeing further in their pupils' learning.

Taking up the issue of perceptions of teachers and students regarding highly-qualified ELTs profiles, we can say that the determining factor for students to use the target language within and beyond the classroom is centered on research results presented above. In other words, highly-qualified ELTs are those not only intrigued with submitting in their institutions, qualities of instructional skills, but also those giving more attention to the qualities of personal traits (Al-Seghayer, 2017).

On this matter, highly-qualified ELTs are those who identify, first and foremost, the attributes and virtues that students expect to see in their classrooms. These attributes and virtues have to do with being humorous, creative, enthusiastic, young, friendly, polite, intimate, tolerant and devoted. They also deal with self-awareness, ability to observe, interpersonal skills, think critically, diversity, sensitivity to context, attitude towards change, etc.

While it is true that ELTs should center their educational awareness with more emphasis on the qualities of personal traits, it is no less true that the qualities of instructional skills must not be scrutinized; that is not our intention as researchers. Instructional skills also play a preponderant role in the learners' success of language acquisition. Ultimately, what would become of students if teachers did not have EFL teaching expertise?

According to Gabrielatos (2002), in order to tackle the instructional skills adequately, highly-qualified ELTs must be inserted in a framework of three categories. Gabrielatos highlights in the first instance the qualities of personal traits, then methodology, and finally language. With methodology, he refers to ELTs' knowledge skills towards the EFL or ESL field, whereas language points out the knowledge in use through speech.

So that an effective ELT is not only someone who possesses grandiose EFL or ESL qualifications but how effective these qualifications are being utilized in the classroom. By getting back to the point of methodology, highly-qualified ELTs are receivers of methodological theories; in turn, they are theorizers of their practice and practitioners of their own theories. In the same vein, effective ELTs are competent in language but sensitive to their own language proficiency and learners' language level.

The pretensions of this section are presented as a colossal task due to the intention of defining somehow the profile of highly qualified ELTs. We know that it is indispensable to balance the qualities of instructional skills and personal traits for learners to attain a proficient language level. However, at the end of the day, the intrapersonal and interpersonal will overlap the instructional; therefore, personal initiatives and professional development programs should be carried out in order to reinforce the qualities of personal traits and instructional skills in ELTs.

## V. ELTs AS EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL MEDIATORS

The interdependence among cultures becomes more robust as time passes by. An illustration of this is visualized in the economic and educational interchange among worldwide nations. In the educational space, cultural interdependence is perhaps an issue treated scientifically on a regular basis by educationalists pertaining to different fields of knowledge.

In EFL or ESL terms, ELTs have to deal with cultural interdependence more intensely due to the presence of both a mother tongue and a target language. The acquisition of a target language is not only an issue focused on learning grammatical patterns to achieve a proficient level but also to learn traditions, customs, knowledge, or ways of life of a host culture.

In this light, ELTs must conduct a role of cross-cultural mediators in their practicum, but why not take a multicultural or intercultural stand from the EFL context? The problem with multiculturalism in EFL teaching is that there is no ontological or epistemological interaction among cultures. By contrast, interculturality is bonded to developing deep ontological and epistemological relationships with no or limited norms.

On the same topic, cross-culturalism refers to accepting cultural diversity in ontological and epistemological terms but taking into consideration individual changes and one culture as the norm while other cultures are compared or contrasted to the grassroots one. Broadly speaking, this definition might sound totalitarian. Nonetheless, unlike the aforementioned two, cross-culturalism establishes moderately logical limits that avoid accepting nonsensical issues.

These logical limits are not attested, for instance, in multiculturalism. In fact, much of this model relegates the cultural interaction to limited spaces such as living alongside people from different cultural backgrounds. Besides, there is no inclusion of ontology and epistemology in the superstructure of a host culture.

The logical limits become worse in the interculturality. In this model, it is true that ontology and epistemology are contemplated in the superstructure of a host nation. However, the relativization of logic is very preoccupying. Relativizing the logic can lead the superstructure of a country, which is composed of education, science, laws, etc., to impose fake knowledge or realities on citizens.

It can be then argued that cross-culturalism is the best option to be taken in the EFL field because it considers the acceptance of other ontologies and epistemologies but with logical limits. In other words, when fake realities or knowledge appear in the educational interaction, ELTs can raise awareness on learners that certain cultural practices attempting to be recognized as formal knowledge or legitimate reality are an attack against logic and common sense.

The EFL field is the perfect place for learners to interchange knowledge and realities. That is why in order to provide effective teaching, ELTs are expected to incorporate ethnic literature in their classrooms (Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 2002). However, the incorporation of ethnic literature should be carefully examined before taking it into practice.

In being cross-cultural mediators, ELTs have to figure out that treating learners' worldviews in the classroom has a positive repercussion on their learning; for that reason, they must be included in the instructional planning. ELTs also have to comprehend that the discussion around learners' worldviews is not only focused on dances, vestments, or typical food. On the contrary, a wealth of legitimate realities and formal knowledge can be inspected in depth before treating them in an educational curriculum.

In this light, ELTs should not forget the qualities of personal traits, as well as the qualities of instructional skills in incorporating ethnic literature in an educational program. In point of fact, these qualities, with the support of logic, can serve as filters to discern between the legitimate and the illegitimate in terms of ethnic literature.

Cross-culturalism, in the EFL field, can consequently be interpreted as a fundamental quality that ELTs must possess, a quality that does not permit them to tolerate the intolerable when dealing with counterfeit realities or knowledges. On the contrary, it stimulates their ontological and epistemological sensitivity to contribute, in this way, to the design of more effective EFL teaching and learning settings.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper aims to offer ELTs reflection around the most vital qualities of personal traits, which are required to contribute to the design of more effective EFL teaching and learning milieus. Certainly, there are abundant qualities of personal traits that ELTs can incorporate in their practicum to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

From our outlook, we cannot diminish the importance of every single quality of personal trait which can be located in the literature. On the contrary, we firmly believe that they are all relevant. However, the qualities of personal traits that better cope with the online and onsite defiance that ELTs are facing in contemporary EFL education are the ones treated here.

In this sense, it is compulsory to remember that ELTs must always be eternal learners, not only preoccupied with enhancing their academic profiles but also learners worried about strengthening virtues inherent to their profession, particularly those of emotional intelligence. Likewise, humanism should still guide the ELTs' practicum, as it empowers them with an autonomous outlook endowed by responsibility towards themselves and their learners.

Correspondingly, in order to be highly qualified professionals, ELTs should always bear in mind that there must be an appropriate balance between qualities of instructional skills and qualities of personal traits. In the same vein, ELTs, in having the opportunity to teach not only a language but also culture, should keep up with their students' worldviews and incorporate them with logical limits into their curricular planning.

To conclude, ELTs' challenges when teaching English are complex, although the biggest challenge is perhaps to create interesting situations for learners to use the language not only in the classroom but beyond it. In this regard, ELTs should take into account the learners' favorite perceptions regarding qualities of personal traits without detracting from the qualities of instructional skills. Future research may hence test training programs that facilitate in ELTs the reinforcement of both qualities, but with more emphasis on the qualities of personal traits.

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Otherness in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*: A Postcolonial Rendering

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# The Silence of Compliance: Child Soldier Trauma Narratives in Contemporary African War Novels

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**Abstract**—The victimhood of child soldiers is without any argument, a fact. In many wars, the illegitimate conscription of children under the age of eighteen has resulted in severe repercussions in the mental health of the child soldiers even after the war. Child soldier trauma depicted through many literary artifacts shows the intensity and gravity of the situation. The novels by Uzodinma Iweala, Chris Abani, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie viz *Beasts of No Nation*, *Song for Night* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* address the issue of child soldier conscription, the resultant trauma, and the slim chances of the betterment of the children even after the war is over. The paper moves toward acknowledging the victimhood of these children but at the same raising concerns about the agency of the trauma. The role of the child soldiers as perpetrators beyond their status of being victims and the necessity to provide proper psychosocio care to avert trauma and impending disorder in the society. A new approach concerning the grey area of in-betweenness in the victim/victimiser binary is needed while analysing desperate times like that of the Biafran civil war.

**Index Terms**—perpetrator trauma, victimhood, child soldiers, victim/victimiser, Nigerian civil war

## I. INTRODUCTION

Trauma, a term which has gained popularity in psychoanalysis mainly during and after the world wars that shook even the foundation of world peace, has now become, for the lack of a more precise word, popular in usage and scope. The sociological and political aspects of trauma are most of the time underestimated with the universalisation of trauma as a psychologically disturbing event that focuses more on individuals and less on the community level. As the world has enormously disturbing episodes of so many atrocities, literature as a medium that reflects on multiple facets of society has never failed to capture their effects in literary artifacts. War narratives of contemporary African literature especially, have come out with many breath-taking efforts to delineate the trauma experienced by people during historically oppressed times – colonialism, racism, civil wars, discrimination at national and international levels etc. The atrocities and man-made horrors continue even during testing times questioning the very integrity of the core elements that make humanity. The remaining certainties of the uncertain world are chaos and the complex manifestations of the twisted psyche that turn out to be the residual remnants of greed.

Trauma narratives based on many events such as the Holocaust, World Wars I and II, the 9/11 attacks, the Vietnam war, etc are very popular and have achieved remarkable success in capturing the lost expressions in the shock of the events. However, experiences of the third world and postcolonial countries have drowned in a sea of neglect and lack of interest of the first world countries for a long time. It can be said that the articulation became more powerful and appeared more promising in its effect after the decline of colonialism. In the history of Africa especially, there has been umpteen number of man-made tragedies including racism, colonialism, civil wars, and the like. The Biafran civil war (1967-70) which wreaked havoc in Nigeria is an unforgettable experience for millions of population still now. The emerging number of books by Nigerian authors during contemporary times is a testimony to the still lasting impact of the war.

## II. TRAUMA NARRATIVES AND THE BIAFRAN WAR

Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* (2005), Chris Abani's *Song for Night* (2007), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) are notable and internationally acclaimed narrations on the Biafran civil war and its effects on a particular sect of people who have been tremendously affected by the war, the child soldiers. One of the most fascinating things about war narratives is the transgenerational power of trauma across generations and how the writers, even after many years of the war, still ponder over the subject of trauma related to the war when historical anecdotes interest the world with factual details alone. Renegotiating the traumatic experiences of the Biafran civil war makes the writers deal with the postcolonial angst of Nigeria. Studies related to war have often focussed deeply on the

issue of child soldiers as the case is very sensitive and yet a continuing atrocity even during the present times. Recent writings regarding the issue by contemporary writers dwell mostly upon the psyche of the children who have been deprived of every childhood right. Under these circumstances, the characters showcased in the novel need to be studied under multiple glances because of not only the age and circumstances of the child soldiers but also the deeds of these children during direct or indirect combats.

While *Beasts of No Nation* follows closely the plight of young Agu, who had to join an army troop when his family got displaced and his father died, *Song for Night* trails on the journey of the character My Luck, who had been separated from his troop in a mine explosion. Both depict the tragic journey of children who are not even close to becoming adults but turned out to be soldiers. *Half of a Yellow Sun* however deals with the trauma of the civil population in general. It centers around how the Biafran civil war, in the course of its brutality, affects all the sections of society. The novel talks about a series of issues – women who get raped and murdered; men who get depressed and not being able to take care of families; children and adults who are forced into the army against their will and lose their lives; poverty, black market, and malnourishment among children; pathetic lives of people who tremble and try to escape to trenches upon air attacks, etc. It also brings in the issue of child soldier trauma along with other concerns.

The plot of Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* centers around Agu and how he suffers at the hands of a loose army consisting of a paedophilic commander and crude soldiers. He gets raped and bullied to unimaginable levels and at the same time, the narrative informs what these kinds of situations can do to a child. Agu becomes one among them and enjoys killing after a while, finally being rescued to a comfortable place where he is properly taken care of. Though Chris Abani in *Song for Night* tells the tale of My Luck whose narrative is slightly better than the situation of Agu, the traumatic episodes are equally disturbing. My Luck's search for his army troop is the journey through his trials and tribulations throughout the war. His angst has an additional dark nature because of the suppressed voice. Though *Half of a Yellow Sun* is not limited to child soldier trauma like the other two novels, the experiences of Ugwu after being conscripted into the army are very important as it details the further character development and downfall of the character even after his rescue.

The main characteristic feature of the narratives is the way the writers have depicted the trauma of the child soldiers through unconventional manner. While Iweala undermines all the literary conventions of the language by making a small child his protagonist using broken languages and grammatically incorrect syntactical structures, Abani explores the voice behind the severed tongue of the character My Luck. Adichie also focuses on the life of Ugwu, a seemingly simple and expressive boy who suddenly became silent about his experience while in the army after being rescued. The prominent idea behind every child soldier narrative is typically presumed to feel sympathy towards the children who are forced against their will to do things and in the due process of war, go through a lot of personal traumas of their own, among men who have forgotten what essentially is humanity. How authorization was ever made to send these children to the frontline during a gruesome war instead of being protected irrespective of the tribe to which they belong, is a very much concerning social issue. Egodi Uchendu (2007) in the article titled "Recollections of Childhood Experiences during the Nigerian Civil War" revisits the experiences of earlier child soldiers and how they have been treated:

After exposure - often more than once - to the front line, some were sent home with post-traumatic stress syndrome, which during the Nigeria civil war was popularly called 'shell shock'. Some pretended to suffer from this condition in order to induce their demobilization. For the real victims of 'shell shock' in Biafra (but also in the Idoma and Tiv communities), it manifested in temporary deafness and displays of violent behaviour. (p. 403)

The concerned question here, though not usually asked because of the obvious age constraints and the exceptional situation of Nigerian civil war, is whether the child soldier trauma is owing to suffering or the unimaginable deeds they have done. It is quite an obvious fact that the grey area between victimhood and victimisation is somewhat inexplicable. Even then the silence and trauma of the child soldiers and the aspects behind that trauma cannot be presumed to be victimhood alone at all times. In the novels taken scrutiny, the authors, without giving any judgemental views, present the life of child soldiers as accurately as possible. Though tracking every character and their traumatic episode from a war narrative is difficult, there are certain aspects in the novels which put the audience in a conflict in determining the true nature of trauma.

### III. TRAUMATIC VICTIMHOOD

The character My Luck, in *Song for Night*, is the only character with an articulative voice throughout the novel and the rest of the characters occur only in the memories of My Luck. My Luck describes how the severed tongue affected the miners psychologically. When the army recruited the boys and Ijeoma, the only girl in the troop to be mine diffusers, the sheriff asked the doctor to cut off their tongues without their consent or giving any warning, in order to avoid the risk of them screaming in the battlefield and getting identified. Later, My Luck remembers how it only helped in increasing the volume of the screams they had in their heads. Abani (2007) talks about the underlying screams behind the silence of My Luck in the narrative. "What they couldn't know was that in the silence of our heads, the screams of those dying around us were louder than if they still had their voices" (p. 22). The unspeakable condition of trauma as advocated by the traditional trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth is reflected in the muted voices of My Luck. Caruth (2016) in the book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* has elaborated on the concept of inability to

express trauma as the major characteristic feature of any instance of traumatic experience. The incomplete accessibility to trauma causes the intensity:

The repetitions of the traumatic event which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing. (p. 92)

My Luck most of the time stays rational and acts according to the situation. He knows that being part of the platoon is the only way to survive and closely follows the training he has attended. However, he knows that behind the pretence of sanity, his mind is not at all in his control. My Luck periodically goes through everything that he has suffered. It is more apt to say that the remembrance of traumatic things is a part of his daily routine. However, one thing that is lacking is his awareness that he is indeed traumatized. He has exhibited all the classic symptoms of being traumatized – hallucinations, panic attacks, restlessness, and lack of proper sleep along with his inability to utter a single sound. The psychological dimensions of My Luck's trauma are quite explicit throughout the novel.

In *Beasts of No Nation* too, Agu is faced with many traumatic episodes his psyche was not prepared for. To hit the reality, nothing can be done in preparing the mind to face a war, especially a war like that of the Nigerian civil war. Though the accurate age of the child soldiers cannot be determined from the narratives, the language structure from Agu as the protagonist gives a sense of his lesser age when compared to that of My Luck and Ugwu. It is a misfortune that such a child at a young age has got the fate to see his known people die while trying to rescue their village. He became a part of that bloody war that has taken away all the dear and near ones in his life:

I am seeing man running with no headlike chicken, and I am seeing arm and leg everywhere. Then everything is just white and all I am hearing is step slap, step slap, step slap, and the sound of my own breathing. All of this is really happening to me? It is all happening like it is happening again and I cannot even be believing it. (Iweala 2005, p.89)

The effects of these instances on Agu's daily life are traumatic to such an extent that he somehow ends up becoming a different person thereafter. Agu has been forced to kill by the commandant:

He is grabbing my neck and whispering into my ear, kill him now because I am not having the time oh. If you are not killing him, enh. Luftenant will be thinking you are a spy. And who can know if he won't just be killing you. He is squeezing my hand around the handle of the machete and I am feeling the wood in my finger and in my palm. It is just like killing goat. Just bring this hand up and knock him well well. He is taking my hand and bringing it down so hard on top of the enemy's head and I am feeling like electricity is running through my whole body. The man is screaming, AYEEIII, louder than the sound of a bullet whistling and then he is bringing his hand to his head, but it is not helping because his head is spilling out like milk from coconut. (Iweala 2005, p.25)

From the moment of that murder onwards, everything for Agu has changed forever, even his perception of himself. The sad part about his experiences is that unlike others he does not know the source of the trauma he has been suffering. From the moment of witnessing his own father's gruesome murder, everything in his life has become so tragic that the marks left behind in his psyche got overlapped from time to time. Even Agu's last image of his father is not a pleasant one. "I am seeing all of the soldier with gun and knife and then I am thinking about my father just dancing like that because of bullet" (Iweala, 2005, p.13). "Nothing is the same anymore. I am not being able to be sleeping at all when it is time to sleep. Each time I am lying down my head, some voice inside of me is shouting and starting to make too much trouble so I cannot even be closing my eye" (Iweala, 2005, p.165). Iweala has successfully portrayed many of the characteristic features of trauma through the description of others characters in the novel. Griot, a small boy regularly has panic attacks and he sees frightening visions almost every night disrupting his peace of mind on an everyday basis. He has gone with his mother to the market to buy something because the family has been suffering from starvation. In an air attack by the enemy soldiers, he has witnessed the most atrocious deeds of war which caused innocent poor people to lose their lives in seconds when they least expected it.

I was just in the market when I am hearing GBWEM! I am just hearing one blast and the whole ground began to shaking shaking. And then those government pilot, they are just coming in low with their screaming plane and I was covering my ear but the drum were just beating TAKA TAKA TAKA and everybody is running this way and that way. This one is hiding under the wheelbarrow. That one is hiding in church. This one is jumping in gutter. I am not knowing where to be hiding so I am just running running up and down the road. I am hearing another GBWEM landing next right to me. And then I was feeling fire on my body but I wasn't burning. When I am looking up, I am seeing people hanging from tree like piece of meat. Head just hanging like coconut before it is falling off. (Iweala, 2005, p.97)

During the initial times of being forced to be a part of the army, Ugwu's condition was more or less the same as Agu and My Luck in the other novels. He could not confide in anyone how he has felt during the violence and murders. Though Ugwu did not understand the complete anarchy during wars, he is certain that if he wants to stay alive he has to obey the commander and follow the instructions. There are a lot of instances in the novel where Ugwu has chosen silence as his only method of coping with the unbearable time. From a character who used to talk a lot and ask a lot, he



has become a silent being. It can be inferred that behavioural changes that occur due to traumatic situations have a lasting effect on the character of a person, especially among children:

There were more operations. Ugwu's fear sometimes overwhelmed him, froze him. He unwrapped his mind from his body; separated the two, while he lay in the trench, pressing himself into the mud, luxuriating in how close and connected he was to the mud. The *ka-ka-ka* of shooting, the cries of men, the smell of death, the blasts of explosion above and around him were distant. But back at the camp his memory became clear; he remembered the man who placed both hands on his blown- open belly as though to hold his intestines in, the one who mumbles something about his son before he stiffened. And, after each operation, everything became new...He touched his own skin and thought of its decay. (Adichie, 2006, p.365)

Here, the fear insinuated in Ugwu's behaviour and general nature is quite understandable considering the circumstances and his situation. Like Agu, he has joined the army at a time he least expected it. When the three child soldier characters are considered, only My Luck has joined the army on his own. Even in My Luck's situation, he has joined the army because he wanted to save his life, since joining any side is the only viable option:

Nobody explained it at first. Nobody had time; nobody cared; after three years of civil war nothing is strange anymore; choose the reason that best satisfies you. There are many ways to say it, but this is the one I choose: they approached me and said I had been selected for a special mission. I had been selected to be part of an elite team, a team of engineers highly trained in locating and eliminating the threat of clandestine enemy explosives. Even though I had no idea what clandestine enemy explosives were, I was thrilled. (Abani, 2007, p.18)

Agu in the care and comfort of a family has been taken into the army as a child soldier when he was separated from his mother and sister, and his father got killed in action. Agu has been spotted by the soldiers of the opposite army who came soon after the ones who killed Agu's father and villagers left the scene. Though they first thought Agu is a spy used by the enemy soldiers and prepared to kill him after hitting him so many times, the Commandant has given him a chance to join the army. The intentions of the Commandant behind taking Agu with him, as revealed in the later sections of the novel, turned out to be purely paedophilic. But in the situation of not knowing the whereabouts of his mother and sister, and having witnessed his father being shot with multiple bullets, Agu has been left with no choice but to obey the Commander:

If you are staying with me, I will be taking care of you and we will be fighting the enemy that is taking your father. Are you hearing me? He is stopping and licking his lip. Are you hearing me? Everything will be just fine, he is saying with his lip so close to my ear that I am hearing his saliva in his mouth. I am looking and seeing his smile and feeling his hand on my face touching me softly...

What am I supposed to be doing?

So I am joining. Just like that. I am soldier (Iweala, 2005, p.13)

In Ugwu's case too, though not under the protection of his own family, Olanna and Odenigbo have offered him a sense of security and cared for him, and he was considered more a family member rather than a servant. And he has an experience where Olanna went of her ways and bribed the recruiters from taking Ugwu. Unfortunately for him, no one was there to help him this time, and against all his will he was conscripted into the army and he stayed with the army only because he was afraid that he might end up being shot if he tried to escape.

Ugwu began to run until he heard the gunshot, so deafening, so alarmingly close that he fell to the ground and waited for the pain to drill into his body, certain he had been hit. But there was no pain. When the soldier ran up to him, the first thing Ugwu saw was the pair of canvas shoes, before he looked up at the wiry body and scowling face. A rosary hung around his neck. The burnt smell of gunpowder came from his gun

'Come on, stand up, you bloody civilian! Join them there!'

Ugwu stood up and the soldier slapped the back of his head and a splintering light spread to his eyes; he dug his feet into the loose sand to steady himself for a moment before he walked over to join the two men standing with their arms raised high (Adichie, 2006, p.357)

In one way or the other, all the three main characters from three different novels, My Luck, Agu, and Ugwu are the victims of a brutal war they cannot escape. The horrible situations and the life-endangering day-to-day lives of the army people during desperate time are beyond imagination. These child soldiers have gone through the cruelties and miseries of war even when their psyche was splitting apart. Even when they want to come out of the army, they have no place to go. This applies to most of the child soldiers because most of them have witnessed either the terrible death of their family members or separation. Staying alive becomes the only option once they become child soldiers and there is no guarantee that they can become free one day even if the war comes to an end. For them, the trauma continues, and life itself becomes a traumatic episode.

Many instances can be cited to show how My Luck from *Song for Night*, has been affected by the traumatic instances he has witnessed. After seeing a group of old women eating the body of a small child, My Luck was not even able to rest for a long time. Abani (2007) in *Song for Night* explores the psyche of My Luck thoroughly. "It is that little face, maybe a few months old, that keeps me from the rest" (p.7). "I haven't rested since that night. There has been exhaustion; sleep even. But not rest" (p.16). "I couldn't eat it because it reminded me too much of the dead child in my dreams, and of that night we stumbled on that gory feast, those gorgons, and I felt the campsite as the others cooked and ate it (p. 41). Chris Abani has presented a series of instances where the character My Luck suffers. The journey to find

his platoon becomes a journey through his trauma remembering the horrific images he has witnessed and experienced at various levels. The trauma and the psychological effect led to a silence that only aggravated the muteness of his voice.

#### IV. THE VICTIM-PERPETRATOR BINARY

However, the conflict and dilemma in safely assuming the source of trauma emerge only when My Luck tries to analyse certain instances where he has gone wrong. My Luck is a person who has killed his own superior Major Esse in to save a little girl from him. Though he has ended up killing both, his noble intention is unquestionable. Nevertheless, his motive behind some of the murders he has done is very much questionable. "I have killed many people during the last three years. Half of those were innocent, half of those were unarmed- and some of those killings have been a pleasure" (Abani, 2007, p. 60). The pleasure part behind the killings is the fact that raises the question. It is a universally acknowledged matter that child soldiers were forced to do things they do not even like. My Luck has been forced to rape, to kill, to rob, etc. However, when he acknowledges the fact that he has relished some of the killings, he turns out to be a victimizer:

Who taught me to enjoy killing, a singular joy that is perhaps rivalled only by an orgasm? It doesn't matter how the death is dealt- a bullet tearing through a body, the juicy suck of a flesh around a bayonet, the grainy globular disintegration brought on by the clubs- the joy is the same and requires only the complete focus on the moment, on the act. (Abani, 2007, p.117)

In many studies related to trauma, the traumatic episodes of the victims assume primary importance. However, as the concept of the perpetrator is unavoidable, the narratives tangentially touch the issue. And some narratives focus on perpetrators and perpetrator trauma. The compartmentalisation, though essential as advocated by Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, child soldier trauma, is considered a grey area when the agency of the deed is considered. Though there is not much to argue about the victimhood of the child soldiers, the perpetrator tendency in them is a matter of dispute. Similar to My Luck in *Song for Night*, Agu in *Beasts of No Nation* has similarly expressed his obsession with being a perpetrator on his own accord. "Far away, I am hearing screaming and gunfire and my head is growing smaller and my body is growing bigger. I am wanting to kill; I don't know why. I am just wanting to kill. I am seeing animal and I am wanting to kill it" (Iweala, 2005, p.58).

Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun* has always been affected by traumatic episodes after he raped an innocent bartender girl. He killed many people of the enemy camp during the war out of his helplessness as he was conscripted into the army. He has got the name Target Destroyer for his aim and execution of action. However, his own action against the girl whom he raped shows that there is a victimiser in him after all.

'No! Target Destroyer is next!'

Ugwu backed away from the door

'Ujo abiala o! Target Destroyer is afraid'

Ugwu shrugged and moved forwards. 'Who is afraid?' he said disdainfully. 'I just like to eat before others, this is all.' (Adichie, 2006, p.365).

Here, Ugwu has chosen himself to be a victimiser. He is more conscious of his manly image before his group of army men. Though he has always been haunted by the image of the girl for the rest of his life, at that moment of action, he has chosen to do the act of rape at his own will. Though the situation of Ugwu is miserable, the deed he has done deserves no justification. It is cruel and one of the most atrocious forms of exerting his manhood. After his rescue, he has always been haunted by the hatred he saw in the eyes of the girl he raped. Later he cannot tolerate the grief when he came to know that his sister was raped by a group of soldiers. He has inflicted the pain on somebody and he pretty well knew that he has deserved the pain of knowing what his sister might have gone through.

Unlike Ugwu, My Luck, in *Song for Night*, does not want to rape anyone but he has to do it as per the instruction of his superior officer of the platoon:

"You are the only one who hasn't raped anyone yet!" he barked at me.

I wanted to ask him what this skirmish, this fight, this destruction of an innocent village had to do with our mission to defuse mines, but I knew better. I looked at the woman. My hesitation puzzled her and she stopped crying. John Wayne was angry at my insubordination and he pointed his gun at my head.

"Rape or die," he said, and I knew he meant it. (Abani, 2007, p.66)

In the case of My Luck, it is clear that he has to do it to save his life and nothing else. Though he has done many murders and violent activities, the rape of an innocent woman is never part of his own will. My Luck has a moral high ground compared to Ugwu when a similar situation is contrasted and evaluated. However, that does not save My Luck from the remorse he has after the act. It has taken Ijeoma a great deal to talk him out of guilt. Though My Luck is a victimiser, he is also a victim of the atrocities of war. The after-effects of all these actions had affected his mental stability and health.

Many other characters have chosen silence as their only mode of survival from exposing their traumatised psyche before the world. Strika, in *Beasts of No Nation*, another child soldier like Agu, has not said a single word but draws pictures of images that haunt him forever. LaCapra defines this repetitive behaviour of going through the traumatic event again and again as acting out. Strika's deal with repeatedly drawing pictures of horrible things, the way he was sexually molested by the Commander, and his vision of family as dead bodies hanging from trees are the examples of

La Capra's concept of acting out. "This is very clear in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They have a tendency to relive the past, to be haunted by ghosts or even to exist in the present as if one were still fully in the past, with no distance from it" (LaCapra, 2014, p.143). In a case like that of Strika, the complete silence towards his own life and experiences may not turn out to be a temporary situation from which he can emerge unharmed when proper treatment is given. This is because the trauma of characters such as Strika is never properly addressed. Judith Lewis Herman (2015) in *Trauma and Recovery* opines that the silence of trauma victims is a grave condition:

All too commonly, chronically traumatized people suffer in silence; but if they complain at all, their complaints are not well understood. They may collect a virtual pharmacopeia of remedies: one for headaches, another for insomnia, another for anxiety, another for depression. None of these tends to work very well, since the underlying issues of trauma are not addressed (p. 86)

#### V. SILENCE, SECRECY, AND COMPLIANCE

In the case of Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the suffering is not known to anyone but himself. He has many chances to share it with others after his rescue but he has chosen not to do that. In his case, he is not afraid that his sufferings would not be understood by anybody, but at the same time his sufferings would also entail his horrendous deeds including murder and rape he committed during the war. This is quite applicable in the case of Agu in *Beasts of no Nation* and My Luck in *Song for Night*. In *Beasts of No Nation*, after his rescue, Agu has got the chance to share his experiences but he is not sure whether the listener, a white woman in charge of the home of rescued children of war, would relate to the things he says. He is always under the impression that the whole talking out process is doing nothing good as the listener is not an empathic one in his case. "But every time I am sitting with her I am like old man and she is like small girl because I am fighting in war and she is not even knowing what war is" (Iweala, 2005, p. 175). Even more than that, Agu has admitted that he cannot reveal everything to anyone even if he wanted. Even when he can tell certain things he has experienced during his conscription and his role as a child soldier during a brutal war, he cannot reveal any of the crimes he has done during the same situation. "I am saying to her sometimes, I am not saying many things because I am knowing too many terrible thing to be saying to you. I am seeing more terrible thing than ten thousand men and I am doing more terrible thing than twenty thousand men (Iweala, 2005, p.176).

When Agu has chosen to edit details of his experiences to the listener and Ugwu has chosen not to have a listener as he is too ashamed and afraid to reveal many things he has done, My Luck has spoken through the language of silence and that too with the people who have gone through the same ordeal as that of him. When the platoon aimed to kill a man, his wife sacrificed her own life by jumping in front of him and she was shot. My Luck and other members of the platoon have grieved for what they have done but all these kinds of instances prove that the child soldiers cannot reveal everything they have suffered in the war. If they have to come clean and out of their trauma, there is a necessity of honesty and it demands a lot of courage to be honest, especially in the case of the child soldiers:

We have seen fathers shoot their children on our orders, sons rape their mothers, children forced to hack their parents to death- the worst atrocities- all of which we witnessed impassively. But this was different. We all cried when the woman died, except John Wayne, who was well lost. It wasn't dramatic really, just silent tears and a shame that kept us from meeting each other's eyes. (Abani, 2007, p.83)

In this instance, it can be clearly stated that child soldiers are not just victims of the war or the atrocity of the system but they are the victimizers also. Though it is the circumstance of war that had turned them to become victimisers, the agency behind their actions cannot be ignored under any circumstances. Kali Tal (1995) in *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* opines those soldiers are at the same time both victims and victimizers. "Those exposed to combat or other life-threatening events, and those exposed to the carnage resulting from combat were traumatized...The soldier in combat is both victim and victimizer; dealing death as well as risking it" (Tal, 1995, p. 10).

Though the trauma of the victims is though seen in a humanitarian light, not all the traumatic experiences of the child soldiers could be considered so. Notably, the novels touch many instances where the characters ruminate on the events which led them to kill innocent people out of their frustration or sometimes to their enjoyment. It is quite accurate to describe the dual role of child soldiers as victims/perpetrators. Hence child soldiers cannot be considered in the limelight of glorious victims alone. The trauma narratives delineate the instances where war situations make child soldiers partly monsters. These instances prove that the grey zone of compliance, at times, can make the child soldiers perpetrators. The factor that they are under aged does not give any justification to the compliance to horrible deeds they have done.

In many studies, it has been proven that these young children with such exposure may turn out to be more dangerous to civil life in their adulthood. "Trauma appears to amplify the common gender stereotypes: men with histories of childhood abuse are more likely to take out their aggressions on others, while women are more likely to be victimized by others or to injure themselves" (Herman, 2015, p.82). None of the novels touch on the future of the child soldiers. Towards the end of the narratives, except for My Luck, the child soldiers seemed to get rescued from the war and their life of being child soldiers. Though the future endeavours are not explicitly mentioned, the writers have hinted at the disturbed psyche of the characters who never let go of the past experiences and the trauma associated with them. (Reading along the lines of Herman's theory shows that such character types may continue their life in the same way, further resulting in a potential threat to themselves and the society too in future.



Arguments like that of the mental stability of these ill-fated children conscripted into the army can counter the theory of compliance of child soldiers but the enjoyment part as claimed by them while doing a murder cannot be disregarded as negligible. One such occasion is in which Agu confuses a mother and a daughter to be his own family under special circumstances. However, the moment he realised the truth, he willingly took part in cutting the arms of the daughter and raping the mother. Trauma arises out of being forced to do something atrocious and the trauma that comes out later from willingly taking part in a monstrous deed cannot be considered equally. The silence of trauma as depicted through certain characterisation in the novels is not only pointed solely at victimhood but also at compliance to crime and gruesome murders at own will. A typical attempt of the perpetrator's mind to justify what they have done even after knowing that there is no logic behind is exhibited by Agu in *Beasts of No Nation*. After the murders, he keeps calming himself and tries to come out of hallucinations and panic attacks:

I am not bad boy. I am not bad boy. I am soldier and soldier is not bad if he is killing. I am telling this to myself because soldier is supposed to be killing, killing, killing...I am singing song to myself because I am hearing too many voice in my head telling me I am a bad boy. They are coming from all around me and buzzing in my ear like mosquito and each time I am hearing them, they are chocking my heart and making my stomach to turn. So I am singing

Soldier Soldier

Kill Kill Kill

That is how you live.

That is how you die (Iweala, 2005, p.30)

Judith Herman (2015) in *Trauma and Recovery*, details the psyche behind the silence and secrecy of the perpetrators regarding the deeds they have done.

In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim...To this end, he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization (Herman, 2015, p. 4)

In this context, for My Luck in *Song for Night*, the silence though is enforced and traumatic, it is his way of escaping from owning up the agency of his trauma. Similarly, Strika, the character in *Beasts of no Nation*, is suffering a lot from angst and his silence is the proof that trauma can steal the articulative power of a person, especially a child. However, the agency behind that trauma is not clear from the narrative. Strika has been sexually abused by the commander. The pictures he draws when asked about his family, clearly show that he has witnessed their tragic end. But the acts of violence he has done while he is in the army and his compliance to many murders and rape cannot be ignored in this situation. My Luck in *Song for Night* has carved his hands multiple times in remembrance of the people he has killed. In the chapter "Memory is a Pattern Cut into an Arm" (Abani 23), he talks about the crosses he has carved on his hands for friends and relatives and the two strangers. For a person who has kept a tab for the traumatic accounts of loved ones, it is a bit strange if his total neglect of the people he has killed with enjoyment seems unintentional. Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun* chooses the option to write a book with the title *The world Was Silent when We Died*. He has covered many aspects right from the start of the war and included the pathetic life of the civilians. He articulated how no one helped the poor people who tried in vain to escape death and starvation. Yet, he stayed silent throughout about his experiences while he was in the army intentionally hiding his sufferings as well as his actions. The silence in most cases appears to be intentional. The child soldiers during the course of time have lost their child-like nature owing to war. Though some have taken up responsibility of actions, many have not done that. It is clear that silence of the child soldiers is not always a sign of victimhood. At many instances, the silence is the indication of grief, shame, and sometimes secrecy. Suppressing the agency behind the trauma is equally traumatic in intensity as that of victimhood. However, the compartmentalisation cannot be accurately done as child soldiers are both victims and victimisers.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The narratives of Uzodinma Iweala and Chris Abani and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie show the angst of child soldiers who happened to be the prey of a desperate time in the history of Nigeria – the Nigerian Civil war. The novels capture every aspect of child soldier trauma – from the clinical symptoms to the complicated expressions. Though the agency behind traumatic instances is never fully recognized due to obvious reasons, especially in the case of child soldiers, the chance of perpetrator trauma cannot be ruled out. These trauma narratives open up avenues of opportunities for discussing the agency behind child soldier trauma. The secrecy and silence of the compliance are explicit. Finding a cure for trauma, without proper articulation and expression, is almost next to impossible. Though the perpetrator trauma is often seen in a different light, the betterment lies in treating the characters considering being victims, but still understanding the potential for danger as there are elements of victimisers in them. If one is indeed in search of the true victimizer, the quest should go beyond just the child soldiers and who made them victimisers in the first place.

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# Do the Educational Content and Activities of Action Pack Textbook Involve Jordanian EFL Fifth-Grade Students in Learning English Language? An Analytical Study

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**Abstract**—The current study aimed at analyzing the degree of involvement of the educational content and activities in Action Pack 5, which is used to teach the English language for Jordanian students in grade five. To gather the data, the researcher used Romey's formula. To achieve the study purposes, 25% of Action Pack textbook pages were chosen randomly to find out the level of involvement of the educational content. Also, all the activities, totaling (122) activities were chosen from the analyzed textbook to find out the level of involvement in these activities. Results showed that the degree of involvement of the educational content of Action Pack 5 was (0.19), which means that the analyzed textbook was autocratic and had few challenges that evoke students' thoughts. It also shows that the degree of involvement of the analyzed activities was (0.87), which means that the analyzed textbook makes students in grade five more involved and active during their learning English.

**Index Terms**—Action Pack 5, English language textbook, fifth-grade students, involvement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are one of the key parts of any educational system. They are considered the source of knowledge, information, and facts. Therefore, teachers can present the learning material to their students. The English language is one of the main school subjects, so it is important to be interested in the educational content that is found in English textbooks. In Jordan, Action Pack 5 is used to teach the English language to students who are in fifth grade.

Teaching and learning the English language require using a textbook that is written and organized correctly (Pamungkas, 2010). It is claimed that the content of any textbook should be presented in a manner that facilitates achieving the outcomes of the textbook, and in turn improving students' performance academically and personally. Thus, introducing the educational content is needed to achieve the purposes of the learning process (Sa'ada & Ibrahim, 2011).

Different reasons make the textbook so important. First, it presents experiential content, and it classifies the learning material rationally to reach the planned goals. Second, it introduces for both teachers and students what they are going to do to complete their teaching and learning processes (Eisner, 1994). It is clear that textbooks are significant in education and play a key role in it. Although presenting a suitable textbook is required, but analyzing it is also so important (Tanner & Tanner, 1998).

The analysis of the textbook is based on clear criteria, such as the suitability of the textbook for students. According to Al-Hashemi and Al-Ghazawi (2006), using involvement as a standard of evaluating the textbook is one of the different ways. The use of involvement helps in investigating the suitability of the textbook for students' level and helps in exploring students' ability to use the learning material. Thus, introducing the textbook should be in a manner that allows students to be involved deeply in the learning process.

The involvement is defined as "the degree of attracting the textbook for students and involving them in the book material through presenting the educational material, including the activities and abstracts that stimulate students to explore and discover, and challenge their ideas to be more interactive" (Al-Naji, 2002, p. 77). Another definition of involvement is written by Suleiman (2003) who defined it as the level of the textbook in offering the information and the educational situations for students that are related to the learning milieu.

It can be said that the first person who assesses the involvement is Romey (1968). According to Romey (1968), the involvement degree of the textbook is measured by introducing the learning material as activities, drawings, and shapes. This process of evaluation can be made by selecting random pages from the textbook and then evaluating and analyzing them to discover the involvement level of the analyzed textbook (Abu Sa'aleek, 2018).

The content of the textbook should be in a manner that encourages students to be more engaged while they learn. This aspect of the content makes students more active and dynamic in the class (Fazlollahi & Tavana, 2010). The content that makes students active has the following aspects (Romey, 1968; Delavar, 2007):

1. Giving students a key role in the learning process.

2. Having questions that ask students to use a higher level of thinking.
3. Presenting activities that motivate students' thinking and encourage them to discover.
4. Asking students to deal with different views and select the appropriate one.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Alsirhani (2011) analyzed the texts of Arabic language textbooks used to teach grade 4 in Saudi Arabia. His study aims to find out the level of involvement of the analyzed texts. The researcher used Romey's formula to analyze the data. Results showed that the level of the involvement is suitable, and this means that the analyzed texts are involved students during learning the Arabic language.

Nawafleh (2012) analyzed the degree of involvement in science textbooks, which are used to teach students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in Jordan. Data was collected by Romey's formula. Findings showed that the analyzed activities have an acceptable level of involvement.

Yahia (2014) analyzed science textbooks to find out the level of involvement. These textbooks were used in Jordan to teach students who are in grades 1, 2, and 3. Findings showed that the three textbooks are involved students during learning science.

Khalaf (2015) analyzed the degree of involvement in the science textbook in Jordan. This textbook is used to teach science to students who are in grade 4. After content analysis of the textbook was made, the finding showed that the analyzed activities do not involve fourth-grade students properly.

Fari (2016) analyzed the textbooks used to teach science for grades 6, 7, and 8 in Palestine. The purpose of the study is to find out the level of involvement in these textbooks. To gather the data, Romey's formula was used. Results showed that analyzed activities are not in an acceptable range, and this means that students are not involved in science class. Also, analyzing diagrams and pictures showed that they involve students in learning science.

Haji (2016) analyzed the content of the social studies textbook to find out the degree of involvement. The textbook is used for students who are in grade 6 in Kurdistan. Collecting data was based on using Romey's formula. Findings revealed that the analyzed activities are adequately involved students.

Eslaminejad and Saeid (2017) analyzed the English language textbook to find out the level of involvement. The textbook is used in Iran to teach the language to adult students. The researcher analyzed all the content of the textbook. Results showed that the textbook has a satisfactory level of involvement which means that the learning material of the book involved students in their learning the language.

Al-wa'elly (2017) investigated the degree of involvement in the Arabic language textbook. This textbook is used to teach grammar for Jordanian tenth-grade students. The researcher analyzed 74 activities to find out the involvement degree. Romey's formula was used to collect the data. Results showed that the activities are involved students according to the technique used (i.e., Romey's formula). They also showed that the involvement degree in the analyzed textbook is not in an adequate range that allows students to involve during learning the grammar.

Abu Sa'aleek (2018) analyzed the English language textbook to find out the level of involvement. The researcher analyzed 136 activities in the textbook "entitled Action Pack 12" used to learn the language in Jordan. Gathering data was based on Romey's formula. Results revealed that the learning material existing in the textbook is unsatisfactory while the degree of involvement of the analyzed activities is high.

Al-Mutairi (2020) analyzed the content of the Arabic language sixth-grade textbook to find out the level of involvement. Collecting the data was based on Romy's formula. Findings showed that presenting the content is satisfactory, which means that students are involved in the content. Also, findings showed that the activities are at an unsatisfactory level, which means they are not involved with students during their learning.

## SUMMARY

It is clear from the reviewed studies that all studies were analyzed the level of involvement in the targeted textbooks. The researchers analyzed different school subjects, such as (Alsirhani, 2011; Al-wa'elly, 2017; Al-Mutairi, 2020) who analyzed the Arabic language textbooks. The study of (Nawafleh, 2012; Yahia, 2014; Khalaf, 2015; Fari, 2016) examined the degree of involvement in science textbooks. Moreover, the study of (Eslaminejad and Saeid, 2017; Abu Sa'aleek, 2018) analyzed the level of involvement in English language textbooks. Different textbooks for different grades were analyzed, such as (Alsirhani, 2011) analyzed fourth-grade textbook. The study of (Nawafleh, 2012; Fari, 2016; Al-Mutairi, 2020; Haji, 2016) analyzed the textbooks used to teach grades 6, 7, and 8. Also, the study of (Al-wa'elly, 2017) analyzed the students' tenth-grade textbook. The study of (Abu Sa'aleek, 2018) analyzed the textbook used to teach tenth-grade students.

The present study seeks to analyze Action Pack 5 to find out the level of involvement. The current study differs from the reviewed studies because it analyzes Action Pack 5 which is a relatively new edition used in Jordan to teach English for students who are in grade 5. There are no, to the researcher's best knowledge, studies that analyzed the textbook, specifically under the study.

In the Jordanian context, students learn the English language through using the Action Pack series. This series is used to learn the language from grade 1 to 12. Students are given the English class either 4 or 5 times every week. English teachers are equipped with a teacher's book, flashcards, and CDs to teach the language naturally. The Ministry of Education (MoE) usually seeks to adapt the textbooks used to teach the English language, and this adaptation goes

through vast developments around the world. Action Pack 5 is one of the new textbooks that can now be used to learn the English language. Thus, it is important to evaluate the activities used in the textbook and decide whether they involve students in their learning the language or not.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is believed that the textbook is one of the main parts of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it is needed to revise the content of the textbook to present the educational content in a way that focuses on using higher thinking skills. Different experts are called to analyze the textbook before using it in teaching and learning. In Jordan, the MoE usually develops the textbook used in teaching the English language. One of these textbooks is Action Pack 5 which is considered the first textbook in the basic stage.

During the researcher's work in teaching the English language, he has strongly noticed that students have low performance in learning the language. This result is because the learning material is not presented in a way that students can easily get involved during learning the English language.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study tries to find the involvement level in the analyzed educational content and activities in the textbook Action Pack 5.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the degree of involvement of the educational content used in Action Pack 5?
2. What is the degree of involvement of the activities used in Action Pack 5?

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it is the first study in Jordan that analyzed the English language textbook, namely Action Pack 5. Also, it is helpful for the authors of the textbook to provide them feedback about the degree of involvement in the analyzed textbook. This study is also useful because it provides a piratical framework for English supervisors regarding the involvement to give attention when they train teachers.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to the English language textbook (i.e., Action Pack 5), which is used to teach the language during the scholastic year 2021/2022. Also, it is limited to the involvement of the textbook in two domains (the educational content and the activities).

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERM

**The Involvement:** The degree to which students' fifth-grade interact with the content of Action Pack 5, and what it contains educational content and activities that stimulate students' thinking and encourage them to research and not only as a recipient of information. The involvement of the textbook is measured by Romy's formula.

**Presenting the Educational Content:** This is the way that is used by the authors of the Action Pack to present the educational content for grade 5.

**Activities:** are the practical linguistic situations that enable the student to practice linguistic behavior inside and outside the school.

**Action Pack 5:** is the official textbook used in Jordan to teach and learn the English language for fifth-grade students.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The present study tackled the descriptive-analytical research design to accomplish the purposes of the study. The researcher used Romey's formula to find out the level of involvement of the analyzed textbook (viz. Action Pack 5).

### POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher chose the Action Pack textbook as the population of the current study to find out the degree of involvement in the analyzed content and activities. This textbook was used to teach the English language to Jordanian fifth-grade students during the year 2021/2022. The researcher depends on the specific areas to analyze the textbook as follows:

1. The involvement of the textbook regards the presentation of the educational content.
2. The involvement of the textbook regards activities.

### SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The researcher chose a part of the textbook as the sample of the current study. In light of presenting the educational content, 25% of the textbook pages were chosen. Also, he chose all the activities, totaling (122) activities.

### INSTRUMENT OF THE STUDY

This study was based on Romey's formula (1968) as the instrument of the study, which was used to collect and analyze the data. Romey's instrument can be summarized as follows:

**First:** The involvement of the textbook regards the presentation of the educational content

The educational content can classified into categories as follows: (a) facts; (b) conclusions or generalizations; (c) definitions ;(d) direct questions; (e) questions to ask students to analyze information; (f) declarative sentences; (g) instructions that ask students to perform an activity; (h) questions that are asked to interest students; (i) guided sentences; (j) rhetorical sentences. In light of this formula, the involvement of the textbook regards the presentation of the educational content is

The involvement coefficient =  $(e, f, g, h) \div (a, b, c, d)$ .

**Second:** The involvement of the textbook regards activities.

To calculate the involvement of the activities in the analyzed textbook, the researcher followed the following formula:

The number of suggested activities ÷ The number of selected pages

Interpretation of coefficient values

According to Azar (1982), the following standards can be used to find out the level of involvement. These standards were as follows:

1. If the level of involvement is zero, this means that the textbook does not engage students while they learn.
2. If the level of involvement is (1), this means that only half of the sentences involve students and encourage them to think.
3. If the level of involvement is between (0.4 - 1.5), which means that the content of the textbook makes students active while they learn.
4. If the level of involvement is less than (0.4), which means that the textbook has a simple challenge for the student's thought
5. If the level of involvement is more than (1.5), which means that the textbook has a question with little information on how to deal with these questions.

#### RELIABILITY OF THE ANALYSIS

Two methods were used to find out the reliability regards the presentation of the educational content. The first method was the analysis reliability of the researcher himself. In this method, the researcher reanalyzed the analysis of the educational content by selecting randomly five pages of the textbook pages. The researcher compared his analysis in the first and second after two weeks of finishing the first analysis. The percentage of the agreement of the two analyses was (82). The second method was made by making another analysis from another researcher after training her how to analyze the textbook based on Romey's formula. The percentage of the two analysis was (79), which it is adequate for the study.

#### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Romey's formula was used to find out the degree of involvement in the analyzed textbook. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to identify the level of involvement in the areas of the study (the educational content and the activities).

### IV. RESULTS

#### Results related to question one: What is the degree of involvement of the educational content used in Action Pack 5?

To find out the level of involvement in the analyzed educational content, the study sample was analyzed and classified under Romey's formula. Frequencies and percentages of each category were calculated. Results are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGE OF THE ANALYZED EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN ACTION PACK 5

Category	Sentences	Frequencies	Percentage
A	Facts	35	29
B	conclusions or generalizations	20	16
C	Definitions	13	10
D	direct questions	25	20
E	analytical questions	5	4
F	declarative sentences	12	10
G	Instructions	-	-
H	questions that are asked to interest students	1	1
I	guide sentences	7	6
J	rhetorical sentences	5	4
	Total	123	100%
Involvement degree of the textbook		0.19	

As shown in Table1, the degree of involvement of the Action Pack 5 textbook was (0.19). This result shows that Action Pack 5 which is used to teach the English language for grade 5 has simple challenges that stimulate student's thoughts.

#### Results related to question two: What is the degree of involvement of the activities used in Action Pack 5?

The researcher counted all the activities in the analyzed textbook (namely Action Pack 5). To find out the level of involvement of the activities, the following formula was used. The degree of involvement of the activities = The number of suggested activities (122) ÷ The number of selected pages (139) = 0.87. Table 2 shows the title of units and the number of the proposed activities.

TABLE 2  
UNIT TITLES AND THEIR NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES IN ACTION PACK 5 ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

Unit Number	Unit Title	Number of Activities
1	We usually go to the park	8
2	The moon was a circle	7
3	Did you enjoy school today?	7
4	Review	6
5	Are you going to see planes?	7
6	Grandpa took this photo	7
7	She is the youngest in the family	7
8	What were you doing?	6
9	Review	7
10	Are there any lentils?	7
11	The meal tastes delicious!	7
12	Why is Kareem excited?	7
13	Review	6
14	You should play sports	7
15	There was a great celebration!	7
16	Life will be different	7
17	Have you ever climbed a mountain?	7
18	Review	5
Total	18	122

As shown in Table2, the number of the analyzed activities was (122) and the number of textbook pages was (139). The degree of involvement was (0.87), which is acceptable if it is located between (0.4 - 1.5).

## V. DISCUSSION

### Discussion of the Results Related to Question One

The results show that the degree of involvement of the educational content (0.19), and is a very low percentage according to Romey's formula. This result indicated that the analyzed textbook is so autocratic and does not allow opportunities for students to participate actively. This confirms that the textbook which is used to teach English for grad five has educational content focusing on facts, generalizations, and conclusions. The researcher explains these results to that the textbook is based on the language directly and neglecting the importance of improving students' thinking skills and their needs to research and find the information by themselves. It can be seen from the analysis that the textbook has educational content (i.e., facts and generalizations). This indicates that the textbook has ignored utilizing the content which focuses on skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. The researcher may due to this result to that the authors of the textbook have little knowledge of the significance of involvement because they may learn in the conventional methods or may respond to norms that affect writing the educational content of Action Pack 5. Also, this result may be because the authors of the textbook are foreign, who do not know the nature of Arab students and their needs. The results of the study are congruent with the results of the study (Khalaf, 2015; Fari, 2016; Haji, 2016; Al-wa'elly, 2017; Abu Sa'aleek, 2018) who indicated in their findings that the degree of involvement of the educational content is very low percentage and unacceptable according to Romey's formula. In contrast, the results of the current study are incongruent with the studies (Alsirhani, 2011; Nawafleh, 2012; Yahia, 2014; Eslaminejad and Saeid, 2017; Al-Mutairi, 2020) who indicated in their results that the analyzed textbooks have an acceptable level of involvement.

### Discussion of the Results Related to Question Two

The results of the analysis showed that the level of involvement in the analyzed activities was (0.87). This percentage is satisfactory according to Romey's formula. Action Pack textbook for grade five presented linguistic activities that allow students to participate and activate freely and encourage them to self-learning. This result may be since the analyzed textbook has given interest for the assessment tools and activities. To achieve the purposes of the textbook, the activities are comprehensive that cover questions in different levels (i.e., comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and improving students' linguistic repertoire).

Because of the importance of the English language, the authors of the textbook present varied activities that ask students to respond to them either orally or in writing. The diversity of the activities helped the authors to enrich the textbook with different activities that make students the core of the teaching/learning process and make them autonomous learners. The findings of the current study go with the findings in studies (Fari, 2016; Haji, 2016; Eslaminejad and Saeid, 2017; Al-wa'elly, 2017; Abu Sa'aleek, 2018) who show in their analysis that the analyzed textbooks have activities that involved students while the findings of the present study do not go with the findings with studies (Khalaf, 2015; Al-Mutairi, 2020) who that their analyzed textbooks do not have activities that involve and makes students activate during their learning.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of involvement degree in Action Pack 5, several recommendations are presented:

1. Presenting the educational content in a way that stimulates students' thinking and encourages them to acquire self-learning skills.

2. Summarizing the learning material at the end of every unit to help students complete their learning and inspire them to investigate and analyze.
3. Increasing teachers' awareness about students' involvement in the teaching-learning process.
4. Conducting other research to find out the degree of involvement in other English language textbooks in Jordan.

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# How to Empower Machine-Translation-to-Web Pre-Editing From the Perspective of Grice's Cooperative Maxims

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**Abstract**—This article takes pre-editing to a new level, shifting its purpose from improving the linguistic accuracy of the machine-produced translation (MT) to boosting the communication effect of MT. Adopting the method of MT textual analysis, this research asked ten university students to read and assess two sets of MT versions generated from pre-edited and non-pre-edited texts retrieved from the web pages of five companies in Taiwan. Students were interviewed to express their preferences and make comments. The findings showed that 90% (9/10) of student respondents perceived the MT texts, which were generated from pre-edited text with a shorter length, as more communicative than the MTs produced from non-pre-edited texts. Additionally, 100% (10/10) of student respondents agreed that the MTs, which were generated from pre-edited texts with concise textual contents and thematic relevance to subheadings, were more communicative than the MTs produced from non-pre-edited texts. The respondents' feedbacks are compatible with Grice's maxims of quantity, quality, and relation. This article concludes by highlighting the new direction of revising the information amount, content, and thematic relevance of a web text, and supports extra-linguistic pre-editing from the perspective of Grice's cooperative maxims.

**Index Terms**—MT, pre-editing, quality maxim, quantity maxim, relation maxim

## I. INTRODUCTION

The automated machine-created translation (MT) has become one of easily-accessed media of information transmission and communication globally. Particularly artificial intelligence (AI) technology empowers the neural MT system to help it produce the output with better quality and high comprehensibility. Due to this improvement, people start mulling whether pre-editing, which revises the source text to enhance the readability and comprehensibility of MT outputs, remains necessary. However, for real-time effective communication of web-based MT texts, there is much more than linguistic accuracy. Despite a great improvement in the linguistic rendering of current neural MT systems, there are other factors that can enhance the communication effect of MT and that we cannot overlook. We may push and move forward to think about what to tell and how much to tell in a web-based MT text. As an add-on, pre-editing for MT-to-Web needs to consider extra-linguistic factors and shifts its linguistic issue to communication concerns. The MT of web-based text can be reader-friendly or reader-appellative. Pre-editing can move beyond linguistic accuracy and pursues how to make the MT evoke web audiences' interest. This idea is borrowed from our daily communication in which we hope to be interested in what the addressor says besides easy comprehension. Simple, easy-to-understand words and simple sentence structures are generally perceived as essential requirements for MT. However, if the audience finds that the information in an MT text is not introduced clearly and logically, they would not accept it. To ensure the effective communication of an MT text, we can pre-edit the source text to make what is said and how it is said in the MT text attractive and comprehensible to web audiences.

Most of existing literature on pre-editing calls for adhering to the rules of conciseness, simplicity and flatness (Shih, 2020). The concise style requires the use of short sentences; the simplicity feature emphasizes the use of simple sentence structures, and the flatness trait asks for the use of words without local identity, words without multiple meanings, and words without vague and ambiguous meanings. While not denying the importance of linguistic accuracy through pre-editing, this article moves a step further. It concerns the content, the way of developing ideas, and the amount of information in a source text. Pre-editing can shift its focus from linguistic to communicative aspects with an aim to foster MT-mediated communication effect. To this end, this article explores how the MT outputs of a source text with and without pre-editing show different levels of communication in the areas of content, idea development and information amount. Grice's (1975, 1989) maxims of quality, quantity and relation are used as the theoretical framework to support research findings because they discuss how conversational communication between the addressor and the addressee can be optimized following some principles. In the similar fashion, pre-editing helps boost the communication effect of MT outputs if it complies with effective communication principles. Three research questions are raised for investigation.

- (1) Why is the MT generated from a pre-edited text perceived as more communicative than that from the non-pre-edited text when examined from the information amount?

- (2) Why is the MT generated from a pre-edited text perceived as more communicative than that from the non-pre-edited text when examined from the content quality?
- (3) Why is the MT generated from a pre-edited text perceived as more communicative than that from the non-pre-edited text when examined from the contextual structure?

Never is research on pre-editing strategies conducted from the perspective of Grice's (1975, 1989) cooperative maxims, so this article is a new attempt and opens up a new direction. The author asked ten student participants to assess the MTs of the source texts with and without pre-editing, and it was justified that the MT generated from a pre-edited text had a better communication effect.

## II. THEORY REVIEW

### A. Pre-Editing

Pre-editing is defined as "the process of preparing a source language (SL) for translation by a machine translation system" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 129). It is also seen as the process of revising a source text before it is rendered by an MT system (Melby, 1987). According to Carbonell & Tomita (1987), the purpose of pre-editing is to "eliminate complex grammatical structures, ambiguous words and problematic nuances" (p. 72). In other words, the objective of pre-editing is to reduce the semantic vagueness of lexical items and the incorrectness of grammatical, syntactic structures.

Pre-editing often goes through the process of converting a natural language into a controlled language. A source text is revised using a simplified form of language based on some restrictions on lexicon, grammar and syntactic structures of the source text. The controlled language, as opposed to the natural language, refers to an artificial language that does not permit an erroneous expressive variation in sentence structures and semantic features. Arnold, et al. (1994) claimed that a controlled language referred to "a specially simplified version of a language" (p. 211), perceived as a partial solution to communication problems. In essence, it is a "variant of [source language] in which texts are composed according to a set of rules designed to enhance the clarity and readability of what is said" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 29). It uses "only a limited number of basic words (including a clearly circumscribed teaching vocabulary), each of which typically has only one meaning" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 30). In the MT context, it is "used as a means of improving the performance of machine translation systems" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 29). In order for the MT system to produce more correct multi-lingual outputs, weather bulletins, medical reports, UVI reports, traffic reports, business letters, product instructions, and automobile owners' manuals, to cite few, are often written using the controlled language.

International companies developed and implemented controlled language tools to perform pre-MT editing. European Association of Aerospace Industries developed AECMA Simplified English, and applied it in the aeronautic industry (Torrejón & Rico, 2002). Boeing Company developed Boeing Technical English (BTE) and used it to restrict and unify the style of BTE texts. Caterpillar Inc., a heavy-equipment machinery manufacturer, developed Caterpillar Technical English (CTE) to assist in the translating of some documents (Torrejón & Rico, 2002). General Motors conducted the Controlled Automotive Service Language project (CASL) in 1993. The Swedish manufacturer of trucks, Scania, and BMW developed their own controlled language system for Swedish and German texts respectively (Torrejón & Rico, 2002).

Over the past ten years, rapid technological advances in neural MT system have greatly improved linguistic accuracy of MT outputs. Thus, pre-editing has been less applied. However, the author thinks that for an online neural MT system to render the web text into multiple target languages, pre-editing remains useful in non-linguistic aspects. Since web audiences often scan or skim the web-based MT texts for desirable information, they care more about getting core messages immediately rather than the high level of linguistic accuracy. Thus, current pre-editing can make an alternation on its focuses, changing from previous linguistic areas to communicative and functional issues. This proposal is what the present article aims to promote.

### B. Theory of Grice's Cooperative Maxims

Since this article supports the communication effect of the MT generated from a text with extra-linguistic pre-editing from the perspective of Grice's cooperative maxims, the important concepts of the theory need to be discussed at some length. Grice (1975, 1989) proposed the cooperative principle because the key to effective communication was commonly tailoring a message to the addressee's/receiver's need. To illuminate the cooperation principle, Grice (1975, 1989) raised four maxims--quantity, quality, relation and manner. The quantity maxim refers to the right amount of information input; the quality maxim means true information; the relation maxim suggests relevant information, and the manner maxim means a brief, clear and orderly presentation. The four maxims cover the scope of message, the source of the message, the content of the message and the way of presenting a message. The scope must be appropriate, neither too much nor too little. The information source must be true and, if needed, have the evidence. The content must be relevant to the topic or be treated as a relevant response. The way of presenting must be succinct, brief and orderly. In this research, only the maxims of quantity, quality and relation are used to support the communication effect of the MT generated from a pre-edited text.

According to Grice (1975, 1989), too much information could cause a waste of time, but too little information will be informatively inadequate. The false information might offend the hearer and the unclear and illogical, ambiguous way of delivering the message will hinder the conversation from continuing. Additionally, the speaker and the hearer must move toward a mutually accepted goal or follow the same direction in their talk; otherwise their information is not related to the shared topic and cannot move on.

Green (1996) pointed out that Grice's (1975, 1989) cooperative maxims had been overrated as the common assumptions for all speakers in the world without paying attention to intercultural difference or diverse ways of communication. The author agrees to this point and argues that no theory can be generalized to cover all individual instances. Partial modification is needed when a theory is replicated in a different study. Thus, adopting Grice's (1975, 1989) cooperative maxims to discuss MT-enabled communication, the author has raised some modification.

In the area of information amount, Grice's (1975, 1989) maxim of quantity is applicable without adaptation. In each act of communication, a wordy text or talk is often boring to the reader and the hearer. Many people feel it is a waste of time to read a long text for information scanning or skimming. Particularly web audiences are eager to get the main idea or the gist of a text within a short time. Thus, the rule of neither too much nor too little information is used to examine the pre-editing of textual length. Regarding textual content, Grice's (1975, 1989) maxim of quality needs to be modified. In the conversation situation, Grice (1975, 1989) asked the addressor to provide true information with reliable resources. For web audiences, instead of genuine, reliable information, the important and interesting information is what they are more concerned about. Thus, when it is used to support pre-editing function, Grice's (1975, 1989) maxim of quality is modified as important and intriguing information.

In the aspect of thematic relevance, Grice's (1975, 1989) maxim of relation emphasizes relevance to immediate needs in the process of interaction. This means that the addressor needs to consider what the addressee expects to hear from the talk and the information must be relevant to the topic they are talking. In the context of pre-editing, the MT text expects to convey messages in a well-organized way, so Grice's (1975, 1989) maxim of relation can be adjusted from relevance to the addressor's immediate needs to informative relevance to thematic subheadings. The modified maxim of relation refers to the thematic relevance of information as the guidance for pre-editing. Overall, Grice's (1975, 1989) discussion is set within the context of conversation, but our discussion is put within the MT context, so the maxims of quantity, quality and relation need adjustments to fit pre-editing in the present research.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. *Collected Data*

Some passages extracted from the web-based texts of five Taiwan's companies are collected, including Chinese Petroleum Corporation (CPC) (2013), Asogroup Com. (2011), ASUSTeK Computer Inc. (2016), The Grand Hotel (2018) and Ten Ren Tea Co. Ltd.(2021). All collected texts are used for pre-editing. The focuses of pre-editing include (1) shortening the length of the text, (2) removing redundant, unimportant information, and (3) adding subheadings and relating information to the subheading. The three areas of pre-editing are kept in line with Grice's (1975, 1989) maxims of quantity, quality and relation.

Two MT versions of the text with and without pre-editing are collected for a comparison. The neural MT system, DeepL, is used to generate English translation from Chinese. DeepL is chosen because it hails itself as the world's most accurate translator on the web through an assessment of English-to/from-Germany, English-to/from-French and English-to/from-Spanish MT outputs generated by DeepL, Google, Amazon and Microsoft (DeepL. Com., n.d.).

#### B. *Research Methods*

This research adopts a mixed-method approach consisting of MT textual analysis and informal interview. The communication effect of two MT versions of the same source text with and without pre-editing were analyzed and assessed by student participants, who were English majors. These students volunteered to help assess the English MT texts. Eight females and two males were included, and their English proficiency was beyond the B1 level (550 scores) of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). All participants received informal interviews through their verbal consent.

The entire MT text is used as an assessment unit because web audiences often read an MT text to get its gist or its core messages. The participants revealed their views after a comparison of two MT versions. They informed which MT version they thought was more communicative in terms of textual length, content quality and idea development. Additionally, they commented why they favored one version over the other. They were advised to overlook lexical, syntactic and grammatical errors because the assessment in this research did not focus on linguistic accuracy of MT. The participants' feedback after reading two sets of MT versions of five texts was provided to the authors during informal interviews.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. *Pre-Editing Textual Length to Produce More Communicative MT*

In response to RQ1, the findings showed the MT generated from the shorter, pre-edited text was perceived as more communicative than the MT produced from the longer, non-pre-edited text. Nine out of ten (90%) student respondents favored the MT generated from the shorter, pre-edited text over the MT produced from the longer, non-pre-edited text. The consensus the student respondents had reached was that a shorter MT version could reduce their effort and time for reading. Table 1 shows two MTs of a passage retrieved from the CPC text with and without pre-editing.

TABLE 1  
TWO MTs OF A PASSAGE FROM THE CPC TEXT WITH AND WITHOUT PRE-EDITING

Source Text without Pre-editing	MT1
本公司產製高品質的優良油品，火炬商標早已受到國人的信賴，品質第一是信守不渝的經營理念。 <u>未來更應加強品質管理致力提昇國人生活環境的品質。本公司肩負國家多項任務，充分供應各行業用油是本公司重要職責之一；</u> 油品市場自由化後，為了市場占有率，業務經營更著力於銷售服務面。如：特殊的工業用油服務及用油技術的指導，對第一線油品銷售人員的服務水準與態度更為要求，以落實服務至上的經營理念，繼續維繫市場「領導」品牌於不墜。(Chinese Petroleum Corporation, 2013)	Our company produces high quality oil products, and the Torch trademark has long been trusted by the people of China, and quality is our business philosophy. <u>In the future, we should strengthen the quality management and strive to improve the quality of the living environment of the nation. Our company is responsible for many national tasks,</u> and supplying oil for all industries is one of our important responsibilities. After the liberalization of the oil market, in order to gain market share, our business operation is more focused on the sales and service side. For example: special industrial oil service and oil technology guidance, the service standard and attitude of the front-line oil sales staff are more demanding, in order to implement the business philosophy of service first, and continue to maintain the "leading" brand in the market without falling. (139 wds)
Source Text with Pre-editing	MT2
本公司產製高品質的優良油品，火炬商標早已受到國人的信賴，品質第一是信守不渝的經營理念。 <del>未來更應加強品質管理致力提昇國人生活環境的品質。肩負國家多項任務</del> 本公司重要職責之一是充分供應各行業用油； <del>油品市場自由化後，為了市場占有率，業務經營更著力於銷售服務面。如：</del> 本公司指導特殊的工業用油服務及用油技術， <del>對第一線要求</del> 油品銷售人員的服務水準與態度，以落實服務至上的經營理念， <del>繼續維繫市場「領導」品牌於不墜。</del> (Chinese Petroleum Corporation, 2013)	Our company produces high quality oil products and the Torch trademark has long been trusted by the nation. Quality first is our business philosophy. One of the important responsibilities of our company is to fully supply oil for all industries; our company instructs special industrial oil service and oil technology, and requires the service standard and attitude of oil sales staff to implement the business philosophy of service first. (69 wds)

As shown above, the length of MT2 produced from the pre-edited text is 69 words, as opposed to 139 words of MT1 generated from the non-pre-edited text. Most students were positive about MT2, expressing that the shorter MT version contained the lower amount of information, so it sped up their reading. One student respondent claimed that she did not care about the detailed information when skimming a web text. A couple of student respondents revealed that they did not have patience to read the details, so the shorter, the better. They thought that some statements, e.g., "In the future, we should strengthen the quality management and strive to improve the quality of the living environment of the nation," and "Our company is responsible for many national tasks," were redundant and could be eliminated. Without the information, they still could understand clearly the business philosophy of CPC—the strong commitment to the production of good-quality oil for the country. Contrary to most respondents' view, another student respondent insisted that detailed information should be retained, so she could understand better the business value and contributions of CPC.

Many student respondents' preference for the shorter MT version suggests that web audiences in general favor a shorter text because it can reduce their cognitive load of reading the web text. This point concurs with Grice's (1975, 1989) proposal of the quantity maximum that urges the addressor to use neither too much nor too little information in the process of information exchange. The current Chinese web texts addressing domestic companies tend to use overlapping information, so they can be revised.

#### B. Pre-Editing Textual Content to Produce More Communicative MT

In answer to RQ 2, the findings showed that the MT produced from the pre-edited text that carried only key information was perceived as more communicative than the MT generated from the non-pre-edited text. All ten student respondents (100%) favored MT2 generated from the text whose content was pre-edited over MT1 produced from the text whose content was not pre-edited. It was agreed that MT2 highlighted the important and intriguing information, so it attracted audiences' attention and interest. Table 2 shows the two MTs of a passage extracted from the web-based text of Asogroup Com. (abbreviated as ASO) with and without pre-editing.

TABLE 2  
TWO MTs OF A PASSAGE FROM THE ASO TEXT WITH AND WITHOUT PRE-EDITING

Source Text without Pre-editing	MT1
五十多年來，社會環境不斷變遷，然而阿瘦皮鞋這份對產品的堅持與講究卻不曾改變，每一雙阿瘦皮鞋都是「用心、貼心、愛心」的完美呈現。 <u>透過產品不斷地精進、研發，打造每一雙結合了「時尚設計」與「精湛工藝」的鞋款。</u> 以「真、善、美、新」為品牌核心經營理念：「真」- 真材實料、實實在在，「善」- 舒適好穿的鞋款、完善的服務，「美」- 與時俱進的時尚款式，「新」- 滿足、超越消費者需求的創新產品。未來，阿瘦皮鞋仍將繼續努力，向下一個五十年邁進。(Asogroup Com., 2011)	The social environment in Taiwan has changed a lot in the past 50 years, but our persistence and efforts have not changed at all. Our shoes represent our sincerity, thoughtfulness and love. <u>Through continuous improvement and research, our shoes combine fashionable design with excellent skills.</u> "True, Good, Beautiful, New" is our key business philosophy. "Truth" means genuine materials and solid work. "Goodness" means comfortable shoes and perfect service; "beauty" means ever-evolving styles; "newness" means ever-innovating products to meet customer needs. We will continue to work hard to move into the next 50 years.(93 wds)
Source Text with Pre-editing	MT 2
<del>50 多年以來，社會環境不斷變遷，然而阿瘦皮鞋這份對產品的堅持與講究卻不曾改變。</del> 阿瘦皮鞋製作的每一雙包含我們的誠意、貼心及愛心。 <del>透過產品不斷地精進、研發，打造每一雙結合了「時尚設計」與「精湛工藝」的鞋款。</del> 以「真、善、美、新」為我們的核心理念：「真」--真材實料、 <del>實實在在</del> ，「善」-- <del>舒適好穿的鞋款</del> 、完善的服務，「美」--與時俱進的時尚款式，「新」--滿足、 <del>超越</del> 消費者需求的創新產品。未來，阿瘦皮鞋仍將繼續努力，向下一個五十年邁進。(Asogroup Com., 2011)	For more than 50 years, each pair of leather shoes made by A-Skinny has contained our sincerity, thoughtfulness and love. Our core business philosophy is "Truth, Goodness, Beauty, and Newness": "Truth" -- genuine materials, "Goodness"-- perfect service, "Beauty" -- fashionable styles that keep up with the times, and "Newness"-- innovative products that meet consumer needs. In the future, A-Skin will continue to strive for the next fifty years.(70 wds)

Being asked the reason for her preference for MT2, one student respondent expressed that the key points of the text, namely the business philosophy of ASO, appeared immediately after the beginning sentence, so it attracted her interest. In contrast, when the same message was shown after three long sentences in MT1, it had downplayed its importance and could not evoke her interest. Another student respondent who had the similar view claimed that she needed to decode the meanings of the first three long sentences before she caught the core message of ASO business philosophy of "Truth, Goodness, Beauty, and Newness". Several students agreed that the redundant information, e.g., "Through continuous improvement and research, our shoes combine fashionable design with excellent skills," distracted their attention from the core message of the business philosophy of ASO.

We may examine how students respond to another example that is the MT of a passage extracted from the web text of The Grand Hotel (abbreviated as TGH). Table 3 shows the two MTs of a passage with and without pre-editing.

TABLE 3  
TWO MTs OF A PASSAGE FROM THE TGH TEXT WITH AND WITHOUT PRE-EDITING

Source Text without Pre-editing	MT1
圓山飯店創立於民國 41 年（西元 1952 年），十四層宮殿式大樓，巍峨高聳於圓山之腰， <u>前臨基隆河、後倚陽明山、東望松山、西眺淡水。</u> 飯店紅柱金瓦氣勢宏偉的外觀，襯托富麗堂皇的古典氣氛，傳達了中國的藝術之美，是台北市的代表地標之一， <u>聞名世界。</u> 是中外人士觀光住宿或商務會議的最佳選擇。(The Grand Hotel, 2018)	Founded in 1952, the 14-story palace-style building towers over the waist of Yuanshan Mountain, <u>facing the Keelung River, leaning against Yangmingshan Mountain, looking east at Songshan Mountain and west at Danshui.</u> The hotel's <u>magnificent outlook with red pillars and golden tiles,</u> set against the magnificent classical atmosphere, conveys the beauty of Chinese art and is one of the representative landmarks of Taipei City and <u>is known worldwide.</u> It is the best choice for sightseeing and business meetings for Chinese and foreigners.
Source Text with Pre-editing	MT 2
圓山飯店創立於民國 41 年（西元 1952 年），十四層宮殿式大樓，巍峨高聳於圓山之腰， <del>前臨基隆河、後倚陽明山、東望松山、西眺淡水。</del> 飯店紅柱金瓦氣勢宏偉的外觀， <del>襯托富麗堂皇的古典氣氛，傳達了中國的藝術之美，</del> 是台北市的代表地標之一， <del>聞名世界。</del> 是中外人士觀光住宿或商務會議的最佳選擇。(The Grand Hotel, 2018)	Founded in 1952, the 14-story palace-style building towers over the Yuanshan Mountain. It is one of the representative landmarks of Taipei City, with a magnificent classical atmosphere that conveys the beauty of Chinese art. It is the best choice for sightseeing and business meetings for Chinese and foreigners.

With the same results as student responses to the example shown in Table 2, all student respondents favored MT 2 produced from the pre-edited text, which preserved only important and significant information, over MT 1 generated from the non-pre-edited text. A couple of student respondents reached an agreement that without unnecessary information. e.g., "facing the Keelung River, leaning against Yangmingshan Mountain, looking east at Songshan Mountain and west at Danshui," and "magnificent outlook with red pillars and golden tiles," MT2 allowed them to

concentrate their attention on the most important information of “the 14-story palace-style building towers over the Yuanshan Mountain”. On the contrary, MT1 provided redundant information to make the key message off focus and so reduced the audience’s interest. One student maintained that the web text with only meaningful and significant information, as exemplified by MT2, intrigued him and motivated him to read the text. Another student noted that the loud statement “is known worldwide” exaggerated the fact, so he disliked MT1.

Student respondents’ overwhelming preference for MT2 brings into light that the MT text that conveys key and interesting information without miscellaneous, exaggerative information can trigger the reader’s interest. Most web audiences scan web texts first and then determine if the texts are worth close reading. Thus, the quality of the content of the web text is a key factor to affect web audiences’ choice of reading it or not. The respondents’ comments concur with Grice’s (1975, 1989) maxim of quality. As the addressee regards conveyed information as false and then discontinues conversation in Grice’s (1975, 1989) communication context, the audiences who scan MT texts lose their interest when they find that the MT cannot immediately attract their attention and interest.

### C. Pre-Editing Contextual Structure to Produce More Communicative MT

In reply to RQ 3, the findings showed that the MT produced from the pre-edited text, which added thematic sub-headings and related information to the specific themes, were accepted as more communicative than the MT generated from the non-pre-edited text. All student respondents (100%, 10/10) favored MT2 generated from the text, whose presentational way emphasized thematic relevance to subheadings, over MT1 produced from the text whose way of information presentation was not logical. Table 4 shows the two MTs of a passage extracted from the web-based text of Ten Ren's Tea (abbreviated as TRT) with and without pre-editing.

TABLE 4  
TWO MTs OF A PASSAGE FROM THE TRT TEXT WITH AND WITHOUT PRE-EDITING

Source Text without Pre-editing	MT1
以『老行業・新經營』的精神・天仁致力於產品創新、通路創新及組織創新・除了將商品以茶為核心向各類型食品發展外・也開發「喫茶趣」(cha FOR TEA)複合式餐飲連鎖系統・以追求茶葉國際化、生活化、年輕化的目標。2003 年天仁授權美國可口可樂公司生產烏龍茶、綠茶飲料・創下國內傳統產業跨國性策略聯盟的典範。秉持「天然、健康、人情味」的經營理念・天仁購物網結合實體通路的優勢・提高服務品質・以踏實經營為原則・顧客滿意為目標・逐步的實現「有足跡的地方・就有天仁茗茶」。茶是天然、和平的飲料。創造更和諧、健康的社會與生活環境・將是天仁永遠追求的目標。(Ten Ren Tea Co. Ltd.,2021)	With the spirit of "old industry, new management", Tianren is committed to product innovation, channel innovation and organizational innovation. <u>In addition to developing products with tea as the core to various types of food, it also develops the "cha FOR TEA" complex -Style restaurant chain system</u> , in order to pursue the goal of internationalization, life and youth of tea. <u>In 2003, Tianren authorized the American Coca-Cola Company to produce oolong tea and green tea beverages, setting a model for the multinational strategic alliance of domestic traditional industries.</u> Adhering to the business philosophy of "Natural, Healthy, and Humane", Tianren Shopping Network combines the advantages of physical channels to improve service quality, based on the principle of pragmatic operation and customer satisfaction as the goal, and gradually realizes "Where there is a footprint, there is Tianren "Mingcha". <u>Tea is a natural and peaceful drink.</u> Creating a more harmonious and healthy society and living environment will be the goal that Tianren will always pursue.
Source Text with Pre-editing	MT 2
經營理念 天仁追求自然、健康與人情味的生活。我們的原則是誠實的操作且我們的主要關注是顧客的滿意度。我們想要創造和諧的社會與健康的生活環境。我們最終的目標是擴展我們的分店・故我們能夠在世界各地服務客戶。  創新業績 我們致力於產品的創新、行銷的創新與組織的創新如下： 1)我們商品以茶為核心・向各類型食品發展。 2)我們發展 food & drink 連鎖系統・名為 Cha For Tea。我們已變成更國際化、更年輕及更友善使用者的公司。 3)在 2003・我們授權美國 Coke-Cola 公司生產烏龍茶與綠茶・創下國內傳統產業跨國性策略聯盟的典範。(Ten Ren Tea Co. Ltd.,2021)	<b>Business philosophy</b> Tianren pursues a natural, healthy and humane life. Our principle is honest operation and our main concern is customer satisfaction. We want to create a harmonious society and healthy living environment. Our ultimate goal is to expand our branches, so we can serve customers all over the world.  <b>Innovation performance</b> We are committed to product innovation, marketing innovation and organizational innovation as follows: 1) Our products take tea as the core and develop into various types of food. 2) We develop a food & drink chain system called Cha For Tea. We have become a more international, younger and user-friendly company. 3) In 2003, we authorized the American company Coke-Cola to produce oolong tea and green tea, setting a model for the multinational strategic alliance of domestic traditional industries.

Many students were of the opinion that the contextual organization in MT2 helped them comprehend the messages easily and clearly. When they saw the subheading “Innovation performance” that indicated the theme of the business achievements of Ten Ren’s Tea, they prepared for getting the information regarding the objectives the company had achieved over the past several years. In this way, they got the gist and understood the thematic messages easily. In contrast, MT1 had all information grouped together without thematic distinction, so it caused them to have difficult comprehension.

One student respondent pointed out that in MT1, the first sentence singled out the company's innovation philosophy, but the subsequent sentences did not introduce how the company enforced the philosophy. The other student respondent expressed that in MT1, the sentence that addressed the company's achievements, e.g., "In 2003, Tianren authorized the American Coca-Cola Company to produce oolong tea and green tea beverages, setting a model for the multinational strategic alliance of domestic traditional industries" was mixed with the sentence that presented the company's innovation commitment, e.g., "In addition to developing products with tea as the core to various types of food, it also develops the "cha FOR TEA" complex-Style restaurant chain system." This contextual structure caused the MT text to be thematically confusing. Furthermore, the sentence, "Tea is a natural and peaceful drink", was irrelevant to the sentences that came before and after it. Another student respondent commented that as opposed to MT1, MT2 was well-organized by providing two subheadings "business philosophy" and "innovation performance", and grouping relevant information together under the two subheadings. This organizational way allowed him to understand the context easily.

The above example suggests that if all ideas are organized with thematic relevance to specific subheadings, they would be easily understood. The student respondents' comments concur with Grice's (1975, 1989) modified maxim of relation. The findings are supported by Strawson's (1964) argument that relevance in human communication is a common shared principle because "stating is not a gratuitous and random human activity" (p. 92). All given information is required to be relevant to the thematic topic (Wilson, 1998; Reinhart, 1981) and the greater the relevance of the information input, the smaller the processing effort is needed on the receiver/hearer. In the same vein, MT2 showcases a higher degree of thematic relevance than MT1, so it is more easily comprehended with less cognitive effort.

At this point, it is concluded that in addition to textual length, textual content, the way to present ideas or the way information is introduced is not of less importance. Pre-editing should give equal attention to the above three extra-linguistic areas to generate a more communicative MT text.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article presents the case study of the MTs of company texts with and without pre-editing in the areas of textual length, content, and textual structure to justify the strength of extra-linguistic pre-editing. While not denying the effectiveness of improving semantic, syntactic, grammar accuracy of MT outputs through pre-editing in existing literature, this article proposes an add-on direction—to focus pre-editing on extra-linguistic areas of a web text to optimize the communication effect of MT. The results of a comparative assessment on two sets of MT versions by university students have justified the communication effectiveness of extra-linguistic pre-editing. The present article takes on some research significance as follows.

- The existing literature of pre-editing never touches on extra-linguistic adaptation. In a different manner, this article shows that pre-editing can be done on the content, information amount and thematic relevance to enhance the communication effect of MT.
- MT and pre-editing is never probed from the perspective of Grice's (1975, 1989) cooperative maxims, so this article is a new attempt and opens up a new direction in the study of pre-editing.
- To optimize the MT-mediated web-based communication, pre-editing can move beyond the linguistic issue and consider how to increase web audiences' interest by meeting the extra-linguistic expectations.

This article concludes by calling for pre-editing a web text into a more communicative one with the appropriate amount of information, meaningful content, and thematic relevance. Pre-editing in the future can move towards a new path it did not take before when faced with the increasing linguistic accuracy of MT outputs generated by an advanced neural MT system, which is accessible for free on the web.

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# Teacher Written vs. Audio Feedback on Undergraduates' Written Assignments

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**Abstract**—Due to the importance of instructor's feedback on students' written assignment as part of formative assessment and the relatively new way of delivering audio feedback, this case study aimed to explore instructor's audio vs. written feedback provided on 15 pairs of undergraduates' written tasks through Google Docs over an academic semester in a Saudi public university. The data was collected from actual feedback comments in both modes and follow-up interviews with the students. The content analysis of feedback revealed that audio feedback differed from written feedback in terms of quantity and content. Despite the potential of audio feedback revealed through the content analysis, the majority of students (16) preferred written feedback over audio feedback for its clarity, easiness, easy access to feedback and its focus on a certain issue in the assignments, whereas 14 of them preferred audio feedback. Several challenges highlighted by the students, including its length and detailed instruction and the difficulty in accessing it served as good points for several pedagogical implications for instructors in this study.

**Index Terms**—feedback, audio feedback, written feedback, peer review, L2 writing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher feedback is an essential part or component of teaching, especially in writing classroom instruction (Dixon, 2015). It has been documented as an effective way of teachers'/instructors' formative assessment of students' writing or written tasks and assignments in various undergraduate courses, including writing in higher education (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014; Dixon, 2015). Feedback is a type of teachers' scaffolding to students to achieve certain goals (e.g., successful accomplishment of written tasks) that they may not be able to do alone (Hyland, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Gould & Day, 2013; Lee, 2014). Effective teacher feedback related to the goals and outcomes specified in a given course (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick 2006). The effect of teachers' effective feedback on students' assignments is even associated with students' future learning (Hennessy & Gillian Forrester, 2014).

Due to the importance of teachers' feedback on students' assignments, many researchers have explored the way feedback should be composed and provided to students. Specifically, whether teachers should deliver their feedback in written comments or audio records has attracted the attention of those researchers. In order to explore this interesting research topic, studies have compared and evaluated both modes of teacher feedback on students' assignments in different courses and disciplines (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Rodway-Dyer, Knight, and Dunne 2011). Most of these studies provided evidence of the efficacy of audio feedback, especially when combined with written feedback. Certain advantages of audio feedback as perceived by students include clarify, simplicity in terms of the language used, detailed instruction on students' issues and flaws in their written tasks and useful suggestions and explanations (Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova et al., 2011; Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011; Parkes & Fletcher, 2016; Voelkel & Mello, 2014).

Yet, most of these studies have reported such findings on the advantages of audio feedback from students' perceptions through questionnaires, interviews and even focus group discussions as reflections at the end of courses. According to Macgregor, Spiers, and Taylor (2011), while previous research has reported students' perception of audio feedback as quality or good feedback, there is still a need for a comprehensive investigation of the effectiveness of audio feedback in students' learning. Such comparison between both modes of teacher feedback could have been enriching if analysis of the actual feedback practices had been implemented in most previous research. This is crucial especially since "the advent of audio feedback technology is relatively new and its use in higher education as a vehicle for feedback is in its infancy. Consequently, there is not a substantial body of research on the subject" (Lunt & Curran, 2010, p. 760). Therefore, the present study attempted to explore teacher's audio vs. written feedback from both an actual analysis of teacher feedback and from students' perspectives by answering the following two research questions:

1. How does the audio feedback differ from the written feedback provided by the instructor on undergraduates' written assignments in relation to its amount and content?
2. How did the undergraduates view both types of teacher feedback provided on their writing?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Theory:** Teacher/instructor feedback has been conceptualized in previous research as a type of scaffolding or assistance provided to student in successfully accomplishing their tasks that they may not be able to complete independently (e.g., Hyland, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2014). Such conceptualization of feedback as scaffolding is founded on the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsk, 1978). This theory provides insights into the process of mediated learning and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). As learners engage in learning through collaboration with others (e.g., teachers or peers), they are assisted (e.g., verbal assistance or assistance through language) not only to do certain tasks but also to progress in their learning and achieve higher levels of ZPD (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Nassaji & Swain, 2000). From this theory, feedback assists learners to detect the issues and flaws in their written tasks and also helps them to correct such issues and enhance their tasks.

**Previous studies on audio vs. written feedback:** Recently, due to the increasing revolution of technology in higher education, many researchers have explored the potential of instructors' audio feedback and even compared it to written feedback on students' written assignments in various courses and disciplines (e.g., Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Rodway-Dyer, Knight, and Dunne 2011). Most earlier studies focusing on students' perception and experiences in receiving audio vs. written feedback reported students' highly positive perception of or preference for audio feedback over written feedback (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova et al., 2011; Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011; Parkes & Fletcher, 2016; Voelkel & Mello, 2014).

These above studies supporting the potential of audio feedback also documented certain features or advantages of audio feedback perceived by students. For instance, according to Rodway-Dyer et al., (2011), audio feedback is time-effective, applicable to different types of assessment and tailored to the needs of individual learners or groups and understandable. For Hennessy and Forrester (2014), the perceived the advantages of audio feedback include its effectiveness, inclusion of less technical language and provision of detailed instruction. As reported by Parkes and Fletcher (2016), the positive features of audio feedback perceived by the students are its clarity, easiness, identification of areas of strengths and weakness in students' assignments and being personal.

Moreover, Voelkel & Mello (2014) found that audio feedback was associated with students' satisfaction, particularly in relation to the amount of feedback, details and clarity. It was also interesting that it is not only the detailed nature of audio feedback that was identified by Lunt and Curran (2010), but also the poor standard of written feedback students received which were the main reasons behind their preference for audio feedback. Audio feedback was also preferred by students for it involved students in better learning of the course content (Olesova et al., 2011).

Some previous researchers reported that students' preference for audio vs. written feedback differed according to the foci/content of feedback. For instance, Ice et al. (2010) found that while the combination of audio and written feedback was preferred by students at all levels. On the other hand, most of the students preferred receiving written feedback over audio feedback focusing on the micro-level issues. The reasons behind this preference could be due to the focus of written feedback on one instance of poor spelling and grammar, whereas audio feedback providing a detailed instruction on each point or issue confuses students. This finding supports the findings reported by According to Still (2006) who found that the majority of students preferred receiving written feedback on their grammar and spelling-related issues.

Some studies have also reported contradicting findings on the potential of audio feedback, which also highlighted its disadvantages. Fawcett and Oldfield (2016) found that the students showed a significantly higher preference for written feedback over audio feedback. The students' experiences in the quality of feedback did not significantly differ between those receiving either audio or written feedback. The researchers justified such findings by stating that the standard of the written feedback (well-written feedback as opposed to hand-written feedback in early studies) could prevent students from perceiving the higher quality of audio feedback over the written feedback and also the experimental nature of the study as opposed to most previous studies.

According to Johnson and Cooke (2015), the majority of students preferred written feedback over audio feedback. They also justified their preference by stating that they could easily refer to written feedback as opposed to audio feedback that requires downloading. The researchers attributed such finding to the skills and comfort of tutors in recording their feedback. In a study by Olesova et al. (2011), most students perceived written feedback more effective than audio feedback due to the visual support the written feedback provides. Voelkel and Mello (2014) found that that students' referring to written feedback was higher than their referring to audio feedback, which could be due to the easiness involved in re-reading the written feedback as opposed to re-listening to the audio feedback.

## III. METHODOLOGY

**Research design:** The current study adopted a qualitative research approach, specifically an exploratory case study. Such approach suits the aim of the present study, particularly exploring the audio feedback as part of instructor's feedback (Gould & Day, 2013). Thus, the case study reported in this paper is context bound since it focuses on a particular undergraduate course in a Saudi public university.

**Study setting and participants:** The study was conducted among 30 undergraduates joining a linguistic course at the third year of their undergraduate program at the Department of English in a Saudi public university. The university

campus where the study was carried out was especially for male students so all participants in this study are male Saudi students. The participants were joining the English Bachelor Program in Education and they speak English as a foreign language (EFL), while their first language (L1) is Arabic. The course they were joining reported in this study aims to enable students acquire knowledge about linguistics in English. However, the task assigned to them, the main focus of this study, is a critique of two papers focusing on topic related to linguistic analysis of morphological and syntactic features of a text in English.

**Study procedure:** Prior to the study procedure, the learners were informed of the purpose of this study and for ethical considerations, they signed a written form each student. They were also informed of the follow-up interviews and assured of protecting their confidentiality. The participating students joining the course were assigned to critique writing. They were instructed on the task as one of the tasks required for the evaluation of their performance in this course at the start of the semester. The students were assigned to start working on the task from the fourth week of the semester till the thirteenth week when they had to submit their final drafts for evaluation. However, since the task was effort-demanding, the students were assigned in 15 pairs. They were given the chance to select their peers and their topics of the tasks. Then, the instructor taught them how to use Google Docs via their mobiles in the classroom. He also created 15 Google Docs pages and shared each page with its respective pair of students. Once they finished writing the first draft (Week 10), each pair uploaded the draft in their Google Docs page for the instructor to give feedback. At this first stage, the instructor read all drafts and provided feedback, while each pair had to revise the task based on the written feedback.

As they finished revision, the instructor read the revised drafts to check students' revisions based on the written feedback, then the second stage (audio feedback) started. The feedback was recorded by the instructor's through mobile using Talk & Comment for Android. Once he finished recording each feedback, he could copy the link and posted it in the form of written comment in the Google Docs that was immediately converted into audio once the students' playing program was on. The students were also trained on how to play and listen to sample audio feedback. This stage lasted till the thirteenth week when all pairs received audio feedback from the instructor and revised their tasks as final versions to be submitted for evaluation.

**Data collection:** The data was collected from the instructors' feedback on students' written tasks and follow-up interviews with the students. For the first type of data, the feedback comprised the instructors' written and audio feedback comments. This data was archived in the Google Docs pages of the 15 pairs of students. Once each pair revised the draft in both stages based on the written feedback and audio feedback, respectively, they were asked to upload their revised draft in the form of word file, but they were not allowed to delete the feedback comments from the Google Docs since this data later was analyzed. While the instructor's written feedback was collected at the end of the first stage, the audio feedback was collected at the end of the second stage. Both modes of data were archived and subjected for analysis later.

For the second type of data, the students were interviewed at the last week of the semester by another researcher. The follow-up interview consisted of five structured questions that were prepared prior to the interview meeting. The questions focused on eliciting students' reflections on their experiences in receiving audio vs. written feedback as well as their preferences for modes of feedback, justifications behind their preferences and their likes and dislikes for both modes of feedback. However, there were also a few other questions seeking clarifications, elaboration and justifications of their views were asked during the interview meeting. The students were interviewed individually, and the entire interview session lasted almost for five hours. It was recorded using the researcher's mobile recording voice.

**Data analysis:** Prior to the analysis of the instructor's actual feedback, the audio recorded comments were listened to by the instructor and another colleague. Then, the comments were transcribed and were organized along with the written feedback in word files. This made it easier for us to read the comments carefully, compare and contrast the audio and written feedback. The actual analysis was initiated by counting the overall number of audio recorded comments ( $n=97$ ) and written feedback comments ( $n=520$ ) provided on the students' written tasks over the semester. However, since this quantitative content analysis was not sufficient for our comparison and it was intended to focus on the quantity of both modes of feedback, we needed to compare both feedbacks in terms of its content.

In carrying out the qualitative content analysis of feedback, we referred to other studies on teacher written feedback because most of the above studies comparing audio and written feedback approached this topic from the students' perspectives or perceptions. Regarding this, first we coded each comment (audio and written) in relation to its language/pragmatic functions (e.g., question, directive, suggestion and so forth). However, our purpose from this qualitative analysis of feedback was not to identify the language functions of feedback rather than looking at whether each single commentary feedback constitutes up one or more language functions. From this analysis, we could observe that while for the audio feedback, each recorded comment composed more than one pragmatic function, for the written feedback, 490 comments composed only one pragmatic function each and only 30 comments consisted of more than one language function each (See the samples in the finding section).

The qualitative content analysis was pursued, but this time, our focus was to code the feedback in relation to its foci: what aspect of writing does each commentary feedback target or focus on? Although the framework for coding the feedback in terms of its foci was adopted from previous research on teacher written feedback, we attempted to adjust it into these categories according to our instruction and assessment of students' tasks: content, organization, linguistic

accuracy and requirements. We also looked at whether each commentary feedback in both modes focused on a single issue or a combination of issues. Based on this, we observed that whereas each feedback in the audio data focused on more than issue, thus targeting an overall number of 334 issues, each comment in the written feedback focused on a single issue, thus targeting an overall number of 520 issues.

#### IV. FINDINGS

**Audio feedback vs. written feedback:** To answer the first question, the findings of the study are reported and interpreted according to our analysis of both types of feedback in terms of quantity and content:

**Quantity of feedback provided:** Our analysis of the data was initiated by conducting a quantitative enquiry of the audio vs written feedback provided on the assignments of the ten pairs of students over the academic semester. The focus of this quantitative analysis was exclusive to the number of audio vs. written comments. The findings (Table 1) show that the number of written commentary feedback (520) exceeded the number of audio feedback. However, this led us to carry out an extensive content analysis of both types of feedback in order to gain better understanding of the pragmatic constituents of such feedback and the issues and flaws in students' writing the feedback addressed or targeted. The findings are reported in the second sub-section.

TABLE 1  
THE OVERALL NUMBER OF FEEDBACK IN ITS BOTH MODES

Mode of feedback comments	Number
Audio feedback	97
Written feedback	520

**Content of feedback:** Based on our substantial content analysis of the pragmatic constituents of the audio vs. written feedback comments quantified above, we found that whereas in all the audio comments (97), each recorded comment tended to be composed of several pragmatic functions, only 30 written comments combined more than one pragmatic functions each, and the remaining comments (490) carried out only one pragmatic function each. The following two example of the transcribed audio feedback illustrates how the instructor could diversify the feedback linguistically from statement, asking question, advice or suggestion to justification. So this audio of almost a medium size carried out four different pragmatic functions:

Here I think you have already used the full name of this approach in the earlier par graph so why again using it? You should use the abbreviated name of it here because the reader is familiar with it.

On the other hand, the written comments (30), which were found to be composed of more than one pragmatic function each, usually the instructor combined two different pragmatic functions (e.g., suggestion & question, statement & question, praise & question, evaluation & suggestion, and so forth). This is illustrated by the following written commentary feedback which is a combination of praise and a question seeking an addition of a sentence to the introduction to state the purpose of the paper:

A great introduction you wrote. But can you add one sentence stating the aim of your paper to the reader at the end of your introduction?

We also calculated the overall number of pragmatic functions composing the audio vs. written feedback. Based on this, the overall number of audio feedback comments (97) contained an overall number of 351 pragmatic functions. This implies that the instructor could linguistically diversify his feedback in each audio feedback and could convey a higher number of diverse linguistic functions in a low number of audio comments. In contrast, the number of pragmatic functions carried out by the written feedback reached only 550 despite its higher number of comments provided. This finding also illustrates that each audio feedback contained more than three functions, while the written feedback (30) contained only two functions each.

TABLE 2  
THE OVERALL NUMBER OF FEEDBACK COMPOSED OF SINGLE AND MULTIPLE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS IN BOTH MODES

Mode of feedback	Composed of a single pragmatic function	Composed of more than one pragmatic function	Overall number of pragmatic functions
Oral feedback (97)	0	97	351
Written feedback (520)	490	30	550

Since the content of feedback is an important feature of effective teacher feedback, we analyzed the audio vs. written comments in relation to the foci or issues and flaws it addressed. Two important features of audio feedback were identified: being elaborative or detailed and focusing on multiple issues rather than a single issue each. For the first feature, we noticed that in most of the audio feedback, the instructor did not only point at the issue (s) detected in students' written assignments, but he also elaborated it or provided a detailed explanation on it (Table 3). Although this feature was observed in some written comments, they were not as elaborative as audio feedback. For instance, the following two sample comments demonstrate how the audio feedback comments were larger and more elaborative and detailed than written comments.

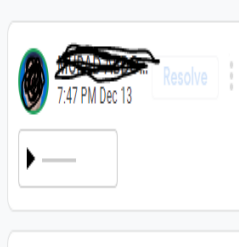
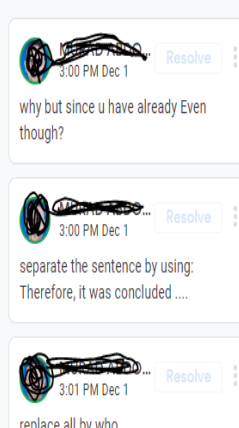
TABLE 3  
SAMPLE AUDIO VS. FEEDBACK IN RELATION TO ITS INSTRUCTION

Mode of feedback	Samples
Oral feedback	Hi see the highlighted sentence structure. Of course, you have used three sentences together without any connecting word. You did not even stop at the end of each sentence. Such sentences are run-on-sentences. In order to fix them, remember to read each sentence and when you feel that it gives you a complete idea, then put a full stop or connect it with another sentence to make a compound sentence, using and, but or so etc. I hope you get my point here.
Written feedback	Sure about this sentence structure? Please check it and correct it.

From the above two comments, while the audio feedback provided a mini lesson on the issue of sentence structure, including identification of the error, explanation of its nature and suggestions on how to fix it, the written feedback, in the form of a question and a directive, just pointed at the issue, but did not inform the students of what was exactly wrong with its structure.

For the second feature related to the focus of feedback on the issues and flaws in students' written assignments, it was found that most of the audio feedback (86) focused on multiple issues. In other words, each audio recorded comment addressed several issues and flaws varying from content, organization, language to requirements. In contrast, in all written feedback, each comment focused on a single issue. The following shots of audio feedback and written feedback in Table (4) provided by the instructor on one pair of students demonstrate how one audio feedback focused on multiple issues: appropriate vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and idea expression, whereas each written comment of the three comments targeted only one single issue related to the linguistic accuracy (e.g., the first written feedback focused on the use of "but" in a sentence initiated by "although").

TABLE 4  
SAMPLE AUDIO VS. FEEDBACK IN RELATION TO ITS FOCUS ON ISSUES IN STUDENTS' TASKS

Mode of feedback	Samples
Oral feedback	<p>3.1 Research Design</p> <p>This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The errors were classified into respective categories and later tabulated to see the distribution of errors made. The number of errors frequency were recorded. The findings were interpreted and discussed in terms of the forms of sentences as well as reasons that influenced the errors made.</p> 
Written feedback	<p>immersion, but the number is little which concluded that GMT is much more preferable. This idea was also supported by Shih-Chuan Chang (2011) where it has been found that the experimental subjects of his study; the English sophomores who experienced the GMT classroom benefited the approach significantly as compared to the control group; the ones that undergone the Communicative Approach classroom. Their understanding of the language grammar showed a tremendous increment, depicted on the test marks at the end of the study. Their learning motivation had also increased since they were aware of what they were learning since the grammar features like the passive voice, imperatives, non-finite verbs and subjunctive mood were explained and taught to them overtly. In short, these two findings have so far validated the idea of GMT significance in language learning.</p> 

From the above examples, we could confirm that each audio feedback targeted several issues and flaws in students' written assignments, while each written feedback targeted a single issue. This is all supported by our quantitative enquiry of the issues targeted by both types of feedback. Based on the analysis of the overall number of audio vs. written feedback provided over the academic semester (Table 5), the overall number of the audio feedback (97) targeted a number of 334 issues in students' assignments, varying from content (52), organization (24), linguistic accuracy (211) and requirements (47). On the other hand, the overall number of written feedback (520) targeted a number of 520 issues distributed as 61 for content, 49 for organization, 304 for linguistic accuracy and 106 for requirements.

TABLE 5  
THE OVERALL NUMBER OF ISSUES TARGETED BY FEEDBACK IN BOTH MODES

Type of feedback	Content	Organization	Linguistic accuracy	Requirements	Total
Oral feedback (97)	52	24	211	47	334
Written feedback (520)	61	49	304	106	520
Total	113	73	515	153	854

**Students' experience in receiving feedback from the instructor:** To answer the second research question, the findings obtained from the follow-up interviews with the students revealed their varying experience in receiving audio vs. written feedback from the instructor. The findings are discussed under the following themes generated from the thematic analysis of the follow-up interviews:

**Students' overall positive experience:** The findings revealed that the students described their experience as the first time-experience in receiving feedback from the instructor on their assignments at the university. All students stated that it was their first time though some of them pointed at that they received feedback from other instructors on their assignments in other courses. Yet, such feedback they received in other courses is only provided one time after submission of the assignments at the end of the semester:

**S10: As a first timer- I mean the first time for me to receive feedback, I did not expect that I would receive constant feedback from the doctor. You know? because in other courses, we just receive small comments on our final assignments at the last week of the semester.**

In addition, almost all students reported their interesting experience in receiving feedback from the instructors on their assignments over the academic semester. Their responses to the second interview questions are evident of their positively perceived experience in receiving such formative feedback on their assignments. Some of them also justified their positive views on their experience as receivers of feedback by the guidance, instruction and assistance they received through the instructor's feedback in doing their assignments and successfully accomplishing them:

**S22: Yes, definitely Dr's feedback was invaluable because guidance was available each step of the way.**

**S19: It was a great experience because the instructor used many types of feedback which were really helpful on guiding me on doing the assignments.**

**Students' varying preference for feedback:** The findings obtained from the students' responses to the third question in the interview displayed that their preference for the type of feedback received from the instructor on their assignments varied from their like for written feedback (16 students) to their preference for audio feedback over written feedback (14 students). These varying preferences are illustrated by the following sample responses extracted from the transcripts of the follow-up interviews:

**S8: Probably, I would prefer written over the audio feedback.**

**S24: I would say audio feedback over written feedback.**

The students' responses to the fourth and fifth questions in the interview revealed interesting findings underlying the reasons behind students' varying preferences for receiving feedback and provided more elaborations of the perceived value and disvalue of audio vs. written feedback. These findings are interpreted under two conceptual themes: the perceived advantages and the perceived disadvantages of audio vs. written feedback from the students' viewpoints as follows:

**Perceived advantages of audio vs. written feedback:** Regarding the perceived advantages of the written feedback, most of the 16 students who hold preference for written feedback highlighted the features of the written feedback: clarity, easiness in understanding the intended message, easy access to feedback and its focus on a certain issue in the assignments. These features are illustrated in the following students' sample voices in the interview:

**S16: I can say I have one reason. I prefer written feedback as I could see the points clearer and refer back easier.**

**S14: Written feedback is easier to read it when revising and easier to be understood.**

**S2: As I said written feedback because I can focus on an important point in my assignment.**

The above findings do not mean that all the 16 students disliked the audio feedback as some of them (7) in responding to the fifth question of the interview pointed at the positive features of the audio feedback. Thus, their responses in combination to the responses of the nine students who preferred audio feedback over written feedback indicate that audio feedback is advantaged for being comprehensive or detailed, simple and conducive to students' development of a sense of their serious issues and flaws in the assignments:

**S18: The audio feedback was very good in details and very helpful. I learnt a lot through the feedback actually.**

**S9: I like the fact that the teacher's audio feedback was simple. I mean using simple words.**

**S1: By listening to teacher's intonation, we could grasp the severity of our mistake.**

**Perceived disadvantages of audio feedback:** From the above findings, there were some disadvantages of audio, which made most of the students prefer the written feedback over audio feedback in this study. First, almost 13 students pointed at the confusion of audio feedback. Since each audio feedback focused on several issues and flaws of students' assignments, it became confusing for those students to focus on all issues while listening to it and revising their assignments:

**S4: Through audio sometimes I get lost listening to it.**

Moreover, due to the detailed nature of audio feedback as illustrated in the above samples, some students (8 students) misunderstood some points carried out by the audio feedback. As a result, they got lost about what to focus on while listening to the audio feedback and revising their assignments:

**S17: Sometimes audio feedback was long and I had to re-play them for many times, just to check on one sentence in the audio.**

Another related disadvantage of audio feedback as perceived by eleven students is the quality of audio feedback. Regarding this, they pointed at the external noises they heard in the recorded audio files, which distracted them from clearly listening to the main points on their issues and flaws in the assignments:

**S6: One reason is due to the external noises that could disrupt the audio and the listener having to misheard some messages along the way or hearing mispronunciation of some words.**

A final challenging issue that led to some students' perceived disadvantages of audio feedback is the difficulty involved in accessing the audio feedback recorded and posted in the form of comments in the Google Docs pages. Almost seven students pointed at this challenge, which disturbed their convenient access and listening to audio feedback:

**S10: I think part of why I prefer written feedback compared to audio feedback was because I could not play certain audio feedback on the devices that I use to write my assignments.**

## V. DISCUSSION

In accordance with the first research question, the findings revealed the instructor's audio and written feedback differed in relation to its quantity. Specifically, the number of written comments provided over the study period was higher than that of the audio comments. Apparently, this finding could be due to the drafts on which the feedback was provided. In other words, the written feedback was provided on the first drafts of students with more issues and flaws as opposed to the second drafts on which he provided the audio feedback. However, this finding cannot be fully and accurately interpreted this way because our further analyses of the content of both modes of feedback provided better insights into the differences between the two modes of feedback, which helped in interpreting this finding.

Based on our content analysis of the actual feedback in both modes, we could observe the efficiency of audio feedback in comparison to written feedback in several ways. First, each comment in the audio feedback data consisted of more than one pragmatic function. This finding suggests that the audio feedback was more potential in terms of its composition and providence or delivery than written feedback. In other words, the instructor could provide a high number of feedback in terms of its pragmatic functions through a low number of audio feedback comments. This finding supports the efficacy of audio feedback in relation to its being economical and time-efficient (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Rodway-Dyer et al. 2011; Parkes & Fletcher, 2016).

Our findings also indicate that audio feedback is more effective than written feedback in regard to its foci. Since the quality of teacher feedback is largely judged or evaluated by its content or the information it delivers to students (e.g., Hennessy & Forrester, 2014), our findings obtained from the content analysis of the instructor's feedback provided evidence illustrating how the instructor could target more than one issue in one audio feedback comment. Audio feedback can be a tool for carrying rich and detailed information (e.g. Oldfield, 2016; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova et al., 2011). Yet, our study contributes to this body of previous research on this potential of audio feedback based on an actual analysis of feedback rather than mere analysis of students' perception of feedback. There are only two studies focusing on the actual analysis of both modes of feedback (Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011; Voelkel & Mello, 2014) though these studies did not focus on analyzing both modes of feedback in relation to its pragmatic functions.

In addition, as shown by our finding on the overall number of issues and flaws targeted by audio and written feedback, the nature of issues in students' writing affects the way instructors use audio or written feedback. First, the audio feedback targeted more content-related issues than written feedback could be due to the suitability of audio feedback for issues and flaws in the area of content which appear more complex and require more detailed explanations from the instructor. On the other hand, the higher number of issues and flaws in linguistic accuracy and appropriateness was targeted by the written feedback in this study. This could be due to the fact that since issues and flaws related to language and requirements seem less important and less complex, it is convenient to target such issues through written comments. This is in agreement with some other studies which highlighted the perceived value of written feedback in identifying local or micro-level issues in students' written tasks from students' perspectives (e.g., Ice et al. 2010; Still, 2006) and also from an empirical analysis of both modes of feedback (Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011; Voelkel & Mello, 2014).

As an answer to the second research question of the study, our findings demonstrated that the students described their overall positive experience in reviving feedback from the instructor on their written assignments. Such positive experience could be due to the students' first time in receiving formative feedback on their assignments at college. This finding corroborates those of previous research on students' valuing of their experience in receiving feedback from the instructors (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011). The students also compared such formative feedback to the feedback of instructors in other courses and recognized the continuous support received through the instructor's formative feedback on their assignment. As they constantly received the feedback over the semester from the start of

writing their assignments till the end of the semester, the students could perceive the value of such formative feedback through the support, guidance, identification of issues and flaws in their writing and suggestions on enhancing their written tasks. This finding does not only support empirical studies on the value of instructors' formative feedback (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova et al., 2011), but also contributes to our understanding of conceptualization of such feedback as scaffolding or assistance from the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). We can, therefore, confirm that instructor feedback is a vehicle for scaffolding or assistance provided by more capable others (instructors) to learners to successfully accomplish their tasks and enhance their learning (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2014; Nassaji & Swain, 2000).

Despite the efficacy of audio feedback supported by our content analysis of the actual feedback on the students' assignments, the findings obtained from the follow-up interviews or reflections of students are somehow contradictory. First, most of the students preferred written feedback over audio feedback though the difference in the numbers of students (16) displaying preference for written feedback and students displaying preference for audio feedback (16) is not high. While such finding also contradicts those findings reported by most previous studies on students' high preference for audio feedback over written feedback (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Ice et al., 2010; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Olesova et al., 2011; Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011; Parkes & Fletcher, 2016; Voelkel & Mello, 2014), it is in an agreement with findings of some other studies (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016; Johnson & Cooke, 2015; Olesova et al., 2011).

In exploring the main reasons behind those students' preference for written feedback over audio feedback, our findings highlighted some reasons which could be disadvantages of audio feedback. One of the main reasons is students' confusion as a result of the detailed instruction provided through the audio feedback. Although this detailed instruction is considered as one advantages of audio feedback in our analysis of the actual feedback and in several previous studies based on students' perception of feedback (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Gould & Day, 2013; Lunt & Curran, 2010; Rodway-Dyer et al., 2011), it was perceived by those students as a barrier for them for it distracted their attention from listening to the main point in order to revise their assignments in this study. Therefore, we suggest that instructors should minimize the detailed instruction when delivering feedback to students through audio records in order to help them get the main points clearly.

Another reason behind students' high preference for written feedback over audio feedback was the poor quality of records in the feedback files. In this regard, an important issue concerning audio feedback is the quality of recording (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014; Olesova et al., 2011; Parkes & Fletcher, 2016). This becomes a challenging issue for students who receive audio feedback since the presence of external noises while recording the feedback will disturb students from well listening to the intended suggestions in such records. This will also affect their positive experience in receiving audio feedback from instructors. Therefore, it is advisable for instructor to make sure that the environment where they record their feedback is free-noise and calm.

Another issue stated as one reason behind students' preference for written feedback is related to one disadvantage of audio feedback is the difficulty experienced by some students in accessing the audio feedback recorded and posted as links in the form of comments in the Google Docs pages. Although the students were instructed on the impotence of uploading the program related to the audio feedback, this was perceived by some students as a barrier. Interestingly, the issue here is not the same technical issue, which is unsuitable recording as identified in some previous studies identified technical issues with unsuitable recording devices (e.g., Emery & Atkinson, 2009; Johnson & Cooke, 2015), but rather it is concerned with students' preparation (e.g., downloading the programs in their laptop or mobile devices). Therefore, a good preparation of students for feedback should ensure that they are all able to access the feedback easily in order to avoid such emerging issues during the feedback implementation stage.

These issues could be the main reasons why those students perceived the value of written feedback in terms of its clarity, easiness in understanding the intended message, easy access to feedback and its focus on a certain issue in the assignments though they could recognize certain advantages of audio feedback in relation to its comprehensiveness or details, simplicity and its role in helping them develop a sense of their serious issues and flaws in the assignments. Such finding could be also interpreted from the good standard or quality of written feedback provided to the students in this study, which was also reported in a previous study (Fawcett & Oldfield, 2016). In both studies, the written feedback was typed rather than hand-written, which could contribute to students' high preference for written feedback over audio feedback.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Despite the detailed findings on both modes of feedback in this study, there are several limitations that should be addressed for future research. First, our content analysis of both modes of feedback focused on the overall feedback provided on the fifteen pairs of students. However, future research should also compare both modes as distributed among the pairs to find out further differences. Moreover, this study was not intended to determine the role of both modes of feedback on students' written tasks. Therefore, future studies focusing on this aspect can do so by assessing the quality of students' tasks at the end of each stage. Another limitation is that this study focused on male students due to the culture that separates males from females in the study content, which might have affected our findings.



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# Investigating Rhetorical Aspects of Writing Argumentative Essays and Persuasive Posters: Students' Perspective

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**Abstract**—Students at the tertiary level need arguments because they are expected to use analytical and critical thinking skills. The present study is situated in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in an Omani University and reports the experience of (N=46) undergraduate EFL writers in argumentative essays and persuasive posters. Using rhetorical strategies, and drawing on the principles of persuasive writing, the participants prepared posters and essays on two separate topics. Data were collected from the 46 participants' responses to a semi-structured online survey questionnaire. Analysis of the data obtained indicates that the participants preferred designing posters to writing persuasive essays while reporting varieties of rhetorical difficulties in building an argument for persuasion. The participants also perceived establishing evidence and facts as the most challenging element in persuasive writing and arousing the audience's feelings and emotions as the most challenging rhetorical appeal in posters. Some pedagogical implications were reported as well.

**Index Terms**—argumentative writing, persuasive posters, rhetorical appeals, persuasive strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Students in higher education use a variety of genres and writing modes, but the argumentative essay is the most common one (Peloghitis, 2016; Wingate, 2012; Zhu, 2001), probably because it is regarded as an important pedagogical means of building knowledge across a broad range of disciplines (Smith, Kiili, & Kauppinen, 2016). Arguments are necessary for university students because they are expected to conduct critical analysis of issues, concepts, and situations (Bonnett, 2011; Smalley, Ruetten, & Kozyrev, 2001). The purpose of argumentative writing, in the second language (L2) instruction context, is to present a viewpoint that is contested or to defend a position (Richards, & Schmidt, 2002), through evidence and logical presentation of facts. According to Ramage, Bean, and Johnosn (2019), an argument has three essential characteristics: (1) it demands authors and speakers to prove the validity of their claims and statements; (2) it is both a process and a product; and (3) it incorporates components of fact-finding and persuasion. Furthermore, argument incorporates perspectives of rhetoric which is defined as the “study of the ways messages influence people; the faculty of discovering the available means of persuasion in a given case” (Zarefsky, 2005, p. 112). In the wider terrain of argumentative writing, students across disciplines are expected to experience and develop a broader constellation of writing abilities and effective communication skills, specifically persuasion. In the English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing context, the use of persuasion is one of the important skills learners of English need to acquire, practice, and master. Learning to develop the ability to communicate effectively and persuasively is essential for students of different programmes in their academic journey and future career, – “an emphasis which is quite appropriate to the L2 classroom” (van Lier, 1988, p. 55). In this regard, Stevens (2005) argues that “Students must learn how to create discourse appropriate to rhetorically persuasive contexts if they are to become successful managers” (p. 62) or perform in any other duties related to their employment. In addition, the innovations in computer-mediated communication which facilitate the rapid proliferation of information via highly advanced media and the Internet have made teaching L2 students to develop argumentative and persuasive skills an important pedagogical goal. It is a pertinent fact that the world today lives in the information era where people are surrounded by multiple sources of information that can be accessed anywhere. Larson (2010), observed that communication media have been important since the printing press—and they continue to be so—but persuasion assumes extra significance in highly technological culture and new media-rich world.

According to Fletcher (2015), teaching persuasion by employing the “rhetorical approach to argumentation” (p.251) incorporates the three conventional rhetorical appeals for *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* as identified by Aristotle. According to Lanham (1991), rhetoric seeks persuasion through (1) “*ethos*, or the demonstration of the speaker's good character, (2) *pathos*, or playing on the audience's feelings, (3) *logos*, what today we would call “proof” of some sort” (p.115), or logic. According to Wingate (2012), writing persuasive argumentation involves developing a position, presenting a position, and analyzing and evaluating content knowledge as the key components of argumentation that undergraduate students must learn and practice. Rhetoric is also said to have five canons: (1) invention/discovery, which corresponds to finding what works for the situation, (2) arrangement, or the process of ordering material and structure of content, (3) style, which pertains to language use, (4) memory, which relates to remembering the subject and content of the

argument, and (5) delivery, which concerns exhausting all the tools and resources available to communicate effectively (Toye, 2013).

Although the argumentative essay is the most common genre students learn to master in higher education, writing argumentative essays with a focus on their rhetorical effects, however, remains a daunting task by nature for many L2 students as it demands them to display their ability to employ sophisticated linguistic and cognitive skills (Campbell, & Filimon, 2018; Fletcher, 2015). Such a task is expected to be challenging especially for students writing in another language like English (Zhu, 2001). In addition, students were reported to find it difficult to develop their abilities to use persuasive writing due to the inconsistent instruction that overlooked the complexity of the genre itself (Wingate, 2012). The present study attempted to examine higher education students' preferences for persuasive modes, and their experience and difficulties in the argumentative writing process in an EFL writing context. The study specifically attempted to explore students' perceived difficulties in handling the rhetorical appeals for persuasion to build a persuasive argument through argumentative essays and persuasive posters.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Changing Trends in Writing Discipline Research

The changing scene in university teaching at the dawn of the twenty-first century has challenged many traditional practices, heralding a new era of pedagogic innovations especially in the ESL and EFL writing classrooms. A peculiar feature of the new reality is the relevance and dominance of technology in the entire educational process within the classroom and beyond. This omnipresent medium of learning has passionate users who are described by Prensky (2001) as "digital natives", because "they spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age" (p.1). Stating the urgent need for technology-contextualized pedagogic activities, particularly in the language classrooms, Shrum and Glisan (2010) argued that "Perhaps the most convincing reason to use technology in teaching languages is the nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century students" (p. 449). Considering the changing nature of the learning landscape and the opportunities and challenges it brings, understanding the needs of the digital era learners has become more essential than ever before. According to Delante (2017), "Since technology continues to shape learning in both the real and virtual worlds, universities must remain abreast with technology and be proactive in providing academic learning support to students both for their survival and for student progress" (p.1). In the same vein, Manen and Adams (2009) observed that "in recent years, college and university teachers have been increasingly required to integrate technology in their teaching, and institutions schedule ever more courses online" (p. 10).

Thus, in the context of ESL/EFL writing classrooms, teachers and curriculum designers are required to raise learners' awareness of the significance of technology and facilitate its management and use for better learning in both physical and virtual environments. On the other hand, the coronavirus outbreak has given further significance with convincing evidence to technology-based learning. According to Salih and Omar (2021) "With the disruptive mutations that have affected all countries globally, online education has shifted from being an alternative to a *fait accompli*, giving little time to academic institutions to consider adopting virtual education as an all-inclusive, one-size-fits-all solution" (p. 62). The pandemic-triggered online education and its practices represent the catalyst for the new direction learning and teaching across disciplines and contexts might take.

On the other hand, the shift of interest in scholarship on the second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) writing instruction from the product-approach to the process-approach has brought new practices to the English Language Teaching (ELT) context with a greater focus on the value of involving the learner in a multidimensional learning situation that offers opportunities for varieties of abilities, competences, and modes of learning various writing genres and styles (Shehadeh, 2011; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1998). Previous research has attempted to explore the efficacy of collaborative learning activities and peer reviews on the composing process (e.g., Sánchez-Naranjo, 2019; Salih, 2013), as well as the socio-cognitive dimensions of student writers' interaction (Klucevsek, 2016; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Frankenberg-Garcia, 1999). Empirical studies on peer review activities and collaborative learning have also reported significant findings on the role of peer feedback in the writers' revision behaviour and negotiation of meaning (e.g., Yang & Meng, 2013; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994), and the social dimensions of peer feedback in shaping writers' drafts in the composing process (Dörnyei, 1997; Flowerdew, 1998). A significant development in the process approach is the growing tendency for integrating the L2 composing process instruction with technology which is witnessing rapid developments in types and applications. The integration of technology into second language classrooms has significant implications for teaching writing genres (Purwanto, 2016; Manen, & Adams, 2009). Thus, online L2 writing instruction may be most effective when provided as an integral part of a process-oriented environment where L2 writers are offered effective and maximum support to assist them to develop their composing competence (Kuo, 2008). Using technology to integrate and contextualize L2 writing instruction is deemed significant as it appeals to the needs of the digital students and can motivate them to extend their learning activities and continue learning outside the classroom.

This paradigmatic shift in ESL/EFL writing scholarship and practice has gone in tandem with the growing interest in multiple forms of multimodal writing "which combines words, images, sound, and other modes" (Jiang, & Luk, 2016, p.1), and "asks students to engage in making meaning with a range of new modalities and in new genres" (Miller-

Cochran, 2017, p. 88). Research in multimodal composing (MC) has attempted to explore its potential in improving the learners' abilities to compose while fulfilling academic tasks (e.g., Lim & Polio, 2020; Jiang, 2018; Warschauer, 2017), as well as its role in motivating the learners to grasp the target language knowledge and communication skills (Jiang & Luk, 2016; Manchón, 2017; Yang, 2010). It is believed that "incorporating multiple modalities into an L2 writing classroom can help encourage a focus on process, as various modes of expressions can contribute to invention, drafting, and mixing" (Miller-Cochran, 2017, p. 89).

Calling for incorporating multimodal composing in writing beyond the familiar written essays, Jewitt (2005) argued that integrating technology with instruction means moving beyond the linguistic feature of written forms. The researcher believes that educational practices in the twenty-first century are better enhanced with multimodal composing and that "The multimodal character of new technologies produces a tension for traditional conceptions of literacy that maintain written language at their centre" (p. 330). Shepherd (2018) examined the significance of making connections between the students' previous digital and multimodal experiences and the writing classroom. The author concluded that when students recognize how different writing situations can be related inside and outside the classroom, it is more likely that they will be "convinced that their digital writing experiences have value and the broader definition of writing that includes these experiences will be useful to them" (p.104) in other composing contexts.

Morton-Standish (2014) investigated the use of online media to teach students persuasive writing. According to Morton-Standish, engaging students in online persuasive writing tasks on topics of their interest motivates and enables them to develop argumentative and persuasive skills that can be used in real-life situations. In addition, incorporating online media and engaging students in building online arguments "will develop their persuasive writing in a manner that not only prepares them for the demands of the real world, but imparts the joy and the power that comes with mastering the art of persuasive written expressions" (p. 429). Smith, Kiili, and Kauppinen (2016) compared argumentation in essays and digital videos, as well as the transmission of ideas between them. The researchers reported that the affordances for argumentation offered by each medium were used by the students to transfer meaning as they built an argument. In addition, the distinction between these two mediums provides new insights into the potential for constructing an argument in an educational setting by orchestrating numerous forms. However, it is also significant to examine the students' experience in employing different multimodality to disseminate meaning and build an argument.

Although there is a growing tendency to use technology in contextualizing language learning and teaching and consensus among researchers on the crucial role played by imagery and visuals in arguments, especially when used in conjunction with other modes of communication (Kjeldsen, 2015), the role of multimodality in supporting composing, especially persuasive and argumentative writing, remains peripheral. A possible reason for this is perhaps the fact that multimodality is a relatively new concept and that its theoretical underpinnings are still developing (Stein, 2008).

It is pertinent that there is much current literature in second language writing research that documents argumentative writing in terms of writing processes and strategies used in text production. Researchers have also investigated some aspects of difficulties L2 learners face in argumentative writing. Previous research has attempted to provide insights into the causes of difficulties learners face and the role of teaching strategies and models in identifying challenging areas for students learning persuasive writing. For example, in an action research-based study, Campbell and Filimon (2018) examined the impact of strategy-focused writing techniques on the argumentative-essay writing skills of a linguistically heterogeneous class of 47 students. The researchers found that using strategy-focused writing instruction has helped the students to improve their writing in two aspects, namely, using evidence to build an argument, and the use of standard English. However, the students showed less improvement in the domains of purpose, focus, and structure of argumentative essays. In this context, an understanding of the students' needs and aspects of challenges they may encounter in L2 writing classrooms helps contextualize the writing task and integrate effective instructional strategies. To improve the students' overall writing performance, writing instruction should identify students' difficulties, assign collaborative writing tasks and provide linguistic scaffolding while engaging students in continuous feedback.

Wingate (2012) studied the difficulties undergraduate students encountered while building argumentative essays. The researcher analyzed how 117 first-year undergraduate students conceptualized 'argument' in academic writing and the difficulties they encountered in developing argumentative essays. The researcher found that the students encountered difficulties in writing essays to develop an argument, often due to their lack of understanding of the concept during secondary school, which was aggravated by the inconsistent teaching they received at the university. To help students understand argumentative essay writing, the researcher proposed that argument development should be the primary focus of writing instruction. While helping students to develop the correct and concise understanding of argumentation in academic writing may be an important instructional objective, exploring difficulties with other elements of the writing components remains crucial. In a study about teaching students persuasive writing in business communication, Stevens (2005) found that students are often assigned to write persuasive essays on cases and situations that they have never experienced in real life. The tasks required them to analyze and respond to situations they have never experienced and this complex learning situation created difficulties for those students. The researcher used a personal experience in a car accident to exemplify an authentic real-life situation to teach students strategies for constructing arguments and evidence to the insurance company. They were exposed to the process of building an argument for persuasion by applying the persuasive powers of the rhetorical appeals for ethos, pathos, and logos which help establish credibility,

stir emotions and build facts and evidence for an argument. The researcher concluded that the students were able to write effective persuasive letters to negotiate the insurance settlements with the insurance company while displaying a level of understanding of the significance of building arguments based on developing clear knowledge about the situation, analyzing the audience, and supporting the purpose of argumentation with evidence. The researcher advocated the use of real-life cases and scenarios to contextualize and integrate building arguments with persuasion instruction.

Grabill (1992), experimented with promoting 37 students' transition from narrative to persuasive writing by asking them to choose an issue of public concern and write a persuasive essay with a specific audience in mind. After completing their essays, the students were asked to convert them to persuasive letters to be sent to the target audience in real-life situations. The students' letters were responded to by the concerned audience. The researcher observed that the students were highly motivated and have shown improved persuasive writing skills and learned to support what was an emotional issue for them and collect evidence and professional opinions. The researcher also reported that students transitioned from an affective, personal writing style to a persuasive one, and, as a result, achieved social interaction. Through their participation in an active public debate, the students developed the essence of authentic persuasive writing.

Pelohitis (2017) studied the difficulties undergraduate Japanese students experienced in writing argumentative essays in English. The researcher found that Japanese students perceived writing the first draft and organizing and structuring ideas as the most challenging aspects, followed by documenting academic sources and implementing citation styles. Students also reported encountering difficulties in initiating thesis statements, counterarguments, grammar, mechanics, word choice, and style while applying varieties of metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, social strategies, and rhetorical strategies. In a similar study, Zhu (2001) studied the writing processes, strategies and difficulties faced by 14 Mexican graduate students who were assigned an argumentative writing task in English. The researcher found that the students perceived organization and argumentativeness as the most challenging rhetorical aspects. The researcher also reported that the students developed a variety of self-regulated strategies related to writing processes such as exploring and incorporating feedback, applying writing models, sharing ideas with native speakers, and reflecting on prior knowledge and learning experiences.

Research that investigated the learning of writing in English by EFL Arabic-speaking students has focused mainly on the linguistic and structural challenges facing those students (Abu Rass, 2015; Razak, & Saeed, 2015), resulting in a limited knowledge of other aspects such as involving learners in the multimodality-enhanced composing processes and the efficacy of incorporating persuasive posters in argumentative essays. In a corpus-based study, Al-Abed Al-Haq, and Ahmed (1994), examined the difficulties Saudi undergraduate students experienced in writing argumentative essays by analyzing 62 essays produced in English by these students. The researchers found that the students were unable to express their thoughts coherently, establish clear arguments through well-written thesis statements, or express their ideas through arguments and counterarguments. The researchers recommended the use of the rhetorical approach instead of the structural approach as well as contrastive rhetoric for teaching L2 students' argumentative and persuasive writing. Although research has explored argumentative writing with depth in recent years, little is known about the pedagogical implications of integrating the rhetorical features of persuasive posters and argumentative writing. Research needs to broaden our understanding of the effective use of the rhetorical aspects of multimodal composing in the context of the argumentative genre and the difficulties learners may encounter in the process. In addition, another area that awaits researchers' attention is studying the role of L2 writers' strategies in handling the rhetorical aspects of multimodal composing.

One of the requisite skills for learners of English is the ability to communicate and persuade effectively. Persuasion is one of the significant soft skills that students need to succeed at the workplace. It is one of the essential graduate attributes many higher education institutions strive to inculcate in their students. Exploring the students' experience in combining posters and essays to build an argument for persuasion is expected to enhance our understanding of the types of challenges these learners have in handling the rhetorical features of argumentative writing. In other words, knowing how L2 students perceive and apply rhetorical devices in their persuasive writing is imperative in any pedagogical effort to help students use and develop better persuasive strategies. The current study attempted to address this issue by examining how L2 undergraduate EFL writers perceived their experience in handling persuasive rhetorical devices to build persuasive essays and posters. Through an analysis of the data obtained from an open-ended survey questionnaire administered to the subjects, the study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. How do L2 undergraduate students perceive building persuasion through argumentative writing and posters?
2. What aspects of difficulties do L2 students have in writing argumentative essays?
3. How do L2 students perceive incorporating rhetorical devices into building persuasion?

The study's questions were addressed in the following section of methodology.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The current study is exploratory in nature and combines aspects of qualitative and quantitative methods in its investigation of the students' experience in using rhetorical appeals as strategies to build argumentative essays and persuasive posters. The study examines the participants' perceived difficulties in applying rhetorical appeals in argumentative writing and persuasive posters with a focus on perception rather than production. In other words, the

study examines learners' difficulties in building persuasive writing from their perspective by building on their inputs rather than examining textual features of their writing process.

#### A. Context and Task

The present study was conducted in two EFL learning writing classes in an English Major Programme in an Omani higher learning institution. The two classes had a total enrollment of 46 undergraduate students (N=22 in Group 1, and N=24 in Group 2) who took a course in Rhetoric (3 Credit Hours) for one full semester which lasted about 16 weeks. The classes for the two groups were scheduled twice a week (3 contact hours each) and had four additional contact hours per week. The course aimed at introducing the students to critical and analytical thinking skills by examining classical and modern traditions in rhetoric with focus on essential concepts and perspectives on writing. The syllabus covers a wide range of topics in rhetoric and argumentative writing. The participants were taught about argumentative writing and rhetoric and all topics introduced were geared to offer the students a chance to improve their speaking and writing skills and use language logically, purposefully, and persuasively.

#### B. Participants

The participants in the present study were 46 EFL undergraduate students in an Omani higher learning institution. The average age of the participants was 22. They were all native speakers of Arabic and have learned English for at least 15 years. In terms of language proficiency, all the participants had completed the General Foundation Programme after which they joined their English Language and Literature Major. With a good command of English, they are able to follow classes, process ongoing assessment components, and write final exams. To fulfill the assessment criteria of the Course, and after developing reasonable understanding of rhetoric, its purposes of use, as well as aspects of rhetorical strategies and appeals, the students were assigned a writing task in which they were required to work independently and produce a persuasive poster and an argumentative essay (both on the same topic). The first group which comprised 22 students chose tourism as a topic, while the other 24 students in the second group chose the rights for education by individuals with a disability as a topic for their assignment. Both groups were given clear instructions and guidance on the tasks. The students also received regular feedback from the Course Instructor.

#### C. Data Collection and Analysis

##### Questionnaire Survey

The purpose of this study was to explore L2 students' difficulties in writing argumentative persuasion. The study used a questionnaire survey as a source of data. After completing and submitting the assignment, the participants were asked to respond to an online debriefing open-ended survey questionnaire about their experience in building argumentative essays and designing persuasive posters with a particular focus on rhetorical appeals. The participants' responses were collected and analyzed by the researcher to determine the difficulties they experience in the rhetorical aspects of argumentative essays. The survey focused on the subjects' understanding of the purpose of argumentative writing and persuasive posters, and the challenges they encountered in applying rhetorical appeals in building an argument. The participants were asked to specify with justifications whether they prefer writing a persuasive essay or designing a persuasive poster as well as the challenges they encountered in building both persuasive essays and persuasive posters. They were also asked to rank the three rhetorical appeals of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* in terms of difficulty by selecting from a four-point scale as 'most challenging', 'challenging', 'less challenging', and 'not challenging'. Administering the open-ended survey with this scale of options was useful as it helped in providing a diagnostic lens and a better understanding of the students' perceptions about the difficulty they encountered with rhetorical appeals. In addition, the analysis of the data elicited from the students' perceived experience in incorporating persuasive posters with argumentative essays provided insights into the pedagogical values of using multimodality in argumentative writing.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's first question explores whether L2 students prefer writing argumentative essays to designing persuasive posters or vice versa. More students in both groups preferred designing persuasive posters to writing argumentative essays. In Group 1 and Group 2 (26 out of 46) students perceived posters as interesting in conveying persuasive messages compared to argumentative essays. On the other hand, 20 students in both groups preferred writing argumentative essays to designing posters. Most participants perceived designing a persuasive poster as easier and more enjoyable than writing an argumentative essay. They described designing persuasive posters as "an attractive", and "good way of persuasion". They also used phrases such as "difficult, demanding, and challenging" to describe writing an argumentative essay task. One of the students is reported to have said, "making a poster is more enjoyable. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to collect and create something unique to send a valuable message. Additionally, people are more likely to notice visuals than words since pictures allow them to comprehend an idea quickly and easily". Another participant said "designing a persuasive poster is more enjoyable. Collecting and creating something out of the box to reach a valuable message is such an amazing work to do. One image is enough to convince the audience by using rhetorical appeals. Furthermore, people tend to catch pictures because they can easily and smoothly get the idea more

than writing". The participants' interest in using persuasive posters gives a broad hint of their need for better exposure to persuasive writing. It also draws attention to the pedagogical effects and values of incorporating multimodality into persuasive writing. Incorporating persuasive posters into the argumentative essaywriting process provides an important motivational factor that can assist L2 writers to overcome the challenging nature of the argumentative writing process. The values obtained about the students' preferences for rhetorical modes can be seen in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR RHETORICAL MODES (N=46)

Mode	%
Essay	43 (20)
Poster	57 (26)
Total	100(46)

The other 20 participants expressed their preference of argumentative essays to designing a poster. They perceived writing an argumentative essay as more effective in communicating persuasive messages to the audience, which can make them change their minds or take an action. Comments such as "more persuasive", "carries more evidence", "enables writers to build a persuasive position" were used by the participants to describe writing argumentative essays. One participant said, "I find that writing argumentative essays is more convincing and interesting because it carries more and more evidence, and also more explanation on the subject". Another participant reported that "I think writing a persuasive essay is more interesting because writing a persuasive essay can create more argument through conscious and thoughtful consideration of rhetorical position, audience, and rhetorical appeals, where the audience can be more influenced." Table 2 summarizes the reported common aspects of both argumentative essays and persuasive posters by the participants. These aspects include all the participants' comments and justifications in response to the question about their preferences of writing modes.

TABLE 2  
REPORTED ASPECTS OF ESSAYS AND POSTERS (N=46)

Modes	
Essays	Posters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More persuasion power</li> <li>- More space for writers to express thoughts</li> <li>- Enhance other skills</li> <li>- Clear elements and structure to follow</li> <li>- Enable social connection</li> <li>- Requires evidence to support ideas</li> <li>- Relate ideas to purpose</li> <li>- Deliver direct message</li> <li>- Involve critical thinking</li> <li>- More options for arguments and persuasion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attractive</li> <li>- Quick delivery of the message</li> <li>- Brevity and economy</li> <li>- Wide range of coverage</li> <li>- Can appeal to the audience of different backgrounds</li> <li>- Touch human emotions</li> <li>- Creative</li> <li>- Contain precise ideas</li> </ul>

The use of essay writing and posters for persuasion as combined modes provides a better understanding of how L2 students perceive and understand persuasive writing, as well as the types of difficulties these students have in handling the rhetorical aspects of persuasive writing.

The second research question is about the students' perceived difficulties in writing an argumentative essay. The participants have reported varieties of difficulties they encountered with argumentative essays. The following are the sources of difficulties perceived by the participants:

1. Topic selection
2. Finding evidence
3. Structure/Organization
4. Rhetorical appeals
5. Persuasive strategies
6. Developing an argument/Taking a clear position
7. Rebuttal and counterargument
8. Grammar
9. Audience analysis
10. Appropriate style
11. Topic sentence
12. Title selection
13. Introduction and conclusion
14. Persuasive tone

Most of the participants found difficulty in selecting a topic, structuring and organizing ideas, allocating facts and evidence, and making a clear persuasive argument to win the audience support. One participant said, "I had a hard time at the beginning, which is choosing the appropriate points that should be clarified in writing. I took a long time at this stage". Another student stated that "the main challenge is thinking of the idea...how to arrange all elements in an appropriate way that can influence the reader". The participants also reported other aspects of difficulty concerning the



selection of appropriate vocabulary, the effective use of rhetorical devices, topic sentences, selecting a catchy title, keeping the audience interested, and the correct use of language. As the data shows, the difficulties reported by the participants provide clear indications of the difficult nature of the argumentative essay writing process for L2 students. Most of these difficulties were reported in the previous literature which investigated difficulties L2 students encounter in argumentative writing. However, it is interesting to see how students perceived related difficulties in establishing persuasive grounds through both writing argumentative essays and persuasive posters. More action research on incorporating multimodal composing into argumentative writing to uncover aspects of difficulties students may have in writing for persuasion is imperative.

The study's third question addresses the participants' perceptions towards the rhetorical devices of ethos, logos, and pathos in building an argument for persuasion in both argumentative essays and posters. The participants (N=46) were asked to rank the rhetorical appeals according to their level of difficulty starting with the most challenging one. Figure 1 below summarizes the participants' ranking of these rhetorical devices in terms of their level of difficulty in building an argumentative essay. The most challenging rhetorical aspect reported by the participants in writing persuasive essays was to do with providing proof and building facts and evidence for an argument. The strategy of arousing the audience's feelings and emotions by using pathos was ranked second in terms of being most challenging, followed by ethos which deals with the author's credibility. However, the data shows that the participants have ranked pathos first as challenging (37%), followed by ethos (30%), and then logos (11%). In addition, the data shows that 35% of the participants perceived ethos as less challenging, while 20% perceived logos as less challenging and 15% for pathos. In terms of being easy in writing argumentative essays, 30% of the participants perceived logos as being easy, and 20% considered pathos to be so while 15% perceived ethos as easy. These results shed more light on the difficulties students have with rhetorical appeals in writing argumentative essays.

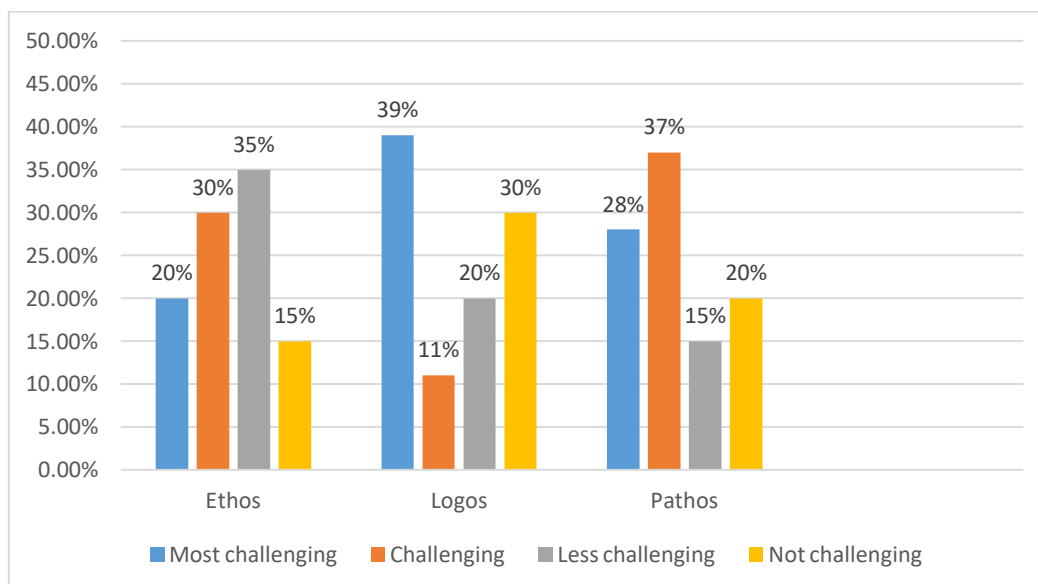


Figure 1. Difficulties in rhetorical appeals in essays

The participants were also asked to report their experience with rhetorical appeals in persuasive posters by ranking the most challenging rhetorical appeal. Figure 2 below summarizes the participants' ranking of these rhetorical devices in terms of their level of difficulty in building persuasive posters.



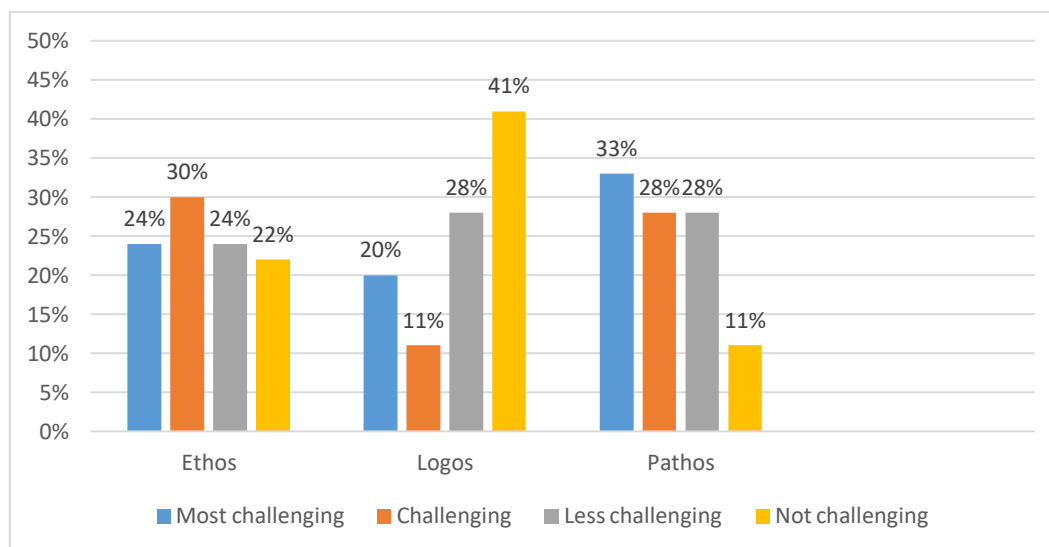


Figure 2. Difficulties in rhetorical appeals in posters

In building persuasion in posters, the participants found pathos the most challenging rhetorical appeal, followed by ethos and then logos. The reported difficulty in persuasive posters concerning building facts and evidence by the participants is consistent with their feedback on the challenges they experienced while establishing logic and proof (logos) in writing persuasive essays. The most challenging common rhetorical appeal for the participants in both argumentative essays and persuasive posters was logos. The process of building facts and providing evidence for an argument is one of the major difficulties L2 students encounter in argumentative writing. However, the participants ranked ethos, which relates to the authors' credibility, first as a challenging rhetorical appeal in persuasive posters followed by pathos and then logos. The students found it difficult to establish credibility and stir the audience's emotions and feelings in persuasive posters as well. This aspect of difficulty is consistent with the reported difficulty in writing argumentative essays about creating persuasion based on facts and evidence and developing strategies to touch the audience's emotions and feelings. Building persuasion in argumentative essays and posters is a task that requires great focus on the audience, and students need to be creative in using persuasive strategies multimodalities such as posters can offer.

The data also reveals that the perceived difficulties in rhetorical devices in both modes showed variation in the way students ranked each device. While the participants reported building facts and evidence for an argument the most difficult element of writing argumentative essays, they found it difficult to stir the audience's feelings and emotions in persuasive posters. Although 57% of the participants have expressed preferences for posters (see Table 1) in building persuasion, developing persuasion that touches human emotions and motivates action remains a challenge. Students learning to build persuasion in argumentative writing need to understand the different meanings and functions of rhetorical appeals. The results of data analysis in this context reveal an important fact about the features and limitations of multimodality in the context of argumentative writing and persuasion. Research that uncovers the rhetorical aspects of the multimodal composing process in the context of argumentative writing and persuasion is necessary.

## V. CONCLUSION

The present study explored the difficulties L2 students experienced in argumentative writing and their preferences for argumentative essays and persuasive posters. It was an attempt to understand the aspects of difficulties students encountered when using rhetorical appeals to develop persuasive strategies to communicate their messages in argumentative essays and posters. One of the findings indicates that more participants preferred posters to essay writing as a mode to build an argument for persuasion. This result encourages exploring the use of multimodality such as posters as persuasive modes in teaching students how to construct arguments and use persuasive strategies effectively. The use of persuasive posters within the multimodality context is expected to enrich the students' digital and multimodal composing experience, which can motivate them to relate that to their writing in various contexts. Research that examines the efficacy of incorporating other multimodality genres in building an argument for persuasion is urgent. We need to know if digital multimodal composing can assist L2 students to develop better persuasive strategies that can help them in their real-life situations.

The findings also indicate that the participants found difficulties in certain aspects of writing argumentative essays. The participants reported that they faced challenges in selecting an appropriate topic, organizing and developing the content, establishing facts and evidence as well as establishing an effective tone. The present study's results confirm the findings of previous research that has examined various aspects of difficulties learners had in writing argumentative essays. Students need to be exposed to more text analysis activities, preferably within the collaborative learning context,

in the writing classrooms and have a better understanding of how to develop persuasive strategies. It is also encouraging to understand the students' experience in using persuasive posters to support building an argument. An important feature of persuasive posters is that they enable users to communicate an idea or a set of ideas and concepts to recipients. The students' perceived difficulties in rhetorical appeals have significant pedagogical values which can inform the L2 classroom writing curriculum and instructional strategies. The rhetorical approach to argumentative writing needs to take into consideration the students' actual knowledge and experience with rhetorical appeals and their affordances as persuasive strategies. In addition, introducing the discourse features of argumentative writing in writing classrooms is better enhanced by action research-based approaches which can provide practical solutions and a better understanding of the classroom reality.

The present study is subject to some limitations. First, it obtained data by focusing on the perceptions of the participants about the difficulties encountered in building an argument rather than the production and the strategies they employed. By examining the students' actual written products, more aspects of difficulties could have been identified. Second, the study could have made use of varied sources of data by interviewing the participants and instructors. Teachers' reports and feedback on the students' performance in writing provide valuable insights into the students' level of knowledge and the challenges they face. The changing nature of learning environments in the 21st century higher education together with the proliferation of computer-mediated communication and modern media makes changing instructional choices and strategies an inevitable pedagogical step that higher learning institutions have to embrace. Student writers need to be exposed to different persuasive and communicative strategies within multimodal composing practices. More research is needed to uncover these issues.

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# Challenges in Teaching English for EFL Learners at *Pesantren*: Teachers' Voices

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**Abstract**—The aim of this study was to find out the challenges faced by teachers of English in teaching English at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). This study was qualitative research with a case study approach. The participants of this study were two teachers of English at *pesantren* in MUBA regency. To find out the challenges faced by the teachers in teaching English, the data gained from observation and interviews were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that there were five challenges faced by the teachers of English in teaching English: 1) improving students' motivation; 2) improving students' language competence; 3) managing over-crowded class; 4) managing limited time; and 5) facing lack of supporting facilities. Implications of the findings are also discussed.

**Index Terms**—challenges in teaching English at *pesantren*, Islamic boarding school, teaching English

## I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school, known as *pesantren* is one of the Islamic institutions that are well-known for its education quality and its superiority in teaching language to its students. As the oldest Indonesian education schools, *pesantrens* have historically implemented English as a foreign language (EFL) as one of the compulsory subjects in their curriculum (Daulay as cited in Habibi et al., 2018, p. 2105). In addition, the 2003 Law on the Indonesian educational system gives English a place as the first foreign language among other foreign languages used in Indonesia such as German, Arabic, or Japanese (Komaria, 1998 as cited in Abrar et al., 2018, p. 129). It means that, *pesantren* also give foreign subject to be learned by students, the foreign subjects are Arabic and English. As a foreign language, teaching English has challenges, such as a lack of proficiency in speaking skills. Speaking is one of the most challenging skills. There has been a lack of literature and information on EFL student teachers' experiences in speaking English in the context of Indonesia (Mukminin et al., 2015). Besides, limited time is also a problem in learning English (Gultom, 2015). Generally, the time to study English is not enough for the students to learn and use the language. Similarly, in the 2013 curriculum, time allocation for English subject at schools is reduced. This condition can lead to some consequences for the quality of EFL in Indonesia (Sahiruddin as cited in Pitaloka, 2014, p. 2).

Teaching English in Indonesia is not always running well. Challenges in teaching English are also frequently faced by English teachers in Indonesia. Related to challenges in teaching English, Songbatumis (2017) found that some challenges emerged, from students, teachers, and the school's facility. Students are challenged by their lack of

vocabulary mastery, low concentration, lack of discipline, boredom, and speaking problems. Meanwhile, teachers' challenges are short-age of training, language proficiency issues, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity with technology, and lack of professional development facilities, resources, and time constraints.

Based on the explanation above, there was a need to conduct a study to investigate deeper about challenges faced by teachers at one Indonesian *pesantren*. Results of the study can be useful information for English teachers, schools, government to create better policies that can improve English Language Teaching (ELT) in *pesantren*. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English at *pesantren*.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three main challenges for the teachers in teaching English as a foreign language. Copland, Garton and Burns (2014) mentioned that there are three challenges commonly faced by English teachers in teaching English, as follows; a) teachers' proficiency; b) classroom management c) government policy and curricula. Those challenges will be described below. The first challenge is the teacher's proficiency. A good proficiency level is needed for a teacher, especially for English teachers. Unfortunately, many teachers have low proficiency levels, and lack confidence. Second, many English teachers have difficulty in teaching English, especially in large classes where a classroom consists of more than 30 students. Teachers cannot closely monitor students' language use, and the problem of discipline. Third, teachers must teach English based on the curriculum and policies set by the government. The curriculum used is incompatible.

Furthermore, Khaljoo (2013) argued that there are several challenges in teaching and learning English. The first is low hours of English language teaching. Some experts complain about the amount of time devoted to the course and believe that in many cases teachers cannot teach all subjects in this limited time. Second, lack of interest and motivation for learning English. Most students are not interested in learning the language and just think about passing the course. Thus because they are not interested, they do not listen to their teacher. They do not learn anything. Even if they learn something, they will forget it quickly because they are tired of its repetition. Third, the next factor is the lack of concentration. When students do not have concentration cannot learn the material. The fourth is students who are ahead of others. Another difficulty in English teaching relates to those students who attend English classes outside of school. Next, most English teachers lack proficiency in the English language. Unfortunately, most high school teachers are not fluent in English and cannot teach the English language orally. The last is lack of repetition and frequent practice of students. Since students are not interested in learning English, so they will be tired of repeating and practicing the language.

In addition, teaching English is not always running well. The teachers of English have some major challenges in teaching English in classroom. According to Lynch (2008, as cited in Fajaryani, Masbirorotni, Nuraini, Nafrial, and Nopianti, 2018, p. 67), there are three most crucial challenges in teaching and learning English in classroom, as follows; First, lack of motivation, learners may not have inspired and interested towards the learning of English language. They fear failure in exams and even in classroom interaction, so they cannot get involved easily in classroom interaction and learn the language comfortably. They must be motivated by teachers to learn English in classroom interaction. Second, insufficient time allocation, resources, and materials, English is a foreign language, and hence it cannot be learned and taught as easily as a mother tongue or first language. And when it is learned or taught as a second language, it requires a long time and simultaneously adequate resources and materials to create an English classroom climate that facilitates teaching-learning process. Third, over-crowded classes, the number of students in a classroom can range from one, for those who teach individual private students, to fifteen or twenty students in a typical classroom up to multitudes of thirty-five or forty or even fifty or more students packed into a language leaning situation. The large classes create several problems such as discomfort, less attention, evaluation, difficulty in managing class, maintaining learning effectiveness, etc. Those three main challenges, as mentioned above, are necessarily needed to be overcome to improve the quality of English Language Teaching.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

A case study design was applied as the research design in this study. Creswell (2014) says a case study is a qualitative approach that involves the study about an issue explored through one or more cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Mukminin et al., 2017). This study investigated the causes of challenges in teaching English for EFL learners at one *pesantren* located in MUBA regency using observation and interviews to gather the data. The participants of this study were two English teachers that have much information related this research.

### B. Data Collection and Analysis

The data from observation was needed to answer the research objective, which was about the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching English at *pesantren* in MUBA regency. The observation checklist consisted of some indicators, mastery of the material, classroom management, facilities, and student's motivation. The observation

checklist was useful to observe the challenges faced by teachers of English within teaching English in class. The data were also collected through interviewing teachers of English at *pesantren* in MUBA regency. In interviewing the participants, we used a semi-structured interview to answer general and specific questions. General questions were used to answer about general challenges and practice of English language teaching. On the other hand, specific questions were used to answer some questions, which consisted of some indicators, teachers' proficiency, and mastery of material, classroom management, class size, facilities, student assessment, students' motivation, government policy, and curricula.

In analyzing the data, we used thematic analysis to analyze the observation and interview data to answer the research problem. Braun and Clark (2006) stated that thematic analysis identifies, analyzes, and reports themes within data. Braun and Clark (2006) mentioned that there are six steps commonly used in analyzing qualitative data, as follows; (1) the researcher have to be familiar with the entire body of data (2) generate codes, (3) search for themes (4) review themes (5) define and name themes, and (6) produce the report.

### C. *Trustworthiness*

We validated the data triangulation was used to check the validity the data. According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (example, between principal and student), types of data collection (e.g., observational fields notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., between document and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. We used methodological triangulation technique in this study. Methodological triangulation is a technique that uses a different method on the same object study. Then, the data from observation and interview had to be cross-checked. Finally, those data combined with corroborating each other.

## IV. FINDINGS

The research findings presented the challenges in teaching English faced by the teachers of English at one *pesantren* in MUBA regency. The data of this research were obtained from observation checklist and interviews of the teachers of English. An in-depth interview was done using both Indonesia and Sekayu languages (local language) because the local language was easier to understand. Besides, we hid the participants' names; the first participant (P1), the second participant (P2). All the data were collected from observation and interviews with the participants involved in this study. After analyzing the data from observation and interviews, we found some challenges faced by the teachers of English in teaching English. The themes and codes gained from thematic analysis were described in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
THEMES AND CODES TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH

No	Themes	Codes
1.	Teachers were challenged to improve students' motivation	<p>A. In speaking activities, most students looked less active and not confident to speak English. Teachers were challenged to encourage the students to be more active, confident and engaged in using spoken English.</p> <p>B. In listening activities, some students looked less interested in learning because there was no language laboratory and the audio device provided was so poor that teachers were challenged to make the students more interested in listening activities.</p> <p>C. In reading activities, most of the students looked shy and afraid of making pronunciation mistakes in reading text. Teachers were challenged to give motivation to make the students more confident and enthusiastic.</p>
2.	Teachers were challenged to improve language competence of the students	<p>A. In speaking ability, most students lacked vocabulary and pronunciation, so teachers were challenged to improve students' speaking skills by enhancing student's vocabulary mastery.</p> <p>B. In writing ability, most students lacked of ideas and had grammatical errors in writing essays, so that teachers were challenged to develop students' ideas and improve students' grammar.</p> <p>C. In reading ability, most students had difficulty understanding the content of reading text, so that teachers were challenged to enhance students' comprehension.</p> <p>D. In listening ability, most students who sat in the back lacked understanding of the audio recording. The teacher was challenged to prepare the listening comprehension easier to understand by the students.</p>
3.	Teachers were challenged to manage over-crowded class	<p>A. In speaking activities, some students lacked attention to the teacher because the students were disturbed by other friends so that teachers were challenged to make the students pay attention.</p> <p>B. In reading activities, some students did not get opportunity to read text, so that teachers were challenged to manage students' opportunity to read.</p> <p>C. In listening activities, most students sitting in the back always asked for recording repetition though they were given limited repetition.</p> <p>D. In writing activities, most of the students were noisy, and the students cheated with their friends in doing the task, so the teachers were challenged to be more aware and assertive to the students.</p>
4.	Teachers were challenged to manage time allocation	<p>A. In speaking session, the teachers were challenged to manage students' talking time in speaking by the allocated time.</p> <p>B. In writing session, most of the students could not finish writing the essay. They were only able to finish 1-2 paragraphs out of 3 paragraphs so that the teachers were challenged to manage time and give the lesson in accordance with students' writing ability.</p> <p>C. In reading session, most of the students could not finish task on time because they need more time to understand text. Teachers were challenged to manage time by giving the material following students' reading ability.</p> <p>D. In listening session, time to practice was less because the duration of the audio recording too many repetitions. The teachers had to manage time in each session in the listening activity.</p>
5.	Teachers were challenged to face lack of supporting facilities	<p>A. In speaking activities, teachers were challenged to use various media provided by the school, such as handouts, pictures, videos, and others.</p> <p>B. For listening activities, this school did not provide supporting facilities to teach listening, such as laboratory and speaker. Teachers were challenged to bring and use their own speaker in teaching listening.</p> <p>C. In reading activities, this school only provided teachers' handbooks. It did not provide students' handbooks so that teachers were challenged to use other media such as handouts, novels, fairy tale books, fable books, etc.</p>

#### A. Improving Students' Motivation

Based on the data collected from the observation and interview, we found that one of the challenges faced by the teachers of English in teaching was the students' lack of motivation in learning English. In this case, students who had low motivation did not focus and were not active in learning English. Based on the data gained from the interviews, we found a challenge confronted by the teacher when the students had less concentration or less focus in learning English. Consequently, the students having low motivation could be a problem in learning English. For example, participant 1 (P1) said that, *"Yes of course, it was a challenge for me in teaching English, when the student lack of motivation in learning the student will lose their concentration or do not focus in the lesson"* (personal communication, April 20, 2019). Besides, the participant 2 (P2) argues, *"Yes of course. It was a challenge for me. For example, the student leaves the class when study, talking with their friend at study, and then, if I asked them, they do not know, and so on"* (personal

communication, April 19, 2019). Subsequently, challenges in terms of students' motivation could be seen from learning activities, especially in teaching speaking, reading, and listening. The result of observation would be an explanation of those challenges. The result of observation in speaking activities showed that the students seemed lazy and less active in speaking English. In speaking activity, when the students were asked to speak in front of the class the students were not ready to speak, and most of the students looked scared and nervous in speaking. In addition, other students who were sitting talked to his friend about topics that had no relation to the current topics discussed, and most of the students did not pay attention to his friend presented in front of the class. Therefore, the teachers were challenged to stimulate the students to be more active and involved in learning English.

In reading activities, most of the students looked shy and hesitant in reading textbook. Based on observation data, when the teacher asked the students to give their opinions, read text, and answer teacher's questions, most of students were shy and confused. Furthermore, some of students sitting in the back row went to sleep, not being active and less giving attention when the teacher was explaining. In teaching reading, the teachers were challenged to improve students' motivation to learn English to become more passionate and confident in learning English.

In listening activities, the result of observation showed that some students showed less interest in learning listening because there were no language laboratory and audio devices provided. Moreover, the students did not learn listening and the teacher skipped this activity because there were no facilities provided to support teaching listening activities. The teacher was challenged to improve students' motivation in listening activity by providing interesting lessons in teaching listening.

### *B. Improving Language Competence of Students*

The data gained from the interview showed that the teacher's challenge in teaching English is when the students had less language competence. The students having less competence could be found in some activities, such as speaking activity, reading activity, and writing activity, which become challenges for teachers in teaching. The teachers were challenged to improve the language competence of students. For example, Participant 2 (P2) said that, *"the students' ability in English here was poor, it is because they were not interested in learning English so English competence here is still poor"* (personal communication, April 19, 2019). Participant 1 (P1) shared the same opinion. The challenges of language competence were explained below. Subsequently, the result of observation and interview showed that teachers were challenged to improve students' speaking ability. In observation, we found most of the students had a lack of vocabulary and mispronounced the English words. In the speaking activity, we found that most students had difficulty pronouncing the English words when they were asked to speak English. This issue commonly appeared when the teacher of English was teaching speaking. For example, participant 1 (P1) said that, *"lack of students mastery in English pronunciation"* (personal communication, April 20, 2019).

In addition, the teachers of English were challenged in presenting the material because the students had limited vocabulary. In speaking activities, most of the students did not understand the meaning of the words contained in the material. The students who had limited vocabulary could be a challenge for the teacher in teaching. For example, participant 1 (P1) argues that *"Lack of vocabulary mastery is a problem in teaching. If I asked to speak English they were confused even did not answer what I ask caused they did know the meaning and lack of vocabulary mastery"* (personal communication, April 20, 2019). Another challenge related to language competence has to improve writing skills. In observation, most students seemed to lack ideas and had difficulties in organizing paragraphs grammatically. The students' lack of grammar caused them to have limited vocabulary and could not make the sentences correctly. Therefore, the teachers were challenged to make students write sentences correctly and develop students' ideas in writing. The next challenge related to students' language competence was that students had difficulty understanding the text of reading comprehension. Based on the observation in the reading activity, most students did not understand the text they read. Additionally, when the students were asked to answer the reading comprehension questions, they did not know how to answer the questions since they did not understand the meaning of the questions and the text. The teachers were challenged to enrich the students about the reading text so that the students could understand the reading text and answer the reading comprehension questions.

The last challenge related to students' language competence was that students lack understanding of the audio recording. Based on the observation in the listening activity, most students who sat in the back had difficulty listening to the audio recording well. They always asked to record repetition because the students could not answer the listening comprehension. The teacher was challenged to enrich the students about listening comprehension and prepared the easy material.

### *C. Managing Over-Crowded Class*

Based on the data gained from observation and interviews, we found that challenge faced by teachers of English in teaching English was managing the over-crowded class. The problem in managing an over-crowded class commonly occurred in teaching English in a large class. For example, participant 1 (P1) said that, *"one of the challenges for me in teaching was managing the class which had many students and the number of students more than 30 students like VII grade male that I taught the number of student consists of 37 students"* (personal communication, April, 20, 2019). Therefore, participant 2 (P2) also gives opinions, *"yes of course, the number of students becomes challenges for me if the number of students a lot"* (personal communication, April 19, 2019). In addition, the challenges in managing an



over-crowded class would be seen from observation in learning activities, especially in teaching speaking, reading, and listening. The explanation would be described below.

The observation in speaking activity showed that if the number of students was more than 30, most of the students rarely paid attention. In speaking activity, when the teacher spoke in front of the class, most students did not pay attention and talked out the topic with their friends. The teacher could not monitor students one by one because there were many students in the class. In teaching speaking, teachers were challenged to make students pay attention. In reading activities, some students did not get the opportunity to read text. Based on observation, teaching English in a large class was a challenge for teachers because they had to manage time effectively in teaching reading, so the students could read text one by one. In teaching reading in a large class, the teachers were challenged to manage everything effectively. In listening activities, teaching English in a large class, especially teaching listening, teachers had challenges if there were many students in the class, the learning was not conducive. Based on the result of observation, students were always asking for repetition though they were given the limited time of repetition. During the lesson, the students were only given three times to listen to the audio recording on tape, but most of the students did not understand the story they listened from the recording. Consequently, teachers were asked by the students to repeat the recording. In writing activities, teaching English in a large class, especially writing, teacher had challenges being awarded and assertive to the students. Based on the observation, most students were noisy during writing activities, and the students did cheat in doing the task.

#### *D. Managing Limited Time*

Based on the observation and interview data, we found that challenge faced by teachers in teaching was time allocation. In this pesantren, English subject was taught only two meetings in a week. The time used to learn English was only 90 minutes in a meeting. Therefore, English is taught for a limited time. Consequently, English teachers were challenged to give the lesson effectively and efficiently in a limited time. The data from the interview showed that time allocation provided by the school was limited. Thus, the teacher had to manage the time effectively and efficiently. For example, participant 1 (P1) said, "I think, time to learn English in this pesantren is not enough because English is a foreign language, not our language, so that we need more time to learn it. I always need more time to explain the material, and also, the students cannot learn English well if time was limited. Here, we learn English may  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours in a week because English is primitive than Arabic" (personal communication, April 20, 2019). Therefore, participant 2 (P2) also said, "I think the time to learn English here is very inappropriate because I need more time in teaching. Here, only two meetings in a week and time to learn are only 40 till 60 minutes in a meeting" (personal communication, April 19, 2019). English teachers were challenged to manage time, especially in teaching speaking, reading, and writing. The challenge of managing time in teaching speaking, reading, and writing would be described below.

In speaking activities, the teachers were challenged to manage their talking time and students' talking time in accordance with the allocated time. In teaching speaking, teachers should give the lesson effectively and efficiently. The observation in speaking class showed that some of the students had no chance to speak because the time provided was over. Consequently, some students could not speak in front of the class and it would be continued in the next meeting. To sum up, the teachers had the challenge to teach speaking in accordance with the allotted time. In writing activities, the teachers' challenges in teaching writing were that the teachers had difficulty managing time in giving writing tasks to the students. The result of observation showed that when the writing activity was almost over, most students were only able to do some paragraphs from 3 paragraphs. In observation, most students seemed confused in writing essay, and then some of the students were cheating with their friends. It may be caused by the students' ability which was still poor in doing writing essay in limited. In writing the essay, it would take a longer time to be done. It had become a crucial challenge for teachers. Teachers were challenged to manage time and to give the lesson in accordance with students' writing ability.

The next challenge of managing limited time occurred in the reading activity. The material used to learn reading was very difficult. In observation, the students were asked by the teacher to drill some questions in the handbook. Most of students seemed confused and most of the students had difficulty in doing reading comprehension that the teacher gave. In reading activity, the teacher was challenged to manage time allocated in accordance with material and students' reading ability. The last challenge of managing limited time encountered in listening activities. Time to practice listening comprehension was less. In my observation result, the students sat in the back asked recording repetition whereas time was limited so that most of the students did not finish their work. The teacher was challenged to manage part of each session well in listening comprehension.

#### *E. Facing Lack of Supporting Facilities*

Based on the data gained from observation and interview, we found that facilities in this Pesantren became issues and challenges for the teacher of English in teaching. Most of the facilities that support the teaching learning process were unavailable such as, students' and teachers' books, language laboratory, projector, audio devices and others that can be used to learn. The data from interviews showed that the teachers had difficulties using facilities in teaching. For example, participant 1 (P1) said that, "Facilities in this pesantren was very limited, so it is become the challenges for me as a teacher, almost in every class there is no enough facilities like media electronic or other media" (personal

communication, April, 20, 2019). After that, participant 2 (P2) says “I think the facilities in this pesantren has not fulfilled” (personal communication, April 19, 2019).

In line with the interview data, the teachers faced challenges related to teaching listening. In teaching listening, there were no facilities provided by the school to support teaching English. In fact, there was no laboratory to teach listening and there was no audio device to be used. In observation, when the teacher was teaching listening, the students were not interested in learning because the listening process was taught by using poor audio devices. For facing insufficient facilities in teaching listening, the teachers were challenged to use poor speakers provided or bring and use their speakers to teach listening.

In teaching speaking, the school did not provide various media as learning sources. The school only provided teacher's and students' handbooks as learning sources. In observation of speaking class, the teacher taught speaking by asking the students to make a dialogue presented in front of the class. In brief, the teachers were challenged to use various media that were not provided by this school, such as handouts, pictures, videos, and others.

The last challenge related to insufficient facilities occurred in teaching reading. In teaching reading, the teachers only depended on the book. Meanwhile, the book contained difficult material. This made the students difficult to understand the text. The result of observation showed that teacher only used the handbook in teaching reading without using additional media because the facilities provided by the school were inadequate. It had become a challenge for the teachers to use insufficient facilities provided by this school or bring and use additional media that the school did not provide.

## V. DISCUSSION

After we analyzed the data using thematic analysis, we found that teachers of English faced several challenges. One of the challenges was the students' lack of motivation. Dörnyei (2012) says that motivation determines human behavior and gives direction to achieve it. He lists motivational components that are categorized into three main dimensions. In another explanation, Küpers (2011) states that demotivation is a reduced driving force for thinking, feeling, and acting that causes someone is not active. Students who had low motivation were considered a challenge the teachers of English should consider to enhance students' motivation. The teachers were challenged to encourage the students to be more active and engaged in learning speaking, reading, and listening.

Further, we also found that challenges in teaching English faced by teachers were when their students had a lack of language competence. Therefore, when the teacher explained material but the students lacked mastering vocabulary, the teacher had to explain the meaning of vocabulary used by the teacher. This result was in line with Songbatumis (2017), who found that challenges in teaching English in the classroom are students' lack of vocabulary mastery. It hindered the students' understanding of the subject. Some students might have a lack of vocabulary mastery which makes them not actively participate in class.

In line with it, the challenge faced by teachers of English was students' lack of pronunciation mastery. In speaking, some of the students could not pronounce words in English correctly. The result was similar to the researcher conducted by Songbatumis (2017) who found that most of students commit errors in pronouncing words. In writing activity, most students lacked ideas and had difficulty organizing paragraphs grammatically in writing essays. Fatiloro (2015) says that dictionaries, grammar guides, and the web should always be the tool for consultation when teaching and learning English.

Furthermore, an over-crowded classroom was also a challenge in teaching English faced by the teacher. It made the teaching and learning process not effective. The result is similar to the research conducted by Gultom (2015) who found that the problems of English language teaching in Indonesia were the class size. No matter what teaching method is used, the result of the English teaching and learning will not be satisfactory. Then, Al-amarat (2011) found that “overcrowded classrooms with students”. “It may refer to classroom overcrowding, which may prevent the implementation of classroom management strategies”. Subsequently, lack of time allocation was also a challenge in teaching English faced by the teacher. Lynch (2008) mentioned that insufficient time allocation, resources, and materials are the problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language which it requires long time. English teachers had to teach English in limited time and lack of repetition which they had been teaching a meeting in a week. The challenge faced by the teacher when she taught English in limited time was the teacher had difficulty in managing the time for transferring information, because time available for teaching English was only 90 minutes in one meeting. This challenge is similar to the research conducted by Habibi, Mukminin, Najwan, Haswindy, Marzulina, Sirozi, Harto, & Sofwan, (2018) in which time is the factor that we should pay attention. We have difficulties to manage the time in every meeting. Students are hard to understand the materials in a limited time while English is tested in the national exam. We sometimes skip some unimportant activities. In addition, Songbatumis (2017) also found that the time provided was not enough to apply teaching ideas in the classroom and improve their professional development. Time provided to teach English was only two hours for each meeting, to be exact, 90 minutes in every meeting, whereas, these participants expect that the ideal time to teach English is 90 minutes for each meeting.

Another challenge faced by teachers in teaching English was the lack of facilities. Ajibola (2010) said that, “ensuring the availability of sufficient textbooks, computers, listening devices, hands on tools, and other teaching instruments is a challenging assignment”. In this research, we found that the resources and facilities were insufficient. It made the

teachers of English facing the challenge in teaching. They did not use electronic media to support the teaching learning process. Therefore, the resources like text books were limited to be used, and even MTs level did not use text books when learning English. This result was congruent with Teevno's (2011) study, who found that "Though the majority of the schools have their libraries, none of these have the provision of English newspapers, no computers, and audio visual aids".

From the results above, we concluded that being a teacher was not easy because there are many challenges found in teaching. Many challenges are faced by teachers both the challenge from the students, and school as well. Besides, we also realized that the government's role is important to improve teaching learning at school, such as giving the facilities to support the teaching learning process.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Using a case study approach, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the challenges faced by teachers of English in teaching English at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Overall, the findings of this study exposed that there were some challenging factors in teaching English faced by the teachers of English such as a) improving students' motivation, b) improving language students' competence, c) managing over-crowded class, d) managing limited time, and e) facing lack of supporting facilities. This research only focused on finding out the challenges in teaching English. The next researchers may conduct similar research to find the challenges in teaching English which are not explained in this study. Subsequently, based on what we found in this study, we expected that the teachers may reduce the challenges by doing several activities such as giving a warming up for students or introducing new vocabulary for them, reminding students to bring a dictionary and motivating them. Last, for the facilities issues, school should provide facilities that support the teaching and learning processes such as a language laboratory, teachers and students' handbooks, and time allocation to learn. Government could provide more materials and add the time in meeting to learn English to reduce challenges faced by teachers in teaching English.

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# The Efficacy of Computer-Mediated Feedback in Improving L2 Speaking: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract**—Recent trends in computer-mediated communication (CMC) have led to a proliferation of studies investigating the effect of computer-mediated feedback (CMF). The present systematic review aimed to explore the role of linguistic, contextual, and individual factors in mediating the impact of CMF on second language (L2) speaking performance. A literature search located 16 relevant empirical studies for the final analysis. Each study was coded for linguistic, contextual, and individual characteristics. First, CMF was theoretically conceptualized as an instructional input, a dialogic process, and an internal process based on theoretical underpinnings. Correspondingly, CMF was analyzed under the influence of 1) linguistic factors including feedback type, the linguistic focus of CMF, and the timing of CMF, 2) contextual factors including the feedback source and the task type, and 3) individual factors including individual differences and learners' proficiency levels. The implication of the study was twofold. Theoretically, this study not only provided a multi-dimension view towards the effect of CMF in developing L2 oral proficiency but also shed new light on the interrelations between these identified factors. Pedagogically, teachers were encouraged to take advantage of CMC technologies to enhance the effectiveness of CMF as well as considering learners' uniqueness. Suggestions for future research were also provided.

**Index Terms**—computer-mediated feedback (CMF), L2 speaking, linguistic factors, contextual factors, individual factors

## I. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has triggered a huge amount of computer-mediated communication (CMC) inquiry in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). CMC refers to communication via computers between individuals (Herring, 1996). The dynamic nature of CMC is believed to be four-fold: temporality, anonymity, modality, and spatiality (Smith et al., 2003). These features highlight the effectiveness of CMC in facilitating second language (L2) development that cannot be provided by the traditional face-to-face environment. From the perspectives of contextual and linguistic factors, CMC creates and supports a flexible social context for authentic communication while drawing learners' attention to linguistic input (Heift & Rimrott, 2008; Kim, 2014; Young & Wang, 2014). From the perspectives of learners' individual differences, CMC can not only strengthen learners' motivation and self-confidence but also reduce anxiety (Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995). Thus, the importance of CMC in L2 learning is indisputable.

Feedback is a major contributor to successful language learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Broadly speaking, feedback takes the form of suggestions or comments for improvement that are provided through recognizing the quality of performance (Sadler, 1989). This kind of feedback assists learners in identifying their learning strengths and weaknesses, and improving their understanding and performance (Sadler, 1989). Narrowly speaking, in the context of L2 teaching, the feedback that learners receive mostly refers to corrective feedback (CF), i.e., the feedback on oral or written linguistic errors made by L2 learners (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). As Schmidt (1990) states in the noticing hypothesis, i.e., the intake for learning comes from learners' notice in input, CF could help learners notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target L2 form by addressing learners' erroneous utterances (Lochtman, 2002). In this study, feedback ranges from both formal and structured comments to specific CF on learners' speech (Yu et al., 2018).

Recent technological advancements have offered the opportunities of utilizing CMC technologies to provide feedback on the speaking performance of L2 learners, which can lead learners towards improved performance (Gu et al., 2021). This kind of feedback, driven by CMC technologies, is defined as computer-mediated feedback (CMF) (Bahari, 2021). Evidence from a number of experimental and meta-analyses studies has established that CMF benefits L2 learning (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013; Young & Wang, 2014; Ziegler, 2016). For instance, CMF is effective in enhancing achievement and engagement (Gašević et al., 2016), facilitating collaborative learning (Rassaei, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2016), creating a cosy atmosphere of learning (Cornillie et al., 2012), improving writing skills (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), developing oral proficiency (Lyster et al., 2013; Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013), and providing real-time error correction (Kato et al., 2016). These potential advantages of CMF emphasized the importance and need to expand studies on using CMF to facilitate L2 learning (Tabrizi, 2021).

Although studies have recognized the significance of CMF in the development of L2, there are still some research gaps that exist. On the one hand, comparing to studies investigate written competence, relatively few studies have analyzed the impact of CMF on L2 oral production (AbuSeileek & Abualsha'r, 2014; Shintani, 2016). Accordingly, the present study systematically reviews the literature published in the last decade (2012-2021) exploring the effect of CMF

on L2 speaking proficiency. On the other hand, the existing literature has predominantly concentrated on the linguistic aspects of CMF such as the feedback type (e.g., recasts, prompt, comment), the linguistic focus of L2 speaking (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy), and feedback timing (e.g., immediate, delayed) (Andújar-Vaca & Cruz-Martínez, 2017; Fang et al., 2021; Rassaei, 2017, 2019). However, the effect of CMF not only depends on its linguistic features (Lyster & Saito, 2010; Pawlak, 2014), but also subjects to multiple 1) contextual characteristics such as task type (Gurzynski-Weiss & Révész, 2012), feedback source (Carless, 2016), and 2) individual variables such as working memory (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013), proficiency level (Mackey & Philp, 1998), motivation (Uzum, 2011), anxiety (Sheen, 2008). Unfortunately, the role of contextual factors and individual differences has received scant scholarly attention (Yu et al., 2018). Therefore, to fill this gap in the CMF literature, this review takes linguistic, contextual, and individual factors into consideration. Specifically, this study aims to discover new developments and provide directions for future research in exploring the effectiveness of CMF with the following research question: How do linguistic, contextual, and individual factors impact CMF in developing L2 oral proficiency?

## II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This systematic review was underpinned by three interrelated cognitive theories of SLA: output hypothesis (Swain, 1993), interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996), and noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1994).

Firstly, developed by Swain (1993), the output hypothesis states that learners learn new linguistic knowledge by noticing the gap between their utterances and the target form, which enables them to be aware of it and modify their output by receiving feedback containing implicit or explicit input about the linguistic errors (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Therefore, CMF can be conceptualized as an instructional input that intends to help learners process and repair their linguistic errors (Yu et al., 2018). The efficiency of this instructional input is largely dependent on linguistic factors, e.g., feedback type, linguistic focus, and timing (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Secondly, according to the interaction hypothesis, L2 proficiency is developed by interaction and communication (Long, 1996). Similarly, the sociocultural perspective views feedback as a dialogic process whereby learners develop their L2 proficiency through interacting and cooperating with an expert (e.g., an instructor, a more capable peer, and a computer system) (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Both of the two aforementioned perspectives posit the importance of the external environment the learners are exposed to, e.g., the feedback provider and the feedback type (Ellis, 2010a). In this sense, CMF can be regarded as a dialogic process.

Thirdly, the noticing hypothesis argues that L2 learners cannot transfer input into intake unless they can consciously notice the input (Schmidt, 1994). Likewise, researchers from social constructivism perspectives have conceptualized feedback as an internal process, through which learners engage in processing, generating, and reacting to feedback (Ellis, 2010b). The ability of noticing is mediated by learner internal factors, e.g., working memory, anxiety level, and proficiency level (Pawlak, 2014). Thus, CMF can be defined as an internal process.

Taken together, CMF can be defined as an instructional input, a dialogical process and an internal process, whose efficacy is regulated by linguistic, contextual, and individual factors respectively.

## III. METHOD

This systematic review qualitatively analyzed 16 selected primary studies to provide a comprehensive as well as a rigorous overview of the efficacy of CMF on L2 speaking proficiency.

### A. Literature Search

Efforts were made to conduct a meticulous and thorough literature search with the goal of providing a better understanding of how CMF facilitates L2 oral proficiency development and offering a comprehensive analysis of the latest peer-reviewed studies published from 2012 to 2021. The identified major terms include: 1) computer-mediated/ computer-assisted/ technology-based feedback; 2) speaking skill/ competence, oral proficiency; 3) second/ foreign language, L2, which were keywords used by primary studies in the area of education, linguistics, information technology, e-learning, computer science interdisciplinary, and psychology. Then, combinations of the key terms with appropriate Boolean operators ("AND" or "OR") were used to search eligible studies published in electronic databases of Wiley, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Scopus, Sage, EBSCOhost (Academic Search Premier), Taylor and Francis (Tandf), Web of Science (WOS), and Emerald.

### B. Study Selection

More than 300 studies relating to CMF and L2 oral proficiency were identified through the retrieval process. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to determine relevance to the proposed research questions.

#### Inclusion criteria

1. The study identified its participants as L2 learners without learning disabilities or language impairments.
2. The study provided feedback using different digital platforms: computer, mobile, website.
3. The study accessed L2 oral proficiency including accuracy, fluency, and speaking strategy.
4. The study was published in English.

#### Exclusion criteria

1. The duplicate studies were removed to avoid double-counting.
2. The non-empirical studies such as review articles or editorial.
3. The study did not report critical information for the present systematic review, e.g., the correlation between CMF and speaking skills.

Besides, a snowballing strategy was employed, i.e., references in the selected studies and meta-analyses on similar topics (Bahari, 2021; Young & Wang, 2014; Yu et al., 2018) were used to identify potentially qualified studies and further ensure a complete literature selection, resulting in 13 eligible studies. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram (Fig. 1) illustrates the selection steps.

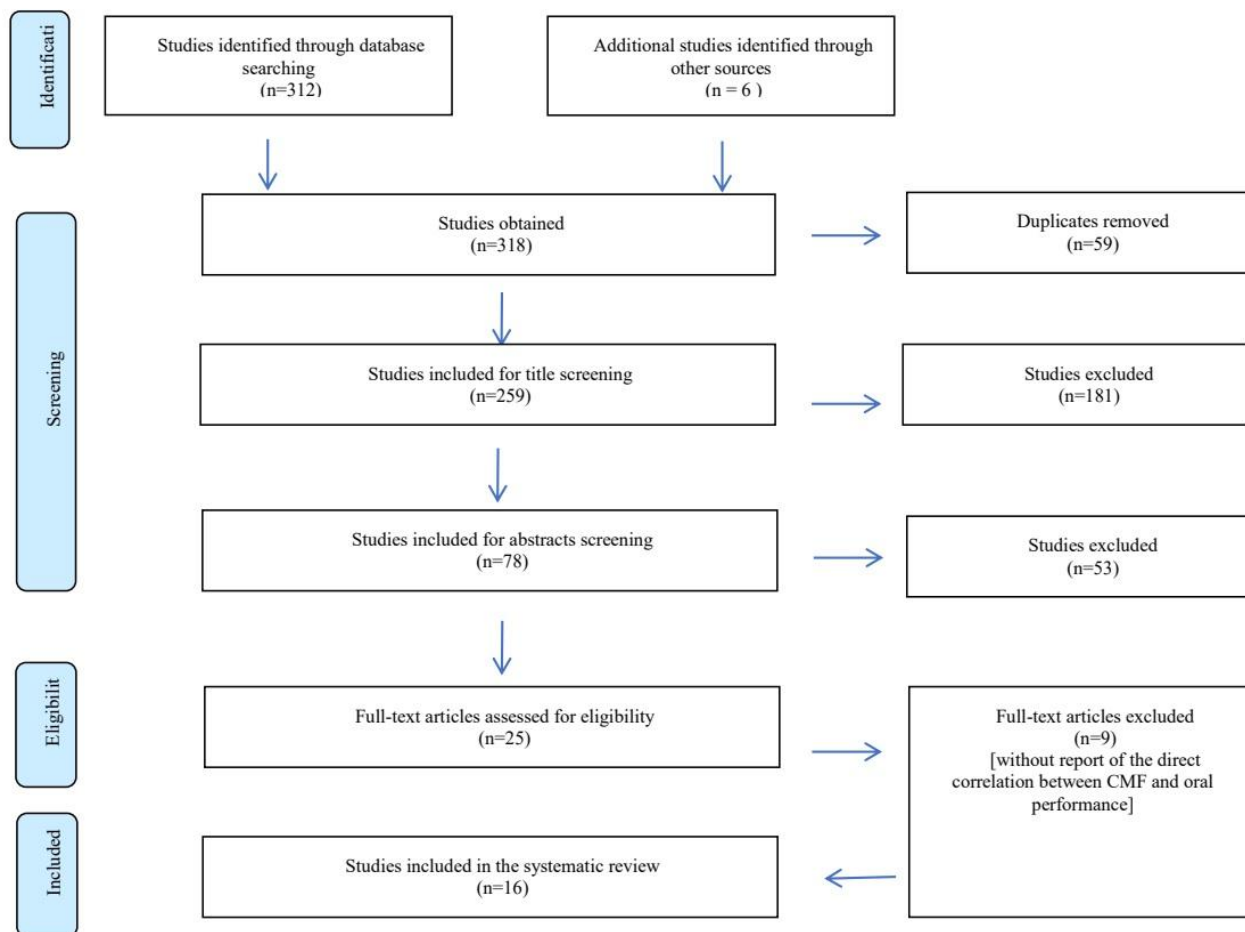


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

### C. Data Analysis

The data analysis comprised two steps. First, the basic information of reviewed studies was summarized in Appendix A accessing: 1) information about the author(s) and publication year; 2) sample size; 3) participants' portfolio including their gender, age, and L2 (Shin, 2020). Second, the characteristics of the primary studies were classified and summarized into three categories namely linguistic, contextual, and individual factors (Yu et al., 2018) (see Table 1). In total, thirteen subcategories were developed to better capture the effect of CMF on L2 oral proficiency development. Each selected study was analyzed using this coding schema.

TABLE 1  
DATA ANALYSIS RESULT

Themes	Subcategories	Codes
Linguistic factor	Feedback type	CF (including recast, explicit correction, clarification request, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition), score, comment, colour, wave-form graph
	Linguistic focus	Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, accuracy, tone, coherence, speaking skills
	Feedback timing	Immediate, delayed
Contextual factor	Task type	Focused, unfocused
	Feedback source	Instructor, peer, computer system
Individual factor	Individual differences	Working memory, anxiety, motivation
	Proficiency level	Advanced, intermediate, elementary, and beginner proficiency

## IV. RESULTS

The reviewed articles were discussed based on CMF's diverse conceptualizations: an instructional input, a dialogical process and an internal process, which are influenced by linguistic, contextual, and individual factors respectively.

## A. CMF as an Instructional Input

Table 2 displays the reported linguistic factors that influence the effectiveness of CMF on L2 speaking performance.

TABLE 2  
LINGUISTIC FACTORS

Study	Feedback type	Linguistic focus	Feedback timing
Ahn and Lee (2016)	Elicitation	Pronunciation, vocabulary	Immediate
Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017)	Recast, elicitation	Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension	Immediate & Delayed
Bryfonski and Ma (2020)	Recast, metalinguistic feedback	Tone	Immediate
de Vries et al. (2015)	CF	Grammar	Immediate
de Vries et al. (2016)	CF	Grammar	Immediate
Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021)	CF	Pronunciation, grammar, accuracy, fluency, coherence	Delayed
Fang et al. (2021)	CF	Vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, comprehension	Immediate & Delayed
Gleason and Suvorov (2012)	Comment	Pronunciation, fluency, speaking skills	Delayed
Gu et al. (2021)	Score, colour, wave-form graph	Fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary,	Delayed
Martin and Valdivia (2017)	CF	Oral performance in general	Immediate & Delayed
Rassaei (2017)	Recast	Accuracy of the target feature (the definite article 'the')	Immediate
Rassaei (2019)	Recast	Accuracy of the target feature (the articles 'a' and 'the')	Immediate
Sagarra and Abbuhl (2013)	Recast	Accuracy of the target feature (noun-adjective agreement)	Immediate
Wu and Miller (2020)	Score, comment	Fluency, accuracy, pronunciation,	Immediate
Yang et al. (2012)	CF	Pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, accuracy	Immediate & Delayed
Yu et al. (2016)	Comment	Oral performance in general	Immediate

## 1. Feedback Type

In the field of SLA, Lyster and Ranta (1997a) identified six types of corrective feedback, and from the most implicit one to the most explicit one they are: recasts, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, explicit corrections, repetitions, and elicitations. Among them, recasts (56%) have been largely investigated by the reviewed studies, followed by prompts such as and elicitation (50%) and metalinguistic feedback (44%).

As Rassaei (2019) illustrated in his study about learners' interpretations of recasts, it is worthwhile and informative to study the CF perceptions of providers and receivers in order to evaluate the effectiveness of CF. With regard to providers' views of these feedback types, Bryfonski and Ma (2020) investigated the effects of explicit versus implicit CF on Mandarin tone acquisition. The instructor initially preferred metalinguistic feedback over recasts because metalinguistic could offer more explanations on the target feature. However, after the experiment, the instructor indicated the domination of recasts due to their ease of delivery. In the follow-up semi-structured interviews, the instructor commented that her perception of feedback type was associated with the time constraints of their classes and the proficiency level of the learners. This preference largely corroborated that of learners in Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017) that learners also used recasts more frequently than elicitation to help their partners in oral production when they were engaged in peer interactions. From the receivers' perspective, there was a mismatch between learners' perceived and practical preference for CF in Bryfonski and Ma (2020)'s study. Students thought they wanted to receive metalinguistic feedback with detailed explanations, whereas in reality, they preferred recasts without interruption of their speaking. This is partially consonant with previous work done by Martin and Valdivia (2017) suggesting that learners rated explicit correction as the most effective strategy. Besides the perception of CF, Gu et al. (2021) investigated learners' perceptions of the usefulness of automated feedback using the score, colour, and wave-form graph in facilitating the Speaking section of the TOEFL iBT test. The vast majority of participants acknowledged the helpfulness of these feedback types because of its construct relevance and its diagnostic nature. Another line of research has focused on L2 students' cognitive processing capacity which is closely related to the efficacy of feedback (Egi, 2010). Using stimulated recall interviews, a vast majority of the English as the foreign language (EFL) learners in the studies of Rassaei (2017, 2019) could successfully notice recasts as CF in computer-mediated instructional contexts, which guarantees the practicality of recasts.



## 2. Linguistic Focus of CMF

According to the general proficiency speaking scale proposed by Hughes and Reed (2016), learners' speaking skills should be assessed in terms of comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation, which is also the case in the reviewed literature in this study. What stands out in Table 2 is the high rate of focus on pronunciation and accuracy (44%). The linguistic features that also attracted academic attention among the reviewed studies are fluency (31%), grammar (25%), and vocabulary (25%).

Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017) reported 80 Spanish EFL learners' views toward the linguistic focus of CMF by statistically analyzing their LREs signals in their chat on Whatsapp. The results showed that correction of phonological errors was the most abundant, which might be explained by the fact that phonology is fundamental in English interaction (Yu et al., 2018). The least favored error type to be addressed was morphosyntactic. This finding largely coincides with Mackey et al. (2000)'s belief that students were more capable of identifying and recognising the phonological errors more accurately than morphosyntactic ones.

## 3. Timing of CMF

Timing serves as one of the most crucial mediators of the effectiveness of CMF (Goodman et al., 2004; Smits et al., 2008). An inspection of the data in Table 2 reveals that researchers examined the immediate CMF (81%) more often than the delayed CMF (44%).

Yang et al. (2012) surveyed 90 freshmen EFL learners at an Asian university to empirically test the effectiveness of voice over instant messaging, a web-based learning application, for enhancing learners' oral proficiency. All of the participants were regarded as the advanced English learners. In this study, both immediate and delayed feedback was provided by tutors. The result indicated that learners who received delayed feedback did not improve as significantly as those who received immediate feedback. Although the delayed feedback was detailed, learners might have already forgotten the types of mistakes they had made. Thus, it was arduous for those advanced learners to take advantage of corrections supplied by the delayed feedback. Similarly, Martin and Valdivia (2017) analyzed that immediate CF may interrupt the natural flow of speech and it may also undermine both the learners' confidence and increase their anxiety. This finding is contrary to that of Guadagnoli et al. (1996) who found that the learning outcome of the lower-intermediate learners was fostered by immediate feedback, whereas delayed feedback is more effective for advanced learners. This result may reflect differences in the criteria defining learners' language proficiency. However, this finding is partially consistent with a more recent study exploring the impact of feedback timing on learning online, which has suggested that there were no remarkable correlations between language proficiency and feedback timing (Smits et al., 2008).

## B. CMF as a Dialogical Process

Table 3 presents the contextual factors of CMF in terms of feedback source, task type, and assessment task.

TABLE 3  
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Study	Feedback source	Task type
Ahn and Lee (2016)	Computer	Unfocused
Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017)	Peers	Unfocused
Bryfonski and Ma (2020)	Instructor	Focused
de Vries et al. (2015)	Computer	Focused
de Vries et al. (2016)	Computer	Focused
Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021)	Peers	Unfocused
Fang et al. (2021)	Peers & Computer	Unfocused
Gleason and Suvorov (2012)	Peers & Instructor	Unfocused
Gu et al. (2021)	Computer	Unfocused
Martin and Valdivia (2017)	Instructor	Unfocused
Rassaei (2017)	Peers	Focused
Rassaei (2019)	Instructor	Focused
Sagarra and Abbuhl (2013)	Computer	Focused
Wu and Miller (2020)	Peers	Unfocused
Yang et al. (2012)	Instructor	Unfocused
Yu et al. (2016)	Computer	Unfocused

## 1. Feedback Source

Although previous research has recognized the essence of feedback provided by instructors, peers, and computer systems, research has yet to systematically investigate the effect of feedback sources on speaking skills (van Ginkel et al., 2017). It can be seen from the data in Table 3 that the rates of these three feedback sources in the selected studies are almost equivalent: 44% of feedback was generated by computers automatically, 38% and 31% came from peers and instructors respectively.

Firstly, regarding the feedback provided by peers, Gleason and Suvorov (2012) addressed learner perceptions of CMF offered by both peers and instructors in aiding their oral skills. In the semi-structured interviews, learners

expressed their desire to communicate with fellow classmates through an online platform. They believed such CMC technology to be reciprocal that allowed them to obtain peer feedback, and further promote learners to 1) reflect on their own oral performance, 2) exchange value and ideas, and 3) interact with their peers. More recently, Wu and Miller (2020) confirmed this result by collecting 25 Hong Kong learners' attitudes towards mobile-assisted peer feedback. They found that involving students in giving peer feedback not only transferred learners' identity from receivers relying on teacher feedback to producers and evaluators of knowledge but also engaged learners in a more socially equal atmosphere of speaking (Wu & Miller, 2019). The result revealed learners' appreciation to offer and receive peer feedback, which allowed them to participate in speaking tasks fully and collaboratively. In addition, Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021) also reported participants' positive attitudes towards peer feedback, perceiving it as an ideal substitution for instructor feedback. Nonetheless, some participants failed to recognize the advantages of peer feedback due to their lack of confidence in themselves and their peers. Thus, learners' uniqueness such as their different personalities and anxiety levels should also be taken into account.

Secondly, on the subject of instructors' feedback, all the participants in Martin and Valdivia (2017)'s study valued it the most and followed it by feedback from themselves and classmates, which contradict Gleason and Suvorov (2012) showing the preference for peer feedback over instructor feedback. This result is in accord with previous research indicating that instructors were considered to be learners' prime source of knowledge, so the feedback provided by them was deemed to be more reliable (Van den Boom et al., 2007).

Thirdly, as for the feedback given by automated computer systems, it can serve as an additional learning resource that monitors learners' input and output while providing immediate and individualized feedback (Fang et al., 2021; Gu et al., 2021). Ahn and Lee (2016) analyzed the user experience of a mobile-based learning system that provides timely feedback for improving speaking proficiency. The result supports prior research that appraised this system in enhancing the spoken grammar of 29 Dutch learners (de Vries et al., 2015). They stated that the system afforded a sense of collaboration for learners which is indispensable for accessing spoken output. Moreover, the research to date has identified several virtues of using computer systems to offer feedback as follows: 1) it supplies constant and intensive feedback (de Vries et al., 2015); 2) it could be controlled by learners in terms of the amount and type (Heift, 2004); 3) it is able to focus on both holistic evaluations and specific linguistic phenomena (Gu et al., 2021).

## 2. Task Type

The task is defined as a meaning-oriented material that requires learners to use the target language in order to accomplish a teaching goal (Bygate et al., 2013). On the word of Long (2000), tasks were regarded as an ideal platform for L2 teaching and learning, since the CF provided at the post-task stage drives learners attention to both forms and meanings. Task-related characters were often investigated as leading relational variables that moderate the links between feedback and L2 development, which highlights the significance of exploring the role of task type (Révész, 2009). According to Ellis (2009), there are two types of tasks, i.e., unfocused (designed for learners to use language in general communicatively) and focused tasks (designed for learners to communicate using some specific linguistic features such as certain grammatical structures). It is apparent from Table 2 that more than two-thirds of the selected articles utilized unfocused tasks (69%), while 38% of the studies employed focused tasks.

On the subject of focused tasks, Sagarra and Abbuhl (2013) studied how computer-delivered recasts in the absence of meaning-focused interaction affected the accuracy of Spanish noun–adjective agreement in learners' spoken language. The results showed that recasts led to gains of the target feature. A possible explanation for its outcome may be the models of target structures provided by recasts could profit learners (Leeman, 2003). In a similar vein, de Vries et al. (2015) found prompt (without giving target structure) made no difference in learners' improvements of the target structure -- inversion of subject and verb in Dutch, which would further prove the importance of affording the target feature in CF (i.e., recasts) to facilitate L2 grammar learning. Another plausible reason for this result may be the complexity of the target structure which might benefit more from implicit feedback such as recasts (Goo & Mackey, 2013). The inversion in L2 Dutch occurs even in advanced learners due to its difficulty (Blom & de Korte, 2011). Moreover, this result reflects that of Rassaei (2019) who found that partial recast would promote target-like modified output effectually. While concerning the unfocused task, feedback mainly concentrated on general speaking proficiency, in terms of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehension (Fang et al., 2021; Wu & Miller, 2020). In comparison, feedback given in unfocused tasks was found to address learners' oral errors more frequently than in focused tasks (Gurzynski-Weiss & Révész, 2012).

## C. CMF as an Internal Process

Table 4 demonstrates the individual factors relate to CMF, i.e., individual differences, proficiency level, and L1 background.

TABLE 4  
INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Study	Individual differences	Proficiency level
Ahn and Lee (2016)	N/A	N/A
Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017)	N/A	Intermediate
Bryfonski and Ma (2020)	N/A	Beginner & Upper-intermediate
de Vries et al. (2015)	N/A	Pre-intermediate & Intermediate
de Vries et al. (2016)	N/A	Beginners & Pre-intermediate
Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021)	Anxiety	Intermediate
Fang et al. (2021)	N/A	Pre-intermediate
Gleason and Suvorov (2012)	Motivation	Pre-intermediate
Gu et al. (2021)	NA	N/A
Martin and Valdivia (2017)	Anxiety	Intermediate
Rassaei (2017)	N/A	Intermediate
Rassaei (2019)	N/A	Intermediate
Sagarra and Abbuhl (2013)	Working memory	N/A
Wu and Miller (2020)	N/A	Upper-intermediate
Yang et al. (2012)	Motivation	Advanced
Yu et al. (2016)	N/A	Beginner & Pre-intermediate

### 1. Individual Differences

Thus far, research has shown that CMF effectiveness is constrained by individual learner characteristics: 1) learners' abilities such as working memory (WM) capacity (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013), 2) learners' propensities including foreign language anxiety (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2021; Martin & Valdivia, 2017), and learners' motivation (Gleason & Suvorov, 2012; Yang et al., 2012). As exhibited by Table 4, anxiety and motivation particularly come to the forefront of the research agenda in the recent decade (13%) in comparison with WM (6%).

Firstly, working memory is broadly defined as the impermanent storage and manipulation of information that is essential for carrying out complex cognitive tasks (Baddeley, 2007), which can also be applied to SLA (Hasegawa et al., 2002). WM has been demonstrated to impact the noticing of interactional recasts (Egi et al., 2002; Sagarra, 2007). In line with Mackey et al. (2010), empirical evidence suggested that WM was positively associated with speaking performance in the groups that received oral computer-delivered recasts (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013). In particular, learners with higher WM spans produced more accurate utterances regarding the target structure than the lower WM span learners.

Secondly, anxiety was demonstrated to have a disruptive influence on L2 acquisition in general, especially for L2 speaking (Chou, 2018; Zhang, 2019) and L2 speaking in particular (Bashori et al., 2020). Online classes may serve to mitigate anxiety by providing CMF as well as enabling learners to have more time to process input and plan output (Baralt & Gurzynski-Weiss, 2011). Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021) compared the effect of L1 CMF and L2 CMF on speaking performance and anxiety of 32 EFL learners from Iran. Although participants in both groups appreciated CMF's beneficial role in diminishing anxiety, only L1 CMF led to a statistically significant reduction of anxiety at the end of the experiment. The results verified that CMF might not exert a direct impact on lowering anxiety, the language used in CMF also matters. This finding deviates from that of Martin and Valdivia (2017), reporting support towards the provision of CF in oral tasks regardless of participants anxiety level because CF would evoke a positive recognition of the work and make learners feel more at ease, which in turn lower learners' anxiety (Tseng & Tsai, 2007).

Thirdly, motivation accounts for people's behaviour, the endeavor one makes, the last of willingness to sustain this activity (Dörnyei, 2002). Depending on the learner's attitudes towards the community of the target language, Gardner and Lambert (1959) classified motivation into two kinds: 1) integrative motivation (learning the target language for communication); 2) instrumental motivation (learning the target language for pragmatic and utilitarian benefits). Gleason and Suvorov (2012) examined the influence of CALL with CMF in fostering L2 learners' motivation. The majority of learners showed both integrative and instrumental motivation, who claimed to use English in the future for professional goals as well as personal communication purposes. Additionally, CALL where CMF was found to be efficient in improving learners' L2 confidence and affording opportunities to practice the target language. These results agree with the findings of Yang et al. (2012), in which CMF offered a sense of accomplishment. Since motivation positively correlates with achievement, the sense of accomplishment would further strengthen learners' motivation (Huang, 2004). The motivation type improved in Yang et al. (2012) was the integrative motivation with a highly-regarded communicative aim, whereas Gleason and Suvorov (2012) illustrated the increment in both integrative and instrumental motivation. This inconsistency may be due to the different linguistic focuses in these two studies: Yang et al. (2012) provided elicited correction on pronunciation and vocabulary, while Gleason and Suvorov (2012) focused more on fluency and speaking skills, which are more required in the professional field.

### 2. Proficiency Level

This review categorized learners' proficiency levels based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level. In total, five proficiency levels have been identified, i.e., beginners, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced. Evidence suggests that there exists an interplay between the

effectiveness of CMF and L2 proficiency (Ziegler et al., 2018). de Vries et al. (2015) analyzed the proficiency gains under two conditions: 1) learners received oral practice and immediate CF and 2) learners received only oral practice without CF. The result revealed that unlike learners with higher proficiency levels, elementary learners were unable to improve their grammatical accuracy on the target structure without CF. This is in accordance with de Vries et al. (2016), who performed a similar experiment and found that CF significantly facilitated L2 speaking for learners with little to general knowledge (0–60 %) of the target structure, and such benefit decreased as L2 proficiency increased. Taken together, these findings indicated that CMF would produce the most salient effect on lower-intermediate learners. In detail, Bryfonski and Ma (2020) demonstrated that the lower proficiency learners were better suited for more from implicit feedback (e.g., recasts) than from explicit metalinguistic feedback, which contrasts with the finding of Li (2009) that learners with little knowledge of the target structure benefited more from explicit feedback than implicit feedback. This discrepancy could be attributed to the fact that recasts present examples of target-like language form (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013).

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This systematic review has presented an overview in light of the preceding empirical studies about the effect of CMF on L2 speaking proficiency from 2012 to 2021. Rigorous and exhaustive searches found 16 studies that met the inclusion criteria. Three sets of factors that could mediate the effect were identified, i.e., linguistic, contextual, and individual factors.

The insights and implications provided by the current review are twofold. Theoretically speaking, a comprehensive framework of CMF was proposed to facilitate understanding of the factors that play a role in the CMF process from the aforementioned three theoretical perspectives. Interactions were found not only between the factors and CMF but also between the factors. For instance, on the one hand, the impact of CMF is mediated by learners' individual factors including learners' WM capacity, anxiety levels, and proficiency levels. As Yilmaz (2013) argued that prior knowledge of a target feature (proficiency level) is assumed to affect CF. On the other hand, those individual features would also interact with linguistic factors including feedback type, linguistic focus, and feedback timing. As Yoshida (2010) suggested that instructors would determine the specific type of CF based on their perceptions of learners' oral proficiency. Pedagogically speaking, instructors should take full advantage of computer or mobile devices to promote L2 oral proficiency development. They could explicitly demonstrate their feedback strategies. In this way, learners would notice the feedback more easily and learn specific features contained in those feedback strategies. After learners have a basic understanding of feedback, instructors could train them to provide peer feedback to each other, since many learners showed favourable attitudes towards peer feedback (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2021; Wu & Miller, 2020). Instructors should also be cautious when providing CMF considering learner differences in perceiving and responding to CMF. Especially in Asian EFL contexts, where learners are always sensitive and anxious, instructors should devote effort to create a more relaxed and harmonious atmosphere by providing positive and explicitly detailed feedback.

The present study has identified several suggestions for future studies. First, although CMF attracted considerable scholarly attention, tremendous research efforts were given to investigate the linguistic factors. Thus, more attention must be paid to contextual factors (e.g., grouping, treatment length) and individual learner factors (e.g., aptitude, learning style, learner beliefs, cultural background). Second, several studies have recognized the correlation between linguistic, contextual, and individual factors. Surprisingly, their interplay has still not yet been extensively examined. Further investigation and experimentation into this topic are strongly recommended.

## APPENDIX A. SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Study	Sample size	Participants' portfolio		
		Gender	Age	L2
Ahn and Lee (2016)	302	N/A	Middle school students	English
Andújar-Vaca and Cruz-Martínez (2017)	80	32M;48F	18-31	English
Bryfonski and Ma (2020)	41	18M; 23F	Mean=39.5years	Chinese, Mandarin
de Vries et al. (2015)	29	11M; 18F	22-48 (Mean=31 years)	Dutch
de Vries et al. (2016)	31	15M; 16F	16-62 (Mean=28 years)	Dutch
Ebadijalal and Yousofi (2021)	32	32F	19-28	English
Fang et al. (2021)	66	56M; 10F	18-20	English
Gleason and Suvorov (2012)	10	N/A	20-30 (Mean=25 years)	English
Gu et al. (2021)	154	N/A	N/A	English
Martin and Valdivia (2017)	50	17M; 33F	Two-thirds of the participants were older than 25	English
Rassaei (2017)	57	25M; 32F	18-33	English
Rassaei (2019)	70	29M; 41F	22-33	English
Sagarra and Abbuhl (2013)	218	N/A	First - semester Spanish students	Spanish
Wu and Miller (2020)	25	10M; 15F	18-22	English
Yang et al. (2012)	90	N/A	N/A	English
Yu et al. (2016)	159	N/A	N/A	English

Note. M stands for males, F stands for females

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# How Do EFL Students Perceive Brainstorming in L2 Writing Classes?

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**Abstract**—Brainstorming is a valuable pre-writing activity in enabling learners to get started in writing classes. The present qualitative study explored the participants' perceptions regarding the use of the method after experiencing it in online writing classes. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling, and their age range was 19 to 23. They had participated in private writing classes and volunteered to take part in interviews performed after the course. The interviews were also done virtually via WhatsApp, during which the respondents answered six questions. The analysis of the interviews led the researchers to extract eight significant themes, which were then divided into advantages and disadvantages. The interviewees mentioned idea generation, encouraging new ideas, becoming open-minded, enhancing motivation to write, and creating stronger rapport with classmates as the positive features of brainstorming. The disadvantages consisted of being distracted by too many ideas, being influenced by others' ideas, and accepting ideas expressed by the majority. The study has implications for language teachers, educators, and ELT specialists.

**Index Terms**—brainstorming, L2 writing, online classes, students' perceptions

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a challenging task, and EFL/ESL learners usually have problems composing essays. Learners must pay attention to several issues during writing, including grammar, mechanics, coherence, and cohesion. Therefore, teaching writing should be an amalgamation of different techniques and strategies used to create a composition. Teachers apply various techniques in writing courses to enhance learners' writing ability, which partially relates to how they view writing. Some prioritize content and idea generation and resort to different classroom practices to teach writing (e.g., Helen, Paul, & Hellen, 2020; Rahmawati, 2019; Rashtchi, 2007). Some consider grammar and mechanics as essential factors in promoting learners' writing ability. Thus, they focus on practices that draw learners' attention to the writing structures (e.g., Rashtchi & Mohammadi, 2017; Rashtchi & Ghandi, 2011). Still, some teachers believe that writing is an excellent practice for stimulating thinking skills (Rashtchi, 2019; Rashtchi & Aghajanzadeh, 2008; Sheikhy Behdani & Rashtchi, 2019). One activity that boosts thinking and helps learners write with ease is brainstorming. As a pre-writing activity, it has a primary role in developing ideas, and many teachers use it in their classes (e.g., Rashtchi & Beiki, 2015; Rashtchi & Porkar, 2020). However, research studies usually focus on the effects of brainstorming in students' writings. What seemed essential to the current study's researchers was to explore EFL learners' views regarding brainstorming and how they perceive its role in advancing writing skills. The present study investigated participants' perceptions regarding brainstorming after practicing the activity in an online writing course.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The mainstream teacher-centered methods have long been replaced by student-centered educational settings in which learners are held responsible for reflection and the creation of meaning. Brainstorming as a student-centered approach has gained prominence in the twenty-first century due to its role in learner autonomy (Smit, Brabander, & Martens, 2014).

Brainstorming, which pivots around spontaneous pair or group discussions to nourish creative thinking, lateral thinking, and problem-solving, was coined by Alex Osborn (1963) and has been a bold concept since it enjoys numerous positive attributes. Some defining characteristics of brainstorming include "multiple ways of thinking, breaking old thoughts, associating different concepts, expanding the borders of thoughts, and seeking problem-solving" (Hoing, 2001, as cited in Tsai, Liao, Chang, & Chen, 2020). In addition, the prohibition of either criticism or even praise of the generated ideas is a distinguishing attribute of brainstorming since praise of an idea attaches negativity to other opinions that are not praised and can be construed as inappropriate. Brainstorming is a cooperative activity, and teachers use it to develop sharing ideas and group activities in their classes. However, it can be applied with even one individual and might cultivate perspective-taking.

Regarding L2 writing and brainstorming, as Rashtchi and Porkar (2020) state: "it facilitates the process of generating ideas and helps organize learners' thoughts to get involved in writing activity" (p. 1). While brainstorming, some

seemingly impractical thoughts might spark even more valuable ones and add to the richness of the collected ideas. Amoush (2015) investigated the role of brainstorming in EFL learners' writing and showed the effectiveness and priority over traditional teaching methods. It is worth mentioning that this problem-solving mode comes in different types, such as nominal, traditional, and electronic. Usually, brainstorming involves different groups who put forward related ideas to be classified while fulfilling a task. Learners who are engaged in brainstorming encounter various viewpoints by sharing ideas with peers. Brainstorming stimulates their thinking skills and curiosity for looking for new ideas (Amoush, 2015; Asundi & Rao, 2018; Ryoo, Molfese, & Brown, 2018).

In traditional brainstorming (TBS), there is verbal intragroup interaction. Members of each group are supposed to share thoughts orally by going through different steps. First, groups of three to ten from diverse backgrounds are formed. Second, the problem, task, or topic is presented to the learners. Then, in a non-judgmental atmosphere, ideas are generated, a step also known as the divergent phase. Finally, the generated ideas are discussed and prioritized in what is called the convergent phase. Although advantageous, there is the risk that not all members take an active role in the process due to laziness or shyness. As a result, there could be insufficient ideas regarding the imbalanced number of the members and produced thoughts (Al-Samarraie & Hurmuzan, 2017). In Nominal brainstorming, every member in each group is held responsible for idea generation via communicating with other group members (Henningsen & Henningsen, 2013). Nominal brainstorming can yield a more significant number of ideas. However, since its role as the technique that lets the learners produce quality thoughts individually has remained unclear, its efficacy has been questioned (Sutton & Arnold, 2013). As another type of brainstorming, electronic brainstorming has been introduced in recent years to compensate for nominal brainstorming's defects. Through electronic brainstorming, learners are free to use any electric forms of obtaining data, such as the Internet (Baruah & Paulus, 2016). In some contexts, electronic brainstorming might be considered more practical since students could generate more ideas than other varieties of brainstorming. However, there is no consensus on the most effective form of brainstorming. Context of instruction, the field of study, and discipline are decisive factors in verifying the practicality of brainstorming (Brandies & Dotzauer, 2016).

Regarding what is mentioned earlier, different fields of study such as business, psychology, and languages have employed various brainstorming modes in educational processes, and the results were rewarding. For instance, in a study on a civic course, the researchers reported a rise in the participants' performance, more creative learning, improved interactions among peers, and more meaningful activities due to employing brainstorming activities (Matto, McCartney, Bennion, & Simpson 2017). In a 2014 review of the effectiveness of brainstorming in five disciplines of business, language, education, industry, and psychology and 42 studies, especially electronic brainstorming, were reported to be the most beneficial, particularly in decreasing social stress and enhancing learners' creativity.

However, one danger of the activity is an "increase in cognitive load for individuals who lack knowledge and communication skills to participate in shared decision-making, which may limit the quality of the produced solutions" (Johnson & D'Lauro, 2017, p. 4). On the other hand, some learners might be more productive while working on their own. In the field of L2 learning, a study comparing the effects of mobile-assisted BS, wordle-assisted BS, and cooperative BS showed that wordle-assisted BS could be more advantageous in practicing argumentative essays (Rashtchi, & Porkar, 2020).

Mastery in writing in a second language has always been a source of worry for learners and educators. The root of the difficulty is the need to focus simultaneously on lower and higher-order thinking skills to come across ideas worthy of writing. As Luchini (2010) puts it, "the different cognitive and linguistic characteristics involved in the writing ability make it a difficult task for students to learn" (p. 84). Besides, as the primary trend in teaching writing is to shift from product-based to process-based writing skills (Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014; Cavkaytar, 2010; Hyland, 2016), learners are assumed to receive scaffolding during the different stages of writing. The literature on L2 writing has shown a direct relationship between writing proficiency and writing strategies. Brainstorming is one of the well-known strategies capable of transforming a seemingly tedious task into an enjoyable experience for the learners. This viewpoint is the ground for attaching considerable significance to this form of band or group inventiveness.

Numerous scholars have documented the positive role of brainstorming in L2 writing. For instance, Storch (2005) investigated the role of brainstorming on writing skills and concluded that cooperative writing has the potential to increase not only writing quantity but also quality as the learners could produce more persuasive arguments. The success of brainstorming could be due to solving the most severe challenges learners encounter, that is, idea generation and getting started. As Fang (2013) states, finding worthy thoughts for producing a quality writing paper is of great value. Maghsoudi and Haririan (2013), in their study, pointed to learner autonomy gained through brainstorming while trying to fulfill a writing task. Besides, Khalaf Ibnian (2011) confirmed more beneficial roles of BS in organization strategies and mechanics of writing.

Writing is a vital skill in L2 learning. Yong (2010) believes that writing ability can reflect learners' L2 knowledge. However, the skill is challenging for student writers. The positive point is that the wealth of research on L2 writing has led researchers to invaluable understandings that facilitate writing. For instance, research on L2 writing strategies (e.g., Karim, Maasum, & Latif, 2018; Machili, Mu, 2005; Papadopoulou & Kantaridou, 2019; Rashtchi, & Karami, 2015), classroom practices (e.g., Elola, & Oskoz, 2017; Everson, 2011; Keck, 2014; Rashtchi, Porkar, & Ghazi Mir Saeed, 2019), and employing context-based tasks (e.g., Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Gebhard & Harman, 2011) are only a

few to mention. However, learners' perceptions regarding the benefits of employing different classroom practices have not been focused on much. The present study aimed to delve more deeply into the use of brainstorming in L2 writing courses. In doing so, the researchers of the present study formulated the following research question:

**RQ:** How do Iranian EFL learners perceive the role of brainstorming in writing courses?

### III. METHOD

#### A. Participants

Sixteen EFL learners (six males and ten females) in three intact classes participated in a 20-session online writing course that employed brainstorming as a pre-writing activity. In each class, there were eight learners: one group consisted of six females and two males, and another group of four females and four males. They were university students aged 19 to 23 who had taken a private writing course. They were studying TEFL or Translation studies in different branches of Islamic Azad University. Their purpose was to improve their writing skills to take academic writing courses in their universities afterward. They had selected the classes according to their life schedules. At the onset of the study, the IELTS General indicated that their English level was B2 or upper intermediate (5.5 - 6).

#### B. Instruments

##### 1. Testing Instrument

The researchers used an IELTS exam extracted from General IELTS 15 (Test 2) to specify the language proficiency level of the participants before starting the writing program. The test consisted of 19 listening questions, 14 reading questions, and one writing task. The speaking section was excluded due to the participants' time constraints and the problems of the online environment.

##### 2. Interview

The researchers used interviews to discover the participants' perceptions regarding BS (Appendix A). They included six open-ended questions. Having prepared the first draft, the researchers consulted with two experts regarding the appropriacy of the content. Then five students with similar characteristics to the study participants reviewed the questions and stated their opinions regarding the choice of vocabulary, appropriacy of the questions, and clarity.

#### C. Materials

The coursebook was *The Practical Writer* (Bailey & Powell, 2008). Also, ten topics were selected from *501 Writing Prompts* (Appendix B) for practicing writing during the course.

#### D. Procedure

Two online writing classes met twice a week for 20 sessions. The classes took 90 minutes. The course was run through the Adobe Connect platform, which made sharing and group work possible. Also, the teacher created a WhatsApp group to connect the learners and facilitate out of the class interaction.

In each session, first, the teacher introduced the topic of the day and asked the learners to think about it individually. They had ten minutes to check the Internet or any sources to get ideas (individual brainstorming). The teacher also wrote some keywords on the screen and asked the learners to express their opinions that were boarded electronically. Then, in each study group, the members were put in two groups of four students to express their ideas and share them with group members (group brainstorming). The participants were encouraged to take notes during discussions. After brainstorming, the participants were required to review their notes, ask for clarification, share ideas, and discuss issues with their classmates. Brainstorming took about half an hour each session. However, the learners used the WhatsApp group to share ideas and negotiate with classmates regarding the ideas suggested during the class while writing their essays.

The participants were supposed to write a five-paragraph essay after the class and submit it to the teacher, who was one of the researchers, via e-mails. The writings were corrected by the teacher and e-mailed to the learners. The teacher extracted the common mistakes and explained them in the subsequent session. Each session was also devoted to teaching the coursebook, including grammar, style and mechanics, and coherence.

After the treatment, the participants took part in the online interview sessions via WhatsApp. The teacher explained the purpose before the interview sessions. She clarified that participation was voluntary, and the learners were free to refrain. However, all participants proclaimed their satisfaction in answering the questions. The interviews were run by one of the researchers and took about ten minutes for each participant.

### IV. RESULTS

The participants' responses regarding the efficacy of brainstorming in writing urged the researchers to divide the main themes extracted from the responses into two categories of advantages and disadvantages of brainstorming. The responses indicated mixed opinions of the participants, although the tendency was much more towards positive attitudes, and the participants' optimistic ideas outweighed the undesirable ones. The participants regarded group brainstorming

as more of help than the individual one. This finding is congruent with a similar study by Omidvar and Abedianpour (2018), in which the tendency was to group brainstorming.

Concerning the classification of the results, the advantages had five main themes: a) idea generation, b) encouraging new ideas, c) becoming open-minded, d) motivating learners to write, and e) creating stronger rapport with classmates. The disadvantages consisted of a) being distracted by too many ideas, b) being influenced by others' ideas, and c) accepting ideas expressed by the majority.

#### A. Advantages of BS

**Idea Generation:** Almost all the participants mentioned the contribution of brainstorming to generating ideas. One problem with writing is that learners do not know what to write. The respondents mentioned that searching the Internet, discussing with their classmates, and sharing ideas were helpful in the writing process. One of the participants mentioned:

*Sometimes I felt as if I was totally out of ideas, and this brainstorming thing really pushed me forward.*

**Encouraging New Ideas:** The second category refers to the role of BS in writing. The participants felt that the technique encouraged them to start writing by and providing them with ideas. Most participants mentioned that brainstorming directed their thoughts and gave meaning to the wild or dispersed ideas in their minds. It could help them organize their thoughts and prevent shifting from one issue to the other. Most of the learners mentioned that brainstorming gave them the courage to share their ideas and oppose others' viewpoints. It enhanced their decision-making abilities by urging them to select from the ideas proposed during group discussions. The following are some extracts from the interviewees' responses:

*"Brainstorming pushed me to talk about my ideas and not worry about being criticized or objected because I felt I was free to criticize others, as well."*

*"I think I could select the best ideas with a higher speed than the beginning of the course."*

*"Brainstorming gave direction to my wild ideas and shaped them. Organizing my ideas became easier."*

#### Becoming Open-minded

The classes helped learners listen to others' viewpoints, express their opinions, and provide reasons for their standpoints. By equipping learners to share ideas (which most of the time continued in the WhatsApp group), the learners tried to challenge others' perspectives, clarify their positions, and convince classmates. They valued the policy of tolerance among the class members and the teacher and appreciated teachers' attitude, who welcomed every thought. The following are extracts from what the participants mentioned:

*"I enjoyed the classes because they were not boring. Classroom discussions improved my speaking, too. I tried to look for words to talk about my opinions."*

*"Brainstorming taught me to listen to others, evaluate what they said, and give reasons when I did not agree with [ideas]."*

*"The classes gave me the brevity to express my ideas and disapprove others when I did not like them."*

**Motivating Learners:** Another classification of the benefits of brainstorming mentioned by the participants was motivating them to write. The learners believed that the activity lessened their fear of writing. They could focus on the content and free themselves from excessive tendency to "write perfectly from the very beginning," as mentioned by a participant. The learners believed too much focus on grammar impeded the process of writing. They believed:

*"Writing seems much easier for me after taking part in the classes. I did not like writing at all. It was the least favorable language skill for me."*

*"Having ideas helps me to jot down things and feel less stressed about how to start."*

*"I learned to put ideas down and then correct my writing by drafting and revising."*

**Creating Stronger Rapport with Classmates:** The participants unanimously agreed that brainstorming could establish a friendly relationship among the class members. They felt close to each other and cooperated in the writing process. They thought working in groups created empathy and prepared them for working together to solve a problem. The following are the interviewees' perceptions:

*"Brainstorming fostered a friendly atmosphere in the classroom; exchanging ideas helped us to work together."*

*"Brainstorming helped me to feel responsible for my friends' learning."*

*"The friendly relationships in the classes changed my mood. I was under pressure due to several reasons caused by the Pandemic. But working together and talking to the classmates were a release."*

#### B. Disadvantageous of Brainstorming

Analyzing the respondents' answers to the interview questions helped the researchers extricate the following negative points regarding BS.

**Being Distracted by Too Many Ideas:** Although beneficial, brainstorming is not without downsides. In large groups, brainstormers may come up with too many ideas, making it challenging to choose the quality thoughts from the pool of ideas. In this study, some participants mentioned that they found it hard to make up their minds on selecting the best view from time to time. One of the participants stated:

*"With too many ideas, I didn't know where to start. Sometimes, it took me a lot of time to make up my mind and which position to take."*

Another student blamed:

*"Sometimes brainstorming was confusing. Sometimes it was not easy to organize what you heard. Sometimes I felt everyone was right in one way or another, which made writing difficult."*

**Being Influenced by Others' Ideas:** Brainstorming can be done through different tools and technological instruments. However, the individuality of the brainstormers might be ignored, and some participants' thoughts could be discarded or overshadowed by other participants. Two of the interviewees mentioned that they did not have a good learning experience since they felt either ignored or found themselves accepting ideas. They did not truly believe in them. They sometimes found themselves inferior to others because they had to change their ideas under the influence of others. One of the participants mentioned:

*"I did not like BS because the classmates objected [to] my ideas. I had to modify my viewpoints and think like others in the group. Sometimes, I felt I am self-censoring myself."*

#### **Accepting Ideas Expressed by the Majority**

One of the participants complained about feeling the pressure of accepting the opinions of other group members. She stated that although she did not want to do so, she found it challenging to be different. This condition led her to accept the ideas expressed by the majority. Another learner reported her dissatisfaction with intra-group criticism, and consequently, she refrained from sharing thoughts. Another respondent mentioned that he had to modify his ideas although he was not entirely satisfied to do so."

*"Sometimes, I felt that I had to change my ideas, though I did not like it."*

*"There was an unconscious feeling in me to be appraised by others. So, I tried to say something to be pleased. Of course, not always, sometimes."*

## V. DISCUSSION

The interview results indicated that most of the participants were positive toward using brainstorming in writing classes. The interviewees indicated that brainstorming could help them generate ideas. This assertion supports schema theory, prioritizing activating learners' background knowledge and enhancing writing (e.g., Qin, 2016; Sun, 2014).

In addition, the respondents' views clarify that brainstorming can cultivate higher-order thinking skills (e.g., open-mindedness, problem-solving, inferencing meaning). This finding indicates that BS can be used to teach critical thinking skills and help educators employ them in different learning activities. This finding aligns with what Rashtchi and Sadraeimanesh (2011) found regarding the role of debate in promoting critical thinking skills.

The interviewees' viewpoints conform to the research findings regarding the efficacy of brainstorming for developing learners' writing performance (e.g., Khalaf Ibnian, 2011; Manouchehry, Farangi, Fatemi, & Qaviketf, 2014; Rashtchi & Beiki, 2015), who found that the activities develop learners' writing performance.

However, the disadvantages mentioned by the learners are worthy of attention. The findings align with Isaksen and Gaulin (2005). They believe that brainstorming may have some threats such as motivation loss, pressure to follow specific ideas, and inhibition. The researchers of the current study recommend teachers be careful while applying brainstorming in their classes. Although it is a student-centered activity, teachers' roles as facilitators and supervisors are highly required.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present qualitative study explored a group of participants' perceptions regarding the use of brainstorming in writing classes. The interview results directed the researchers to extract five advantages and three disadvantages regarding employing the technique in writing classes. The participants experienced brainstorming in virtual courses. Thus, extending the results to in-person courses should be done cautiously. Besides, the limited number of participants, typical of qualitative studies, does not allow its generalization to other contexts. Since brainstorming is a practical pre-writing activity, the researchers suggest additional surveys on its advantages and drawbacks in writing classes. The participants' social background, country of residence, and personality features, which were not considered in the current study, can also affect their perceptions about the technique.

## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you think about brainstorming used in your classes at the beginning of each session?
2. Did you find brainstorming helpful? Please explain.
3. Did brainstorming have any drawbacks? Please explain.
4. In what measures did you find brainstorming useful?
5. Do you prefer to have brainstorming in your writing classes in the future? Why or why not?
6. Any additional comments you want to mention about the writing course?

## APPENDIX B. WRITING TOPICS

- 1-We all have favorite activities that we enjoy. Write an essay convincing readers to try the activity that you enjoy most.
- 2-Write an essay convincing readers to break a specific habit that is harmful to their physical, emotional, or financial health.
- 3-Have you ever traveled to a place that you found very meaningful and rewarding? Write an essay that persuades others to visit this important place.
- 4- A few decades ago, many families had half a dozen or more children. Nowadays, more and more families are choosing to have only one or two children. Are smaller families better than larger ones? Why or why not? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.
- 5-What is your all-time favorite movie and why? Write an essay persuading readers to watch this film.
- 6-Have you ever made a change that improved your life or the lives of others? Write an essay that convinces readers to make a change for the better.
- 7-You have been asked to write a brochure to attract visitors to your hometown. Write an essay that convinces people to visit the place where you live.
- 8-Many people believe that honesty is the best policy. In your opinion, is it ever okay to lie? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 9-What would improve your hometown? Write an essay convincing town officials to make a change that would improve your neighborhood.
- 10-Every year, millions of people visit zoos around the world. But some people believe that zoos are inhumane and that animals should not be kept in captivity. Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

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# The Influence of Teacher Audio Feedback via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka on Chinese College Students' English Speaking Ability\*

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**Abstract**—In order to effectively improve the English speaking ability of Chinese college students, this paper explores the effectiveness of oral English practice and teacher audio feedback via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka. The research instruments include a 10-week daka practice, two questionnaires and an interview. It has been found: 1) Oral English practice via Sharedaka has a positive impact on Chinese college students' English speaking ability. 2) Teacher audio feedback better caters to students' need and helps improve their pronunciation and intonation. 3) Communication via Sharedaka creates a more relaxed atmosphere between teachers and students.

**Index Terms**—teacher audio feedback, daka, WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka, Chinese College Students, English speaking ability

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, universities in China have been dedicating themselves to reforming teaching modes and methods, shifting from traditional teacher-centered, spoon-feeding and non-individualized teaching to student-centered, interactive and individualized teaching. Great progress has been achieved while problems remain. One especially prominent problem is that many college students are still incapable of communicating their ideas in English, a phenomenon known as mute English.

Exam-oriented education and mass higher education in China are both contributing factors to the mute English phenomenon. On the one hand, though quality education was promoted many years ago, students are still profoundly influenced by the exam-oriented education. The English examination in Gaokao does not attach enough attention to test-takers' speaking and listening abilities, leading to the negligence of these skills by both middle school teachers and students. On the other hand, due to the massified higher education and the large population in China, at present, the student-teacher ratio in many universities is still quite high and many classes are large in size. As a result, students usually do not have enough time and opportunity to practice their English in class. Meanwhile, many college teachers are under heavy workload. Therefore, when students have problems and doubts, where teachers' feedback and help are badly needed, they find it difficult to get timely and effective help and support from teachers.

Teacher feedback has long been recognized as one of the most important aspects of students' learning. According to Bloxham and Boyd (2007), the provision of feedback is "the most important aspect of the assessment process in raising achievement" (p. 20). Researchers in China also identified the importance of teacher feedback, for example, Yuan, Lu and Zhang (2018) claim that proper teacher feedback can facilitate students' emotional development and enhance their learning efficiency and academic performance. However, despite the inarguable importance of teacher feedback, it "has remained one of the least satisfactory areas in students' university experiences" (Xu, 2018, p. 1). Effective feedback should be "timely, precise, thorough and constructive" (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014, p. 777), otherwise even "the most carefully crafted type" of feedback "could be fated to be misunderstood and ignored" (Mutch, 2003, p. 37).

Against this backdrop, the improvement of teacher feedback effectiveness should still be a critical issue in teaching research. And the study on effective teacher feedback would hopefully provide useful suggestions for enhancing students' English speaking ability.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Feedback

The significance of feedback has been recognized in motivating learning. Feedback provides information for improvement and enhances students' learning performance, therefore, it is considered by many researchers and teachers to be one of the most powerful ways to strengthen students' learning (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Shute, 2008; Hepplestone et al., 2011). Price et al. (2010) even argue that feedback is "the most important part of the assessment

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process" (p. 277). Despite its importance, however, feedback is one of the "least understood features in instructional design" (as cited in Shute, 2008, p. 153) and "has remained one of the least satisfactory areas in students' university experiences" (Xu, 2018, p. 1). "Student surveys across the world have highlighted that students are dissatisfied with the feedback they receive on their assignments." (Nicol, 2010, p. 501) The situation is even worse in China due to the constraints of large classes and the high student-teacher ratio.

### *1. Written Feedback*

Much research has been carried out on improving written feedback with a focus on the criteria and principles of effective written feedback. Nicol (2011) summarizes good written feedback as understandable, selective, specific, timely, contextualized, non-judgmental, balanced, forward looking, transferable and personal. Based on the review of formative feedback literature, Shute (2008) suggests "formative feedback guidelines for (1) things to do, (2) things to avoid, (3) timing issues, and (4) learner characteristics" (p. 176). Essentially, effective feedback should describe how the student has performed, address problems or errors, explain the goal or standard to reach and provide suggestion on future improvement and should be "timely, detailed and specific" (Gould & Day, 2013, p. 555).

Of critical importance to effective written feedback are also issues relating to two most important stakeholders, i.e. teachers and students. According to Rust (2002), "explicit guidelines on giving effective feedback" (p. 156) should be provided for teachers. Mutch (2003) points out that feedback should be regarded as a developmental activity instead of focusing just on individual practice. Nicol (2010) proposes that feedback should be considered as "a dialogical and contingent two-way process" because "dialogue is fundamental to successful learning and teaching" (p. 503).

### *2. Audio Feedback*

In recent years, there is a growing interest in exploring how technology might be used to support effective feedback. Audio feedback, as a means of facilitating discussions between students and teachers, is considered as an alternative to traditional written feedback (Bond, 2009; Rotheram, 2009; Orsmond et al., 2013; Gould & Day, 2013; Chew, 2014; Xu, 2018).

Compared with written feedback, audio feedback has several advantages. First, audio feedback is "more detailed, personalized and supportive than written feedback" (Gould & Day, 2013, p. 554). Second, audio feedback may be more easily accepted and adopted by learners in that it is "more likely to include suggestions for how to improve work, rather than just identifying the problems" (Gould & Day, 2013, p. 556). Third, audio feedback is less time-consuming than written feedback (Hennessy & Forrester, 2014) and richer in content in that "one minute of audio is equal to six minutes of writing" (Lunt & Curran, 2010, p. 761). Fourth, conveying more than "mere words", audio feedback can create "learning conversations" with the help of the teacher's "tone, expression, pronunciation and emphasis", leading to "a greater understanding of tutor/lecturer comments" (Gould & Day, 2013, p. 556). In the past, restricted by the limitations of information and internet technology, audio feedback was recorded via specific sound-recording software and delivered to students via email or Blackboard, hence lack of attention and wide use.

In Chinese context, studies have also been conducted on teachers' audio feedback. According to a case study of a university English teacher's use of audio feedback on WeChat, a popular social media platform in China, Xu (2018) reveals how the instructor's audio feedback on WeChat increases student engagement and enhances meaning negotiation. Compared with audio feedback in previous researches, using WeChat in giving audio feedback does not require much technical knowledge and is much more user-friendly.

### *B. WeChat-Assisted English Teaching*

Since its launch on January 21, 2011, WeChat has been developing at a phenomenal speed to be the most popular mobile social software in China, especially among young people. It is an all-in-one messaging app which can be used to send free text and audio messages, pictures and short videos to individual users or in group chat. Files and URLs can also be shared among users. By January 19, 2021, 1.09 billion users used the WeChat app on a daily basis (Zhang, 2021). "WeChat has brought new changes to the user relationship, communication form and communication mode, created a new mobile communication experience" (Jiang, Hou & Xiong, 2018, p. 584), which has been increasingly used by teachers and students in Chinese universities.

Research on WeChat-assisted English teaching in China mainly falls into three categories: using WeChat as a beneficial extension of classroom teaching, WeChat-based interactive classroom teaching and flipped classes via WeChat (Fan et al., 2015; Miao, 2016). Most studies investigate WeChat functions such as group chat, material sharing and public platforms (Bai & Hao, 2013; Chai, 2014). Nevertheless, more attention has been paid to utilizing WeChat in enhancing students' reading ability (Jiang, 2016; Chen et al., 2017) while students' listening and speaking abilities are somehow under-researched. The influence of teacher audio feedback via WeChat on improving students' speaking ability has remained relatively under-explored.

### *C. WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka*

"WeChat mini programs are 'sub-applications' within the WeChat ecosystem" (Graziani, 2018), providing advanced additional functions to users, such as mobile payment, online shopping, government services, gaming and so on. Without downloading and installing many different apps, users can have access to multimillions of functions within the

WeChat app. Since its debut on January 1, 2017, there are now more than 3.8 million mini programs, providing service to over 400 million users every day on the WeChat ecosystem (“WeChat Mini Programs Development White Paper”, 2021).

One increasingly popular type of WeChat mini program is punch-in, or *daka* in Chinese. To punch in means “to record the time of one’s arrival or beginning work by punching a time clock” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and employees are often required to punch in before work and punch out after work. Similarly, such mini programs as Sharedaka allow users to keep a record of their participation in a certain activity.

Sharedaka is a popular WeChat mini program among various others providing free *daka* services to all WeChat users. It allows users to create their own *daka* activities or join those created by others. Activities now available on Sharedaka cover different areas such as language learning, reading, sport and exercises, photography and so on. For example, Listening to English Every Morning, a popular activity on Sharedaka, has nearly 180,000 participants. Widely known as the best WeChat mini program for *daka* activities, it was credited as one of the best WeChat mini programs of education in 2020 and rated among the 100 best WeChat mini programs in 2020 (“WeChat Mini Programs Development White Paper”, 2021).

A disproportionate amount of research, however, has exploited the use of WeChat-based *daka* activities in education and language learning, with focuses mainly on taking the register and creating a reading environment. Wang (2018) used *daka* activity with her students for one month on their daily progress concerning English vocabulary, listening, reading, translation and writing to make sure they were better prepared for CET-4, an important English test for non-English majors in China. The conclusion was that *daka* activities can help students, especially those who are lack of self-control, regulate their learning. However, she only required her students to share their progress in group chats and had no effective control over the content, leading to the result that the teacher had to keep the track of students’ learning manually and some students lied about their learning progress.

In Xu’s (2018) case study on the application of audio feedback on WeChat, though student engagement and meaning negotiation were enhanced, the use of WeChat group chats incurred similar problems. All types of messages or information shared via WeChat group chats are not systematically recorded and it is easy to lose track of them among hundreds of or even thousands of messages. Searching for a particular message might become an arduous task.

In contrast, Sharedaka offers an array of unparalleled advantages. First, there is no restriction on user identity. Anyone can choose to create their own *daka* activities or join those created by others, without submitting private personal information. Second, different forms are available for the *daka* content, ranging from text, picture, audio to video. Third, it creates a friendly communication atmosphere, allowing users to view, like or comment on a *daka* post, or to share it with their friends or on their WeChat moments. Fourth, it provides every participant a personal summary report after an activity ends, helping them to keep track of their own participation and progress. The organizer of an activity can view the reports of all users, which saves the trouble of collecting data manually.

This study thus attempts to explore the use of teacher audio feedback via Sharedaka in the development of college students’ English speaking ability, with the hope of providing practical and effective suggestions for both teachers and students in China.

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

#### A. Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the research, the paper aims to answer the following three questions:

- (1) Will *daka* activity via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka improve students’ English speaking ability?
- (2) Will teacher audio feedback via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka enhance students’ English speaking ability?
- (3) What are students’ perceptions of teacher audio feedback via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka?

#### B. Research Subjects

This small-scale research examines the perceptions of second-year undergraduates who take part in a 10-week oral English practice *daka* activity and receive teacher feedback in the audio form via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka. Subjects of the research are 43 students from a natural class taught by the author. Most of them are with relatively lower level of English as they are from an Independent College of a Tier-3 university in China. Timely and additional teacher audio feedback outside class might be more helpful for them compared with students who already excel at oral English.

#### C. Research Instruments and Procedures

This research involves the use of two questionnaires, a 10-week *daka* activity and a post-*daka* interview in order to have an in-depth view of the influence of teacher audio feedback on the development of students’ English speaking ability. The two questionnaires were conducted via Wenjuanxing, an online questionnaire tool which can automatically generate the results. The interview was recorded and transcribed for closer study.

Before the *daka* activity, the first questionnaire was conducted to find out students’ perceptions of teacher feedback they received in the past and their prior knowledge of WeChat-based *daka* activities and attitudes towards using them in English learning.

The *daka* activity via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka lasted for 10 weeks. All the 43 students were required to post

their practice of oral English three times a week in either audio or video form. The author reviewed their daka contents and gave at least one audio feedback to every student every week. Peer review was also utilized in the research to ensure the communication among students and to provide them with as much feedback as possible. To guarantee active participation, students' participation in the activity was reflected in their term performance scores.

After the 10-week daka activity, the second questionnaire was used to gather students' thoughts on the activity and teacher audio feedback. In order to better understand the influence of teacher audio feedback on their English speaking ability, eight volunteers were invited to take part in a follow-up interview, which allowed for more personal and detailed reflections.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study firstly investigated students' perceptions of their own English speaking ability and opinions of teacher feedback. Then the students participated in the 10-week daka practice and received the teacher's feedback on their daka content. After the daka practice, the second questionnaire survey was carried out to gather their reflections, and an interview was organized for more detailed information about their gains and the remaining problems.

##### A. Pre-daka Student Survey

The first questionnaire survey aims to investigate students' perceptions of their own oral English, problems in their oral English practice, their need for teacher feedback, and their use of WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka.

##### 1. Students' Self-Perception

As shown in Chart I, most of the students are not confident with their own oral English. As for the contributing factors, firstly, many middle school teachers and students fail to attach enough importance to English speaking ability as it is not included in the Gaokao. Secondly, many students are afraid of "losing face" and are unwilling to speak English in front of others unless they think their English is perfect or much better than that of others. Unfortunately, many of them are not satisfied with their own oral English and have very little confidence in speaking English.

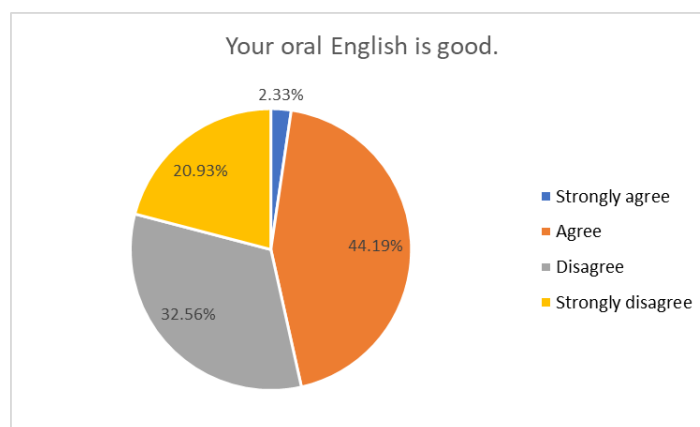


Chart I Students' perceptions of their own oral English

In line with their low self-confidence, 74.42% of them consider "confidence" to be one of the important factors influencing their English speaking ability (See Table I). Besides, the questionnaire results show the top four influencing factors are their grasp of English grammar, the lack of practice opportunities, vocabulary, and their knowledge about English pronunciation rules.

TABLE I  
FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY

Item	Number	Percentage
Grammar	36	83.72%
Lack of practice opportunities	36	83.72%
Vocabulary	35	81.40%
Lack of knowledge about English pronunciation rules	34	79.07%
Confidence	32	74.42%
Lack of opportunities to communicate with native speakers	27	62.79%
Lack of help from teachers	20	46.51%
Cultural differences	14	32.56%
Lack of help from peers	13	30.23%
Others	0	0.00%

##### 2. Students' Need for Teacher Feedback

As analyzed above, though feedback is "the most important part of the assessment process" (Price et al., 2010, p.

277), it “has remained one of the least satisfactory areas in students’ university experiences” (Xu, 2018, p. 1). In the Chinese context, the situation is worse as the result of the large classes and the high student-teacher ratio. University teachers’ heavy workload also contributed to the inadequacy of timely teacher feedback. Consequently, though many students are not satisfied with their own oral English, the lack of timely feedback from teachers (See Chart II) finally results in little or fruitless practice of their oral English. As shown in Table I, 46.51% of the students consider “lack of help from teachers” to have a significant influence on their English speaking ability.

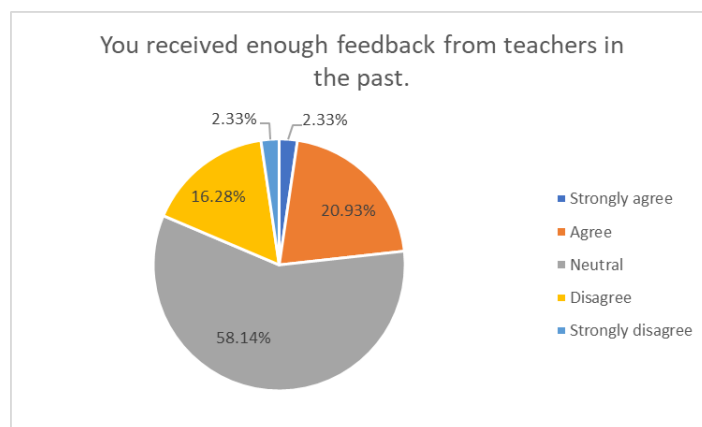


Chart II Teacher feedback received by students

Despite their low self-assurance, all the students are eager to improve their English speaking ability and are in urgent need of guidance and help from teachers (See Chart III).

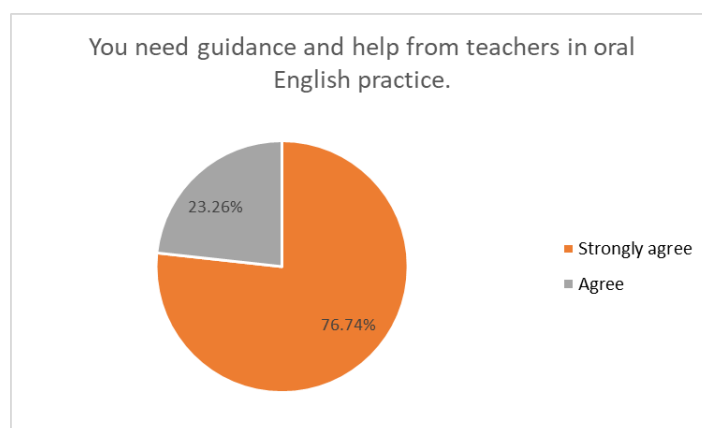


Chart III Students' need for teacher guidance

### 3. Students' Attitude towards the Daka Activity

To maximize the effects of oral English practice via Sharedaka, students' familiarity with the mini program and willingness to participate in the daka activity are of vital importance.

In the first place, students' use of smart devices and daka apps are investigated to guarantee their successful participation in the daka activity. Owing to the rapid development of information technology and smartphones, and the popularity of WeChat and WeChat mini programs, all the 43 students have smartphones, with 18.6% having both a smartphone and a tablet. They all have WeChat accounts and 58.14% of them are familiar with Sharedaka or similar WeChat mini programs. The author then introduced Sharedaka to those who had no daka experiences.

Also included in the questionnaire is their willingness to participate in the daka activity as this is the prerequisite for their active participation. Since they are eager to improve their own English speaking ability, all of them are therefore willing to participate in the 10-week daka activity.

#### B. The Influence of the Daka Activity and Teacher Audio Feedback on Student's English Speaking Ability

In the 10-week daka activity via Sharedaka, 79.07% of the students posted their audio more than 30 times during the activity, meeting the requirement of three times a week (See Chart IV).

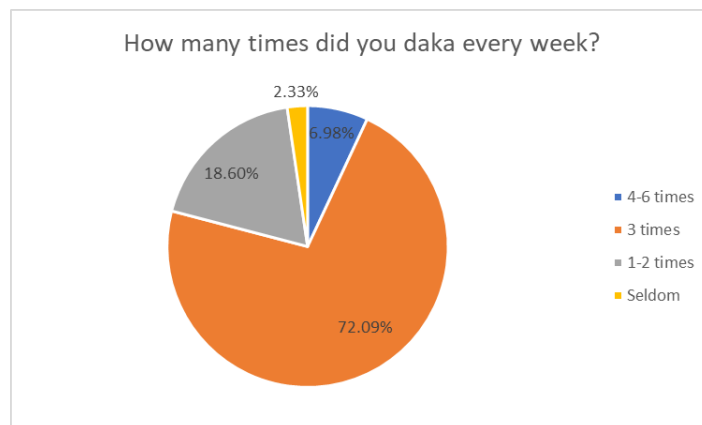


Chart IV Students daka frequency

In the 10-week daka activity, the author reviewed students' daka contents and gave at least one audio feedback to every student every week, providing suggestions on their specific problems and general oral English practice. To ensure the communication among students and to provide them with as much feedback as possible, peer review was also utilized in the research, requiring every student to comment on at least three posts every week.

After the daka activity, the second questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews were carried out to gather students' feedback on the use of Sharedaka and teacher audio feedback. The results testify to the positive influence of oral English practice via Sharedaka and of teacher audio feedback on student's English speaking ability.

### 1. Improved Accessibility and Convenience

Limited by the curriculum design, and the number of teachers and classrooms, the students in the research have only two hours' class time for oral English every week and just one teacher, which is still quite common in many universities in China and results in the scarcity of practice opportunities in class. In this context, practice via Sharedaka is not only convenient but free from external constraints such as time, place and weather. With only a smartphone and internet access, students can daka at any time and in any place. According to the post-daka questionnaire, 90.7% of the students chose to daka at night after a full day's study while this is unlikely in the traditional teaching context.

Moreover, WeChat mini programs allow users to have access to multimillions of functions within WeChat, lowering the threshold for smart devices. With cheap smartphones or tablets, users can still post their practice audio conveniently. Sharedaka provides further help to users in that it can automatically remind them to participate in the chosen activities, which is especially helpful for those who lack self-control.

Moreover, in individual or pair practice, the lack of effective supervision often makes English learners less and less motivated in speaking English. Daka activity, on the contrary, enables learners to monitor each other. Many of them would stick to the end just for the sake of not being left behind. The automatic daily and final reports also help them keep track of their participation and achievements in the daka activity.

### 2. Timely and Individualized Feedback

Chinese university teachers' heavy workload and the high student-teacher ratio pose big obstacles for students to get enough timely feedback and help from teachers, which can seriously undermine students' learning enthusiasm.

Against this backdrop, WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka enables teachers to feedback on each student's oral English practice at any time and in any place. Teacher audio feedback on the one hand provides students more and better help owing to its richer content than written feedback as "one minute of audio is equal to six minutes of writing" (Lunt & Curran, 2010, p. 761). Giving audio feedback is less time-consuming and thus offers more individualized help on every student's specific problems. On the other hand, conveying more than "mere words", audio feedback creates "learning conversations" with the help of the teacher's "tone, expression, pronunciation and emphasis", leading to "a greater understanding of tutor/lecturer comments" (Gould & Day, 2013, p. 556). Comments on mistakes or problems are relatively less encouraging than praises. Yet with audio feedback, encouragement can be expressed through the teacher's voice, hence better understanding and acceptance on the part of students.

Furthermore, compared with face-to-face feedback, cloud storage makes audio feedback via Sharedaka accessible to students at any time and in any place. One interviewee said, "I can correct my pronunciation after listening to the teacher's audio feedback but the same mistake might be made again. In that case, I'll listen to the feedback and practice the correct pronunciation again. In this way, I can finally remember the correct pronunciation." Questionnaire results also show that 95.35% of the students would listen to the author's audio feedback more than once and 97.68% expected to get similar feedback in the future (See Chart V and Chart VI).

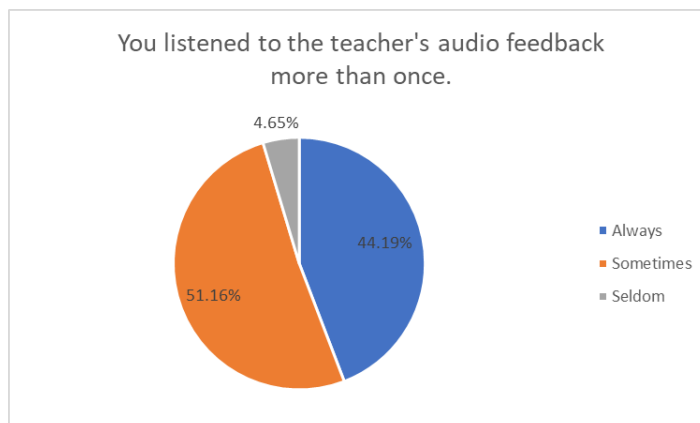


Chart V Students' response to teacher audio feedback

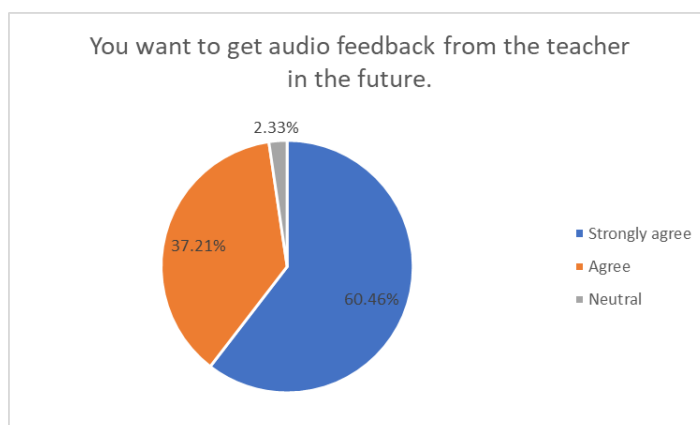


Chart VI Students' expectation for future teacher audio feedback

As a result, after the 10-week daka activity, more than 90% of the students claimed that the daka practice helped improve their pronunciation and English speaking ability (See Chart VII and Chart VIII).

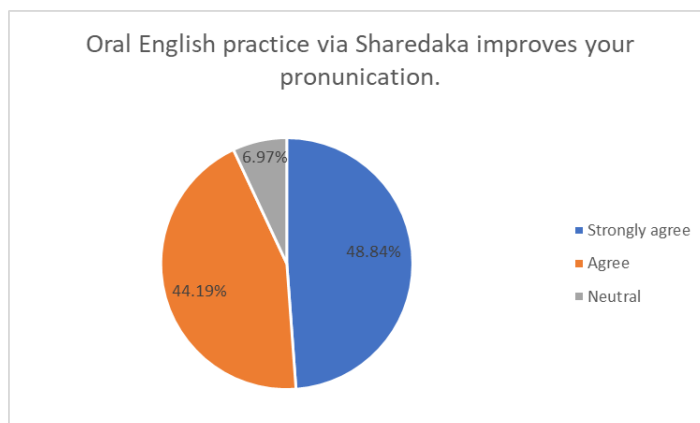


Chart VII Influence of the daka practice on students' pronunciation

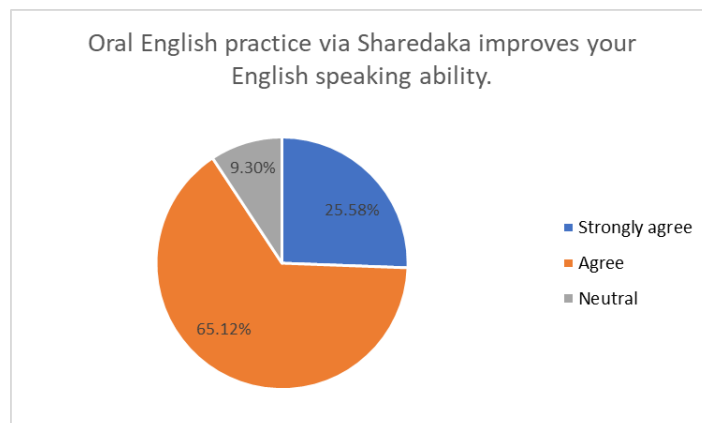


Chart VIII Influence of the daka practice on students' English speaking ability

### 3. Enhanced Students' Confidence

Oral English practice via Sharedaka has many advantages over face-to-face communication. First, it minimizes students' shyness and embarrassment. This is especially prominent if they are allowed to use nicknames rather than their real names. One interviewee said, "I'm quite shy and afraid of losing face when speaking English in front of others. But in the daka activity, I could find a quiet place and practice by myself. It's in this way that I can persist in practicing my oral English."

Second, some students would practice many times to perfect their posts, which ensures the practice time. One interviewee gave her comments, "I think my pronunciation and intonation are really very bad so I would often spend almost one hour before I posted my practice. This costs a lot of time but is quite beneficial because it helps me to correct mistakes and makes my pronunciation better."

Third, Sharedaka facilitates students' participation in the activity with the help of the reports on their daka practice. Immediately after each successful daka post, the student receives a report on their ranking in the daka group. Other functions such as giving comments and likes make it easier for all students to communicate with each other and monitor each other's practice. At the same time, they can share their daka posts in WeChat moments or other socializing apps, which further improves their self-confidence through the praises and likes from friends and even strangers. As shown in the two charts below, 88.37% of the students hope to continue practicing their oral English via Sharedaka.

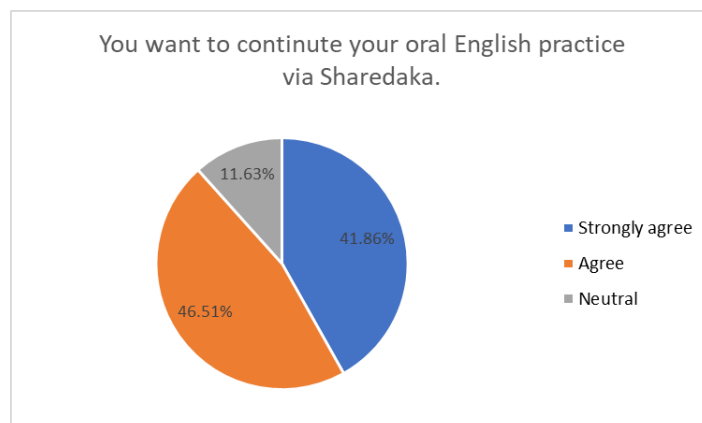


Chart IX Students' attitudes towards future daka practice

Most importantly, teacher audio feedback via Sharedaka positively increases students' self-assurance. One interviewee expressed her satisfaction by saying, "If I'm praised by the teacher, I'll have a great sense of satisfaction and achievement and will be better motivated to practice speaking English." Even audio feedback on their mistakes can prove to be equally encouraging. Different from the "cold" written feedback, audio feedback from the teacher not only caters to students' specific need, but reduces their uneasiness when receiving comments on their mistakes. They can be assured that making mistakes is inevitable in learning a foreign language and there is no need to worry about losing their faces.

### 4. Relaxed Communication Atmosphere

The daka activity allows the students to practice not only their oral English but also communication skills.

With the help of Sharedaka, every student can view or listen to all the posts in the daka group, give each other comments or encouragement, or help correct each other's mistakes. Since they are required to comment on at least three



entries every week, many of them would listen to others' posts many times for fear that they would give improper comments. One interviewee expressed her views about giving others comments, "I would be very cautious in commenting on others' posts. If my comments are wrong or I fail to find out their mistakes, I would feel quite guilty. So this not only improves my own English but teaches me to be careful and responsible for every word I said." Another interviewee commented on one of her roommates, "Her oral English is already excellent but she's still quite strict with herself. Every time she would practice her daka content for almost one hour. Besides, she often helped us with our pronunciation by praising our correct pronunciation and pointing out our mistakes. She really helped us a lot."

In addition, the daka activity creates a more relaxed atmosphere for teacher-student communication because it increases the interaction while reducing students' anxiety in face-to-face contact with teachers. The teacher's loaded language and affectionate voice can both elicit a strong positive emotional response from the students. If they have doubts about the teacher's feedback, they can then continue the "conversation" as in real life.

In a word, oral English practice via Sharedaka helps students with not only their pronunciation but mutual communication. Timely communication between the teacher and the students creates a better English learning environment (See Chart X and Chart XI).

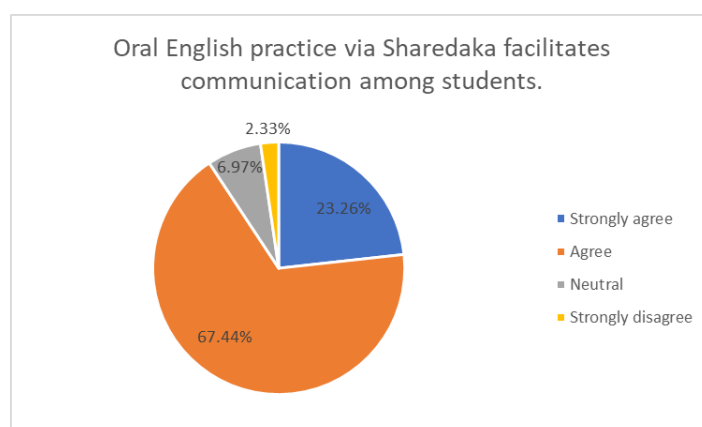


Chart X Influence of the daka activity on communication among students

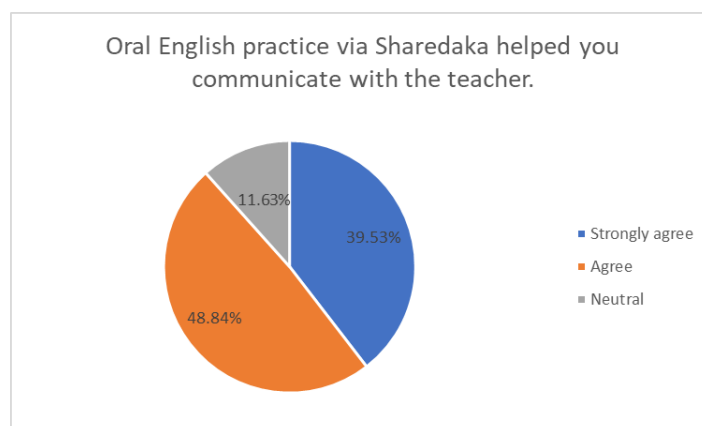


Chart XI Influence of the daka activity on teacher-student communication

### C. Remaining Problems

In this study, though the students made great achievements during the daka activity, there are still problems to be solved.

#### 1. Inadequate Learner Initiative

The key to any learning is the learner and the realization of learning objectives lies in learner initiative. If learners themselves are not fully aware of the importance of a learning task, the learning results will be negatively influenced. That's the reason why 20.93% of the students failed to daka three times a week (See Chart IV) in the 10-week daka activity.

Ironically, this is opposite to their perceptions of the effectiveness of practicing speaking English via Sharedaka. Words from one interviewee can explain the reason, "Most of us college students are very lazy and give up practicing English easily." Therefore, teachers should firstly clarify the importance and the requirements of each task and then observe and monitor students' performance closely. Different means of motivation and encouragement are also necessary.

## 2. Learners' Attitudes towards Others' Comments and Criticism

In the daka activity, besides their own daka practice, the students are also required to give their comments at least three times a week. To fulfill this task, most of the students would listen to others' posts again and again in order to give proper and correct comments. One interviewee said, "I was even more cautious in commenting on others' posts than practicing English myself. I wouldn't give my comments unless I was certain about what I said."

However, some students are unwilling to comment on others' posts out of the following reasons. First, some students just gave their comments for fear of the loss in their term performance scores. As a result, their comments such as "Good pronunciation" and "Well read" were usually monotonous and hollow. Second, some feared that their pronunciation was not good enough for them to give proper comments. Third, some worried that their criticism might incur unfavorable feelings from others.

Since it is almost impossible for a teacher to give each student enough timely feedback, teachers should make sure every student understand the necessity of peer review and help them form correct attitudes towards others' comments.

## 3. The Gap between Student Needs and Teacher Capacity

Among the various factors influencing teacher feedback, the first one concerns the amount of feedback provided. In the 10-week daka activity, the author managed to give every student audio feedback at least once every week, but "one audio feedback every week is far from enough", as commented by one interviewee. This clearly is an inherent problem with teacher feedback. Though compared with traditional written or face-to-face feedback, audio feedback via Sharedaka is more convenient and timely, there is still a great discrepancy between students' needs for teacher feedback and what a teacher can provide. This gap will not be filled unless the high student-teacher ratio can be lowered or teachers' workload can be reduced. Moreover, the motivating force of teacher audio feedback may hinder students' English learning because this is the reason for the active participation of some students. Several interviewees admitted that they would possibly stop daka practice without the teacher's feedback.

Related to the scarcity of teacher feedback is the failure to address students' problems or mistakes in time. One interviewee expressed her idea, "If the teacher didn't give me feedback, I would not know if I had made mistakes and I might continue to pronounce some words in the wrong way." At present all that a teacher could do is take advantage of every chance to communicate with the students. The use of Sharedaka in helping students learn English is a supplementary aid but can never substitute face-to-face communication between teachers and students.

## 4. Limitations in the Research Design

Accurate pronunciation and intonation is only one aspect of speaking English. It is essential and more important for English learners to use appropriate English to express their own ideas and to communicate with others. In the daka activity, however, the students were often trying to demonstrate "perfect" English by practicing the same word or sentence too many times. Some would "spend almost one hour repeating several sentences" in order not to "lose face". The increase in their practice time indeed improves their English speaking ability but causes problems at the same time. On the one hand, it is not real English in real communication situations but just pretentious English as the result of a lot of practice. On the other hand, practicing the daka content many times is only beneficial to the pronunciation of the content itself. Worse still, if the teacher fails to provide timely feedback, the same mistake might be made again and again, resulting in greater difficulty in finally correcting it.

The research results, therefore, prove the positive influence of the daka practice and teacher audio feedback on students' pronunciation and intonation, but there is not enough proof for the improvement of their English speaking ability.

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. Research Findings

This paper investigated the use of daka activity via WeChat Mini Program Sharedaka in Chinese college students' oral English practice. Besides the analysis of students' performance in the daka activity, it explored the influence of teacher audio feedback via Sharedaka on students.

The results show that both the daka activity and teacher audio feedback via Sharedaka have a positive influence on improving students' English speaking ability. Firstly, the interactivity and convenience of this learning mode has brought great changes to teachers' "teaching" and students' "learning." It lowers the threshold of using technology for both teachers and students and creates a more relaxed communication atmosphere. The relationship between students and teachers and among students themselves can be effectively improved. Secondly, timely and individualized teacher feedback is conducive to improving students' pronunciation and overcoming their anxiety when speaking English. With more opportunities for oral English practice and more feedback on their specific problems, their learning readiness is significantly motivated. Thirdly, it is helpful to build students' sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. Teachers' affirmation has a significant effect on enhancing students' self-confidence, which in turn results in the development of their English speaking ability.

However, several problems arose in the research. The first concerns students' self-control. Students who lack self-control are unable to persist in practicing speaking English despite their willingness to participate in the daka

activity. What follows is their attitudes towards giving comments. Their reluctance to comment on others' posts is caused by either fears for "improper" comments they might give or unfavorable opinions of the receiver. The most prominent problem lies in the gap between students' needs and teachers' capacity. In the Chinese context, this is very difficult to solve unless the high student-teacher ratio can be lowered or teachers' workload can be reduced.

### B. Pedagogical Implications

English speaking ability has long been a headache for many Chinese English learners. The improvement of their oral English attracts attention from not only students themselves but also teachers and researchers. Though great achievements have been made, the mute English phenomenon still exists and many Chinese English learners are still afraid of speaking English in front of others.

In this context, it is of primal importance for teachers to cater to the learning needs of students, and constantly utilize new teaching methods to create a disciplined and relaxed classroom atmosphere. This paper proves the positive influence of the daka activity via Sharedaka on students' English speaking ability. The research result can help teachers and students to better make use of the convenience of the information age and the internet technology. In the context of the information age, the use of smart devices and mobile apps can not only improve teaching quality, but also stimulate students' initiative in English learning. WeChat, with its many communicational characteristics, can effectively promote the exchange between teachers and students, leading to more than better understanding and emotional communication.

Meanwhile, teachers should reflect on their use of teaching resources and methods. Instead of fearing for the distraction from smart devices, teachers should develop an impartial attitude towards their use in teaching and learning. It will be better for teachers to provide guidance on students' use of the smartphone instead of simply forbidding its use.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the smart devices and mobile apps are created to serve teaching and learning needs not to take the place of real-life interaction. In exploiting the use of tools like WeChat and WeChat mini programs, face-to-face communication between teachers and students should never be neglected.

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# Attitudes of Saudi Non-English Major Students Towards Learning English

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**Abstract**—The present study aims at investigating the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students towards learning English at the University of Bisha, Bisha, Saudi Arabia. In addition, the study attempts to identify how the students view the culture of English, English native speakers, and the importance of English in the present time. The data were collected from 80 Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha through a three-point Likert scale questionnaire with 13 closed-ended items. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS. The results of this study show that the students have overall positive attitudes towards learning English. Apart from this, it was found that the students are aware of the importance of English in the present time. Interestingly, the students reflected positive attitudes towards the culture of English and English native speakers. Finally, some implications for teachers and recommendations for future research are presented.

**Index Terms**—attitudes towards EFL, culture of English, Saudi non-English students

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Definition of Attitudes

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed an increasing interest in studying and defining 'attitudes'. In the field of social psychology, an attitude is a complex term that is closely linked with a wide range of other concepts. For example, McKenzie (2003) identifies 'belief', 'opinion', 'value', 'habit', 'trait', 'motive' and 'ideology', as overlapping concepts with the word 'attitude'. Due to this complexity and interrelation, giving one clear-cut definition of attitudes might be a bit problematic. However, several researchers have already attempted to define the term.

One early definition was suggested by Allport (1935, p.810) as "a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations to which it is related." Allport's definition indicates that an attitude is not inherited but constructed through one's experiences and surroundings. Later definition of attitude was introduced by Ajzen (1988, p.4) as "a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event." This definition regarded attitude as a matter of liking or disliking a particular thing.

Wenden (1991) presents a comprehensive view of attitudes. He classified attitudes into three categories: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive aspect of attitudes refers to the beliefs and thoughts about an object. The affective one refers to the emotions and feelings about the object, i.e. liking or disliking a particular thing. Finally, the behavioral aspect of attitudes refers to the actions or intentions towards the object.

### B. Language Attitudes

"Attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction" (Zeinivand, Azizifar & Gowhary, 2015, p.241). Language attitudes mean "the extent to which L2 learners perceive the L2, its speakers, its community, its culture as well as the tangible or utilitarian benefits that L2 can bring to its seekers" (Alshami, 2012, p.1). It is an umbrella term that includes a wide range of other concepts. The following classification has been created by Baker (1992), which points to the focuses of language attitudes research over the past years:

- Attitude to language variation, dialect and speech style
- Attitude to learning a new language
- Attitude to a specific minority language (such as Welsh)
- Attitude to language groups, communities, minorities
- Attitude to language lessons
- Attitude of parents to language learning
- Attitude to the uses of a specific language
- Attitude to language preference

The current study falls under the second category of Baker's classification: attitudes to learning a new language.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Role of Attitude in Foreign Language Learning

Attitude is one of the socio-psychological factors that play a significant role in motivating EFL or ESL learners. It has been extensively studied in the last decades by several researchers. One prominent figure in this field is Robert Gardner, who published several books and research papers attempting to explain this concept and its relationship with second language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduced a theory which states that to be a successful second language learner, one must be psychologically prepared to accept the practices of the second language's culture and speakers. The learner's attitudes towards the members of the other language determine how successful they are in learning the language.

In his socio-educational model of second language acquisition, Gardner (1985) divided motivation into three aspects: the desire to learn the language, the effort made to learn the language, and the attitudes, or what he calls 'affective reactions' toward learning the language. In this model, Gardner considered attitude as one of the components of motivation. This indicates that the relationship between attitude and second language learning is indirect, unlike motivation, which is obviously a direct relationship.

Ellis (2004, p.320) summarizes language learners' attitudes towards their native culture as well as towards the target culture of the other language in the following table:

TABLE 1.  
LEARNERS' ATTITUDES

	Attitudes towards native culture	Attitudes towards target culture
Additive bilingualism	+	+
Subtractive bilingualism	-	+
Semilingualism	-	-
Monolingualism	+	-

(+) = positive attitudes      (-) = negative attitude

As shown in Table (1), monolinguals (those who speak only one language) generally possess negative attitudes towards the target culture, which in return might hinder their learning of the other language.

As mentioned earlier, research on language attitudes, specifically attitudes towards learning English, has been a subject of study in the field of applied linguistics in recent decades. When it comes to the academic context, students' attitudes towards learning English can be affected by factors such as gender, age, field of study, level of education, religion, culture, etc. This, in return, may lead to positive or negative attitudes towards learning the language. In conclusion, based on what has been discussed previously, the following general statement can be given:

Positive attitudes towards L2 → High motivation to learn L2 → Better performance in L2

### B. Review of Related Studies

In the EFL context, several studies have been conducted to investigate the students' attitudes towards learning English. Adnan (2017) explored the attitudes of 30 Malaysian first-year university students towards English in relation to their native language (Malay) and their religion's language (Arabic). All the participants received their past education in national religious schools. The study found that the students have positive attitudes towards learning English. In addition, they were aware of the importance of English both for their education at the university and their future career while simultaneously valuing Malay and Arabic.

Yosuff (2019) investigated the attitudes of 100 Indonesian non-English major students towards using English in everyday communication. The study showed that the students carry positive attitudes were motivated to communicate in English regularly. Furthermore, they were aware of the importance of learning English in today's world.

Iqbal, Aftab and Azhar (2019) attempted to examine the common assumption that relates the students from Islamic educational backgrounds with negative attitudes towards learning English. The study's sample consists of 151 students from the Islamic Learning Faculty and 135 students from the Education Faculty, both at the University of Karachi, Pakistan. It was revealed that there is only a minor difference in the attitudes of both faculties as the Islamic Learning Faculty's students expressed positivity towards English to a degree lesser than that of Education Faculty's students. Based on the findings of this study, the assumption mentioned above is rejected.

In Afghanistan, Orfan (2020) investigated the cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes of 210 non-English major students towards learning English in terms of six variables. It was found that the students' overall attitudes were positive. In addition, students' gender, age, first language, and field of study have less impact on their attitudes as compared to the students' access to the Internet and their English learning experience in English language centers.

Some studies discussed the role of age and level of study on students' attitudes towards learning English. For instance, Bhaskar and Soundiraraj (2013) explored the attitudes of 52 Indian first-year Mechanical Engineering students towards learning English. It was revealed that there is a significant shift in the students' attitudes between school and college. At the college level, students' attitudes changed to be more positive.

In Jordan, Abu-Snoubar (2017) measured the impact of gender and field of study on students' attitudes towards learning English at the al-Balqa Applied University. The participants were 176 randomly chosen from the various scientific and humanities faculties at the university. The study found that gender affects students' attitudes as females showed more positivity than males. On the other hand, field of study was found to have no effect on the students' attitudes.

Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) investigated the attitudes of 81 Petroleum Engineering students towards learning English at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology, Yemen. The study reported that the students have positive attitudes towards learning English. In addition, the majority of the students showed their interest in the culture of the English-speaking world.

When it comes to Saudi Arabia, several studies, with various focuses, have been conducted to determine college students' attitudes towards learning English. For instance, at Jeddah Community College, Khan (2016) discovered a positive correlation between students' attitudes and their performance in English. Students' proficiency in English was not satisfying even though the educational setting was fully prepared with all the needed equipment and resources for students. The study attributed this issue to students' negative attitudes towards education in general and some other factors such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes in English. In this case, the researcher emphasized the teacher's role in improving students' attitudes to learning and encouraging them to use the target language.

Some studies focused on the relationship between students' attitudes towards English and their academic achievement. For example, in a study conducted on 112 English major students at Um Alqura University (Al-Qunfudah branch), Al samadani and Ibnian (2015) found that students with high GPAs expressed positive attitudes towards English more than those with low GPAs.

According to the humble knowledge of the researcher, only one study has been carried out at the same university of the present study (the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia) and with a similar focus. That is, Ali et al. (2019) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of intensive English program students towards English speaking skills. The participants were from the colleges of Arts, Business and Community. The study revealed that the students' overall attitudes are positive, and students are becoming aware of the importance of English in their future.

After reviewing the literature, it was found that no sufficient studies have touched upon the attitudes of non-English major students towards learning English in the Saudi EFL context, especially at the university of the current study. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students, particularly those majoring in Islamic Studies, Arabic Language and Business Administration, towards learning English at the University of Bisha. Besides, the study attempts to explore the students' attitudes towards the culture of English, its native speakers, and its importance in today's world. Identifying the students' attitudes would help understand the reasons behind the low level of achievement in English courses among Saudi non-English major students in general and at the University of Bisha in particular.

### *C. Research Questions*

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards learning English?
2. What are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards the culture and native speakers of English?
3. What are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards the importance of English in the present time?

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Design*

The study follows the quantitative research paradigm. The researcher employs a survey to identify Saudi non-English major students' attitudes towards learning English at the University of Bisha. The researcher chose this paradigm due to its suitability to the present study, which attempts to investigate the attitudes of a large number of students, and so this can easily be done through a questionnaire. In addition, the participants will fill out the questionnaire electronically without any pressure from the researcher.

### *B. Participants*

The sample of this study consists of 80 Saudi non-English major undergraduate students at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The classification and demographic information of participants are illustrated below (See Table 2). All the participants have taken an intensive English course at the preparatory year (PY) for 12 hours per week. Besides, before joining the university, they studied English for 7 years, starting from the last stage of primary school until graduating from high school.

TABLE 2  
FREQUENCIES & PERCENTAGES OF PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (N=80)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	41	51.2
Female	39	48.8
<b>Field of Study</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Business Administration	26	32.5
Islamic Studies	27	33.8
Arabic Language	27	33.8
<b>Level of Study</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Second Year	26	32.5
Third Year	30	37.5
Fourth Year	24	30

### C. Instruments

The study employs a three-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from Gardener's (1985) attitude and motivation test battery (AMTB) and some related studies. In addition, the questionnaire was slightly modified to suit the Saudi EFL context. The questionnaire carries 13 closed-ended items covering three main aspects (i.e., the three research questions): attitudes towards learning English, attitudes towards the culture and native speakers of English, and attitudes towards the importance of English in the present time (See Appendix A).

### D. Procedures

After designing the questionnaire, it was translated by the researcher to enable the participants to understand the items clearly, since they are not majored in English. The questionnaire's Arabic translation was revised and approved by a professor of applied linguistics at the University of Bisha. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was (0.724) which is acceptable for this study. After establishing the reliability, the questionnaire was distributed to the target participants electronically through Google Forms. The researcher wrote the instructions and consent form on the cover page of the electronic form of the questionnaire. After reaching the desired number of participants (i.e., 80), the researcher closed the electronic form of the questionnaire.

### E. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were forwarded to Microsoft Excel. The answers were coded as follows: (1) for "disagree", (2) for "neutral", and (3) for "agree". The data were again forwarded to the Statistical Procedure for Social Sciences (SPSS) for the quantitative analysis. The descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were used. Means between (1.00 - 1.50) were considered "low", means between (1.60 - 2.50) were considered "moderate", and means between (2.60 - 3.00) were considered "high".

## IV. RESULTS

### A. The First Research Question

In order to answer the first research question (i.e., what are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards learning English?), descriptive statistics were used. The descriptive statistics included the mean and standard deviation of the students' attitudes towards learning English.

TABLE 3  
MEANS & STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH (N=80)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean (M)</b>	<b>Std. Deviation (SD)</b>
1. I enjoy learning English.	1.00	3.00	2.41	0.81
2. I like communicating only in my mother tongue.	1.00	3.00	2.41	0.72
3. I have a desire to improve my English level constantly.	1.00	3.00	2.65	0.62
4. English is a complicated language.	1.00	3.00	1.83	0.85
<b>Total</b>	--	--	<b>2.33</b>	<b>0.28</b>

Table 3 shows that the mean average of the participants' attitudes towards learning English was (2.33), and the standard deviation was (0.28). This indicates that Saudi non-English major students' attitudes towards learning English are moderate. As shown in Table 3, the item with the highest mean was item 3, "I have a desire to improve my English level constantly."

### B. The Second Research Question

In order to answer the second research question (i.e., what are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students towards the culture and native speakers of English at the University of Bisha?), descriptive statistics were used. The descriptive statistics included the mean and standard deviation of the students' attitudes towards the culture and native speakers of English.



TABLE 4  
MEANS & STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CULTURE & NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH (N=80)

Item	Min	Max	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
5. I think it is important to know the culture of any language I want to learn.	1.00	3.00	2.65	0.60
6. I like having many friends from English-speaking countries.	1.00	3.00	2.50	0.71
7. When I learn English, I like to know about its culture.	1.00	3.00	2.60	0.69
8. Knowing English helps us communicate easily with its speakers.	1.00	3.00	2.88	0.37
<b>Total</b>	--	--	<b>2.66</b>	<b>0.42</b>

Table 4 shows that the mean average of the participants' attitudes towards the English culture and native speakers was (2.66), and the standard deviation was (0.42). This points out that the students' attitudes towards the English culture and native speakers are high (i.e., positive). As shown in Table 4, the item that gained the highest mean was item 8, "Knowing English helps us communicate easily with its speakers."

### C. The Third Research Question

In order to answer the third research question (i.e., what are the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards the importance of English in the present time?), descriptive statistics were used. The descriptive statistics included the mean and standard deviation of the students' attitudes towards the importance of English in the present time.

TABLE 5  
MEANS & STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH IN THE PRESENT TIME

Item	Min	Max	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
9. I think English is important in today's world.	1.00	3.00	2.86	0.38
10. I think English will play an important role in Saudi Arabia in the future.	1.00	3.00	2.68	0.59
11. Learning English helps me use the new technologies such as the internet and databases.	1.00	3.00	2.76	0.56
12. Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	1.00	3.00	2.53	0.71
13. Learning English is important for my future career.	1.00	3.00	2.59	0.74
<b>Total</b>	--	--	<b>2.68</b>	<b>0.46</b>

Table 5 shows that the mean average of the participants' attitudes towards the importance of English in the present time was (2.68), and the standard deviation was (0.46). This demonstrates that the students' attitudes towards the importance of English in the present time are high (i.e., positive). As shown in Table 5, the item with the highest mean was item 9, "I think English is important in today's world."

## V. DISCUSSION

The present study is an attempt to investigate the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students towards learning English and its importance in today's world. It also aims at recognizing to what extent the students accept the culture of English and English native speakers. On the contrary to the researcher's expectation, it was found that Saudi non-English major students possess overall positive attitudes towards the English language, learning it, its culture, its native speakers, and its importance in the present time, even though they do not heavily need it during their 4-year study at the university. However, there are some limitations that made it challenging to reach generalizable and detailed results. That is, the study is limited to a sample of 80 non-English major students at a Saudi university (i.e., University of Bisha). In addition, the study is limited to a 3-point Likert scale questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The study was carried out in two months during the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

The attitudes towards learning English were measured by items 1, 2, 3 and 4. The participants highly desire to improve their current English level constantly (M=2.65, SD=0.62). Meanwhile, they were moderately enjoying learning English (M=2.41, SD=0.81). The participants were moderately in favor of using only their mother tongue (i.e. Arabic) in communicating and interacting with others (M=2.41, SD=0.72). Besides, the participants moderately see English as a complicated language to learn (M=1.83, SD=0.85). The results of the previous four items indicate that the participants are aware of the importance of improving their English but simultaneously are neither highly enjoying learning the language nor favoring to use it communicatively, which can be attributed to the traditional and outdated teaching methods practiced by some teachers of English courses.

The attitudes towards the English culture and native speakers were measured by items 5, 6, 7 and 8. The results of this part were unexpected. The participants think culture is an integral part of the language (M=2.65, SD=0.60), so they expressed a liking towards knowing the English culture (M=2.60, SD=0.69). Moreover, the participants moderately accept having friends from English-speaking countries (M=2.50, SD=0.71). Meanwhile, the participants think that knowing English is significant to ease the communication with English native speakers (M=2.88, SD=0.37). In short, the sample of this study reflected flexibility and open-mindedness towards English culture and native speakers.

Items 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 measured the third focus of this study: attitudes towards the importance of English in the present time. The participants showed awareness of the importance of English in today's world ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=0.38$ ). Therefore, they believe in the importance of English in their country's future ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=0.59$ ). The participants moderately think that English will be important in their future careers ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ). The participants also emphasized the importance of knowing English as it helps them use modern technologies such as the Internet and databases ( $M=2.76$ ,  $SD=0.56$ ). Finally, the participants moderately correlate knowing English with being an educated and cultured person ( $M=2.53$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ).

The findings of this study are in agreement with the studies conducted by Yosuff (2019), Orfan (2020), Abu-Snoubar (2017), Iqbal, Aftab and Azhar (2019), and Ali et al. (2019). These studies reported positive attitudes held by the students from non-English majors towards learning English. In addition, the present study supports the studies carried out by Adnan (2017), Bhaskar and Soundiraraj (2013), and Ali et al. (2019). These studies revealed that the students are aware of the significance of English in the present time. Concerning attitudes towards English culture and native speakers, the present study is in line with the study of Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009), which showed that most of the students have an interest in the culture of the English-speaking world.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha towards learning English. It was found that the students have overall positive attitudes towards the English language, learning it, its culture, its native speakers, and its importance in the present time. This is a positive indicator placing the responsibility on the shoulders of teachers of English courses. The teachers should constantly keep and enhance the students' attitudes towards learning English, as it is now the first international language. Having positive attitudes towards learning English poses a successful starting point in the students' journey of learning the language. Furthermore, the teachers should improve their teaching methods and use new and creative ones to make students willing to learn the language. Positive attitudes towards learning English accompanied by high-quality teaching methods and a well-designed curriculum would reduce the percentage of failure or low grades in English courses, which is quite common among Saudi non-English major students at the University of Bisha.

The researcher suggests that future research, either at the same university or other Saudi universities, might increase the number of participants, especially for the studies that follow the quantitative research paradigm. That is, a larger sample size would give more generalizable and significant results. Furthermore, future researchers are recommended to use the mixed method research paradigm or qualitative research paradigm, which can lead to more detailed results. Last but not least, further research might figure out the reasons behind the low level of achievement in English courses among Saudi non-English major students despite having positive attitudes towards learning English, as revealed by the current study.

## APPENDIX A. THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN ITS FINAL FORM

### Attitudes of Saudi Non-English Major Students towards Learning English

This questionnaire is part of a research project that investigates the attitudes of Saudi non-English major students towards learning English at the University of Bisha. Your participation will contribute to the achievement of this project which heavily relies on this questionnaire. Your answers will be used for research purposes only and nothing will affect your grades negatively or positively. The questionnaire has 13 short statements that will not take you more than three minutes to complete. The target students in this project are Arabic Language, Business Administration, and Islamic Studies students from level 3 up to level 8.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

#### Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

#### Field of Study:

☐ Arabic Language

☐ Business Administration

☐ Islamic Studies

#### Level of Study:

☐ Second Year

☐ Third Year

☐ Fourth Year

Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. I enjoy learning English.			
2. I like communicating only in my mother tongue.			
3. I have a desire to improve my English level constantly.			
4. English is a complicated language.			
5. I think it is important to know the culture of any language I want to learn.			
6. I like having many friends from English-speaking countries.			
7. When I learn English, I like to know about its culture.			
8. Knowing English helps us communicate easily with its speakers.			
9. I think English is important in today's world.			
10. I think English will play an important role in Saudi Arabia in the future.			
11. Learning English helps me use new technologies such as the internet and databases.			
12. Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.			
13. Learning English is important for my future career.			

## APPENDIX B. FREQUENCIES &amp; PERCENTAGES OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH (N=80)

Item	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	49	61.3%	15	18.8%	16	20%
2	44	55%	25	31.3%	11	13.7%
3	58	72%	16	20%	6	7.5%
4	23	28.7%	20	25%	37	46.3%

## APPENDIX C. FREQUENCIES &amp; PERCENTAGES OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE CULTURE &amp; NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH (N=80)

Item	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
5	57	71.3%	18	22.5%	5	6.3%
6	50	62.5%	20	25%	10	12.5%
7	57	71.3%	14	17.5%	9	11.3%
8	71	88.8%	8	10%	1	1.2%

## APPENDIX D. FREQUENCIES &amp; PERCENTAGES OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH IN THE PRESENT TIME (N=80)

Item	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
9	70	87.5%	9	11.3%	1	1.2%
10	59	73.8%	16	20%	5	6.3%
11	66	82.5%	9	11.3%	5	6.3%
12	52	65%	18	22.5%	10	12.5%
13	59	73.8%	9	11.3%	12	15%

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# Critical Thinking Sub-Skills in English Debate

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**Abstract**—Incorporating the existing theoretical models of critical thinking (CT) with empirical data analysis, this paper proposes an analytical framework for English debate in a Chinese EFL context. The framework divides the core tasks of debate into four stages: information assessment, argumentation, presentation, and reflection. Each stage requires different CT skills and sub-skills. After analyzing the 24 students' debating and subsequent reflective practice, this paper discusses the key points and difficulties in developing CT skills in the process of English debate and tries to explore the operable teaching methods.

**Index Terms**—CT, CT sub-skills, English debate

## I. INTRODUCTION

CT (Critical Thinking) refers to use appropriate evaluation criteria to think consciously and make reasonable judgments (Damer, 2006). Arguably one of the most fundamental skills, this ability helps make good, reasonable, and ethical decisions, underlying success in academia and professional careers. In fact, Chinese language learners generally lack the ability of comprehensive analysis and logical thinking (Huang, 1998). In the years following 2010, a tremendous amount of educational effort and research have seen directed at the improvement of students' general CT skills.

As the debate is known to be one of the best methods of honing and applying the skills of CT analysis, completing a debating course has been added to graduation requirements in many universities in China and in turn, British Parliament (BP) debate has enjoyed high popularity in China. Domestic research on CT has mainly focused on how to embed it into courses such as English speech, debate, writing, etc. Moreover, in the field of English debate, the focus of attention has tended to be on the rules, strategies, and importance of debate. However, with a distinct lack of empirical research being undertaken, all of the above studies remain only in the hypothetical stage, making little contribution to our understanding of the process by which CT skills are developed through engaging in English in-class debate.

In classroom instruction, teachers take it for granted that as long as the students advance, refute, and defend claims, they will inevitably be honing CT skills and therefore their CT ability will improve. However, it was the finding of the author that even after a whole semester of attending a course that included both developing and practicing debating skills, students' CT skills remained weak, held back by problems like deficits in explanation, irrelevant arguments, failure of role fulfillment, unclear logic, and problematic or absent structure.

There are lots of questions worth exploring such as the nature of the characteristics of individual debaters' CT skills, how to scientifically evaluate the teaching effectiveness of such CT training, and which pedagogical methods prove most effective in improving students' CT skills. To sum up, the solution to the above challenges needs to be based on a clear evaluation standard of CT skills in debate particularly. Combining the existing CT theories with the practice of English debate learners, this paper answers the following two research questions: (1) What are the CT sub-skills in English debate? (2) Which of the CT sub-skills are the focus of learning and teaching and which prove the most difficult?

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

### A. Theoretical Foundation

CT skills are defined from the perspective of skill and content, but as yet no generally accepted, comprehensive list of skills that constitutes 'CT Skills' has been formulated (Harrell, 2011). Moreover, a different focus of definition and related research of CT skills has resulted in three significant theoretical models of CT.

Firstly, Facione's Delphi Panel's Dualistic Model (2011) explains relevant skills according to task steps by dividing CT skills into two: the processing of external information (interpretation, analysis, and evaluation) and the information output (inference, interpretation, and self-monitoring).

Secondly, the Ternary Model proposed by Paul and Elder (2006) advocates dividing thinking into eight elements: purpose, question, information, definition, hypothesis, perspective, inference, and enlightenment, and all of them should be measured or examined by ten standards including clarity, precision, accuracy, importance, relevance, integrity, logic, motivation, scope, profundity, to fulfill the goal of CT training.

In addition, based on the above two models, Wen Qiufang (2009) proposed the hierarchical theoretical model. Her model is characterized by meta CT and CT consisting of cognitive skills and affective dispositions. Cognitive skills include three CT skills i.e. analysis, inference, and evaluation, and correspond to the eight standards which include those of clarity, correlation, logic, profundity, and flexibility.

However, the CT skills, no matter how comprehensive they are, vary from subject to subject. In contrast, Sun Min (2017) constructed a framework that combined the characteristics of the above three theoretical models and put forward a new analytical framework (see Table 1), with which, he designed CT sub-skills for persuasive speech in particular. Firstly, Sun classified the six types of CT skills (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, interpretation, and self-monitoring) in the Dualistic Model into three (analysis, inference, and evaluation), consistent with those in Wen's hierarchical theoretical model. Secondly, he absorbed the standards of eight elements especially "purpose" and "perspective" from the Ternary Model. In comparison, his framework simplifies the number of CT skills, and the clarification of each sub-skill is clearer and more operable.

TABLE 1  
SUN'S CT SKILLS FRAMEWORK (2017, P.33-34)

CT Sub-skills		
Analysis	Interpretation	Interpret the meaning of viewpoint, concept, behavior, symbol, and rhetoric to eliminate ambiguity
	Clarification	Clarify the content, meaning, function, motivation, values, and rules contained in the information
	Classification	Put forward the framework of classification to understand, describe and summarize the information
	Comparison	Compare and distinguish views, concepts, and judgments; analyze the relation between the whole and the parts
	Identification	Check and decompose the reasoning process into presupposition, premise, and conclusion
Inference	Organization	Identify, search and screen the arguments to support the conclusion
	Predictability	Form diversified solutions to problems and predict possible results
	Inference	Use appropriate inference methods and determine the positions and views
	Explanation	Present concepts, methods, standards, situations to evaluate one's own or others' interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and reasoning.
Evaluation	Validate inference	Examine, question, and judge the acceptability and sufficiency of premises
	Self-monitoring	Test personal views and justifications, and reflect on factors affecting fair and objective judgment like stereotypes, prejudices, emotions, motives, values, attitudes
	Self-regulation	Correct problems with reasonable methods

### B. Teaching Background

This study is based on the teaching practice of debate courses for second-year English majors. The research data came from 24 learners (6 males and 18 females). All students have completed relevant theoretical knowledge of debate on the MOOC online learning platform such as parliamentary debate rules, topic types, debate positions and responsibilities, evaluation criteria, etc. The course design is divided into three stages: pre-debate stage (before-class), during-debate stage (in-class) and post-debate stage (after-class).

"Before-class preparation for debate entails team discussion and information searching. During the three-hour in-class activities each week, topic explanation, debate practice, feedback, and discussion are covered. The specific arrangements are as follows: In the first week, teachers explain the basic concepts, analyze one particular topic (such as social movement, economy, feminism, etc.), and assign the motion to debate for the following week. Debate practice is held in the second class of the second week. After drawing lots to decide the roles, there are 15 minutes of preparation time before the debate begins, this is followed by teachers' oral feedback and interaction. Each round of debate is videotaped for teachers to review students' performances and reflect on what guidance and feedback would be of constructive help after class. Furthermore, having participated in a debate, students are required after class to write reflection journals and complete questionnaires at the end of the semester" (Liqing, 2021, p. 60).

### C. Data Analysis

This study explains the relevant sub-skills according to the debate task steps. Firstly, the practical in-class debate is divided into four task stages: information assessment, argumentation, presentation, and reflection, and then the core tasks and specific CT sub-skills of each stage are formulated; According to the video of each debate, teachers' scores, feedback and reflection journals, the analysis framework is finally constructed. The second step is to evaluate the individual learners' CT sub-skills listed in the framework by marking and classifying typical problems and summarizing focus and difficulty to debater's CT development. Finally, the author reflects on debate pedagogy, through classroom discussion, video observation, and students' reflective journals.

## III. CT SUB-SKILLS IN ENGLISH DEBATE PRACTICE

This study takes Sun Min's framework of CT sub-skills as the theoretical basis, dividing the CT skills into three categories: "analysis", "inference" and "evaluation". Based on the debate practice, this study elucidates and merges the specific CT sub-skills involved in each task stage of debate activities.

TABLE 2  
CT SKILLS IN ENGLISH DEBATE PRACTICE (LIQING, 2021, P. 57-58)

CT SKILLS IN ENGLISH DEBATE PRACTICE (LIQING, 2021, P. 57-58)				
Stage		Core tasks	CT skills	CT sub-skills
Before-class		Information assessment	Analysis & evaluation	Analyze the background of the topic and check the relevance and accuracy of the information
			Analysis	Analyze the topic type
			Analysis	Analyze the definition and interpretation of the topic
			Analysis	Analyze potential issues
In-class	Preparation	Argumentation	Analysis and evaluation	Build the case
			Analysis	Analyze the burden of proof
			Inference	Make claims or arguments
			Inference	Provide reasons and linkage to help reach the conclusion
			Analysis	Predict the opposite view
	Debate	Presentation	Evaluation & analysis	Establish criteria to judge arguments.
			Analysis and inference	Rebuild the arguments
			Inference & evaluation	Respond to refutation, opposing views.
after-class		Self-evaluation	Evaluate	Evaluate the structure of the argument
			Evaluate	Test the relevance of the claim to the conclusion
			Evaluate	Check the acceptability of claims
			evaluate	Evaluate the sufficiency of claims for the truth of the conclusion
			Evaluate	Check the completion of team goal
			Evaluate	Test the validity of refutation

#### A. Before-Class Preparation

The instructor announces the motion one week in advance, explaining the relevant background knowledge related to it, and then debater learners work in pairs to search for information and think deeply about the topic through discussion.

"debate topics do not exist in a vacuum" (Trapp, 2016, p. 45). The topic originates from specific realistic problems in reality. Only by understanding the social and historical background of the topic can the debater clarify the core events of the whole debate. This requires learners to test the relevance, accuracy, and profundity of information and topics. At the same time, the collection of information requires debaters to take the breadth and depth of an issue into account, that is, to consider issues from multiple perspectives, such as both positive and negative sides, from the perspective of different stakeholders and so on. However, it is often the case that the debaters' arguments are single, one-sided, and have little relevance to the topic. The main reason for this was found to be that they had only generated arguments in favor of a position they were in support of rather than researching valid reasons for both sides of an argument. This behavior was combated by the teacher in the pre-debate class releasing only the motion or topic but not allowing pupils to know which side of the argument they would be assigned to. This forces the learners to consider and prepare relevant information which would support both the pro and con sides of the argument. As student Chen reflected, "since there were only 15 minutes to prepare for the on-site competition, even if the teacher emphasized the importance of analyzing the topic background, under the pressure of such time constraints I felt unable to, as my concern was focused entirely on defending my side of the argument. In other words, I was only worried about making my side of the argument sound good. Yet, when the motion was announced a week in advance, I had to consider all perspectives on the motion because I didn't know in advance whether I would be assigned to the pro or anti side. Instead of thinking "what are my arguments?", I thought "what are the core issue of this motion?" "What are the main reasons for people supporting and opposing it?" and "What kind of solution can solve this problem?". Keeping these questions in mind can exercise students' ability to identify, clarify and explain problems by relevance and accuracy.

In addition, debaters need to analyze the types of motion, "to determine what type of motion they are dealing with and how the topic influences the kinds of arguments that will be debated" (Trapp, 2016, p. 46). Take the topic "the advertising image of CK model Jari Jones is not a social advance" as an example, this motion attributes "social progress" to the image of a model and thus is a value motion. Initially, all the learners need to define the core concept of "social advance", and interpret what behavior belongs to "social progress" to narrow the motion. Through selecting appropriate resources and formulating searches, the debaters gradually make it clear that the stakeholders mainly involved in this motion are the minority - the marginalized LGBT group. By combing the historical and social background of this topic, that is, the western model industry, they realize that the core issue in this debate is "the image of an LGBT model conflicting with the traditional image of a model".

After considering the topic background, the type of motion, and the particular definition and interpretation, the debaters then turn to an analysis of the potential issues, say, criteria and application. The first stock issue requires debaters to find a standard or a measure to evaluate something i.e. what criteria should be used to judge whether or not the "social progress" can be assigned to "the image of a model". Guided by these criteria, students can focus their discussion on areas like political correctness, aesthetic standards, model identity. The second stock issue then asks debaters to determine how

the image of the CK model meets or does not meet the aesthetic standard, whether the way the CK company selects models is according to political correctness, and whether Jari Jones' identity as LGBT meets or does not meet the model identity. In this process, debaters' analytical skills are well trained by identifying the central problems, comparing similarities and differences, and distinguishing relevant information.

### *B. In-Class Debate Practice*

In this stage, once the draw is released, the debate process models the procedure for the formal debate in parliamentary systems of government, consisting of preparation and on-site debate competition. In the 15-minute preparation time, with the role assigned, debaters' analysis of the topics is also different from the before-class preparation stage. Each debater needs to fulfill his / her duties and obligations. For example, the prime minister needs to define and interpret the topic, while the whip needs to summarize the whole debate. While every debater has his responsibility, each Proposition and Opposition team is subtly competing against the other team on their side.

Since at this stage, every debater is fully aware of their position and roles, the real argumentation, the process whereby debaters employ arguments to advocate a position starts. First, team members need to analyze and build their case such as taking the current situation into consideration, positions and objectives, specific plans (Policy), and standards (value) according to the type of topics and speaker- position. Secondly, team members need to analyze the burden of proof in this debate based on the topic type and stakeholder. Policy topics need debaters to clarify the legitimacy, effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages of the policy; A value motion would require them to distinguish the object to be evaluated, determine the standard to measure the object, and judge whether the evaluated object meets the standard.

The process of the debate then enters its most important stage, the construction of argument, that is, the process of using relevant and reliable arguments to prove a conclusion through reasoning. Those who do well in argumentation reveal excellent CT skills, namely, inference, analysis, and elevation. Generally speaking, a complete argument consists mainly of three basic elements: claim, evidence, and warrant. First, in the process of preparing arguments, for one thing, debaters need to refine claims, select authoritative and relevant evidence and provide warrants to connect evidence to claims. For another, they also need to predict the arguments and possible refutations that the opposition may put forward. Second, to defend their position, debaters need to put forward the criteria to judge the argument according to the topic type, and then compare the criteria and explain why this particular criterion matters. The most difficult part is the second point. As student Wang mentioned in his journal: "in the process of making an argument, due to limited time, I can only prove why this claim is true by explaining the mechanism, but fail to demonstrate why such a criterion is more important."

Debaters, after prep-time, start to debate. Even though they might be well-prepared, in an actual debate competition, debaters take the risk that another person will confront their argument and that lower houses take the risk that their arguments are discussed in advance by the upper house. In a debate, these risks are almost certainties. Due to the unpredictability of the scene, the claims, evidence, and argument to be expressed by the debaters may be different from the previous predictions. Therefore, speakers may be put in the situation of refuting the opposing side's argument while needing at the same time to rebuild their own, which again develops debaters' skills of inference, analysis, and elevation.

Debate fosters excellence in speaking and CT, but success in a competitive debate depends primarily on good critical listening and note-taking skills. Many debaters only care about whether they have delivered what they have prepared, rather than respond to the opposing teams' strong points. In such a situation, there may not be any engagement between the two sides for the entire debate, nor any new arguments from the lower house. Many students have reflected on this point after practice. For example, classmate Zhou said, "I was trying to listen, but I could only catch the individual keywords, and sometimes, their poor logic stopped me from listening. Thus, instead of listening, my attention shifted to my speech." This kind of feedback is illuminating on providing evidence that weak language competence also hampers the listener from being able to decipher information from the opposing side, thereby limiting their opportunity for developing better CT skills. Indeed, Poor listening ability also explains why students are relatively reluctant to use points of information for direct exchange which offers speakers precious chances to engage a potential weakness or lack of clarity regarding the argument that is being presented. Listening is not a passive activity. Rather, it is an active process and good listening habits and note-taking requires effort and energy and are thus worth special attention in classroom instruction.

In addition, time organization skills are imperative. Some students spent more than three minutes on rebuttal which leaves them no time to rebuild their arguments. No matter how excellent the rebuttal speech is, one team cannot win the debate simply because their arguments are not successfully rebuilt without sufficient evidence to support the claim. The way to improve it is to record the speech to check the time allocation for refutation and reconstruction of the argument and repeat delivering the speech again till they can manage time reasonably. Student Yang, one of the best in class who adopted this method said that it "helped my speech to be structurally sound and better qualified within 7 minutes and 15 seconds". With continuous effort, she managed to break in one tournament.

### *C. Reflection Stage*

The reflection stage refers to the debater's self-evaluation, after the on-site debate and the teacher's oral feedback. On numerous occasions, debate learners committed errors repeatedly, making it difficult for them to make progress. In view of this, teachers can ask debaters to reflect after each round of debate practice in written form as required. To be specific, the reflective journals must re-examine speech from the perspectives of the structure of argument, the relevance between



claims and conclusion, sufficiency and acceptability of claims, and acceptability, and effectiveness of rebuttal and completion of the team goal.

The purpose of writing reflective journals is to engage learners in assessing the quality of their speeches regularly after careful consideration. After all, “thinking is not driven by answers but by questions” (Paul & Elder, 2006, P. 84). Debaters need to think about questions like “Whether their arguments target at the core of this motion?” “Are claims consistent and acceptable throughout the presentation?” “Is the relevance of the argument guaranteed?”; “Is there a logical fallacy in reasoning?” “Is it clearly and well organized?” “Do the arguments help to achieve the team’s goals?” “Do I refute the other’s strongest argument?” etc. Questions stimulate thought and answers to them are also an effective means to improve students’ awareness and evaluation skills.

The vast majority of students (87%) said that such a reflective journal was time-consuming but very helpful. “The reflection journal helps me to re-examine my speech and clarify why I lost the game. While thinking over the judge’s oral feedback, I knew that I didn’t understand many basic concepts such as “mechanism”. When the teacher explicitly asked me to write my own errors in the reflection journal, I went to re-read the relevant parts.”; “A Reflective journal is not designed to write feelings as a debater but to think in the way that teacher requires. This forced me to evaluate my way of thinking during the whole process of argumentation.”; “During the debate, I thought I was well prepared and quite fluent in delivering my speech, but I still lost this debate. I felt a little disappointed. It was through the process of writing the reflective journal that enabled me to realize that I spent too much time giving examples while failing to demonstrate why these examples mattered”. These words show that reflective journals can be useful only if debaters write as required in the way of answering the required questions.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study, inspired by CT theories combined with classroom debate practice, clearly lays out CT sub-skills that learners need to use at each stage of English debate. In the pre-debate stage of before-class, the core task for debaters is information assessment which requires debaters to adopt analysis and evaluation sub-skills. The key to this stage is to avoid unilateral and irrelevant arguments. During the in-class stage, after each debater knows his or her position and particular role, argumentation starts. Greater emphasis has been given to the construct of argument, which involves sub-skills inference, analysis, and evaluation. However, it is the argument rebuilding and refutation skills that are of paramount importance, because the real debate is full of unpredictability. Moreover, listening and time management skills stand as the foundation upon which debaters can bring all their skills into full play. Finally, and still, a very important factor is the process of after-class self-evaluation. It has become very evident that debaters who evaluate their performance in debate and analyze key questions and problems clearly and precisely help train their evaluation skills and cultivate problem-solving abilities.

Some teaching methods are also put forward to help cultivate CT sub-skills. First, at the stage of information assessment, teachers can announce the motion in advance without assigning roles. Secondly, team discussion on motion type analysis is the key to preventing debaters from veering off the topic. Thirdly, reflective journals which require debaters to reflect upon their thinking process as required enable them to hone their argument skills.

This paper provides illumination and a deeper understanding of what sub-skills constitute CT skills in English debate and which CT sub-skills are the focus and difficulty of classroom instruction. It is hoped that this study can assist teachers in integrating CT into English debate. The training process of CT is long. Only by constantly improving students’ understanding of CT and integrating CT training into daily classroom teaching can English teachers cultivate students with excellent language quality and thinking ability.

There are still many deficiencies in this study, such as the lack of consideration of CT disposition, the lack of a more specific and detailed description of CT sub-skills, the narrow scope of data collection, and so on. It is hoped that more teachers will devote themselves to the empirical research of CT skills, working together to improve our understanding of the characteristics of individual debaters’ CT skills, and figure out pedagogical methods to improve students’ CT skills.

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# Kamil Kilani's Adaptation of Shakespeare in Arabic Children's Literature: Acculturation Versus Enculturation

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**Abstract**—Children's literature is a young literary genre which is guided by a complex set of motivational, cognitive and metacognitive considerations. In the Arab world, children's literature emerged in tandem with the modern translation movement but has started to prosper as an independent literary form only recently. Translating for children is an arduous task with myriad challenges on the linguistic, sociocultural and educational levels. This paper aims to research Kamil Kilani's Arabic adaptation of *King Lear* as a model to translate for children. Kilani's translations are significant because they are adapted in a way which responds to the needs of children without simplifying the lexical and stylistic components of the source texts or compromising their cultural content. The paper adopts a descriptive methodology supporting the main argument with comparative examples from the source text and the target text. The analysis shows that Kilani's adaptation revolutionized the source text's form and structure, while preserving its conceptual content, language level and style exquisitely. The results suggest that translating for children does not have to embrace cultural adaptation strategies and can instead embrace a model of acculturation between the source text cultural content and the target text readers.

**Index Terms**—translating for children, Arabic children's literature, adaptation, Kamil Kilani, Shakespeare, descriptive translation studies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Children's literature is not an independent literary genre with distinctive features shared by all the books that belong to this literary form. Rather, it is an overarching term which refers to a variety of literary forms like "nursery rhymes, songs, storybooks, poems, riddles, fairy tales, folk tales and picture books" (Leonardi, 2020, p. 2). There is an integrated relationship between children's literature and translation movements all over the world. Children's literature emerged as a result of adapting or translating influential texts like holy books, classical works, adults' literature, etc. to target the age group of children. Since translation contributed to giving children's literature its shape and distinctive features and introduced it as a new literary form combining features from different genres, it is no exaggeration to say that translation movements have played a pivotal role in "the canonization" of children's literature (Ghesquiere, 2016, p.25). The following excerpt provides a general definition of children's literature:

Children's literature is not a homogenous body of texts characterized by features of content, style or form shared by every book in the corpus. Its sole common denominator lies in its audience and in those who engage with it: children's books are texts that are produced or deemed appropriate for children by adults. (O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 16)

Although children's literature is not a distinctive literary genre in its own right, works which belong to this literary form have common features that are shared cross-culturally and linguistically. For instance, children's literature has a marginal status compared to other types of literature, and this provided authors, translators as well as editors with ample flexibility in adapting works of art as children's literature to respond to the educational needs of the little readers who are considered "unable to understand specific cultural and linguistic elements" (Leonardi, 2020, p. 4). According to Leonardi (2020), children's literature invests in adaptation for ideological reasons relating to politics, feminism or cultural considerations, and these adaptations have contributed to the "acceptability and survival [of children's literature] throughout the years." (p. 2). The author continues to remark that such adaptations lead to loss and/or shifts in the content of the original text, which implies that "its original ideology, values and norms will be inevitably shifted, diminished or lost and new ideas and concepts may be added to suit the target culture" (p. 6).

The adaptations of literary works as children's literature address three components of the translated text: language use, topics discussed, style and presentation. As for language use, the authors of children's literature tend to observe the appropriateness of the text's lexical content culturally and cognitively by showing sensitivity to the target group's cultural norms and enriching the children's vocabulary and lexical patterns. Regarding the topics discussed in works of children's literature, the authors of this literary form feel the need to distance their works from "violent or strong content features" (Leonardi, 2020, p. 3). Also, writers of children's literature are keen on developing stylistic features which appeal to the target group's aesthetic taste such as the use of lyrics, imagery and others. Other features of

children's books are the directness and simplicity of their presentation, and the limitation in the topics discussed as the main goal behind writing for children lies in the educational component with an unswerving interest in appealing to the ethos of the audience more than anything else. The following passage provides a description of the features ascribed to translating children's literature:

the message in children's books was presented in a straightforward manner. Every question came with an answer, and children's stories remained silent about topics that were not fit for discussion. Sex, violence and injustice became taboo subjects, considered unfit for young children, unless sublimated in fantasy takes set in a hardly recognizable world. (Ghesquiere, 2006, p.23)

In the Arab world, the emergence of children's literature coincided with the dawn of the modern translation movement that marked the onset of *alnahda*, the cultural revival movement, at the end of the nineteenth century in countries like Egypt, Syria and Lebanon (Dunges, 2011; Mdallel, 2003). This literary genre was the fruit of translating from European languages into Arabic to target the age group of children. Although translating for children into Arabic started more than a century ago, it is believed that the Arab world children's literature is "still too young and little explored" (Bizri, 2015, p. 78) and that "there is a scarcity of research related to children's translated literature in the Arab World" (Habtoor & Al-Qahtani, 2018, p. 1017). By and large, translating for children into Arabic adopted the translation strategy of domestication for ideological or socio-cultural reasons, taking into consideration the Arab culture as an integrated whole with unifying features like language and religion. The following excerpt summarizes the features of children's literature translated into Arabic:

Arabic children's literature is still impregnated with morality, didactics, and a heavy ideological bias, despite some attempts for change. Translating for children is, in its turn, governed by the same rules that govern writing for them. Translation is a cross-cultural communication in a world made up of heterogeneous cultural entities some of which see in translation a potential threat to their cultural specificity: hence the recourse to ideological manipulation. (Mdallel, 2003, p. 305)

This study is conducted to bridge a gap in current research endeavours on translating for children in the Arab world by discussing the adaptation of children's literature for non-ideological reasons. The study is significant as it examines the complexities of translating for children from English into Arabic from a new perspective which is not classically discussed vis-à-vis the translation of children's literature. The article proposes an unconventional reading of translating for children, in general, and Kilani's translations of Shakespeare as children's literature, in particular. The assumption in this paper is that critiquing the adaptations of world literature as children's literature have focused on cultural and ethical aspects of the adaptations and not investigated other equally-important aspects that have significant implications for practicing and researching translating for children. The study provides a gestalt analysis of Kilani's translation of *King Lear* (Shakespeare, 2011) adopting a contrastive descriptive methodology to answer the following translations:

1. Can children's literature be adapted without simplification of its lexical content?
2. Can children's literature be adapted away from cultural/ideological considerations?
3. What are Kilani's contributions to translating and introducing Shakespeare to the children of the Arab world?
4. What are the strategies that can be adopted to adapt children's literature without sacrificing the stylistic or cultural components of the ST?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The twentieth century witnessed an evolving interest in researching the translation of children's literature worldwide. The seeds of children's literature were sowed in the 16th and 17th century in the form of religious writings that aimed to educate children religiously and morally, but children's literature as a gradually-independent literary form emerged during the eighteenth century when the authors of children's books underplayed the didactic and educational tone steadily and replaced it with a balanced focus on components that address the metacognitive skills of children and arouse them intellectually and aesthetically (Leonardi, 2020). Throughout its journey of development, children's literature continued to distance itself from taboo topics like violence, carnality, horror and death (Leonardi, 2020; Oittinen, 2000; Oittinen, 2006) and concentrated on entertainment, adventures, fairy tales and similar topics. The studies that investigated the strategies and implications of translating children's literature reached consensus that the main tendency in translating this literary form was that of adaptation which allowed "a greater degree of freedom in terms of cuts, omissions, additions, explanations, simplifications ... in order to conform to the target audience's context, norms and culture, thus displaying a certain degree of ideological manipulation" (Leonardi, 2020, p. 116).

Leading scholars in researching children's literature maintain that such adaptations emerged as a result of the ancillary status of children's literature compared to other well-established and canonized genres (Even-Zohar, 1990; Klingberg, 1986; Shavit, 1981). Both Even-Zohar (1990) and Shavit (1981) believe that children's literature cannot be researched in isolation of other prevalent literary forms, and this applies to translated children's literature which is also influenced by its secondary status vis-à-vis the predominant literary tradition in the target language. Since children's literature, as a whole, is an evolving literary genre with a marginal position compared to other literary forms, the dominant tendency in translating this literary form is to align the Target Text (TT) with the cognitive, cultural as well as ideological needs of the target group(s) rather than mirror the ST norms and patterns and reflect them neutrally. This is postulated by the assumptions of the literary polysystem theory which claims that the approach adopted in translating a

work of art keeps a direct relationship with the status of the literary form compared to other literary genres. The following figure reflects the relationship between different literary forms in an expanding circle model which is knotted at the bottom (point of origin) and loose at the top (scope of evolution).

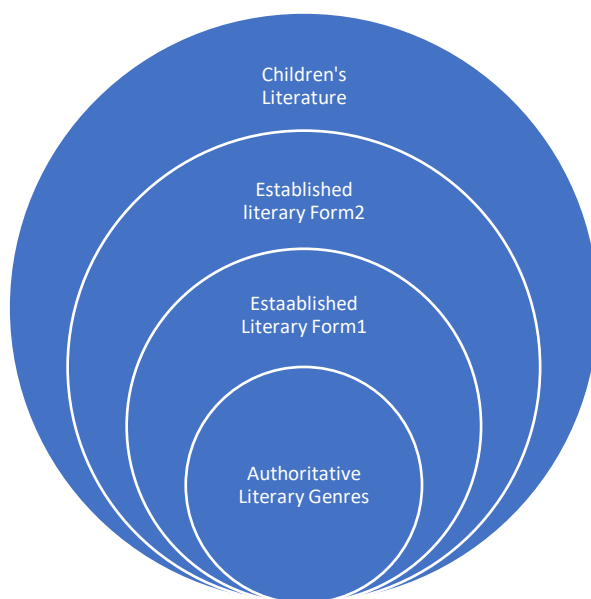


Figure 1. The Marginal Position of Children's Literature in the Literary Polysystem

While researchers like Klingberg (1986) and Shavit (1981) lamented the negative role of child literature's adaptations in consecrating its inferior status compared to other literary forms, others highlighted the role of the target readers/groups, editors, publishers, local communities in embracing the translation strategy of adaptation (Leonardi, 2020; Oittinen, 2000; Oittinen, 2006). It is widely recognized that writing for children does not target the age group of children exclusively; rather it takes into consideration the agency of adults, parents or educators, in selecting, reading and even guiding the children about the types of books to read. In *The Illustrated Treasury of Children's Literature*, Martignoni (1955) highlighted this agency by addressing the book to both children and their parents who may invest in quality family time to introduce their little ones to literary texts from the English language heritage by exposing them to the songs and stories of Shakespeare, John Keats, Hans Christian Anderson and many others.

The recent approach to literature adaptation that is inspired by Bourdieu's theory of cultural change refutes Shavit's assumptions about the low status of adapted children's literature in the literary polysystem. Topical studies about the adaptations and appropriations of literature explore the implications of Bourdieu's theory for researching translation from a socio-cultural perspective focusing on the dynamics that influence the translator's choices of translation strategies (Hanna, 2016). One such contribution which researched the adaptations of Shakespeare as children's literature is *Shakespeare in Children's Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital* by Hateley (2008). This work shows "how nineteenth-century and modern authors use Shakespeare to coincide with and produce supposedly 'ideal' gendered readers that ultimately work to promote normative patriarchy" (Sasser, 2011, p. 155).

Although Shakespeare's works are known for their complex themes and rich lexical content, their authoritative status in world literature and the universality of their themes have created a sustained interest in their presentation to all age groups including children. Unsurprisingly, Shakespeare's works were presented as children's literature not only through translation but also in adaptations using the original language of the source texts, i.e., the English language. There is a common understanding that the works of Shakespeare address the elite due to the complexity of language and thought; yet, these works have become an integral part of "popular culture" (Hateley, 2008, p. 1) and accessible to all age groups including children. Frey (2001) explained how Shakespeare's plays were introduced to young age groups, and not only adults, from an early stage in their production. The presentation of Shakespeare's works to the age group of children in English goes back to the beginning of the seventeenth century when the Bard's works were represented as songs, stories, novels as well as play adaptations that targeted children in schools and beyond. The writer reviewed children's works of literature which adapted some of Shakespeare's works like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Macbeth* and others, explaining that the purpose behind these adaptations was for the children to "get a taste of Shakespeare without confronting his texts directly" (p. 148). Another book which reviewed Shakespeare's adaptations as children's literature is *Shakespeare as Children's Literature* by Richmond (2008). This publication provided a comprehensive review of Shakespeare's adaptations for children between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Ford, 2009).

Examples of adaptations of Shakespeare's works include *Tales from Shakespeare* by Mary and Charles Lamb (1807), *Family Shakespeare* by Harriett and Thomas Bowdler (1807) besides adaptations of Shakespeare's texts for school teaching in the middle of the nineteenth century (Frey, 2001; Richmond, 2008). These adaptations downplayed the

presence of inappropriate content in the plays to make them readable by children. For example, the adapted plays did not incorporate certain content in the STs such as violent scenes and the appearance of ghosts. The twentieth century saw a continued interest in adapting Shakespeare's works to different degrees ranging from simple adaptations like *The Children's Shakespeare* by Edith Nesbit (2000), first published in 1900, to highly transformed adaptations that altered the trajectory of the plot, characterization and other components like *Bravo, Mr William Shakespeare* by Marcia Williams (2000), first published in 1956. The latter adapted Shakespeare's tragedies and history plays like *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Richard III*, as comedies (for more on the adaptations of Shakespeare for children at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century see (Richmond, 2008)).

In the Arab world, producing and publishing children's books came late compared to the West (approximately two centuries later) thanks to the modern translation movement that prospered at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although early attempts at writing for children started at the beginning of the twentieth century, Arabic language children's literature is still believed to be in its infancy as an independent literary genre focusing on the texts' pedagogic function which is mainly concerned with educating children linguistically, culturally as well as politically. According to Mdallel (2003), "This tendency, which is decreasing in the Western societies, is still very much alive in the Arab societies, where children's literature is basically meant to teach children, to remind them of the dichotomy between good and evil" (p. 301). The institutional and intellectual interest in developing children's literature and improving its quality is recent represented by a number of initiatives in some Arabic countries and is yet to be further encouraged and materialized. One way of reviving the interest in developing children's literature is through researching the translation of world children's books or other works of literature to target the young generations. The following passage highlights the current status of children's literature in the Arab world:

In the Arab world, children's literature primarily has a didactic function. It is meant to impart values like patriotism, love of Islam, and appreciation for Arab culture and heritage and for the Arabic language ... The authors tend to have a conservative worldview, and they may aim to indoctrinate children politically... Frequently texts are dry and moralizing, and illustrations are not appealing to children and unsuitable to the story. (Dunges, 2011, p. 172)

Translating Shakespeare's plays has always been a prelude to cultural revival in the Arab world in one way or another. Shakespeare was first translated for adults with the rise of the translation movement during *al-nahda*, and the early translations of Shakespeare embraced adaptation as a translation strategy (Omar, 2012; Omar, 2020) that aimed to introduce Shakespeare to the Arab audience. Translating Shakespeare for children was pioneered by Kamel Kilani who is considered "The leading Egyptian writer of children's books written in Arabic for the first half of the twentieth century" (Morrison, 2015, p. 48). One may wonder what could the reason(s) be behind choosing Shakespeare's works as STs to be translated to address the children age group? It is worth mentioning that the STs that were selected by Kilani to adapt as children's literature comprised an array of masterpieces from the Arab and Islamic culture such as his series of stories from the life of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and stories about the famous *Juha*, besides stories adapted from world literature and heritage like *King Midas* (the legend of King Midas from Greek mythology), *Robinson Crusoe*, adapted from Daniel Defoe's novel, some Shakespeare's plays and others (al-Hajji, 1995).

Obviously Kilani was establishing a children's library which prepares the young generation to become the future intellectuals of the nation by introducing them to high cultural values from their own culture and other cultures worldwide. Kilani's translations of Shakespeare appeared in the thirties of the twentieth century when the Bard was presented to adults in adaptations that were far from matching the original texts both in language and style. Kilani's adaptations of Shakespeare fall under Hanna's (2007) description of Khalil Mutran's translation of *Othello* as 'decommercializing Shakespeare'. These adaptations granted the children the prestigious status that Mutran is believed to have given to his adult readers by exposing them to "high culture" literary works (Hanna, 2007, p. 28). As such, Kilani's adaptations of Shakespeare were accomplished in anticipation of their future role in preparing intellectually-motivated Arab readers who are open to reading books from and about other cultures. Undoubtedly, when Kilani decided to adapt Shakespeare as children's literature, he had in mind Hateley's (2008) idea on 'the future agency' of reading children's literature in the sense that "children's Shakespeare pushes an audience toward reading Shakespeare as an adult" (Gailey, 2020, p. 331).

Kilani received wide acknowledgement by researchers and translation professionals for his contributions to children's literature in the Arab world (Abu-Nasr, 1996, Stephens *et al*, 2018). He is described as the founder and pioneer of children's literature as he is believed to have revolutionized this literary form by writing and translating over 250 children's books. During that time, children's literature was of three types: translated works, lyrical poems by poets like Ahmad Shawqi and Muhammad al-Harawi and children's magazines (Morrison, 2015). Kilani's translations presented Shakespeare in sophisticated language and style that competed with the original texts in every sense of the word. Despite the wide recognition and critical acclaim granted to Kilani for his achievements in establishing children's literature as an independent literary form, very few studies researched his writing style and translation strategies. In a paper presented to the first international conference on the origin and evolution of children's literature in Arabic language, Muhammad (2016) explored Kilani's role in enriching children's lyrical stories by analysing his adaptations of Shakespeare.

This study aimed to examine unexplored aspects in translating for children from English into Arabic. The assumption in this research is that critiquing translation works as children's literature has focused on adaptations that aimed to enculturate the ST's values as fits the expectations of the target readers while neglecting adaptations whose purpose was to intellectualize the TT readers about the values and discourse embraced by other cultures through acculturation. The following sections will discuss the research methodology and analysis vis-à-vis the research questions about translating for children.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed comparative and descriptive methodology which is inspired by Toury's model of descriptive translation studies (Toury, 1997). According to descriptive translation studies, any mutation that influences the result of the translation process in the form of loss or shifts (Catford, 2004) needs not be studied in the framework of equivalence between the ST and the TT. Rather, it should be examined vis-à-vis its implications for the translation process as a whole for a practical understanding of what actually happens during the translation process away from any prescriptive categorization of the dos and don'ts of translation.

The comparative analysis was conducted on two levels: The first level adopted a general comparison between the ST and the TT dealing with genre-related properties of the texts including plot, characterization, style and structure; the second level of comparison benefited from data collection on the lexical content of the ST and TT including collocational patterns, idiomatic expressions as well as culturally-embedded metaphors and images. The aim behind the collected data was to identify the type of adaptation embraced by the translator in light of the arguments presented in the literature review and to answer the research questions about Kilani's contribution to translating world literature as children's literature into Arabic.

### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a descriptive analysis of Kilani's translation of *King Lear* by discussing genre-related features of the ST and the TT, on the one hand, and analysing certain lexical properties of the TT, drawing comparisons between its content and the ST's content whenever possible, on the other hand. The first part of the section will analyse four generic components of the ST and the TT: Characterization, plot, structure as well as style. As for characterization, it is noticed that Kilani preserved the main characters in the play and excluded secondary characters. Out of eighteen characters, Kilani presented thirteen characters excluding the following characters which are considered minor, compared to other characters in the play. The characters that were missing in the TT include: The Duke of Cornwall (Regan's brutal husband), Oswald (Goneril's steward and accomplice), Curan (Gloucester's servant), Old Man (Tenant of Gloucester), as well as Servants to Cornwall.

The translator used the technique of foreignization in presenting the characters by borrowing their names from the source text, as shown in the table below. It is believed that the use of borrowing is mutually exclusive with the translation strategy of adaptation as it introduces foreign elements to the TT and the readers. However, in translating children's literature, translators may resort to this technique to convey the idea that the topics/values which are reflected in the TT originated in a different environment and culture and may not necessarily apply to the target culture (Habtoor & Al-Qahtani, 2018).

TABLE 1  
CHARACTERS' PRESENTATION IN THE ST AND TT

ST	TT
1. King Lear	1. الملك لير
2. Goneril	2. جنريل
3. Regan	3. ريجان
4. Cordelia	4. كوردليا
5. The Fool	5. البهلول
6. Earl of Gloucester	6. جلستر
7. Earl of Kent	7. كنت
8. Edgar / Poor Tom	8. إدجار
9. Edmund	9. إدمند
10. Duke of Albany	10. ألباني
11. King of France.	11. ملك فرنسا
12. Duke of Burgundy	12. الأمير الإنجليزي
13. Doctor Attendant to Cordelia.	13. طبيب كوردليا

As for the ST's plot and structure, Kilani's translation preserved the plot of the ST with some variation in the play's structure, unlike the early adaptations of Shakespeare's plays which transformed the plot and characterization of the plays considerably (Omar, 2012; Omar, 2020). Although Kilani's adaptations coincided with the emergence of those adaptations by being published in the thirties of the twentieth century, the translator followed a different pattern of adaptation by preserving the plot of the STs. In the example of *King Lear*, both the ST and the TT consist of five acts. But while the ST acts are divided into scenes, the TT acts are subdivided into short narratives with subheadings that

have cognitive and didactic functions. The following table provides a description of the subheadings employed under the five acts with their back translation.

TABLE 2  
ACTS DIVISIONS IN KILANI'S *KING LEAR*

Acts' divisions in TT	Back translation
تمهيد: قصة عجوز – مهرجان الملك الفصل الأول: 1- عهد الشيخوخة، 2- بنات الملك لير، حديث جُنريل، حديث ريغان، حديث كُرديليا، نيل كُرديليا، غضب لير، مهرجان الملك، وداع كُرديليا	Prologue: the story of an old man- the king's festival Act I: Old age, Lear's daughters, Goneril's speech, Regan's speech, Cordelia's speech, Cordelia's nobleness, Lear's wrath, the king's festival, Cordelia's farewell
الفصل الثاني: في قصر جُنريل، حديث جُنريل، وفاء الوزير، البهلُول، ذكاء البهلُول، قصة العصفور والغراب، حاشية الملك، دعوة لير، دعابة البهلُول، عند ريغان، حبس الوزير، مقدم لير، حقوق الوالدين، مقدم جُنريل، غضبة الشيخ	Act II: In Goneril's palace, Goneril's malevolence, the minister's loyalty, the Fool's intelligence, the story of the bird and the raven, the king's courtiers, Lear's prayers, the Fool's sense of humour, at Regan's palace, the minister's imprisonment, Lear's arrival, filial rights, Goneril's arrival, the old man's rage
الفصل الثالث: هبوب العاصفة، الأعاصير والرعود، نشيد العاصفة، آلام الشيخ، أنشودة البهلُول، شيطان الغاية، الأمير الوفي، في بيت الأمير	Act III: The storm, hurricanes and thunder, the storm song, the old man's suffering, the Fool's song, the forest's devil, the loyal prince, at the prince's house
الفصل الرابع: الأمير جُلستر، ولدا الأمير، فرار إدغار، مستشار المملكة، الجاسوس، نصيحة الأمير، نكية الأمير، الزارع والأمير، الأمير والمجنون، حوار الأمير وولده، في الحقول، عودة المخلصة، نصيحة الطبيب، مناجاة كُرديليا، بقطة الشيخ، حوار مع كُرديليا، اعتذار النادم،	Act IV: Prince Gloucester, the prince's two children, Edgar's escape, the kingdom's advisor, the spy, the prince's advice, the prince's tragedy, the prince and the farmer, the prince and the mad man, the dialogue between the prince and his son, in the fields, the return of the loyal daughter, the doctor's advice, Cordelia's soliloquy, the old man's awakening, the dialogue between the old man and Cordelia, apology of the repenting father
الفصل الخامس: هزيمة كُرديليا، الخبيثاء الثلاثة، مصارع الخبيثاء الثلاثة، توبة الهالك، مصرع كُرديليا، لوعة الناكِل، خاتمة لير	Act V: Cordelia's defeat, the three villains, the end of the three villains, the repentance of the defeated villain, Cordelia's end, the suffering of the bereaved father, Lear's end

Kilani's use of subheadings in organizing the acts aimed to introduce the narrative component to the text in an attempt to facilitate the reading process since the plays are adapted to be read by children rather than acted on the stage. During the time Kilani translated and wrote for children there was no theatre that targeted the children age group in Egypt or other Arab countries. Besides, storytelling dominated the scene in Arabic children's literature since its inception in the early twentieth century. In a bibliographical study about the genres used in Arabic children's literature, al-Hajji (1995) concluded that story-telling (the narrative mode) prevails in Arabic children's literature hitting a percentage of 53.8%. Kilani presented the narrative element at the expense of dialogues and monologues which he condensed making the play look like a novella. The translator supported the narrative fabric with contextual cues about the moral lessons of the text. These are reflected by the use of words loaded with expressive meaning to unveil the ethical and behavioural traits of different characters such as 'Goneril's malevolence, the minister's loyalty, the Fool's intelligence, the Fool's sense of humour, filial rights, the old man's rage, the old man's suffering, the Fool's song, the forest's devil, the loyal prince'. This amplification serves a cognitive function that helps the children to understand and learn some values in a smooth and indirect manner. Also, narration adds an aesthetic aspect to the text and makes it more entertaining for the children by creating a mixture of dialogue, narration, and lyrics.

This takes us to a discussion of the stylistic aspects of the ST and TT. One of the stylistic aspects of the ST is the author's tendency to mix prose with verse, which applies to almost all Shakespearean works unexceptionally. In *King Lear*, three characters mix verse with prose and these are the Fool, Edgar as Poor Tom and Oswald (Lennard, 2010). Kilani was careful to preserve this stylistic component in the TT because they enrich its cognitive and aesthetic aspects; the translator went even as far as amplifying the lyrical component, and by doing so he made a great contribution to introducing lyrical stories to the emerging sub-genre (Muhammad, 2016). Nagarajan (2017) explained that "in *King Lear*, the songs are sung by the Fool" in order to "provide in a pithy form the background of common sense and folk wisdom that Lear has flouted" (p. 360). Kilani amplified this function of the lyrics by extending their use to other characters like Lear and Kent. Amplifying the lyrical content of the play responds to the cognitive and stylistic requirements of adaptation because the adapted songs or dialogues speak wisdom using simple meter and harmonious rhythms.

Another stylistic aspect of Shakespeare's texts is the sophisticated language which is distinguished for the prolific use of highly expressive lexical patterns, and this will be discussed in the second part of the analysis. This section will unveil more about Kilani's translation strategies and his contributions to adapting world literature as Arabic children's literature. The discussion will also answer the research questions on whether it is possible to translate for children without simplification or adaptation of the ST's cultural content. These two research questions will be answered by examining the lexical content of the ST and TT including collocational patterns, idiomatic expressions as well as



culturally-embedded metaphors and images. The analysis will discuss examples from the lexical patterns of the TT and compare them, whenever possible, with examples from the ST.

The following tables provide examples of three types of lexical patterns including conjunctions, collocations, idioms, and metaphors. The main feature which is shared by this variety of lexical patterns is their expressive power and articulateness, which is a distinctive feature of Shakespeare's language. The first table will present examples of synonyms joined by means of the conjunction word 'and'. It is noticed in the cited examples that the translator joined the synonyms by means of conjunction as a form of amplification to contextualize difficult/high register vocabulary. Table 3 also provides examples of the strategy of paraphrasing which also serves to disambiguate the meaning of articulate vocabulary while exposing the children to high-register vocabulary to reinforce their cognition of different concepts.

TABLE 3  
AMPLIFICATION AND PARAPHRASING OF SOPHISTICATED VOCABULARY

Amplification	Back translation	Paraphrasing	Backtranslation
الابالسة والشياطين	Devils and fiends	ما عَمَّ (ما لبث) أن أدرك	Immediately (soon) he realized
الظلم والقسوة	Injustice and cruelty	المنمقة (المزخرفة)	Ornamented (Decorated)
الشدة والعسر	hardship and adversity	ظفرت (فازت)	Gained (won)
الشقاق والتفرقة	discord and dissonance	تنتكر (تتغير)	Deny (change of heart)
الحسرة والأسف	remorse and regret	تقطب حاجبها (تعبس)	To furrow one's eyebrows (to frown)
السامة والضجر	Boredom and irritation	ولا تلثي له رجاء (لا تجيب)	Would not respond to his wishes (to ignore)
لوماً وخبثاً	Callousness and perniciousness	نُهزة الخطوب والكوارث (فرصة لليلايا والنكبات)	A prey to misfortune and calamities (a victim of...)
المديح والثناء	Praise and commendation	لم يأل (لم يبق) جهداً	Did not spare (save) efforts
التهديد والوعيد	Threatening and intimidating	المجون (عدم المبالاة)	Dissipation (indifference)
لجأجتك وعنادك	Your intransigence and stubbornness	مداعياً (ممازحاً)	Facetiously (jokingly)
الظلم والاعتداء	Prejudice and hostility	متوخيأ (قاصداً)	Seeking to (wanting to)
الرياء والنفاق	Hypocrisy and pretense	أوعزت (أشارت)	gestured (signaled)
يسترانها عن ناظره، ويحجبها عن عينه	Conceal it and veil it away from his sight and eyes	بثاقب بصره (بنظره الناقد)	With his sharp sight (with his critical eye)
الاحتقار وقلة الاكتراث	contempt and apathy	الويل (العذاب والهلاك)	Woe (torture and demise)
الخطوب والكوارث	Calamities and misfortunes	لم تعصمني (لم تحفظني)	Did not make me infallible (did not protect me against)
الإساءة والتنكيل	Abuse and torture	قوسيت قناته السنون (حننت الأعوام ظهره)	Years arched his spine (his back bent)
جلبتهم وضوضاءهم	Their clanging and clattering	جلبتهم وضوضاءهم (أصواتهم العالية)	Their clanging and clattering (their loud voices)
أحكم وأبرم	I sentence and issue the verdict	تحنر المطر (سقط)، ثم همى (نزل بكثرة)	There was rainfall (the rain dropped), and then downpour
التجلد والصبر	Fortitude and patience	خارت قواه، وزايله رشدة (فارقه هداه)	He lost his strength and his senses (lost his mind)
الصفح والعفوان	Forgiveness and clemency	خطل الرأي (فساد التفكير)	Misconception (inability to think wisely)

The table above shows that the translator employed the strategy of amplification for cognitive reasons to enrich the vocabulary of the little readers while reducing the cognitive load of sophisticated vocabulary by using conjunctions that join the word with a synonym or paraphrasing the meaning of the word between two brackets. It is obvious that the translator was careful to simulate rather than simplify the articulate language of the ST. For this purpose, he used high-register vocabulary in Arabic to expand the vocabulary base of the readers and at the same time reflect the style of the ST. Besides his use of expressive vocabulary, the translator used complex lexical patterns such as collocations and idioms which represent another feature of Shakespeare's style and language. The following table provides examples of collocational and idiomatic patterns in the TT.

TABLE 4  
COLLOCATIONS AND IDIOMS IN THE TT

idioms	Back translation	collocations	Back translation
يرفع عن كاهله أعباء الملك	Lift the burdens of the kingdom off his shoulders	وادم الخلد	Having a quiet mind
وقعت عيناه على	His eyes fell on	ناعم البال	With an easy mind
جلل الشيب رأسه	Grey hair covered his head	سوء التدبير	Ill management
أسلم لسخطه العنان (ترك لغضبه الزمام)	Gave vent to his anger	فرصة سانحة	Golden opportunity
دالت دولته (انقلبت رأساً على عقب)	His influence receded	آيات الإعجاب	Verses of admiration
ففاض قلبه لوعة	His heart was overwhelmed with sorrow	في حله وترحاله (في إقامته وسفره)	Whether he travels or abides in his place (near or far)
إيغار صدر أبيه (إشعاله غيظاً)	Incite his father	الإقلاع عن فكرته الخاطئة	Abandon his misconception
أهلك من الحرث	To destroy the crops (cause great damage)	الالفاظ المعسولة	Honeyed words

The last part of this section will provide comparative examples from the ST and the TT about the translation of cultural metaphors. The analysis will investigate the translation strategies used by Kilani to process two types of cultural metaphors and images: non-Biblical metaphors of deity and Biblical metaphors from Christianity. As for the ST's non-Biblical metaphors, they reflect the pagan setting of the play. Deity is referred to in *King Lear* 28 times as "gods, goddess, godson". All these references to deity are inspired by the following conceptual metaphors:

GOD HAS A PLURAL IDENTITY

GOD HAS A FEMALE IDENTITY

GOD HAS A HUMAN TRAIT

Only one time the ST refers to deity as having a unique representation "as if we were God's spies" (Shakespeare, 2007, 5.3.17). Kilani underplayed the pagan aspect of *King Lear* by deleting all references to deity as having human qualities and ambiguating the reference to deity as "divine care", as reflected in the only example in which Kilani refers to deity in the TT.

TABLE 5  
KILANI'S AMBIGUATION OF PAGAN METAPHORS

TT	Back Translation
إدجار يتحدث لأبيه بعد سقوطه من مكان تخيل له أنه جبل شاهق محاولاً قتل نفسه: "ولتفرح بما ظفرت به من السلامة، فما أشك في أن العناية الإلهية تصحبك" (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 4, p. 38)	Edgar says to his father who, in an attempt to kill himself, fell from a place which he imagined to be a high mountain, "I have no doubt that the divine care is giving you company and protection"

On the other hand, *King Lear* abounds in Biblical metaphors which are inspired by Christianity. Given the conspicuous "Christian content of Shakespeare's corpus" (Lefler, 2010, p. 212), it is hardly a surprise to find Christian references dominating *King Lear*, despite the pagan background of the play. Wittreich (1984) analysed *King Lear* within a Christian framework and provided a critical reading of the presence of apocalyptic images in the play. The author explained that the images which were inspired by the Book of Revelation in *King Lear* are implicit rather than explicit in view of the pagan context in which the play is set. Biblical images in *King Lear* include images of the apocalypse and the story of Jesus Christ. Kilani preserved Biblical references to the apocalypse as the following table shows.

TABLE 6  
BIBLICAL IMAGES OF THE APOCALYPSE

ST Apocalyptic Imagery	TT Apocalyptic Imagery
Howl, howl, howl, howl! ... That heaven's vault should crack. (Shakespeare, 2007, 5.3.232-234)	"وأغولوا نادبين حتى تنفطر (تنشق) السماء" (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 5, p. 49)
Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks! You sulfurous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Smite flat the thick rotundity o' th' world, Crack nature's molds (Shakespeare, 2007, 3.2.1-8)	واشتدت الزويعة عنفاً، وتحّد المطر (سقط)، ثم همى (نزل) بكثرة كآته السيل الجارف، وجلجلت الزعود القاصفة، ودوّت الرياح العاتية (العنيفة)، وخيّل إلى الناس أنّ البراكين انفجرت، وأن الكواكب انتثرت (تساقطت)، وأنّ الجحيم سغرت (التهبت) (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 3, p. 26) "وتشتدّ العاصفة هبوباً، ويزأّر الرعد مجلجلاً قاصفاً، ويبرق البرق، يكاد سناه (ضوءه) يخطف الابصار، ويوهم من يراه أنّ الكرة الأرضية تهتزّ من أقطارها (جوانبها) وأنّ الدنيا قد زلزلت زلزالها" (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 3, p. 27)

Another Biblical metaphor which reflects Christian beliefs sees Cordelia as a Christ figure (Greene, 1996; Waldron, 2017). Some researchers associated the Christ figure with different characters other than Cordelia such as Edgar, Kent, and Lear himself (Lefler, 2010). But the leading argument across different interpretations of the play associates Cordelia with Jesus Christ “based predominantly on her selfless love for her father and her innocent death” (Lefler, 2010, p. 212) and as “She is implicated in the repentance and redemption of her father and these two concepts are central to Christian belief” (Waldron, 2017, p. 76). One of the images that are invoked by the story of Jesus Christ is reflected in Lear carrying his dead daughter. This image “has been likened to the famous pieta of Michelangelo, which depicts Mary holding the dead Jesus after the crucifixion” (Waldron, 2017, p. 76). Kamil Kilani’s translation of *King Lear* presented all these images explicitly as shown in the following table.

TABLE 7  
BIBLICAL IMAGERY FROM THE STORY OF JESUS CHRIST

ST Biblical Image	TT Biblical Image
“He hath commission from thy wife and me To hang Cordelia in the prison” (Shakespeare, 2007, 5.3.27-28)	“نفذ سهم القضاء- ولا مرد له – ولقيت حنقها مصلوبة في السجن (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 5, p. 48)
(Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms...) (Shakespeare, 2007. 5.3)	“فحمل جثتها بين ذراعيه، وهو يصيح مغوثاً، نادياً...” (Shakespeare, trans. 2011, act 5, p. 48)

The discussion shows that the strategies used by Kamil Kilani in translating *King Lear* include foreignization, amplification, paraphrasing, and deletion. Interestingly, the analysis reveals that the strategies employed by the translator and discussed above involve incongruity if researched from the perspective of adaptation. Both amplification and deletion are known as techniques adopted in adaptation, but this does not apply to the other techniques of foreignization and paraphrasing. Another notable congruity in Kilani’s translation of *King Lear* is the fact that it is an adaptation which preserves the cultural content of the ST and its linguistic complexity, contrary to the expectations of research about the translation of children’s literature or translating texts as children’s literature. The shifts that affected the ST were related to its genre features rather than linguistic or conceptual content. The analysis also reveals that Kilani’s adaptation focused on amplification rather than simplification of the ST’s style and language showing a certain level of sensitivity to pagan references while preserving the ST’s cultural connotations consistently.

## V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper researched Kamil Kilani’s adaptation of *King Lear* as children’s literature. Kilani’s adaptation provided a novel model of adaptation which departed from the omnipresent cultural adaptation model and replaced it with a model of acculturation through translation. This goes contrary to the expectations of earlier research about translating for children. It is widely assumed that translating for children is expected to embrace an enculturation model which consecrates the values of the Target Text (TT) at the expense of the ST’s cultural content. According to the polysystem theory, this is what gave children’s literature its periphery nature. Kilani’s translations did not see children’s literature as a periphery literary form. Rather, Kilani’s adaptation highlighted children’s literature as an independent creative literary form which mixes different genres in one text and embraces a high-culture adaptation model of acculturation. Although Kilani’s translations of Shakespeare are dressed as adaptations, they embrace a model of cultural interaction in which the translator reflected the cultural content and values of the ST unequivocally and limited his adaptation to genre-related components without sacrificing the stylistic functions of the ST.

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# Analysis of Conversational Interaction in the Listening Discourse of Test for English Majors-8

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**Abstract**—Conversational interaction analysis is a method of analyzing the content and structure of the words spoken by both parties in a conversation. The listening discourse of TEM-8 has not only the basic characteristics of daily conversation discourse, but also its special features as a selective examination. This paper applies a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, encompassing the perspectives of the construction and transformation of turn, the sequential organization of the conversation, and the repair of conversation, to carry out conversational interaction analysis on listening discourse materials of the TEM-8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019. The results revealed that candidates need to grasp the topic, match questions with answers, capture details, and pay attention to the role change, tone and repair of the conversation, as well as strengthen listening training, so that they can do well in TEM-8 exams.

**Index Terms**—test for English Majors-8, listening discourse, conversational interaction analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language communication in people's daily life includes oral communication and written communication. In oral communication, there are non-interactive methods such as monologues and speeches, as well as conversations that require both parties to participate. Conversational interaction analysis is a method of scientific analysis of people's conversational structure patterns in the course of interaction. The purpose is to find the basic rules of conversation from the recurring patterns in a large number of conversation records, and then dig deeper into conversations (Du, 2013).

The relevant papers which related to conversational interaction analysis include daily conversations (Wu & Yang, 2020), classroom conversations (Zhang, 2019), and dialogue materials for large-scale oral exams such as CET-4, IELTS, and TOEFL (Gu, 2020), while not many papers focus on conversational interaction analysis on the listening discourse of the Test for English Majors-8 (TEM-8 for short). The listening discourse of TEM-8 doesn't only have the basic characteristics of daily conversation discourse, but also its special features as a selective examination. This article uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, from the perspectives of the construction and transformation of turn, the sequential organization of the conversation, and the repair of the conversation, to analyze the listening discourse materials of TEM-8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019. It aims at finding some rules and characteristics of the conversational feature of the listening discourse of TEM-8, and giving some enlightenment to the candidate's listening comprehension.

## II. CONVERSATIONAL INTERACTION ANALYSIS

The basic feature of conversation is interaction. There must be at least two participants in a conversation, and the speaker must complete social or communicative behaviors in an orderly manner. In the 1960s, the conversation analysis school represented by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson proposed a method aimed at studying the internal structure of conversation. Conversation analysis is divided into two research orientations. The first one is theoretical conversation analysis. In theoretical conversation, only the conversation itself is studied, in which the composition, organizational structure, and conversation routines are analyzed, ignoring the social factors of the discourse. The second one is applied conversation analysis, whose purpose is to explore how conversational analysis theory is applied to various fields of our society. Paul Ten has called the former "Pure CA" and the latter "Applied CA". Conversational interaction analysis belongs to the category of "pure conversational analysis research". It is used to analyze the interactive characteristics of the two parties in the conversation and how the topic being discussed is regulated by the people engaged in the conversation. Its research focuses on conversation. The content includes three main aspects: (1) the construction and transformation of turn; (2) the sequential organization of conversation; (3) the repair of the conversation.

### A. Turn

Foreign scholars Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) believe that turn refers to a speaker continuously producing words during a conversation. When the roles of the speaker and the listener are exchanged or when both parties are silent, the speaker's turn is over. Liu Hong (2006), a domestic linguist, believes that turn refers to a series of words spoken by the speaker at any time during a conversation, ending with the exchange of speaker and listener or the silence of all people. This definition provides two measurable criteria for the end of a turn: first is the exchange of roles between the speaker and the listener, which marks the end of one turn and the beginning of the next. The second is

whether the speaker's words are continuous. If the speaker is silent after uttering a word continuously in the conversation, and no other words are said later, it means that the current turn is finished.

### 1. Turn-Construction

The most basic unit of turn-construction is the turn-constructive unit (TCU). Turn-construction unit refers to the various language forms and components used to construct a turn. Generally, there are lexical-type TCU, phrase-type TCU and sentence-type TCU (Yan, 2018). A turn can be constructed by one or more turn-construction units. Turns have predictability, which means the parties involved in the conversation can infer the type of turn-construction unit and the possible ending point of the turn during the process of constructing. There are four turn-construction strategies: exploit resources and initiate the turn, unfold gradually and keep the turn, cope freely and change the turn, promote understanding and take turns (Zhou, 2011).

#### a. Exploit Resources and Initiate the Turn

To start a continuous conversation, not only a specific topic, discourse center, and resources for conversation are needed, but also the active participation of both sides (Sun, 2018). These conditions make it possible to keep the speakers talking and avoid silence caused by lack of topics or conversation resources, leading to the interruption of the conversation. Therefore, the first task of constructing a turn is to find suitable conversation resources for both parties to promote the natural generation of turn.

##### Example 1

W: Good morning, Dr. Harley. Thank you very much for coming on our radio talk. We know that you are an applied linguistic specializing in second language acquisition.

M: Right.

(Part 1 in Listening Comprehension Section B Interview of TEM-8, 2011)

In this material, interviewer W started the first turn with his greeting "Good morning". Then according to "We know that you are an applied linguistic specializing in second language acquisition", it's obvious that interviewee M's profession is mentioned as the topic of this turn, which build the foundation for further development of the conversation.

#### b. Unfold Gradually and Keep the Turn

After the turn is triggered, both parties in the conversation need to expand the turn around the topic, and some new questions can also be involved. If the speaker wants to keep the conversation from being interrupted in communication, he should learn to control the initiative of discourse effectively. Take the listening discourse material of TEM-8 in 2011 as an example. There are 22 turns in this material, during which the interviewer and the interviewee take turns to initiate the turn.

##### Example 2

W: So, age plays an important role in language learning?

M: Yes. But that's not the only reason.

W: Oh, is that so?

M: Yes. For example, time and interest. Old children and adults often have less time and motivation to learn a second language.

...

M: Well, this may be one of the issues here. But this cannot be the whole story. As not all differences between languages cause difficulty. Let me give you an example.

W: OK.

M: Research has found that many errors by Czech speakers learning English were made on syntactic constructions in which the two languages do not differ.

...

(Part 1 in Listening Comprehension Section B Interview of TEM-8, 2011)

There are two sentences in the turn of interviewee M in the material, "But that's not the only reason" and "Let me give you an example". These two sentences are at the end of what the interviewee M said, so it ought to the interviewer W's turn to speak after M's speaking. However, owing to these two sentences, the initiative of the turn still belongs to M. These sentences give him the opportunity to express more opinions.

#### c. Cope Freely and Change the Turn

During a conversation, it's a common communication obstacle in dialogue that there is silence between both parties from time to time. If they want to break the deadlock and maintain the conversation, the key is to initiate a new turn. After getting a new turn, it is necessary for both parties to be good at taking turns in the communication so that they will not fall into silence again. Thus, both parties should be able to explore new topics in order to start a new turn.

#### d. Promote Understanding and Take Turns

The effective continuation of the conversation depends on two speakers' accurate understanding of the content in the

conversation. It is difficult for the conversation which is not comprehended by the listener to have the possibility of continuity. Therefore, during a conversation, the speaker can use explanations, repetitions and other strategies to ensure that the listener can understand his words. At the same time, the listener can also use some strategies such as asking, questioning, and supplementing to express his opinions based on their conversation. Finally, both parties can understand the meaning of the conversation in time, so as to promote the normal progress of the conversation.

## 2. Turn-Taking

When the speaker stops speaking and the listener starts to speak, the roles of both sides in the conversation are reversed, resulting in the change of a turn. The position where the roles change is called "turn-turn related position". The position associated with turn-taking is generally located at the end of a turn, and it usually changes in five aspects: intonation, phonetics, syntax, semantics and sign language (Duncan & Niederehe, 1974). Based on this, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson proposed the concept of turn-taking in 1978. Sacks pointed out that the seemingly disorderly dialogue in daily life is actually a highly organized and orderly phenomenon. The hidden rules in the conversation that control the orderly progress of the conversation are called turn-taking mechanisms. People need to follow the basic principles in the communication process even though there is only one speaker. Based on the above analysis, the speakers in the conversation may infer a possible ending point of turn transformation, at which the transformation is most likely to occur. This point is called "transition-relevance place". The suitable points of turn-taking have five characteristics: completion of a complete grammatical sequence, appearance of summary utterances, reduction of intonation and volume, signals of the speaker's initiative to give up the turn by asking questions to others, and a long pause or silence (Gao, 2018).

Turn-taking is often used in oral communication teaching. Common types of turn-taking include modified turn-taking, induced turn-taking, insertion-type turn-taking, and distributed turn-taking (Zhang, 2019). In the process of teacher-student interaction in oral teaching, students' responses often appear inaccurate or inappropriate. At this time, teachers can use modified turn-taking to help students adjust their speech expressions and correct mistakes. Induced turn-taking is the most important way of turn-taking in oral communication. There are usually two types: direct inducement and indirect inducement. They are based on the original expression of the speaker and use some introductory sentences to link the dialogue so as to promote the next turn. When teachers and students communicate around a certain topic, many subtopics may be derived. If students are talking about the subtopics or any other unrelated topic, the teacher may interrupt the students' speech through insertion-type turn-taking, so that the students' attention can return to the main topic. Distributive turn-taking means that the teacher takes the initiative to specify the speaker for the next turn. Common methods include directly designating students to answer and guiding students to answer in a certain order.

## B. Sequential Organization

The most prominent feature between turns in conversation is "adjacency". The generation of each turn shows the understanding of the speaker on previous turn. At the same time, the current turn also creates a new context for the generation of next turn. As a result, the sequence of conversation analysis is jointly constructed by the speakers. The behaviors performed by both sides are not only shown through the turn design, but also understood by the sequence position of the turn. This section discusses the global structure of a conversation called sequential organization, including three aspects: adjacency pairs, preference organization, and non-preference organization.

### 1. Adjacency Pairs

The concept of adjacency pairs was originally proposed by Schegloff and Sacks. Adjacency pairs are the concrete manifestation of the organization, language stability and repeatability of human social behaviors in conversation. The typical adjacency pairs are composed of two parts. The part that appears in the front usually represents the initiation of the utterance, which is called the antecedent of the adjacency pairs. While the part that appears in the back usually represents the response of the utterance, which is called the subsequent part of the adjacency pairs. Generally speaking, the antecedent and the subsequent parts of adjacency pairs are contributed by two speakers, which are adjacent to each other to form a system. And it is generally required that the subsequent parts of adjacency pairs are constrained by the antecedent pieces, which makes the sequential organization of a conversation exhibits a certain degree of stability and detectability. Liu Hong (2006) summarized 15 types of adjacency pairs based on the characteristics of Chinese:

- (1) compliments-compliments; (2) farewell-farewell; (3) call-answer; (4) ask-answer;
- (5) apology-relief/blame; (6) wish-thanks/blessings/relief; (7) introduction-compliments/introduction;
- (8) suggestions-agreement/prevarication/objection/question; (9) thanks-humility/thanks;
- (10) statement-statement/supplement/affirmation/question/confirm/negative;
- (11) offer--accept/decline/prevarication/questioning;
- (12) accusation-apology/deny/excuses/acknowledgment/controversy/provocation;
- (13) praise-humble / thanks / agree / praise;
- (14) request-accept / postpone / prevarication / rejection / questioning;
- (15) congratulations-thanks / humble / congratulations.

### Example 3



W: ... I want that money to be actually in the schools, for the schools to decide how it should be spent...

M: OK, thank you very much, Theresa, for talking to us on the program.

W: Pleasure.

(Part 2 in Listening Comprehension Section B Interview of TEM-8, 2015)

#### **Example 4**

M: ... Can you remember how many big hurricanes there have been in this country over the last few years? I think evidence is all around us.

W: I don't think we have enough information to be honest. We've only been measuring these things for around two or three hundred years ...

(Part 1 in Listening Comprehension Section B Interview of TEM-8, 2019)

In the listening discourse material of TEM-8 in 2015, when both sides of the conversation have finished their talking, interviewer M expresses his appreciation for interviewee W's enthusiastic introduction by saying "OK, thank you very much, Theresa, for talking to us on the program". And then the interviewee W uses "pleasure" in response to interviewer M's gratitude, which belongs to the adjacency pair of "thanks-humility". Similarly, in the listening material of 2019, the first person of the conversation says the sentence "I think evidence is all around us" to state his views, and then the second person gives "I don't think we have enough information to be honest" to show the opposite view immediately, which belongs to the adjacency pair of "statement-negative".

### **2. Preference and Non-Preference Organization**

Preference organization, which is gradually improved nowadays, is one of the core concepts of conversational interaction analysis research proposed in the 1970s and 1980s. Some researchers believed that under a certain sequential organization structure, the response behavior invited by the communicative partner is a priority behavior, otherwise is a non-priority behavior. And the structural characteristics of the turn which are used to implement the priority or non-priority behavior are the so-called preference organization or non-preference organization. Therefore, it is known to us that people usually regard those conversation behaviors that are directly executed without delay as the priority behavior of a conversation, and define the conversational behaviors that are explained and delayed in execution as non-priority behaviors. We need to pay attention that "priority" and "non-priority" here do not refer to the speaker's personal desire or psychological tendency, but refer to a highly generalized and institutionalized way of speaking.

Preference organization and non-preference organization are often used as a conversational strategy to achieve a certain conversational effect. But actually, in conversational interaction analysis, they are often explained together with adjacency pairs. Take the "question-answer" adjacency pairs in listening discourse material of TEM-8 in 2011 as an example.

#### **Example 5**

W: OK. Most people think, including me, it is difficult to learn another language. What are the reasons? Why is it so?

M: Well, there are a number of reasons for this. Ah, first, there have been research studies. They have shown that some aspects of language learning, especially syntax, are more difficult beyond a certain age, say, after around 12 years of age...

(Part 1 in Listening Comprehension Section B Interview of TEM-8, 2011)

In this piece of material, the interviewer W asks the question "What are the reasons? Why is it so?", followed by the answer of the interviewee M. So it could be inferred that this dialogue belongs to the adjacency pair of "ask-answer". According to W's question, the content of M's answer should state directly what the specific reasons are and why these reasons occur. But in fact, the interviewee M answers "Well, there are a number of reasons for this" at first, and combines specific research proofs as examples to prove then. And he doesn't state the specific reasons in a direct way in his answers. Instead, he hides the answers in the process of narration, which requires the interviewer W to sum up the answers from the narratives by himself. Therefore, such kind of answers are not in line with the requirements of preference organization.

### **3. Repair**

Repair is a "self-correction" mechanism of conversation. In other words, repair can help to correct the improper or wrong expressions during a conversation so as to solve the problems of listening, speaking, and understanding between both sides in a conversation. In daily communication, for various reasons, the speaker constantly modifies what he said to achieve a more accurate communication. At the same time, the listener also checks his understanding of those words by questioning, repeating and other methods. Both the speaker and the listener are not only repairing themselves, but also repairing each other.

The studies of conversation interaction analysis have shown that there are many forms of repair in conversations. Due to the initiation and the resolution of repair could be performed by different communicators, the kind of repair can be divided into the following four categories:

- (1) self-initiated—self-repair; (2) self-initiated—other-repair;
- (3) other-initiated—self-repair; (4) other-initiated—other-repair.

In the listening material of 2011, when talking about the factors that could have influence on language learning, the interviewee wants to express the meaning of "the more special the characteristics of a language are, the more difficult it

is to acquire". But the expression seems to be a little bit absolute to some degree. In order to solve this problem, the parenthesis "relative to other language" is added into his expression, which is a repair of the scope of discourse. And later, when it comes to the summary of teaching methods, the interviewee uses "I mean, all depending on specific conditions" to supplement his content after summarizing the characteristics of those teaching methods, which is a supplementary repair to the meaning of discourse.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH METHODS

#### A. Research Questions

The following specific questions are raised on the base of the above theoretical background:

(1) What are the characteristics of turn in TEM-8 listening discourse? What is the sequential organization of the conversation? What are the characteristics of repair in conversation?

(2) What kind of enlightenment do the conversational features in TEM-8 listening discourse give on students' performances when doing listening comprehension?

#### B. Research Methods

In this paper, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is used. The conversational materials are from the part of the interview in the listening texts of TEM8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019. Based on the theory of conversational interaction analysis, this paper analyzes the interactive features of a conversation from the following three perspectives, namely, the construction and transformation of turn, the sequential organization of conversation and the repair of conversation.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the listening comprehension materials in TEM-8 come from daily speeches, news and dialogues. The types of questions in listening comprehension include objective multiple-choice questions and subjective blank-filling questions, which improves the reliability and validity of the test paper overall. In this process, candidates' ability to get the main idea, grasp the details and understand the implied meaning between lines is trained (Hu & Ni, 2015). Besides, in listening comprehension part of TEM-8, the materials and questions are read together, while only the choices will be presented on the test paper. So candidates must take full advantage of time before listening to browse the answers quickly so that they can have a general impression of the structure of each question, and infer what they need to pay attention to based on the answers. And the requirements of prediction and shorthand also increase the difficulty of the test in an invisible way (Wang, 2018). Therefore, giving an in-depth analysis and discussion of the listening comprehension materials in TEM-8 from the perspective of conversational interaction analysis is of great value to explore the rules of conversation structures and contents in listening comprehension materials. What's more, it can provide some inspirations for candidates' listening comprehension.

#### A. Grasp the Topic and Pay Attention to the Role Change of Conversation

Table 1 demonstrates the total number of the turns in the listening discourse materials in TEM-8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019.

TABLE 1  
THE FEATURES OF TURN

Features	2011	2015	2019
The Number of Turns	22	16	17
The Number of Sentences/Words	46/447	31/653	44/606
The Number of Words in One Turn (Maximum)	61	118	122
The Number of Words in One Turn (Minimum)	1	1	4

It can be inferred that the difficulty of listening comprehension part in TEM-8 is increasing year by year. The number of turns in these three listening materials is around 20, and the total number of words is increasing year by year, but the number of sentences varies greatly, which is caused by the length of the turn. The length of a turn can be as long as more than one hundred words or as short as one word. Generally speaking, the answers of these listening questions are hidden in the turns, but candidates are easily distracted by the long turns, and they may waste too much time to read the long questions in multiple-choice questions, resulting in the inability to answer the questions correctly. Therefore, when listening to materials, candidates should pay attention to the first turn, which often contains significant information such as the main topic of this material, the identity information of the first speaker, or the general attitude of one speaker. Then the candidates can exclude the choices that do not conform to the topic of materials from the multiple-choice questions, and mark the contents related to the identity information of the speaker to facilitate listening to the following key points.

Taking the first question of the Interview part in the listening discourse material of TEM-8 in 2011 as an example. The question is "What is Dr. Harley?", and the four choices are: an applied linguistic; a social linguistic; a

psychological linguistic; a neuron linguistic. It can be seen that the four choices are all descriptions of linguists, and the difference lies in the different majors. Therefore, candidates can infer that this question is to examine the identity of the character. After focusing on "linguistic", they should keep an eye on the majors of characters and pay attention to sentences containing phrases such as "specialize in" "major in" and other adjectives or clauses that modify linguistic.

TABLE 2  
THE TYPES AND NUMBERS OF TURN-TAKING

Types of Turn-taking	2011	2015	2019
Modified Turn-taking	2	1	2
Induced Turn-taking	9	5	5
Inserted Turn-taking	0	1	2
Distributed turn-taking	0	0	0

Table 2 shows the types and numbers of turn-taking in the listening discourse material of TEM-8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019. From the table, we can see that the types of induced turn-taking accounted for the majority in the past three years, since one of the main characteristics of interview conversations is that most conversations are initiated by interviewers with some questions. Therefore, in addition to grasping the main topics when listening to the materials, candidates should also pay attention to the questions raised by the interviewers, and take notes of the follow-up detailed inquiries, such as "Can you give us some examples". After listening to the question clearly, it is natural to pay attention to the answers of the interviewee, which is caused by the turn-taking—the exchange of roles between the two sides. More importantly, the position of turn-taking often implies that the answers to the questions will appear.

### B. Match Questions with Answers and Pay Attention to the Tone of the Conversation

TABLE 3  
THE FEATURES OF SEQUENTIAL STRUCTURES

Features	2011	2015	2019
The Number of Turns	22	16	17
The Number of Adjacency Pairs	9	7	8
Preferred Organization/ Dispreferred Organization	7/2	5/2	3/5
The Number of Insertion Sequences	0	1	2

Table 3 illustrates the features and numbers of sequential structures. Taking the listening material of 2015 as an example. There are 16 turns and 7 adjacency pairs in the conversation in this year. Among the seven adjacency pairs, there are five places meet the rules of preferred organization, while two places show the dispreferred organization, and the number of insertion sequence is one. By observing the whole table, it can be found that the total number of adjacency pairs in the interview has not changed much, but the number of conversations meeting the preferred organization is gradually decreasing, which shows that the two participants of the conversation are inclined to answer questions indirectly to each other. This change makes it difficult for the candidates to hear the answer directly from the conversation as before. On the contrary, it requires candidates to analyze the conversation comprehensively according to the tones and diction raised by the speakers, which has higher requirements for the candidate's comprehensive use of English. So it can widen the gap between different candidates to a certain extent effectively.

When answering such questions, candidates should first pay attention to the speaker's question, so as to have a preliminary judgment on the structure of the question. Then, candidates should pay attention to the first sentence that the listener says. Although it may not have a direct answer to the question, it often contains the listener's tone and attitude, which is the emotional basis for their subsequent answers. Besides, candidates should browse the details of the choices, exclude the choices that contain absolute words such as "all people" or "must", and compare the other details in the choices while taking notes. According to the marks, the candidate should listen to the speaker's follow-up detailed answer, extract and integrate the key information, and get the correct answer.

### C. Capture Details and Pay Attention to the Repair of the Conversation

Table 4 shows the different types of repair and its number of occurrences in the interview in TEM-8 in 2011, 2015 and 2019.

TABLE 4  
THE FEATURES OF REPAIR

Types of Repair		2011	2015	2019
Interviewee	Self-initiated—Self-repair	3	2	0
	Other-initiated—Self-repair	0	0	0
	Other-initiated—Other-repair	0	0	0
	Self-initiated—Other-repair	0	0	2
Interviewer	Self-initiated—Self-repair	0	1	0
	Other-initiated—Self-repair	0	0	1
	Other-initiated—Other-repair	2	0	0
	Self-initiated—Other-repair	0	1	2

According to the statistics in the table, the repair of conversation is very common in listening comprehension materials of TEM-8, and the highest frequency type is interviewees' self-repair. They will repair their language from time to time according to the needs of conversation, so that the content in the conversation can be accurately conveyed and understood. At the same time, with the help of the repair initiated by others, interviewees can confirm whether the meaning of their words is accurate through the interviewer's rhetorical question, questioning and repetition, so as to ensure that the conversation can continue.

In the interview in TEM-8, most of the interviewers and interviewees relied on self-repair strategies to restate the meaning of words, and a few of them use other people's repair strategies. As long as the repair is involved, it means that the person who is mastering the turn may change or supplement his words. For example, when words such as "in other words" and "that is to say" appear, it implies that the speaker will give further explanation of what he just said. Sentences like "some people think it's right, but I don't think so" suggest that the meaning of the speaker's following words will change greatly or be opposite completely, which is often the key point in the examination of multiple-choice questions. Therefore, candidates need to listen to the emergence of conversations' repair attentively.

#### D. Keep an Eye on the Basics and Strengthen Listening Training

The results of conversational interaction analysis of listening comprehension materials in TEM-8 can play a certain role in training candidates' test-taking skills. However, candidates should still attach importance to basic English language learning and consolidate their language skills in daily life. In the aspect of strengthening listening training, firstly, candidates can do morning reading for half an hour every day to imitate the pronunciation and intonation of each character in the audio, so as to strengthen their speech recognition ability. Secondly, they can also listen to the listening materials from different occasions and read some original English newspapers and books in order to expand the background knowledge of western culture. Thirdly, for cultivating the ability of inference, prediction, and shorthand etc., candidates can spend some time in listening practice whose level is equal to the requirements of TEM-8 regularly.

### V. CONCLUSION

Most of conversations in listening comprehension materials of TEM-8 meet the requirements of adjacency pairs. The construction and change of turn also have obvious lexical signs. At the same time, the views and attitudes of both sides of the conversation can also be reflected in the repair of the conversation. The change of preferred and dispreferred action in the conversation is an important factor that can widen the attainment discrepancy between candidates. Therefore, candidates need to grasp the features of each conversation, use prediction, inference and other skills reasonably, and do more listening training consciously in order to improve the grade of TEM-8.

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# Preparing Future Human Resources in Language Learning: EFL Student Teachers' Voices' Academic Stressors

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**Abstract**—Preparing good and skillful human resources in language learning is avoidable, particularly for the country like Indonesia which is still a developing one. The intent of this qualitative study in the case study tradition was used to explore what the academic factors that made EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning at one public university in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. We adopted a qualitative case study approach. Using a convenience case strategy, we interviewed EFL student teachers. The primary data for our study were collected through the face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted in English, audio-taped, and directly transcribed verbatim. The interviews data were analyzed through reading line by line all the transcriptions to find major themes. We found eight salient and interweaved themes led EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning including (1) internal and external factors of choosing English as a major, (2) pleasure and displeasure feeling in studying English in university, (3) positive and negative responses to the lecturers in studying English, (4) positive and negative influences of friends in English major, (5) feeling about academic activities (credits, assignments, subjects and examinations) (6) feeling about discussion or presentations, (7) the most pressure or stress issue during the learning processes, and (8) dealing with the stressors. The findings of this study shed light on our understanding of the academic factors that made EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning.

**Index Terms**—future human resources in learning English, stress, student teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Preparing good and skillful human resources in the lights of developing a country is a major effort of every country in the world including being able to communicate in a global language like English. Having skillful human resources in communicating with other people from different countries and culture is a must in today's situation (Abrar et al., 2018; Erlina et al., 2019; Marzulina et al., 2019). To achieve such as a goal, a country through its educational sector should prepare and produce their individuals to be able to use English both inside and outside the country. In Indonesia, many young people still believe that taking English major at a university has a good prospect in future. However, the motivation of becoming EFL student teachers could emerge from themselves or others. After becoming EFL student teachers, many of them may enjoy the academic process of the program while there are some students who may feel trapped in the program that may make them feel stressed to fulfill academic demands. According to Hoy and Woolfok (1993), learning as a challenging process is a main stressor for the learners since they are needed to familiarize their knowledge. Moreover, Harwood (2010) says that among the school or college subjects, languages are impelled by stress, as language is a multi-skill subject; interpersonal communication, cognitive, and physical skills. Furthermore, Chen (1999) state that language barriers may generate harm and tangible threat to students whose first language is not English

while Alqahtani and Alajmi (2013) say that language as a simply human activity and as an overwhelming means of interpersonal communication is a source of stress.

Stress may attack any people in any situation. One of them is stress in language learning. Stress in language learning is part of academic stress. It may happen when people or students learn a new language like English. Learning English as a foreign language is easy for some people, but it may not be easy for some other people as English is not their first language. Learners of English as a foreign language frequently express their feeling of stress or anxiety when they learn to communicate in English Language. Previous literature has indicated that stress is part of academic process. The findings of Mukminin's study (2012; 2013) indicated that language issues such as difficulties in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English as several sources of stress for language learners. Additionally, Hashemi (2011) found that language anxiety originated from several factors such as learners' own sense of self, language learning difficulties, differences in learners' target language cultures, and differences in social status of the speakers and interlocutors. Additionally, in terms of speaking, Mukminin et al. (2015) found five major sources of stress including (1) low speaking skill due to lack of vocabulary and grammar, (2) fear of negative responses from others, (3) low self-esteem to speak in English, (4) fear of being evaluated by teachers, and (5) cultural influences to speak English due to a more teacher-centred style while Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) found that pronunciation, immediate questions, fears of making mistakes and negative evaluation were the main sources of EFL speaking anxiety.

Even though some studies (e.g., Alqahtani & Alajmi, 2013; Mukminin, 2012; Chen, 1999) have been documented related to the students' stress in the context of language learning, research on stress of EFL student teachers as future human resources in English language learning in Indonesian context is still understudied. This fact encouraged us to do research on stress of EFL student teachers as future human resources in English language learning in one of the public universities in Indonesia. To achieve the purpose of the research, two questions guided our study: (1) What do the academic factors make EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning? (2) How do they deal with the stressors?

## II. METHODOLOGY

In order to expand our knowledge of the academic factors make EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning, we adopted a qualitative case study approach. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to report the qualitative findings on the academic factors that make EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning at one public university in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. As this study focused on EFL student teachers as future human resources in one English education program, a qualitative case study was appropriately adopted (Mukminin, 2012; Mukminin, 2015; Mukminin, 2017). Merriam (1998) wrote that a qualitative case study was an intensive and holistic description, explanation, and analysis of "a bounded system" (p. 27) or phenomenon such as a person, a program, an institution, a process, a social unit, a group, and a policy.

### A. Research Site, Access, Sampling Procedures, and Participants

The researchers conducted the current research in one English education program at one public university in Jambi province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia. To get access to research site, we obtained permission from the English language program chair and the dean of faculty of teacher training and education. In this study, a purposeful sampling with a convenience case strategy was used to discover, understand, and gain more insight on the academic factors that make EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning. In conducting this research, the researchers planned to have more participants through the convenience case strategy. However, we finally had 6 students consisting of 3 males and 3 females voluntarily agreed to participate in the research.

TABLE 1  
PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Participant	Gender	GPA	Major	Current Status
1	Male	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year
2	Female	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year
3	Female	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year
4	Female	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year
5	Male	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year
6	Male	Less than 3.00	English education program	BA/the last year

### B. Data Collection, Analysis, and Trustworthiness

The primary data for our study were collected through the face-to-face interviews. The interviews did not take place once. It depended on the participants' time and willingness. During the interview, we began asking participants to talk about their experiences related the students' stress in learning English as a foreign language. We, then, asked them more specific questions related to our research inquiry. Each student teacher was given an option to answer to interview questions in either Indonesian or in English. All student teachers elected to use English. As a result, any grammatical errors might appear in the excerpts. The interviews were conducted in English, audio-taped, and directly transcribed verbatim. The second interview was also conducted because we needed more data from each student teacher. The

second interview lasted approximately one hour for each participant at a location of the participant's choice. Additionally, to support the interview data, we also used a demographic background survey to obtain participants' backgrounds including age, gender, semester, and others.

For the analysis of the data, the demographic data analyzed descriptively. The researchers used demographic profile survey in order to get the information about the participants before doing the interview. The interview data that had been recorded were transcribed. The transcription of the interviews was done by the researchers. After transcribing the interviews, the researchers divided them into some categories or themes. The next step was to divide the data to be related to categories by doing a process of marking segments of data (text data) with symbols, descriptive words, or categories.

To confirm the credibility of the inquiry or the "trustworthiness" (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 300) of our study, the researchers had done following procedures. Firstly, the researchers had an interview to the personal students about their stress in learning English, and that interview was recorded as evidence. Also, the researchers check with the colleagues that served as member checking.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the research was to explore the qualitative findings on the academic factors that make EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning at one public university in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. Based on the interview data analyses, eight salient themes that emerged in this research were (1) internal and external factors of choosing English as a major, (2) pleasure and displeasure feeling in studying English in university, (3) positive and negative responses to the lecturers in studying English, (4) positive and negative influences of friends in English major, (5) feeling about academic activities (credits, assignments, subjects and examinations) (6) feeling about discussion or presentations, (7) the most pressure or stress issue during the learning processes, and (8) dealing with the stressors

#### A. *Internal, External Factors, and Combination of the Two Factors*

In this study, the reasons why the participants chose English as their major could be classified into three categories, they were internal, external, and combination of the two factors. Out of six participants, two of them reported that external factors motivated them to choose English as their major. It indicated that they chose English major was not their willingness, but it was their parents who encouraged them to opt it. For example,

**Participant 1: This is not mine, because this is my mother want me to choose English major in this university.**

**Participant 2: It is because my parents ask me to enter this major.**

On the other hand, there were three participants who had internal reasons of opting English as their major. Particularly, one participant stated that she loved English. Even though, her field of study trained to be an English teacher, but she did not intend to be a teacher. Similarly, other two participants were interested in English on accounts of international language. They reflected,

**Participant 4: Actually I chose English education because I like it, but I actually I don't want to be English teacher, yes just like English.**

**Participant 5: I think I like English speaking English is the most of the speaking of the world.**

**Participant 6: My consideration maybe English is an [a] universal language and I like it.**

Only one participant declared who had both internal and external motivation in pursuing English education. In other words, her major was opted not only because of her parents' choice but also due to her own option. For example,

**Participant 3: Because maybe my parents want me, I am here, and the second I like too, I like English too.**

The data from the interviews indicated that both internal and external factors were the reasons of choosing the English major for their field of study. From the findings of this study, three participants were influenced by internal factors while two participants had external reasons in making a decision; it was because of their parents' choices. The last, there was one participant who conveyed that her choice was supported by her parents as well as her own willingness.

#### B. *The Feeling of Pleasure and Displeasure in Studying English*

One of the crucial themes was to know how the participants felt about studying English in the faculty of teacher training and education. Among all participants, two of them reflected that they had no doubt that studying English was enjoyable. Their positive responses could be seen as follows,

**Participant 5: I think I feel happy and enjoy.**

**Participant 6: I think studying English in this university.. Great.. I enjoy.**

However, the remaining participants stated different things from those two participants above. They reported that sometimes they were not comfortable studying English. Out of four participants who were displeased studying in English department, three of them declared that it was influenced by lecturers. Moreover, there was one participant who reflected that sometimes she was anxious and shy, but she did not give any specific reasons. The statements of them could be seen as follows,

**Participant 1: I feel good but sometimes our lecturers treat us like stupid persons.**



**Participant 2: Sometimes I'm bored it depends on the lecturers.**

**Participant 3: Sometimes I'm bored but I still enjoy it, but it depends on the lecturers too.**

**Participant 4: I feel happy but sometimes I feel nervous and sometimes like shame.**

The statements above indicated that the majority of the participants responded negatively to what they were feeling about studying English. Boring classes were the reasons of it. Even, one of the participants reported that there was a lecturer who underestimated him in the class. Certainly, it psychologically affected students' enthusiasm in learning. However, it depended on who taught them. Nevertheless, there were two participants who reported that they were happy in taking English major.

#### *C. Positive and Negative Responses to the Lecturers in Studying English*

The quality of the lecturers belongs to the most important factor in the provision of high quality education. Surely, the qualified lecturers will determine a quality of education. In this study, participants gave their views what they were thinking about the lecturers in their major. The interviews showed that there were three participants who criticized their lecturers when they taught them in the English major. For example,

**Participant 1: students can't understand what the lecturers talk about.**

**Participant 2: Killer, boring, old styles...our lecturers.**

**Participant 3: Some are killers, some are boring old school**

Yet, the positive responses also came from participants. Two of them admitted that there were good lecturers who could make students enjoy the class during the learning processes. Even though there was one student who declared that she did not totally understand what the lecturers were saying, but she was happy with the lecturers. For example,

**Participant 4: I feel happy but actually I feel confused about what he or she says because when they're talking in English, I do not understand.**

Even though the finding above indicated that some lecturers were good. On the other hand, it was also stated that some of them should be evaluated both academic and non-academic competences. Academically, as reported by the participants, the lecturers were supposed to upgrade their teaching styles. Moreover, with regard to non-academic sides, the lecturers were demanded to behave well with the students. Because some of the participants declared that there were not good lecturers when teaching them.

#### *D. Positive and Negative Influences of Friends in English Major*

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds. Nevertheless, regarding friendship, our participants only had one view; they felt that all their friends were awesome. All participants admitted that their friends brought positive atmospheres in their academic life in studying English. Even, they supported each others with generosity. They were really impressed with their mates as stated the followings,

**Participant 1: I got good friends and support me.**

**Participant 2: My friends are kind and good.**

The data from the interviews indicated that there were no negative influences of friends in English major to all the participants. In addition, the study showed that their friends very encouraged them.

#### *E. Feeling about Academic Activities (Credits, Assignments, Subjects, and Examination)*

**Feeling stressed about credit hours**, completing a bachelor degree in Indonesia takes 4-5 years. In some countries, it only needs 3 years. Compared with the number of credits is also more in Indonesia. In this study, the participants shared their mind that they felt stressed about the credits. There were five participants who had a problem regarding the number of credits offered. It could be shown in the following statements,

**Participant 2: Oh yes, of course, I feel stressed with the credit hours.**

**Participant 3: Feel stressed? Yes of course I feel stressed.**

**Participant 6: I got stressed when I have to complete about twenty four credit hours.**

Conversely, out of six participants, there was one participant reported that he did not feel stressed with credit hours in English major. Participant 1: "I did not really feel stressed about credit hours." The data indicated that most of students felt stressed toward a number of credits offered. It would be more stressful once they took full credit in a particular semester (twenty four credit hours). Moreover, in Indonesia, the students were not given a freedom to choose their courses in the area of specialization on what they need and what they are interested in. Also, they try to take as many credit hours as possible to reach the target of the study.

**Feeling stressed about assignments**, students are demanded to learn more autonomously. The assignment is one of the ways to create an independent learning for them. Yet too many papers assigned in the same time as the other works made students feel stressed. In this study participants reported, for example,

**Participant 2: I always feel stressed. I have too much homework in one semester.**

**Participant 4: Yes, it really burdens me a lot and finally I feel stressed.**

The data indicated that all of the participants were grumbling about assignment. So, it made them stressed. Even, some participants thought that the assignment given to students was too much. In reality, students were not only demanded on academic competence, but also non-academic one like taking part in the college organizations, volunteering, training, and so forth.

**Feeling stressed about the courses**, even though English major focuses on English language teaching. Yet, some others courses are also part of curriculum in the English major such as literature and linguistics. There were some subjects that would make students stressed. They were poetry, cross culture understanding, research, and subjects relating to linguistic including morphology and phonology.

**Participant 2: Yes, Poetry. It makes me stressed because I don't like a poem.**

**Participant 3: Yes, in Linguistics because the lecturer is very boring and makes that me feel that the subject is bored too.**

**Participant 4: for CCU, the assignment is very hard and I feel stressed.**

On the contrary, there was one student who declared that none of subjects made him stressed. In the other word, the subjects offered in the English major are good for him. Out of six participants, there were 5 participants who would feel stressed of certain subjects with different reasons. Particularly, the difficult subjects were the one related to literature and linguistics. It meant that they did not have any difficulties with the courses which focused on English language teaching, like curriculum and material development, teaching English as a foreign language, educational profession, language testing, and so forth.

**Feeling stressed about examinations**, the students pursuing their studies are not only to get better knowledge, but also to get better score in order to be easy to have a proper job in the future. Sometimes, they tend to be grade-oriented students. This orientation could make them stressed. According to Struthers, Perry, and Menec (2000), students' academic stress is inversely related to their course grades. Ideally, the students are supposed to minimize stress in order to get a good score in examination.

**Participant 2: Nervous and confused for the exams**

**Participant 3: Examination, I feel really stressed about how I must do it in that time.**

A different view was stated by one participant. He reported that he did not feel stressed in the examination. Participant 1 stated confidently that he felt good in doing it.

**Participant 1: I feel good to do it.**

The examples of excerpts above describe participants' feelings and thoughts in which majority of them were stressed in examination. Their stress was expressed in the form of being confused, nervous, and afraid. In other words, mentally, they were not ready to have examinations in English.

#### *F. Feeling about Discussion or Presentations*

In presentation, both English competence and public speaking ability are needed. Most of the participants stated their negative feeling in presentation. Implicitly, they shared their disagreement toward such as a kind of the learning method. Their unhappy expressions could be seen as follows,

**Participant 1: I don't agree with presentation in here because students must know about their topic. I feel nervous when I am asked to do that.**

**Participant 2: I'm nervous, stressed, and sometimes I'm shaking when holding a paper.**

The data interviews above indicated that among the participants of the study, participants felt stressed with a group discussion and presentations in learning English in their major.

#### *G. The Most Pressure or Stress Issue during the Learning Processes*

Regarding the most pressure or stressed issues during the learning processes, out of six participants, four of them admitted that they felt stressed when the lecturers asked them to use English. The participants declared that they were confused to respond to it. For example,

**Participant 1: sometimes lecturers ask the questions immediately and it makes me blank.**

**Participant 2: sometimes I [am] nervous and stress [ed] when the lecturer [s] ask me to use English and I'm confused to answer.**

In addition, there was one participant who admitted that the most pressure thing was because he had lack of vocabulary.

**Participant 4: I have limited vocabulary and bad grammar to speak and I feel stressed.**

The last participant reported that he did not understand what the lecturers were speaking. So, he feel really stressed in the class.

**Participant 5: I think If I feel stress[ed] as I don't understand what lecturers speaks and I cannot understand about he says.**

The statements above indicated that there were three main points that the participants felt the most stressed during the learning process. First, they felt stressed to be asked in English. Second, they had lack of vocabulary, and third they did not understand what the lecturers said.

#### *H. Deal with the Stressors*

The last theme explores the participants' ways in coping with their stress. Each participant had his or her own strategy to solve the stressors during the learning processes in the English major.

**Participant 1: Talking [sharing] about my problems with other[s].**

**Participant 2: I play with my brothers, my phone, Google, and games.**

**Participant 3: I go to travelling with my friends and talk about that with them.**

**Participant 4: I talk with my best friend about my problems in English.**

**Participant 5: if I feel stressed I can go to canteen to eat and make a joke with my friends.**

**Participant 6: Playing a game and travelling**

The data from the interviews indicated that among participants there were various ways that would be done to solve their stress in learning English. Each participant had his or her own comfortable method in overcoming the problems. In short, they shared their problems with their friends or did something that could make them happy (eating, using mobile phone, joking, etc.), and travelled around with the mate(s). In terms of academic ways, they discussed with their friends who they think are smart. They discussed the stressors with their smart friends.

It was hard to decide what the academic factors that made EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning at one public university in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia and what factors played in a greater part than others as all of the factors seemed to be involvedly interwoven. Among the factors of students' stress in learning English, the participants experienced both internal and external factors of choosing English as their major. It meant that the stress was not because of who opted their field of study but how they dealt with it.

Additionally, participants in this study reported that they felt unhappy in studying English. The participants stated that they were not satisfied with some teaching staffs who taught the courses. Many of them complained about the lecturers' competences. So, participants' unhappiness could make them lazy in studying English. According to Kottasz (2005), poor tutors or lecturers are the reasons for students' non-attendance at lectures and tutorials. Additionally, the lecturers play an important role in teaching-learning processes. How they engage with student teachers is an important thing in educational life. This study found that there were some lecturers who did not treat every student fairly which led participants to be bored during the learning processes. Agrawal and Thakur (2014) said that the school environment was the result of the interaction of teachers- students' relationship, teachers' academic and professional qualification, teachers' teaching. As found in this study, both academic and non-academic competences of the lecturers were needed to be improved as participants felt uncomfortable with academic atmospheres in the research site. In terms of feeling stressed about academic activities (credits, assignments, subjects, and examination), this study showed that majority of the participants had problems with their academic demands. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lin and Huang's (2014) study. In terms of feeling about presentations, the findings showed that the participants were not comfortable with the presentation method which was conducted during the courses, because it made them afraid, confused, and nervous. Similarly, it was also found by Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014), a significant number of respondents had indicated that they experienced speaking anxiety for a wide range of reasons which made them to be more fearful, confused, trembling, feel very tense, feel very rigid, make their heart beat fast, make them nervous, make them make mistakes and make them perform poorer when delivering speech, attending interviews or during classroom presentations. With regard to the most pressured or stressful issue during the learning process, each participant had various responses including they were feeling stressed to be asked in English by their lecturers, they had lack of vocabulary, and they did not understand what the lecturers said in English. The finding of the study is consistent with what Liu (2007) found in that lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency and memory disassociation were the sources leading to English language speaking anxiety.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Preparing good and skillful human resources in language learning is avoidable, particularly for the country like Indonesia which is still developing. The intent of our qualitative design in the case study tradition was used to explore what the academic factors that made EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning at one public university in Jambi, Sumatra, Indonesia. We found eight salient and interweaved themes led EFL student teachers as future human resources feel stressed in English language learning including (1) internal and external factors of choosing English as a major, (2) pleasure and displeasure feeling in studying English in university, (3) positive and negative responses to the lecturers in studying English, (4) positive and negative influences of friends in English major, (5) feeling about academic activities (credits, assignments, subjects and examinations) (6) feeling about discussion or presentations, (7) the most pressure or stress issue during the learning processes, and (8) dealing with the stressors. Implications for future research and education policies and programs can be drawn from the findings of this study. To deal students' stress, educational policymakers and lecturers at departmental levels could encourage students to learn English through e.g., providing motivating teaching media (films and using audio-visual aids) or providing sufficient language learning facilities.

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# An Interpretation of the Play *After the Fall* Based on Role- and -Value Cognitive Concept\*

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**Abstract**—The paper aims to interpret Arthur Miller's stream-of-consciousness play text, *After the Fall*, from the perspective of the cognitive concept of evolving reference, namely "role and values". The results of the study are as follows: 1. Mutual across-time-and-space contextual embedment or entanglement is the distinctive feature of stream-of-consciousness play text, which makes it possible to present synchronically what has happened diachronically, so that the various values generated by role switching over the past years are accessible in a while. 2. This feature in turn makes characterization more natural, true-to-life, vivid and substantial, revealing not only the different aspects of the protagonist's disposition but also the shaping process involved. 3. Despite the seemingly disordered contextual entanglement, the values through role switching are implicitly linked by the cause-effect logical relationship, which ensures the textual coherence of the play.

**Index Terms**—characterization, coherence, stream-of-consciousness plays, evolving reference, role and values

## I. INTRODUCTION

In literary criticism, stream of consciousness is a narrative mode that attempts "to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind of a narrator" (Cuddon, 1984). In novels, a character expresses their own interior memories, desires, speculations, obligations or other forms of non-real situations in their reported direct thoughts, free indirect thoughts, or narrator's presentation of thought act (Leech and Short, 2007). But in plays, characters' thoughts are presented mostly in dialogues and monologues.

Arthur Miller's play *After the Fall* presents what keeps happening in the mind, thought and memory of the main character, Quentin. As Marino (2005) observes, "Miller returned to the Expressionistic technique he had used in *Death of a Salesman* by setting the entire play, as he indicated in the staging notes, 'in the mind, thought, and memory' of the main character". As readers, we need to keep track of the different states of mind of characters, and observe which text world level they are attached to (Stockwell, 2014).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF ROLE AND VALUES

### A. Dichotomy of Role and Values

In Fauconnier's account of categorization, noun phrases, rather than simply identifying people, things or concepts, are seen as performing roles or role functions. Thus, 'definite descriptions are primarily role functions and secondarily the value taken by such roles. The domain of the role may include times, places, situations, contexts and much more' (Fauconnier, 1985). Statements, such as "The president changes every seven years", "Your car is always different", "Your apartment keeps getting bigger and bigger", 'The president', 'your car', and 'your apartment', do not have one fixed referent in reality. Thus Fauconnier, in describing noun phrases, says that they can have 'a fixed identity, but their other properties can change' (1985). The linguistic elements of a mental space may identify a role or its role value. An element may either be understood as pointing to an abstract concept, a role, or it may be understood as pointing to a particular individual, a value.

Nunberg (1978) holds that the link between a role and its value for some setting of parameters is itself a pragmatic function. Proper names also have role interpretations under suitable pragmatic conditions. The changing contexts highlight the functional value of a definite description and the multiple values at hand. From this point of view, a description, as role, will change values from one space to another. This accounts easily for the phenomena discussed by Kripke (1979), that is, the scope of a description depends on which space the element described belongs to. In other words, the interpretation of values of proper names has more to do with social contexts or literary narrative structures.

Lakoff (1993) regards variations of roles in fiction as "multiple selves" or Dualistic Person or the dichotomy of "subject" and "the self". Emmott (1992), Gavins (2007) and Stockwell (2014) define it as "enactor". For example, there are different enactors of "Pip" in *Great Expectations*. When Pip was small, he was humble, kind, and loving. These traits are mainly attributed to his impoverished childhood. But Pip gradually changes to a bitter and snobbish person after he meets Magwitch, his benefactor but a convict. Having gone through dramatic ups and downs, Pip finally

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resumes his loving and kind nature. There also exist two distinct versions of Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*: one for "reality" and the other for the "picture". Dorian Gray remains youthful, while the painting of him becomes old and horrid. Dorian is so appalled by his changing image in the painting that he resorts to hiding it in the attic. Later when the painting is changed into a splendid portrait, Dorian Gray is found lying on the floor in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. "He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was".

The split versions of the protagonists also appear in plays. In Miller's early play *Death of a Salesman*, the protagonist Willy Loman appears to be a very active, passionate, confident, hopeful man in his flashbacks or fantasy worlds, whereas in the text actual worlds which are based on the last 24 hours of his life, he is irritable, pessimistic, grumbling and desperate. The different versions of Willy Loman, which exist at different conceptual levels of a discourse, give readers an overall view of his personalities, which are found to be in conflict with the social and cultural value orientation of his times (Fang, 2013). That is why understanding a rounded character requires readers to integrate different piecemeal values of the same character at different stages of their lives or in different circumstances.

### B. Role/Value identification in *After the Fall*

Quentin's mental journey involves ascending, descending and horizontal metaleptic jumps. Such three types of unnatural metalepses were put forward by Bell and Alber (2012). According to them, in an ascending metalepsis a fictional character or narrator jumps from an embedded story world to a hierarchically higher one, whereas in a descending metalepsis, a narrator or a character jumps into an embedded story world or an author jumps from the actual world into a story world. In addition to these two vertical types of metalepsis, there are horizontal metalepsis that represent transmigrations between story worlds (Bell & Alice 2012). Quentin's vertical jumps include interactions either between the text actual world and the story world where he interacts with Holga or between Holga's story world and the embedded story worlds about his past relationships. His horizontal transmigrations refer to his interactions with his two ex-wives, Louise and Maggie, his mom Rose and brother Dan, his friend Lou together with Lou's wife Elsie. The diagram of his stream-of-consciousness is depicted as follows:

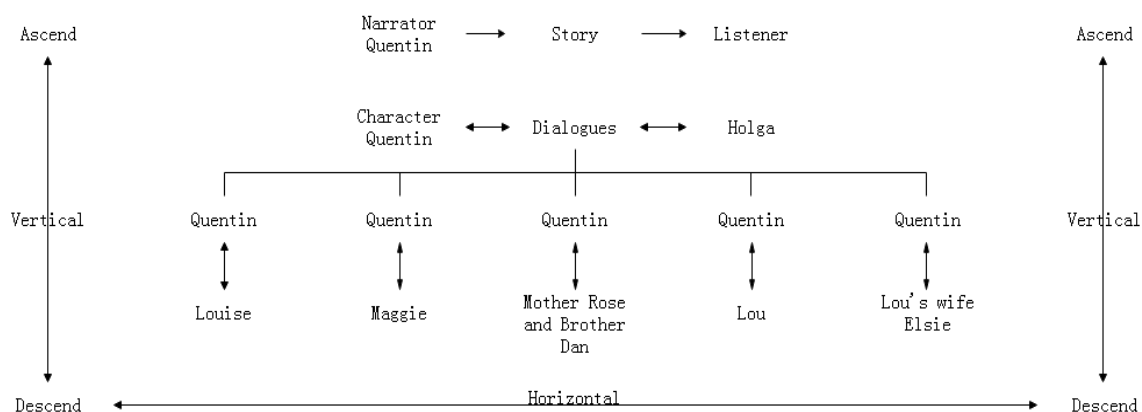


Diagram 1: Quentin's mental journey

The interwoven texture contributes to characterization of multi-faceted characters. Among vertical metaleptic jumps, the Role of Quentin demonstrates different values at different layers. According to Fauconnier's definition, the distinction of Role and Values should be closely related to their pragmatic implication. Every time the stage direction "to the Listener" appears, it signals Quentin's anchor is ascending to the text actual world, in which Quentin expresses his uncertainty and hesitation about starting a new romantic relationship with Holga, a German archaeologist. So I mark the value in the text actual world as Quentin<sup>1</sup>. On the surface, Quentin is addressing the Listener whom he does not indicate the exact identity, but the stylistic feature of his speeches to "the Listener" is more like a monologue full of introspection and self-blaming. Quentin's interaction with Holga is viewed as Quentin<sup>2</sup>, because Holga's unique life experience brings a new perspective for his life. She was a member of the resistance organization during World War II and was not betrayed by her comrades even though they were arrested and executed. She survived and chose archaeology as her career. She took Quentin to the Concentration Camp and discussed the meaning of life with him. Her remark that it is a mistake to look for hope outside one's self makes Quentin feel so refreshed and encouraged. However, looking back upon his unhappy life in the past, especially his two failed marriages and his betrayal of his best friend Lou, Quentin is hesitant about committing himself again. When Quentin keeps recollecting the old days, transmigrating between different story worlds, interacting with his ex-wives, his lovers, his family members, etc., he is marked as Quentin<sup>3</sup>.

### III. SYNCHRONIC PRESENTATION OF WHAT HAPPENED DIACHRONICALLY

The benefit of the analysis based on role- and -value dichotomy is that it enables what happened diachronically to be

presented synchronically, so that the various values generated by role switching over the past years are clear or accessible all at once. The following excerpt covers a long period, including Quentin's metaleptic jumps across three vertical levels, involving "Quentin<sup>1</sup>", "Quentin<sup>2</sup>" and "Quentin<sup>3</sup>".

Quentin<sup>2</sup>, *as though drawing on his courage, suddenly turning to her*: Holga. I thought I noticed your pillow was wet this morning.

Holga: It really isn't anything important.

Quentin<sup>2</sup>: There are no unimportant tears.

Holga: I feel sometimes-*Breaks off, then*: - that I'm boring you.

Louise, *entering upstage*: I am not all this uninteresting, Quentin<sup>3</sup>!

*He stares at her, trying to join this with his lost vision, and in that mood he turns out to the Listener.*

Quentin<sup>1</sup>: The question is power, but I've lost the ...Yes!

*He<sup>3</sup> springs up and circles Louise.*

...

Holga: I may not be all that interesting. I wish you'd believe me, Quentin; you have no duty here.

Quentin<sup>2</sup>: Holga, I would go. But I know I'd be looking for you tomorrow.

*Mother enters, taking Holga's place on the seat beside him.*

Quentin<sup>1</sup> *continues speaking without pause*. But there's truth in what you feel. The time does come when I feel I must go. Not toward anything, or away from you...But there is some freedom in the going.

As could be seen from the above, Quentin accidentally noticed that Holga was upset by his ever-weakening affection for her. Holga's remark "I feel sometimes I'm boring you" reminds him of his first ex-wife Louise's similar complaint "I'm not all this uninteresting!" His monologue-like stream of consciousness, that is, "The question is power, but I've lost the...Yes!" suggests that his true face is seen through by people and that he no longer has enough power to manipulate his women, who all have independent thoughts of their own. The stage direction "Mother enters..." seems to reveal that his deceased mother's negative influence on him still exists. What Quentin<sup>1</sup> says reveals his sense of helplessness and introspection about what he has done. All such happenings cover three time-space domains, involving various characters, but are effectively presented all at once, successfully creating a rounded Quentin with vivid details.

#### IV. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DISPLAY OF QUENTIN'S PERSONALITIES

The values generated by role-switching, as seen in the above, make characterization more natural, true-to-life, vivid and substantial, revealing not only the different aspects of the protagonist's personalities but also the shaping process involved. Quentin's mental horizontal transmigration enables readers to gain a glimpse of his failed marital relationship in the past. Quentin's second ex-wife Maggie catches him having an affair with his best friend, Lou's wife, Elise. However, Quentin does not feel ashamed of it because this is his habitual behavior. His first ex-wife, Louise, makes similar complaints about his infidelity "You've been trying to keep the home fires burning and see the world at the same time", "You must know how I felt when I found that letter in your suit". It seems that Quentin takes fickleness in marital life for granted. He keeps abandoning the old and seeking the new. Both Louise and Maggie complain about Quentin's coldness and indifference, as Louise says "we don't seem...married.... You don't pay any attention to me..." (p.282), and then she reproaches his misunderstanding of women, including a misconception about herself, "You have no conception of what a woman is... You think reading a brief to a woman is talking to her? What do you need a wife for? What am I to you?" (p.283). All this testifies to Quentin's domestic emotional violence, his ignorance about the responsibility in marriage and his lack of respect for women's rights and dignities.

Quentin treats Maggie quite differently before and after the marriage. In the following excerpt, when they first meet, Quentin gives Maggie empty promises as his brother Dan used to do to him:

Maggie: And---what's moral, again.

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: To live the truth.

Maggie: That's you.

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: Not yet, dear; but I intend to try. Don't be afraid to call me if you need any help. *She is suddenly gone. Alone, he continues the thought.* Any time--*Dan appears in crew-necked sweater with his book*--you need anything, you call, y'hear?

DAN: This family's behind you, Quentin. *Backing into darkness, with a wave of farewell as train whistle sounds:* Any time you need anything ...

Quentin<sup>1</sup> *surprised, he has turned quickly to Dan, who disappears; and to the Listener, as he still stares at the empty space Dan has left:* You know? It isn't fraud, but some...disguise. I came to her like Dan--his goodness! No wonder I can't find myself!

The above is the juxtaposition of Quentin<sup>3</sup> who is addressing Maggie before their marriage and Quentin<sup>1</sup> who repents his immoral behavior and admitted being like his dishonest brother Dan. As Quentin reflects later, when Maggie took an overdose of drugs and attempted committing suicide after their marriage, he totally lost patience, sent her to the Institution and dissociated himself from her. That is why he labels himself above as a "disguise" or a liar.

The appearance of "Dan" is not accidental because it suggests the cheatings of Quentin by his brother Dan and his mother has a bad influence on the shaping of Quentin's disposition.

Quentin's biggest regret in life is his attitude toward his best friend and colleague, Lou. Lou is a socialist, who is then tipped off by his colleague, Mickey, during the McCarthyism in the 1950s. Quentin has promised to defend him, but later on at the last minute Quentin changes his mind for fear of losing the job. The following is the dialogue between Louise and Quentin on the night when Lou dies. He knows better than anybody else that Lou's death is caused by despair.

Louise: What is it?

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: Lou. Was killed by a subway train tonight.

Louise *gasps*: How?

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: They don't know. They say "fell or jumped."

Louise: He couldn't have! The crowd must have pushed him!

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: There is no crowd at eight o'clock. It was eight o'clock.

Louise: But why? Lou knew himself! He knew where he stood! It's impossible!

Quentin<sup>3</sup>, *staring*: Maybe it's not enough--to know yourself. Or maybe it's too much. I think he did it.

Louise: But why? It's inconceivable!

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: When I saw him last week he said a dreadful thing. I tried not to hear it. *Pause. She waits.* That I turned out to be the only friend he had.

Louise, *genuinely*: Why is that dreadful?

Quentin<sup>3</sup>, *evasively, almost slyly*: It just was. I don't know why. *Tears forming in his eyes, Quentin<sup>1</sup> comes toward Listener.* I didn't dare know why! But I dare now. It was dreadful because I was not his friend either, and he knew it. I'd have stuck it to the end but I hated the Danger in it for myself, and he saw through my faithfulness; and he was not telling me what a friend I was, he was praying I would be - "Please be my friend, Quentin" is what he was saying to me, "I am drowning, throw me a rope!" ... I felt now that my Danger had spilled out on the subway track! So it is not bizarre to me.

The dialogue is between Louise and Quentin<sup>3</sup>. Apparently, Quentin understands the reason for Lou's suicidal better than Louise. In his introspection signaled by "Quentin<sup>1</sup> comes toward Listener", he confesses he is afraid of the danger involved in Lou's case. If he had defended on Lou's part, he would have put himself in the danger of losing the job. By saying "I hated the Danger in it for myself", "I felt now that my Danger had spilled out on the subway track!", Quentin expresses his regret about failing to keep his promise to speak for his friend in the law court at the critical moment, which results in Lou's death.

Therefore, the above value through role-switching offers a multi-dimensional display of Quentin's personalities. Therefore, we have an overall picture of what Quentin is basically like. He is a man, who is negatively influenced by his family members and his domestic atmosphere, which in turn affects the shaping of his personalities. He is a man, who is unfaithful in marital life, almost addicted in abandoning the old and seeking the new. He is a man, who repeatedly exercises domestic emotional violence and pay little attention to women's dignities and his marital responsibility. Also, he is a man, who finally finds himself disoriented in life and is beginning to repent, feeling the prick of conscience for what he has done.

## V. EXTERNAL DISORDER VS INTERNAL LOGIC RELATIONSHIP

Despite the seemingly disordered contextual entanglement, the values of role switching are logically linked by the implicit cause-effect relationship, which ensures the textual coherence of the play text. The marginalization and the unhealthy domestic atmosphere experienced by Quentin in his childhood partly contribute to Quentin's selfishness in his later life and to his cold-hearted refusal to help his friend. His failed interpersonal relationship has a lot to do with his mother's treacherousness he witnessed in his childhood. As Moss (1980:58) observes, "Quentin's disorientation had its roots in his youth: two memories, both of which show his Mother to be treacherous".

His mother repeatedly reproached her frustrated husband when he lost money in the stock market crash. Instead of giving consolation, she became more aggressive and overbearing, criticizing his inability in business. In Quentin's memory, mother always spoke in a domineering or bossy tone:

"What are you winding up?",

"When did this start?",

"How much are you taking out of it?",

"You lost your mind?",

"You sold those wonderful stocks?",

"You mean you saw everything going down and you throw good money after bad?"

"Are you some kind of a moron?",

"You'd better cash your insurance",

"Do it tomorrow!", and

"You get them back!".

Flying into hysteria, she even regretted marrying him,

"I should have run the day I met you",

"I should have done what my sisters did, tell my parents to go to hell and thought of myself for once",



"I should have run for my life! I ought to get a divorce!"

All such complaints of hers leave a very negative impression on Quentin. What makes Quentin intolerable is that she refused to admit any of her wrongdoings "What I said? Well, I was a little angry, that's all, but I never said that. I think he's a wonderful man! How could I say a thing like that? Quentin! I didn't say anything!" Unluckily, Quentin seems to be surrounded by such domineering women in her life. Lou used to be afraid of his wife Elsie. Whenever Elsie told off Lou in the presence of Quentin, Quentin involuntarily thought of the way his mom used to scold his father.

Lou, with a difficult grin and chuckle: Well, dear, I'm not all that delicate, I-

Elsie, with a sudden flash of contempt, to Lou: This is hardly the time for illusions!

Mother: You idiot! Quentin<sup>3</sup> is shocked, turns quickly to Mother, who stands accusingly over the seated Father. My bonds?

Quentin<sup>1</sup>: Why do I think of things falling apart? Were they ever whole?

The reason why his mother's words "You idiot" suddenly occurs to Quentin is that his mother often reproaches his father like this. Besides being dominant in the family, Quentin's mother badly hurt him by lying to him in order not to take him for traveling. One day she went off on a vacation without telling Quentin, "they sent me for a walk with the maid. When I came back the house was empty, which made me feel abandoned" (p.325). And the reason for Mother's deception is that she wanted a rest. Lack of trust in his childhood affects his later relationship with Lou. In the following excerpt, his friend Lou is tipped off by Mickey and is disillusioned by Quentin. Lou has no choice but to mount the subway platform to end his life.

Quentin<sup>1</sup>, his arms down, crying out to Listener: But in whose name do you turn your back?

Mickey: That we go together, Lou, and name the names! Lou!

Lou, staring at Quentin<sup>3</sup>, mounts the platform where the men wait for a subway train.

Quentin<sup>1</sup>: I saw it clear-in whose name you turn your back! I saw it once, I saw the name!

The approaching sound of a subway train is heard, and Lou leaps; the racking squeal of brakes.

Lou: Quentin! Quentin!

All the men look at Quentin<sup>3</sup>, then at the "tracks." The men groan. Quentin's hands are a vise against his head. The tower lights as ...

Mother enters in prewar costume, sailboat in hand, bending toward the "bathroom door" as before.

Quentin<sup>1</sup>: In whose name? In whose blood-covered name do you look into a face you loved, and say, now you have been found wanting, and now in your extremity you die! It had a name, it ...

Mother, toward the bathroom door: Quentin<sup>3</sup>? Quentin<sup>3</sup>?

Quentin<sup>3</sup>: Hah? He hurries toward her, but in fear.

Mother: See what we brought you from Atlantic City! From the boardwalk!

Men exit from subway platform. A tremendous crash of surf spins Quentin about, and Mother is gone and the light of the moon is rising on the pier.

As shown above, Quentin<sup>1</sup> appears three times with the similar exclamation "in whose name do you turn your back", which could be regarded as his self-blaming. Mother's image also appears three times. She has just returned from her trip to Atlanta and tried to please Quentin with toys, but Quentin no longer trusts her because he was badly hurt. Lou's death and Mother's deception seemingly has no direct relations with each other, but an overview of the play text will reveal the implicit cause-and-effect relationship between them, that is, the lack of sincerity and mutual support Quentin witnessed in his childhood contribute to his selfishness and ego-centeredness in his later life. No wonder he finally refuses to help his friend at the last minute.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The stage direction "To the Listener" marks the ascending metalepsis of the play in which Quentin switches or jumps, as it were, from an embedded story world into a hierarchically higher one, whereas in a descending metalepsis, he jumps into an embedded story world. In addition to these jumps from the text actual world into the story world, Quentin travels or transmigrates between different story worlds. The dynamic feature of such stream-of-consciousness plays requires readers to keep track of the route markings in the maze of the play plot. In fiction, this could be achieved by observing the shifts of point of view, which are grammatically realized by tenses, moods, personal pronouns, space builders, and other cognitive operators. In plays, role-and-value distinction can be made by deictic shifts in stage directions like "to the Listener", "to Holga" and "Mother/Louise/Maggie appears", or the speaking tone. Some speak in a condescending and patronizing tone, while others speak in a relatively gentle way. Therefore, a knowledge of such linguistic forms helps readers to follow the dynamic feature of such play texts and enables them to tell apart role and values so that they could effectively catch the different values of the same role from the entanglement of complex temporal-spatial domains or story worlds.

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# An American Mystic in the East: Tracing the Origins of Robert Bly's Interest in Persian Literary Tradition

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**Abstract**—The American poet Robert Bly is among the most important literary figures in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He worked in various capacities as a poet, translator, teacher and workshop organizer among other things, so much so that he is sometimes compared to Ezra Pound on account of the variety of his interests and the extent of his influence. Like Pound, Bly developed an interest in Asian poetic traditions, including that of Iran, and in doing so, he translated the poetry of Rumi (better known as Mowlana in Iran) and Hafez into English. The present study seeks to trace the paths through which Bly came to develop an interest in Persian mystical poetry and to demonstrate two concerns that guided and informed his interest in this tradition; that is, the socio-political vocation of the poet and the formal advantages of the poetic form known as *Ghazal*. Such concerns, it will be argued, are firmly rooted within the American literary tradition and therefore this study reveals the continuities that underlie Bly's interest in Persian poetry, suggesting that he sometimes approached Persian poetry on his own terms, without paying proper attention to the context, a shortcoming that, as will be shown, is the result not of ignorance but what may be called methodological laxity.

**Index Terms**—Hafez, mysticism, Robert Bly, Rumi

## I. INTRODUCTION

The American poet Robert Bly (b. 1926) has been an influential figure on the American literary scene in various capacities since the 1950s. He was the editor of the magazines *The Fifties*, *The Sixties* and *The Seventies*, introduced foreign poets to the American audience through translation of their poetry, and organized poetry workshops and sang poems to an enthusiastic audience, among other things. In fact, he is frequently compared to Ezra Pound (1885-1972) on account of the diversity of his interests and the extent of his influence on other poets.<sup>1</sup>

Bly often enlisted the help of a fellow poet or a scholar to introduce foreign poets to American audience in order to enrich the American poetic tradition which in his opinion “had no bold new poetry since the astounding daring of *The Waste Land*” (Faas, 1976, p. 709). In doing so, he also showed interest in the Eastern Mystical tradition and particularly the two Persian poets: Rumi (better known as Mowlana in Iran) (1207-1273) and Hafez (1315-1390).

In 1976, Bly showed Coleman Barks (b. 1937) some translations<sup>2</sup> of the poetry of Rumi, adding that “These poems need to be released from their cages” (Moyers, 1995); he later joined Barks to translate seventeen poems by Rumi in *Night & Sleep* (1981); and in 1983, he published *When Grapes Turn to Wine*, “Versions of Rumi by Robert Bly,” as the cover page advertised. In translating the poetry of Hafez, Bly was in better company; he published his translation of the poetry of Hafez entitled *The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door; Thirty Poems of Hafez* in 2008 with the help of Leonard Lewisohn (1953-2018), “an unfailingly fierce and generous scholar of Iranian literature,” as Bly (2004) emphasized in an anthology of poetry in translation (p. vi). The poems are highly annotated by Lewisohn, which is indicative of his knowledge of Persian poetry.

The present paper seeks to investigate Bly's interaction with the Persian poetic tradition. The first section of the paper traces some of the main routes through which Bly came to discover and turn his attention to Eastern poetic tradition and particularly Persian poetry. And the second and third sections address two concerns that informed Bly's interest in the Persian poetry of Rumi and Hafez; that is, Bly's conception of the socio-political role of the poet and the Eastern poetic form known as *Ghazal*.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, (Kooser, 1994, p. 813; Stitt, 1980, p. 663).

<sup>2</sup> The translations were by Arthur J. Arberry (1905-1969) and Reynold A. Nicholson (1868-1945) (Elmarsafy, 2013, p. 266).

## II. A MEANDERING PATH TO PERSIA

Robert Bly's literary career took many twists and turns, from the beginning, following his graduation from Harvard in 1950 at the age of 24. He spent two years at the University of Iowa, attending the Writers Workshop and was granted a Fulbright Scholarship in 1956 to go to Norway in order to translate Norwegian poetry into English. Bly's project was cut short and took a new turn when he came to discover the poetry of Latin American and European poets such as Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) and Georg Trakl (1887-1914) in Oslo in 1956 (Gioia, 1987, p. 210). This event was significant in Bly's later career in more than one way. Bly, first and foremost, realized what was lacking in the American poetry and, returning to the United States, set out to translate European poetry into English, with the aim of enriching the American poetic tradition (*Ibid*). But the event was also important in opening new possibilities before Bly, which ultimately directed his path towards the Eastern poetic tradition.

One of the important figures in this respect was the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936), whose works greatly influenced American poetry in the 1950s and the 1960s, including that of Robert Bly.<sup>3</sup> Bly's translation from Lorca appeared in two books of poetry: *Lorca and Jim  nez Selected Poems*, published in 1973 and *The Winged Energy of Delight; Selected Translations*, published in 2004. In the short prefaces Bly wrote to these books, he referred to the influence of Arabic poetry on Lorca's works. Of course, Lorca himself was more precise when explaining about the influences on Spanish poetry, including his own: "When our songs reach the extremes of pain and love they come very close in expression to the magnificent verses of Arab and *Persian* [italics mine] poets" (Qualey, 2012, p. 13).

Moreover, the name of Lorca's poetry book and his frequent reference to Eastern poetic forms demonstrate his familiarity with that tradition. His "The Tamarit Divan"<sup>4</sup> contains some poems entitled *Qasida* and *Ghazal*, which are Eastern poetic forms; and Bly translated some of them in his edition of Lorca's poetry. Bly ultimately came to write *Ghazals* of his own too in his poetry book "My Sentence Was a Thousand Years of Joy" published in 2005, in a way which more strictly—compared with Lorca—corresponds with the form of *Ghazal*, repeating the name of the poet in the last stanza.

Moreover, after Bly's project of translating Norwegian poetry was cut short in 1956, he resumed the project later with two differences: he broadened the scope of the project to include the Scandinavian literature and there was also a new emphasis on the poetry of "inwardness," with free association of images, a shift of emphasis that was mainly the result of discovering European and Latin American surrealist poetry. In doing so, Bly came to know the poetry of the Swedish poet Gunnar Ekel f (1907-1968), who was influenced by Eastern mystical poetry. In the early 1960s, Bly joined Christina Bratt to publish in *The Hudson Review* a few poems by Gunnar Ekel f in translation. In 1975, Ekel f was again among the three Swedish poets featured in a book of poetry<sup>5</sup> chosen and translated by Bly; and later, Ekel f was also present among the many other non-English poets in the anthology of poetry Bly published in 2004, entitled *The Winged Energy of Delight: Selected Translations*.

From early on in 1962-3, Bly realized and referred to the influence of the "inward thought of the Orient" on Ekel f's poetry (Bratt and Bly, 1962-1963, p. 546), a characteristic (i.e. inwardness) that came to be a staple of his conception of what genuine poetry is; and he later identified Persian mystical poetry and French poetry as the two sources, outside the Scandinavian tradition, for Ekel f's poetry early on in his career<sup>6</sup> (Bly, 2004, p. 208; Smith, 2013). The realization that Eastern (particularly Persian) poetry influenced poets such as Lorca and Ekel f, as demonstrated above, encouraged Bly to turn his attention to the Eastern poetic tradition, as a result of which he developed an interest in the Eastern and particularly Persian poetry in terms of style (poetic forms) as well as on account of the quality of inwardness and spirituality present in this mystical tradition; and he set out to translate the Persian poetry of Rumi and Haf z into English.

Of course, other factors also played a part in encouraging Bly and strengthening his interest in the Eastern poetic tradition. For example, in an interview, published in 2000, Bly remarked that his son-in-law "who was born in Jaipur [i.e., a city in India], asked me to help him a few years ago to translate some poems of the Indian poet Ghalib [1797-1869], who lived in the 19th century and wrote in Urdu, which is a mixture of *Persian* [italics mine] and Hindi" (Quinn, 2000).<sup>7</sup> In turning to Persian poetry, Bly's interest was informed by two important considerations, which will be discussed in some detail below; that is, his conception of the socio-political vocation of the poet, and the formal advantages of the *Ghazal* as a poetic form.

## III. BLY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ROLE OF THE POET

Robert Bly is among the American poets whose life and poetry are greatly shaped by the contemporary political

<sup>3</sup> See (Chamberlain, 1985, p. 434) and (Sadoff, 1980, p. 18). And Bly discusses Lorca's role in American poetry in his 1990 book *American Poetry: Wilderness and Domesticity*.

<sup>4</sup> The term "Divan" itself comes from the Persian *diwan*, meaning "collection" of poetry (Lorca, 2007, p. 182).

<sup>5</sup> The book was entitled *Friends, You Drank Some Darkness. Three Swedish Poets: Harry Martinson, Gunnar Ekel f, and Tomas Transtr mer*.

<sup>6</sup> Ekel f's interest in the East was indeed strong. He attended the School of Oriental Studies in London and "read Persian and Sanskrit in Uppsala" (Bly 2004, p. 208); he wrote on Islamic themes (Daruwalla, 2001, p. 172); and he was fascinated by the Oriental mysticism (Sj berg, 1970, p. 101).

<sup>7</sup> There are other factors, which were significant in drawing Bly's attention to the Eastern poetic tradition, such as Buddhism and Haiku poetry, among other things. Bly mentions some of them in an interview (Shakarchi and Bly, 1982, p. 229). But here factors particularly related to Persian poetic tradition are relevant.

developments. He believed in the socio-political role of the poet and did not, to quote Biespiel (2010) on a different matter, merely “moonlight” as a cultural writer (p. 151), because he genuinely had faith in the transformative power of poetry and worked actively to bring about change in the society. In 1967, in an essay entitled “On Political Poetry,” Bly elaborated on his idea of what political poetry consisted in, emphasizing his opinion about the necessity of “inwardness” in poetry: “what is needed to write true poems about the outward world is inwardness; [and poets need to] penetrate the husk around their own personalities” and delve into their psych, so that they may “speak of inward and political things with the same assurance” (Hickman, 2015, p. 94).

The necessity of access to the psyche in the case of poetry and politics suggests that Libby (1972) is right, in his assessment of Bly’s poetry, when he locates the origin of both poetry and politics in the mind (p. 82). Elaborating on this point, Bly likened the life of a nation to the psyche of an individual, but on a larger scale. Only a poet with a good “grasp of his own concerns [...] can leave them for awhile,” delve into the socio-political consciousness and emerge successfully with what can genuinely be called political poetry<sup>8</sup> (Faas, 1976, p. 714).

Of course, Bly’s tendency to infuse his poems with political themes or, as one of his critics put it, to “marry the Muse ... to politics,” (Gwiazda, 2005, p. 169) invited much criticism. And many of the attacks, as Bly explained, came particularly from the academia by the university professors (Quinn, 2000). Bly was aware of the possible problems attending political poetry, and tried to clarify what he thought about political poetry on several occasions in interviews. For example, in an interview in 1976, praising Lorca’s poems because of their genuine “images”, Bly asserted that “Most political poetry [in the United States] is barn-door poetry” in comparison (Faas and Bly, 1976, p. 683). And in another interview in 1982, when the interviewer said that some critics believed Bly’s poetry—and that of Gary Snyder (b. 1930)—were too “moralistic,” “didactic” and “instructive,” he replied:

Who knows? They may be right. You can never say anybody’s wrong. But if I were asked about it, I would say that I understand the poem to be a container of energy, and the more kinds of energy in the poem the better. [...] In the Confucian world, you give instruction in a poem; the poem lays out certain rules to help people live decently. Snyder does a lot of that. Some people connect such instruction with high school principals and stuff, but I don’t. I consider it to be a good form of energy, a true form of energy, if the instruction is intelligent. (Shakarchi and Bly, 1982, p. 233)

The last clause is of great importance. While political poetry may be didactic, it does not, in Bly’s opinion, necessarily seek to encourage us to take a particular course of action but instead tries to deepen our awareness (Ghazoul, 1986, p. 107). Therefore, among Bly’s favorite poets, we can find figures who were actively political (like Neruda and W. B. Yeats) as well as those who were so in a broad sense of the word (like the Indian poet Mirabai (1498-1547)).

There are three main factors that are of significance in shaping Bly’s interest in politics and his conception of the poet with a socio-political calling. This section addresses these three factors, i.e., the Vietnam War, the American literary tradition, and the influence of foreign poets (whose works Bly translated into English), with the aim of demonstrating how similar socio-political concerns guide and direct his interest in the Persian poetry, particularly that of Hafez.

The Vietnam War (1954-75) was a significant event in American history in the 1950s. Bly, who preferred the secluded quietude of the countryside before the start of war, became very vocal from the start in his opposition to the Vietnam War and he expressed it both in his poetry and his life. His poems about the war were published in the poetry book “The Light Around the Body” (1967) and he submitted the National Book Award check he received in 1968 for the same book to a draft-resistance organization (Beisner, 1970, p. 210).

As Bly emphasized in an interview (Quinn, 2000), he had already been working on political poems before the beginning of the Vietnam War, but the war was indeed a turning point in Bly’s poetry, giving a more political bent to his “romantic emphasis on ‘inwardness’” (Suarez, 1991, p. 81). It is mainly as a result of this experience that, for Bly, the poetry of inwardness and political activism are combined. Of course, Bly’s tendency in combining the mystical and the political impulses should be analyzed in the tradition of American poets like Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)—who were incidentally a great influence on Bly<sup>9</sup>—and within the context of the debates about the role of the poet in the society.

Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), for example, criticized Emerson’s pragmatic mysticism, believing it would disrupt the *status quo* in the society. Holmes was particularly more concerned about Emerson’s more radical followers who, as a result of Emerson’s teachings, would seek to bring about change in the society such as pursuing women’s rights, pushing for radical political reforms, *etc.* (Weinstein, 2006, pp. 143-144).

The same combination of the mystical and political impulses can be seen in Thoreau’s works, who was a pantheist, with little regard for institutionalized religion, and a rebellious soul who espoused a kind of qualified Unitarianism in line with his transcendentalist principles (Greeley, 1974, p. 18). As Libby (1972) says, Like Thoreau, Bly gradually developed an interest in “the politics of American imperialism” (p. 81), chiefly as a result of the Vietnam War. In 1967, Bly refused to receive the \$5,000 grant offered by the Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities to the Sixties Press

<sup>8</sup> For Bly, poets who wrote great political poems include: Pablo Neruda, W. B. Yeats (1865-1939), W. V. Moody (1869-1910) and Walt Whitman (1819-1892), to name a few (Faas, 1976, p. 714; Brown, 1973, p. 60).

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, (Shakarchi and Bly, 1982, p. 231), where Bly acknowledges his debt to Thoreau and Emerson; and (Suarez, 1991, p. 81), where Richard Sugg suggests that Bly’s poetry is in the romantic tradition of these two American poets.

‘Since the [US] Administration is maiming an entire nation [i.e. the Vietnamese] merely to advance our national interest’ (Hickman, 2015, p. 93); and in 1968, in his acceptance speech at the National Book Award ceremony, Bly used the opportunity to criticize the US’s foreign policy, stating that we are “murdering a culture in Vietnam at least as fine as our own” (Molesworth, 1975, p. 97).<sup>10</sup>

This socio-political conception of the role of poet can also be observed in Bly’s activities in the capacity of the translator of foreign poetry into English. Perhaps, Pablo Neruda who is called “Noble laureate, international diplomat and political activist in one” (Bleiker, 1999, p. 1129) is the best example to illustrate this point. Bly discovered Neruda in a library in Oslo short after 1956 when he received the Fulbright Fellowship to translate and introduce Norwegian poetry to the American readers, and he immediately realized Neruda’s poetry was quite different from what he had read in the American tradition. Taking the New Critics to task for being completely “blind” to foreign poetry, Bly seems to be at first impressed with the surrealism in Neruda’s poetry (Quinn, 2000); but the socio-political aspect of the life of the poet gradually became of great significance to him, a fact evident in many of the short introductions that accompany Bly’s translations, and he drew attention to the foreign poets’ roles in engaging critically with the *status quo*.

In the preface to the book *Neruda and Vallejo; Selected Poems*, Bly remarked that Neruda, who struggled all his life to “keep Chile from returning to right-wing control,” wrote poems that included “careful nature observation, geology, accounts of European invasion, North American meddling, and rage” (Bly, 1993), making a case for the relevance and significance of Neruda’s poetry for the American audience; and he praised the Peruvian poet César Vallejo’s (1892-1938) political writing, asserting that it “belongs with” the political writings of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963) (*Ibid*). The same is true about Bly’s prefaces to the translation of the poetry of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875-1939)<sup>11</sup> and of the Hindu poet Mirabai<sup>12</sup> (c. 1498-c. 1546) as well as the Spanish poet Juan R. Jimenez (1881-1958) and the French poet Francis Ponge (1899-1988), among others, who are featured in Bly’s anthology *The Winged Energy of Delight; Selected Translations*.

And again the same attention to socio-political concerns can be identified in the prefaces written to Bly’s translations of the poetry of the Persian poets, particularly Hafez. Leonard Lewisohn (who joined Bly in the translation of Hafez’s poetry, published in 2008) referred to Hafez’s “most bitter attacks on orthodoxy” during the “orthodox [and] harsh” reign of Muzaffarid Mobarez-al-Din Muhammad (1318-1363) (Bly and Lewisohn, 2008, p. 72). And Bly, in his short preface to the same book, highlights “aggressive attack[s] on fundamentalists” among other themes in Hafez’s poetry (*Ibid*, p. v).

Bly seems to be more reserved in depicting Rumi as a political poet, but in his preface to the translation of this Persian poet’s poetry (Bly 2004, p. 332), he did refer to the uneasy status of Sufis in orthodox Islam and the problems they suffered through in Muslim communities, citing as an example, the famous mystic Ḥallāj (c. 858-c. 922), who was imprisoned and then hanged to death on account of his controversial views as well as attempting political reform<sup>13</sup> at a time when Baghdad was rife with political conflict (Mojaddedi, 2003). And Rumi, interestingly, frequently referred to Ḥallāj in his works and identified with him.<sup>14</sup> In other words, although Rumi did not engage in politics, for instance the way Neruda did, his ideas were very controversial when compared with the mainstream Islam,<sup>15</sup> and it is exactly the fact that Rumi represented something more than the mainstream Islam, which attracted the attention of Coleman Barks and his mentor Robert Bly. Barks (2014) wrote in the introduction to the book *Rumi; Soul Fury*: “I’m not interested in placing these poems in a particular religious tradition. Rumi was a devout Muslim, a Sufi. [...] But he has also been heard as a more universal voice.”

As the outline above shows, out of the 1950s and the 1960s, Bly gradually emerged as a poet with a political calling, and his conception of the role of poet was shaped and influenced by American poets (such as Emerson and Thoreau), the contemporary political developments (the Vietnam War), and Bly’s encounter with foreign poetry (such as that of Neruda). And such socio-political concerns can be traced in his prefaces to the foreign poetry he translated into English, including that of Persian poets, showing that the socio-political role of the poet was a guiding principle in his interest in foreign poetry throughout his career.

#### IV. BLY AND THE POETIC FORM: *GHAZAL*

Bly’s socio-political tendencies were not confined to poetic subject matter and he sought to revive and promote the prose poem—which in his opinion could be traced back to an ancient form, the fable (Horvath, 1992, p. 11)—as “the rhymed metered poem is, in our consciousness, so tied to the feudal stratified society of England that such a metered poem refuses to merge well with the content of American experience” (Bjorklund, 1995, p. 549). In trying to free poetry from its conventional metric limitations, Bly belongs to the tradition of American poets like Walt Whitman and Emily

<sup>10</sup> In 2003, Bly was also among the many poets who signed a document entitled “A Plea for Reflection” to voice their dissent (Morrissey, 2003, p. 16).

<sup>11</sup> The book is entitled *Times Alone; Selected Poems of Antonio Machado*, published by Wesleyan UP in 1983.

<sup>12</sup> The book is entitled *Mirabai; Ecstatic Poems*, published by Beacon Press in 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Ḥallāj’s involvement in the political reform is not an established fact. As J.W. Fiegenbaum observes, “The alleged involvement of al-Ḥallāj in an attempt at political and moral reform upon his return to Baghdad was an immediate factor in his arrest” (paragraph 7).

<sup>14</sup> See (Najjari and Ahmadnejad, 2013), which is a study of the role of Hallaj in Rumi’s works.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, (Masroori, 2010), where he investigates Rumi’s “criticism of religious persecution.”

Dickinson (1830-1886) who avoided using iambic pentameter to a great extent (Finch, 2005, p. 148). While Whitman chose dactylic rhythms and Dickinson favored hymn stanza, Bly adopted the prose poem believing it “is the final stage of the unpretentious style” more suitable for the expression of “complicated human perceptions” (Sajé 2014, p. 148) and that it is “the suppler form for the embodiment of the mind’s action” (Dana, 1990, p. 79).<sup>16</sup>

The last quote, with its emphasis on the interrelation of mind and poetic form, demonstrates Bly’s association with a movement that came to be called “deep image” poetry.<sup>17</sup> The term signifies the “expression of psychic force which suddenly becomes language” (Faas, 1976, p. 710). In other words, the prose poem yields itself more easily to “psychic leaps” between “the quotidian and the unconscious” (McFarland, 1997, p. 257), bringing images into close association, which results in powerful metaphors with “equal footing in the familiar and the strange” (Bond, 2015, p. 161).

In a statement that brings to mind Eliot’s remarks about the dissociation of sensibility in its sweeping generalization, Bly asserts that European poetry gradually failed to produce powerful associations sometime in the thirteenth century, with Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342/43-1400) and William Langland (c. 1330-c. 1400) already showing signs of this decline, and by the eighteenth century, the situation was at its worst when poetry became almost intellectual and imagination was forgotten. It was William Blake (1757-1827) who first “abducted the thought of poetry and took it off to some obscure psychic woods” (Bly, 1975, pp. 5-6).

For Bly, this leaping quality could also be observed in the poetry of poets like Machado, Jimenez, Neruda and Lorca, whom he translated into English. As an example, Bly mentions, in an essay titled “Looking for Dragon Smoke,” Neruda’s “Nothing But Death,” where the poet “leaps from death to the whiteness of flour, then to notary publics” and so on (*Ibid*, p. 4). This free association of various images, for Bly, is best evident in surrealism, as in a revealing statement he uses the words “leaping” and surrealist” interchangeably, when comparing Spanish and French surrealist poetry<sup>18</sup> (*Ibid*, p. 40). The liberating force of surrealism allowed the mind to go back and forth between the conscious and the unconscious with equal facility. And Bly embarked on the dual mission of promoting “leaping” poetry and translating Spanish poetry into English because he believed that the reason for the lack of vigor in American poetry was due to the fact that “other poetries have passed through surrealism; we have not” (Faas, 1976, p. 709).

Bly believed the fact that American poetry suffered in this regard was evident in the poetry of Ezra Pound and Imagist poets, where the poem is composed of “pictures” rather than images. He wrote in *The Fifties* that Imagism was a misnomer because Imagist poets “did not write in images from the unconscious” (*Ibid*, p. 710)<sup>19</sup>; he hoped in 1962 that the American “poetry of pictures” would be replaced by a poetry originating from “the inward world” (Yenser, 1982, p. 32), like those of Vallejo, Neruda and Lorca, among others.

Such considerations about poetry and its form led Bly to the translation of poetry from other traditions, first from Spain and Latin America and then from the East and particularly Iran. And interestingly, the same concerns (i.e. the leaping quality of poetry as well as its being rooted in the inward world) inform his interest in Persian poets, chief among them, Rumi and Hafez. Although Bly never learned Farsi (i.e. the Persian language), immediate experience of Iranian culture<sup>20</sup> and seeking help from scholars<sup>21</sup> helped him gain some knowledge of Persian poetry and mysticism, a fact evident not only in the collections of poems he translated from Farsi, but also in his occasional comments about the poetic forms used in Persian poetry.

Bly frequently drew attention to the free association of images in the Eastern poetic form known as *Ghazal*. For instance, he described the form of the *Ghazal*, as written by the Indian poet Ghalib (1797-1869), in this way: “No clear thread unites all the couplets. It slowly becomes clear that we are dealing with a way of adventuring one’s way through a poem utterly distinct from our habit of textual consistency in theme” (Bly 2004, p. 362). And he expressed similar thoughts about the *Ghazals* of the Persian poet Hafez on several occasions.

In an interview in 2000, for example, Bly described the form in the context of Persian poetry thus: “the *Ghazal* often makes a leap to a new subject matter with each new stanza [which is] a form of wildness” (Quinn, 2000). He struck a similar note when he compared the poetry of Hafez to the movement of the hands in a Bach prelude: “The left hand goes on talking of failure and repentance, and the light, quick right hand talks about the magnificence of poetry and religion, of the side glances given to us by God” (Bly 2004, pp. 377-378) while the whole poem is tied together by an invisible center. And again, trying to emphasize the difference of Hafez’s poems from those in the Anglo-American tradition by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), Bly remarked that the poetry of Hafez “moves in a jagged manner” and the poem begins “again with each stanza” (Bly and Lewisohn, 2008, p. v). As Kashani (2014) states, “Bly appreciated the skillful use of metaphors in Hafez’s *ghazals* through which he brings several points of views together within one *ghazal*” (p. 113).

<sup>16</sup> Bly also promoted the prose poem as “the natural speech of a democratic language” (Lehman, 2003, p. 49) and considered it particularly suitable as “no one has set up the standards yet” for it (Hetherington and Atherton, 2020, p. 13).

<sup>17</sup> The term was coined by Robert Kelly and Jerome Rothenberg in 1961 (Faas, 1976, p. 710), and Bly did not like the coinage (Hetherington and Atherton, 2020, p. 109).

<sup>18</sup> Bly, it is worth noting, preferred Spanish surrealism to French surrealism, a fact he expressed on different occasions. See, for instance (Bly, 1993), where he stated that “French surrealist poems appear drab and squeaky” and (Quinn, 2000), where he remarked that “Most of the images of French surrealism don’t have a center.”

<sup>19</sup> Barone (1982) also expounds on the significance of the role the mind plays in Bly’s conception of the image (p. 120).

<sup>20</sup> He came to Iran, accompanied by Coleman Barks, in 2006.

<sup>21</sup> For example, in translating the poetry of Hafez, he enjoyed help from the scholar of Iranian literature, Leonard Lewisohn (Bly, 2004, p. v)

The same free association of poetic images and elements can be seen in the poetry of Rumi. The famous Iranian Rumi scholar Abdolkarim Soroush (2006) described the experience of composing poetry by Rumi thus:

the warm, raw experience of the words [come] to his [i.e., Rumi's] lips through his mind—he is like a man swimming when he plunges into the depths of the sea. You never know from where he might next emerge. So you cannot follow him, because the steps are not, strictly speaking, logical. He moves with free associations; that is the formula. (p. 282)

Coleman Barks, who worked closely with Bly on translating the poetry of Rumi into English, identified similar features in the words of Rumi's mentor, Shams, collected in a book entitled *The Sayings of Shams*. Barks (2014) stated that "Shams' sentences do not proceed logically," tracing what he thought to be a kind of "numinous structure" in them. It is therefore no wonder that Bly (2004) considered Rumi to be "more an excitable library of poetry than a person" and when he encountered Rumi's poetry, he "at once [...] felt at home" (p. 331).

As demonstrated, Bly clearly found interesting the free association of different ideas and images in the Persian mystical poetry. And particularly the poetic form known as *Ghazal*, infused with the mystical poetry of Hafez and Rumi (with its emphasis on the spiritual and "the inward world"), was adopted by Bly and he used it in many of his poems. Bly in an interview referred to the influence of Rumi on his poetry book "This Body Is Made of Camphor and Gopherwood" (1977) (Quinn, 2000), and a reviewer of his poems remarked that Bly "brilliantly adopts this richly-symbolic, philosophically-inclined form," i.e. *Ghazal* in the poetry book "The Night Abraham Called to the Stars" (2001) (Taylor, 2002, p. 45), citing Rumi and Hafez as examples.

Bly's interest in the Eastern poetic form *Ghazal* can be traced back to his dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in American poetry of the 1950s and the 1960s as well as his original ideas about how American poetry should be transformed. And as Bly was a poet with an international frame of mind, he investigated Eastern poetry to find new poetic forms, which corresponded to his ideas about the free association of images in poetry.

## V. CONCLUSION

Throughout his career, Robert Bly worked in various capacities as poet, editor, translator, *etc.* to broaden the scope of American poetry and set right what he believe to be wrong about it. In doing so, he adopted themes and poetic forms from cultures so different and distant from his own, including that of Persia. This paper sought to show how Bly became familiar with the Persian poetic tradition, and to demonstrate how his interest in Persian poetry was informed by his concerns about the poetic form as well as his conception of the socio-political role of the poet. It further tried to show how such concerns originate in the American literary tradition.

Furthermore, the present paper reveals implications that could be the subject of another study. By revealing the continuities that underlie Bly's interaction with Persian mystical poetry, this study demonstrates that Bly usually approached Persian poetry on his own terms. Therefore, it is no wonder that sometimes he misrepresented Persian poets and poetry, focusing on the aspects that interested him.<sup>22</sup> And this is a point more evident in the case of Rumi, as Bly was not accompanied by a scholar well-versed in Persian poetry, in translating the poetry of Rumi.

Of course, Bly himself was aware of the problems attending translation of literary works and how themes and ideas could be distorted in the process of translation. In an interview, he remarked that "We are all tourists of the East, all Westerners are, and we take their concepts and we misuse them constantly... It's exploitation not different from what the American soldier did in Vietnam" (Faas and Bly, 1976, p. 691). And he believed that a translation, at its best, "resembles a Persian rug seen from the back—the pattern is apparent, but not much more" (Liro, 1992, pp. 71-72). Therefore, he sometimes called his translations "versions" to indicate that they were reworkings of the original (Bly, 2004, p. vi), emphasizing, in the introduction to his translation of the poetry of Hafez, that loss of meaning is an unfortunate but inevitable result of the process of translation (Bly and Lewisohn, 2008, p. vii).

Given that Robert Bly has been an important figure in facilitating the transmission of Persian poetry in the American culture, it is necessary to investigate the manifestation of Persian poetry in Bly's poetry as well as translations, and to identify the ways in which it has been qualified or contorted in the process of translation.<sup>23</sup> Having said that, although Bly was occasionally inaccurate and always controversial, he has been an indispensable figure on the American literary scene since the 1950s; and the original poetry he composed and the foreign poetry he translated remain a very readable and worthy legacy, which attest to his merits both in the capacity of a poet and a translator.

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<sup>23</sup> Anoosheh and Jahromi (2020) have recently written about the translation of Hafez's poetry by Bly and Lewisohn in the paper "A Mystical Reading of Hafiz's Translation by Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn." It would be best to build on their paper and broaden its scope in order to cover Bly's opinions about Hafiz expressed, for instance, in his anthology of poetry in translation *The Winged Energy of Delight* and the quotes from Hafez he used in his other books, such as the book *More Than True: The Wisdom of Fairy Tales*.



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# An Analysis on the Pursuit of Happiness in *The Lord of the Rings*

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**Abstract**—Since *The Lord of the Rings* was adapted by Peter Jackson into trilogy film in 2001-03, it has astounded its critics and gratified its fans and students. Many critical journals or graduation papers have also talked about this massive novel. After doing a lot of reading concerning these reviews, it's clear that most of them analyze this work using psychoanalytical criticism; myth and archetypal criticism; cultural studies, and recently ecocriticism. Among these theories, psychoanalytic interpretation mainly focuses on Freud's key ideas, namely the id; ego; and superego. According to Freud's theory that: "Psychoanalytic literary criticism is not simply about interpreting a text's protagonists. It also seeks to relate the text to the mind of its author." (Berg, 2003, p.84). In this circumstance, this paper will probably dig some new insights by using this theory. The paper will follow the protagonist's inner mind through employing Freud's some key ideas, such as repression and projection. Based upon psychoanalytic analysis of the protagonists, this paper tries to argue that the three Hobbits can acquire happiness as long as they deal properly with the relationship between themselves and the society. In other words, common people can also push the wheel of history as long as they code well with themselves and the society.

**Index Terms**—psychoanalytical criticism, Repression, Projection, Happiness

## I. INTRODUCTION

When considering the commentary related to *The Lord of the Rings*, the idea that it is a story about growing up or maturation is a popular notion, and an aspect for which psychoanalytic analysis is appropriate. Doubtless, the Ring itself reflects the development of the characters' mental processes. The three hobbits who have a close connection with it all changed considerably: first, they would grow irrational, acting contrary to convention, then return to normality before falling into desperation. Finally, they would have all kinds of fantasies, their very behavior controlled by the Ring. The plot of *The Lord of the Rings* can be summarized as humans being disturbed and tortured by the Ring they forged. However, we cannot confine the plot to only this level. Through the act of destroying the Ring by Frodo, the Ring-bearer, and his fellowship, we can also see people's struggle against being "conquered by the Ring."

## II. THE PROBLEMS THE "QUEER" HOBBITS FACE

According to the description in the "Concerning Hobbits" section of *The Lord of the Rings*, we know that hobbits are different from humans. They are simple-minded, living a happy life in the peaceful Shire. The issue of social and cultural differences in the Shire actually reveals a dangerous situation among its inhabitants. Gandalf, who always holds the correct perspective, worries that Sauron will enslave the charming, absurd, and helpless hobbits. Moreover, the hobbit families are eager to obtain power either absurdly or significantly. Their awareness of differences in the Shire allows Frodo, who has a special ability, to become the potential person to accept the mission and attract followers.

It is because of the Shire's isolation from the rest of Middle-earth that many political problems arise among its inhabitants, and "queerness" is a prominent reason for these problems. The hobbits cannot believe those who come from outside because they behave and think in ways the hobbits cannot understand. For example, they exhibit a distrustful attitude toward Dark Rider when he suddenly appears in the Shire. They also tend to enjoy acting similarly in ways that include living in holes, eating excessively, and smoking tobacco, so when Bilbo and Frodo obtain a treasure, a mark of distinction, the hobbits present a hostile attitude toward them. Therefore, in order to maintain the inhabitants' trust, one must make oneself "natural" and diminish one's "queerness."

Bilbo is "very rich and very peculiar." to the extent that some inhabitants begin to be jealous: "...it seemed unfair that anyone should possess perpetual youth as well as inexhaustible wealth" (Tolkien, 1999, p. 27). Both his wealth and longevity make him seem "queer": "It isn't natural, and trouble will come of it!" (Tolkien, 1999, p.27). On the one hand, the "trouble" derives from Bilbo's wealth and long life, which arouses the inhabitants' jealousy. On the other hand, Bilbo is queer to his fellowship in the Shire because he has been changed by the journey, obtaining considerable knowledge about the world. In addition, control of the Ring made him conscious of good and evil. For one thing, the desire of the self wants to possess the Ring. For another, Bilbo wants to protect the Shire and the world from Sauron's slavery; a contradiction that has made him thin. Moreover, when a person wears the Ring, they become invisible. This is because, when the Ring controls its wearer, it erases their identity: one has lost their self. In the novel, Bilbo has remained young but become thin and stretched. However, he has never connected this to his possession of the Ring. In

fact, to obtain control of an individual, the Ring appeals to the desire of the self for gold, power, and love as a means of controlling the individual.

Aiming to win support from the inhabitants, both Bilbo and Frodo take a generous attitude toward them. Bilbo shares his money with his friends and relatives: "He had many devoted admirers among the hobbits of poor and unimportant families" (Tolkien, 1999, p.27). Indeed, his generous actions diminish the fear of difference among the less wealthy hobbits. People in the Shire think he is "well-spoken," polite, and gentle because he treats them in a fair manner, without demonstrating a superior attitude. However, in order to gain the support and trust of the hobbits, Bilbo must address two problems. First is the arrival of Frodo, an orphan and his heir, which arouses the potential inheritor's anger, since their inheritance will be significantly decreased. Second is the inheritance of Bag End by Frodo due to Bilbo's disappearance on his birthday party. Since the relatives continue to be entangled with the "treasure" Frodo receives, he will inherit the problems Bilbo used to face.

Realizing this problem, Bilbo must act. At this moment, Bilbo's ego starts to play a part. It takes charge of the spiritual aspect of one's personality, such as logic, learning and observation" (Freud, 1992, p.15). It always attempts to maintain a balanced relationship between desire and conscience, functioning as a coordinator of the personality. The ego's obligation is to protect an individual's life from all dangerous situations in the outside world (Freud, 1992, p.17). Bilbo organizes a party, inviting all the inhabitants of the Shire, and all who attend receive a present. He also offers them the splendor of fireworks, songs, dances, music, games, and fine and abundant food. The moment Bilbo disappears from public signifies the disappearance of selfishness. By offering a remarkable birthday party and suddenly disappearing from it, Bilbo succeeds in achieving a harmonious relationship with the inhabitants.

The peculiarity of the Ring offers its wearer special power. It promotes the self and allows the individual to have the prospect of power. Perhaps it is because of the Ring that Bilbo was queer to others. At first, Bilbo is not willing to relinquish the Ring to Gandalf. In his eyes, other people are unworthy of trust. He says to Gandalf: "Now it comes to it, I don't like parting with it at all, I may say. And I don't really see why I should. Why do you want me to?" he asked, and a curious change came over his voice. It was sharp with suspicion and annoyance. 'You are always badgering me about my ring: but you have never bothered me about the other things that I got on my journey'" (Freud, 1992, p.43). Bilbo wants to keep the Ring because he found it: "It is my own. I found it. It came to me" (Freud, 1992, p.43). It is the gift Bilbo most needs to be rid of. However, when Gandalf insists that Bilbo should leave the Ring with Frodo, he uses the same language as Gollum: "It is mine, I tell you. My own. My precious. Yes, my precious" (Tolkien, 1999, p.44). At this moment, Bilbo's id takes control of his personality, wanting only to fulfill his desire of possessing the Ring. However, the constraint of reality makes his ego work, forcing him to part with the Ring.

In order to free himself, Bilbo must stop possessing the Ring. However, it is extremely difficult for him to do so. Gandalf's demand for the Ring arouses Bilbo's suspicion, and he treats Gandalf as a thief. Then Gandalf wins his trust back by saying, "I am not trying to rob you, but to help you. I wish you would trust me as you used" (Tolkien, 1999, p.45). Bilbo apologizes: "But I felt so queer... And I don't seem able to make up my mind" (Tolkien, 1999, p.45). Bilbo must have realized his queerness comes from his wealth, perpetual youth and generosity, which permits him to hold a prominent position in the Shire. Therefore, it is difficult for him to give up the Ring. "Giving up the Ring is the final gift: to allow the self to grow and mature, the individual must learn to be selfless" (Bloom, 2008, p.23). In this case, Bilbo's generous behavior toward his relatives is correct and necessary.

Bilbo's deed of giving the Ring to Frodo has the same function. When Frodo gains the Ring, however, it represents a prospect for individual and even heroic maturation. Unlike a traditional quest that aims to pursue profound knowledge or valuable treasure, Frodo must destroy something. According to the previous description, Bilbo must change his ego and be generous toward the inhabitants of the Shire to become the same as them. However, returning the Ring to its owner means that one must renounce the possession of power. Therefore, Frodo, who is different from other hobbits and his queer cousin Bilbo, is more suitable for the quest.

Unlike Bilbo, who has deep roots in the Old Forest, Frodo is accepted by the hobbits in the Shire perhaps simply because of the wealth and favor his cousin offered. However, Frodo is as "queer" as Bilbo. Frodo is an orphan from "across the river" (a similar experience as his creator (Tolkien; Bloom 23)). His people like using boats, which makes the hobbits feel he is unnatural.

After Bilbo disappears, Frodo becomes the Lord of the Manor and must face a test from the Sackville-Bagginses. They not only buy things not given away at a lower price but also spread the rumors that Gandalf and Frodo plan to obtain Bilbo's wealth. Frodo can tolerate their unfriendliness since he is accompanied by his cousin Merry Brandybuck who, like his mother, comes from Buckville near the Old Forest. At first, Frodo regards Bag End as his inheritance to keep. As time passes, however, Frodo reveals his "oddity" just as Bilbo did, by holding birthday parties for his cousin. His best friends are Merry Brandybuck, Peregrin Took, and other younger hobbits who are fond of Frodo. Like Bilbo, Frodo can maintain his youth due to his possession of the Ring and is therefore considered "queer" by the Shire inhabitants.

There is little doubt that tension exists between the "normal" and "queer" hobbits. This kind of difference can surely lead to trouble and danger. However, in Tolkien's perspective, difference can lead to coldness (Frodo stealing mushrooms and venturing into others' lands), adventures (both Frodo and Bilbo setting out on their journeys), and finally wisdom and understanding. We can also feel differences in social relationships. While hobbits from a lower class

generally engage in manual labor, such as gardening and domestic service, Sam helped Frodo up Mount Doom and helped him destroy the Ring, rendering him noble and worthy of respect from others in the final chapters. The same situation is true for Gollum. He was an unsettling creature, casting avaricious eyes on the Ring without considering other factors. However, Gollum's moral deficiency is ameliorated by his final contribution to civilization and cosmic good when he disobeys his "master," Frodo, and steals the Ring. Because of this deed, Frodo can finally relinquish control of the Ring and obtain the happiness he pursues.

Gollum is descended from a branch of hobbit-kind "akin to the fathers of the fathers of the Stoors" (Tolkien, 1999, p.69). Together with other hobbits, they should have shared a similar culture. However, Gollum has forgotten much of it as a result of his solitary lifestyle. This is the reason why Gollum is quite different from the other hobbits. In some sense, he stands as an alter ego for Bilbo-Frodo. Like Frodo, Gollum treats the Ring as his "birthday present" because it was given to him on that special day. Frodo initially treats Gollum similarly to the manner in which the Brandybucks treat him, reacting to Gollum's "queerness" with suspicion and anger. Therefore, at first, he states that Gollum should have been killed, saying to Gandalf: "What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature when he had a chance" (Tolkien, 1999, p.78). He cannot understand that it is Bilbo's pity and mercy that, even while wearing the Ring, offers him a happy life, and, ironically, it is Gollum on the lip of Mount Doom who saves Frodo and indeed Middle-earth itself.

In Tolkien's perspective, differences serve each other: "the relationship is circular and depends upon both need and desire, necessity and obligation, the dances of Self and Other until the music ends" (Bloom, 2008, p.25).

The above section primarily analyzes the social and cultural problems the "queer" hobbits face. This section consists of background information regarding the characters' changes in attitude and behavior when addressing complicated situations, further probing their inner minds from a psychoanalytical point of view.

### III. THE RING'S CONTROL: THE WARPING OF HUMANITY

The Ring's control and enslavement of human beings is revealed through spiritual manipulation. Through subconscious power leaking into people's minds, the Ring changes people's spiritual perceptions gradually, then makes them identify with it, finally achieving the aim of controlling human beings. Desire is a part of what the Ring represents, and it is a power people cannot resist. Possessing the Ring means that the individual loses a sense of who they are and what they truly want.

Freud's early theory assumed that "hysteria stems from libido's over-control and inappropriate over-release" (Baronet, 2006, p.76). He subsequently modified this theory, suggesting that, "hysterics were suffering from reminiscences; that is, that their symptoms were the results of the continued mental tension produced by traumatic events" (Yang, 2000, p. 82). In fact, characters in *The Lord of the Rings* have hysterical feelings concerning losing the Ring.

In some sense, Bilbo was the first person who owned the Ring. When he meets Gandalf at his birthday party, he says to his old friend that, "I am old, Gandalf. I don't look it, but I am beginning to feel it in my heart of hearts. Well-preserved indeed! Why, I feel thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread" (Tolkien, 1999, p.42). Words like "thin" and "stretched" clearly reveal the considerable spiritual pressure weighing on Bilbo. This kind of tiredness derives from his anxiety concerning losing control of the Ring.

The same phenomenon also happened to Bilbo. At "the Council of Elrond," when asked to deliver the Ring, "Bilbo was shaken by a sudden shame and fear; and he felt a great reluctance to reveal the Ring, and a loathing of its touch. He wished he was far away." (Tolkien, 1999, p.321) Words such as "shame," "fear," and "loath" illustrate Bilbo's fear and anxiety, and it is clear that Frodo's anxiety derives from the Ring. He is afraid of losing the Ring. Therefore, he is unwilling to let other people see it, fearing that they will steal it from him. At that moment, the Ring is by no means just an ordinary object. It has mixed with the self's emotion: the fulfillment of the self's desire. Losing the Ring means the self has nothing to pursue, which rendered him hysterical. However, fear is an extreme aspect of hysteria, used by the self as a barrier to avoid connecting with the outside world. Therefore, we can say that, because of the Ring's effect, Frodo began to unconsciously establish a barrier to guard against his fellowship. Depression is the self's defensive mechanism in psychoanalysis. Freud thinks that, "as long as id, ego, and superego's drain confront with anti-drain's resist, it will not go into the mind. The suppression and dissolution of drain to anti-drain means depression" (Wang, 1998, p. 79). In the novel, fear of losing the Ring makes the hobbits feel shameful or embarrassed. However, they cannot resist this desire, so depression comes into being. In this sense, hysteria and depression occur together. In the story, when Bilbo and Frodo sense their depression, they always try to control that feeling. However, since the evil power of the Ring is so substantial, they fail to change this situation, resulting in odd behavior.

To sum up, the sudden malevolent face of Bilbo and the shadow in Frodo's mind are the evil power's projection onto their unconsciousness. Once the self-defense mechanism fails, their minds are manipulated by the Ring, driving them to unusual acts.

"Projection occurs when an unwanted thought, feeling or motive is attributed to another person and is closely connected to denial, which is the process by which the individual denies feeling a particular emotion, but asserts that someone else does!" (Tolkien, 1999, p.46). In the novel, when the characters who are controlled by the Ring fail to self-repress, daydreaming and a split self occurs. When an individual's desire cannot be achieved, it will transform into the above two forms.

As soon as Frodo puts the Ring on, it starts to gradually affect him. In Elrond, although Frodo has been controlled by

the Ring, and his humanity has begun to change, he can resist himself at this moment. However, when closer to Mordor, the Ring's power grows increasingly stronger, and Bilbo has difficulty resisting its corrosion, and his humanity begins to degenerate.

Events on the Anduin River represent a vital point in the plot's development. Boromir, a prince of Gondor, is tempted by the evil Ring. He wants to take the Ring to his people, making his country flourish again. To escape Boromir's attempted theft, Frodo puts the Ring on and is invisible to the outside world. This conflict between Boromir and Frodo not only makes the fellowship fall into crisis, but also forces Frodo to leave the fellowship and continue the quest without help, facing perils alone. It is worth noting that, when wearing the Ring this time, he sees Sauron's fantasy and the eye for the first time. Those fantasies were daydreams Frodo had. Freud believed that, "daydreams resulted from Libido, since happy people would not have daydreams, only those who haven't achieved their wishes would daydream." Therefore, when Frodo sits on the throne overlooking Middle-earth and foresees the future, it indicates that he is no longer satisfied with being just an ordinary hobbit, and that he wants to become a ruler, controlling the whole world. The lustful "eye" is an embodiment of his own desire. The appearance of the fantasy indicates that Frodo cannot resist the evil power in his unconscious mind and begins to be manipulated by it.

The opposition of Gollum and Smeagol also presents the conflict between the Ring's will and the controlled. "division of ego." Ever since Gollum is presented in the novel, two voices always accompany him. Gollum represents the Ring's will, while Smeagol represents the self before degeneration as a natural, ethical and pure body. The quarrel between Gollum and Smeagol is an external form of the self and a power struggle. Since Smeagol could not control the evil ego in his unconscious mind, it would be presented as a single individual to fight against the main body. Therefore, whether Gollum acts rightly or wrongly all depended on what kind of mind controlled him. When promising to lead Frodo to Mount Doom, Smeagol's mind is dominant at that moment. Gollum follows Smeagol's every instruction. However, when Smeagol's kindness is suspected by Sam, Gollum takes the place of Smeagol's predominance. "the fleeting moment had past, beyond recall. 'Sneaking, sneaking!' he hissed. 'Hobbits always so polite, yes. O nice hobbits!' Smeagol bring them up secret ways that nobody else could find. Tired he is, thirsty he is, yes thirsty; and he guides them and he searches for paths, and they say sneak, sneak. Very nice friends, O yes my precious, very nice'" (Tolkien, 1999, p.936). Gollum speaks this not only for the purpose of defending Smeagol, but also to persuade Smeagol to give up his predominance, allowing the evil mind to take control.

All in all, both Frodo's fantasy and Gollum's split self all indicate that the Ring tries to manipulate characters' minds and change their wills.

In psychoanalysis, "recognition" means objectivity takes the predominant position, and subject changes to adapt to objective's change" (Yang, 2000, p.111-112). In the novel, the characters spiritually rely on the Ring, and gradually lose their own consciousness, which could be called recognition.

In Elrond, Frodo had a clash with Bilbo. Next, on the way to Moria, Frodo lost his spiritual leader. Finally, he departed from his fellowship on the Anduin, facing various on-coming dangers by himself. All through the journey, Frodo's friends diminished in number, and he felt increasingly lonely. The first time he felt lonely was in Elrond. It is also the first time he began to repel and be suspicious of his friends. Loneliness in Elrond was a presentation of Frodo's empty mind. The Ring made him have misunderstandings with his friends, and he closed his heart toward them. Therefore, although many friends were around him, he felt even lonelier. In Cirith Ungol, Frodo estranged his only friend, Sam, which led him into absolute loneliness. When the Orcs tortured Frodo, not only was his body wounded, but his will was also destroyed. When Sam brought the Ring and gave it back to Frodo, Frodo snatched the Ring and chain from Sam's hands. "The hideous vision had seemed so real to him, half bemused as he was still with wounds and fear. Sam had changed before his very eyes into an orc again, leering and pawing at his treasure, a foul little creature with greedy eyes and slobbering mouth" (Tolkien, 1999, p.1193). Fantasy is a daydream. It means a lack of desire, and only happens to people who have not achieved their goal. Therefore, the leering and pawing figure of an Orc appeared before his eyes, representing Frodo's desire to possess the Ring. Earlier, Frodo's fantasy stemmed from the Ring's control. However, here, the fantasy resulted from Frodo's own mind. It indicated that Frodo has recognized the Ring's will, and he has been controlled by it.

Frodo's suspicion toward Sam meant he inwardly cut all connections with the outside world, and his ego fell into absolute loneliness. Therefore, in the end, although Sam insisted on accompanying Frodo, he never felt any warmth or any existence of life. He told Sam that, "At least, I know that such things happened, but I cannot see them. No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire. I begin to see it even with my waking eyes, and all else fades" (Tolkien, 1999, p.1226).

'Naked' is a materialized form representing a spiritual inanity. We can see that at an emergent point, Frodo has lost his ego and been controlled by the evil Ring. Therefore, on Mount Doom, Gollum, the dark side of Frodo, jumped up and knocked Sam out. At this moment, there was nobody to persuade Frodo. His trial of fleeing away with the Ring on his finger indicated his humanity had finally disappeared.

Through the subtle descriptions of the changes in the three hobbits' minds, the novel presents the process of humanity's loss. However, even though the Ring made their humanity unbalanced, they never gave up fighting against the Ring's control.

According to the above description, we can see the characters suffer from many mental conflicts, namely the interaction of id, ego and superego, to change both social and personal conditions. Conflict is unavoidable and can sometimes be healthy, but unresolved conflict can thwart a person's ability to grow and develop. According to psychoanalytic views, psychological conflict is an intrinsic and pervasive part of human experience. Furthermore, the conflict between the id and the superego, negotiated by the ego, is one of the fundamental psychological battles all people face (Freud, 1992, p.25). The ego usually acts as a mediator between the id and the superego. It is also the ego's job to satisfy the impulses of the id, but in a manner that fits reality to a particular situation. Since impulses are rarely realistically satisfied, it is the ego's task to keep them beneath the individual's awareness. It uses problem-solving skills to solve the conflict and anxiety between the id and the environment. However, when anxiety is so strong that it threatens to engulf the ego, defense mechanisms come into play.

#### IV. THE REASON FOR DEGENERATION: MATERIAL DESIRE

The three hobbits' humanity was distorted because of the Ring's control. They strove to achieve the revival of humanity. Therefore, we can find that humanity's sublimation or degeneration was closely connected with the Ring. A closer analysis of the Ring can detail the reasons for this degeneration.

Like all other rings, the Ring was forged by human beings. It was ultimately an object with the attributes of an object. Nevertheless, it was different from a common object since it could deliver human beings' desires, indicating the worship of material desire.

The Ring was the creation of Sauron. When Sauron forged it, he endowed it with his evil will. This wickedness could tempt any person, causing them to have evil ideas. Isildur was the first who was tempted by the Ring. When Isildur cut the Ring from Sauron's finger, his heart was immediately controlled by the Ring. Then he changed his ideas and betrayed the oath of destroying the Ring, wanting to possess the Ring himself. Of course, he was doomed to fail. When Deagol found the Ring on the bed of the river, Gollum at once got the idea of killing his friend and taking possession of the Ring. Even Gandalf and Galadriel, who owned supreme power, became seduced by the Ring. To sum up, the Ring meant an object's incentive to human beings, and the reason why the Ring could have irresistible power was that it could fulfill people's desire, helping them attain that which they dream of. In the novel, the Ring had two kinds of temptations:

Freud holds the idea that instinct is an organism's impulse to return to an original situation. He divided instinct into two categories: life instinct and death instinct. Life instinct is also called sexual instinct, which is the internal motive for life's evolution and development (Wang, 1998, p.54-55). However, it happens in a casual manner. Death instinct is a born instinct and is life's essence and goal, which is inevitable.

Although humans have sensibly realized the inevitability of death, people were unwilling to face death. Therefore, the longing for immortality and the fear for death have constituted people's biggest trouble in the world. The greatest temptation the Ring brought was that it could help people resist death and live forever.

In addition to immortality, the Ring's temptation can be seen in its endowment of supernatural power. Letting people who wear the Ring become invisible is the Ring's most obvious characteristic. Invisibility enables people to be curious and different. It can also make people become lazy, representing the dark side of humanity. Because of the existence of the Ring, all dreams can be achieved easily, and may therefore degenerate easily. The Ring cannot bring happiness to people because it brings out people's personal desires. A mind filled with countless desires is doomed to fail. We can say people's desire to possess an object is the primary reason for their degeneration.

#### V. HUMANITY'S RECOVERY: THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The Ring's evil gives the three hobbits an imbalanced relationship between their inner urges and social demands. Achieving a stable state of mind is a key problem to be solved. The obvious solution is to change social or personal conditions. In fact, the characters did solve this problem in relation to these two aspects.

From Bilbo, Frodo, and Gollum's experience, we can see that their principally spiritual degeneration stems from the Ring's control. To find their humanity, a balanced mental state is vital to fight against the Ring's corrosive qualities. In the novel, Gandalf and Bilbo decided to leave the Ring with Frodo, thinking he has a healthy body and the virtues that would help him resist the Ring for a longer time. They knew he would ultimately fail, though. An inherent goodness is therefore a key weapon in fighting against the Ring.

From "Concerning Hobbits," we have some general knowledge regarding hobbits: "Hobbits are unobtrusive but very ancient people" (Tolkien, 1999, p. 1); "at no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves" (Tolkien, 1999, p.7). Moreover, they do not have government like humans do, which renders them less bound. Therefore, they can develop the purest and kindest personalities. As hobbits, Bilbo, Frodo, and Gollum also inherit these virtuous qualities. They are easily content, hard-working and strong-minded. Therefore, even though they have lost themselves to the Ring's erosion, they still can escape the Ring's control and find their humanity again.

When Bilbo obtained the Ring from Gollum, he did not lose his mind like Gollum, nor was he tortured by the Ring like Frodo. This was because he was kind and easily content, which allowed him to resist the Ring's temptation. In *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1999, p.1937), Bilbo, Gandalf and several dwarfs went on a journey looking for treasure. When they

prevailed, the king of the dwarfs rewarded Bilbo with a large amount of gold. However, Bilbo refused to take it, saying that living peacefully and happily is more important. In the chapter "A Long-Expected Party," Bilbo's birthday party was a significant event in the Shire. All the Shire's people were invited to take part in the great feast and received a present, indicating that Bilbo lived a wealthy life. We can see that virtuous qualities and a wealthy life made him both materially and spiritually satisfied. This satisfaction allowed him to not be easily controlled by the Ring, which has not left many marks on Bilbo. Although Bilbo realized the Ring presented an unmistakable burden, he never lost his mind like Gollum, who always wanted to possess the Ring. He finally decided to have a quest in the forest, and left the Ring with his heir, Bilbo. On his journey, his normal humanity finally returned.

Frodo was Bilbo's heir. He was the last to obtain the Ring as an inheritance and he undertook a historical mission with it. Like Bilbo, Frodo had a kind, agreeable personality, which made him popular among the Shire's people. In the council of Elrond, when considering Frodo's virtues, the king of the elves, Elrond, insisted on selecting Frodo as the Ring-bearer to destroy the Ring. When almost all present suspected Frodo's ability, Elrond stated that, "this quest may be attempted by the weak with much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere" (Tolkien, 1999, p.351). It was Frodo's hobbit toughness that enabled him to resist the Ring's control and finish the great mission. Ever since Frodo put the Ring on and left the Shire, the Ring tried to make Frodo surrender, while Frodo made every effort to resist the Ring's attrition. Therefore, all throughout the journey to Mount Doom, Frodo's heart was interwoven with compassion and wickedness.

The contrast of compassion and evil in Frodo's mind also presented itself in the form of Gollum and Sam, the characters who followed Frodo all the way from the Shire to Mordor. When Frodo finally destroyed the Ring, the two characters both influenced Frodo. Sam acted in the compassionate role, while Gollum played the evil role. Therefore, the objective of destroying the Ring was achieved due to all three characters' efforts. Without Gollum and Sam's help, Frodo would never have completed his quest.

In Elrond, Gollum was presented as a shadow between Frodo and Bilbo. Tolkien used Gollum as the shadow aspect of Frodo, indicating that the two had an intimate relationship. However, Gollum was the externalization of Frodo's shadowy personality. From the plot, we can see Gollum was present or otherwise in a manner that reflected the changes in Frodo's mind. As soon as Frodo left the Shire, Gollum began to follow him. Readers never see the presence of Gollum, only finding his blurry image in the words, until they passed into Mordor. We can notice that Frodo's shadow was strong or light depending on whether Gollum was present or hidden. Before leaving the Shire, Frodo's mind enjoyed peace. After leaving the Shire, Frodo's mind began to gradually change under the influence of the Ring. When entering Mordor, with the Ring's temptation increasing steeply, and Frodo's resistance decreasing strongly, Frodo finally gave in to the Ring, and his moral character diminished by trying to put the Ring on and presenting himself before the evil eye. Therefore, Gollum was the externalization of Frodo's evil power.

On the contrary, Sam, who had accompanied Frodo ever since they left the Shire, represented the kind aspect of Frodo. The Ring's most dangerous element was that it could corrode a human being's soul and estrange relationships between people. The conflict between Boromir and Frodo on Mount Amon Hen was due to the Ring's influence. When Frodo put the Ring on and became invisible, Boromir shouted, "Frodo, Frodo! Come back! A madness took me, but it has passed. Come back" (Tolkien, 1999, p.521). However, Sam, who had accompanied Frodo the longest, did not change at all and always preserved the virtuous qualities of hobbits. Tolkien wrote that Sam was "a reflection of the English soldier, of the privates and batman I knew in the 1914 war, and recognized as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter, 1981, p. 91). Therefore, the author endowed Sam with admirable qualities and power. During their journey to Mordor, Sam not only prepared Frodo's meals but also acted as Frodo's spiritual support. Every time Frodo fell into spiritual crisis, Sam would provide Frodo with the capacity to pass through the crisis and could always aid Frodo when he went into a "spiritual wasteland."

"The one Ring was endowed the power of ruling all the world by the Dark Lord. All things in Middle-earth are affected by its magic and evil power, but Tom in the Old Forest was an exception. When Frodo put on the Ring and was invisible in front of Tom, he found that the Ring lost its power. Old Tom was an incarnation of nature. That the Ring lost its power before old Tom meant that nature could also help to resist the Ring's evil power. In the process of destroying the Ring, the spiritual power given by nature also enabled the characters to escape being turned into a creature without humanity. Nature's influence can generally be divided into three aspects:

Nature is the place full of life and the real-world, possessing divinity. The reminiscence of nature is the call of beauty and the dream of divinity. However, beauty and divinity are vital factors in human beings both obtaining and retaining humanity. Therefore, the reminiscence of nature can draw Frodo and Gollum back from degeneration.

Gollum has lived in the cavern for several centuries with the Ring at hand. During this extensive time, although the Ring had the upper hand in Gollum's mind, it could not totally change him. In addition to Gollum's dogged life and sturdy defensive qualities, the recall of nature also secretly supported Gollum's mind. Gandalf said that, "Even Gollum was not wholly ruined. He has proved tougher than even one of the Wise would have guessed—as a hobbit might. There was a little corner of his mind that was still his own, and light came through it, as through a chink in the dark: light out of the past. It was actually pleasant, I think, to hear a kindly voice again, bringing up memories of wind, and trees, and sun on the grass, and such forgotten things" (Tolkien, 1999, p.72). "Was not wholly ruined" means that there remained



some conscience in Gollum's mind that had not been engulfed. "Light came through his mind" indicates that a recall of nature helped Gollum insist on not being controlled by the Ring.

As for Frodo, it was the recall of nature that supported him along the journey through Moria. The days when Frodo was tied up and tortured on the tower of Cirith Ungol were dark indeed, and the recall of nature supported Frodo throughout these perils. When Frodo lost hope of destroying the Ring, he responded gloomily to Sam that, "At least, I know that such things happened, but I cannot see them. No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of trees or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire. I began to see it even with my waking eyes, and all else fades" (Tolkien, 1999, p.1226). Frodo forgetting about nature indicates that Frodo had lost the last pure aspect of his mind and had become totally controlled by the Ring. "Naked" represents a materialized presence alluding to a spiritual emptiness. It suggests that Frodo had rendered his soul to the dark lord and only his body remained in the world. Therefore, like Gollum, he could not think of anything living. Nature was the last protective screen between them and the dark lord. Once they lost the protection of nature, they would fall into the dark abyss.

In the novel, salvation was also demonstrated at the places of Elrond, Lothlorien, and the High Sea. The three were all dwellings of elves. They are utopias created by Tolkien and represent perfect worlds that humans long to dwell in. The three spaces are filled with nature's beauty and healing power, so the Ring's power is restrained here, and Frodo's humanity is retained. The subsequent section portrays and explains how this healing power is achieved.

Frodo was wounded by Strider's sword on Weathertop. He would not die, but he was controlled by the dark lord's evil will. "He almost welcomed the coming of night, for then the world seemed less pale and empty" (Tolkien, 1999, p.277). "Then Frodo felt himself falling, and the roaring and confusion seemed to rise and engulf him together with their enemies" (Tolkien, 1999, p.281). Moreover, Frodo's arm became slightly transparent, which indicates his empty mind. Frodo's abnormal behavior in Elrond is caused by this, so Frodo's recovery in Elrond represented his spiritual recovery. As Tolkien described in the novel, "Elrond has a magic power, not long before, all anxious and fear would disappear from their mind." When Bilbo left the Shire and went on his journey, he lived for a long time in the Shire, and he gradually gained a peaceful mind, having a happy life there. He almost escaped the Ring's control, so when he saw the Ring again, he no longer lost his mind as he did before. He just received the Ring in a peaceful manner. Bilbo's devastated heart was cured in Elrond.

Lothlorien is a place full of beauty, goodness, and truth. Elves who live here worship it, so here is retained the purest and most beautiful scenery in the whole of Middle-earth. Walking through this fantastic dream-like world, Frodo's heart was shocked. Legolas said, "the sound of the falling water may bring us sleep and forgetfulness of grief" (Tolkien, 1999, p.441). Fascinated by its extreme beauty, Frodo would leave his heart in Lothlorien, which indicated that his heart was purified by nature, gaining salvation. Therefore, when the companions all received tests from Galadriel, the Lady of Lorien, all except Frodo experienced a dilemma. The other people wanted to choose, meaning their hearts were not strong enough to resist seduction. That Frodo could ignore Galadriel's temptation meant he already had the ability to fight against the evil Ring, his behavior having changed considerably since he walked into Lothlorien. Before going into the forest, he was tempted on four occasions. He resisted the Ring's temptation only once, because of the elf's song. The other three times he was subjected to temptation, he put the Ring on and went into the world controlled by the dark lord. When Frodo recovered, he felt loneliness for the first time, which estranged his fellowship. When he walked out of Lothlorien, he had developed the power to resist the Ring until it was destroyed at last. Therefore, we can see that Lothlorien, the embodiment of nature, endowed Frodo with the power of retaining his virtue and fighting against the malevolent Ring's control.

When the Ring was destroyed by the fellowship, all were happy. However, Frodo was upset about returning to his previous life. The Ring had clearly done great harm to Frodo's mind, which could not be cured. Back in the Shire, Frodo was always sick, and his mind was withered. When Sam tried to persuade Frodo stay in the Shire, Frodo said, "'Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them. [...] Your hands and your wits will be needed everywhere. 'come now, ride with me'" (Tolkien, 1999, p.1347). Sam chose to stay in his beloved Shire and arranged to sail to the West in order to sooth Frodo's injured soul. In western cultures, a boat can bring people to another world, so it implies Frodo's sublimation of the mind.

A crystal phial and earth from Lorien were given to Frodo and Sam as presents. Because these presents came from a divine world, they were endowed with great power from nature. Therefore, these two presents played an important role in the novel.

Mirrors are used by human beings to judge themselves. Because of its special function, a mirror usually plays the role of recognizing both human beings and the outside world. The Mirror of Galadriel is a galactic disk with divine water in it. It can not only tell the past, present, and future of those who stare at its surface, it can also reflect people's minds, helping them find and know their egos. As the queen described, "in this phial is caught the light of Earendil's star, set amid the waters of my fountain. It will shine brighter when night is about you" (Tolkien, 1999, p.491). In this sense, the crystal phial is not only a tool but also an embodiment of nature.

The earth given by Galadriel to Sam helped when reconstructing the Shire. When Frodo and his hobbit friends returned to the Shire a long time after they left it, they found that the Shire had significant negative changes. Life there had become complicated. Its people had lost faith in and kept away from others. To Frodo's dismay, in the Shire stood

great numbers of factories, many forests were cut down, rivers emitted foul smells. In order to retain the Shire's old beauty, Frodo and his friends undertook many actions. However, like Frodo's heart, the Shire could not regain its old scenery. Therefore, Sam brought out the earth to bring the Shire back to life. The dust given by the elf was filled with nature's power. It could make the soil regain its vitality. "His trees began to sprout and grow, as if time was in a hurry and wished to make one year do for twenty[...] an that flicker and pass upon this Middle-earth" (Tolkien, 1999, p.1339). "Mud" is the root of life and the continuance of it. The sprouting of Lorien's earth in the Shire suggests that hobbit culture will continue in the Shire through the healing spirit of nature's divinity. Therefore, because nature recovered its original appearance, the hobbits also retained their virtues.

To sum up, although the three hobbits who were closely connected with the Ring were tormented and tempted by its evil spirit, they strove to make their egos mediate between their ids and superegos to obtain perfect personalities. The happiness of the novel's ending lies in it illustrating that decent people will finally receive a happy life if they adhere to goodness and tenacity.

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# The Ideology of Language Purism in Online Interaction of Arabic Speakers

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**Abstract**—Recently, the critical relationship between ideology and discourse becomes one of the main issues discussed in a wide range of disciplines. Language ideology is described as a dynamic and inconsistent process that must be studied in its given context. This paper aimed to explore the sociolinguistic aspects of language ideology embedded in online interaction of Arabic speakers. The ideology of language purism was the focus of this study. Critical Discourse Analysis was employed as a theoretical framework to analyze the data. The study showed the dynamic nature of discourse and asserted interdiscursive indexing of linguistic purism ideology among Arabic speakers on Twitter. Three key ideological dimensions namely nationalism, modernity and humanity have been recognized from the data corpus. The data asserted considerable influence of people's cultural ideologies related to Islamic and Arabic identities on their language use and attitude. Modernity was also indicated to be one of the central factors influencing speakers' perception about their languages and language use. English was described as a global language to be used to fulfill various integrative, communicative, and affective functions in modern life. Speakers' comments about normality and personality in language use asserted the role those ideological perceptions play in their attitudes towards language purism. The intertextual analysis of the discourse revealed several linguistic features of texts under study including reporting speech, voicing, and shifting. These features served various pragmatic and social functions in this context.

**Index Terms**—language ideology, language purism, critical discourse analysis, textual analysis, indexing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language ideology and language attitude have been extensively researched in various areas of applied linguistics. They are among the key factors that should be considered in the study of language use in society (Ag & Jørgensen, 2013; Hatoss, 2013). The critical relationship between ideology and discourse became one of the main issues discussed in a wide range of disciplines. A question about the way ideology is discursively constructed and embedded in discourse has emerged across social science and humanities studies. Language ideology is described as a dynamic and inconsistent process that must be studied in its given context.

This research was conducted to explore the ideology of language purism embedded in online interaction of Arabic speakers. Specifically, this research aimed to:

- Explore the sociolinguistic aspects of language ideology embedded in online interaction of Arabic-speakers.
- Examine the ways this ideology is constructed in the online discourse.
- Investigate factors that affect language ideology in this context.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA henceforth) as a transdisciplinary research approach, has been employed as a theoretical framework for this study. This approach is selected as it allows the dialogue between multiple disciplines and the oscillating theories of ideology.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language ideology and attitude have been studied in a wide range of disciplines. Studying language ideology and attitude helps in understanding how everyday interactions reflect and reproduce the social construction of society (Fairclough, 2001, 2003). Language ideology is used as an instrument to describe linguistic practices as it explains how the speakers relate themselves to the languages.

However, in the vast majority of language attitude research, language ideology and attitude have been examined as static entities fixed in the individuals' minds. Thus, statistics-based methods of analysis, such as the matched-guise technique, have often been used to measure language attitude. Although such quantitative methods are useful in language ideology research, more recent scholars, such as González (2003), Jørgensen et al. (2011) and Hatoss (2013), assert the necessity to pay more attention to discourse analysis since language ideology changes over time as it is related to different variables in society, especially political and social conditions. This notion stems from the idea that ideologies are cognitively and socially represented in texts. Hence, discourse analysis is critical for holistic and deeper understanding of language ideology embedded in context.

There are many approaches to discourse-based analysis of language ideology and attitude that involve different levels of analysis. This includes, but is not limited to, Content-based approaches, Turn-internal semantic and pragmatic as well

as Interactional approaches (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). In more recent research, CDA, is widely used in social studies. It incorporates various approaches to analyzing texts including grammatical, semantic as well as conversation analysis (Fairclough, 2003). However, new version of CDA was developed recently by Fairclough (2003) namely 'Transdisciplinary' approach. According to Fairclough (2012, p.452), "Methodologically, this approach entails working in a "transdisciplinary" way through dialogue with other disciplines and theories which are addressing contemporary processes of social change". It draws upon a wide range of approaches to analyzing discourse from both micro textual, and macro sociological levels of analysis.

The ideology of language purism and language separation has been discussed across several linguistic contexts (Jørgensen et al., 2011). These ideologies reflect beliefs and attitudes expressed widely in political and educational discourse over the past decades. Several concepts appeared in literature that describe the person who separates languages and talks only one variety without switching between different linguistic codes (languages or varieties of languages) as an 'idealized native speaker' (Jørgensen et al., 2011). Equally, there are situations in which language is described as 'pure', and 'clean,' while in others it is defined as 'dirty' or 'unorderly' language (Burridge, 2010). Mixing languages is seen as "illegitimate mode of communication" even among the bilinguals themselves (Li, 2000, p.18). Purity refers to forms of languages that involve certain features, while others missing these features are considered as 'impure', 'improper', or even 'incorrect' (Jørgensen et al., 2011). These negative concepts often refer to the varieties beyond standardized form of a language or the forms that are infected by structures associated with other language or even colloquial forms of a language (Ag, & Jørgensen, 2013). Hence, speakers may violate the purity ideal both by using "foreign" stuff and by using "dirty" stuff (Jørgensen et al., 2011, p.32).

However, on the other hand, positive and more tolerant policy towards language use has emerged. Recently, there are calls from scholars, such as Cummins (2008) and Garcia and Sylvan (2011), for enhancing plurilingual use of languages and encouraging bilingual speakers to utilize their linguistic repertoire especially in academic and business contexts. As language ideology changes over time, there is a constant shift in attitude to the definition of 'proper' language or 'good' use of a language (Burridge, 2010). Thus, the positive attitudes towards specific linguistic behaviors might be found in a society while considered as 'taboo' in others.

Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) mentioned ideologies that had been found in different communities to indicate ideas of better and worse speech. They referred to an ideology of the sanctity of language in an ultraorthodox Jewish community in which the Hebrew language is restricted to be used only in religious sacred discourse. Similarly, standard form of Arabic language is regarded as pure form of Arabic worthy to be studied and used for both written and oral communication (Mizher, & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2014). Diglossic condition of Arabic has been discussed widely in literature (see e.g. Ferguson, 2000 & Palmer, 2007). Standard Arabic is known as a form of high variety for its religious status among Muslims while colloquial dialects are defined as low varieties of Arabic that are usually spoken during daily life conversations. The ideology of the standard language was also discovered in a study of Nugaraitė (2017) on people's attitudes toward their regional varieties in Lithuania and migration. In this study speakers were found to be affected by the three main factors, including education, the linguistic pressure from society and the Soviet language policy. People in Lithuania found themselves under pressure to speak right and avoid wrong form of the language while others in migration felt much freer to speak the variety of their choice. Still, according to the standard Lithuanian language ideology, the standard form was regarded for both, people in Lithuania and abroad, as a suitable variety to be spoken through different official events.

Purist ideology also serves several political and economic functions for its people. Certain linguistic varieties or features including some loanwords or accents were identified to be spoken by minorities such as "elite members" in Mexico and Spain to exclude people of the larger economy or political authority (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Burridge (2010) provides examples of five exchanges which indicate people's relationship and passion to their languages. Several expressions were found in public to imply negative influences of a powerful American English on Australian English such as 'Facing an American Invasion', go on to 'condemn this insidious, but apparently virile, infection from the USA' (Burridge, 2010, p.7).

Hence, language attitudes are highly affected by ideological perspective found in different societies because of various political, cultural, and social factors. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) explain that language purism is an ideological issue that is greatly affected by standardization process which is complexly related to different issues about language, politics, and power. Thus, researchers (e.g., Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Cummins, 2008; Burridge, 2010; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011) call for problematizing language ideology and utilizing linguistic diversity rather than assuming or reading its elements.

Furthermore, there is a call for analyzing linguistic features rather than languages as separate entities especially in multilingual environments such as super-diverse societies. According to Jørgensen et al. (2011), the concept of 'languages' as separate and bounded packages also pervades everyday life. They explain that languages are defined socioculturally or ideologically, and so the notion of studying 'language' is not accurate as an analytical level of language practices. The reasons of such claim are provided by Jørgensen et al. (2011, p. 28):

Firstly, this will prevent us from dealing with language production which cannot be ascribed to any individual "language". Secondly, we will inevitably simplify the range of resources employed by speakers.

For the purpose of this research, the ideology of language purism was examined. More attention was directed to Arabic language valuation among its speakers and their attitudes to switching between Arabic and other languages particularly English. The research is beneficial as it contributes to better understanding of language ideologies from both theoretical and experimental grounds. It sheds light on linguistic ideology related to Arabic among its speakers as expressed in their online discourse. Such clarification is important to recognize the reasons behind ideological behaviors and attitudes towards language use and find ways to deal with such views in different interactional contexts.

Recently, researchers in bilingualism (e.g., Li, 2011; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011) use several terms such as code mixing (CM), code switching (CS) and translanguaging interchangeably especially when studying sociolinguistic aspects of bilingual behaviors in different contexts. In this study, the terms 'mixing' and 'switching' are used interchangeably to describe the usage of multiple languages by bilingual speakers in one context.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a transdisciplinary research approach, is used as the theoretical framework for this study. This approach allows 'oscillating' between a focus on specific features of texts and other elements related to social structuring of language (Fairclough, 2003). By applying this approach, language ideology of Arabic purism was examined from both textual and sociological perspectives. Hence, this discourse-based analysis leads to a more fruitful examination of the factors affecting language attitudes, as it allows us to explore ideology constructed in discourse. On the macro level of analysis, sociological implications of the texts were included. The social, cultural, and political factors that affect language attitude and ideology were investigated. Linguistic features of the texts (including vocabulary and grammatical structures) were also considered for deeper analysis of texts.

In this research, the data was collected from two online sites: '*The international day of Arabic language*' and '*Speak only Arabic*' Hashtags in Twitter. Only comments that have explicit references to language and language use valuation were examined. This helped focus on the utterances that reflect language ideology. However, holistic investigation to the interaction in specific context was also important to discover the link between textual, interactional, and social factors.

Data analysis was divided into two main stages: 1) data organizing and coding 2) data description and discussion. After collecting data from the overmentioned virtual sites, they were imported into the NVivo coding program to be organized and coded. This software program is useful especially for qualitative research as it helps to organize and visualize data. It also contributes to analyze quantitative data and discover occurrences of specific features or actions under examination (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019)

Two methods of analysis were used for this purpose. Firstly, the Grounded Theory approach was used for textually-oriented analysis of texts. Main themes and concepts related to language ideology of Arabic were identified. Language attitudes towards Arabic and the use of Arabic were explored. Themes were developed inductively from the corpus of data, followed by clarification and thorough explanation. This includes identifying key words and employing textual analysis of posts and comments in several threads that have been selected for the research purpose. A thread is a Twitter series of connected Tweets written by one person.

Secondly, the intertextual analysis of discourse was conducted. It involved an intensive examination of several linguistic features found in the data corpus including reporting speech, voicing, and shifting. According to Fairclough (2003), intertextuality may include different linguistic elements, such as voicing and reporting speech. Fairclough (2003, p.47) explains his view as follows:

We can begin by noting that for any particular text or type of text, there is a set of other texts and a set of voices which are potentially relevant, and potentially incorporated into the text. It may not be possible to identify these sets with great precision, and they may be rather extensive and complex. But it is analytically useful to begin with some rough idea of them, for a significant initial question is: which texts and voices are included, which are excluded, and what significant absences are there?

Therefore, the notion of 'voicing' has been analyzed in terms of speakers' performance of different social roles and voices during their online interaction following Silverstein (2004). Focus was on the use of shifters and various lexical terms to index voicing and create specific discursive positionings that achieve different interactional goals. Shifting and distancing are two main linguistic features that have been investigated in this study.

In addition, Fairclough's (2003) two factors were used to analyze the occurrences of both direct and indirect reported speech found in the data corpus. The first examines the relationship between the original quote and the quoted speech while the second investigates the link between the quoted text and the text in which it is embedded. Fairclough (2003, p.49) mentioned four ways of reporting including direct reporting, indirect reporting, free indirect reporting, and narrative report of speech act reporting. This study involved two types of reported speech. First the direct reporting, which is the actual words used in quotation marks, and the second type is the indirect reporting, which refers to a summary of what was said or written.

Excerpts of data texts are identified in '*Italic*' font with '**CAPITAL**' font for the word that has certain grammatical features (e.g., voicing & shifting). In addition, 'underlining' feature is used to direct attention to the main idea in the text for more clarification. These excerpts include English translation for the Arabic words in the data corpus on Twitter. Translated Arabic words into English were often directly provided. Quotation marks were used to give direct examples

of the occurrence of different lexical terms in the data. Within some excerpts, explanation also followed in parentheses for ambiguous expressions.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Thematic Analysis

The study showed discursive indexing of linguistic purism ideology by Arabic speakers in online interaction. Data demonstrated interdiscursive nature of discourse, and how it is affected by different ideological practices. Three key dimensions, namely *Nationalism*, *Modernity* and *Humanity* have been recognized from the data corpus as the major themes for understanding ideological perceptions of speakers in the research context. These themes are arranged subsequently into various subcategories (sub-themes) as seen in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
THE OCCURRENCES OF DIFFERENT THEMES AND SUB-THEMES IN THE ONLINE DATA

Ranking	Ideological dimension	Occurrences No.	Occurrences Prec. %
<b>A</b>			
<b>Nationalism</b>			
1	Arabic identity	20	19
2	Islamic identity	14	13.5
3	Arabization	7	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39.5</b>
<b>B</b>			
<b>Modernity</b>			
1	Communication	21	20
2	Civilization	13	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32.5</b>
<b>C</b>			
<b>Humanity</b>			
1	Personality	16	15.5
2	Normality	13	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>Grand total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>

Nvivo software was used to classify speakers' linguistic ideologies regarding the speakers' perspectives about their language and language use. Recurrent ideological themes are discussed and then followed by the analysis of discursive ideology construction in the discourse. Thematic analysis was useful for the study purpose due to its flexibility which allows researchers to examine different experiential concerns of speakers regarding their linguistic behaviors. It also helps to investigate several personal and social factors affecting speakers' ideology and practices. According to Clarke and Braun (2017, p.297), "TA (Thematic Analysis) can be used to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experience, views and perspectives, and behavior and practices; 'experiential' research which seeks to understand what participants' think, feel, and do". The ideological sub-themes included under the three main themes under discussion, were ranked from the most frequent into the least in each thematic section as seen in table 1 above. Further discussion of the three main dimensions and their subsequent related concepts is included in next sections.

##### 1. Nationalism

One of the core themes that have been identified in the study corpus was *nationalism*. It was embedded in the discourse through three main subthemes including *Arabic nationalism*, *Islamic nationalism*, and *Arabization*. Nationalism could be recognized from the recurrent utterances about Arabic (19%) and Islamic identities (13.5%) within the texts (see Figs. 1 &2). It also appeared in speaking about the ideology of Arabization (7%), and calls for working on adapting, and localizing English words into Arabic setting. In this discourse, nationalism ideology includes indications to certain values, and ethics related to Arabic speakers' use of their language. In this section, thematic analysis for these themes is provided with sufficient discussion for the data.

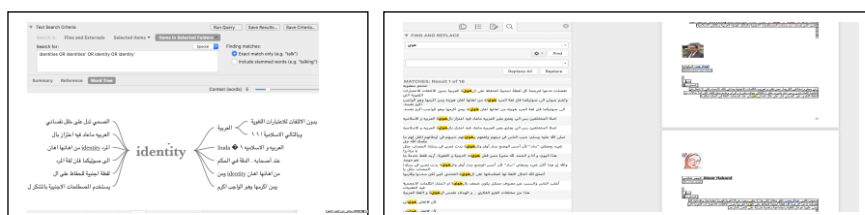


Figure 1. The occurrences of the word identity in the data corpus, Nvivo 12 (left) and MS Word (right)

File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
P data 2	Files\IP Data	1	2.01%
P data 3	Files\IP Data	3	1.73%
P data 4	Files\IP Data	1	0.14%
P data 5 A	Files\IP Data	1	1.19%
P data 5 B	Files\IP Data	1	2.11%
P data 6 A	Files\IP Data	2	0.44%
P data 6 B	Files\IP Data	1	2.47%
P data 7 A	Files\IP Data	2	1.00%
P data 7 B	Files\IP Data	1	1.43%
P data 8	Files\IP Data	1	2.67%

File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
P data 1 B	Files\IP Data	3	3.45%
P data 2	Files\IP Data	3	4.53%
P data 3	Files\IP Data	1	1.14%
P data 5 A	Files\IP Data	1	1.17%
P data 6 A	Files\IP Data	5	2.45%
P data 6 B	Files\IP Data	1	1.35%
P data 7 A	Files\IP Data	6	2.32%

Figure 2. The frequency of the reference to both Arabic & Islamic identity in the data corpus, Nvivo 12

One salient sub-theme that has been recognized in the data corpus was Arabic nationalism. Arabic is recognized as a core value of Arabs as an ethnic group. Arabic is considered among Arabs as a shared symbol and a marker of a group identity that must be reserved to save their ethnic identity (Suleiman, 2003,1994; Bitar,2011). Collected data proved that the national status of Arabic among its speakers affected their attitude toward languages, and different linguistic practices such as mixing languages. According to comments provided by the interactants, purism, which involves using only Arabic, was regarded as one feature of being Arabic and maintaining Arabic identity (excerpts 1 and 2).

*Excerpt 1*

*And I join my own voice to your voices, the language of a person is his identity, then if he is insulting it he is insulting himself, and whoever valued it, (and that is what WE must do), valued himself*

*Excerpt 2*

*And I speak Arabic because MY language is MY identity*

Moreover, some comments even go beyond to reflect stronger rejection of mixing by labelling people who switch as unhealthy people and who may be suffering from several psychological and cultural deficiencies (excerpt 3).

*Excerpt 3*

*Do not say workshop but say: 'dawrah' (Arabic word for workshop), because using a foreign word in Arabic, or Arabic in a foreign sentence without a reason is not understandable and may be caused by a psychological deficiency the speaker suffers from.*

Further extreme perspective against language mixing was also reflected in speakers' comments about using English. It was regarded as a 'murder' in which Arabic identity is described as the victim (excerpt 4). Others see mixing English with Arabic a kind of intellectual invasion (excerpt 5). Invasion's remnants are used metaphorically in this comment to indicate negative impact of western culture on Islamic identity and culture as expressed in Arabic world. This notion was asserted by other speakers who indicated the necessity to fight for heritage and origin as seen in excerpt 6.

*Excerpt 4*

*Oh, thanks God, I repudiated THAT who killed his religious and linguistic identity*

*Excerpt 5*

*This is one of the intellectual invasion's remnants, and the target is eliminating Arabic identity and language*

*Excerpt 6*

*Oh God mercy, I do not know how WE feel when WE speak English or mix, is that a damn or media trick, why WE are not proud of OUR language and the real cultural life, with media do not help US to fight for OUR heritage and origin, it is so awful, and I am so regretful because I am trapped in it*

However, complex relationship between Arabic language and ethnicity in the Arabic speaking world was discussed by many researchers such as Hatoss (2013), Myers-Scotton (2005) and Suleiman (2003). Myers-Scotton, (2005, P.113) explains it saying:

But certainly not all speakers of one language are in the same nation state. The Middle East presents a different picture regarding language. Arabic is the classic vehicle in which Islam, a major ingredient in Arab nationalism, is expressed.

Hence, Arabic is often regarded as a core value for ethnicity among Arabic speakers with Muslim affiliation, but it is not usually the case with others from different religious and cultural backgrounds including some minorities in Arabic countries such as Sudanese in the South Sudan and Maronite Christian in Lebanon (Hatoss, 2013; Myers-Scotton, 2005).

However, the marked nature of language in defining identity is dynamic as it is greatly affected by many sociological, sociolinguistic, psychological, and psycholinguistic factors that interact in a complicated way, to define the most salient features identifying a group's identity, (see e.g., Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Hatoss, 2013).

Data corpus showed strong ideological attitudes and practices toward using Arabic as the language of Islamic religion. It is described in the speakers' comments as "*the language of Islam, the language of Quran, the language of worship, the language of revelation from heaven, and the language of the last prophet*". Speakers' attitude to Arabic, and English indicated the ideology of Islamic nationalism. The comment below (excerpt 7) showed this strong ideology towards mixing Arabic and English which is clearly affected by the speakers' religious ideology of Arabic language:

*Excerpt 7*

*WE must glorify OUR language and feel proud about it, as it is the language of the last revelation from the heaven and the language of the last prophet*



*Excerpt 8*

*A: Using foreign language to show off is not modernity anymore except for THOSE who recently became modern, confident person knows more than one language but feels proud of HIS OWN language whatever this language is, especially if it is a beautiful language like the language of the Quran*

*B: Yes, you are right all languages are poor compared to the language of the Quran*

*Excerpt 9*

*Yes, only Arabic language deserves respect because it is the language of the holy Quran and it is the one that refines behaviors and make them perfect, but the mixed and futile languages have nothing good*

Moreover, the ideology of purism was asserted in the data corpus through reported speech (direct quotation) from the holy Quran (excerpt 10), and the speech of the prophet Muhammad (excerpt 30).

*Excerpt 10*

*Mr Suliman, the psychological problem is in OUR minds, WE are mentally deficient, and this resulted from the French colonization, and the schizophrenia between present and future, as for the past, God says in His holy Quran: "Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand." Ask THEM by God why Allah revealed this verse in Yosef surah (Joseph chapter in the holy book)*

Religious ideology, expressed above, is found in various contexts among Muslims from different cultural backgrounds and within different interactional contexts (Suliman, 2003). Using "pure" Arabic and rejecting switching could be noticed from their discourse during different formal and informal interaction. Arabic, and standard Arabic in particular, has its prestigious status from the early period of Islam for its various religious, cultural, and educational functions (Suliman, 2003; Palmer, 2007; Versteegh, 2014). As mentioned earlier in this paper, diglossic condition of Arabic has a considerable role across different interactional contexts in Arabic world (see Palmer, 2007; Ferguson, 2000). Standard Arabic, which is the language of the holy book of Muslims is known as a form of high variety and thus it is typically used for formal and educational purposes. Colloquial dialects, on the other hand, are defined as low varieties of Arabic that are usually spoken during daily life conversations. The data supports similar situations that reflected diglossia of Arabic where foreign languages are defined as linguistic codes used within limited contexts for specific academic, and communicative purposes. It is also in line with several studies that showed a sort of conflict in the usage of different languages in Arabic contexts especially in academic environments that involve mixing standard Arabic with its various dialects, as well as with French and English (see e.g., Al-Asal & Smadi, 2012; Mizher, & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2014; Chakrani, 2011).

Dual Arabic-Islamic nationalism could be noticed from the data. Arabic was asserted as the language for both Islamic and Arabic communities. Several comments assert social, and religious values of Arabic particularly for people from Arabic-Islamic background (excerpt 11):

*Excerpt 11*

*Only dummy people, THOSE who feel proud about languages other than Arabic, currently no one at all feels proud of Arabic and Islamic identity, there are only cheers and flashiness "Islam and language" and there is no reality*

Comments in this section assert the ideology of Arabic purism and define Arabic as superior language over other due to its religious and social status specifically in Muslim-Arabic society.

Among the interesting themes that emerged in the dataset was the call for Arabization as an action should be taken to adapt English terms into the Arabic corpus. The reason behind this call was to avoid using English words within Arabic speaking contexts. The Arabization of any foreign name means that Arabs pronounce and spell it according to their grammar, orthography, and tongue (Al-Zubaidi, 1994 cited in Al-Shbiel, 2017).

The data at hand, included several comments of speakers who claim the notion of Arabization. In a post about using the English word "workshop" (see excerpt 3 above), many replies asserted the idea of the urgent need to Arabize foreign words that are commonly used by Arabic speakers in Arabic discourse (excerpt 12).

*Excerpt 12*

*Respectful opinion my great sister, WE suggest Arabize foreign words including nouns that are not pure scientific without blaming anyone. But there are cases of linguistic mixing that are unhealthy and reflect psychological trouble and deficient identity of SOME PEOPLE, WE must be specific*

What is worth mentioning in this context, is the use of several concepts that are related directly to purism and cultural identity. These concepts strongly reflect ideological concerns regarding Arabic discourse. Arabization is regarded as an action that must be taken to reveal several ethical and cultural values. "Respect, honor, pride, victory, bravery" were among the frequent words used to assert purism theory and claim strong rejection of any bilingual discourse that include mixed Arabic-English words. On the other hand, several terms were used to describe mixing negatively including "shame, insult, deficiency, stupidity, ignorance".

Hence, serious calls for Arabization, and its crucial role to develop contemporary Arabic language were recognized in the data. This finding is in line with several views and demands found in literature regarding the efforts that must be done by the Academy of the Arabic language in developing the Arabic language to cope with modernization, and scientific development (Al-Shbiel, 2017; Kharyoush, 2003; Mizher & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 2014).

## 2. Modernity



The second main central theme that was recognized from the study corpus is *modernity*. Two critical sub-themes were included in this dimension namely *civilization* and *communication*. Several comments with considerable frequency (32.5%) referred to the direct relationship between language use and social, technical, scientific, educational, and economic aspects of life. Modernity and mixing were recognized as two central interrelated ideologies in the discourse of purism. However, these comments reflected both positive and negative perspectives about mixing English words in Arabic speaking discourse.

Speakers strongly expressed their negative attitudes toward using English in Arabic contexts to show themselves as civilized people. Strong language was used to describe people who mixed their languages as “*inexperienced*” and “*recently educated*” and “*(later) civilized people*”. “*(Recent) modern*” was also the expression that has been mentioned to describe people who mix English with Arabic words in their speech as people who have just known civilization (e.g., excerpts 13 & 14):

*Excerpt 13*

*It is all right; speak whatever language you want but speak it in your study field or workplace as there is no need to show off yourself here and there because showing off with foreign language is not modernity or education anymore except for (recent) modern people*

*Excerpt 14*

*It is sad but funny thing and there are many reasons for that, SOME PEOPLE think that with this practice THEY are being modern and civilized people but, in my view, with respect, THEY are dummy. But some need it for university and study purposes, but the worst thing is when THEY ask you: ‘what it means in Arabic?’.*

However, other comments that assert mixing as a sign of modernity were in favor of using English terms especially nowadays in this globalized and growing interdependent world where people may need to express themselves as modern and educated through using more common international words in their speech such as inserting some English technical terms (excerpts 15 & 16):

*Excerpt 15*

*Nowadays, most Arabic words are not found in the dictionary anymore, and if you use them, you will be so old, so learn English but do not use it more than Arabic*

*Excerpt 16*

*Unfortunately, anyone writes in Arabic, speaks Arabic, especially in private companies, is recognized as ignorant and they laugh at him. They ask YOU to use English and they are all Saudi*

Using English, whether through inserting some English words or producing full English utterances, was a necessity for both inter- and intracultural communication. English globally plays a role of a lingua franca when people from different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds come to communicate. Among the interesting comments that explain the role of mixing to enhance interaction are the excerpts 17, 18, and 19 below in which inserting ‘foreign’ terms is considered understandable and justified practice.

*Excerpt 17*

*Sometimes WE need some foreign words for more clarification of the meaning of an Arabic word and in other times some foreign words are closer to the mind than Arabic ones, that’s it*

*Excerpt 18*

*Mixing is normal, and it is called code switching and it has an important role in improving communication*

*Excerpt 19*

*English is everywhere and pervades everything, I do not know why, maybe it is the media, yes, the reason is the media, movies, social media, and so on*

Thus, mixing was regarded as normal or usual feature of communication to have a good opportunity in modern life and to keep pace with a great revolution of technology in modern societies.

### 3. Humanity

The third principal theme in the data corpus is *humanity*. Speech about humanity was interesting as speakers attempted to explain and justified the linguistic behaviors of people who mixed their languages specifically English and Arabic. Two main sub-themes related to the idea of humanity were identified including *personality and normality* with 15.5 % and 12.5% frequency respectively. However, both positive and negative attitudes were recognized from the speakers’ comments.

Mixing was described as a normal behavior for ‘bilingual’ speakers as they have two linguistic codes, and they may employ both during their interactions in different spaces. Education and communication through various communicative situations encourage people to practice mixing. Hence, this linguistic behavior normally appears during their daily contact (excerpts 18 ‘above’ & 20).

*Excerpt 20*

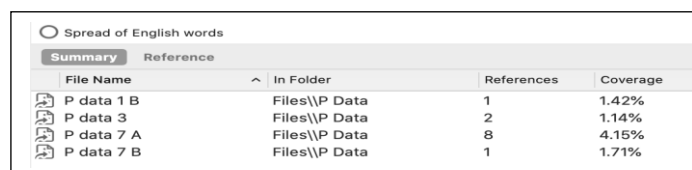
*It (mixing) is a normal behavior, I am not supporting it, but it is normal and not a psychological deficient especially for people who have Arabic as a mother tongue, and they have a foreign language for communication and education*

More explanation was provided by other speakers to assert mixing as *"very normal behavior"* for the common and widespread usage of certain English words that are known, and usually used by people despite the existence of their Arabic equivalents (excerpt 21).

*Excerpt 21*

*You say words like 'bank' and 'counter', and these words have equivalents in Arabic, but linguistically these words were assimilated into Arabic. they are common 'in mouths', so it is a very natural linguistic behavior*

Hence, the spread of English was mentioned as one focal reason of mixing and inserting English words into Arabic contexts. The words like *"common, prevalent and widespread"* were frequently used by speakers when talking about using English words by Arabic speakers in different contexts (see Fig. 3):



Spread of English words				
Summary		Reference		
File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage	
P data 1 B	Files\VP Data	1	1.42%	
P data 3	Files\VP Data	2	1.14%	
P data 7 A	Files\VP Data	8	4.15%	
P data 7 B	Files\VP Data	1	1.71%	

Figure 3. The frequency of the occurrence of the notion of the spread of English across the world in the data corpus, Nvivo 12

Personality was another theme which was noted from speakers' comments about language use. The effect of different personal traits on speakers' linguistic behaviors was mentioned frequently in the data. Examples of interesting ideas reflected by several speakers were mixing for being *"arrogant,"* and *"have a desire to show off"* linguistic ability or modernity, as early mentioned. Another related, and exciting description that was attached to people who mix English with Arabic words was *"fashionable people"* who try to imitate others to seem stylish. Several characteristics that reflect strong negative attitudes toward mixing were used to describe people who speak English within Arabic discourse. Certain negative features were attached to them such as *"less or not confident about themselves, ignorant, stupid, and disgusting"*.

Nevertheless, some positive words were also used to describe people who mix Arabic and English in a certain context. They were described as *"nice, funny, and beautiful"* people. However, only (21%) of comments about people who mix English words within Arabic discourse were identified as positive. Speakers expressed their acceptance and provided justification as a normal and expected behavior in current multilingual environments.

## B. Textual Analysis

The data corpus involves different positions and roles of speakers on Twitter regarding using Arabic. There are multiple personas manifested by these speakers throughout the data which reflect dynamism in discourse and assert creative indexical moments (Reyes-Rodríguez, 2008). In these moments, speakers were claiming distinctive ideological perspectives, and evoking different interactional identities. Reporting speech, voicing, shifting, and distancing are the linguistic features that were found in the data corpus, and are discussed in this section.

### 1. Reporting Speech

Several occurrences of both direct, and indirect reported speech were found in the data corpus. Reporting speech was used to reflect different perspectives regarding using diverse linguistic codes available to the speakers (Arabic and English) in a single Arabic discourse. Fairclough's (2003) two factors in analyzing reported speech were applied to analyze and explain this linguistic feature. The first examines the relationship between the original quote and the quoted speech while the second, investigates the link between the quoted text, and the text in which it is embedded.

In several replies on different posts that involved purism ideology, direct quotations from Islamic religious books were identified. They include direct quotation of verses from the Quran (see excerpt 10 above), and from Prophet Mohammad speech (excerpt 22).

*Excerpt 22*

*Now most English words became dominant for most speech of people, the reason is not known may be for weakness in identity feeling and this could be included in the Prophet speech when he said: "You will follow the wrong ways, of your predecessors so completely and literally that if they should go into the hole of a mastigure, you too, will go there."*

These excerpts demonstrated a clear refusal of using English words within Arabic speaking contexts. They were replies on a post that requests Arab speakers to avoid using the English word (workshop or course) instead of its Arabic equivalent *"dawrah"*. Strong expressions were used to assert the idea of speakers' tendency for assimilation through acting and speaking like western people (English and French native speakers in particular as in the two examples above). In excerpt 10, after asserting the idea of abnormality of mixing languages, the speaker elaborated his speech by direct reporting of verses from the Quran for demonstrating the high value of Arabic being the language of the holy Quran.

Similarly, excerpt 22 showed the strong ideology against dominance of foreign terms in Arabic speaking context. After attempts to discover the reasons behind switching, direct quotation of Prophet Muhammad speech was added. The hadith of the Prophet, cited above, is usually used to draw Muslims' attention to avoid following other cultures. Such

religious quotations are used to assert mixing as non-favorable behavior that reflects the desire of identity assimilation or shift.

In addition, the data involved several Islamic expressions that are quoted from the Quran, and Prophet Muhammad discourse such as “(We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return), (There is no power and no strength except with Allah), and (God bless you). It is a common feature of Islamic discourse to serve various pragmatic and social functions (Susanto, 2006; Almansour, 2010). Thus, these quotations are usually borrowed, and used by people in both Arabic and Islamic discourse.

Moreover, various quotations from Arabic literary texts were identified in the data. They include verses from famous Arabic poems that reflect the beauty, and the high value given to Arabic over other languages (excerpts 23 & 24):

*Excerpt 23*

*As Hafiz Ibrahim said: I am the sea in my depths, pearls are concealed, so can they ask the diver about my shells!*

*Excerpt 24*

*My language, and I am proud I fell in love with it, it is the beauty, and its merit is clarity It is Arabic, there is no doubt that the Quran is prominent in its rhetoric.*

In this discourse, both direct and indirect reported speech were used to approve or disapprove switching of speech. These examples were mostly given to assert that mixing is wide-spread, and inevitable linguistic behavior during communication in the modern world; as explained by the speakers in excerpts 25 and 26.

*Excerpt 25*

*I sat there to explain and theorize about the importance Arabizing science, and I provided some proofs and evidence and I said while I am Arab and “the patient” (English word inserted) is Arab why we teach them in English, and this was very disappointing as it was contradicting self in such an honorable case*

*Excerpt 26*

*It is widely spread in Egypt when you come to download an application, they, for example say do you want (“tset up= to set up”) the program (t= is an Arabic inflectional morpheme means to)*

These quotations assert the idea of Arabic purism whether it was directly meant through the verses that explain the superiority of Arabic over other languages for being the language of the Quran or indirectly as in several comments which reflect the notion of being independent and proud of the identity and avoiding using others’ (often Western people) norms of behaving including their languages.

Using religious expressions that reflect dissatisfaction with this linguistic behavior also indicates the purism ideology of people in this context. These religious expressions interweave within the narrative about the context of being in contact with Arabic background speakers where Arabic could be used as the only means of communication with no need for any other linguistic code.

## 2. Voicing, Shifting, and Distancing

Voicing, shifting, and distancing are other linguistic features that have been recognized from the data corpus. The data involved invoking of different social roles and voices into distinctive online interactional exchanges. There was use of shifters to index voicing in the data context. Several lexical terms were also used to create specific discursive positionings and achieve different interactional goals.

Using pronouns was one prominent linguistic feature that serves several functions in the discourse. Pronouns were employed to index distance and create otherness (Silverstein, 2004). Using plural personal voice “WE” (e.g., excerpts 1, 6 & 7) served the function of collective identification as indicated by Brewer and Gardner (1996). Pronouns also imply the meaning of speaking from the position of the wider Arabic community by relating their shared concern (excerpt 27).

*Excerpt 27*

*Exactly, WE must be proud about OUR language under any circumstances, foreign utterances must never be used and inserted into OUR Arabic language, and WE say it is a part of OUR speech. unfortunately, I see interviews, you do not know, and you may feel shocked of PEOPLE and how THEY are blundering in speech from Arabic into English*

Likewise plural personal voice “US” (excerpt 6) as well as the possessive, both singular and plural, pronouns “MY & OUR” (excerpts 17 & 34) were also used to reflect Arabic community voice and show distance from others. Moreover, by using these pronouns speakers may invoke the Islamic society voice. This claim could be recognized through direct reporting of different religious texts and expressions as discussed above.

In excerpt 34 above, the speaker also changed voice between the narrator and the interlocuter to show solidarity (Reyes-Rodríguez, 2008). While the speakers include certain groups of people (speakers of pure Arabic) and recommend them to keep speaking pure Arabic utterances, they exclude others who mix languages. Thus, the third person plural, both subjective and objective, “THEY & THEM” (e.g., excerpts 10 & 14 above) as well as the demonstrative pronouns “THAT & THOSE” (e.g., excerpts 4 & 8 above) were used, to mark distance from the other people who insert English words into their Arabic speech.

Furthermore, the data include using of some vocative items that served different interactional functions. Two main functions that have been identified from the data were directing interlocuter attention, and asserting solidarity, for example, “My dear brother, my dear sister, my dear daughter, my son” and others showing respect (e.g., “my teacher,

our leader, boss"). Additionally, formal address such as "Mr., sir, and Dr." were used for similar purposes. Speakers in these utterances employed such vocative voices to express distinct levels of power including parents' voices, brothers, children, teachers, and students. This asserts creative use of different linguistic features to index ideology in interaction.

Moreover, there was noticeable use of specific lexical items to index purism ideology of speakers. Several lexical items were used to show distance and reposition of self and others. "People, some, someone, group, and elite" are among words frequently used to describe speakers who switch their Arabic speech into English.

Purism ideology could also be recognized from the frequent referencing to the three different periods of time 'past, present, and future' (see excerpt 10 above) and especially words connecting to the 'past' like "history, heritage, parents, grands, past generation". These words reflect both spatial and temporal links to different contexts and showed speakers use of different contextual markers. Calling for reposition to the past invokes the Islamic society voice of power in the past in which Arabic is recognized as main feature of Islamic worships (Suliman, 2003; Versteegh, 2014). This may explain the reason for holding Arabic language purism ideology. Arabic was claimed to be the language of past, present, and future and thus it must survive and not to be tied to specific context or time as it is related to Islam to accomplish several religious practices such as prayers, and recitation of the Quran.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the sociolinguistic aspects of language ideology embedded in online interaction of Arabic speakers. The ideology of language purism, and more specifically Arabic purism was the problem under study. CDA approach was used as a theoretical framework to analyze the study data. Through this approach, both textual and sociological perspectives of the Arabic purism ideology were investigated.

The study asserted discursive indexing of linguistic purism ideology among Arabic speakers on Twitter. Nationalism was indicated as one of the most powerful factors affecting people's attitudes to their linguistic practices. The data asserted the considerable influence of people's cultural ideologies related to Islamic and Arabic identities on their language use, and attitude. Calls for Arabization as an important action prevailed purists' speech to save Arabic and Islamic identity.

Besides, modernity and switching were recognized as central interrelated ideologies in the discourse of Arabic purism. Despite the prevalence of negative attitudes toward mixing, it was described as critical behavior that fulfills various communicative, integrative, and affective functions in modern life. It was considered necessary to keep pace with a great revolution of technology in current modern and multilingual societies. Speakers' comments about mixing as normal and personal behavior asserted the significant role those ideologies play in their attitudes towards language purism. There were noticeable agreement and acceptance for inserting English in Arabic discourse. Through the intertextual analysis of the discourse, several linguistic features of texts were also recognized including reporting speech, voicing, and shifting. These features served various pragmatic and social functions in this interactional context.

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# The Traumatic Mark in *Invisible Man*

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**Abstract**—*Invisible Man* is the representative work of Ralph Ellison, a famous contemporary American black writer, which mainly describes the growing process of a black man. The aim of the thesis is to analyze the racial trauma that the protagonist experienced at school, in the factory and political group, the three kinds of symptoms after the trauma-hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction, and the result that the protagonist cannot recover from his trauma due to racial discrimination.

**Index Terms**—trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, recovery of trauma

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ralph Ellison (1914-1994), as a contemporary black American writer, spent seven years finishing his first novel *Invisible Man* which was recognized as the most important and influential novel. Thanks to this famous novel *Invisible Man*, he won American Medal of Freedom and was admitted to the American academy of sciences. In 1914, Ellison was born in Oklahoma City and his name was taken from the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, because his father expected him to be a poet like Emerson. When he was a child, he loved music and received a scholarship to Tuskegee Institute for learning music. Due to something wrong with the scholarship, he had to move to New York where he started to engage in literary creation with the encouragement of the famous black poet Langston Hughes and the novelist Richard Wright. (Wang, 1993) In the early stage, he mainly wrote comment articles and published two collections of essays *Shadow and Act* and *Going to the Territory* which expounds his view on literature, music and the political life of black Americans. In 1952, the famous novel *Invisible Man* was published.

In *Invisible Man*, the author narrates that a young, nameless man seeks for individuality in the society full of racial discrimination and segregation and becomes mature in psychology. The content of this novel involves three parts: the life in South Negro University, the encounter in freedom paint factory of New York and the experience in Harlem as well. The author expresses complex and abstruse themes though a seemingly simple storyline so that it can be comprehended from different perspectives.

Some scholars examined this novel by adopting the approach of post-colonialism or by exploring the existential theme of protagonist's life experience and the symbolism of characters' identity. From their research achievements, it can be seen that theme of this novel, existential identity and the resources caused the young man's invisibility.

However, few scholars analyzed this novel from the perspective of trauma theory. Trauma Theory involves Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Recovery and is widely apply to psychiatry. From this perspective, we can experience the injury the black young man got in the white-dominated society.

This thesis will probe the black young man's experience on the basis of trauma theory and the influence on the man's self-identification. It not only provides a new perspective for us to comprehend this novel but also fills with enlightenment for everyone's journey.

## II. TRAUMA THEORY

### A. The Development of Trauma Theory

The word "trauma" comes from Greek, and integrates with literature at the beginning of 1990. It is believed that the origin of trauma theory can be traced to America in 1980. At that time, Vietnam War veterans held a constant political movement and organized inflammatory groups against the war, which increases public understanding of the consequence of war and public support for veterans. They also entrusted a specialized institution to study the influence of wartime experience on combatant and proved that there was a direct relationship between Post-trauma Stress Disorder and war. Thus, PTSD was put into the diagnostic criteria in American medical and psychiatric profession.

Trauma theory rose at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Freud was the first one to study trauma. He analyzed trauma in the aspect of sex, consciousness and desire at first. And then, Freud shifted his attention to the psychological trauma of the war, aiming to study the relationship between combat neurosis and moral personality of the patient so that he could help them recover from trauma. Freud's study of trauma laid a solid foundation for subsequent trauma studies. (Tao, 2011)

In the 1890s, a large number of important scholars have sprung up to study trauma theory and their subjects also began to diverge. And of all the researchers, Cathy Caruth was the most remarkable who was first to put "Trauma theory". Relating to the American psychological association description of PTSD, he further examined characteristics of traumatic experience on the basis of Freud's study. In his study, traumatic events can be sudden and catastrophic, then appear repeatedly so that traumatic experience will make the subject feel hard to handle. What's more, the traumatic

experience will exist in the mind of the person affected, to the extent that the heart of the person who was injured has been carrying the trauma of the experience can't face. (Caruth, 2016)

The factors led to traumatic experience are complex and extensive. It may come from flood, earthquake, fire disaster, war, or due to violence, ignorance and emotional abuse. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a famous psychiatrist - Judith Herman who promotes the development of trauma theory mentioned in her work *Trauma and Recovery* that "Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of human beings, we speak of atrocities." (Herman, 2015, p.33)

From what is mentioned above, it can be seen that trauma theory is important for the definition of trauma. And this thesis mainly studies protagonist's psychological trauma in *Invisible Man* in the help of Herman's work *Trauma and Recovery*.

### B. Post-Trauma Stress Disorder

In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman analyzes trauma theory from three aspects: the nature of traumatic event, post-trauma stress disorder and the trauma recovery. (Xu, 2018)

Trauma events undermine human's ability to adapt to daily life. The severity of trauma events cannot be measured by any single dimension. When one is in danger, the sense of threat puts one on alert. The one will feel angry, tired and painful, and then the sense of threat will cause intense fear and anger. Then these responses make threatened individuals armed to resist and escape. (Herman, 2015) Human's self-defense system will be broken by trauma when resistance and escape do not work, which is the key point PTSD focus on.

"The many symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder fall into three main categories: hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction." (Herman, 2015, p.35) Hyperarousal means constant expectation of danger. Once one has trauma experience, he or she will be on high alert as if danger would happen at any time. Their bodies are ever alert to danger, and unexpected stimulus or specific stimulus related to their trauma experience will make them extremely panic. Intrusion means memories of traumatic moments linger in one's mind. Even the danger has passed for a long time, injured one will still experience the same trauma event in his or her mind repeatedly. Constriction means the numbing reaction after giving in. One who show this symptom feels utterly powerless and despaired as if his or her soul has separated from body. (Herman, 2015)

### C. Recovery of Psychological Trauma

The recovery of trauma plays an important role in a person's traumatized life, which begins only when the survivor is aware of it. However, the recovery of psychological trauma is hard and arduous task. According to Herman, the process of recovery of trauma can be divided into three stages: the establishment of safety, remembrance and mourning, reconnect with others. The first step of recovery is to establish the survivors' sense of safety which is the premise for other treatment. The second step is that traumatized person begins to tell her trauma story at length. This task is to transform the patient's traumatic memory so that it can be a part of his life. The third step is to reconnect with others. (Herman, 2015) In this progress, the task for the survivor is to create the future because he was able to give his trust to someone trustworthy again. Reconnecting with others will contribute to developing a new relationship with others. If three tasks above are finished, it's time for traumatized person to rebirth.

## III. TRAUMA EXPERIENCE IN SEARCHING FOR INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

### A. As a College Student

The invisible man was an honest man who tried to get recognition from others, therefore he tried to create himself according to the values instilled in him by his school education. In white club, he was taken to join the fight between black boys and forced to crawl over the electric blanket to grab the coin. His speech delivered in the club won the award scholarship for black college. The protagonist took the president of the college Dr. Bledsoe as an idol and was always deferential toward him. However, when he was assigned to take the white board Mr. Norton to the slum inadvertently, he made him see the dirty and messy of the black. In order to publish him, Dr. Bledsoe pretend to writing reference letters for him to find a job but actually make him never find a job. Having experiencing these traumas when he was a college student, invisible man showed the following symptom:

#### 1. Hyperarousal

"After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment." (Herman, 2015, p.35) It is the first symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder—hyperarousal. It can be seen that the protagonist showed this symptom when he attended the white social gathering.

At white social gatherings, invisible man rushed up into the front of ballroom where stood a magnificent blonde. However, the protagonist felt a sense of fear, as the author described in this book: "I felt a lot of cold chill me" "I felt a wave of irrational guilt and fear. My teeth chattered, my skin turned to goose flesh, my knees knocked." (Ellison, 1995, p.24) In such case, even danger did not appear, he also felt a sense of cold and fear as if danger was coming. He could



infer that the blonde would have bad experience and felt powerless. From her eyes, invisible man felt that the fear in her eyes was almost exactly the same as the fear he had felt and that he had found in some of his companions. Those who had experienced trauma event before will remind themselves of their own trauma experience at the sight of others' suffering. What's more, traumatic patients will feel guilt when they witness others' suffering or death in terms of Herman's view. (Herman, 2015) Thus, that is why invisible man felt guilt and fear when he saw the blonde.

## 2. Intrusion

According to Herman, "long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present." (Herman, 2015, p.37) It is the second symptom of traumatic stress disorder--intrusion, which can be found in his contact with Mr. Norton.

In the Golden Day, Mr. Norton lost consciousness again in the pushing and shoving of others. Invisible man was pushed into Mr. Norton's body and his face gave the protagonist a nameless dread. He was never so close to the white and was afraid of the "white ghost". In the protagonist's mind, they had to obey the white to get recognition and got accustomed to suffering from them. He never dared to be close to the white, so Mr. Norton's face reminded him of what he suffered and experienced in the past. Because of how scaring his memory about the white is, even the white's face will give him the same feeling as the past. At this time, he showed the symptom of intrusion.

## 3. Constriction

The third main symptom of PTSD is constriction. According to Herman: "When a person is completely powerless, and any form of resistance is futile, she may go into a state of surrender." (Herman, 2015, p.42) At that time, he will feel numb and helpless.

Invisible man came to New York to find a job with Dr. Bledsoe's reference letter. After several letters didn't help him get reply he expected, he started to feel scared with no reason. In his dream at that night, his grandfather appeared, which make him feel that he played a role in a conspiracy hatched by Dr. Bledsoe and Mr. Norton. Later, a recipient of the letter gave him the letter to read, knowing the truth at least. He felt despaired and sat on the bed laughing. Just like the author described: "I laughed and felt numb and weak, knowing that soon the pain would come and no matter what happened to me I'd never be the same." (Ellison, 1995, p.225) At that time, the man will become numb and feel he is not the same as before. Invisible man was looking for a job hopefully with confidence in Dr. Bledsoe. One day he found his hope and expectation had collapsed and was been cheated all the time, all the wounds he suffered came upon him. Of course, he felt helpless and numb, which inferred the symptom of constriction.

### B. As a Worker at the Liberty Paints Plant

Invisible man got a job at the liberty paints plant, but he was transferred to work in the basement of the production of color carrier because he mistook the paint remover for an additive. One day he was fighting with the foreman who always found faults with him, and then no one check the pressure gauge, causing an explosion in the workshop. He found that he was lying in hospital as an experiment for doctors. Doctors and nurse are so cruel that they continued conducting their experiment regardless of his pain. All the damage made him feel numb and began to think about his identity. Having experienced so many traumas at the Liberty Paints Plant, he showed the following symptoms:

## 1. Hyperarousal

According to Herman, patients' bodies are always on the alert for danger, they also have an extreme startle response to unexpected stimuli, as well as an intense reaction to specific stimuli associated with the traumatic event. A traumatic person will be on high alert at all times, such as the protagonist did as a worker. (Herman, 2015)

During invisible man's working at the liberty paints plant, he was careful to deal with the foreman Kimbro. When Kimbro checked the paint he stirred, he felt something was different and suspected Kimbro was cheating him just as Dr. Bledsoe did. Trauma patients always are on high alert for fear that they will be hurt again. (Herman, 2015) Invisible man was so afraid of the white man Kimbro scolding or punishing him that he felt very nervous and timid when his work was checked. Invisible man's attitude towards Kimbro is a black man's fear when he confronted a white man.

## 2. Intrusion

According to Herman, reviving a traumatic experience, whether in the form of memories, dreams or actions, carries with the emotional intensity of the original event. The survivor is continually buffeted by terror and rage. (Herman, 2015)

After invisible man was transferred to work in basement, he accidentally came in the workers' conversation. He was slighted and ignored by these workers as before, which made him feel angry. "The sudden change made me puzzled and angry, as though they were making me the butt of a joke." (Ellison, 1995, p.259) "Here in this room, my defenses were negated, stripped away and checked at the door as the weapons, the razors and pistols of the country boys checked on Saturday night at the Golden Day." (Ellison, 1995, p.261) Here, invisible man experienced the feeling of being ignored and humiliated by others again. He felt that he was hated by everyone here, which reminds him of the fact that he lived with hostility all his life. At that time, he felt angry but there was nothing he could do.

## 3. Constriction



When traumatic patient shows the symptom of constriction, he may feel no longer fear but actually reality is constantly being distorted though it seems that he returns to normal life. (Herman, 2015)

Invisible man was lying in hospital as an experiment after the workshop exploded. Doctors are conducting experiment regardless of his pain. He felt no fear after he was discharged from the hospital: "I was no longer afraid. Not of important men, not of trustees and such; for knowing now that there was nothing which I could expect from them, there was no reason to be afraid." (Ellison, 1995, p.295) At that time, he was no longer afraid of others. After experiencing so many traumas, invisible man turned into a zombie and suspected his identity. He alternated between sobriety and confusion: "We, he, him -- my mind and I -- were no longer getting around in the same circles." (Ellison, 1995, p.295) Traumatic events provide a powerful trigger for entering a trance state. At that time, invisible man has been traumatized by his trauma experience so that he became numb and absent-minded.

### *C. As a Spokesman for the Brotherhood*

Invisible man was saved by a woman named Mary when he fainted in the street because of weakness. Subsequently, he witnessed an elderly black couple violently evicted from an apartment building by whites who reclaimed their rental home. Angered by the incident, he led the crowd in protest which made him be invited to join the brotherhood by Jack who appreciated his gift for public speaking. Invisible man worked hard for the brotherhood but actually he was taken advantage as a tool to preserve the organization at the expense of Harlem blacks. Due to what he experienced in the Brotherhood, there are following symptoms can be found in him.

#### *1. Hyperarousal*

When traumatic person shows the symptom of hyperarousal, he will keep alert on everyone lest they will hurt him like Dr. Bledsoe did before.

Later on, invisible man was chased by police on the account that his speech caused revolt. A kind white girl showed him the way to flee, however, he suspected her motivation and showed the symptom of hyperarousal at this time, which can be seen in his mental activity. For example, "Had she put the man on my trail? What was she doing there?" (Ellison, 1995, p.336) It can be seen that he was wary of anyone. And then, his speech talent attracted the organizer of the brotherhood to accost him. However, he was careful and nervous during their conversation due to so many traumas he experienced. And we can find the sign as following: "Suddenly would tight as a tension spring I turned almost lethargically." (Ellison, 1995, p.337) "I was tense again" (Ellison, 1995, p.339) "I said tensely, 'What are you trying to do?'" (Ellison, 1995, p.341) These descriptions embodied invisible man's symptom of hyperarousal which refers to his hypertension.

#### *2. Intrusion*

When traumatic person shows the symptom of intrusion, the similar experience will remind him of his painful memory and feel guilty if not help people in pain.

On a cold New York Street, invisible man was seeing that an elderly couple was evicted by whites and noticed the photo of couple when they were young. Their eyes were staring at him, which made him felt that a kind of rummy memory was awoken and reverberated in his mind. He picked up an identity card from the ground, written "Liberty ID Card". Due to it, his hands were shaking and breathing fast. The scene aroused his feelings of deprivation, bringing back his painful memory. Trauma patients will experience his pain again when he in a similar situation. Thus, when invisible man was seeing that couple was experiencing pain he can regard them in empathetic light. When the trauma patient witnesses others' pain, he will produce strong feelings of guilt. Therefore, invisible man delivered a speech for the couple and organized the crowd in protest.

#### *3. Constriction*

When traumatic person shows the symptom of constriction, he is easy to be in trance states. After invisible man fled to underground, he was whirling on in the blackness. Finally, he could barely move, and lay beyond the point of exhaustion. As the author described in this novel: "It was a state neither of dreaming nor of waking, but somewhere in between, in which I was caught like Trueblood's jaybird that yellow jackets had paralyzed in every part but his eyes." (Ellison, 1995, p.663) After experiencing so many traumas, he has been in trance state. In his illusion, he smiled at Jack and no longer felt scared. As the author described: "And Jack came closer, threatening, and I laughed. 'I'm not afraid now' I said." (Ellison, 1995, p.665) A traumatic person in the state of constriction will feel numb and no longer afraid of anything.

### *D. Fail in Recovering from Trauma*

#### *1. Fail to Establish Safety*

The first stage of recovering from trauma is to establish safety, but invisible man failed at it. Establishing safety begins by focusing on control of the body and gradually moves outward control of the environment (Herman, 2015) However, invisible man fails to rebuild a sense of trust, which attributes to the society full of racial discrimination.

In this novel, invisible man was taken to join the fight between black boys and then crawled the electric blanket. Even so, he was still filled with hope to the college, trying to get recognition. After he made a mistake, he chose to

believe that Dr. Bledsoe would help him find a good job. However, the fact that it is just Dr. Bledsoe's conspiracy made him feel powerless and unsafe. Because of it, invisible man became more careful when he dealt with others. Nevertheless, in order to prove his identity, he still trusted Jack and joined his organization to devote himself. Again, his trust was not rewarded in the brotherhood. It is their deception that hinders his efforts to establish safety. He believed again and again only to be cheated again and again. The safety he had just established was shattered again and again, which doomed him to failure. "Because no one can establish a safe environment alone, the task of developing an adequate safety plan always includes of a component of social support." (Herman, 2015, p.160) There's no social support but only deception and hurt in the white dominated society, which implied that his failure to establish safety.

## 2. *Fail to Tell Traumatic Experience*

Telling traumatic experience can contribute to the recovery of trauma, which is the second stage of recovering from trauma. However, the protagonist also failed at it. When traumatized person feel powerless and despaired, it is necessary for him to find support from someone trustworthy by sharing his sad experience.

In this novel, almost all the people were hostile to him or pretended to giving him a hand. There's nobody trustworthy for him to pour out his sad story. Even though there's someone to be trusted, he didn't choose to tell his traumatic experience. After he was been experimented by the doctor in factory hospital, he was saved by a kind woman Mary. Mary offered him accommodation and encouraged him to trust himself, gradually invisible man started to trust Mary. But even so, he never told them his suffering. For an invisible man, it is essential for them to find someone trustworthy to rely on. Unfortunately, invisible man failed to tell his sad stories from beginning to end.

## 3. *Fail to Reconnect with Others*

The third stage of recovering from trauma is to reconnect with others, which wasn't finished by invisible man. Traumatized person has to develop a new self and relationship if he or she tries to recover from traumatic experience. Herman put it that, "if the survivor is lucky enough to have supportive family, lovers, or friends, their care and protection can have a strong healing influence." (Ellison, 2015, p.63) It can be seen that no one can recover from the traumatic experience alone and they have to heal his psychological trauma relay on the new relationship with others.

As we can see in this novel, there's no trustworthy man for invisible man to depend on. For Dr. Bledsoe, an excellent black man, encouraged invisible man to work hard for his life as his idol. But what he actually did for invisible man's mistake betrayed his trust. Thus, the new relationship between invisible man and Bledsoe fails to establish. In brotherhood, he was invited to make speech by Jack for the organization. He worked hard for the organization so that he could get recognition from others. At last, he found that the purpose of this organization is not to work for citizen but to preserve the organization at the expense of the black's interests. Thus, the relationship between them is broken. As Herman put it that traumatic events shatter the sense of connection between individual and community, creating a crisis of faith. (Herman, 2015) Almost these people around invisible man are not honest to him, the loss of faith of the society made the impossibility of reconnecting with others.

# IV. THE INFLUENCE OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE ON *INVISIBLE MAN*'S SELF-SEARCHING

## A. *Psychological Changes*

During his self-searching, invisible man suffered a lot from traumatic experience, which has an impact on his psyche. Thus, it is necessary for us to pay attention to the protagonist's psychological changes.

As a college student, he was innocent to plan for his future until when he was experimented in hospital, therefore he started to suspect his identity. As a spokesman in brotherhood, he was cheated and his dream was broken, which made him realize his real identity- an invisible man. Thus, his psychological changes can be divided into three stages: innocence, suspicion and realization.

Invisible man lived in the south of America and looked forward to achieve his naive dream. Because of his excellent performance in the graduation ceremony, he was invited to make a speech at white social gathering, which made him proud. Invisible man considered it as an honorable affair and prepared for it carefully. Unexpectedly, it is actually a kind of battle royal for the white to entertain themselves. In order to deliver his speech, he did what the white required according to grandfather's last words. Finally, he was rewarded for a briefcase which stands for the responsibility and duty. But the naive boy didn't get it that the white just wanted him to perform the duties of a slave. He was educated to please the white to get their recognition when he was a child. Thus, he tried to finish something that make the white satisfied after he entered the college due to scholarship. During his conversation with Mr. Norton, the board director repeated that you were my fate, which was not understood by the pure black man. He just felt that Dr. Norton was a kind man from surface, while actually there's deep racial discrimination in his mind. What is discussed above shows that invisible man is a pure, innocent and ignorant man who just hope to achieve his American dream by his hard work.

At the beginning, invisible man is always filled with hope for his dream and future. Even having so much traumatic experience, he still hoped to find his own identity. However, the cruel reality made him suspect his real identity in the society and the belief he followed. Gradually he realized that his identity actually is an invisible man. The first weakening is that he found Dr. Bledsoe's deception when he longed to get a good job with the faith in Bledsoe. It is ironically that Bledsoe, his idol, trick him all the time and break his dream. The second weakening is that he found he

was lying in hospital to be experimented by cruel doctors. He found a job in New York and work hard for his future. However, the whites' hypocrisy made him suspect his grandfather's counsel "Do as the white do". He started to suspect the belief he followed is whether right or not. After workshop explosion, lying in hospital, he asked himself: "WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" (Ellison, 1995, p.281) That is to say, he started to suspect his identity. At that time, he became angry and suspicious rather than pure and innocent. The third realization is that when he was saved by a black woman Mary and looked after by her. Mary encouraged him to achieve his dream and accept the black culture. Invisible man realized that he should try to accept black culture and no need to be shameful as a black man. Afterwards, he was invited to join the organization Brotherhood, unfortunately, he found that the white in this organization considered the black as political tools to help them preserve the organization as political tools. That is the fourth realization for invisible man. In the white dominated society, black men are forced to obey the white at the expense of sacrificing themselves. Finally, he realized that the reason why his identity is an invisible man is that the white didn't want to recognize their existence. "All his frustrations were rooted in his skin, which made accept the darkness of darkness in the end." (Wang, 1999, p.126)

### B. Identity Realization

In this story, the protagonist was searching for himself all the time, and the process of searching can be divided into three parts:

Firstly, he was so innocent without shame of his skin and work hard to achieve his dream. "He loses himself totally, firmly believing that being obedient and servile, he will be helped by the white to achieve his American dream." (Wang, Xu, 2014, p.88) Thus, as for the invitation to make a speech from the white, he regarded it as an honor. Even the prize briefcase which infers that he should be on the blacks' duty was seen as an award by him. Thus, he was pleased to enter the college and filled with hope of his future without suspecting his identity. Secondly, after being cheated by Dr. Bledsoe, he felt a lot of despair but still wanted to achieve his dream when he worked at the Liberty Paints Plant. However, after an explosion, he was experimented in hospital by doctors who ignored his feelings. At that time, the protagonist began to suspect his real identity. There are several questions lingered in his mind: "Who are you?" "What's your mother's name?" "Who is your mother?" Actually, "the protagonist's experience at the Liberty Paint Plant and its hospital is a turning point in his quest for self-identity." (Wang, Xu, 2014, p.90) Thirdly, he was suffered from the organization Brotherhood as being cheated by Dr. Bledsoe. Experienced so much trauma in the course of his searching, he realized his non-identity. Finally, he realized his invisibility and accepted the reality that he was not recognized with responsible identity.

## V. CONCLUSION

As one of the most influential black writers, Ralph Ellison vividly depicted the black's life in the society full of racial discrimination. His wonderful work *Invisible Man* describes that a young black man is seeking for his identity in the white dominated society. Besides an introduction of the author and work, this paper focuses on the protagonist's traumatic experience, symptoms and recovery.

In this novel, the protagonist experienced a lot of traumas in the process of self-identity. As a college student, he tried his best to finish the task Dr. Bledsoe assigned but surprisingly was cheated by the president later. As a worker at the Liberty Paints Plant, experienced an explosion, he found that he was experimented by cruel doctors. As a spokesman in Brotherhood, he devoted himself in the organization to achieve his dream but to found that he was just a tool to help the white preserve the organization. In such society, no one can give the protagonist help to recover from his trauma experience. Invisible man presented three symptoms: hyperarousal, intrusion, constriction. In his recovery, he failed at establish safety, tell traumatic experience and reconnect with others. Finally, he realized his real identity and chose to live underground.

This paper offered readers a different perspective of the study of *Invisible Man* with the help of *Trauma and Recovery* written by Herman. Through the analysis of the protagonist's trauma, it can help readers have a better understanding of this essay.

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# Narrating the Meaning of Existence: An Analysis of the Autobiographical Narratives of Three Translingual Writers

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**Abstract**—This paper focuses on the autobiographical narratives of three translingual writers, Nabokov, Brodsky and Makine. Their narratives are analyzed by taking into account Vygotsky's ideas on the relationship between language and thought (1987), Bruner's ideas on storytelling (1986, 2002) and Swain's concept of *linguaging* as a meaning-making process through language (Swain, 2006). The paper investigates the question of the role of language in making sense of writers' lives as displaced people. In order to answer this question, we analyzed the autobiographical narratives for *linguaging* episodes that are defined as autobiographical excerpts where the writers attempt to make sense of their lives as displaced people. The following major themes have been identified as the result of the analysis: construction of the lost world out of new experiences, discovery of the meaning of existence, reconciliation through cultural and linguistic hybridity. We believe that the implication of the study is that it can resonate with the lives of other displaced people at the time of cultural and linguistic superdiversity.

**Index Terms**—translingual writers, *linguaging*, sociocultural theory, autobiographical narrative, linguistic superdiversity

“...attempting to recall the past is like trying to grasp the meaning of existence”  
(Brodsky, 1986, p. 1)

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the autobiographical narratives of three translingual writers, Nabokov (1989), Brodsky (1986) and Makine (1997). Their narratives are analyzed by taking into account Vygotsky's ideas on the relationship between language and thought (1987), Bruner's ideas on storytelling (1986, 2002) and Swain's concept of *linguaging* as a meaning-making process through language (Swain et al. 2009; Lenchuk & Swain, 2010). Within this framework, narrative is viewed as a meaning-making tool that facilitates the narrator's understanding of *the self* and of the social and cultural contexts of their lives. In his analysis of narrative, Bruner states that in the mind of a storyteller, memory and imagination are interconnected, as memory can never fully capture the past, nor can it ever escape it. By alienating the storyteller from the familiar, storytelling provides a space to language about the past, and through *linguaging*, the narrator discovers new knowledge and new experiences.

The three writers, whose narratives are analyzed in this paper, are refugees. At different points of time they were forced to leave Russia and seek asylum in a new land. While being in the liminal spaces of their newly adopted countries, the three displaced writers have used their narratives to reconstruct and reinvent three different Russian worlds. In the process of narrating, they have gained knowledge about their past, present and future. Through their narratives, they have shown us that narrative is a profoundly human act and that it helps us understand who and what we are, what has happened and why we are doing what we are doing (Bruner, 2002, p. 64).

This paper is organized in the following way. Section two provides a description of the theoretical framework chosen in this study. Section three states the research question and the chosen methodology. Section four provides a description and an analysis of the data. Section five discusses the findings and section six suggests some pedagogical implications for the teachers and learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) based on the results of the study. Section seven concludes the paper.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section we discuss the theoretical concepts presented in the works of Vygotsky (1987), Bruner (1986, 2002) and Swain (2006, 2009) that emphasize the role of language in the social and cognitive development of human beings.

Specifically, in our theoretical discussion, we highlight Vygotsky's arguments about language as a social and cognitive tool that assists in the development of cognition. Swain's concept of *linguaging* as a process of using language to make meaning is an extension of Vygotsky's concept about the dialectical relationship between thought and word. In our theoretical discussion, we draw upon the ideas proposed by Bruner on narrative as a meaning-making tool. The narrator's understanding of past events, an attempt to reconcile the present and the past and plan for the future are created through narratives.

#### A. Vygotsky's View of Language as a Meaning Making Activity

In his important work *Thought and Word* Vygotsky (1987) criticized the associative and structural approaches to linguistic analysis by claiming that thought and word cannot be viewed as "two independent and isolated elements" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 244). Influenced by the ideas of Hegel's dialectics, Vygotsky stated that separate units, such as words and thoughts could not be studied in isolation from the whole process of verbal thinking because as units they possess the qualities of the whole. Therefore, speech cannot be studied in isolation from the thinking process in the same way that thinking cannot be studied in isolation from speech.

It was necessary to identify the unit of analysis that would include the characteristics of the whole, and Vygotsky found that "the unit that reflects the unity of thinking and speech [is] in the meaning of the word" (1987, p. 244), which constitutes the phenomenon of speech and thinking at the same time. Vygotsky criticized Saussure's pure associative and fixed connections between words and objects and emphasized "the changeable nature of word meanings and their development" (p. 249). If we assume that the nature of word meaning changes, then this can lead us to changes in the relationship between thought and word, where "the structure of speech is not a simple mirror image of the structure of thought... Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word." (p. 251)

Vygotsky convincingly demonstrated based on examples from Russian literature that words can change their meanings. He quoted Dostoevsky who once noted that "it is possible to express all thoughts, all sensations – even a whole chain of argument – through a single word" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 271). Words can develop their meanings; they start their movements from the purely indicative and nominative function to "meaning independent of object relatedness" (p. 255). Vygotsky also noted that "our normal conversational language is in the state of dynamic equilibrium between the ideas of mathematics and the harmony of imagination. It is in the state of continuous movement that we call evolution" (p. 253), and "thought follows in the transformation of the syntax of meanings into the syntax of words" (p. 255).

#### B. Bruner's Position on Narrative as a Meaning Making Activity

Bruner, as a cognitive psychologist and a follower of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, has been interested in studying the effect that the process of narrating a story might have on the cognitive and emotional state of the storyteller. Although he acknowledged the richness of the tool, i.e. language, that is there to tell the story, the main question that he was investigating is the following: What effect does the process of telling a story have on the storyteller's knowledge and experience about himself/herself and about the outside world? First, he noted that a story has two landscapes: the landscape of action, and the landscape of consciousness, i.e. what those involved in the action know, think or feel (Bruner, 1986). Therefore, in Bruner's words, stories can be used as mediators. Through the process of making the familiar strange again, through the process of transmuting "the declarative into the subjunctive" (Bruner, 2002, p. 12), storytellers are able to constantly construct, reconstruct and maintain their lives and experiences, and most importantly, their self-hood that "can not proceed without a capacity to narrate" (p. 86):

Through narrative, we construct, reconstruct, in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow. Memory and imagination fuse in the process... The human mind, however cultivated its memory or refined its recording systems, can never fully and faithfully recapture the past, but neither can it escape from it. Memory and imagination supply and consume each other's wares. (p. 93)

Bruner also emphasized the relationship between memory, storytelling and identity, where "individuals who have lost the ability to construct narratives have lost their selves" (Bruner, 2002, p. 86). In addition, he claimed that stories told about someone's past experiences and knowledge may link a storyteller to the other, i.e. "to read other minds, to tell what others might have been thinking, feeling, even seeing" (Bruner, 2002, p. 85), and when someone is experiencing memory loss, "[they] seem to have lost not only a sense of self but also a sense of other ... selfhood is profoundly relational, that self, ... is also other" (p.85). Thus, for Bruner, stories exist on the two levels of the individual and the social. Stories that are told to reflect our experiences help to maintain our identity and establish our uniqueness "... by comparing our accounts of ourselves with the accounts that others give us of themselves" (p. 65). Therefore, by developing his approaches to storytelling based on Vygotsky's theory of mind, where language is used as a social and cultural tool that mediates our relationship with the outside world, Bruner emphasized the great potential of storytelling, where "the joint and mutual use of language gives us a huge step in the direction of understanding other minds" (Bruner, 1986, p. 62).

#### C. The Concept of Linguaging

For the purpose of this paper, we consider the autobiographical narratives created by three writers as an opportunity

to be engaged in the process of *linguaging* that can be referred to as “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (Swain et al., 2009, p. 89). The concept of linguaging builds on the ideas of Vygotsky on the dynamic relationship between thought and language, more specifically, on the importance of language as a mediating tool in the development of higher mental processes, e.g., the development of abstract thinking. Swain (2006) views linguaging as a cognitive process, i.e. an activity of the mind. In studies on linguaging, it is shown that this process of “coming-to-know-while-speaking” (Swain, 2006, p. 97) facilitates the development of metalinguistic knowledge of abstract grammatical concepts (e.g., the concept of the passive voice) by the learners of French as a second language (Swain et al., 2009). While doing research with elderly people suffering from mild cognitive impairment, Swain and her colleagues (see e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 2011) discovered that when provided with multiple opportunities to language, the residents of the long-term care facility who participated in the study demonstrated improvement in memory functioning and their self-esteem. For example, while linguaging with the researcher, one participant was able to reconstruct her past experiences, make a better sense of them and position herself as an active and capable participant in a series of sessions with the researcher (Author & Swain, 2010).

It should be noted however that one should not view linguaging as a purely cognitive construct. The process of linguaging about a grammatical concept or past events of someone’s life is deeply experiential, and only by being willingly and actively engaged in this process, one can internalize an abstract concept or make sense of one’s life. It is also believed (see e.g., Lankiewicz, 2014) that linguaging is a construct that is related to human agentivity inasmuch it is related to human cognition.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

In this paper the focus is on the autobiographies of three translingual writers whose first language is Russian but who wrote and continued writing in English and Russian, in the case of Nabokov and Brodsky, and in French, in the case of Makine. By using the ideas developed in the works of Vygotsky and Bruner, this paper aims to investigate the following question: What role does language play in making sense of writers’ lives as displaced people? In order to answer this question, we analyzed the autobiographical narratives for linguaging episodes (LE) that are defined as autobiographical excerpts where the writers attempt to make sense of their lives. The following emerging themes have been identified based on the analyzed data. For Nabokov, the major theme is to construct the Russian lost world out of his experiences as a student at Cambridge. For Brodsky, by reconstructing his past, he raises important philosophical questions and reflects on the meaning of existence. For Makine, it is the possibility of reconciliation through achieving cultural and linguistic hybridity. Figure 1 reflects the trajectory of the three major themes identified in the narratives of the three translingual writers.

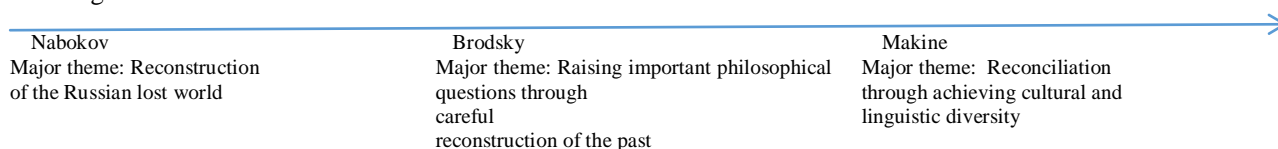


Figure 1. The linguaging trajectory: From a careful reconstruction of the homeland in exile to cultural and linguistic hybridity

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss the linguaging episodes selected from the narratives of the three translingual writers.

#### A. *Linguaging in Exile: The Story of Nabokov*

Vladimir Nabokov was forced to leave Russia after the Revolution of 1917. Throughout his life, Nabokov wrote the following autobiographical narratives: *Drugie Berega* (“Other Shores”) (1956) that was published in Russian, *Conclusive Evidence: A Memoire* (1951) that was published in the United States and *Speak, Memory: An autobiography revisited* (1989), “an English retelling of Russian memories” (Nabokov, 1989, p. 9).

In what follows, we present the analysis of the five LEs taken from Nabokov’s last autobiography. The writer’s struggle as a displaced person and his initial failure to adjust to his new surroundings, which caused him much emotional pain, are particularly evident in these five LEs.

The first years of Nabokov in Cambridge that he attended on a scholarship are colored with the profound “feeling of rich nostalgia” for the Russian world that had been lost, as seen from LE 1.

LE 1: The feeling of nostalgia (Nabokov, 1989, p.188-189)

“And I thought of all I had missed in my country, of the things I would not have omitted to note and treasure, had I suspected before that my life was to veer in such a violent way.”

This deep feeling of nostalgia provides an explanation as to why Nabokov cherished the Russian language as the only tangible Russian thing in his life as an *émigré*. In the autobiography, Nabokov reflects on his attempts to recreate the Russian world by surrounding himself with the literary works of the great Russian writers: “the poetry of Pushkin and Tyutchev, the prose of Gogol and Tolstoy, and also the wonderful works of the great Russian naturalists who have

explored and described the wilds of Central Asia" (p. 191). Moreover, in his room, Nabokov keeps a secondhand copy of Dahl's *Interpretative Dictionary of the Living Russian Language* from which he reads at least ten pages a day. He starts composing poems in Russian that according to him, are not inspired by any emotion but rather by a strong desire to keep "a vivid term or a verbal image" (p. 192) for its own sake. LE 2 presents Nabokov's reflection on the role of the Russian language during that period of his life:

LE 2: The fear of losing Russian (Nabokov, 1989, p. 191)

"My fear of losing or corrupting, through alien influence, the only thing I had salvaged from Russia - her language - became positively morbid and considerably more harassing than the fear I was to experience two decades later of my never being able to bring my English prose anywhere close to the level of my Russian."

LE 2 reflects Nabokov's fears of losing the language of his memories and of a great literary tradition that helped him live through a "painful condition of unrest" (p. 192) that he had experienced while being a student at Cambridge.

Nabokov's years at Cambridge were not only associated with the feelings of nostalgia and emotional pain. Through languaging about his experiences in Cambridge, Nabokov comes to realize the unique nature of his time in Cambridge, as reflected in LE 3:

LE 3: Time in Cambridge (Nabokov, 1989, p. 194)

"...I see this basic property [of Cambridge] as the constant awareness one had of an untrammelled extension of time...Nothing one looked at was shut off in terms of time, everything was a natural opening into it, so that one's mind grew accustomed to work in a particular pure and ample environment ... that yielding diaphanous texture of time was ... especially welcome to the mind."

Further, Nabokov states that this very environment helped him to become a Russian writer (see LE 4).

LE 4: Becoming a writer (Nabokov, 1989, p. 194)

"The story of my college years in England is really the story of my trying to become a Russian writer ... Cambridge was in no way affecting my soul, although actually it was Cambridge that supplied not only the casual frame, but also the very colors and inner rhythm for my very special Russian thoughts." (p. 194).

Nabokov finishes his reflections on the years spent in Cambridge with a description of the state of harmony that had been finally reached during his "last and saddest" (p. 194) spring in Cambridge when he obtained his Honour's degree (see LE 5).

LE 5: The state of harmony (p. 194)

"I suddenly felt that something in me was as naturally in contact with my immediate surroundings as it was with my Russian past, and that this state of harmony has been reached at the very moment that the careful construction of my artificial but beautifully exact Russian world had been at last completed."

The five LEs selected for the analysis in this section serve as a languaging space that provided the writer with an opportunity to recall and reconstruct the past, but most importantly, to make meaning of the events and experiences of his life and to reconcile the world of his lost Russia with his newly adopted country.

### B. Grasping the Meaning of Existence: The Story of Brodsky

The life of a migrant is not always associated with losses. A newly acquired language could be used in Tannenbaum's words as "a distancing, therefore liberating, device" (2003, p.16). The autobiographical essay *Less Than One* (1986) written in English by Joseph Brodsky, a poet and a Nobel Laureate, is an example of how the English language becomes a language that provides the writer with "a boost" (p. 4), albeit a foreign one, to make meaning of the important philosophical questions of life, freedom, memory, totalitarianism, the role of culture and arts in people's lives. The process of making meaning of these questions is reflected in the LEs that are selected and analyzed in this section.

In LE 1, the poet reflects on the non-linear nature of our memory in the following way:

LE 1: Brodsky on memory (Brodsky, 1986, p. 30)

"Memory, I think, is a substitute for the tail that we lost for good in the happy process of evolution. It directs our movements including migration...the process of recollection is never linear... [memory] coils, recoils, digresses to all sides, just as a tail does; so should one's narrative..."

The non-linear nature of memory leads the poet's interpretation of the events that took place in his childhood and reflects his realization of the nature of the feeling of estrangement and ambivalence. In a LE 2 where Brodsky discusses the omnipresence of Lenin's portraits that he learned to ignore at an early age, the poet reflects on his "first lesson in switching off, [his] first attempt in estrangement" (p. 6).

LE 2: Brodsky on Lenin (Brodsky, 1986, p. 6)

"In a way, I am grateful to Lenin. Whatever there was in plenitude I immediately regarded as some sort of propaganda...in fact, the rest of my life can be viewed as a nonstop avoidance of its most importunate aspects."

In his autobiographical essay, Brodsky uses language to "dissect [the] experience" (p. 31) of his own generation grown up under the power of a centralized state, which provides him with an opportunity to realize that suppression is as part of human nature as the desire for freedom (see LE 3).

LE 3: Brodsky on totalitarianism and human nature (pp. 21-22)

"A certain advantage of totalitarianism is that it suggests to an individual a kind of vertical hierarchy of his own, with consciousness at the top. So we oversee what's going on inside ourselves; we almost report to our consciousness on our



instincts...It is not that I think suppression is better than freedom; I just believe the mechanism of suppression is as innate to the human psyche as the mechanism of release.”

At the time when the centralized system of the state reduced everyone’s existence to “uniform rigidity” (p. 20), “the preference [of Brodsky’s friends] was to read rather than to act” (p. 28), as seen from LE 4.

#### LE 4: Brodsky on books

“Books became the first and only reality, whereas reality itself was regarded as either nonsense or nuisance. Compared to others we were ostensibly flunking or faking our lives. But come to think of it, existence which ignores the standards professed in literature is inferior and unworthy of effort. So we thought, and I think we were right.”

The analysis of the four LEs shows that by recalling the past events of the poet’s life and using English to boost his memory, Brodsky was provided with a languaging space to raise and make meaning of important philosophical questions.

### C. *The Language of Amazement: The Story of Makine*

Nowadays, because of globalization, migration is understood as “multi-level, complex phenomenon” (Block, 2007, p. 32) that is characterized by the formation of “transnational social spaces” (p. 33). In the past, immigration meant separation from the émigré’s native country, as seen from the lives and works of Nabokov and Brodsky. In today’s world of superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Vertovec, 2007), the question arises as to the possibility of reconciling the two worlds. Makine’s *Dreams of my Russian summers* (1997), a semi-autobiographical novel written in French, the writer’s second language, and translated in English, seems to provide an answer to this question.<sup>1</sup>

In his semi-autobiography, Makine narrates the story of a boy who spends summers with Charlotte, his French grandmother, in a little town “lost in the depths of the Russian steppes” (p. 221). His grandmother speaks to him and his sister in French, reads for them in French, and tells them the stories of her youth in France. As a result, the boy becomes so fluent in French such that he considers French to be his family “private slang” (p.21). Charlotte’s stories, the imaginary trips between the two rather different worlds - France of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Soviet life of the sixties and seventies – lead to a duality in the boy’s life. Makine describes this in the following way in LE 1:

#### LE 1: “I was seeing Russia in French” (Makine, 1997, p. 33)

“For the first time in my life I was looking at my country from the outside, from a distance, as if I were no longer a part of it. ...I was seeing Russia in French! I was somewhere else. Outside my Russian life... I was afraid of not being able to return to myself, of being stranded in that Parisian evening.”

This duality isolated the boy from the real life, made him an outsider at school. No longer did he consider his “French implant” (p.37) as a blessing. He hates Charlotte and he was thinking about going “to the sleepy little town ... to destroy France” that “made (him) a strange mutant, incapable of living in the real world” (p. 173). However, during his adolescent years, he came to the realization that his grandmother, who was a stranger in his country, as he put it first, shared “the cruel history of this immense empire, of its famines, its revolutions, its civil wars...” (p. 66). Finally, the character ends his identity struggle by finding himself “between the languages” (p. 194). LE 2 presents his conversation with his grandmother, where Russian and French realities seem to mix together.

#### LE 2: The language of amazement (Makine, 1997, p. 194)

“Yes, she had spoken in French. She could have spoken in Russian. That would have taken nothing away from her recreation of the moment. So a kind of intermediary language did exist. A universal language! I thought again about that “between two languages” that I had discovered..., and I thought of the “language of amazement”.

The language of amazement that is referred to in LE 2 assists the character in making meaning of the duality of his life and in understanding his experiences as a bi-lingual and a bi-cultural person. In his view, his grandmother’s language does not have any specificity, as it could be Russian or French, as any of these languages available to the speaker are viewed as a meaning-making resource. The character comes to the realization that it is of little importance in what language he is going to experience this reconciliation, and most importantly that this experience can be gained!

## V. FINDINGS

What can be learned from the analysis of the narratives of the three translingual writers presented above? The stories analyzed above provide empirical evidence that support the theoretical concepts developed by Vygotsky (1987), Bruner (1986, 2002) and Swain (2006) about the dynamic relationship between thought and word, and the role narrative plays in people’s lives. As noted by Bruner (2002, p. 64),

...there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there ready to be portrayed in words. Rather, we constantly construct and reconstruct ourselves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, as we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future.

The summary of the major themes identified in the narratives of the three translingual writers is presented in Table 1.

<sup>1</sup> Makine came to France from Russia as a political refugee. After being initially rejected by many publishers, Makine’s semi-autobiographical novel has won two of the most prestigious literature awards in France (Prix Goncourt and Prix Médicis), and his style was compared to that of Chekhov, Proust and Nabokov (see e. g., Wanner, 2008).

TABLE 1.  
MAJOR THEMES THAT AREA IDENTIFIED THROUGH LES

Nabokov	Brodsky	Makine
1. The feeling of nostalgia for the lost Russian world	1. Brodsky on digression in memory and in narrative	1. French as family's private slang.
2. The fear of losing or corrupting through the foreign influence, the language and culture of Russia	2. A lesson in estrangement and ambivalence	2. Seeing Russia in French
3. Time spent in Cambridge and becoming a writer	3. Suppression and freedom	3. The French implant is no longer a blessing
4. The state of harmony with the Russian past	4. Faking the life in the real world and living in a literary world	4. The language of amazement

The analysis shows that the story told by Makine reflected his struggle of living a dual life and shaped his understanding of hybridity and simultaneity present in the life of a bilingual person. In his story, Nabokov reflected on his deep attachment to the Russian language and the use of English as a mediator for his “very special Russian thoughts” (1989, p. 269). Although he identified himself as an American writer, his story explained why he continued to write in Russian throughout his professional career as a writer and a translator. For Brodsky, his narrative provided him with an opportunity to distance himself from the country that exiled him; moreover, he associated freedom with English, his non-native language.

While discussing the relationship between language, thought and culture in relation to linguistic relativity, Kramsch (2004, pp. 241-242, 2014, pp. 33-34) summarizes the main ideas proposed by Vygotsky about the role of the social and cultural in cognitive development. Her summary is centered around the main argument put forward by Vygotsky about language as a semiotic system. For Vygotsky, language is both a system of signs and a cognitive tool. As a system of semiotic signs that are shared by a community of sign users, language is used as a cognitive tool to mediate the process of higher cognitive development (i.e. the ability to build new cognitive concepts and think in abstract terms). Kramsch further notes that according to Vygotsky, language exists on two planes: social and psychological. The words and thoughts of others are first available to us on a social level and then internalized by us on the psychological level, thus individual development is mediated through the social and cultural worlds of others. Taking into consideration the dialectical relationship between the sociocultural and the individual, Kramsch believes that the socialization of outsiders into a given social group is possible with outsiders gaining a secondary access to the culture of the mainstream community and appropriating it to their own purposes. The languaging episodes selected from the narratives of the three translingual writers show (i) how the narrators have come to important realizations about their lives through narratives and (ii) how they appropriate the mainstream culture to their own purposes. While reflecting on his experiences as a student in Cambridge, Nabokov had come to the realization that his Cambridge years were important in forming him as a writer. For Brodsky, who spent his life in the Soviet Union claiming his place as a poet under the power of a centralized state and its political dogma, the narrative is the space to understand the roots of his estrangement and ambivalence, his escape in books, and his realization that sadly, suppression is inasmuch a quality of a human life as the desire for freedom. As a result of his semi-autobiographical narrative, Makine had come to the realization that it is possible to find an intermediary language in order to reconcile the two languages and the two cultures. He calls this language the language of amazement.

## VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

When stating the pedagogical implications of Vygotsky's theory for ESL/ EFL teaching and learning, Kramsch (2004, p. 253) proposes that ESL/ EFL teachers “can ... link language use to a speaker's or writer's thought, i.e., stance and point of view, and to link that point of view to that of other speakers and writers of the same national, social, or cultural discourse community” By including autobiographical narratives of translingual writers in English as an Additional Language (EAL) and teachers' training programs, we can encourage language learners and teacher trainers to create their own stories where they can reflect on their own experiences of struggle and appropriation of the new culture and language, and ultimately make sense of their personal and professional lives.

In order to accommodate for differences in their stories, it is necessary to create welcoming pedagogical spaces and to be aware of how the stories are being constructed, and what is being told and untold in a story. Narratives of the three translingual writers can become a starting point for educators in understanding how the personal and the social intersect and interact in a story, and how narratives are shaped by certain social and political contexts.

Personal stories of migrants presented for the general public through mass media can facilitate the development of sensitivity and tolerance in the mainstream society, which in its turn, may lead to a critical re-examination of certain political, social and cultural practices.<sup>2</sup> Personal narratives can make people aware of migrants' gains and losses, their psychological traumas and their frustration.

<sup>2</sup>For example, there was a project initiated by Chatelaine (2012), a magazine that covers issues of real concern for women, to pair literacy learners with mentors (novelists, journalists, professors and filmmakers) who assisted the literacy learners in writing their personal stories. The project was conducted through Frontier College, a national literacy organization. In their reflections on the project, both literacy learners and their mentors commented that telling their personal narratives helped them to gain a better understanding of their past and present experiences.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we analyzed the narratives of three translingual writers by using the concept of *linguaging* introduced by Swain within the framework of the works of Vygotsky on the role of language in the historical and cultural development of the human mind, and Bruner's work on narrative. Our analysis has shown that the translingual writers used their stories not only as a means of reflection on their new experiences, but also as a type of social practice and as "a balancing act" (Bruner, 2002, p. 84) that allowed them to make sense of their personal and professional lives in their non-native languages.

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# A Study of Cohesion in the Chinese Legal Text: Based on *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*\*

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**Abstract**—This study analyzes the textual cohesion of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* from the perspective view of Cohesion Theory. According to the data analysis, the study indicates that, in this legal text, the means of cohesion occurs totally 792 times, among which grammatical cohesion takes a large proportion, that is, 83.9%, while lexical cohesion takes the ration of 16.1%. In the lexical cohesion, the repetition is used much more frequently, followed by the means of hyponymy/meronymy, synonymy/antonymy and collocation, taking the ratio of 0.8%, 0.5% and 0.4% respectively. Thus, we can know from the statistics that cohesion is an important feature of the Chinese legal text. It connects the syntactic grammar and the lexicons into together closely in the Chinese legal Articles. Therefore, the paper points out that a proper understanding of the cohesive devices in the Chinese legal text is significant to legal draftsmen and social scientists in the field of language and the law, for they might improve the text quality of their work with it.

**Index Terms**—Cohesion Theory, Chinese legal text, textual features, quantitative analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

The present study is concerned with cohesion in the Chinese legal text. The paper adopts Cohesion Theory developed in *Cohesion in English* (1976) by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday and Ruquaiya Hasan, which is, reference, ellipsis and substitution, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. However, there might be some loophole in the legal texts if something is wrong with the textual cohesion. Possibly it would lead to a potential misrepresentation of the original intention of the lawmakers or misinterpretation by the general public due to a lack of explicit signs of cohesion. Being an essential means to achieve global coherence in a text, cohesion is of vital importance in legislative language which requires extreme accuracy and certainty, as well as avoidance of ambiguity in meaning. In this regard, something should be done to help law drafters in China have a better idea as to how to take care of the textual cohesion in the legislative language, so they would be able to represent more correctly the intentions of the legislative body on the one hand, and achieve a better comprehensibility among the general public on the other.

Legislation is the largest and most powerful source of law and legislative discourse is the most complex and esoteric of all forms of legal discourse (Maley, 1994). Owing to the multi-type of legal language, the thesis merely chooses the Chinese text of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* as the research object.

With cohesion theory, the methods of qualitative and quantitative of the study show a statistic of the distribution of the cohesive devices in Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China. This investigation is a combination of both generality and specialty. It is general in the sense that the textual cohesion is ultimately a universal phenomenon, regardless of the register. It is special because the textual cohesion in the legal register has its own distribution features of cohesive devices.

It should be noted that this study is one of our series of researches on the characteristics of Chinese legal text. Before we have done some relevant research on this Law from the perspectives of theme - rheme structure (Shifang Li & Yifan Wang, 2020) and thematic of progression (Shifang Li & Yifan Wang, 2021).

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Basically, cohesion is a universal linguistic phenomenon which is omnipresent, irrespective of any kind of language. However, there are some different ways of the special embodiment in different languages. Cohesion has certain distinctive characteristics in Chinese, besides the common attributes concluded in the related literature. In the legal text, we can observe that the cohesive devices are not of diversity as in any other type of text. It may be due to the following

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two reasons: on the one hand, there is a tendency for the Chinese language to be more concerned with the consistency in thought rather than the solid mechanisms of cohesion. For example, we can see from the above statistics that there are far less choices in *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*. On the other hand, there are certainly no exceptions in the legal texts that are very rigid in form, requiring being exact, accurate and unambiguous in meaning. Therefore, the choice of the cohesive devices such as reference, conjunction, ellipsis, collocation and repetition in the Chinese legal text is much simpler and highly limited within a small scale, which can be noted from the statistical table in the above.

The significance of an exploration like the one carried out in the current paper lies in at least two respects: first, it is useful to legal draftsmen in China. Presumably they are already experienced as to the special wording and phrasing of legal texts, it does not necessarily mean that they have all mastered the concept of cohesion in a theoretical sense. The preliminary findings in the paper might be helpful to the Chinese legal draftsmen, on the ground that they could have a better knowledge about cohesion in Chinese legislative articles, which will eventually improve their work.

The study of cohesion in the Chinese legal text is a non-exhaustive and tentative approach, special in two aspects: (1). the linguistic data being dealt with is in Chinese. The most advanced theory of cohesion is done in English, having great influence, while the systematic study of cohesion in Chinese has just started and has a far way to go. This entails a number of jobs in the relatively new field of scholarship; (2). The study of the textual cohesion in the text of a particular register and the legal text is still a new undertaking.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### A. Cohesion Theory

The essential prerequisite for conducting the study of cohesion theory is the understanding of the notion of text. The specialized study of text came into being in the 1950s and experienced a substantial development during the 1970s. In *Cohesion in English* (1976), the concept of cohesion is a semantic one, it refers to relations of meaning that exists within the text and that define it as a text (1976, p.4). Let us cite a classic example:

*Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish.* (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p3)

Apparently, *them* in the second sentence refers back to six cooking apples in the first sentence. The anaphoric effect of *them* offers cohesion to the two sentences (Fakuaide & Vargs, 1992). Therefore, we are able to interpret the meaning of the text because there is cohesion between the two parts of the text. In this sense, we say the two sentences form a meaningful unified whole. On the basis of the notion of text, Halliday and Hasan (1976) continue to put forward another concept: texture. They suggest that texture is an appropriate term to express the property of 'being a text'. Texture is the major distinction that distinguishes a text from other language units, and it is embodied by the cohesive relations in the text. Looking back at the above example, we can see the cohesive relations between the two items are co-referential, which means the two are identical in meaning.

As a matter of fact, 'text' and 'discourse' are used to refer to the same entity in different regions. They are, in some cases, treated as synonyms, while in others the distinction is taken to distinguish written versus spoken communication. Without text, discourse would not be a linguistic activity (Georgakopoulou and Dionysis, 1997). Therefore, the two terms, 'discourse' and 'text' will not be distinguished in the present paper.

When we refer to the text, we usually use two terms "Cohesion" and "Coherence". In English, "cohesion" and "coherence" derive from the same word root "cohere" which means "glue, tight and consistent and so on". The concept of cohesion in English was firstly proposed by Halliday and Hasan (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). They propose that "we now come to the most problematical part of lexical cohesion, cohesion that is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.284). Hasan (1984) believes that there is a strong correlation between cohesion and coherence of discourse. Cohesion is not only the connection of the surface clauses in discourse, but also is the means of helping organize discourse through lexicons. Thompson (2004, p.179) considers that "cohesion refers to the linguistic devices by which the speaker can signal the experiential and interpersonal coherence of the text and is thus a textual phenomenon—we can point to features of the text which serve a cohesive function". While Thompson points that "coherence, on the other hand, is in the mind of the writer and reader: it is a mental phenomenon and cannot be identified or quantified in the same way as cohesion" (2004, p.179). Although "cohesion" and "coherent" are two different concepts, the two are interlinked in most of cases. In general, the discourse using the source of linguistic cohesion is usually coherent. Cohesion is a critical linguistic resource to express the coherent meaning.

Cohesion is a semantic concept as well as discourse. Halliday (1994) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) classify it into "Grammatical Cohesion" and "Lexical Cohesion". "Grammatical Cohesion" falls into four types: reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunction. "Lexical Cohesion" also falls into four types: repetition, synonymy/antonymy, hyponymy/meronymy and collocation. We will detailly discuss them in the following sections.

#### B. Grammatical Cohesion

Reference is one type of grammatical repetition in terms of systemic functional linguistics. Thompson holds that "Reference is the set of grammatical resources that allow the speaker to indicate whether something is being repeated from somewhere earlier in the text (i.e. we have already been told about it), or whether it has not yet appeared in the

text (i.e. it is new to us)” (2004, p.180). Generally speaking, reference includes “personal reference”, “demonstrative reference” and “comparative reference”. Actually, some scholars believe that there should be another two types due to the peculiarities of legal discourse: “category reference” and “reference of legal terminology”.

Reference refers to the semantic relation in which the addressee is enabled to identify certain entity by using a word or words. Reference can be sub-categorized as exophora and endophora which can be sub-categorized further as anaphora and cataphora. Exophoric reference refers to an item whose referent is retrievable in the context of situation. Exophoric relation is a means of connecting ‘outwards’ to some entities in the situation. Endophoric reference refers to an item whose referent can be retrievable within the text. It falls into two types: anaphoric relations which are the reference backward, and cataphoric relations which are the reference forward. However, there are three types of reference: personal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference. While the pronominal reference, which often extends over long stretches without the full referent being explicitly specified or needing to be repeated, reflects the constant focus on the same topic, and the fact that both interactants expect the other to co-operate in accepting a fair degree of inexplicitness (Thompson, 2004, p.242). The following table shows the personal reference items:

TABLE 1  
PERSONAL REFERENCE ITEMS

Personals		Head		Deictic
Class	Function	Determinative	Possessive	
Singular	Masculine	he/him	his	his
	Feminine	she/her	hers	her
	Neuter	it	its	its
Plural		they/them	theirs	their

Demonstrative reference is necessarily “a form of verbal”. Speakers identify or point out the referent by make it located on the level of proximity. The demonstrative pronouns can be summarized in the following table:

TABLE 2  
DEMONSTRATIVE REFERENCE ITEMS

Demonstratives				
Class	Function	Head	Deictic	Adjunct
Specific	Near	this/these	this/these	here (now)
	Remote	that/those	that/those	there (then)
Non-specific		it	The	

“Whereas personals and demonstratives, when used anaphorically, set up a relation of reference, whereby the same entity is referred to over again, comparatives set up a relation of contrast. In comparative reference, the reference item still signals ‘you know which’; not because the same entity is being referred to over again but rather because there is a frame of reference—something by reference to which I am now talking about is the same or different, like or unlike, equal or unequal more or less” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.560). Comparative reference can be summarized as the following table:

TABLE 3  
COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ITEMS

Comparatives				
Class	Function	Deictic/numeral	Epithet	Adjunct/Submodifier
General	Identify	same, equal, identical...		Identically, (just) as...
	Similarity	similar, additional...	such	so, likewise, similarly...
	Difference	other, different...		otherwise, else, differently...
Particular		more, fewer, further...; so, as... + numeral	bigger...; so, as, more, less... + adjective	Better...; so, as, more, less... + adverb

Category reference is a legal category occurs in the legal text with high frequency. It refers to that the parallel words in the preceding words and the last category word belong to the possessive relation, that is, the last word (the so called “general word”) can sum up the meaning of the previous words.

Reference of legal terminology also has high frequency used in the legal text. It means that there is certain connection among the parallel words from the legal sense. These words do not constitute the “category reference” but achieve the similar legal effect.

People usually choose to omit some components in the clause when there are unnecessary words or lengthy that is repeated. The missing part can be found in the previous discourse. It is a grammatical means to avoid duplication, highlight new information and make the text compact. The device does not have an effect on the hearer’s understanding but different from reference, ellipsis only occur in adjacent clauses. Halliday and Matthiessen hold that “ellipsis sets up a

relationship that is not semantic but lexicogrammatical—a relationship in the wording rather than directly in the meaning”(2004, p.562).

Substitution refers to use an alternative word to replace a certain component. It is a grammatical issue, indicating the relation among words. It serves as a place-holding device, implying where something is omitted and showing its grammatical function.

Actually, ellipsis and substitution are variants of the same type of cohesive relation. However, ellipsis and substitution seem to follow and refer to the same principles. But there still exists two main differences. One is that the relation of coherent items changes from co-reference into congener and from a lexical item into structural item. The second is that the two are substituted or omitted when the item and the structure is repeated. From the perspective of meaning, there is always a presupposition to show that the item or the structure appears in the previous discourse and is repeated here when we use the device of ellipsis. From the view of structure, it always leaves a vacancy for the hearer to fill. Therefore, ellipsis and substitution are the same. Sometimes ellipsis is called “zero substitution” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In other words, in some cases, there are no absolute principle restrictions whether the speaker uses substitution or ellipsis.

Some possible meanings within the category of extension, enhancement and elaboration are expressed by the cohesive device of conjunction using some conjunctive adjuncts. Speakers usually use a number of conjunctive items consciously either in spoken language or written language so as to make their wording heard logically. Conjunction plays an essential part in how to combine clauses together in order to make the text coherent. There are many types of conjunction. We will take about the six main types, namely the enumerative conjunction (such as “firstly”, “to begin with”, “then”, “in the end”), the reinforcing conjunction (such as “moreover”, “also”, “furthermore”, “in addition”), the apposition (such as “for example”, “in other words”, “that is to say”), the result (such as “as a result”, “hence”, “therefore”, “consequently”, “hence”), the concessive conjunction (such as “though”, “yet”, “besides”, “anyhow”, “however”) and the temporal transition (such as “meanwhile”, “meantime”).

As the above introduces, conjunction is a tool which reflects the logic relation of discourse by the connecting components such as the transitional words. What’s more, within a clause or among clauses, there are usually conjunctive elements linking clauses together to show the logico-semantic relation and the inter-dependency relation among clauses (Halliday, 1994). If no conjunction, there must be punctuation marks to indicate the logical relation such as a colon indicating the further explanation and detailed content, a semicolon indicating a parallel relationship, a comma indicating the compact parallel relation.

In a word, the conjunctive subdivision is an essential means to build up the relations among clauses. They play an important role in helping construct coherence in text.

### C. Lexical Cohesion

There is no possibility for people to turn their topics from time to time. They are willing to focus on their point of topic by one systematic line. So as to keep the discourse as a whole and stress on the main idea, they usually use the key words repeatedly. They choose words to guarantee the continuity of the discourse. However there is no need for the repetition. People can reiterate the word with its synonym, superordinate or general word. We mainly talk about four types of lexical cohesion here: repetition, synonymy/antonymy, hyponymy/meronymy, and collocation. The “Repetition” here we said refers to the repetition of vocabulary. The Chinese scholar, Zhu yongsheng (2001) hold the view that the repetition refers to a certain word (usually the key word) appears in the same discourse repeatedly. Using the repeated words can not only prominent the theme and the main idea, but also play the role of being the link of discourse. It can make the sense of the discourse coherent. There are three forms of repetition: (1) the repeated words consistent with the form; (2) the repeated words having differences in the singular and plural forms; (3) the repeated words derived from the same root. Synonyms and antonyms can also play a bridging role of cohesion. The synonymy/antonymy here we said is a broad concept, not restricted with the part of speech. The hyponymy/meronymy is contained in the “superordinate”. The superordinate refers to the word class while the hyponym refers to the word species. The meaning of superordinate is general and abstract while that of hyponym is concrete. The type “collocation” refers to a coherent independent of any type of semantic relationship. It is a special link among words which may occur in the same discourse at the same time.

In conclusion, we need to link words and clauses together so as to create a discourse and we need to construct the discourse by the same systematic line. Cohesion including reference, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion makes it possible for us to get such a coherent discourse. It is helpful for us to make analysis on the process of cohesion. It helps us a lot to get a better understanding of our reading and it plays an essential role in our writing as well. It could be impossible for us to produce nonsense passages deviating from the topic. As Thompson said, “it is a mental phenomenon and can not be identified or quantified in the same way as cohesion” (Thompson: 2004, p179). Cohesion is the main means to show coherence in any discourse. Thus, it is essential for us to adopt the advantages of the cohesive devices in creating a legal text.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cohesion is a kind of semantic concept as well as the term of discourse. It refers to the semantic connection among

the linguistic components in the discourse, or in other words, the relationship between a component and another one which can make explanation for each other in the discourse. When a component depends on the interpretation of another component in the discourse, the relation of cohesion is produced. Cohesion is different from other concepts such as morpheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence and so on. The former belongs to the semantic concept while the latter belongs to the grammatical concept. The latter is the concrete manifestation of the former. As is elaborated in section II, Halliday has divided cohesion into grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion falls into the following four types: reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunction. Lexical cohesion falls into four types as well: repetition, synonymy/antonymy, hyponymy/meronymy and collocation. In the following part, we will take it about in the legal text.

第二十九条 审判人员、检察人员、侦查人员有下列情形之一的，应当自行回避，当事人及其法定代理人也有权要求他们回避：……

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第三章第二十九条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 29 Under any of the following circumstances, a judge, prosecutor, or investigator shall voluntarily disqualify himself or herself, and a party or his or her legal representative shall have the right to request the disqualification thereof: ...”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

In Article 29 there are two personal pronouns: “their” and “his”. The former refers to the parties mentioned in the previous and the latter refers to any member of the judicial, procuratorial or investigatory personnel mentioned in the previous. That is the “reference” in cohesion. It also uses the means of repetition: “withdraw” and “withdrawal”, which are the different forms of the same root word. Besides, there is an obviously mark of conjunction: “and” which connects two clauses naturally. Sometimes the means of conjunction and ellipsis are used together, see the following Article.

第二十七条 上级人民法院可以指定下级人民法院审判管辖不明的案件，也可以指定下级人民法院将案件移送其他人民法院审判。

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第二章第二十七条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 27 A people's court at a higher level may designate that a people's court at a lower level try a case over which jurisdiction is unclear or designate that a people's court at a lower level transfer a case to another people's court for trial.”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

The “and” appearing in Article 27 connects two clauses. However, the second clause following after “and” omits the subject “a People's Court at a higher level”. In such condition where the clauses connected by the conjunctions have the same subject, there occurs “ellipsis” to avoid the unnecessary repetition in the sense of the phrases. In fact, there is another means to achieve such effect besides ellipsis, that is, substitution.

第十二条 未经人民法院依法判决，对任何人都不得确定有罪。

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第一章第十二条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 12 No person shall be found guilty without being judged so by a people's court in accordance with the law.”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

Here it uses “such” to substitute the action of sentencing to be guilty in order to avoid the redundancy and complicated repetition. Through the analysis we find it that there are types of hyponymy/meronymy, synonymy/antonymy and collocation used in “Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China”.

第八十三条 公安机关在异地执行拘留、逮捕的时候，应当通知被拘留、逮捕人所在地的公安机关，被拘留、逮捕人所在地的公安机关应当予以配合。

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第六章第八十三条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 83 Where a public security authority executes detention or arrest of a person in a different place, it shall notify the public security authority at the place of residence of the detainee or arrestee, and the public security authority at the place of residence of the detainee or arrestee shall provide cooperation.”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

The definition of collocation given by Halliday and Hasan (1976) is very wide, including the items among clauses or



the relationship of these items among paragraphs.

In general, any two lexical items having similar patterns of collocation—that is tending to appear in similar context—will generate a cohesive forces if they occur in adjacent sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.286).

In the above Article 83, there are two items “arrest” and “detain”. There is certain necessary objective link between the two. In the procedure, when a criminal suspect is arrested, the following step is usually the criminal detention, that is, to keep him in custody for certain days. The application of collocation makes it much more accurate and completed. Let us see another article selected from the Law.

第三十一条 审判人员、检察人员、侦查人员的回避，应当分别由院长、检察长、公安机关负责人决定；院长的回避，由本院审判委员会决定；……

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第二章第三十一条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 31 The disqualification of a judge, prosecutor, or investigator shall be decided respectively by the president of a people's court, the president of a people's procuratorate, and the chief of a public security authority; the disqualification of the president of a people's court shall be decided by the judicial committee of the court; ...”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

Here “judge”, “procurator”, “investigator”, “president of the court” and “the chief procurator” occurring in the Article 31, all belong to the category of the law enforcement officials. Therefore they are the meronymys of the same hyponyms. By using the meronymys, it achieves an effect of coherent in the meaning.

第四十三条 辩护律师经证人或者其他有关单位和个人同意，可以向他们收集与本案有关的材料，也可以申请人民检察院、人民法院收集、调取证据，或者申请人民法院通知证人出庭作证。……

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第四章第四十三条)  
(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

English version:

“Article 43 A defense lawyer may gather information regarding a case from a witness or any other relevant entity or individual with the consent thereof, and may also apply to the people's procuratorate or people's court for gathering or submission of evidence or apply to the people's court for notifying a witness to testify before court. ...”

(<https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=29202&lib=law>)

In Article 43 the items of “collect information” and “obtaining of evidence” refer to the same activity in fact, that is, to select some relative messages that are beneficial to the case. Therefore, the relationship between the two items belongs to the type of synonymy/antonymy in cohesion. After the statistical analysis we get the following table of the application of cohesion theory in the Law. And we find the distribution of cohesion in the Law.

TABLE 4  
DISTRIBUTION OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN THE LAW

Distribution of Cohesive Devices in the Law					
Cohesion	number	classification		number	ratio
	792	Grammatical cohesion	Reference	369	46.6%
			Ellipsis	47	5.9%
			Substitution	118	14.9%
			Conjunction	131	16.5%
		Lexical cohesion	Repetition	114	14.4%
			Synonymy/antonymy	4	0.5%
			Hyponymy/meronymy	6	0.8%
			Collocation	3	0.4%

We can see that, from the table, in the discourse of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, the means of cohesion occurs totally 792 times, among which grammatical cohesion takes a large proportion, that is, 83.9%, while lexical cohesion takes the ration of 16.1%. Specifically speaking, the proportion of means of reference is 46.6%, the one of ellipsis is 5.9%, the one of substitution is 14.9% and the one of conjunction is 16.5%. In the lexical cohesion, the repetition is used much more frequently, followed by the means of hyponymy/meronymy, synonymy/antonymy and collocation, taking the ratio of 0.8%, 0.5% and 0.4% respectively. Thus, we can know that cohesion is an important feature of the legal text. It connects the syntactic grammar and the lexicons into together closely in the legal Article. The linguistic phenomenon may lies in the surface structure of the text, or among the paragraphs and clauses, or among the components of the same clause. The phenomenon of cohesion can be found here and there through making an analysis on the *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*. The linguistic components can be made into an organic whole with the devices of cohesion. Therefore, cohesion is usually considered to be the “physical network” of the text.

From the perspective of the text production process, cohesion is the prerequisite condition to make different clauses

into a whole, while from the perspective of the text which has been generated already, as is said in the above, cohesion is the means to reflect the important features of text. In the Law, cohesion makes the objective reference more specific, clear and tight to introduce the means of reference frequently in order to make the legal language more precise and accurate.

Conjunction is a kind of means to reflect the logical relationship of the discourse by using the components of conjunction. In the Law, the conjunctions of the logical relationship are mostly parallel and transition. The use of conjunction makes the logical relationship of the legal text structured and clear so as to reflect the rigidity and the compulsion of the legislative language.

In section II, we have mentioned that the substitution is the means which uses the alternative words to replace certain compositions while the ellipsis refers to omit certain component of the text. Therefore from this kind of view, the purpose of the substitution and the ellipsis is all to avoid the unnecessary repetition so as to highlight the new information, compacting the meaning of the discourse from both the grammatical structure and the sense. It fully embodies the elites of legal language, and reflects the accuracy of the legal text to use the two cohesive devices flexibly.

Next let us see the application of lexical cohesion in the Law. The repetition we mentioned here refers to the lexical repetition, that is, certain words (usually the key words) appear in the same text repeatedly. We know that to avoid the lexical repetition is an important rhetorical device such as the above-mentioned substitution and ellipsis, of which the goal is to make the text clearer and more concise. However, in the text of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, to use the lexical repetition appropriately can not only highlight the theme and the central idea, but also play the role of linking text together closely. Thus it achieves an effect that makes the text convergent and coherent, which reflects the mandatory compulsion and the authority of the Law. The legislative language has always been known for its rigidity, accuracy and meticulousness. Therefore, in the legal text of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* there is application of synonymy/antonymy, that is, to use multiple words to represent the same meaning of one word. However, lexicons can not have the same meaning completely. Most of the legislative lexicons belong to the cognitive synonyms. There are differences more or less in other concepts or sense except the similarity of the ideational meanings. The *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* is a procedural law which defines many details of the enforcement process. So although the synonymous appears in the Law, its proportion is not so large. Similarly, the devices of hyponymy/meronymy and collocation take a very small proportion in it. As we know the lexicon is the main carrier of the meaning of language and cohesion is the tool to connect these meaningful words in order to express coherent sense and thus to deepen people's understanding of the structure and function of the text.

## V. CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper takes examples to analyze the textual features of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* by using Cohesion Theory. We can know from the statistics that cohesion is an important textual feature in the legal text. It connects the syntactic grammar and the lexicons into together closely. However, the choice of cohesive devices are not so diversified in such legal text, which reflect the elites, formality, compulsion, rigidity, and accuracy of the Law. Thus it achieves the authoritativeness of the Law, *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*.

Cohesion is not the form of structure but a kind of semantic relationship, which uses devices such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction and collocation to connect each component which is structurally unrelated but semantically interdependent together. Therefore, to study cohesion of the legal text can help us better grasp the stylistic characteristics conveyed by the Law.

Studies on textual cohesion in a legal text are still in the course of development, which foreshadows a lot of possible areas for linguistic scientists to work in. This potentially valuable subject will draw more attention and there is a great deal to do in this respect.

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# Listening to Saudi EFL Learners' Voices: Demotivating Factors Affecting Learning

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**Abstract**—A plethora of research has considered motivation instrumental in achieving the requisite objectives in learning a language regrettably overlooked the most critical component called demotivation that indubitably affects the learning process substantially. The researchers have taken the daunting task to figure out the demotivating factors that affect Saudi learners' English proficiency. The research is qualitatively based on the responses obtained from semi-structured informal interviews with twenty-six respondents and classroom observation inputs from over 125 students learning English as a foreign (EFL) language at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia. The sample of this study responded to a self-structured questionnaire to get qualitative data and after twofold data analysis, six demotivating factors related to students; teachers; environment (internal & external); attitude towards EFL learning; course materials, and time constriction were identified. The findings and suggestions reckon students, teachers, parents, and administrators to give utmost priority to address demotivation factors to facilitate even EFL learning to timely achieve not only the prerequisite learning outcomes but may also lead learners to be autonomous, infuse interest, confident with 21st-century skills, better teacher-learner relationship, and change in cognitive behavior, and non-cognitive aspects which includes perception, attitude, beliefs and willingness to learn English language.

**Index Terms**—motivation, demotivation, Saudi learners, English as second/foreign language

## I. INTRODUCTION

The craze to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia has been ever-increasing day by day. In the early times, the English language was always perceived to be taught only to the people who were eager to learn English. However, the English language today has become Lingua Franca, which is required to uphold better business relations to interact with people of other countries working in Saudi Arabia and on international platforms. Recent research revealed that Saudi learners showed that they are instrumentally motivated to learn English for the reason that it meets university criteria, but a few studies have shown otherwise.

But since successive research hasn't acted on plans tackling demotivating factors to address serious concerns is now happening under duress when the EFL teachers and learners are under huge pressure to achieve learning outcomes making it all shaky. To compound the fact that it has become a burning issue in academia, instant actions are also not doing it any favors. EFL learners have great potential and enormous talent but poor decision-making has wrecked all the concerned. Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2020) in its analysis of English skills showed that the English language proficiency level in Saudi Arabia is very low with an EF EPI score of 399, which falls at eighth place in the Middle East region. It also revealed that it was on the 97th position in a hundred countries list...English proficiency in the region is by far the lowest of any region in the world. We should take it a wake-up call to rise to the occasion and ignore critics who care about "compromising the silver job" and take remedial action before it becomes too late.

A plethora of research has considered motivation instrumental in achieving the requisite objectives in learning a second/foreign language regrettably overlooking the most critical component called demotivation that indubitably affects the learning process substantially. This triggered a spark to explore more why Saudi learners aren't motivated to learn English and if they are motivated then why don't they perform as expected. Therefore, this study undertakes to investigate the causal demotivating factors that thwart their English proficiency. The research will further underscore the forms and concepts of motivation, its relevance for EFL teachers to exercise in the formal settings to bring in the tangible transformation in learners' attitude and motivation towards EFL acquisition. Alongside, the major factors responsible for demotivating learners are also enquired into to get some feasible and pragmatic solutions that may lead learners to change their perception, attitude, and willingness to learn the English language. Accordingly, the study is a seminal attempt to examine the major demotivating factors impeding Saudi learners from learning the English language as a foreign language in Saudi Arabian EFL learners' context.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is a dynamic and broader concept that encapsulates giant space across disciplines. Dornyei and Otto (1998) describe it as a dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized, and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out. Guay et al. (2010) refer to the reasons underlying behavior and Broussard and Garrison (2004) state motivation as the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something. A plethora of research has been undertaken across disciplines suggesting motivation operating through teaching practices despite illustrating its pros and cons. We have included studies published in the last three decades to comprehend in a better perspective.

Motivation has gone past many development stages from intellectual behavior adaptation to self-regulation theory (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). In between, a strategy on rendering autonomy to learners in the classroom and a strategy for revitalizing motivation via collaborative or cooperative learning techniques (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000) had also been exercised. Today, we need motivation for our learners to attain lifetime multi-skills eventually developing critical thinking to face global challenges studying at university. These future skills have been argued as assorted mechanisms as inferences drawn by inductive or deductive reasoning (Willingham, 2007); evaluating (Case, 2005), and making decisions or solving problems (Willingham, 2007).

A wealth of empirical evidence on motivation exists, suggesting several conclusions; however, motivation in language learning was embarked on only in the last decade of the twentieth century; Dornyei (1990 to 2010) considers motivation one of the main determinant of language accomplishment and Oxford and Shearin (1994) motivation determining the extent of active or personal involvement second language learning; and later assumed by many prominent researchers (Dornyei, Csizer & Nemeth, 2006) in the English as a second or foreign language learning and still many on the way. However, with the new research in ESL/EFL acquisition, there has been a paradigm shift to a new concept called demotivation, which is also considered as “another side of motivation (Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009b)”.

Contrary to motivation in language learning, the term demotivation has never been measured so grave and overlooked, which imposed severe threats and challenges for the EFL community. Dornyei (2005) approves this fact “...in spite of their great significance, demotivation has received very little attention either in mainstream psychology or L2 research.” This century has witnessed glimpses of a few studies reflecting upon this grave issue to consider demotivation a novice, but a valuable concept in second/foreign language learning. Dornyei (2001) could map out the hidden side of the coin defining demotivation as “...specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action; however, he doesn’t consider all negative influences as a demotivating factor and argues that a strong negative factor (categorized nine demotivating factors) restrains the current motivation, with some other positive motives still remaining and ready to be activated.” The elucidation gives flexibility and dynamics to the concept that negative factors deterring motivation may be diminished by powerful positive factors inducing motivation. Flout and Falout (2004) feel that motivation pushes learning for life whereas demotivation cuts learning short. Yan (2009) stated demotives as the negative counterparts of motives and Hu (2011) described demotivating factors that impede learners’ learning motivation. The relevant research on demotivation would facilitate teachers and learners in better understanding of motivation theoretical concepts eventually help to lessen the demotivating factors affecting development in EFL learning. The researchers have varied opinions underscoring the demotivation factors as internal and external. Alike, Ushioda (2001) and Kim and Seo (2012) consider extrinsic demotives, conversely, Dornyei (2001, 2005) states it intrinsic factors, which has been further emphasized in the studies by other elite researchers (Hirvonen, 2010; Jomairi, 2011; Yan, 2009).

On giving adequate details on worldwide studies on motivation and demotivation, many studies have dealt with the demotivation factors affecting Arabic EFL learners’ language learning (Javid, Asmari, & Farooq, 2012; Alhuqbani, 2009; Al-Tamimi, & Shuib, 2009; Kblawi, 2005; Dhaif-Allah, 2005). The researchers have found EFL learners energetic and hardworking but unable to display interest in language learning. This also led the diagnostic approach to find negative factors (demotivating) along with the positive factors (motivation) affecting learners’ perceptions and attitudes towards language.

We often observed that most of the students are instrumentally motivated and learn the English language for studying abroad and communication; however, Qashoa (2006) examined the students’ integrative and instrumental motivation for learning the English language and identified the factors affecting motivation. Abu Baker, Sulaiman, & Rafaai (2010) emphasize the identification of learners’ demotivating orientations at the beginning of a language course for making decisions on the choice of language to be learned, the learners’ activities, the learners’ expectations on language learning, etc. Kblawi (2006) in research conducted in Israel explored the factors affecting negatively learning English. Hirvonen’s (2010) in his study on Arab students in Finland found instrumental and integrative demotivating factors confirming the dominance of positive attitudes towards the English language trounce demotivation. Many scholars’ findings showed that despite all concerted efforts, EFL learners couldn’t accomplish and display tangible results as expected (Javid & Al-Khairi, 2011; Al-Jarf, 2008).

The Ministry of Higher Education is determined to enhance students’ English proficiency level ensuring all resources required to contribute to English language learning both at school and tertiary level. The initiatives have produced results but still miles to go to achieve the requisite objectives. The researchers have made a seminal attempt to look into

the demotivating factors that deter Saudi EFL learners' language learning. A better perspective on demotivating factors would enable all to evolve strategies that boost and encourage both teachers and learners to timely accomplish the desired learning outcomes. The study tries to discover why the English proficiency level in Saudi Arabia is not as expected accentuating major negative effects that demotivate Saudi EFL learners.

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are fourfold:

- (a) To investigate the major demotivating factors affecting learners' language learning
- (b) To learn how teachers can encourage learners to overcome the demotivating factors,
- (c) To extract the most prominent demotivation factor that affects learners' EFL learning
- (d) To review best practices used in tackling the demotivating factors

### IV. METHODS

#### A. Participants

The participants of this study consist of all Saudi undergraduate male students studying in the preparatory year at the Jazan University of Saudi Arabia and have been studying the English language as a compulsory subject in the College of Science.

#### B. Instruments

The research is qualitatively based on the responses obtained from semi-structured informal interviews with twenty-six respondents and classroom observation inputs from over 125 students learning English as a foreign (EFL) language at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia. The qualitative data from the interviews were conducted after the observation data collection to get a deeper sense and better interpretation of the results. The tools for the research are the observational inputs from the EFL learners in the classroom and semi-structured interviews in regard to the demotivating factors in learning English as a foreign language. As for the semi-structured interview, this was conducted with ten students each semester. The interview sessions were conducted at the end of the semester at the students' convenience.

#### C. Analysis

The data (observatory and interviews) were segregated and organized to scrutinize the demotivating factors affecting Saudi learners' EFL learning. The process was a bit tedious and time-consuming to analyze each response to its requisite response on the given six demotivating factors.

### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results were analyzed mainly on six demotivating factors: The results have ensued six major causal demotivating factors that hinder learners' language learning. These are related to the student, teacher, environment, attitudes, course material, and time constriction-related factors enumerated herewith.

#### *Students-related Demotivation factors*

The students were initially motivated to learn the English language but struggled and faltered in the beginning eventually improved from the sedate start. The researchers were teaching groups of heterogeneous students who in the majority attended classes regularly. There were three to four teachers teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills separately to each group. The commencement of the course teaching made students uncomfortable facing difficulties in learning lengthy textbooks on all English skills. They were shy, hesitant, and resisted responding in the class making one-way communication and teacher-centered. Despite a few students who were reasonably good in English, most of the students were quite low in English proficiency because they learned English at school just to pass the exam. The researchers observed negative reactions to the textbook (texts), English as a medium, lack of basic knowledge of English, poor vocabulary, poor grammar, poor reading, and writing skills, etc. This was further confirmed with the responses gathered in interviews. Later on, the students gained momentum as the teachers evolved and manipulated their teaching strategies. The participation, involvement, and interaction in the classroom developed positive feelings surmounting their resistance, performance pressure, evaluation panic, and anxiety. It brought changes in their behavior, attitude towards the English language, improved abilities, self-confidence, self-worth, and self-belief enhancing their sense of competence. Eccles & Wigfield (2002) mentioned that individuals should be more motivated to the extent that they feel they are in control of their own successes and failures.

#### *Teachers-related Demotivation factors*

Students not keen on learning the English language made the researchers introspect and reflect upon their own teaching techniques, course contents, and other factors that may affect students' interest in language learning. This was the result of what the researchers went through the studies related to teachers found as one of the dominant demotivation factors (Oxford, 1998; Ushioda, 1998; Dornyei, 2001; Keblawi, 2005; Kikuchi, 2010). The students opined on the teacher's unclear English pronunciation, speed, use of difficult vocabulary, fast teaching pace, strict or flexible, teacher's behavior, ignoring students' interest, taking up course directly, etc. were all beyond the ability, scope,

and knowledge of students. Most students were blank when asked questions on the topics taught in class and unable to complete home assignments. Therefore, we have considered this factor crucial to demotivating Saudi learners. Also, Sharma (2018) opines that EFL teachers through implementing sound motivational strategies may enhance students' motivation, whereas naive behavior tends to affect students' motivation. Indeed, the results unveiled negative attitudes toward EFL teachers. Furthermore, the teacher has a special role and place in students' life as Krashen (1982) claims that "...the effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation." This has sounded an alarm for the teachers to evolve, try new methods, prepare study materials matching students' level, use of latest technology, alter teaching styles, motivational techniques, beliefs, and attitudes to motivate the students to attain English proficiency.

#### *Environment-related Demotivation Factors*

This is one of the most critical factors affecting students' language learning. This includes both internal and external where internal is related to the classroom and external denotes the informal settings. Students initially encountered problems: lack of types of equipment- computers, audio, and video materials, speakers, etc., which affect the quality of teaching. But the same was addressed immediately and teachers used technology to conduct activities that allowed students to participate and enhance their cognitive skills. The students don't get ample opportunities to practice English and study English subjects as compulsory to promote to the next class. The parents, teachers, and peers should assist students to read and using English in real-life situations. The teachers plan and prepare activities wherein students partake in pairs or group activities to solve problems or express opinions on specific topics. Providing a hassle-noise-free language learning environment in the classroom avoids distraction, resulting in increased concentration, focus and motivates the students, and instills confidence. We often observe that an unhealthy classroom environment makes learners anxious, which challenges students' learning effectiveness and motivation. Alike, the monotonous classroom atmosphere leads to students' lack of interest, absence from class, and feel sleepy. The finding indicated that teachers created a classroom environment conducive to language learners and left no scope for them to complain. The conclusion matches the outcomes of many studies that display the attitude of classmates, compulsory nature of English study, friends' attitudes, inactive classes (Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), however, don't agree on, the inappropriate level of the lessons and inadequate use of school facilities such as not using audio-visual materials, which are found better in the context of this study.

#### *Attitude towards EFL Learning*

Mentioned in the students' related factor, students displayed resistance and passive attitude towards the English language because of many aforesaid reasons. The students had negative attitudes towards EFL since they couldn't find content related to their objectives of specialization and took no interest in English. Luu (2011) stated that students facing a huge volume of difficult grammar and vocabulary often demonstrate widespread anxiety. It was observed that some students have a negative attitude towards English speaking community creating demotivation. Gardner (1985) affirms that language learners' attitude towards the target culture and its people has a considerable influence on their learning achievement and a learner cannot learn a language effectively if he has a negative attitude towards the country, people, and culture of the target language. Thus, the onus was on the teacher to teach the importance of the English language in today's scenario and convince them of its uses in a career to create interest in learning the English language. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) argued that teachers, in the teaching process, can foster students' motivation to learn by familiarizing learners with the L2 culture and L2-related values in order to increase their positive attitude towards the target language-speaking community. Displaying patience and patience in equal measure, the teacher could convince students to maximize their implausible talent and incredible potential in language learning. Though, sometimes they got away to innocuous reading activities with the English language somehow off the target. But they indeed recovered and improved their language skills from the sedate start using their time and efforts. Soon after, they saved their best and, along with a genius and humane teacher, helped accomplish the requisite learning outcomes.

#### *Course Materials-related factors*

The results showed that the students found the textbook bit lengthy with intricate contents. They were grappled with odd situations where they couldn't comprehend the contents of the lecture and felt demotivating. It led to the monotonous classroom environment, without any learning, unseen chapters and topics with difficult texts, new vocabulary, etc., in all four skills. Many studies had similar findings on this factor, which were demotivating for the students. Tran and Baldauf (2007) stated that the students perceived textbooks as demotivating; however, Kikuchi (2009) found uninteresting contents of the texts, out-of-date topics, too long and difficult texts, difficult textbooks books, etc. leading to students' demotivation. Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) discovered learning contents and materials considered as strongly demotivating, and Bahramy and Araghi's (2013) revealed dull and boring texts and subjects not related to daily life subjects, too much grammar, and not following a steady, step by step schedule identified as the second most demotivating factor for students in learning English. The results herein differ with these researches marginally as the students progressed and comprehend the texts, grammar and partake in all the activities conducted in the class or given as assignments. Therefore, it may partially be considered as a demotivating factor in the context of this study.

#### *Time Constriction-related factors*

The researchers considered this very vital in the Saudi Arabian context because firstly, the learners don't use the English language in daily life, secondly, they don't get ample time to study English and the 'obligatory nature of

English language course' since they have to focus more on their major subjects. The students need time to read texts, write summaries, assignments, problem-solving tasks, and other activities not specific to English programs but mainly on other core subjects. Parents and teachers may guide them to work out a schedule by which they can devote time in equal measure to all subjects.

The second objective of the study, how teachers can encourage learners to overcome the demotivating factors, has largely been discussed in teacher-related demotivating factors. The teacher has to be active, alert, and visionary to foresee the main causes that may affect the language learning process. Instant and contingency plans, attractive and interesting activities at par with learners' level of language competence, one-on-one interaction, creating and maintaining a conducive classroom environment, cordial relations, prompt feedback, and controlled evaluation are a few measures that can diminish demotivating factors to the greater extent.

The next objective, to identify the most prominent demotivation factor that affects learners' EFL learning, was a much difficult task of the study because all factors affect either way; directly or indirectly; internal or external and in virtual settings. The researchers on the basis of discussion with colleagues and data analysis found the environment-related demotivation factors as the most prominent and dominant affecting learners' interest and language proficiency. The onus lies on all concerned; teachers, parents, peers, administrators to look into these factors giving utmost priority. A concrete system and mechanism should be put in place encapsulating guidance, counseling, support, redress mixed-ability learners' problems, encouraging cooperative and collaborative learning by students' taking part in pairs or group tasks; rationalize syllabus, textbook content; environment to promote English at all levels; giving students' autonomy to choose activities may together bear constructive and tangible results in bringing excellence in language learning.

What best practices do we use to tackle the demotivating factors was the last objective to overcome all the problems and challenges EFL learners face today. The researchers firmly believe that if a teacher comes with a heart, learners come with the heart and the soul. Comprehending this sentence makes teachers comfortable to evolve, devise, plan and organize their efforts to promote EFL learning amongst learners. Furthermore, Sharma (2018) proposes:

Nearly all the problems can be addressed by proper teacher counseling, teacher training and workshops on teaching methods, curriculum design, course specification, students need analysis, teaching style and strategies, continuous teacher evaluation, students' feedback, developing 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, use of tools and websites in teaching plan, multiple intelligences, integrating ICT, understanding educational goals and objectives in national policies for education and using multilingual approaches in pursuit of Saudi Vision 2030.

For that reason, structuring tasks and activities matching learners' interest and proficiency level, setting goals, continual monitoring in behavioral changes, interest and attitude; friendly, democratic, and controlled behavior with learners; innovative teaching practices, judicious use of motivational techniques, committed and competent teachers, sound feedback and evaluation process, and teachers' stability with the group; noise-free learner-centered classroom environment; use of latest technology, exploiting smartphones and students' interest to use social applications: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, snap chat, etc., in the language learning process are a few best practices that the talented and intellect EFL teachers exercise in their teaching today.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Aforesaid findings and discussion give an ample understanding of both internal and external factors that mostly demotivate learners. The results also revealed significant points on demotivating factors for second/foreign language learners and can negatively sway the learner's attitudes and behaviors, lower classroom environment, teacher's motivation, and result in everlasting dismal learning outcomes.

The most salient finding is that among six demotivating factors, the most concerned one was the environment-related factors; while the least concerned one was the teacher-related factor. All concrete observations and findings if adhered to in the letter and spirit would indubitably stimulate students' engagement and interest, inculcate a positive attitude and a sense of respect towards the English language. In general, all factors that affect students' language learning should be duly taken care of to avoid any vulnerability to motivate and encourage learners to enhance their English language proficiency. The uniqueness of this work lies in its findings where researchers have tried to come up with results and suggestions having dimensions that directly or indirectly influence Saudi EFL learners' motivation.

Lastly, we should come out with all guns blazing against all demotivating factors to allow EFL learners to get high English language proficiency. We absolutely believe that 'There is still more to explore to demotivation factors affecting English language learning'.

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