English Language Education

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi
Christopher J. Denman *Editors*

Individual and Contextual Factors in the English Language Classroom

Theoretical, Pedagogical, and Empirical Approaches

English Language Education

Volume 24

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Rahma Al-Mahrooqi • Christopher J. Denman
Editors

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Editors
Rahma Al-Mahrooqi
Chair of the Sultan Qaboos
University Council
Muscat, Oman

Christopher J. Denman
Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for
Postgraduate Studies and Research
Sultan Qaboos University
Muscat, Oman

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Foreword

This volume explores the different ways in which we can approach learners as whole human beings by focusing on the influence of a range of individual and contextual factors in the learning process. Schools and classrooms do not only engage students intellectually. They are also strongly influenced by the unique personal, social and cultural backgrounds that students bring to their learning, whether inside or outside the classroom. Students and teachers do not, and indeed cannot, leave their learning histories, preferences or emotions behind when they enter a new learning context.

In part one of this volume – *Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* – the six chapters address a variety of topics, from interculturality to intrapersonal studies, that deal with individual and context-related factors including personality, emotion, cognition and metacognition. In relation to the pedagogical aims of this collection, they are all theoretically sound, but practical in nature.

Part two, *Research Perspectives: Teachers and Learners*, also foregrounds the theory of practice. The seven chapters cover different aspects of individual and contextual factors, including by investigating the motivation and psychology of learners and learning. Several chapters shed light on attitudes and perceptions of students about their own learning. What is especially noteworthy is the variety of research contexts and the range of cultural backgrounds of the learners and researchers, in addition to the exploration of how various contextual factors impact learners.

In part three, we witness a similar variety of cultural contexts, and a variety of research perspectives that all, in some way, address the role of technology in supporting individual and contextual factors in the classroom. In 2020/2021, we all learnt to improve our ability to teach and learn remotely. As we begin to emerge from a global pandemic, I am relieved to note that it is not only viruses that communicate successfully across borders. In these four chapters, it is clear that technology is not seen as an end in itself. All of these chapters reinforce the themes addressed in the first two parts of this volume.

Understanding the broad and complex issues presented in this volume will help us address the inevitable challenges we face whenever we enter the variety of cultural and social settings where we learn (or fail to learn). As a so-called native

speaker of British origin, my own 26 years' experience in the Gulf region have helped me understand the limitations of attempting to use a simple monolithic outsider's (or insider's) approach to an international language classroom. My own holistic approach to education has evolved from this understanding, but, looking back, it took me too long to understand many of the individual and contextual factors that help create a successful learning environment beyond borders. Unfortunately, volumes like this were not available in the 1970/1980s to help.

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Christopher J. Denman have again made an important contribution to our field. I have been fortunate to witness several times over the last decade the kind of infectious enthusiasm that Rahma, ably supported by Christopher, brings to her international academic presentations and publishing activities. Many of these emphasize the need for continuous and holistic reform in school education. The recognition that this long-term contribution has already received makes me optimistic about the state of English language instruction. I am also convinced that this book will have a significant impact well beyond national or cultural borders.

This volume is timely and relevant to all of us because it addresses a range of individual and contextual issues that need addressing before effective, holistic learning can take place. I believe that teachers are aware that fully engaging with learners is important. What makes this volume especially significant is that it raises awareness about why understanding learners as unique individuals impacted upon by a range of contextual factors is important, and how we can promote this in a variety of intercultural, intracultural, interpersonal and intrapersonal situations.

Roger Nunn
Head of the Department of English
American University of Sharjah
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
Founding Member, English Scholars Beyond Borders

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Editors

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi was appointed the Sultanate of Oman's Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in 2020, following her time as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University from 2016-2020. Among her positions as a Minister, she is the Chair of Sultan Qaboos University Council, the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) Board of Directors, and Board of Trustees of the College Al-Shari'a Sciences. In addition to her current position, she has coordinated tertiary-level English courses and programs, been the director of one of the largest English language centres in the region, and published widely on English language teaching and learning. Email: mrahma@squ.edu.om

Christopher J. Denman is a researcher at the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. He was previously affiliated with the university's Humanities Research Centre and was also an instructor at its Language Centre, following from English teaching experience at the secondary and tertiary levels in Australia, South Korea and Japan. He has published and presented widely, in addition to being a co-editor of several volumes concerned with various aspects of English language instruction within the Arab world and internationally. Email: denman@squ.edu.om

Contributors

Ndrew Allmark is a teacher and course leader on the foundation English programme at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. He has an MA in English Language Teaching from Leeds Beckett University, and an MSc in Teaching English Language in University Settings from the University of Oxford. He was a prize-winning postgraduate in both institutions. His research interests include the cross-linguistic

influences of Arabic on English language proficiency and the motivation of English students and educators. He is also active in curriculum and materials development. Email: ndrew@squ.edu.om

Fajer M. Bin Rashed is a published researcher with 13 years' teaching experience at the tertiary level in Kuwait. She has a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and a Master's degree in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies from Kuwait University. She has previously served as a board member for TESOL Kuwait and has presented at regional and international conferences. Her research interests include bilingualism, multiliteracy, cultural studies, and identity formation. Email: fajerbinrashed@gmail.com

Kerrin Burnell is a university English language instructor from New Zealand. His research interests include language testing and feedback, and the role of personality traits in language learning. He has taught at universities in South Korea, New Zealand, Oman and most recently Macao, where he teaches academic English to undergraduate students. Email: kerrinb@um.edu.mo

Karine G. Chiknaverova is a professor of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at MGIMO-Odintsovo. Her interests include theory and methods of teaching foreign languages at university, English for Specific Purposes, legal translation, learners' autonomy, learners' language and error analysis. She has authored more than 70 scientific articles and books. Email: chiknaverova@mail.ru

David Coulson is a professor of applied linguistics and language education at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan. He supervises research on both English and Japanese applied linguistics. His interests are in all aspects of second language teaching and learning, with a particular focus on vocabulary in a second language. He is presently researching the longitudinal development of word association and collocation in Japanese learners. In addition, he is interested in international education and recently published an edited volume on Educational Reform and International Baccalaureate in the Asia-Pacific. Email: coulson@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp

Tanju Deveci is an associate professor of English at Khalifa University in the United Arab Emirates. He previously worked at Sabanci University in Istanbul and Bilkent University in Ankara, both in Turkey. His research interests include lexis, pragmatics, academic writing, lifelong learning and learning skills. He has published various journal articles and book chapters in these areas. Email: tanju.deveci@ku.ac.ae

Susan Finlay has been involved in English language teaching for almost 30 years, and in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) since 2005. She has taught in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. She has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, UK, holds a DELTA and is a CELTA trainer. She now

works at the University of Glasgow in the School of Engineering, lecturing, developing course materials and assessments, and delivering professional development sessions on a transnational education programme with the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, in Chengdu, Sichuan province. Email: Susan.Finlay@glasgow.ac.uk

Mahsa Ghanbarpoor is a PhD graduate in Applied Linguistics with a focus on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). She did her MA in TEFL as well. Mahsa is a faculty member at New York Film Academy, Los Angeles Campus. In addition to teaching courses on language acquisition, assessment, discourse analysis, teaching methodology and academic writing, she has published several scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, contributed to academic books and presented research at international conferences on (higher) education, both domestically and abroad. Her main research interests include formative evaluation, dynamic assessment, teacher education and learner characteristics in second language learning. Email: mahsa.ghanbarpoor@nyfa.edu

Hranush Ginosyan has an MA TEFL from the American University of Armenia and is Assistant Lecturer at the Center for Preparatory Studies, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, where she teaches English and heads the Curriculum Committee of the Department of English for Sciences. Her research interests include learning styles and strategies, instructional design and transitional challenges. Hranush is the author of a number of publications and a presenter at international ELT conferences. Email: hranushg@squ.edu.om

Steven Herron is an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) specialist who has worked in various roles, from a teacher at the British Council to his current role as Director of Learning, Teaching and Academic Affairs for the Oxford International Education Group. He has worked in the pathway sector for 15 years, including the management and development of dynamic education provisions such as bespoke online learning and integration of various types of cognitive skills, including metacognition. Prior to this he worked for various colleges and universities. He holds an EdD, two MAs and four teaching qualifications. Email: sherron@oxfordinternational.com

Robert Remus Hoffman has been a teacher of English as a Foreign Language for 12 years in countries across Europe, East Asia and the Middle East. After attaining his MSc in Organizational Leadership in Education from the University of Glasgow, his research focus shifted towards leadership support for innovative changes in English foundation programme curricula. He regularly presents at comic conventions in the Middle East and in North America on the use of comic strips and comic books to further the teaching of language in the EFL classroom, and now coordinates e-learning for the English department at the Military Technological College, Oman. Email: robertrhoffman@gmail.com

Gayane R. Hovhannisyan received her degrees in TEFL (MA) and then General and Applied Linguistics (PhD, DSc) in Moscow, the Russian Federation, and Yerevan, Armenia. She has published around 100 works in applied, cognitive and cultural linguistics, psycholinguistics and education, in different countries and languages. Among them are handbooks and manuals for higher linguistic education, a monograph and over 50 articles on language and linguistics, education and communication. Gayane also practises forensic voice and speech identification, and has around two decades' experience in university administration and research supervision. Fourteen PhD students successfully defended their dissertations in linguistics and education under her guidance. Now she is interested in transdisciplinary studies of system thinking and social-psychological modeling of "language personality". Email: dr_gaya@brusov.am

G. R. Kiran is the dean of Middle East College, Muscat, Oman. He holds a PhD in Information Systems from London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom. He has headed and implemented key governmental projects on e-governance and ICT in Kerala, India. Kiran also has vast experience, at both national and international levels, in areas relating to higher education management, teaching, research, strategic policy development, quality assurance, social computing, governance reforms, e-governance and ICT for development. Email: kirangr@mec.edu.om

Yasmin Ladha is a writer and an instructor at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, in Muscat, Oman. Her most recent publication is *Country Drive* (2018), a book of poetry co-authored with Sukrita Paul. Yasmin is also the author of *Blue Sunflower Startle*, a novel. *Women Dancing on Rooftops: Bring Your Belly Close* is her book of short fiction, poetry and personal essays (1997), her chapbooks are *Bridal Hands on the Maple* (1992) and *Lion's Granddaughter and Other Stories* (1992). She is working on a book of personal essays set in Muscat and Calgary. Email: BLadha@hct.edu.om

Priya Mathew heads the Centre for Academic Writing at Middle East College, Oman. Her research interests include corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and English for Specific Purposes. She is investigating the use of language in content courses in a range of disciplines and has designed effective interventions in order to improve student writing support mechanisms. Email: priya@mec.edu.om

Ryan McDonald has been involved in education for the past 14 years, working in New York, Istanbul, and Muscat, Oman. He holds a Master's in the Science of Teaching from the State University of New York and is a CELTA-certified educator. He works at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat. He has been a board member of the Middle East and North African Writing Center Alliance since 2015 and has served in several capacities, including his role as president. Email: rmcdonald@squ.edu.om

Olga Obdalova is a professor at Tomsk State University, Russia. She is Head of the Laboratory of Socio-cognitive Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching and Acting Head of the Department of Foreign Languages, Tomsk Scientific Center, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences. Her research interests include intercultural pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, methodology of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and intercultural communication. She has authored more than 100 scientific articles and books. Email: O.Obdalova@mail.ru

Abdulmalik Yusuf Ofemile is a chief lecturer, associate fellow (Advance HE, United Kingdom) and multidisciplinary researcher with teaching and research experiences in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. His research straddles language, applied linguistics, multimodality, media and information literacy, computer science, TESOL and the Integration of ICT into diverse contexts, and he contributes to the understanding of linguistic and communication issues surrounding human-computer interaction in real-world application and interaction contexts. Abdulmalik contributed a chapter to the recently published Multilingual Matters book titled *Rethinking Language Use in Digital Africa: Technology and Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2021). Email: abdulmalikofemile@yahoo.co.uk

Abbas Ali Rezaee is an associate professor at the University of Tehran, Iran. He obtained his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Exeter, England. His main research interests are language teaching, language testing, CALL and ESP. He has taught various courses at BA, MA and PhD levels. He has published a large number of articles on various topics in language teaching and testing. He has also supervised many MA theses and PhD dissertations in TEFL and Applied Linguistics. Moreover, he has presented papers and workshops in many national and international conferences. He has published a book and has two more in print. Email: aarezaee@ut.ac.ir

Mehvish Saleem PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Languages, Institute of Business Management, Pakistan. She has done research on language teacher psychology. Her research interests include all aspects of language learner and teacher psychology, but more specifically language teacher cognitions and emotions. Email: Mehvish.Saleem@iobm.edu.pk

Radhika L. Sankara Narayanan works at the Centre for Academic Writing, Middle East College, Muscat, Oman. She has a Cambridge DELTA as well as a doctorate degree in English Literature. Her major fields of interest are Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and teaching exam courses like IELTS. Email: radhika@mec.edu.om

Benjamin Thanyawatpokin is an English lecturer and researcher at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan. His research interests include game-based language teaching and task-based teaching activity development. He received his Master's degree in English Education from Ritsumeikan University in 2015. Email: btpokin@gmail.com

Victoria Tuzlukova has almost 40 years teaching and research experience in Russia and Oman. She is on the faculty at the Centre for Preparatory Studies of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, which she joined in 2006. During her time at the Centre she has been involved in a number of research projects and initiatives. Her research interests focus on sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, foreign language acquisition, and the role of culture in foreign language teaching and learning. Victoria has presented and published in a broad variety of international conferences and journals. Email: victoria@squ.edu.om

Carl Vollmer is a teacher of English, social studies, and Theory of Knowledge (TOK) at Ritsumeikan Uji Junior and Senior High School in Japan. He holds a Master's degree in English Education from Ritsumeikan University. His research interests include task-based learning, conversation analysis and language curriculum development. Email: cvollmeruji@gmail.com

Lanzhen Zhang is a PhD student in the Graduate School of Letters, Ritsumeikan University, Japan, where she also works as a teaching assistant. She has worked in the field of mass communication and second language acquisition. Her research interests include various aspects of SLA, identity of multilingual users (Chinese/English/Japanese) and intercultural communication in the digital era. Email: gr0345hk@ed.ritsumei.ac.jp

Introduction: Individual and Contextual Factors in the English Language Classroom: Theoretical, Pedagogical, and Empirical Approaches

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Christopher J. Denman

Abstract For teachers of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), the effective recognition and integration of a wide range of individual and contextual factors, including those concerned with cognition, metacognition, emotion, identity, and socio-cultural background, into the classroom may represent a significant challenge. This is often the case in those settings where native English-speaking teachers work in foreign language contexts where they may have limited understanding of local cultures and languages, or where language instructors have class groups that are culturally and linguistically diverse. In these, and similar, contexts, the types and extent of individual and contextual factors impacting on language learning may challenge learner and instructor expectations of what an effective and supportive classroom is. While such a situation offers numerous opportunities for learners and teachers to expand knowledge of themselves, each other, and the world around them, it also presents the possibility for ineffective teaching and learning to occur. Within this framework, contributors to this volume examine a number of topics related to individual and contextual factors in ESL/EFL settings, with a particular focus on issues of cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity. Chapters are presented across the three sections of theoretical and pedagogical approaches, teacher and learner research, and research into the roles of technology. They include explorations of the roles of cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity in ESL/EFL, the ways student/teacher identities and socio-cultural factors manifest in the classroom, the impact of metacognition on student engagement, and how technology can support the identification and integration of individual and contextual factors in the learning process. By presenting the latest theoretical, pedagogical, and research perspectives from around the world, the book provides a resource for all

R. Al-Mahrooqi
Chair of the Sultan Qaboos University Council, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: mrahma@squ.edu.om

C. J. Denman (✉)
Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: denman@squ.edu.om

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stakeholders with an interest in the roles individual and contextual factors play in the English learning process.

Keywords Individual/learner factors · Context · Socio-cultural setting · Cognition · Emotion · Identity · ESL/EFL · Technology

1 Introduction

For teachers of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), the effective recognition and integration of learner and contextual factors, including in terms of cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity, into the teaching and learning process may represent a significant challenge. This is often especially the case in those settings where native English-speaking teachers work in foreign language contexts where they may have limited understanding of local cultures and languages, or where language instructors have class groups that are culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse. In these, and similar, contexts, the types and extent of individual and contextual factors impacting on language learning may challenge both learner and instructor expectations of what an effective and supportive classroom should look like. While such a situation offers numerous opportunities for learners and teachers to expand their knowledge of themselves, the host and/or target language/s, the socio-cultural setting, and each other's backgrounds, it also presents the possibility for ineffective teaching and limited student-teacher understanding to take place.

For conscientious language instructors around the world, the literature offers a plethora of individual and contextual factors that can potentially have a defining influence on their students' language learning. Cognitive approaches to language learning, for instance, emphasise the importance of individual learner factors, including by foregrounding the active and reasoned mental activity students engage in to successfully learn a second or foreign language. Individual cognitive factors that impact language learning include intelligence, memory, attention and awareness, and language aptitude or innate language ability. Learning strategies employed by students can be classified into cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies, with the latter being divided into social strategies and affective strategies by Dörnyei and Skehan (2003). Cognitive strategies are the actions performed by learners that involve the manipulation and transformation of language input in order to retain it, and include memorisation, repetition, transformation and so on, while metacognitive strategies include learners' conscious awareness of their cognition, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. Dörnyei and Skehan's social strategies encompass interacting with others in language learning, and include conversing in and practising the language with others, while affective strategies involve learners exploring and managing their own emotions in language learning.

Gardner's (1985, 2000) socio-educational model, described by MacIntyre (2007) as one of the most dominant in its field, provides one of the best-known expositions

of the impact of individual and contextual factors on language learning. The 1985 version of the model offers the four components of social milieu, individual differences, SLA context, and outcomes. It is the second of these components, that of individual differences, in which cognitive variables, including intelligence, aptitude, and learning strategies, are featured, and which also encompasses learner identity. These are complemented by individual affective variables, including attitude, motivation, language anxiety, and self-confidence – all of which play important roles in Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis. In the socio-educational model, these variables are impacted upon by the social milieu, or the socio-cultural setting in which learning takes place, including in terms of learners' orientations to the language and beliefs about the target language group/s. In this model, learners' cultural identities are "socially formed, grounded in cultural beliefs in the surrounding milieu" (Halimi et al., 2020, p. 149).

Although the socio-educational model has been criticised on a number of grounds (Taie & Afshari, 2015), including for not explicitly theorising the processes whereby environmental and contextual influences are internalised by learners (Halimi et al., 2020), it has, nonetheless, done a great deal to raise awareness of the roles a wide range of individual and contextual factors play in ESL/EFL settings. This awareness has been associated with an emerging emphasis in the literature on the importance of cognitive, affective, and context-related variables, not only in terms of motivation, learning strategies, orientation to the target language group etc., but also in regards to age, gender, ethnicity, orientation, historical and political factors, and engagement with socio-cultural contexts (Murray, 2010).

As the socio-educational model highlights, in seeking to understand the learner as a unique individual operating within wider socio-cultural paradigms and language learning contexts, it is important to move beyond an exclusive focus on cognitive and metacognitive factors to take into account variables that are often more difficult to define and gauge in the language classroom, such as emotion. Despite a growing awareness of the importance of understanding learners as complex, dynamic individuals whose thoughts, feelings, experiences, expectations, and goals all occur within wider social, cultural, historical, and political settings, Swain (2013) states that concern with variables impacting language learning still largely relegates emotions, with the exception of language anxiety, to the margins of research, even though they play a vital part in mediating learning in cultural contexts. The author states that factors associated with the relative dearth of research into the role of emotions in second language learning include the traditional Western valorisation of cognition in the learning process, and the difficulty investigators have with operationalising and measuring the complex array of learner emotional response. This led to a situation in which traditional approaches to learner emotion have focused on individual reactions to the target language and classroom activities, with resultant research often seeking to rank emotions based on their effectiveness in facilitating language learning (Benesch, 2016). Such approaches tend to value the rational over the emotional, and, in doing so, ignore Carl Jung's contention that, "We should not pretend to understand the world only by the intellect; we apprehend it just as much

by feeling. Therefore the judgment of the intellect is, at best, only a half-truth, and must, if it is honest, also admit its inadequacy" (Adler & Hull, 1976, p. 680).

In-line with Jung's belief, the traditionally dominant role cognitive perspectives have played in studies of language learning and identity has been increasingly challenged by the foregrounding of learner and teacher emotion, including by the positive psychology movement. According to Dewaele et al. (2019), one of the first papers to deal with the role of positive psychology in applied linguistics was co-authored by one of Gardner's collaborators – P. D. MacIntyre (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Dewaele et al. state that positive psychology moves beyond the focus on language anxiety, motivation, and attitudes, to encompass a more nuanced approach to understanding how positive and negative learner and teacher emotions impact the language learning and teaching processes, including the ways student satisfaction in language learning can be associated with personal growth in terms of skills, abilities, and identity.

In this vein, Pishghadam et al. (2016) offer Pekrun et al.'s (2007) three-dimensional taxonomy of achievement emotions, in which positive activating emotions include enjoyment, joy, hope, pride, and gratitude – factors that are critical for learner motivation, identity development, and even health. Negative activating emotions, on the other hand, are anger, frustration, anxiety, and shame. Positive deactivating emotions include relaxation, contentment, and relief, and negative deactivating emotions are boredom, sadness, disappointment, and hopelessness. According to Pishghadam et al., it is when teachers understand the potentially activating and deactivating nature of both positive and negative emotions on language learning, including on learner motivation, attention, learning cognition, strategy use and so on, that they can adjust their teaching methodologies to promote student achievement.

Nugent et al. (2019) similarly foreground higher order thinking skills and emotions as among the main forces driving student engagement in learning, and the impact they have on learner interest levels, persistence, self-reflection, self-identity, and growth. Learning experiences, according to the authors, produce student responses that are either positive or negative in nature. Classrooms, along with the learning experiences enacted within them, can be places where positive experiences activate a learner's curiosity and interest, hence making learning pleasurable and rewarding. Conversely, negativity arising in the classroom, often associated with a sense of threat and stress response, limit learner attention and decrease focus on learning. The authors detail the importance of supporting students in exploring the means through which their studies impact their self-identities, including in terms of the influence learning has on their beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours both in the classroom and beyond. By doing so, it is possible for instructors to ensure that learners experience the classroom in a positive way, thereby contributing to their personal development.

As this brief overview indicates, there is growing acceptance of not only the potential impact of individual and contextual factors on language learning, including, as a focus of the current volume, cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity, but also of how these factors interact to influence the successes, set-backs,

opportunities, and challenges occurring in class. Learner and teacher gender, socio-cultural background, personality types, previous learning/teaching experiences, motivations, orientations to the target language, and so on meet contextual factors specific to the classroom and wider educational and social settings, including pedagogical approaches, peer and parental language attitudes, and the value of the target language in wider society, in a broad historical and political context that has an important impact on the learning process. Although focusing specifically on the study of emotions in English language teaching and learning, Benesch (2016) reinforces this point by reminding readers of the importance of casting a wide net in identifying the individual and contextual factors that influence language learning success, including by recognising the impact of socio-political concerns on the classroom and the manifestation of power relations within historical contexts.

Following these perspectives, increasing understanding of the central role individual and contextual factors, including cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity, play in English language learning is necessary for teachers to effectively engage their students and for students to manage and take control of their learning. This understanding is associated with an increasing concern in the literature with the ways in which teachers and learners experience the language learning process, and how a range of individual and contextual factors influence classroom outcomes and student understandings of themselves and the world/s they inhabit. Such perspectives complement humanistic and critical approaches to language learning, which emphasise learning as taking place within socio-political and historical contexts (Pishghadam et al., 2016), and the necessity of instructors recognising their learners as individuals whose transforming sense of identity, including in terms of interests, goals, and beliefs, must be taken into account to achieve their full potential.

It is within this context that the current volume, *Individual and contextual factors in the English language classroom: Theoretical, pedagogical, and empirical approaches*, examines some of the many roles these factors play within ESL/EFL settings. Contributors take a wide range of approaches to the theme, examining such areas as the influence of cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity on ESL/EFL, including in terms of lexis, word recognition, and writing, the influence of learner personality and characteristics, student and teacher identity, and technology use to complement the identification and activation of individual and contextual factors in the classroom. The book presents contributors' works across three parts: Theoretical & Pedagogical Approaches; Research Perspectives: Teachers & Learners; and Research Perspectives: The Role of Technology.

The first part is dedicated to chapters concerned with Theoretical & Pedagogical Approaches to individual and contextual factors. It begins with Hovhannisyan's "Psycholinguistic Competencies and Interculturality in ELT". In the opening chapter, the author details a number of communication challenges to English teachers and learners associated with the linguistic, historical, social, and cultural concerns of language learning. After discussing the fact that language acquisition and cognition are inseparable from emotion and learner identity as factors regulating the adaptation to changes caused by external and internal learning, Hovhannisyan

provides a number of suggestions for addressing these issues. The chapter concludes by offering a methodological framework for developing language personality in ELT.

Deveci and Saleem next foreground the role of lexical competence in foreign language learning. In the chapter, "Reducing Learners' Cognitive Load and Emotional Challenges Created by Lexis: The Andragogical Approach to Enhance Adult Learners' Mental Lexicon", the authors discuss the importance of language instructors helping develop their learners' mental lexicon, and how this process, if not handled with care, can be negatively influenced by individual learner characteristics resulting in the emergence of cognitive and emotional challenges. The authors detail the ways in which andragogy and andragogical assumptions can address these concerns, before offering readers ideas for effective pedagogical practice in foreign language learning contexts.

In the next chapter, "Language Test Feedback and Learner Personality: Implications for Asian Classrooms", Burnell states that, despite a widely-accepted shift to learner-centred pedagogical approaches in English language teaching, students' personality differences and the effect of these on learning are still not well-understood by instructors. The author explores differing perceptions of feedback in second language learning based on student differences in the "big five" personality traits. The chapter stresses the necessity of increasing instructor awareness of students' different personality traits, and of providing personalised feedback that takes into account these traits as a means of enhancing learning.

Further developing the theme of personality in the language classroom, Hovhannisyan explores the concepts of language persona, or personality linked with the linguistic categorisation of emotions, as part of cognitive development. "The Architecture of Language Personality" introduces the cognitive-linguistic categorisation of emotions within the context of L2 personality development. Based on the author's teaching experience and previous research, the chapter features a number of theoretical and practical implications of language persona, including language personality and identity as language learning objectives, while also discussing linguistic and methodological instruments that can be applied in the classroom to facilitate this process.

In her chapter, "From Scribbles to the Launch of a Creative Writing Anthology: The Emotional Investment of Omani Learners as Co-Creators", Ladha reports on her use of creative writing techniques in English language classrooms around the world as a means of supporting learners' original and effective writing. The author begins by describing the use of creative writing techniques to provide space for multilingual learners to engage as co-creators who are emotionally invested in their work. This approach is argued to support independent learning that engenders a genuine commitment to the learning process. Ladha offers numerous examples of creative writing being employed to scaffold learners' cognitive and emotional investment and the expression of their mosaic identities, with implications for pedagogical practice examined.

The final chapter from the first part of the book is Allmark's "An Evaluation of the Conceptual Validity of Vowel Blindness as an Explanation for Differences in

Arabic Readers' L2 Word Recognition". Allmark begins by describing the fact that, despite the frequency with which vowel blindness is cited as a cross-linguistic effect influencing Arabic learners' L2 reading and writing outcomes, its conceptual validity has only rarely been examined. The author's systematic scoping review of Arabic L2 word recognition of alphabetic writing systems concludes that current evidence is too limited and conflicting to validate vowel blindness, and that further research in the area is needed. The chapter concludes by discussing the significance of these results for English word recognition in similar learning contexts.

The next two parts of the volume offer readers some of the latest research in the field from around the world. Part II is dedicated to investigative work on Teachers & Learners, while Part III is concerned with research into the Role of Technology in identifying and supporting a range of individual and contextual factors in English language settings. Part II begins with Rezaee and Ghanbarpoor's "Learners' Willingness to Communicate, Motivation, and Classroom Activity Preferences: Realities from the Iranian EFL Context". After identifying willingness to communicate (WTC), linguistic self-confidence, and motivation as amongst the most important affective variables in the language learning process, Rezaee and Ghanbarpoor examine the relationship between these factors and learner preferences for various classroom activities. Data collected through three questionnaires administered to EFL learners in Iran indicate a positive relationship between WTC and a preference for speaking activities. A similarly positive relationship is also reported between learner motivation and preference for activities across all language skill areas. After analysing the impact of participants' background variables on these results, the authors discuss implications for theory, practice, and materials development in English language settings.

The next chapter features an account of Chiknaverova and Obdalova's investigation of the interconnection between different types of motivation and success in foreign language acquisition in a TEFL course for Russian university students. "Affecting Students' Motivation to Foster Foreign Language Acquisition: Juggling Pedagogical Tools and Psychological Diagnostics in the University Classroom" describes how data were collected with psychological instruments to measure motivation in the language classroom and evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical methods for assessing foreign language communicative competence. Analysis indicates the positive influence of certain types of motivation in language acquisition, in addition to the possibility of enhancing learner motivation through the selection of special pedagogical tools that can be applied in combination with specific teaching styles.

Bin Rashed's chapter, "Escaping the Confines of Essentialism: Conceptualizing New Spaces of Identification among Native and Nonnative ESL Teachers", provides a case study of a Kuwaiti-British citizen teaching in Kuwait who identifies more with English than Arabic. The author offers a detailed account of her participant's reflexivity practice as a means of negotiating emotional challenges in her experience teaching English at the college level and as an expression of her identity development. Bin Rashed's account, which includes her participant's negotiation of a number of emotional challenges, concludes by calling to attention the need to move

beyond the essentialist characterisation of nativity due to its negative consequences on nonnative speakers.

"The Effect of English Study at School on Later Foreign Language Learning: How Chinese People Experience Learning and Using Japanese While Living and Studying Overseas", by Zhang and Coulson, focuses on the ways in which later third language learning can be influenced by the early experiences of English education in learner characteristics such as WTC, perfectionism, and tolerance of ambiguity. The authors detail their use of a mixed-methods approach collecting data through a questionnaire and qualitative interviews from Chinese L3-speakers of Japanese. Results indicate the pervasiveness of "ingrained correctness" among participants, and that the experience of learning an L3 results in some respondents rating their new language ability more highly than their English proficiency. Zhang and Coulson surmise that their participants' positive experience with learning Japanese as an L3 may result in a reappraisal of their English language skills and of their purpose in language learning.

In the next chapter, Mathew, G. R. Kiran, and Sankara Narayanan present a model for writing instruction based on the Swalesian Move and Step text analytical approach to genre. "Introducing Swalesian Genre-Pedagogy to Arab EFL Learners: A Case Study" reports the results of a project piloting the genre-based pedagogical model amongst postgraduate students at a college-level centre for academic writing. The case study involved analysis of a corpus of proficient assignments for students' final-year dissertations in order to identify the Moves and Steps of the part genre of Reporting Survey Findings. Based on their results, the authors discuss participants' perceptions and attitudes to the pedagogy and provide recommendations for improving the design of discipline-specific writing materials by drawing on student corpora.

In the following chapter, McDonald and Finlay detail a piece of exploratory research on the experiences and perceptions of students attending a tutorial centre in a Middle Eastern university. In "Quantifying Quality: Examining Student Satisfaction and Enjoyment of a Middle Eastern Tutorial Centre", the authors describe their analysis of data collected through a questionnaire distributed to university English-language foundation programme students in the Sultanate of Oman as revealing that, somewhat counter-intuitively, learner satisfaction did not significantly increase for participants making multiple visits to the tutorial centre. Despite this, participants largely found their sessions to be valuable and enjoyable, with the positive influence of visits on their English language skills being noted as a particular benefit. The authors discuss the implications of these findings for tutorial centre operations around the world.

The final chapter from the second part of the book is Herron's "Metacognition and Language Learning on an International Foundation Programme". In this chapter, Herron explores the presence of metacognition within an international foundation programme in a British university through a mixed methods research design that employed a self-scoring matrix and a weekly semi-structured blog for student participants, in addition to a teacher questionnaire concerned with student engagement. The author reports that participants generally engaged with metacognitive thinking, although this engagement showed signs of fluctuating over time. Moreover,

metacognitive thinking and reflection were found to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. The chapter offers suggestions for teachers to extend support to these important aspects of English language learning.

The final part of this volume has to do with research into the role technology can play in identifying and supporting various individual and contextual variables in English language classrooms. Part III begins with the chapter, "Construction and Launch of a Virtual Reality Laboratory for EFL Learners: A Crossroad between Cognitive and Emotional Learning", by Hoffman. The author details the efforts of a college in Oman to set up a Virtual Reality (VR) lab in support of its English foundation learners' studies. Based on verbal feedback from students and staff in test meetings and during the lab's beta testing phase, Hoffman reports high levels of user comfort and strong emotional connections with the experience of Extended Reality. However, a number of areas for improvement were also identified to ensure that VR continues to have a strong positive effect on learners' cognitive and emotional learning experiences.

Thanyawatpokin and Vollmer next explore the role of games and gamification in English language learning with a particular focus on issues of learner identity. Their chapter, "Language Learner Identity and Games and Gamification in the Language Learning Classroom: Observations from the Japanese Context", begins by detailing the dearth of practical research into how game-based language learning and gamification can affect language learner identity and investment, before describing their pedagogical interventions at the high school and university levels. A variety of gamification and game-based pedagogical interventions were used with English classes in Japan, with data about the effectiveness of these collected through surveys, homework responses, class discussions, and other classroom observation-based data. Analysis indicates the substantial influence games can have on learner identity and investment in learning, although a number of factors, including teacher interventions, support materials and so on, are stated to influence these benefits.

"Grasping Omani Students' Transitional Challenges: Focus on Computer Self-Efficacy and English Proficiency", by Tuzlukova and Ginosyan, next examines English foundation programme students' transitional challenges in terms of academic development and adjustment by focusing on their computer self-efficacy and English language proficiency. The authors collected data through semi-structured interviews with foundation programme coordinators, focus group discussions with student participants, and online student surveys. Results indicate that foundation students face multiple social, emotional, and academic transitional challenges, with these being partially rooted in limited English language and computer proficiency. Means of addressing these issues that can be applied to similar learning contexts worldwide are discussed.

The book concludes with Ofemile's "Nonverbal Indicators of Comprehension among L2 Users of English Interacting with Smart Verbal Software Agents". In this chapter, Ofemile details a scoping study involving student teachers of English in Nigeria about ways of developing a better understanding of the nature of marked spontaneous nonverbal listenership behaviours and their effect on listener-comprehension during interaction with a computer interface. Participants were

asked to complete a task using vague verbal instructions with a continuum of four voices (synthesised and human). A multimodal corpus was built and analysed from these interactions, with results indicating the possibility of humans showing their level and process of comprehending instructions through facial actions, nonverbal private talk and repairs during the task. Implications and future research pathways for a range of English learning contexts based on these results are discussed.

As this introduction indicates, the current volume seeks to highlight a wide range of individual and context-related factors that impact upon English language learning and teaching processes, with a particular focus on cognition, metacognition, emotion, and identity. Contributors take diverse theoretical, pedagogical, and research perspectives on the theme. By drawing together contributors affiliated with institutions from across the world, the book ensures a wide range of perspectives are presented, and that readers have access to some of the latest international developments, including new directions for research and practice, in English language instruction. It is our sincere hope that readers will find the book insightful and valuable for their own professional practice and research.

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Part I
Theoretical & Pedagogical Approaches

Psycholinguistic Competencies and Interculturality in ELT

Gayane R. Hovhannisyan

Abstract English language teaching has long gone beyond the classroom walls. The term itself includes a whole educational paradigm related to the social-cognitive, pragmatic and ethical aspects of the English-speaking world. Both English learners and teachers in the course of communication face not only language-related challenges but also those borne in historically, socially, and culturally diverse psychology and outlooks: ways of rationalizing perceptions, knowledge structures, attitudes, and the choices of expressing these feelings and beliefs. For both learners and teachers, language learning and cognition are inseparable from the emotional component, which is a factor that regulates adaptation to changes caused by external and internal learning events. Viewing these challenges within the psycholinguistic discipline, the study proposes a set of interrelated approaches and actions, including: (a) a systematic approach to the design of English learner and teacher competencies; (b) the implementation of the psycholinguistic approach to English language learning/teaching (ELL/ELT) that foregrounds learner personality; (c) support for graduate and post-graduate language educator programs with ethnolinguistic cross-cultural study components; and (d) the design of compatible formats for lecturer-student co-research activities and mechanisms of application of these products. The present chapter examines the tasks concerning the implementation of these actions, with recommendations leading to a methodological framework for language personality development in ELT. The proposed methodology has emerged due to the author's study series in the linguistic categorization of emotions, language acquisition and bilingual identity, and culture research frameworks in language education.

Keywords Cultural pragmatics · Emotion · Cognition · ELL/ELT competencies

G. R. Hovhannisyan (✉)
Brusov State University, Yerevan, Armenia
e-mail: dr_gaya@brusov.am

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1 Introduction: Managing Emotions and Cognition in the Context of Diversity

Present in all possible communication contexts, and influenced by speaker subjectivity, the English language changes, acquiring more abstract as a standard, and more specific in local applications, features in all its levels. This brings forward the need to provide multi-component strategies to the culturally diverse English-speaking learners and educators with competencies to avoid misunderstanding and achieve effective teaching results. Although Intercultural Pragmatics seeks solutions (see Bennett, 2004; Hinner, 2017; Maguire & Romero-Trillo, 2017; Nakamura, 2018; Robles, 2019) to level cognitive and emotional inconsistencies between culturally and socially diverse communicants through identifying some key competencies of learning and communication, these skills do not always reflect in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks and programs for reasons that are beyond the capacities of language teachers.

In each of its intercultural contexts, English communication pragmatics has its context-specific peculiarities to be addressed in the classroom, both by teachers and learners. Currently, the number of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) speakers is much higher than the number of native speakers, which gives the English language the widest functional scope among all the languages of the world (Crystal, 2003). It has become part of the more general phenomenon of "English as an international language (EIL)" or "World Englishes" (Jenkins, 2003).

English infiltrates and adapts to most of the languages of the world. As a result, the structure of English and its genre repertoire has acquired new features. And, despite the obvious concerns related to the "decline" of the "Queen's English" (Shariatmadari, 2019), it is moving from the geographical expansion towards dominance in socioeconomic, political, scientific and communication infrastructures (Leimgruber, 2013). English has actually become a sort of sociolinguistic indicator of globalization tendencies (Ford, 2007), involving such conceptual constraints as language standards and variety, corpus-based and normative approaches to teaching and learning, language change and identity (Seoane & Suarez-Gomez, 2016). On the other hand, having their native tongues as a language of intra-community encounters, EFL populations engage in the extensive use of English for both inside-the-circle and outside-the-circle communication, speaking it in their families, with friends and relatives. For example, in the multinational Russian Federation, English enters the cultural programs and families in the status of an "internationally accepted standard".

As a major in teaching the language of international communication, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is offered in almost all of the world's universities. Different parts of the world hold conferences to unify ELT intercultural and multilingual education practices in higher education. These include in the former Soviet states and Finland (Lähteenmäki & Vanhala-Aniszewski, 2010), in various regions of Europe (Cots et al., 2012; Lapresta-Rey & Huguet, 2019; Lasagabaster, 2015), the Middle East (TESOL Arabia) and others (Jones,

2015; Kamhi-Stein & Díaz Maggioli, 2017; Silver et al., 2002), thus maintaining the best traditions and methodological advancement of ELT and adapting it to the regional philosophies of education.

In the past couple of decades, countries in these regions have intensively developed their ELT infrastructure, which has already yielded its deep consequences on both the individuals and the language levels (Matsuura et al., 2004). World Englishes assimilate the phonetic, grammatical, semantic, connotational and discourse specificities of the local uses. On the other hand, language use implies formal accommodation to new cognitive contents and psycho-emotional realia typical of the local cultures (Maguire & Romero-Trillo, 2017; Seoane & Suarez-Gomez, 2016). Therefore, English develops varieties far from each other to impede fluent communication, both in form and content. However, there is little to be concerned about, as it is the language of the youth and the internet (Shariatmadari, 2019), and most of the virtual forms of interaction, including scientific and political communication.

Although English native speakers are traditionally held in high regard in TESOL, what is distinctive about the ELT situation is that, in most cases, it is a "contact language" between individuals who share neither a common native tongue nor cultural background. Both socially and psychologically, they are the consumers of English and the natural representatives of their languages, traditions, and personal lifestyles.

For EFL users, English is a "given code" for communicative consumption. Defined in this way, EFL is part of the more general phenomenon of EIL. At this particular level, participants may encounter cognitive and ethical-emotional indetermination unless the "given standards" are spontaneously ignored in favor of the speakers' self-expression. No specific studies illustrate the hypothesis that context expansion takes place only on the condition that smaller circles entirely interiorize the language, but we assume that, parallel to the social increase of language use, its psychological expansion targets inwards to alter personalities in communication and, hence, their bilingual identities (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Panicacci, 2013).

The traditional meaning of EIL thus comprises applications of English both within and across the circles. This concept of the cycles and their expansion stems from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human development, where language communication is by default taken as the critical factor for circle expansion. Thus, moving from the geographical expansion towards the social infrastructures, English penetrates the third dimension of individual semiosis. It is at this very level that the language itself changes: in the role of the intercultural mediator, this transformation is, in fact, a process of approximation and adaptation of such features as phonetics, morphology, syntax, intonations and imagery, metaphors, idioms, and modality, absorbing the thoughts and feelings of EFL speakers in almost all possible spheres of their life.

Expanding functions result in a change of attitude-meaning on the one hand, and norm-empowerment, on the other (Aitchison, 2004). From the ESL/EFL teaching and assessment perspective, the problem of the norm gradually gives in to prioritizing the factor of understanding as in the role of *lingua franca* English conforms and

localizes, undergoing similar processes of branching as Latin in Romance or Cyrillic in Slavic languages.

Multicultural communities speak EFL, often assimilating and adapting it to their language and thinking rules (Kachru et al., 2006). Each of these representatives uses English to verbalize the world in their ways of mapping it. The non-native English speakers bring their mental constructions, grammatical and syntactical structures, idioms and imagery, that frequently do no conform to Standard English's rules. Notably, approximation occurs at the expense of both the expressiveness of communicants' feelings and thoughts (they usually avail a restricted volume of general vocabulary) and the language wealth.

There are hardly any corpus-based studies indicating word usage frequency, but it is not difficult to observe that the more common English vocabulary has gained extended phrasal uses and collocations not typical of Standard English. Whatever the academic opinions, most of these constructions work well due to the cooperativeness of communicants (Mauranen, 2015), and, as Kachru (1992) has noticed, many of them become part of the regional variant of the language. Sometimes, the non-native verbal thinking and grammatical features borrowed by English can be quite comprehensive and functional in broader multilingual communities.

"Kiss the hand you cannot cut off." Trying to legalize this process, some linguists propose adopting a tolerant approach to the faults caused by negative interference between L1 and L2. Some of them suggest that EFL learners and teachers ignore those features of English that comprise articulation difficulty for EFL learners (Seidlhofer, 2005). Others suggest ignoring other language norms of grammar and syntax, prioritizing the act of understanding (Jenkins, 2000).

The neglecting of the formal structural standard of English has at least two justifying arguments. First, given the "freedom to make mistakes", EFL learners become more encouraged to actively participate in English interactions without being intimidated by non-compliance with the native standards. Second, they are satisfied with the conscious expression of individual cognitive and emotional resources, thus achieving the actual goal of equal interaction. The natural communicative involvement imposes one critical necessity on the multicultural communicants as the only working criterion – provide and receive proper understanding.

It is noteworthy that some communication strategies and skills, such as speed, revision, precision, and completeness that are highly culture-related and socially and ontogenetically diversified, have been neglected, causing, in particular, doubts about the validity of language tests. The criterion of the communicative completeness has been developed in one of my unpublished studies and elaborated by some of my BA students between 2007 and 2012. Almost none of the skills and strategies mentioned above have been highlighted as such, while completeness in interactional communication is an essential and measurable dimension for the emotional and cognitive satisfaction of communicants.

Instead, there are studies in misunderstanding and repair strategies (Edwards et al., 2017; Robles, 2019; Qin, 2014). Types and causes of misunderstanding in various contexts have been a subject of broad pragmatic studies within the past two decades (Bazzanella & Damiano, 1999; Bou-Franch, 2002), but the problem of

completeness still needs to be referred to in L2 teaching contents and competencies. In ESL communication, this competence is especially critical; for example, in the approximating process of instructional (Jager, 2012), virtual interactions, where written and spoken forms intermingle and overlap, parameters of context and time are smeared and fuzzy, and completeness is the only measurement of communication quality.

My teaching and administrative observations allow me to assert that language educators, irrespective of level and learner, need to locate and measure the degree of compromise when developing their ELT programs. If the course or the program targets spoken communication, then spelling and grammar are ignored to an acceptable extent for comprehension. Indeed, when students are first exposed to spoken language and learn it from the environment, they write the way they speak. Moreover, they may use, but have difficulties in understanding, the structure of grammar rules. On the contrary, when learners are first exposed to the written language standard mainly through reading and literacy, their productive skills, both spoken and written, develop to stand closer to the language standard.

Although the literacy-first approach may compromise against slang, repair and spoken fluency, it provides the learners with the skills required for academic advancement. The speaking-first and literacy-first approaches can also be strategically manipulated in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, depending on education design factors. Unfortunately, most institutions seldom carry out studies of precise needs assessment and prefer to solve the inconsistencies emerging as a consequence of loose curriculum design through the formal statistic adaptation of assessment results.

I want to draw attention to the developmental, rather than institutional, aspect of the assessment situations mentioned above, as I believe that harmonizing the correlations between cognitive activities and expression of emotions will instigate a natural corrective chain reaction, as these two factors anchor with the objective of learner development into bilingual, ESL-speaking personalities. Piaget's principles of developmental psychology (Piaget, 2001) and active constructivism and teacher psycholinguistic competencies used in the design of language teaching methods have a high potential of making a sustainable strategy in language personality education. Therefore, in another chapter of this book, I propose the concept and model of language personality as the unique, principal reference for linguistic context and interaction analysis. Placing the language personality at the center of communication research avails a consistent representation of language teaching dimensions.

It is not a secret that, from the psycholinguistic perspective, second language learning firmly stands on conscious cognitive activities (Marlina, 2018). These activities include the reception and retention and memorization of the second language rules and patterns, to offer usable blocks for analysis and further speech production. The "speaking first" environment may leave the learners one-to-one with direct exposure stress, and, if they also lack metalinguistic and psycholinguistic competencies, and if the teacher does not provide support, understanding turns into an endless labyrinth of speech flow decomposition attempts, seldom leading to any meaningful solution. Unlike the literacy-first approach, the speaking-first plan may

turn to a fatal demotivator, requiring the conscious person to speak without having been given sufficient speech instruments.

"Write your problems down and get rid of them." To illustrate the case, I would like to share a fragment from my practice. A colleague turned to me for consulting on a teenage student with some form of acquired speech disorder. English was his second language, which he had learned in a native speaking environment. Though the acquired fluency and native pronunciation were evident, the student suffered some mild retarded articulation. He had also told the teacher that he did not like to read and resented writing in English. After looking closely into the case and consulting some literature (Amsten & Rubia, 2012; Bialystok et al., 2017), we identified a psychomotor link between the student's spoken and written speech disorders.

The student's handwriting movements were very much like his articulation. He hesitated before putting pen on paper and quickly "spit out" all the letters of the word at once. The sentence structure was incorrect, and grammar and spelling were the graphic reflections of his spoken production. As a personality, the student was intelligent and had a strong sense of self-awareness, which would either support or impede our plan depending on what strategy we would use to help him. At that stage, we acknowledged his willingness to share his problem with the teacher. Later, the teacher was to rely on the student's reflexive skills to design speech correction training activities for him.

In social parallels, language standards, from time to time, adhere to the principles of accepting inevitable changes through legalizing the diversification, thus bringing it to the manageable domain of facts (Ford, 2007). The most prominent historical precedent of "getting rid of the problems through writing them down" is the emergence of American, and then, following, varieties of English. The acknowledgment of new norms saved a whole nation from being "illiterate" or "not-good-enough". Stretching learners towards a standard that does not change without dealing with the emerging norms of language in communication will demotivate the previous one and reject the latter (Shariatmadari, 2019).

"The amount makes it either a poison or a remedy." The training of the student started with letter-drawing slowly and with love. The teacher asked him to articulate the phoneme gently and slowly as if he was caressing a cat while writing the letter along with "singing the sound". The next step was to "put the jewels together" on the ink-string of syllables. With a change of intonation coloring between the syllables, the student proceeded to write and utter whole words and then sentences. After six weeks of work, the student stopped stammering, as he had learned to control his inner emotional instability via developing motor fluency in writing. Due to developing the skill of motor, visual and auditory associations, the writing progress began, and the student overcame his problems with speech production.

Learning English, in this case, turned out a success for the correction of a disorder and for personality development. By and large, the example shows that the language skills are deeply interconnected, and that, by improving one of them, we can improve the others if we remember that these are part of the culture of the language personality. The latter is characterized by the interplay of objective, cognitive and emotive activities.

However, there is another factor systematizing all of these activities and determining success. Further, speaking of vectors, we remember that time is one of the fundamental dimensions of culture in the process of managing the cognition and emotions (Markelova et al., 2016). Historically and ontogenetically, human culture is the sum of the objects created in the course of nature cultivation, knowledge compiled, and procedural values refined from emotional experiences. The last two, known as the intellectual-spiritual component, together with the material component, construct the artefacts of cultural consciousness. The attempt to neglect culture in educational matters and to replace it by the concept of social interaction and socialization is doomed to fail, as it is mainly the cultural environment that provides systemic conditions for personality development. While socialization expands personal outlooks, the sense of belonging to a cultural system endows the personality with inner cognitive harmony and emotional stability – factors required for active learning (Sercombe & Tupas, 2014).

"Time is the reason of all." Expressed emotions and feelings are always a reason for learning and conceptualizing, but it takes time to learn. Time deficiency or lapse can cause cognitive stress, or the opposite, time vacuum and depression. What we call time management is the micromodel of the ethnic culture of time. People cultivate their feelings and learning in the context of social adaptation (Olsson et al., 2016). Observations show that learners conceptualize, in other words, interpret and explain, only those fragments of experience and perceptions that they have the time to understand.

Emotions arise as a result of the inconsistencies between the cognitive input and the time allotted to process the information or incorporate it in the structures of meaning and categorize it as part of verbal consciousness. Those feelings that we do not have enough time to conceptualize, we learn to at least control and express using culture-specific speech patterns. In one of my previous studies conducted jointly with a student, I argued that linguistic forms of the emotions/feelings expressed instantiate the degree of their rationalization (Hovhannisyan & Grigoryan, 2013). Language rationalization of emotions, or the process of representing them in the linear order, is one of the most vivid examples of time and cognitive skills interplay, vectoring towards the crystallization of self-consciousness and personality.

Raw emotions process into the structures of verbal consciousness through two main channels of activity, objective and subjective. Objectifying categorization adds to the content of knowledge or, roughly, information storage. It refers to the understanding of the language or, more precisely, the linguistic resource of emotional expression. The second, subjective conceptualization, takes place through physical response, or motor reaction, attitude, which associates with the ethical rules of behavior accepted in a social-cultural environment. In many cultures, where the verbal forms are at a particular stage of refinement, the motor aspects of communication are by default dominating, and they form the core of the cultural identity.

These norms differ from the western understanding of ethics in abundant consumption of time and physical energy. They might seem too lengthy and less practical if they did not contain an essential component – the tact of giving time to the other and oneself to adjust to the context and purpose of communication

reciprocally. When the person affords enough time for individual interiorization, she/he may modify and adapt primary emotional responses according to personal pragmatic goals.

The pragmatics of emotion management and categorization evolve historically, in the course of cultural-linguistic development, and the conceptual structures of native verbal thinking are hard to neglect. I focused on this competence because it argues against Yetim's (2002) idea of designing common ethical patterns of English intercultural communication as an optimal solution. If the algorithms of temporal rationalization were not rooted in some speech cultures so profoundly, his idea would be possible to realize. Nevertheless, even though many of the intercultural guidelines mention the factor of time (Hall, 1976; Bennett, 2004), they suggest neither a distinct methodology for research nor instructional strategies for teaching time and emotion management.

"The teacher comes when the student is ready." It would be meaningless to dwell upon teacher competencies without defining, or, at least, briefly outlining student competencies. Studies in learning mechanisms (Ambrose et al., 2010) indicate that emotions and identity play a central role in overall learning and development (Csizér & Magid, 2014). Referring to Chickering's (1993) model of student development, it is easy to outline the below competencies as learner development vectors. I wonder why these competencies could not apply to personality development and, hence, teachers' professional development. Bearing this in mind, I present here the "student competencies" in the developmental sequence. Ontogenetically, the first competency is the ability to develop purpose and integrity. These are the earliest skills that, ideally, are instilled along with primary activities, including communication. Integrity is a more complex vector, inherent and actualized spontaneously. Its further development depends on the character of the individual, environment, and course of socialization.

The following competency that Chickering (1993) suggests is a complex one, and it consists of three principally diverse vectors of development: intellectual and study skills, physical health/hygiene skills, and interpersonal skills. These are also on the list of the millennials' soft skills, together with emotional competency. Our studies mentioned above prove that emotion management is possible only at a certain level of organization of the verbal consciousness because one has to master – develop, or, at least borrow – some language instruments to be able to manage spontaneous reactions to unexpected events. Language and speech competency enable the expression of individual emotions in a socially and ethically relevant manner. In other words, to solve the constraints between inner authenticity and social-cultural rules of self-regulation, one must have achieved a certain level of intellectual maturity and language competency. And, of course, besides self-regulation, the notion of emotional intelligence includes the component of interactional skills. Chickering's (1993) next three competencies, topping the pyramid of soft skills, encompass autonomy and identity resulting from the vaguely defined, but well-understood, concept of self-organization. It is here where the interaction with the teacher language turns into shared learning experience and cooperation.

2 Pragmatics and Personal Dimensions of Language Learning/Teaching

As discussed above, the correlation between cognition and emotion in intercultural contexts has two main aspects of consideration – social and psychological. The social-cognitive perspective reveals the change of the English language as a knowledge store in its social varieties. The psychological perspective reflects the personality and speech behavioral challenges of non-native English speakers and learners. In most EFL classrooms, usually it is L1 and the native speech algorithm that dominates. Whether supported by the teacher or not, students construct their thoughts in the way most relevant to their social status and psycho-emotional state. They use speech connotations and emotional colorings inherent in their native cultural norms. The topics of discussion and axiological accents in studies also instantiate the learners' native culture and social background. The personality and cultural-behavioral norms of the EFL teacher, who, in their turn may be a non-native to both the L1 and English, can, even more, complicate the situation.

The answer to the question about which of the communicative norms involved will win in such contexts depends on the scope of participants' socio-cognitive and cultural features, including not only the learners and teachers, but also the exam writers and assessors, and, to a lesser degree, policy managers. To find the answer and regulate it through education design, it is necessary first to understand the impact of English on the social and language identities and activities of learners and teachers in each specific academic context. In other words, to manage practical competencies, one should be informed of the knowledge and choices of *all* the participants involved in the contest. Research into each case can be the provider of such information.

The research pool of intercultural pragmatics is the logical successor of cross-cultural communication research, and, as such, follows the tradition of linking practical competencies to language education. One of the earliest attempts to explore the problem is Lancaster University's (2003) pragmatics and intercultural communication project, which features online results. Another critical study connects both the practical and theoretical aspects of language use in intercultural contexts (Witczak-Plisiecka, 2010). More facets of cross-cultural pragmatics can be encountered in recent publications on the topic (Dolgova Jacobsen, 2018; Kecskes, 2014, 2017). However, despite the research attempts of the past decade, the teaching and learning of intercultural pragmatics, i.e. intentional, ethical and emotional expression of EFL, seem to have a long way to go to settle in academic programs.

While the undergraduate level offers introductory courses in Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Pragmatic studies of the actual EFL context can represent a research component in the graduate curriculum, with post-graduate research projects to follow. In one of my previous works (Hovhannisyan, 2018), I indicate that incorporating students into institutional research projects aims to inform students with hands-on expertise and knowledge in the interplay of cognition, emotions, language, and pragmatic choices of speech interaction.

Although the higher education system tends to unify globally, education is initially a cultural phenomenon rooted in national culture. Its role has been to build concepts upon the best national values, those that prove the viability of that very culture. Thus, the education of the language personality needs to be organized on those national values that add to the concepts of global ethics (Singh & Stückelberger, 2017). The strategies advocated by the proponents of cultural neutralization prioritize the social and professional genre diversification in EFL teaching and learning design. Above, I explained that the formal pragmatic solution, wherein the speaker's personality is not linguistically recognized, is a weak option for conversational encounters. On the other hand, it can hardly erase the historically justified cultural identity types, and diversity will remain.

The second approach to intercultural competence emerges from ethnocultural inclusiveness, where EFL learning becomes a way of positive exchange among the cultural characters of communicants, aiming at mutual understanding. In this context, the underlying assumption is that communicants have no standard conventions, but those that are prepared to understand the person as a value. The concept and semiotic model of language persona I propose suggest that the language personality approach does not separate language learning from any of the cultures involved. This approach envisions ESL not just as a means of communication but, rather, as part of national culture, encompassing ethnic identity instruments in intercultural encounters. According to the language personality approach (Hovhannisyan, 2019), language units cannot be interpreted apart from their cultural discourse and individual propositions, values, and behavior.

From this point of view, ESL miscommunication happens when the underlying assumption is a standard that neither communicants will meet. Traditionally, misunderstanding research began with translation studies. Translation and equivalence studies have always had a high potential for retrieving pragmatic illustrations of emotive and cognitive non-equivalence (Bachman-Medick, 1996). The underlying assumption of translation studies has been the dictionary meaning. At present, when modern technologies in corpus and computational linguistics allow more precise and diverse semantic data collection, each case of misunderstanding can be recorded and then sampled as per occurrence (Mustajoki, 2014). In this respect, recent case studies of the problem of misunderstanding, such as Hinner (2017), Edwards et al. (2017), and Qin (2014), directly open new perspectives for ELT emotion, cognition research, and solutions.

The problem of understanding propositions and intentions of language personalities representing different ethnic cultures stands in all the regions of the world. It is a universal one, so far, with hardly any standard solution to propose. The project mentioned above works towards the creation of an atmosphere of mutual understanding and academic channeling. Having participated in similar discussions in monoethnic Armenia, multicultural Russia, multinational Europe, the Middle East and the USA, I have witnessed how theorists search for answers within their habitat frameworks. I suggest systematizing intercultural pragmatic studies within a context of cognitive, ethical and personality aspects of language learning and teaching, built respectively, on the classical concepts of "logos", "ethos", and "pathos". These

aspects allow a focus on both social and individual research language objects, as they deal with: (a) the cognitive content stored in language and speech; (b) the system of rules, beliefs and traditions (conceptual procedures) developed through life experiences; and, related to this, (c) the sphere of communicable feelings and attitude/choice activities.

Now we can attempt to answer the question about what comes first – pragmatics or personality. Intercultural pragmatics focuses on the purposes, strategies and means of communicative solutions. Again, in a strange way, the agent of the practical activities and solutions, the personality, remains somewhere in the pragmatic discourse margins, or is suggested only implicitly. In contrast, personalities are the very agents learners, users and generators of communication, endowed with the features mentioned. Moreover, each time a study of only one aspect of speech behavior occurs, it reduces the complex speech character to the only function under discussion, seldom tracing it down to the personal roots of emotion-cognition interplay.

Having clarified the difference between the pragmatic and personality approaches, we can now cover English language learning (ELL)/ELT with the umbrella-paradigm of dynamic language personality. It will help us to target both learner and teacher competencies. Thus, following the traditional logos-ethos-pathos tridimensional philosophy, we can now consider the interplay of cognitive and emotive processes in the formation of teacher and learner competencies. We shall see that, apart from knowledge and skills, language educators as personalities develop two more aspects of identity: the ability to reflect and transform their own emotions into values and world-vision, and the ability to communicate these values through teacher talk and co-research, thus bridging between the old and new norms of etiquette and politeness. Below are the three dimensions of the personality approach, described by competencies.

3 The Dynamic ELT/ELL Personality Competencies

Logos The logical aspect of ELL/ELT involves the explicit knowledge of the language: its structure, levels, varieties, history, system relations, and, briefly, the ontology. To add, this is related not only to the language taught, but also to the learners' mother tongue, at least. Knowledge of other languages in contact can be considered an asset. Given that educational purposes impose a selection of the content and its reduction to the acceptable quality minimum, teacher competencies require the ability of content selection and organization, according to the concentric principle of Zone of their Proximal Development (ZPD) and the learning cycle. I presented this approach in a series of workshops and forums between 2013 and 2015.

Language knowledge includes the contexts of its usage. Typically, much of context knowledge stems from "reductions", or stereotypes, together with emotional shades and the attitudinal value attributed to them (Allport, 1979). The language

units of content competence include phraseology and set expressions, typical metaphors and interjections. However, content competence does not ensure the full culture functionality of communication. Content competencies are concerned with the structure of knowledge. In cases where knowledge is obtained through formal education, it is primarily verbal. Often, teaching content, and even skills, is confused with the teaching of the language of the subject. This deviation caused the emergence of the material and language integrated approach, which, despite several effective strategies, has not found thus far a permanent place in school or university curricula, except for a few experimental contexts.

Primary knowledge acquisition takes place in L1. It is also the initial stage of establishing the primary mental operations, grammar, and syntactical patterns of verbal thinking, known as the national culture-specific mentality or verbal reasoning. Thus, the formation of content competencies initially occurs in L1 and is, therefore, a token of acquisition of cultural core values. Continuing their post-secondary education in the English language means that students' further process of knowledge constructing falls under the L2 control. Studies claim that the acquisition of knowledge – the urge to think and speak – in a foreign language has the potential to be highly demotivating for learners. Students, because of either an inability to use unfamiliar language means to express their ideas and emotions, or out of fear of making mistakes, quit the struggle for self-expression and, together with it, the desire to communicate.

Following Piaget's (2001) core statements of cognitive psychology, mental constructs develop through adaptive and assimilative activities, thus providing for learners' cognitive development. In situations where learners are under the pressure of language adaptation, and where they are entirely deprived of assimilative activities, they fall out of Vygotsky's ZPD, which leads to negative communicative consequences. Overcoming this imbalance and finding optimal proportions between the content and language form in teaching is one of the main post-graduate research objectives in ELT. It is a highly context-dependent study and may be required to be continuous for education quality purposes.

The second intercultural research objective is the definition of content topics. Current ELT textbooks develop contents of global significance, such as nature protection, food, water, technology and others. This globalist methodology is right in proper measure, as, deprived of personal and culture-specific meanings, the opportunity not only to learn but to share knowledge, communicants waste motivation (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). To keep students active in their ZPD and away from the state of total resistance to learning English, teachers often encourage them to talk and show videos on topics of their interest. Thus, besides the languages involved, logical competencies include such content as learner culture, identity, humor, national imagery, and beliefs, which, together with idiomatic expression, are a necessary cognitive component for both research and teaching practices.

Ethos Pragmatic competencies consider the dynamics of both learning and communication and are relative to the cultural peculiarities, situational conditions and actors involved. This category includes several minor competencies as intrapersonal,

interpersonal skills, communication time management and expression of attitudes within the frameworks of overall cooperativeness (Stier, 2003).

Reflexive competencies involve cognitive skills; that is, placing oneself in the position of the other (perspective-alteration) or viewing oneself "from the outside" (self-reflection). They include alternation between "insider" and "outsider" roles (role-taking), and acting according to them. According Stier (2006), they suppose "coping with problems originating in intercultural encounters (problem-solving) and keeping an open, receptive mind and noticing cultural peculiarities (culture-detection), without valuing them automatically and uncritically (axiological distance)" (p. 7). The author continues that intrapersonal competencies also encompass emotional skills, including understanding the occurrence of feelings and their implications for coping with different emotions arising in unknown or unfamiliar cultural settings.

Interpersonal competencies refer to interactive skills; or, in the words of Stier (2006):

> detecting and accurately interpreting variations in non-verbal cues, subtle signals and emotional responses (interpersonal sensitivity), mastering verbal and non-verbal language, turn-taking (see Ruben 1977; Triandis 1984), cultural codes surrounding conversations and being aware of one's own interaction style (communication competence) and adequately responding to contextual meanings (situational sensitivity). (p. 7)

Interpersonal competencies in the ELT classroom should be regulated through articulate induction and similar behavior by the teacher. However, besides the institutional aspect, there is the individual social-pragmatic and ethnocultural side of the interactions.

Understanding and interpretation competence, together with repair skills, is another robust and complex competence, which involves components from all three communication blocks – cognitive, emotional and procedural. It is yet another sphere of research within the cultural contexts of ELL/ELT. The literature featured above depicts the consumerist and functional approach to the role and attitude toward the language mediator. However, even in that case, knowledge of the language and speech skills is not enough to ensure effective communication in a multicultural dimension, even in academic settings (Figueras, 2009).

The question of discreet understanding between intercultural dialogue parties is actual for the description of professional competencies of ESL/EFL graduates. Further, the problem of discreetness is mainly related to the discretion of all three – cognitive, emotional and ethical competencies (Kecskes, 2017). Speech ethos consists of such dimensions as time, structure and density of information contained as a communicative unit. The increasing number of research publications on understanding and interpretation, together with their counterparts – misunderstanding and misinterpretation – suggests that these are the academic disciplines of the near future at the language and teaching departments of many universities.

Thus, Ethos consists of social, ethnocultural and neurophysiological aspects of choices made by the participants of communication, who represent unique personalities bearing the culture of the languages they speak. Here, I prefer to place it

between Logos and Pathos, as it is where the competence in cognition-emotion interplay regulates the rational and irrational aspects of human psychology. Besides buffering the constraints, this competence is the indicator of personality formation. Further, when we relate to each participant of the intercultural encounter as a language personality, we learn to consider as many factors of cross-cultural pragmatics as the languages involved, explicitly and implicitly in the context, may introduce.

Pathos The emotional and motivational sphere, together with its ethical framing of procedures and activities, relates to procedural competence, which is ascribed by customs and traditions based on some knowledge (beliefs) of what is right and what is wrong. That is the reason I believe this separation is conventional and still relevant in the list of competencies. Otherwise, it remains in the margins of both teaching and research programs of ELL/ELT. The reader can find a detailed definition of the mechanisms and role of categorizing emotions in speaking personality and identity formation. Understanding how we conceive emotions gives us awareness of how different from others we are. The perceptive emotions are universal for all humans, and most cultures also share main emotional images, metaphors and idioms. The differences lie in the way we rationalize them through language.

When trying to express sensitive content in English, L2 speakers, consciously or not, simplify and generalize it, bringing the differences down to an acceptable English, erasing the nuances and streamlining the contents to an absolute or communicable minimum. This acceptable minimum is the learner's L2 competence of the moment; that is, the ability to use the language means at their disposal to exteriorize the psycho-emotional content. Thus, not only are the self-expression opportunities of L2 speakers reduced, but L2 itself undergoes attrition, and that primitive variant, expanding in quantity, replaces the original one. In this way, from primary emotional processing to complex sociolinguistic changes in English, the quality of communication of both knowledge and attitude diversity, and language, degenerates.

Elimination of different preconceptions, and the social and psychological expectations that are produced by them, minimizes the adaptation efforts and liberates the individual from the need to comply with any norms and conventions of any communication system. However, this effect is only temporary, like in international airports. The interim goal of transportation alienates the people on the move from the deep cultural contexts of both ends. Their language, too, abstracts from its cultural background, acquiring the "franca" features, bringing communication down to exchanging basic needs and emotions. Temporality and "the corridor effect" are not the best atmospheres for learning, as the latter, especially in the case of language learning, is, rather, an incubation process, requiring time and deep involvement.

To motivate learners, teachers have to make them feel not "at the airport" but "at home". That is why we claim that the cultural adaptation of teaching materials is essential: it motivates students to actively communicate their feeling, such as national pride, knowledge of national traditions, festivities and symbols of enthusiasm, and emotional creativity, that emancipates the use of English, remaining still within the range of shared understanding. Even passive and usually "weak" students

with low English proficiency demonstrate a notably improved performance of spoken English, motivated by the goal of self-introduction.

To pilot this approach in practice, in 2015, I conducted a research-based series of lessons with general foundation program students. I asked them to write down and give me the unique proverbs in their native language. At the second stage, the students were to translate literally and, then, explain the meaning of the idioms and sayings. I encouraged creative solutions, and we tried to maintain the native language images in the English translation. The results reported at one of the local conferences evidenced high motivation and emotional involvement on behalf of the students when involved in search activities for local equivalents and language means to explain the cognitive and connotative shades of the proverbs. The emotional competence, thus, is not a rigid set of features. Rather, it is a selective complex of content and procedural competencies that professionals can carefully select in every EFL community or classroom.

4 Conclusion

Cognitive competencies predominantly have a quantitative information character and are concerned with the knowing that aspects of both the "other" culture and the learner's "home" culture/s. These competencies include knowledge of language, history, non-verbal behavior, values, norms and social rules, habits, customs, traditions, gender roles, taboos, symbols and so on. Much of this cultural "knowledge" typically comes from "reductions" or stereotypes. As such, it is often ascribed positive or negative value and emotional coloring. The understanding of emotional states showing relevant behavioral skills, or the ability to manage feelings and attitudes, is the next wing of the ELL/ELT competency tripod. The third aspect, linking the rational cognitive and irrational emotive sides of language learning, is procedural competence, or the ethical dimension, of regulating the interplay of the other two through written and spoken varieties of language. All three target the thinking and speaking individual, the language personality of both the learner and the teacher. To summarize, I have identified the following four guidelines applicable to language teacher education.

First, EFL learning and teaching for intercultural encounters require the language personality approach as a core condition for communication success. Both individual and social-contextual premises suggest that the final goal of language teaching is the competent language personality. Second, from the teaching and assessment perspective, in the existing language situation, the norms of the language use may be diversified. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) also supports this approach. Following the principle of balance between "norm-referenced" and "criterion-referenced" assessment (Lazar et al., 2007), it seems reasonable to establish EFL teaching goals that are based on the needs and interests of learners, while also taking into account region-specific structure of intercultural communication.

Third, the research competence of ELL/ELT should develop in at least two lines. The first is purely language-related research. This involves the study of the L1 and L2, including in terms of their typological, deep and surface structural correlations, in addition to their change and current interrelations in learners' verbal consciousness. Comparative linguistics and translation studies can be employed to help the teaching of EFL maintain semantic and structural relevance and consistency. Despite the attempts to minimize mother-tongue issues of ELT, cognitive linguistic research data have long proved that an L2 stem in the iteration of the initially acquired knowledge and skills, hence L1, that is integrated into the personality's consciousness, motor mechanisms and performance, is bound by the already existing semantic and associative systems. To make an L2 system work, the teachers need to know how the underlying L1 system functions.

The other line of ELT research covers psycholinguistic issues, emerging between cognition-emotion interplay. This type of problem is familiar to those cultures facing the dilemma of global integration and cultural identity. This is a common situation in those nations that have areas of uniqueness in terms of culture, values, history, traditions, and/or demographics and so on. In theory, it is possible to separate the universal (language learning/teaching), international EFL, and national (language-specific ELL/ELT) aspects of English studies. Although practically they are inseparable, a focus on each of the research areas may be fruitful for learning materials design, not to mention national EFL philosophy, policies, and methodology.

Fourth, ELT courses, especially those for beginners, including general foundation programs, must develop inside the country, based on the qualified expertise, knowledge of needs and comparison of linguistic and cultural interferences. Long-term strategies require a systematic approach in the studies of values, beliefs and cultural mentality, including the paths of rationalizing emotions. To meet the requirements mentioned above, teachers should aim at the promotion of a language user's capacity to construct personal interaction. Attention should be focused on the aided and then spontaneous use of repairs, emotional intelligence and ethical aspects of negotiation.

Next, courses at all levels must respond to the national and international dimensions of ethics in the professional communication of students. Intercultural pragmatics is not merely a transactional skill, but is rather a complex of ethical and cultural relations. As such, it is vital that courses in Intercultural Pragmatics develop learners' capacities and tools to gain a critical understanding of their standpoint within a range of language-and-cultural interactions. Strong language personality is the incentive to achieve this goal through qualitative and quantitative research of logos, or the categories, Ethos, or the pragmatic speech patterns, and Pathos, or the world of the irrational and the language of emotions.

The final criterion is the relevance between ELL and ELT competencies, achieved through the personality approach towards both language learners and pre-service language teachers. The solution towards the effective management of cognitive and emotive aspects in the psycholinguistic approach to learning lies in relating teacher professional competencies to learners' metalinguistic skills: awareness of the

changes in the language, the verbal thinking and the evolution of emotional attitudes on the way to achieving communicative goals.

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Reducing Learners' Cognitive Load and Emotional Challenges Created by Lexis: The Andragogical Approach to Enhance Adult Learners' Mental Lexicon

Tanju Deveci and Mehvish Saleem

Abstract Lexical competence plays a key role in learning a foreign language. This requires language teachers to pay particular attention to helping learners develop their mental lexicons. Considering the breadth of the English language vocabulary, developing one's mental lexicon can be a rather challenging task. The situation is often exacerbated because of issues individual learners may have to deal with. Taken together, these can create cognitive and emotional challenges for learners, both in their roles as students and in their personal and professional lives. To address this issue, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of individual learners and learner groups. Indisputably, adult learners differ from 'younger' learners in significant ways. In this chapter, we discuss why we believe andragogy, defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, The modern practice of adult education: andragogy versus pedagogy. Association Press, New York, 1980, p. 38), and its associated andragogical assumptions, could help tackle cognitive and emotional challenges adult language learners are likely to face in their attempts to improve their mental lexicons. We complement this by providing practical ideas for how andragogical assumptions can be applied to pedagogical practice in foreign language learning contexts.

Keywords Andragogy · Adult learners · Cognitive load · Emotion

T. Deveci (✉)
Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
e-mail: tanjudeveci@yahoo.com

M. Saleem
Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Pakistan
e-mail: Mehvish.Saleem@iobm.edu.pk

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1 Introduction

Learners' breadth of lexis is considered the sine qua non for proficiency in a foreign language. This drives many educational institutions to devote much time to enhancing their learners' mental lexicon. This is often done by attempting to teach learners the meanings of as many words as possible. However, understanding 'meanings' is one thing, and using the words in specific contexts is another. That is, learning lexis in a foreign language is not simply a matter of placing words in one's mental lexicon; it is essential that learners understand *and* use words effectively. This, however, is easier to say than to do.

The lexis in the English language is so rich that the exact count of the number of words is not known. Just as dictionary writers are challenged in their decisions on which words to enter in a dictionary due to factors such as flexibility of word boundaries together with variations in spelling (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, 2020), learners too face difficulties in deciding which words, meanings, pronunciations, and spellings to learn. The challenge becomes even more formidable when they are required to use lexical items in combination with each other. This, according to Milton (2009), refers to the productive knowledge of words: "Words that can be called to mind and used in speech or writing" (p. 13).

A variety of attempts have been made to guide material designers and learners regarding the kinds of words to learn, the meanings, and the order in which they should be learned (e.g., Coxhead, 2000; Deveci, 2019; West, 1953; Xue & Nation, 1984), and how to learn/teach them (Dellar & Walkley, 2004; Deveci, 2004; Lewis, 1997; Schmitt, 2000). One essential criterion considered in making a decision about these is the characteristics of learners. We argue that the most important of learner characteristic is *age*, which plays a central role in determining the course and student learning outcomes, in-class and outside of class educational practices, and assessment options.

School-age children and adults differ from each other in significant ways. So much so that approaching these two groups of learners with distinctive characteristics in the same fashion would be to their detriment. To circumvent this, at the most basic level the learning environment needs to be physically-structured in ways appropriate to learners' age. This, per se, is not sufficient. Due consideration must also be given to learners' socio-psychological characteristics including, but not limited to, personality traits, emotions, previous learning experiences, learning needs and aspirations.

Indisputably, certain common lexical items are essential for both children and adults as foreign language learners. In regards to the latter group of learners, however, the question is whether the requirement is based on 'felt-needs'. It is also true that both groups of learners may easily be intimidated by the cognitive load, which is generally viewed as the load on one's working memory when processing new information (Chandler & Sweller, 1992; Sweller, 1988), imposed by the volume of lexical items in English and their grammatical properties. This, inescapably, creates

emotional challenges which must be overcome quickly and efficiently so that learners sustain motivation and resilience.

The situation, however, likely challenges adult learners more than school-age children. Among reasons for this are various social and economic responsibilities they hold, physical and psychological changes they experience, and political circumstances in which they find themselves. The load created by such self-induced or socially-constructed demands can be better tackled by helping learners increase their power defined by abilities, possessions, position, allies and so on (McClusky, 1970, 1976). In doing so, teachers must be attuned to adult learners' characteristics (Cross, 1978, 1981, 2003; Knox, 1976, 1980; Thorndike, 1928).

In this chapter, we argue the best way to achieve this in English Language Teaching (ELT) is to adopt the andragogical approach (Knowles, 1973, 1980; Knowles et al., 2011). Towards this end, we first define the mental lexicon and its place in learning a foreign language. Then, we describe the characteristics that differentiate adult learners from children, before reviewing research on cognitive load which shows how this theoretical notion has been conceptualised. We consider insights specific to the field of foreign/second language learning and discuss the pedagogical implications of cognitive load for adult foreign language learners in particular.

Drawing on insights from adult education, we discuss how the andragogical approach can reduce learners' cognitive load and enhance adult learners' mental lexicon. This is followed by a section on andragogy and the provision of specific reasons for considering andragogical assumptions to support adult learners' mental lexicon. In doing so, we provide examples of educational interventions that help reduce the cognitive load adults likely experience in their attempts to enhance their mental lexicons. These, we believe, will help reduce emotional challenges adult language learners are likely to experience.

2 The Mental Lexicon

A simple definition of the mental lexicon is "the arrangement of words in one's mind" (Sripada, 2008, p. 181). Drawing on the functional aspect of the term, Güneş (2013) defines it as "the totality of the words a person uses to express himself/herself and sustain his/her daily life" (p. 14). A similar definition is given by Acha and Carreiras (2014): "The pool of words that we store in our cognitive system throughout our life experience and that we access for comprehending spoken and written language" (p. 196).

Aitchison (2004) notes that the word *lexicon* is the Greek word for *dictionary*. This suggests that the mental lexicon is 'the human word-store'. Aitchison, however, cautions that there tends to be little overlap between words as they appear in dictionaries and words in people's minds. A significant difference, she notes, is in regards to organisation. Words are listed in alphabetical order in book dictionaries, while the order of words in the mental lexicon is not straightforwardly alphabetical.

The order of a word, the author continues, is often influenced by other factors such as "its ending, its stress pattern and the stressed vowel" (p. 12).

Another difference pertains to content. A book dictionary is comprised of a fixed number of words. These can be counted and become outdated relatively quickly. This is due to the constantly changing nature of language. Further, the mental lexicon contains a greater amount of information about each lexical item. Collectively, these point to the extent to which the mental lexicon can be large and complex.

Size and complexity of the mental lexicon is an advantage for effective users of a language, be it native (L1) or foreign (L2). For instance, children with a strong L1 mental lexicon are superior not only at recognising words but also comprehending, questioning, classifying, and making associations (Güneş, 2017). These play a significant role in children's skill in reading and overall success at school. It is also important to note that individuals with enhanced mental lexicon are communicatively more competent. That is, they are more adept at using words in combination with others, making a distinction between literal and nonliteral meanings of words/phrases, and using words appropriately in their respective genres.

Despite some similarities, there are significant differences between the storage and way of functioning of L1 and L2 mental lexicons. For instance, Xinyue and Nannan (2014) found that Chinese L2 learners make fewer semantic connections in their mental lexicon than L1 speakers. They also produce more phonological responses than meaningful responses when confronted with an unfamiliar lexicon. In another study, L2 speakers' mental lexicon differed quantitatively and qualitatively from that of native speakers (Hui, 2011). Among the differences were the strength of the primary response, number of responses, and the classification of responses. Further, the words in the L2 speakers' mental lexicon did not have tight semantic links. Also important to note is the possibility of negative transfer from L1 to L2.

Collectively, these differences indicate that treating L1 and L2 lexicons the same would add to the cognitive and emotional load adults suffer, thus doing a disservice to them. The differences between adults and school-age children pertaining to their physical, cognitive, and affective characteristics, in addition to their life experiences, impact on approaches to the mental lexicon. Therefore, the following section focuses on what it means to be an adult and its implications for learning.

3 Meaning of Being an Adult

The word *adult* is defined in different ways, thus making it impossible to have one universal definition. For example, an *adult* is defined in the Collins online dictionary (2020), as "a mature, fully developed person, [and someone who] has reached the age when they are legally responsible for their actions". Similarly, Evans (1995, p. 164) provides a legal definition of the term as:

An adult is a person who has:

1. reached his eighteenth birthday, or
2. married, or
3. at one time been married, or
4. enlisted in the armed forces of the United States, or
5. had his disability of minority removed by court decree.

Of particular importance is that the legal definition of adulthood varies from place to place as well as from time to time. Aiken (2002) emphasises the notion of responsibility attached to the meaning of the word. According to his definition, an adult is "a person who is capable of assuming responsibility for his or her own affairs" (p. 2). Although he avoids specifying a particular age, he notes that, in some places, an age has been somewhat arbitrarily set to become an adult at somewhere between 18 and 21. He also points to the concept of competency (i.e., the ability to handle one's own life and property) as a distinguishing factor. Competency, however, the author notes, varies depending not only on age, but also on an individual's physical, cognitive and emotional state.

The difficulty in determining a categorical age between adulthood and childhood prompted some scholars, instead, to identify adults' qualities. According to Corder (2008, pp. 5–6), an adult:

1. [is] above the age of compulsory education.
2. [has] some experience of the world of work.
3. [has] family responsibilities.
4. [has] financial responsibilities.
5. [has] domestic responsibilities.
6. [is] reasonably independent.
7. [is] able to make [his/her] own judgments about the world around [him/her].
8. [has] some experience of life.
9. [his/her] tastes are more sophisticated than [he/she was] when [he/she was] younger.

These definitions and descriptions indicate that being an adult may have different meanings across cultures, contexts, and discourses. Of particular interest is the cognitive load adults experience, and how adult characteristics affect them as learners. These are briefly discussed below.

4 Cognitive Load: Definition and Implications for Adult Language Learning

In the late 1980s, research on working memory led Sweller (1988) to propose the cognitive load theory, which assumes that the human brain can process: (a) an unlimited amount of stored information at a given time; and (b) a limited amount of new information at a given time. Cognitive load theory essentially explains how the

human brain learns and stores information. It assumes that human memory consists of long term memory and working memory.

The long term memory stores information in network type structures called schemas. The process of automation plays a crucial role in the construction of schema. Automation helps process information automatically with minimal conscious effort and as a result of extensive practice (Sweller et al., 1998, 2019). The working memory, on the other hand, processes new information and, when its capacity is exceeded in a learning task, it causes cognitive load which, in turn, affects learning (Baddeley, 1983; Young et al., 2014). Cognitive load is thus defined as the load on our working memory when processing new information, which leads to confusion, limited understanding, and/or the inability to store new information in long term memory.

Cognitive load occurs as a result of the combined effect or sum of three types of cognitive load, namely intrinsic, extraneous, and germane load. Learners experience intrinsic cognitive load due to the inherent difficulty in the content being learned (Haji et al., 2015; Sweller, 2010; Sweller & Chandler, 1994). A key factor influencing intrinsic cognitive load includes the complexity of the content (Sweller et al., 1998). In particular, content that contains a smaller number of interactive elements is much easier to learn than content with a large number of elements and/or with high interactivity. While a low interactivity content may include, for example, learning individual words independently of each other, a high interactivity content can be learning the grammatical syntax. This suggests that learning content with high interactivity may inherently consume greater cognitive resources than learning content with low interactivity. Another important factor influencing intrinsic cognitive load includes the learner's prior knowledge (Sweller et al., 1998).

According to Sweller et al. (1998), intrinsic load cannot be "directly influenced by instructional designers although… it certainly needs to be considered" (p. 262). However, other researchers take a somewhat different stance and suggest three instructional techniques to lower intrinsic cognitive load. These include introducing the content to the learner using: (a) a simple-to-complex order, which may prevent the learners from experiencing the full complexity of the learning content and, in turn, control intrinsic load (van Merriënboer et al., 2003); (b) a part-whole approach, whereby learners' work on the individual elements of the task first and are not directly introduced to the integrated or whole task (Pollock et al., 2002); and (c) a modular presentation of solution procedures whereby learners are introduced to the complete task from the beginning but with their attention directed towards the individual interacting element (Gerjets et al., 2004; van Merriënboer et al., 2006).

The second type of cognitive load is extraneous cognitive load, which is also considered as a negative load. It may be experienced by learners as a result of internal distractions such as personal issues and negative emotions (Sweller et al., 2019) as well as of how the learning content is taught. More specifically, it concerns an instructional design that does not facilitate learning or schema construction. An example of this could be providing minimal instructions to learners and making them solve complex learning material without support. According to van Merriënboer and Sweller (2005), extraneous cognitive load does not directly contribute to learning or schema construction and it "can be altered by instructional interventions" (p. 150). This suggests that extraneous load is induced by the instructional material

and, so, an instructional design which reduces this type of load may be used providing greater working memory capacity. This approach will enable learners to spend time and cognitive resources on processes which maximise learning.

A review of literature suggests four important ways in which extraneous cognitive load may be reduced. These include: (a) presenting instructional material, for example, a diagram or illustration and an explanatory text simultaneously or in an integrated way as opposed to presenting the domain elements separately (e.g., Chandler & Sweller, 1992); (b) giving worked out problems, so that students have schema-based knowledge to solve problems (e.g., Rourke & Sweller, 2009); (c) using an instructional design in which the learning content is presented as a combination of auditory and visual material (Low & Sweller, 2005); and (d) giving fewer information sources to learn a single concept, which in turn prevents use of greater cognitive resources (Diao & Sweller, 2007).

Finally, germane cognitive load is a positive type of load experienced by learners during the construction of schemas or the learning processes, such as when differentiating, interpreting, inferring, exemplifying, organising, and classifying (Mayer, 2002). This involves transferring information from the working memory to the long term memory. While the irrelevant instructional content reduces extraneous cognitive load, the relevant instructional content increases germane cognitive load thus making it effective. For this purpose, it is crucial that the instructional content guides and stimulates learners in a way that it redirects their attention towards relevant learning processes or schema construction and in turn increases germane cognitive load.

A close review of education literature in general and foreign language learning in particular, suggests that instructional designs aiming to reduce extraneous cognitive load vary depending on learners' level of expertise. This is also referred as the "expertise-reversal effect" (Kalyuga, 2007). Several studies have shown that the higher the learners' level of expertise, the lower their intrinsic load (Ayres, 2006; Clarke et al., 2005; Tuovinen & Sweller, 1999; Yeung et al., 1997). This suggests that instructional designs reducing extraneous cognitive load are more effective for learners with little knowledge than for learners with more knowledge and experience. Moreover, it implies that instructional designs can be adapted as learners develop expertise. According to Renkl and Atkinson (2003), with more experienced learners, the intrinsic cognitive load can be reduced. So, for example, with experienced learners, using conventional problems instead of worked out problems might be more effective.

Research on cognitive load has been aimed at developing instructional practices that recognise the working memory characteristics to enhance learning. Drawing upon the theoretical and empirical understandings of cognitive load theory, Sweller (2017) points out that this theory has relevance for adult learners which, to a large extent, opposes the traditional pedagogical approaches.

Sweller (2017) emphasises that an adult's foreign or second language learning essentially differs from that of a child's first language acquisition. Bearing this in mind, he suggests some pedagogical implications for adult learners in particular, which include: a) using an explicit mode of language teaching, such as presenting vocabulary and grammar in an explicit manner instead of leaving learners to self-construct or discover information; b) preventing learners from learning a second

language and other curriculum areas (e.g., history or science) simultaneously; c) avoiding split attention by providing meanings of difficult words or translations close to the original text so that learners do not search through other sources; d) avoiding redundancy by not providing information which they might already know; and e) adapting the instructional design with the learners' level of expertise in mind (e.g., eliminating redundant information).

5 Characteristics of Adults as Learners

By their very nature, adults are mature, which is the building block of adult education. However, this maturity, for some, may mean reduced capacity of, and skills in, learning compared to children and youth. This is despite evidence from well-established research (e.g., Thorndike, 1928) showing that adults do have the ability to learn, and that there is no significant decrease in their intelligence as they age. This, of course, is unless adults suffer serious health problems (Kidd, 1976).

Previous research points to two categories of characteristics that define adult learners (Cross, 1981): personal and situational characteristics. The former pertains to age-related developmental characteristics such as physical, psychological and socio-cultural features. As they age, adults likely experience problems with certain psychomotor skills like hearing, seeing, and reaction time. However, increased age also means improved reasoning and decision-making skills. Situational characteristics, on the other hand, refer to adults' engagement in education/learning endeavours on a part-time or full-time basis. They are also related to whether participation is voluntary or compulsory. Cross (1981) points out that adults normally take part in education on a part-time and voluntary basis.

Based on their own field experiences in the workplace, Fogarty and Pete (2004) identified 10 characteristics that apply to adult learners. According to the authors, adult learners:

1. Want to know that the time spent in training, seminars, etc. is being well spent considering their immediate needs;
2. Are pragmatic about learning in that they want practical ideas;
3. Want to know how the new learning relates to what they already do on the job;
4. Question the relevance first and the application second;
5. Are curious about theories or research that support a given idea;
6. Want things modelled in real-world applications that, through demonstration, lay out the steps and illustrate skills;
7. Expect a certain level of proficiency from the adult teaching them;
8. Frequently want to continue learning on their own, through research either online or through sources such as books and journals;
9. Often enter into a learning setting in pairs or as a team; and,
10. Normally have existing knowledge about the topic or the issue at hand. That is, they bring a rich background of experience to the learning setting.

Taken together, the above-mentioned characteristics of adult learners point to the central role maturity plays in learning. Biological age is not the only indicator of maturity. The kind of life experiences and learning skills adults have accumulated over the years may be better indicators of maturity. Adults are also pragmatic in their orientation towards learning in that they prefer to learn things that are directly relevant to the situations in which they find themselves. They like to use what they learn to perform tasks related to a variety of roles they assume throughout their lives. Further, they are oriented towards self-regulated learning. This, though, does not mean that they would not cherish guidance and mentoring from significant others. These, together with other similar characteristics of adult learners, have prompted scholars to propose a variety of adult learning theories and approaches, with one of the most well-known being "andragogy".

6 Andragogy

Andragogy was popularised by Malcolm Knowles (1980) who defined the term as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 38). He compared it to pedagogy, defined as "the art and science of educating children" (p. 38). As these definitions clearly show, the focus in andragogy is on "*helping* adults learn", whereas the focus in pedagogy is on "*educating* children". Education by definition aims at the systematic instruction of individuals in formally-structured educational settings. Andragogy, on the other hand, is geared towards the facilitation of learning in any setting, including formal, informal, non-formal, on-the-job and so on.

Knowles (1973, 1980, 1984) bases his theory on a set of assumptions related to the characteristics of adult learners. These, according to Merriam and Baumgartner (2020, pp. 118-119), are:

1. As a person matures his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.
2. An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. There is a change in time perspective as people mature – from the future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem centred than subject centred in learning.
5. Adults are mostly driven by internal motivation, rather than external motivators.
6. Adults need to know the reason for learning something.

Knowles (1992) further compares andragogical and pedagogical assumptions based on four distinct concepts as detailed in Table 1. According to Table 1, andragogy is more learner-centred than pedagogy. Learners' self-concept, life experiences, life tasks and challenges posed by life are at the heart of designing

Table 1 Comparison of andragogical and pedagogical assumptions

Concepts	Andragogy	Pedagogy
The learner	Increasingly self-directed	Dependent
Role of experience	A rich source for learning	To be built on more than used as a resource
Readiness to learn	Develops from life tasks and problems	Uniform by age-level and curriculum
Orientation to learning	Task/problem-centred	Subject-centred
Motivation	By internal incentives and curiosity	By external rewards and punishment

and executing educational interventions. It is essential that motivation for learning is intrinsic, which is only possible so long as the above-mentioned factors are considered at all stages of the learning experience. In this sense, each assumption is related to other assumptions. They cannot be divorced from each other.

6.1 Andragogical Approach in Foreign Language Learning

Given its psychological, physical, and sociological underpinnings vis-à-vis other approaches and theories of adult learning, it is not surprising that andragogy has gained adherents in large numbers over the years. Andragogical principles have been given prominence by education planners and administrators, in addition to facilitators, in various adult education institutions.

Due to a variety of reasons, such as increased national and international mobilisation, greater intercultural interaction on the Internet, advances in technology, and increased access to education, more and more adults seek to learn English as a foreign or an additional language. There is ample empirical evidence that English language programs planned and run in accordance with andragogical assumptions yield positive results.

Akın (2010) planned and executed such a program based on Turkish police officers' learning needs and skills. She found that the learners' overall aptitude for language learning, and their communication skills in English, increased significantly as a result of their engagement in an andragogical learning experience. Similarly, Ekoto and Gaikwad (2015) found that, when the roles of teaching and learning strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and course assignments were designed according to andragogical assumptions, adult learners gained greater adroitness in English.

6.2 Andragogical Approach to the Mental Lexicon

In this paper, we seek to elucidate the role of lexis in foreign language learning and provide insight into a variety of ways in which adults' mental lexicon can be enhanced through andragogically-compatible educational experiences. Toward that end, we focus on each andragogical assumption one at a time and discuss how language instructors can support their learners' mental lexicon considering these assumptions. This will contribute to their attempts to reduce adult learners' cognitive load and emotional challenges, thus increasing their motivation for, and skills in, language learning. It is important to reiterate that the assumptions and educational ideas that are discussed in isolation should not undermine the fact that they are often related to each other and intertwine. So much so that they all are a requisite for adult learners' overall well-being.

Below we discuss each of the andragogical assumptions in a slightly different order from the one offered above. This is not to suggest a hierarchical ordering. The new order was prompted by our own understanding of the seemingly more direct links between the assumptions and the development of the mental lexicon, which is the focus of this paper.

Assumption 1: The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.

Adults face a series of roles, role gain, and role loss. Not only do these become increasingly complex and demanding throughout adulthood, but they also create extra challenges for adults in terms of balancing multiple roles (Newman & Newman, 2009). Inevitably, a lack of cognitive and emotional adroitness leaves adults ill-equipped to handle such challenges, or reluctant to engage in life-enhancing learning opportunities. Coping with these challenges requires "the integration of cognitive capacities, emotional openness, and effective interpersonal relationships" (Newman & Newman, 2009, p. 450).

In the language classroom, adults' cognitive capacities can be enhanced only if their mental lexicons are supported through the choice of the lexis appropriate to the developmental tasks of their social roles. That is, adults will be more interested and willing to learn lexical items that are directly relevant to the particular task(s) they are to perform instantly or in the near future. For example, the best time to teach an adult words related to childcare is when he/she is just about to become a parent. Similarly, an adult in late midlife might need to understand and use lexis related to adjusting to a certain physiological change, such as menopause. Therefore, the enhancement to the mental lexicon related to these will reduce the cognitive load they may otherwise suffer when reading a self-help web page, or during a consultation session with their doctors.

Learners' attempts to cope with challenges through effective interpersonal relationships is nearly as great a factor as cognitive capacities and emotional openness. Undeniably, the language used during interactions with others is at the heart of effective interpersonal relationships. Adult learners should be helped to learn lexis suited for particular social interactions. They should, for example, be able to

distinguish a formal register from an informal register. This will enable them to establish effective relationships with those whose help they need to fulfil the developmental tasks of their social roles.

In addition, instructors must be highly attuned to the impact of words on adult learners. The kinds of words that undermine their social roles have the potential to cause them to lose enthusiasm for learning. The emotional load caused by this often results in adults' dropping out of educational activities in which they normally participate on a voluntary basis. Taken together, these indicate the extent to which the use of correct items in the mental lexicon helps reduce the emotional load adult learners of a foreign language likely experience.

Assumption 2: There is a change in time perspective as people mature – from the future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem-centred than subject-centred in learning.

The missing ingredient in many language programs is that they fail to 'take advantage of' problems faced by the adult participants. Programs are often guided by pre-selected course-books with an imposed curriculum based on the assumed needs of learners. This approach strips program planners of the opportunity to address the felt-needs of their particular students. There is no denying that an instructor with a finely tuned ear will still adjust his/her teaching according to individual students. However, this would still be within the limits of the pre-determined curriculum and the school's ideology. In addition to content, the lexical curriculum of a program ought to be based on the particular problems adults need to solve immediately. Doing otherwise is bound to increase their cognitive and emotional load. To circumvent this, sessions should be held with the students to identify the specific problems they need to solve.

The lexical items required for these problems should be identified by the instructor in collaboration with significant others. To this end, adults with similar needs should be placed in the same classroom. If the adults are required to fill in immigration-related forms, for example, they should be helped to comprehend words such as *reside, spouse, marital status, sponsor, lawful permanent residence, immigration office*, and *citizenship.* Adults are unlikely to use many of these words themselves; however, they need to add these to their mental lexicons so that they can complete the required forms correctly without dependence on others. There is empirical evidence that learners' utilisation of cognitive and metacognitive skills to solve real-life vocabulary tasks does indeed reduce their cognitive effort, thereby increasing their scores for vocabulary recall and retention (Mohammadi, 2017).

Many an older adult interested to leverage social media finds it difficult to understand and use related lexis, often causing emotional distress in them. Not only should they be helped to learn relevant lexis but also non-verbal communication tools such as symbols and emojis. They should be provided with opportunities to practise these within the classroom context. Towards that end, the instructor can create a WhatsApp or a Facebook group. Such use of social media creates ample opportunity for informal and formal learning. Previous research found that social media sites created feelings of enjoyment, relaxation and convenience (Widen et al.,

2015) and extended engagement in English language learning – particularly vocabulary learning – without hesitation and boredom (Khan et al., 2016). When adults experience such feelings boosted by enhancements to their mental lexicons, they will be able to reduce their cognitive and emotional load.

Assumption 3: An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.

Lindeman (1926) noted that "the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience… Experience is the adult learner's living textbook" (p. 6). One implication of this for language learning is that adult learners need to draw on their life experiences as a source of input. In comparison to children, adults have acquired more experiences as a result of which they have established some sort of understanding of the world around them. They have their own meaning schemes determined by their experiences and the social contexts in which they live, and have developed various abstract conceptualizations about their world and lives. Adults have established representations of the world and their experiences in their mental lexicons, the content of which must be taken into consideration by language instructors.

Any attempt to create a new mental lexicon for L2 would be a major handicap, and *impossible* in any case. It is essential, therefore, that direct links be established between target L2 lexis and learners' experiences. For instance, it may be a futile attempt to teach words related to air travel to a person who has never flown or is not planning to fly. Only when learners connect foreign words with their life experiences will they be interested and willing to learn such lexical items.

Adults' life experiences, including their joys, anxieties, problems needing to be solved and so on, can be very useful didactic resources for developing vocabulary objectives. Towards this end, the Freirean approach can be adopted to explore the target group of learners' mental lexicons as informed by their life experiences. To Friere (cited in Mies, 1973), it is important to make a list of the basic vocabulary of the region the adult learners are coming from. Not only is this a functional necessity, but it also provides educators a means to get into contact with the people of the region. The close, direct and emotional contact with the people enables educators, as outsiders, to understand their learners and create a positive rapport with them from the outset. This also makes the educators themselves learners instead of experts with an agenda to impose on their students. In this way, educators can learn what life feels like to the adults they teach, including in terms of their hopes, frustrations and basic problems.

The material for the inventory of the basic vocabulary could be collected through informal talks and discussions. Needless to say, the whole process requires educators/facilitators who speak the same language as the target group of learners. This approach helps reduce psychological barriers among adults. Learners' recognition of educators' attempts to understand their world and language gives them the hope that the cognitive load to be caused by their engagement in the language program will be minimal.

Another strategy for a learner to develop his/her mental lexicon is to keep a vocabulary journal. Learners are often recommended to record newly learned words in their vocabulary journals according to topics, functional use, grammatical features, and so forth. What we also suggest adult learners could do is to record lexical items that connect to their personal experiences and lives. We also suggest that learners are often asked to reflect on their experiences and lives using these words. Their vocabulary journals organised in the suggested fashion will make it easier for them to access words during reflection. As learners gain more experience in reflecting, the tasks designed for reflection may require learners to make connections between different personal experiences.

Reflection on a holiday in a foreign country, for example, may be combined with reflection on hosting a visitor from a foreign country. Their experience in reflection will engage learners in the analysis of their own as well as others' ideas, feelings, and emotions (Deveci & Nunn, 2018), thus helping them gain new insights into everyday experiences. Not only will this let them cope with psychological challenges, but it will also reduce the cognitive effort made to use new lexis in expressing personally relevant ideas. It is important to note that learners should be given the freedom (not) to share their reflective writing pieces with the instructor since they can be rather personal at times. If the teacher is given access to these, though, they can become aware of the personal differences of each student, which they then can take into account when planning actions to reduce psychological and cognitive loads.

Assumption 4: Adults need to know the reason for learning something.

To the extent adults are informed about the reasons why they need to learn something, they have that much interest in learning. In regards to lexis, providing a list of words they should learn would not suffice to motivate them. Satya (2008) cautions that "[t]eaching vocabulary through lists often results in students knowing how words are pronounced and what one meaning of a word is, but they really do not know how to use the words correctly" (p. 76). It is important for learners to know the meaning of words, how they are used with other words, the situations in which they are used, and the potential social consequences of their use. One of the best ways to achieve this is by teaching vocabulary through use in real-world situations.

By taking this approach, students can be helped to notice why certain words are important to learn. They can also notice the empirical use of these words; it becomes easier for them to see how these words would help them perform specific tasks relevant to their lives. For example, if the learners are a group of immigrants in an English-speaking country, they need to be able to use words for daily functional purposes, such as taking a bus, ordering food, and making a phone call.

To reduce the cognitive load created by word lists, words need to be presented in a context meaningful to adult learners. Towards this end, they should be accompanied by example sentences and mini-dialogues indicating meaning and usage. This will show learners why they need to learn these words. The semantic organisation of the target words would also provide some indication regarding the reasons why they need to learn certain words. It also helps with the cognitive processing and retention of the words.

Learners' cognitive processing of words can also be facilitated through the use of a concordance, which is:

> a reference book containing all the words used in a particular text or in the words of a particular author…, together with a list of the contexts in which each word occurs. Each context may be indicated by means of a precise line reference, or by a short citation, or both (Tribble & Jones, 1997, p. 1).

Learners' attention can be drawn to the frequency of certain words in the concordance indicating their value for learning. The co-contexts for a particular word provided in each line help learners "to discover patterns that exist in natural language by grouping text in such a way that they are clearly visible" (Tribble & Jones, 1997, p. 3). Not only does this provide further evidence that a particular word is important to learn, but it also reduces the amount of effort learners would otherwise have to make to locate sample (co-)contexts for particular words. Undoubtedly, this also helps tackle the emotional load learners likely experience in deciding what is important to learn and why.

Assumption 5: As a person matures his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.

Knowles (1975) defines self-directed learning as a process where learners "take the initiative, with or without the help of the others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes" (p. 8). As this definition indicates, self-directed learners are not necessarily on their own. They can utilise help from others, including peers and instructors.

We know for a fact that some adult learners likely expect the instructor to teach them at the outset. This is often because of their previous teacher-controlled learning experiences at school (Knowles, 1980). Instructors ought to take this into account and help their learners move towards self-directed learning gradually. Towards this end, language instructors can introduce vocabulary learning strategies that may be unfamiliar to adult learners, especially to those without prior foreign language learning experience. This will provide the emotional and cognitive support they may require to move towards self-directedness in learning. Also important to note is that the extent to which learners master language learning strategies determines their level of self-directedness (Oxford, 1990).

An important overarching aspect of self-directed learning is formulating learning goals. Learners should be enabled to set specific goals to enhance their mental lexicons. To this end, they can create a vocabulary-learning plan with goals that are SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). Table 2 features a sample vocabulary-learning plan that can be adapted by individual learners.

A personalised vocabulary-learning plan encourages learners to take control of their learning process. Coupled with support from the instructor as well as peers, the choices learners make for themselves, based on their needs, interests, and learning strategies and styles, reduce the cognitive and emotional load they may otherwise experience.

Table 2 Vocabulary learning plan

What I am going to do to help me learn, revise and remember more words	_____ keep a vocabulary journal _____ use an English-English dictionary _____ read extensively _____ use apps on my smartphone ______visualise words _____ use mnemonic devices _____ make up associations _____ self-check _____ play vocabulary games with peers _____ create vocabulary posters _____ other: …………………
How much time I will spend learning vocabulary each day	Monday: _______, Tuesday: _______, Wednesday: _______, Thursday: _______, Friday: _______, Saturday: _______, Sunday: _______.
How I am going to choose the vocabulary to learn	_____ focus on frequency _____ consider my particular needs _____ consider learnability _____ ask instructor for input _____ other: …………………
I am going to mainly focus on	_____ spelling _____ pronunciation _____ meaning(s) _____ collocations ______word use _____ Other: …………………
How I am going to evaluate my learning	_____ use online tests _____ use newly learned words when writing & speaking _____ read to check increased comprehension ______ask peers to check my learning _____ ask the instructor to quiz me _____ create quizzes for myself _____ Other: …………………

Adapted from Borkovska and Jamieson (2016)

Assumption 6: Adults are mostly driven by internal motivation, rather than external motivators.

Complementarity exists between the above-mentioned assumptions and this final assumption. That is, careful consideration of the assumptions will result in intrinsic motivation in learners. This is *not* to suggest that adults do not respond to "some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like)", but rather that "the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and the like)" (Knowles et al., 2011, p. 68). Therefore, the utmost attention ought to be paid to increasing intrinsic motivation to support the development of adult learners' mental lexicons.

Curiosity is a taproot of intrinsic motivation. There are several ways of creating curiosity about content matter. In regards to the mental lexicon, it is important that learners' schemata be raised prior to their engagement in any of the four skills (i.e.,

reading, listening, speaking, and writing). This will help utilise their existing knowledge of vocabulary and context. To this end, learners can be shown a picture related to the topic and asked to brainstorm relevant words/phrases. When asked to guess what the topic of a reading text might be, they will not only activate their mental lexicon, but also thoughts and feelings around the topic.

Curiosity can also be generated for topics that adults may not have conscious awareness of. Related to this is Freire's concept of critical consciousness. Though Freire used this concept in adult literacy training programs in L1, a similar approach can be used for L2 learners. According to Freire (p. 209, as cited in Mies, 1973), "generative" words with the capacity of leading learners to new ones must be used in literacy programs. One of the key criteria for choosing such words is that, "They should be useful for confronting the social, cultural, and political reality in which the people live". To this, we would add "the social, cultural, and political situations in which *adults are to engage using the target language*." Adults as language learners may yet be to experience certain situations that are likely to challenge their current meaning schemes shaped by their native culture. They will require the emotional and cognitive finesse to cope with such situations.

One of the famous generative words Freire used in his literacy programs is "favela" (slum), which was directly related to the adults' living conditions. In an L2 program, a possible phrase may be "culture shock". In the case of adults that have recently arrived in a destination country, culture shock is a potential experience challenging their psychological and physical well-being. In the case of adults that are yet to leave their home country, on the other hand, culture shock is a topic worthy of attention. If their awareness is raised about this likely experience, they may be better prepared to tackle it. Alternatively, they may be able to provide the emotional help their peers may need.

Towards this end, learners may be introduced to a variety of 'alien' concepts, potentially-disturbing practices and so on, in the destination country. Lexis related to these would be taught in context supported by a variety of realia, such as photos, pictures, videos, etc. Materials may focus on causes, symptoms, effects, and coping strategies. Their cognitive and emotional preparedness developed in this way will help them deal with hardships and vicissitudes in the host culture.

For learners' cognitive and emotional development, a certain amount of extrinsic motivation is essential. Learning words is a cognitively challenging endeavour due to the sheer volume of lexis in English, variations in meaning and spelling, grammatical features of words, irregularities, phonetic peculiarities, etc. These can also easily hamper motivation for learning with a negative impact on learners' overall psychological well-being. To reduce this problem, learners should be praised for their achievements and risk-taking behaviours. Positive feedback should be provided on their use of lexis. It is important to note, however, that superlative praise entails being genuine. Collectively, these will help adult learners build their self-confidence and sustain motivation in the face of challenges with words.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed how the andragogical approach can play a key role in enhancing adult learners' mental lexicon and, in turn, reducing learners' cognitive and emotional load created by lexis. We believe that it is important that the field of foreign language learning and teaching recognises adult learner characteristics, which are essentially different from children, and considers andragogical assumptions to support adult learners' mental lexicon. Reflecting on how andragogical principles support learning means we must also consider how teachers and teacher educators develop and promote teaching practices that are best suited to adult learning. In respect to foreign language learning, there remains scope for broadening understanding and exploring avenues for future research.

Ekoto and Gaikwad (2015) provide empirical evidence of greater adroitness in English among adult learners, which resulted from designing teaching and learning strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and course assignments based on andragogical principles. Indeed, in their study on Turkish police officers' learning needs and skills, Akın (2010) found that learners increased their aptitude for language learning and improved their communication skills in English as a result of their engagement in an andragogical learning experience.

Therefore, we suggest that foreign language teachers in adult teaching contexts would do well to promote an andragogical learning experience. In order to do this, we suggest that andragogical assumptions discussed in this chapter can provide some useful interventions, which could support the development of adult learners' mental lexicon, such as through tasks that are centred on the adults' social roles, life experiences, and that are self-directing, more problem- than subject-centred, and driven by an adult's internal motivation.

We hope with this paper we have been able to firmly highlight the importance of an andragogical approach for teaching and research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. We hope also to have encouraged teacher educators to reflect on how we support teachers in developing awareness of learners' cognitive and emotional challenges created by lexis in particular. The development of adult learners' mental lexicon depends to a large degree on the education approach teachers adopt and, as such, for all concerned, we must promote an andragogical learning experience to support adult learners' mental lexicon and reduce their cognitive and emotional load.

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Language Test Feedback and Learner Personality: Implications for Asian Classrooms

Kerrin Burnell

Abstract Research into the relationship between learners' personalities and language learning has been ongoing for over 40 years. It is, according to Ehrman et al. (System, 31(3): 313–330, 2003) fuelled by the desire to help make instruction more effective and learners more autonomous. Even though there is a long history of research into personality traits and language learning respectively, there have been relatively few comparable studies examining personality effects on language learning, especially in Asian contexts. There is now a substantial quantity of research indicating that personality can be defined by a set of five broad stable traits. These are known as 'the big five' and consist of bipolar factors (e.g., extraversion-introversion) that are separable from temporary states such as emotions. Despite the shift towards learner centred language classrooms that claim to cater to multiple learning styles, the differences in the personality traits possessed by learners, and how these impact learning, is often not understood or dealt with effectively by teachers. This is especially true of student personality and its effect on the uptake of feedback from classroom assessment. This chapter examines the literature on feedback in second language learning, and explores how feedback can be perceived and handled by language learners with different personality traits. The focus is on Chinese speaking contexts where the move from standardised testing to more individualised formative feedback has started to gain traction. This move has the potential to increase teachers' awareness of their learners' personality traits, which may be useful in providing personalised feedback that enhances student learning experiences.

Keywords Personality traits · Openness to experience · Conscientiousness · Extraversion · Agreeableness · Neuroticism · Exam feedback

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K. Burnell (✉)
University of Macao, Macao, China
e-mail: kerrinb@um.edu.mo

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1 Introduction

As long as 2300 years ago, Aristotle discussed personality traits in his foundational work, *Ethics*. In it, he claimed that both moral and questionable behaviour, such as bravery and immodesty, stemmed from attributes possessed by all individuals in different, but relatively constant, ratios. Fast forward 2300 years, and the idea that adults exhibit reasonably stable behavioural characteristics that do not change much over time is still commonplace. Everyone knows someone who is mostly extraverted or easy going or agreeable or sympathetic. But what makes them so?

Parenting and culture obviously play a role, and the evidence for whether there is a genetic component influencing personality is so strong that it is effectively no longer queried (Epstein, 2013). There even appears to be a genetic component to many behaviour patterns that most assume came about as a result of lived experiences. For example, such diverse outcomes as the likelihood of remaining married or in school (e.g., Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014), coping well with stress (Mroczek & Almeida, 2004), feeling easily bored (Barnett & Klitzing, 2006), and even hours spent watching TV (Sutin et al., 2016), are all genetically predetermined to some extent.

Just how early someone's personality reveals itself is up for debate. Parents will tell you about behaviours manifesting themselves in their children long before the age of five; and, as Aristotle himself theorised, "Give me a child until he is 7 and I will show you the man". However, is this just conjecture? Actually, researchers have long been able to predict adult behaviours from looking at signs very early in life. For example, it is possible to tell how extraverted 12 month old babies will be much later in life by examining aspects of their temperament such as disinhibition (Blatny et al., 2007). The emergence of these traits in early life has long term importance as they have been shown empirically to impact many of the factors representing success in later life. For example, Judge et al. (1999), in a study spanning 50 years, found that, along with cognitive ability, contentiousness and neuroticism in early childhood were correlated with job performance as adults.

The ability to predict long term, mostly stable behaviour patterns based on genetically determined personality traits holds great potential in the field of education – especially with regards to personalising instruction to take into account these differences. Although most believe it to be highly impactful on learning, personality effects on education outcomes is a very understudied topic area (Higgins et al., 2002), especially in university students aged 18–22 (Klimstra et al., 2012). Bitchener and Ferris (2012) believe that individual differences, including personality, result in some students being able to gain more than others from certain types of feedback, which has prompted some to suggest that, if teachers were more aware of individual differences, they would be better able to individualise assessment feedback given to learners to make it maximally effective (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Individual differences in language learners are ignored in many L2 feedback studies (Kormos, 2012), meaning that there has been a lack of consistent findings, especially in writing. When a test is given, we often presume a great deal about how the student perceives and interacts with the different activities that constitute the assessment process. Assumptions are made that students arrive at the answers in the

same way, are equally motivated when doing the test, are not disadvantaged in some way by doing the test, and that the way we disseminate information is desired and useful for them. There are a myriad of factors involved, meaning that any two testing experiences can never be the same.

Unfortunately, despite teachers spending a long time assessing students (Crooks, 1988; Orrell, 2006), they seldom stop to think about how different students experience feedback. According to Roberts and Gierl (2010), communicating sufficiently detailed helpful information to learners regarding their performance on tests is not an easy task. Some argue that exam performance reports are often difficult to decipher, disseminated too long after the test, and lead to erroneous conclusions being drawn (Hambleton & Slater, 1997; Huff & Goodman, 2007; Koretz & Deibert, 1993).

In a study on diagnostic L2 testing, Jang (2009) found that, when students were given a learner profile outlining their strengths and weaknesses, most did not find it useful, viewing it as too detailed and only a tool for teachers to design instruction. Other students, however, revealed a desire to receive more detailed feedback in all skill areas. Some students in Jang's study also wanted to be informed about how they performed in relation to other students, something most researchers argue against (e.g., Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Shute, 2008). These contradictory findings reveal that there is sometimes a gap between the feedback students, teachers and researchers feel is useful, and highlight the need to determine why some students do not find certain feedback useful, while others do.

Ellis (2004) argues that there is enormous potential for improved learning as a result of investigations into improved feedback and score reporting, especially from diagnostic exams. This chapter addresses the idea that improved feedback and score reporting can occur if awareness of individual differences, and in particular personality differences, is raised when exam feedback is disseminated. This is of particular importance due to the large amount of time that can be spent by teachers and students during the feedback process.

2 Feedback

Feedback comes from many different sources in life, from an emotional reaction upon receiving a gift, to work performance reviews, to receiving a writing assignment back from a teacher. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) broadly defined feedback as assistance given to a learner to either correct incorrect responses or provide confirmation for appropriate ones. Kulhavy and Stock (1989) stipulated two types of feedback that are considered important for effective learning – verification (whether right or wrong) and elaboration (why was it wrong). Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that, in educational settings, feedback is not just information given to students by teachers, rather, it can be viewed as any kind of response to performance (e.g., classwork or assessments) relayed to a learner by an agent (e.g., peers, teachers or test designers) that learners respond to on a behavioural, cognitive or emotional level (Lipnevich et al., 2016).

So feedback is essentially a consequence of performance that Hattie and Timperley (2007) claim is of more benefit when it is related to something that the learner partially comprehends as opposed to having no knowledge at all. Hattie and Timperley view feedback as a powerful educational tool that should be used whenever performance is required. However, they caution it is only useful when it specifically guides learners to work on tangible ways to perform better in the future. This may be the reason why some meta-studies have shown that feedback in education is effective only in one third of cases (Kluger & Denisi, 1996).

As mentioned in the introduction to this book, there has been a shift over the years from a behavioural to a cognitive perspective in education, including in terms of feedback. Behaviourists viewed learning as entirely stimulus-response, and learners were viewed as being passive recipients of feedback in programmed instructional classrooms (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). On the other hand, cognitivism is concerned with the environment a learner finds themselves in, and views feedback as an essential part of that environment. A cognitive perspective views feedback as a way of encouraging students to become autonomous by taking an active role in their own learning (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991), a conception of an ideal feedback process that still widely persists (Carless et al., 2011).

Test takers taking standardised language tests have long called for more useful information regarding their performance (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996). It is due to this expectation that diagnostic feedback, in addition to test scores, has become much more widely available over recent years (Weaver, 2016). According to Doe (2015), the number of tests with diagnostic properties that are useful for guiding learning in classrooms is rapidly increasing, although much more research needs to be done to determine how exactly these tests impact the learning process. Spolsky (1990) argued that it was a moral responsibility of test users to give both accurate and easily interpretable feedback following tests. Moreover, he suggested profiles should be created that help guide learners and teachers. Shohamy (1992) suggested a model of L2 diagnostic feedback involving collaboration resulting in improved instruction through a feedback process that, according to the author, would ideally be “detailed, innovative, and diagnostic” (p. 515).

Feedback in L2 classrooms these days can take the form of scores and various forms of constructed commenting, both real time and delayed, negative and positive, and focused on task, processes and the self (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Kunnan and Jang (2009) state L2 diagnosis has to take into account learning styles, perceptions of ability, attitude to learning, and cognitive and metacognitive styles, while also containing feedback *and* advice (Alderson et al., 2015). Taking all of these variables into account means looking closely at how learners respond to feedback and asking the question, “What are learners bringing to the feedback process?”

2.1 Response to Feedback

Ilgen et al.’s (1979) seminal study investigated variation in feedback and uptake. The researchers determined acceptance to be largely dependent on how learners evaluated the feedback in terms of ‘sign’ (positive or negative), credibility, timeline,

and frequency. A study by Waples (2015) on receptivity to feedback, albeit on tasks not related to language, found that higher specificity was related to increased receptivity. Waples also reported that feedback sign and goal orientation combined to impact receptivity.

According to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002), feedback has the potential to elicit very strong emotional reactions from students, and these reactions have the power to impact how learners deal with feedback now and in the future, i.e., seeking or avoiding future feedback; therefore, this can greatly impact their achievement. Although most studies find that students realise feedback has instructional value, there is a lot of variation in responses.

Examined factors affecting student responses to feedback include general receptivity to feedback (Lipnevich & Smith, 2008), L2 ability (Cardelle & Corno, 1981), L2 self-ratings (AlFallay, 2004), past experiences with tasks (Mackey et al., 2007), and social anxiety levels (Rassaei, 2015). In addition, L2 studies linking internal loci of control (e.g., Ghonsooly & Shirvan, 2011) and high self-esteem (e.g., Brown, 2010), have been shown to lead to greater positive reactions to task generated feedback.

Radecki and Swales (1988) grouped participants into feedback receptors, semi resistors, and resistors depending on their preferences for writing feedback. The groups not only differed in their desire for the style of feedback (resisters wanted little except a score), the two most open groups also differed from the resistors in their conceptions of what feedback represented (punishment or assistance) and whether they felt any responsibility to use it.

Waller and Papi (2017) used Dweck's (2000) theories of motivation as a foundation to explore how implicit theories of writing motivation had an impact on feedback seeking and use in tertiary L2 writers. The authors reported that second language writers who had an incremental theory of writing intelligence, whereby they thought that writing was a skill that they could improve on through effort, were much more likely to seek feedback. All the aforementioned factors affecting students' uptake of feedback make for an overwhelming array. So, what do the research findings suggest teachers do when offering feedback to language learners? The next section seeks to respond to this question by exploring ideal feedback and then what the research tells us about how feedback is perceived by language learners with different personality traits.

2.2 Feedback as a Dialogue

Doe (2015) cautions that the interpretation of score reports and feedback from diagnostic L2 assessments should be seen as a dialogue with students and not something that just happens as a 'one-off' immediately following performance. One time feedback is thought to seriously affect the validity of a test, especially from an impact standpoint (Lissitz & Samuelsen, 2007), and risks misinterpretations. In fact, many researchers (e.g., Carless et al., 2011; Doe, 2015; Shute, 2008) recommend that any

approach to feedback should be viewed as an iterative process with the ultimate goal of self-regulation and applying knowledge beyond the task.

Findings from Shute's (2008) meta-study led to the recommendation that feedback should have: (a) a task focus as opposed to a test focus; (b) detailed feedback parcelled out to the learner in chunks if needed so as not to be overwhelming; (c) a transparent and easy to understand information transfer; (d) objectivity wherever possible; and (e) a consideration for any learner goals. Feedback providers in Shute's view should *not* give scores, compare learners, give praise or concentrate only on errors. She also recommends tailoring feedback to particular learners. For example, more high achieving learners can benefit from more delayed indirect feedback, while low achieving learners need more detailed feedback presented in a way that offers support to understand it.

Shute's (2008) advice on how to effectively offer reciprocal formative feedback has many parallels with Carless et al.'s (2011) position regarding 'sustainable' learning oriented feedback that takes the form of a dialogic process involving students in an ongoing feedback cycle, rather than a one-off event. Through interviews with exceptional teachers in higher education, the researchers concluded that students gain the most benefit through feedback that encouraged progressively higher levels of self-regulation and self-assessment and did not just provide students with single snap shots of performance that encourage passive reception. This view has received a large amount of empirical backing (e.g., Hounsell, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Pintrich and Zusho (2002) define self-regulation in collaborative feedback in tertiary institutions as "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition" (p. 250). Further, Beaumont et al. (2008) state that it involves sharing, constructing and negotiating meaning. Carless et al. (2011) specifically call for teachers to give feedback that not only addresses the task at hand, but also gives opportunities to move beyond the task. The authors offer the contention of one of their study participants, an award-winning teacher, who maintains that instructors should "only give feedback when it is necessary, and otherwise use strategies for students to find out answers themselves" (p. 402).

3 Individual Differences, Language Learning, and Feedback

Dornyei (2005, p. 2) states that individual differences are "the most consistent predictors of learning success", although they have not always received priority from researchers. Horwitz (2000) discussed the evolution of thinking about individual differences in language learners from the 1920s to the 1970s. The author states that earlier learners seem to be thought of as either having language learning prowess or not; there was no middle ground. However, over time, descriptions of learners changed from absolute to more abstract and nuanced, with the understanding that different learners possess different strengths. Since the 1970s, studies in individual

differences in learners have bloomed, and it is now a major branch of research (Ellis, 2004).

Ellis (2004) wrote about the need for an over-arching theory on how individual differences can influence language learning, though he lamented that it is a long way off as it needs to take into account the complex contextual nature of any language learning endeavour. A comprehensive theory of individual differences also needs to take into account how individual differences affect the number of learning opportunities, the richness of input and output, and the processes involved in acquisition, in addition to how differences interact.

Dornyei (2005) states that individual differences include cognitive, affective and motivational aspects traditionally, but this is only due to a level of comfort and because they 'feel' different. Ellis (2012) suggests that the sizeable array of individual differences can be placed into four categories. These are: *propensities*, cognitive and affective qualities encompassing preparedness or language learning orientation (under which personality falls); *cognitions*, including beliefs about L2 learning; *abilities*, which are capabilities of a cognitive nature; and *actions*, such as strategy choice and usage (see Table 1).

In terms of propensities, orientation to feedback is an interesting but understudied area. London and Smither (2002) introduced and worked on a construct of orientation to feedback which aimed to capture an individual's general feedback receptivity. Linderbaum and Levy (2010) added to this by producing and validating a measure of feedback receptivity. Smith et al. (2013) applied this to tertiary education and found it to be a good predictor of variance in perceptions of feedback, concluding that emotional reactions to feedback were better explained by receptivity than expectation congruency. A study by Cohen (1987) revealed that American

Table 1 Factors responsible for individual differences in L2 learning and studies linking them to personality

Categories	Factors	Study linking personality and this factor
1. Abilities	(a) Intelligence	Dewaele (2012)
	(b) Language aptitude	Lundell and Sandgren (2013)
	(c) Memory	Grey et al. (2015)
2. Propensities	(a) Personality	
	(b) Motivation	Ghapanchi et al. (2011)
	(c) Anxiety	Waller and Papi (2017) and Papi (2010)
	(d) Learning style	Sadeghi et al. (2012) and Hashway (1998) claimed that most style theories are based on personality
	(e) Willingness to communicate	Oz (2014)
3. Learner cognitions about L2 learning	(a) Learner beliefs	Bernat (2005)
4. Learner actions	(a) Learning strategies	Ellis (2004)

systemic functional linguistics learners who rated themselves as good students were much more likely to read through written feedback and use strategies such as mental note taking to process the feedback. While an examination into the role of ability, strategy use, and all other factors involved in feedback use is beyond the scope of this chapter, personality will now be discussed to gain a general idea of its role in the equation.

3.1 Personality

Skinner's (1984) behaviourist theory of learning views personality as simply behaviour influenced by external stimuli; whereas the social or cognitive theory of personality, as supported by Bandura (1986), views more cognitive processes, such as thinking and analysing, as more important. Ackerman and Heggestad (1997) argued that, along with intellect and goals, personality has a great influence on academic achievement and examination performance. In particular, personality has been touted as a highly influential factor impacting language learning (Carrell et al., 1996). Personality traits are relatively stable behavioural dispositions or tendencies to behave in a certain way (e.g., a tendency to be anxious) that should not be confused with emotions or feelings (e.g., feeling anxious before a test), which are more specific to context and tend to fluctuate in intensity over time (Papi, 2010).

There are some who argue for an idiographic theory of traits (Conner et al., 2009), believing that there can be no generalisable theory of traits as all personalities are so complex and idiosyncratic that they are unique to the individual. However, there is strong consensus among personality researchers, even as far back as Goldberg (1992), that trait theory is a valid method of examining personality (Biedroń & Pawlak, 2016).

The most rigorously studied personality traits framework is the five factor model (FFM), or the 'big 5', which describes personality using five broad behavioural domains. It is the most researched personality model and has a substantial amount of investigative work supporting its stability (see Costa & McCrae, 1999; John & Srivastri, 1999). Goldberg (1992) defends the use of the big 5 by arguing that it is not an attempt to reduce the highly complex interrelated aspects of a human personality into five simple descriptions, but that, within each of the five broad domains, there are perhaps thousands of interacting traits. For example, within the domain of extraversion, there are measures of talkativeness, assertiveness and activity level.

The FFM is one of three main personality trait measures that are used to examine personality in learners. The two other major options for studying personality include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality measure (see Pittenger, 1993), and the Eysenk personality inventory (see Muñiz et al., 2005), both of which are beyond the scope of this chapter. Each of the five domains in the FFM – openness to experience, contentiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism – exists on a spectrum. The FFM has proven to be highly uniform over several decades and across cultures (Allik & McCrae, 2002; McCrae & Terracciano, 2005; Vassend & Skrondal,

2011). Because the validity of the FFM has been established by earlier work, researchers have assumed the freedom to investigate how these behavioural domains influence a variety of constructs by using abbreviated inventories (Gosling et al., 2003). The broad domains measured by the FFM, and some of the effects they have on learning behaviour and response to feedback, are offered below.

3.2 Extraversion

Students high on the extraversion scale are more assertive, talkative learners who are energised by social interaction and group work (Costa & McCrae, 1992). There are many studies showing that extraverted students prefer speaking and social interaction as opposed to writing and reading (e.g., Ożańska-Ponikwia & Dewaele, 2012). Matthews et al. (2009) reported that extraverts take less time to make decisions than introverts, which they argued was due to less concern for accuracy. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) found that extraverts were better at learning from the social interactions they gravitate towards, but that introverts were better at explicit language learning. Not surprisingly, extraverts also show preferences towards certain types of tests (e.g., spoken over written). Oral fluency is much lower in an exam situation for introverts compared to a relaxed conversation, while the difference is far less apparent in extraverts (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Extraverted language learners have also been reported as much less likely to be distracted by external stimuli when completing reading exercises than introverts (Ylias & Heaven, 2003). Extraverts have also demonstrated lesser performance when given positive feedback as opposed to negative, whereas introverts perform better with positive reinforcement (Boddy et al., 1986).

3.3 Agreeableness

Students who score higher on the agreeableness scale are more sympathetic, altruistic, and likely to help others. They are also more accepting of the behaviour of others, and place more value on other people's beliefs (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Agreeableness, as measured by the FFM, is thought to be due to higher levels of oxytocin, which means individuals tend to be more empathetic and enjoy forming and maintaining social bonds (Weisman & Feldman, 2013). There is relatively little research on agreeableness and response to feedback, although the research that has appeared indicates it is a potentially interesting area of study. For example, Zhang (2003) found that agreeableness was negatively correlated with both a surface approach to learning (surface motivation and strategies) and an achieving approach (concerned with grades and competition with others). The latter makes intuitive sense, in that altruistic learners would likely not value competition with others. For these types of learners, feedback involving grades and comparisons could be detrimental to progress.

3.4 Openness to Experience

Openness is associated with having an open mind, an active imagination, and a desire for variety (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Openness to experience is associated with a drive to engage in a wide range of experiences including general learning opportunities (Rolfhus & Ackerman, 1996) and L2 use (Baker-Smemoe et al., 2014; Ożańska-Ponikwia & Dewaele, 2012). Openness was found to be significantly correlated with a deep approach to learning that involves a quest for real understanding, and not just mindlessly repeating or working towards grades (Zhang, 2003). Being open minded has been associated with intelligence – possibly as a result of all the accumulated opportunities these types of learners seek. However, this may work both ways. For example, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2006) state that the acquisition of intellectual skills may result in more openness as a result of successful experiences. Whichever way around it is ultimately proven, or if it works both ways, there seems to be benefit to raising awareness of the advantages of being open to opportunities such as learning through feedback.

3.5 Neuroticism

Neuroticism is the only negative trait of the five. Individuals scoring high in neuroticism tend to worry a lot, are emotionally unstable, have low self-esteem, and feel embarrassment, guilt, and pessimism (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The opposite end of this domain scale is emotional stability. There is a connection between neuroticism and hypersensitivity of the amygdala (e.g., de la Barra & Vicente, 2014) which results in learners being more aware and, hence, wary of negative cues or threats in the environment. This wariness makes these learners more likely to try and avoid situations such as negative feedback and grades. Although praise and grades have been shown to be consistently not effective in terms of feedback (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Shute, 2008), studies have shown that praise can compensate for otherwise negative responses to feedback (Lipnevich et al., 2014). This suggests that neurotic learners in particular would likely benefit from avoiding negative feedback and grades unless unavoidable and combined with praise.

Additionally, Eysenck et al. (2007) found that anxious individuals have a very real problem with being distracted by irrelevant stimuli in a multitude of tasks. Eysenck et al. (1987) reported that anxiety also impaired the processing of higher level verbal input. These findings suggest that, when giving feedback to learners who are prone to anxiousness, it should be written, simple and direct to be maximally effective. Furthermore, Mueller (1992) claimed that anxiety, which is highly correlated with neuroticism, is connected to a reluctance to utilise active strategies requiring effort. Hence, neurotic learners may well benefit from instruction involving strategy interventions.

Dewaele (2013) reported a significant link between neuroticism and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) which, in the case of Chinese undergraduates, has worryingly been shown to occur in up to 30% of students and stems mostly from public speaking or tests (Liu & Jackson, 2008) and when students receive negative feedback on performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). An awareness of the link between neuroticism and FLCA can potentially help teachers to alleviate it by teaching strategies (e.g., journaling – Cequena & Gustilo, 2014) to relax them before exams. Also, mindfulness activities (e.g., Beauchemin et al., 2008), and awareness raising, could be of use to help neurotic anxious learners lower their stress levels and better deal with distractions.

3.6 Conscientiousness

Highly conscientious individuals are purposeful, strong-willed, responsible, and trustworthy, so it is perhaps unsurprising that this is a very useful trait in predicting whether students are likely to be successful in many areas (Judge et al., 1999). Contentiousness has proved to be positively correlated with a learning orientation (Beaubien & Payne, 1999), and a deep learning style (Zhang, 2003). Studies have also linked conscientiousness to increased learning strategy use in L2 classrooms (Fazeli, 2011), and an increased feeling of obligation to use feedback (Marando, 2011).

3.7 The Picture Is Far from Clear

The findings presented above have potential implications for the environment in which teachers choose to give feedback and, also, for the ideal form that feedback takes. However, the research on personality and L2 learning is by no means clear cut. For example, Furnham et al. (2009) found that personality and approaches to learning accounted for much less variability when compared to tests of intelligence, and that openness to experience was the only personality trait that had a consistent but small impact on exam scores. Chan and Tesluk (2000) reported that learning goal orientation and extraversion are positively correlated, although Zweig and Webster (2004) stated that it is not clear whether goal orientation – the task specific goals individuals bring to bear on a task – can be treated as being totally separate from personality or if it is just another dimension. They query whether it is "merely repackaged personality or is goal orientation a more proximal variable to intentions and behaviours that is comprised of different elements of personality?" (p. 1695). We also have to be careful when talking about causal relationships between personality, behaviour and outcomes (Matthews et al., 2009). Perhaps in the context of a second language learner, it could appear that personality is affecting receptivity to feedback but, in actuality, it may be other aspects of their language learning or education, or even relationships with teachers, that affect their response to feedback.

There are literally thousands of studies linking personality differences and all of the factors from the four categories mentioned by Ellis (2004). Table 1 lists a select few studies to give an idea of the complexity of the interactions involved.

As the above indicates, personality is vital as it has been shown to influence all of the other areas. However, more meta studies are needed to determine interaction and effect sizes (Ellis, 2012). We now move to a discussion of Chinese students and the unique personality effects inherent with teaching and individualising feedback for these students.

4 Asian Students

As well intentioned as it is to try and improve learning by suggesting that teachers carry out interventions with certain students, there are many contextual factors to consider. For example, for those teaching in Asian contexts in general, and in China more particularly, it is important to consider whether culture and race have an effect on individual differences and personality. In considering this point, it is important to acknowledge that the big 5 framework has been shown to be valid in most Asian contexts. For example, over 50 cultures were examined by the Personality Profiles of Cultures Project (PPCP) by McCrae and Terracciano (2006), with the authors reporting that the FFM was very stable across all the studied cultures.

There have also been a large number of studies that apparently support commonly-held Asian learner stereotypes, such as these learners being shy and introverted (Chang et al., 2011). Furthermore, many studies have also linked this shyness to personality factors such as anxiety (Flowerdew, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Liu & Jackson, 2008). Paulhus et al. (2002) reported that Asian students showed much more shyness than students with European heritage, and concluded that ethnic differences were found to be most evident when looking at participation in class. This is, of course, a problem across L2 contexts, and feelings of anxiety among students are especially pronounced when they perceive that they are competing with other students (Chen & Chang, 2017).

There is some disagreement about whether anxiety is mostly caused by failure or ability, i.e., is the anxiety a result of difficulty or the cause of it? It could be that there is a little of both operating here. Kember (2010) examined the perception that Chinese students are negatively affected due to their preference for rote and passive learning – a type of learning traditionally associated with poor performance at Western universities. However, the author argues that this does not fit in with the performance of Chinese students around the world, especially those in the USA who often achieve better grades and have lower drop-out rates than Western students; although, naturally, context plays an influential role.

As far as feedback and Chinese students are concerned, the picture becomes a little murkier. Carless (2006) found that students and teachers at a Hong Kong university had different conceptions about what constituted good feedback on assignments. Teachers reported that students often did not pick up graded assignments

despite lecturers believing they had spent a long time giving good feedback. He also found that students thought that test feedback was a major issue causing anxiety in university, demonstrating the need for more studies in this area.

Chen et al. (2016) found that Chinese students preferred detailed written feedback on their content and grammar in writing tasks. Interestingly, they also found that students expressed a desire to be more involved in the process of revision without so much guidance from their teacher. The students' requests fit in well with Doe's (2015) definition of diagnostic assessment, which she describes as a secondary set of assessments under assessment *for* learning whereby learners are encouraged through assessment to develop and support their metacognitive abilities. Cheng (2008) claims that this is very difficult to do for Chinese students in large classes where there is a history of early, high stakes, standardised testing. This signals the need for training in how to set realistic process goals, reflect on learning and treat assessments as tools for providing help rather than normative comparisons. Although there are not many studies on personality effects on L2 from Asian contexts, there have been calls to remedy this. Sharp (2004), for example, claims that more understanding of student personality types would be useful for teachers and students to promote effective learning.

5 A Possible Personality Shaping Intervention

If a teacher has very introverted students who do not like to talk, or gregarious students disrupting class, it is somewhat intuitive to decide how best to deal with them in classroom activities. However, when it comes to personality traits that are little harder to decipher, such as openness, or neuroticism, a knowledge of personality effects can potentially help instructors.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has been touted as a way to teach students to become more self-aware, more able to self-direct, and manage relationships with others (Zins et al., 2007). A meta-analysis of programs used to promote SEL has shown them to be effective and to improve social skills, learning and mental wellbeing (Zins et al., 2007). However, these programs have been shown to be deficient in regards to long term tracking and assessment. Zins et al. call for the use of personality trait measures as a way of tracking the effectiveness of these interventions that are essentially attempting to modify the personalities of learners.

Automatically generated feedback from exams that is changed depending on personality variables is one additional promising direction (e.g., Santos, 2016). How can we adapt feedback to get students to study more, seek further help and learn in the most effective way for them? Also, we need to find the best way to test students with different personalities. As detailed above, some researchers have found that extraverts are more relaxed when taking spoken tests, while introverts would often rather take written and reading tests. Knowing what type of student we are dealing with could help a great deal when trying to ensure exam feedback is understandable and, in the case of diagnostic (or formative or sustainable) tests,

making sure learners receive some form of individualised advice and remediation plan as suggested by Alderson et al. (2015).

Baker-Smemoe et al. (2014) suggest that even learners low on the openness and extraversion scales can be pushed to learn more than they otherwise would by designing curriculum to make sure conscientious students are more likely to continue to push themselves. This could be done by having frequent assignments which tap into their drive to please the teacher and meet deadlines. This could be extended to feedback as well, especially if it is dialogic as suggested by Carless et al. (2011), and if learners were made to feel it was an important part of a program. Making it have an effect on grades is also recommended as conscientious learners are competitive and grade driven, and more likely to have an achievement approach to learning (Zhang, 2003).

6 Conclusion

The effect of personality traits on language learning and response to feedback is complex, but its study is of real importance. Ideally, the studies on personality and L2 feedback need to be compiled and a plan for future research directions needs to be enacted along with guidance for how teachers can best help students with varying traits. A comprehensive look into what different traits mean in terms of behaviours, preferences, and reactions to feedback will help move towards a comprehensive theory on how individuals learn best.

From a pedagogical standpoint, having an awareness of personality has potential. We can group students, potentially modify their behaviour, and, most certainly, accommodate them and give them personalised feedback that helps them learn. Although some state that this is not feasible for whole classes (Biedroń & Pawlak, 2016), others, such as Gregersen et al. (2014), recommend giving entire classes personality inventories and using the results to raise awareness, for teachers and students, on how learning style preferences can be tapped for improved instruction.

There are many questions raised on this issue – should we leave conscientious learners to their own devices, knowing they will likely outperform other students, or should we be designing better programs which take advantage of their desire to not disappoint teachers? Extraverts have been shown to be better at oral exams compared to introverts. So, should their feedback be oral? Should extraverted students and introverted learners receive the same type of feedback? Can we direct the extroverts towards attending more to accuracy and introverts more towards fluency? Much more research needs to be done to tease out all the intricate relationships between traits, feedback, uptake, goals, setting and learning. Dialogic feedback would seem to be the ideal approach to feedback as it lessens the chance of giving a learner 'unhelpful' feedback and improves uptake.

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The Architecture of Language Personality

Gayane R. Hovhannisyan

Abstract Conscious activity is the foundation of human personality. Speech and language activity, correspondingly, help form an individual's "language and speech personality" characterized by the semiotic systems or, taken broadly, languages that a person uses for cognitive and communicative purposes. The studies of emotions related to L2 learning often focus on learner attitude towards L2 classes and their associated pedagogical implications. More recent approaches explore learners' abilities to express feelings in L2, a key factor in stimulating active learning and L2 consciousness and personality formation. To assist with this task, teachers need specific professional competencies in the conceptualization stages and L2 means of expressing emotions. Given the objective, the present chapter develops the concept of language persona, or, in other words, the personality rationalizing emotions through linguistic categorization as part of cognitive development. The objective of the chapter is to introduce the cognitive-linguistic categorization of emotions, ranging from exclamations to referential modality and idioms, in the context of L2 personality development. The chapter is the cumulative summary of the experimental, corpus and cultural-linguistic research of emotional language carried out by the author in the past couple of decades. It has both theoretical and practical implications. It theorizes the category of language personality and identity as L2 learning target objectives and proposes some linguistic and methodological instruments for classroom application.

Keywords Language · Activity · Categorization · Consciousness · Personality

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G. R. Hovhannisyan (✉)
Brusov State University, Yerevan, Armenia
e-mail: dr_gaya@brusov.am

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1 Introduction: Emotive and Cognitive Aspects of Consciousness

Language-and-speech activity represents the human mind – the thoughts and feelings – in process. And, because the speech product of any language competence is possible to organize in a complex system of associative, semantic and conceptual structures, we can assume that language consciousness is the visible part of the human personality, its memory, knowledge, thinking, emotions, and intentions. Language consciousness systems are developed in ethnic social groups by institutions and individuals speaking the same language. In each such entity, researchers find the knowledge and attitudes of the group or individual towards the world and the self. It is also the storage of experiences – memories and values of groups and individuals sharing the same language.

As an active social-cognitive system, language consciousness undergoes a constant reorganization in historical language contacts of the group and throughout the individual's life-span. For the individual, learning every new language is a process of L1-consciousness "upgrading", and, hence, the upgrading of the personality, to an expanded, bilingual, and sometimes multilingual realization of the self, including both its rational and irrational aspects.

There is no lack of research proving the connection between cognition and emotion. The basic human emotions described by Charles Darwin (1872) are love, anger, fear, grief and joy. Each indicates a particular state that triggers some activities and inhibits others. When understood, these states are associated with stereotyped feelings and bodily expressions. Unlike purely subjective moods, emotions always have objects and vector outwards. Emotions perform attitudinal functions of assessing things and situations, drive or suspend action, and, if unmanaged, can also disrupt the intended activity.

James-Lange theory (Redding, 2011) defines overall emotions as the natural adaptive response of the human body to changes in the surrounding world. According to Lewis et al. (2001) book, *A General Theory of Love*, the human brain has evolved from reptilian to limbic and, now, neocortical functions. Emotions, originating as a protective function of the reptilian brain, have also evolved to limbic, then cognitive-behavioral and linguistic, representations. Lewis et al. state, "An evolutionary hierarchy of emotion extends from the first reptilian precursor to our own richly nuanced apparatus. Fear is probably the limbic brain's oldest emotion, an elaboration of the primordial reptilian startle" (p. 41), while also maintaining that, "The most common precipitant of this reiterant emotionality is cognition: people tend to think about emotionally arousing occasions afterward, recirculating the experience and stimulating the consequent emotion just as if the inciting event had actually reoccurred" (p. 46).

Emotions and thinking are internal processes in which the primary information about the perceivable reality undergoes a certain extent of processing. As a result, the person achieves some reasons for action. They increase the activity of muscles and organs and stimulate responses, including verbal ones. The opposite is also true.

In the case of excess pressure, the neural system may deprive the person of the ability to move or talk. Pitkanen (2012, p. 79) supports this idea by claiming that, at the quantum level, all cognitive processes-abstraction, deabstraction, understanding, recognition and related experiences and senses have emotional coloring. In a more recent study, Pitkanen (2018) locates consciousness with the pineal gland, which, he claims, coordinates cognitive and emotional-attitudinal functions of consciousness, including conceiving and decision-making.

Research by Nadel and Lane (2002) supports the fact that emotions neither precede nor follow cognitive actions, but rather "decorate", to different degrees of intensity and variety, the mental and physical activities of a person. One of the most comprehensive studies in the area is by Storbeck and Clore (2007). The authors analyze a considerable amount of research and conclude that cognition and emotions are interconnected parts of human brain functions, both having a regulatory influence on each other. Altarriba et al. (2003) claim that language representation of emotions has two main physiological-semantic dimensions, which are pleasure (positive or negative attitude) and arousal (degree of intensity). Further, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Neuroscience and Consciousness, 2019) suggests that speech and introspection are consciousness tracking methods. Because knowledge is itself a result of emotional conceptualizing, we can claim that tracking emotional expressions in the language is one of the most popular strategies of tracking learning activity.

Different theories explain mechanisms of emotions in different ways (Myers, 2004). Pure arousal theory explains them as physiological reactions triggered by some event, which may convert into one feeling or another by contextual factors. Some perspectives concern the cultural variability and the dependence of some emotions on the existence of specific linguistic frames of expression and self-interpretation (Markelova et al., 2016). Overall, cognition is the human way of rationalizing change perceptions, including understanding one's own body reactions, through semiotic activity.

As stated above, emotions, being the immediate body reactions to the perceptions of change, find their expression, among other forms, in language. The process of associating the perceived states and acoustic and visual images with a language sign is known as linguistic conceptualization. It is a gradual transition process, with the flow of syncretic energy into cells and memorization segments as attributes referencing the primary object of reflection. Thus, fundamental cognitive processes build upon the rationalization of emotional expression.

Nowadays, one cannot deny that language activity has become the primary form of social life: our language experiences gradually replace our intact physical activities and perceptions. They prevail over our physical abilities and skills several times. Human consciousness turns into a vast hypertext or discourse, a narrative or a text, depending on which circle of civilization we take as a starting point. Language has become the dominating matter of the enlightened mind. This tendency gave rise to the study of information and communication. Now, in the attempt to develop and refine instructional and digital technologies, human consciousness and learning research focuses on human sentiments and their language representation.

For language teachers and linguists, it is essential to know that basic emotions are pure. In contrast, the complex ones emerge in the course of the cultural-historical and ontogenetic development of consciousness (Olsson et al., 2016). Personal experience modifies chunks of meaningful information and scaffolds them with individual and socially developed senses, thus turning them into useful knowledge. Cultural patterns of society fundamentally influence the emotional coloring of communication. Existing beliefs and value systems are a significant factor in building educational models. Therefore, as a form of targeted communication, education aims to transfer information, skills, attitudes, and values. It also tends to cultivate a particular type of active personality consciousness, where cognition and emotion are equally involved in the learning process.

2 Language Consciousness, Personality, and Identity

A personality develops through mindful activity. The lack or absence of intentional cognitive and/or communicative activity harms, if not dissipates, it. How is the body of the "operational system" of personality that maintains and develops it represented? The traditional answer of psychologists to this question would be *behavior* or *character*. This generic response, however, instantly brings up a string of explicative definitions. For obvious reasons, I believe educators are the best to answer this question. They are the professionals who target the development of personalities, who are armed with a range of theories and approaches to support them in this endeavor, and who organize their learners' character and intelligence by cognitive and communicative schooling.

Formal education of the past four hundred years has been training and assessing the knowledge and abilities contained in students' verbal consciousness. This entity forms and operates due to educational speech communication and categorization of the linguistic picture of reality. Besides schooling, the personality's mind is affected by the social-cultural and, presently, the virtual environments accessed. The central part of modern human consciousness (both in collective and individual representations) has language representation: it realizes through language and speech activities. Even digital languages iterate the rules of natural languages.

We have to admit that the formation of verbal consciousness is the core objective of formal education. Not discussing its strengths and shortcomings in this text, I will contrast it to culture as the natural environment of personality (mind, verbal, and non-verbal activity) development. J. Bruner (1996) has extensively studied functions of education and national culture and discusses their role in developing personalities and identities. The self-reflecting aspect of a personality's character, its identity, and all our self-evaluation about our linguistic competencies, in addition to our knowledge and awareness of our self, emerge in the course of cultural and educational (language) socialization (Csizér & Magid, 2014; Duranti, 2014).

Attracted to the mass effect and global socialization roles of education, most linguists, philosophers, psychologists and educators ignore the personality as a

factor, even though the scientific methodology implies a minimal functional unit in both empirical and theoretical studies. The extensive overview of literature leaves the impression that, in pursuit of scientific objectivity, Anthropology and the Social Sciences have dispersed in the product, leaving the source and end-user of social reality – the speaking person – out of sight.

Though the Social Sciences study different aspects of individual and social lives, the thinking and speaking individual, as a unit that produces, processes and changes communication and language data, remains out of the social paradigm objectives. So far, Social Sciences have not suggested any approach or paradigm to study the central figure of linguistic information and communication. On the other hand, computers are already learning to translate and understand human speech, dealing so far only with language corpora – the frozen product.

There have been perhaps two significant predictions regarding the scientific premises of language personality as an emerging paradigm: and it has already emerged by the force of studies in artificial intelligence (AI). One of them is the following. In the final part of his famous, *Foundations of Speech Activity Theory*, Alexei N. Leontiev predicts that "there arises the task of developing such a scientific discipline, the subject of which would be not the language system, but the underlying fact – the speech activity". Of course, he adds:

> it is still too early to talk about the creation of such an "objective" science of speech activity. However, its emergence is quite realistic, since more particular scientific disciplines (self-dependent or traditionally "incorporated" into psychology, linguistics, and other "old" sciences), exploring individual factors or clusters of speech activity elements, have achieved such a level of development, where their synthesis in a single scientific area appears quite possible (Leontiev, 1974a, p. 330).

This prediction was soon to become real. The second prediction is that of the collective contemplation, which can be considered both a direct and diplomatic report on the state of arts. It is associated with the much-criticized interview with the twenty most eminent scholars of the time in *Speaking Minds* (Baumgartner & Payr, 2016).

The speech communication problem representing the consciousness and personality type attracts increasing attention among neuroscientists for computational modelling and applications. Even though, since the 1930s, Vygotsky's *Thinking and Speech* (see Vygotsky, 1982) has proclaimed linguistics worldview as a system representing the human mind (Daniels et al., 2007), and that speech is its observable form of representation, most of the western studies of cognition and consciousness build their foundations on a neurobiological approach (Daw & Shohamy, 2008; Thomas, 2019). The rationale is that neural mapping is more available for digital translation than the complex semantic variables at diverse discourse levels, cultural contexts and psychosomatic states of actants.

In the context of psychology and education, interdisciplinary personality studies occasionally yield studies that outline the trends and perspectives of future personality research. A recent work by Berulava and Berulava (2018) indicates that education remains the key player in the targeted formation of personality where, alongside cognition, the emotional sphere is represented in the form of stereotyped attitudes and habits. But why is it essential to have *language* personality as an operational

unit, and how does it anchor with the notions of *cognition* and *emotion*? The answer roots among the concepts of *personality* and *identity*, or the self-concept of the person.

Reasoning and emotion are linked and mutually explain each other within a personality ontology. To study emotions and cognition of a "personality" as "a dynamic and organized set of characteristics" (Ryckman, 2012, p. 4), we need a subject, a dynamic and organized output of activity specified by the "set of characteristics". This set of characteristics substantializes in either social-semiotic or speech behavior, thus indirectly referring to language and speech, the subject matter of linguistics. No doubt, the psychological paradigm overlaps broader issues and applications, but speech and language activity is its key instrument point of reference. Thus, only by considering the language and speech product within a personality unit can one draw reasonable conclusions about that specific personality's thoughts and feelings.

This approach has several practical applications in language teaching, from need-targeted materials' design to assessment and curriculum development. The personality approach can also play the role of the system of coordinates for sentiment analysis and the modeling of AI. Although smart technologies have started to develop personality models, they mainly account for communicative features: some genetically given but mostly socially acquired attributes. Once this interest in personality increases, the interplay of cognition and emotion will be viewed as the principal axes of its speech activity (Leontiev, 1974b). Further, a focus on conscious activity and language/speech faculty will cause the factor of identity (the ability of the individual to reflect, change, and control the self) to appear on the stage of speech research. It is now clear that the personality approach makes it possible to observe the correlation between reason and emotion regulated by self-conscious and reflective activity.

The faculty of reflection implies internal semiotic or, typically, speech activity. Externally, identity formation manifests in the infant's early attempts to express subjectivity, attitude, cries, and sounds that the child uses as a reaction to events and subjects perceived. Later, over the first few years, together with language acquisition, the child's personality demonstrates a more and more distinct character along with the categorization of subjectivity and its unique consistency or logic of behavior. The first uses of linguistic modality in speech – the modal verbs (*can*, *should*), words (*sure*, *maybe*, *hardly*), phrases (*would like to*, *by the way*, *I guess*), or the terms of speech coherence and control (*also*, *besides*, *however*, *no doubt*), signal the emergence of language identity. To sum up, "language personality" and "language identity" are actual social units that attract more and more attention among IT, Communication, AI and, hopefully, Education engineers.

The approaches to this object, however, are paradigmatically diverse and interdisciplinary. Thus, to acquire a paradigmatic framework, the science of speech activity should have a minimal unit: a concept of the invariant element of persona, and its varieties of external personality realization and the identity as its internal realization. Modern social media analysts need it to develop speech personality criteria, according to which they study the information market. Educators also need an

actual prototype to design their language programs – not for the mere sake of language skills, but for developing a linguistic personality and identity.

Abstracting consciousness as a psycholinguistic objective helps identify language persona, which is the universal invariant binding the personality descriptors. Specifying the features of these descriptors constructs language personality. The person's ability to reflect upon the complex of personal data, values and dimensions indicates the presence of a certain degree of self-awareness and identity. This model is potentially applicable in all human sciences, including education and, in particular, language education. The knowledge of one's language abilities and competencies comprises language identity. Thus, the abstract concept of persona reflects the zero-position, or the invariant of human social personality and self-reflecting identity (Teimouri, 2016).

The idea of the spiritual and intellectual trinity has been circulating among various cultures and civilizations for centuries. In particular, Swaroop et al. (2017) revive the ancient Indian concept, drawing parallels with similar concepts in the Vedic and Christian texts. Contrary to this, the present author came to the abstraction of the concept of language persona through empirical observations and experimental discovery of universal features of verbal consciousness within the ontogenetic span of schooling age (7–17). The subject study was the category of time (Hovhannisyan, 2001), which is one of the most abstract yet still popular categories among the human intellectual itinerary, where emotions, as change signifiers, play an essential part in linear discretion of events, senses and meanings (Hovhannisyan & Ghazaryan, 2003).

Hovhannisyan (2001) indicates that conceptualizing syncretic sensations into feelings is most relevant to describe by a model that can serve as a prototype for accommodating all the existing theoretical perspectives and measurement systems, dimensions and criteria, of the speaking personality. The study was conducted in the 1990s, when neurolinguistic computational methods had not yet emerged and the author analyzed the experimental material manually. This challenge was rewarded by an insight into each associative pair, making it possible to cluster semantic vectors before labeling, classification and annotation according to syntagmatic and paradigmatic parameters. Although the research objective was to identify cultural and ontogenetic peculiarities of linguistic categorization, significant data on personality traits surfaced as a study by-product. Quite recent works in the neuroscience of consciousness (Neuroscience and Consciousness, 2019) in fact, do iterate the linguistic mapping of human intellect.

Before even the appearance of corpus methods, G. Djahukian (1999) described six basic vectors of universal morphological connectivity. The lexical level of my research formed a toolbox of ten category relationship types. Current systems of natural language processing represent up to a thousand dimensions of semantic correlation. However, I suggest framing these dimensions within the unit of speaking personality, which operates in at least three realities: the physical reality of things, the semiotic reality of signs and symbols, and the virtual-probabilistic realities of internal and external intelligence (Hovhannisyan, 2019).

One of the advantages of the language personality model is that, in addition to the logical aspects of language processing, it explains the psychosocial dimensions of categorization of human emotional language, from pure monosyllabic reactions to complex utterances of attitude and modality. This idea of the model, too, was born due to the manual analysis of the experimental data mentioned. The insight into each semantic correlation of almost six thousand associations empirically proved the role of schooling in language personality development.

The upheaval of Educational Linguistics in the recent decade (see Bigelow & Ennser-Kananen, 2018; Spolsky & Hult, 2010) also focuses on language aspects of education, from a different than personality perspective. It covers global social tendencies and neglects the essential element – the person. Education and the overall culture of professional training were built on language communication. Almost all teaching content – knowledge and skill description – has been transmitted through the verbal and linguistic forms of communication for centuries. People reached for narratives and lectures, books, and records to impart knowledge and experiences, which the younger ones absorbed respectively, through language and speech, through the rational mind and irrational subconsciousness of symbols and traditions, thus building identities. The ability to mediate between different language-worlds or cultures was an asset, a specific personality trait that indicated high intelligence.

At present, mastering at least two languages and metalinguistic competence is an integral component of higher professional qualification. The current exponential rate of IT and AI identifies and overcomes man-man and man-machine language communication barriers. The sphere of human irrationality and, more precisely, its emotional representation in languages can, to a certain extent, be viewed as one of the targets of education. Moreover, language education is the construction site of personality development. In this symbolic context, it is notable that the L2 classroom primarily comprises ideal empirical grounds for natural language processing and understanding research within the scope of language personality development.

3 Personality Development in the L2 Classroom

Among other valuable ideas about the culture of education, Bruner (1996) stresses the role of narrative in creating a sense of personal place in society. Language, as a form of adaptive and assimilative activity, is represented in a linear semiosis of rationalizing reality. Thus, if the narrative is the activity of creating sense-blocks, then the conversation is the interactive participation of creating common meanings and virtual structures as social existence spaces. As such, it has recently become a resourceful study subject due to its potential to reveal hidden dimensions of consciousness and, hence, create social places and landmarks for human personality and mind.

From the *communicative* perspective, a personality is a complex of receptive, productive and interactive competencies. The Common European Framework of Reference for Modern Languages (CEFR) (English Profile, 2015) describes these as

abilities to understand, create, and to interact in verbal communication in one or several natural languages. Each of these three competencies – creating, communicating and understanding – has its psycholinguistic description measured by the following: first, the degree of complexity; next, the depth and precision of representing the speaker's worldview; and, finally, intentional orientation or dynamics. Correspondingly, each of the compound nine descriptors can serve as a measuring tool of a personality's language and linguistic competence. Of course, it is also reasonable to discuss these features connected with the cognitive organization and emotional resource of the mind.

From the *educational* point of view, verbal interaction helps to construct language skills and transfer information into knowledge and meaningful activities. It is through language socialization, or, to put it strictly, through conversation, that the L2 personality develops. The order of steps in integrating emotional expression into L2 use and conception is the exact opposite: learners need language support to translate their feelings into L2.

However, even in the case of the language of subjectivity, information is nothing without the attitude (or emotive reaction), without liking-disliking, and without being evaluated and inserted into the system of the self. As such, it has little significance in learning: it makes sense only in the context of learner needs. Research by Litman and others (see Litman & Forbes, 2006; Rose et al., 2003) proves that a communicative situation and teaching and learning classroom talk suggest a set of psychosocial incentives necessary for L2 learning and personality activation.

From the *cognitive* point of view, language acquisition is a process of developing a new adaptive system or personality. Second, or any subsequent, language learning is a transition and tuning of the person's adaptive skills and competencies to the new requirements. Observations suggest that a lack of emotional involvement in this skill transfer process leads to a lack of participatory responsibility that may result in distraction and inappropriate behavior on behalf of learners. On the other hand, too intensive emotional loads, such as anxiety and stress, may have the opposite effect on learner activity and motivation. Thus, the choice of appropriate contexts and contents and informed application of emotional intelligence and the learning zone of proximal development is crucial for teacher success.

Language learning is always contextual and content-based in both natural and formal educational settings. Both within and outside the classroom walls, L2 motivation depends on the relevance of context and content for learning interaction. Indeed, the General ESL program purpose is mastery of a comprehensive conversational style with several distinctive features, including non-verbosity, spontaneity and coherence, conversation skills, clarity of the extralinguistic situation, and communicating parties.

At present, communication technologies tend to neutralize and reduce many features of communicative styles, bringing them down to an informal conversational style. The borderline between literary and colloquial languages is gradually eliminated (Jones & Singh, 2005), creating more space for functionality and more straightforward, clearer speech communication manners for both spheres. Perceptions about the formal style are also changing due to the increasing speed of

exchange provided by technology. Lengthy greetings and conversation openers are becoming redundant, especially when the context and communicating parties are familiar to each other. Besides, if a few decades ago people had time to revise and edit their handwritten thoughts on paper before posting or publishing them, now the digitalized exchange and publication of information takes seconds, leaving little time for the person to process and organize thoughts and attitudes.

To improve the so-called sentiment aspects of learning and understanding, computational linguists and professionals in machine learning and AI have to solve emotion-related problems. Since, without prior data on a speaker's axiological system, it is hard to handle human subjectivity, AI often does not recognize and, therefore, skips, personal, contextual and cultural indicators of emotional language. In the course of natural language processing, AI typically solves only those semantic problems of understanding and translation that do not strictly specify the source of the speech product and its individual, cultural and social personality features.

In a natural speech product, language personality features reveal themselves through the markers of reasoning, attitude and pragmatic-axiological thinking, self-awareness and identity, and, of course, context and discourse. To direct student activity towards expected outcomes by using these aspects of verbal reasoning, educators need to build a model of the desired language personality and competencies on those existing in the L1 speaker. In some specific cases, L2 thinking traits complement some cognitive and psychological adaptive features of L1 identity.

On the other hand, contrary to L1 acquisition, classroom L2 learning proceeds deductively from the new, often unfamiliar, content to its language units. Formula and pattern explanation typically guide through elicitation of morphological and semantic rules, followed by rendering drills and exercises. Nevertheless, while teaching how to express subjectivity in an L2 classroom, the proactive approach may be an exception from the rule. Current studies of L2 classroom emotions provide positive evidence for using natural language learning strategies in sentiment analysis problems of machine learning. Though the personality aspects of language learning remain unattended, these studies may serve as a source for prototyping neural and computational models of linguistic representation of emotional speech activity and understanding.

Research into emotions in the L2 classroom has developed in two interconnected directions. The first is related to learners' emotional attitude towards L2 classes and makes inferences for pedagogical psychology (Litman & Forbes, 2006). The second type studies the problem of learners' emotional self-expression in L2 (Teimouri, 2016). This teacher task also consists of two parts: first, how to activate students emotionally (Abdolrezapour, 2013) to motivate them to release and express their feelings, and next, how to develop teaching material and organize its delivery throughout the course. Related to this is the usage of emotional language in the L2 classroom, a relatively new research area (Nakamura, 2018; Panicacci, 2013).

The CEFR suggests the descriptors of expressing emotions, feelings, attitudes and opinions in conversation at the B1 level of conversational competence (Council of Europe, 2019). English language textbooks typically offer only one learning event related to emotions as a topic of discussion or do not offer anything at all.

Many general English programs tend to skip this issue. At the same time, teacher awareness of the role of using L2 emotional language in promoting L2 personality development and learning motivation (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017) can make essential positive changes to programs in terms of teaching quality and student engagement. The psychological comfort of learners is a necessary condition, and it should be ensured by the declaration of standard ethical rules and polite language at the start of every course. It can be the first step in introducing the concept and vocabulary of self-expression, from monosyllabic evaluative explanations to different attitudinal lexis shades.

What is in AI known as sentiment analysis is a daily task for some teachers in their L2 classrooms, which they address almost intuitively. Our classroom observations and mini-research sketches show that those students who use emotional language and demonstrate an ability to express attitudes are more motivated to use L2 for self-realization and self-expression and are closer to experimenting with creative style and imagery. Learning and appropriately using L2 emotional language make the speech more expressive and spontaneous and improve the quality of understanding, thereby bringing emotional contentment and overall satisfaction.

4 How Emotions Categorize in Language

As stated above, the linguistic representation of affective expressions and emotional language, or linguistic subjectivity, extends from single-vowel exclamations to reflexive modal phrases, idioms and metaphors, denoting emotional states, attitudes and choices. The choices refer to denoted objects to which, in certain communicative situations, the speaker assigns specific subjective connotations.

The understanding and teaching of linguistic subjectivity is part of a language teacher's core competencies. The lexical units expressing emotions and attitudes accompany objective information as an additional, but not secondary, message conveyed by the speaker. Often, by the influence of subjectivity, the message itself is structurally and qualitatively altered. Therefore, in light of the theory of communication, interjections or emotional-attitudinal expressions perform at least a triple function. They indicate the object they refer to, the speaker's subjective attitude, and the meaning conveyed to the interlocutor. Respectively, we can classify English interjections based on the following indicators:

(a) The degree of the speaker's conscious control of the emotional state;
(b) The evaluative expression regarding the subject and situation;
(c) The degree of explicitness while addressing the interlocutor.

These stages of categorizing emotional expression provide both cognitive and communicative incentives for selecting relevant vocabulary and contextual material in any L2 classroom. The simpler expressions of emotions correspond to stage A, and more sophisticated phrases expressing evaluative attitudes and intentions

correspond to stages B and C. With this in mind, we can now proceed to the steps of categorizing emotions.

Knowing about these stages, and observing the use of emotional language in learners' speech, can help teachers understand students' language competence levels – an essential indicator in language assessment and syllabus design. By framing the linguistic categorization of emotional language, we can see how an exclamation can cause a broad range of psychological interpretations. For example, a more complex lexical unit like, "Oh, my god!", refers to a particular state of mind, while something like, "What a surprise/nice day/smart choice!", can link the attitude to the subject it indicates. An even more complex emotional structure of English phrases, like, "I'm afraid/believe/hope", will convey more mindful states of evaluating the conversation subject or situation.

The category of modality is an entity containing the gradual transition of emotional phrases into modal words and constructions. The emotional language performs both cognitive and communicative functions, starting with the preverbal articulation of monosyllabic exclamations. Exclamations express feelings and sentiments, while interrogative and imperative intonations already contain cognitive elements performing practical tasks of addressing and attraction.

On the lexical level, Djahukian (1974, p. 362) suggests four groups of attitudinal words that perform distinct communicative functions, though without reflecting gradation of emotions. These are, first, pure exclamations, like, "Oh! Wow! Aw! Oops! Ek! Hmm! Holy cow!", and so on. Second are address-and-attraction lexical units such as, "Honey! Darling! Hey, you! Watch out! Guess what!". The third group is question-and-answer lexical units, including tag questions and other phrases like, "Eh? Huh? Well? No way! Fabulous! Hooray!", and modal-referential words and phrases, with the explicit intention of evaluative attitudes. Examples of these include, "Sure! Alas! Well done! Certainly! Unfortunately!".

As this indicates, there is a structured hierarchy (Corver, 2015) within the category of interjection. However, I want to stress not only the structure but also the hierarchical expansion of reasoning within this structural complexity of the class. The interjections acquire a more and more complex idiomatic structure and meanings from unconscious exclamatory expressions of emotions to verbalized feelings and then to attitudinal reference and evaluative interpretation.

Hovhannisyan and Grigoryan (2013) introduce a more detailed representation of categorization, with each of the three categorization criteria associated with the following subcategories:

A. The degree of the speaker's conscious control of the emotional state:
   (i) Unconscious-spontaneous exclamations
   (ii) Semi-conscious, structured exclamations
   (iii) Evaluative modal phrases

B. The evaluative expression referring the subject and situation:
   (i) Immediate self-expression or zero-reference
   (ii) Positive emotions associated with the subject/situation

(iii) Negative emotions related to the subject/situation

C. The level of explicitness of the addressee of emotions:

(i) Vaguely addressed emotions
(ii) Abstract, indirect or mediated reference to feelings
(iii) Intentional address with an emphatic declaration of emotional attitude

Further, to include the social-psychological representation in the process of language change, Hovhannisyan and Grigoryan (2013) propose category D, which is a fourth, quantitative criterion that is expected to provide evidence of the social dialectics of emotional expressions in a language community as follows:

D. Frequency and contextual diversity of usage, according to which the emotion phrases or interjections can be:

(i) Random or incidental
(ii) Social group specific
(iii) Language culture-specific (local or borrowed)

These criteria, developed due to our prior extended comparative study of categorization of emotions, imply that communication of emotions takes place from the elementary vocal exclamations to the most sophisticated forms of expression of will and wish. The dimensions of categorization characterize language personality by its organization of overall and language consciousness, levels of L1, L2, LN competencies, degrees of personality representation and effectiveness in respective language communities. These dimensions have a number of implications in L2 contexts.

5 Conclusion: Implications for Pedagogical Practice

I. *Emotional involvement is a must in the L2 classroom.*

As stated above, efficient language activity implies active emotional involvement, which turns information processing into meaningful knowledge acquisition. Acquisition of a second or third language as an alternative channel of experiencing the world requires a heavy accent on emotionally expressive, psychomotor type activity. Those organizational restrictions that are, for various reasons, imposed on teachers and the learning flow in the classroom, often cause stress, emotional detachment, and excess self-awareness for both the instructor and the students, consequently typically serving as psycho-emotional inhibitors rather than promoters of learning. This circumstance should be taken into account by education managers who quite recently excelled in requiring measurable learning outcome reports and records. Language learning and the growth of personality are, in many respects, an incubation process, and the efforts of unwanted explicitness may prove useless and harmful for achieving the final objective.

II. *The principles of conscious and independent learning need a developmental revision.*

Emotive-evaluative attitude or emotional involvement in learning cognitive processes logically implies student empowerment in the L2 communicative activity. It is not an easy task, as learners have traditionally taken passive-iteration or task performance roles. To develop independent learners, schools should care about educating self-contained personalities, no matter how young. The art of teaching, in this respect, is to balance on the external verge of the zone of proximal development (Yanitski, 2018) to keep students challenged yet not depressed by the impediments proposed. Although psychologically often easy to perform, emotional detachment from L2 communication weakens the sense of participatory motivation. The person may easily be distracted by other, emotionally more attractive, L1 activities, and, even if participating in L2 conversation, the lack of personalized senses releases responsibility. ESL teachers might recall students who would use invective, impolite or irrelevant language, without feeling its connotational weight and respective consequences.

III. *Learners' cultural-linguistic background should be but actively incorporated into language personality development.*

The cultural aspect of L2 emotional language is another challenge in teaching emotional expressions. The subjective attitude in speech reflects the social-cultural traditions and habits of speakers. A vivid example is L1 vs L2 intonation. For example, the falling tone in conversational English typically shows resentment, and the rising scale is a sign of a positive disposition and willingness to support the conversation. The languages spoken in the Middle East, similar to many others, practice the opposite pattern of emotional intonations: rising tones show surprise and mainly negative attitudes while falling scales denote satisfaction, contentment, and approval. The intensive rising tone is a sign of threat, questioning, and, in some cases, disapproval, while the descending scale has a sense of assertive attitude and satisfaction. A vivid example is the use of the universal, "Oh!".

Therefore, teachers should expect that requiring a change in emotional expression as per L2 norms may cause psychological discomfort to learners. Teachers have to find complementary language teaching methods, either modifying the language uses or accepting borrowings from learners' L1. To teach and translate the pragmatics or cultural expression of English interjections, the teacher has to find at least close, equivalent units in learners' native language – a technique that may fail due to the polysemy and diverse contextual applications of the L1 phrase. We believe that teaching emotional expression should proceed from reference/meaning to language, as depending on the context, many subjective meanings in conversation manifest themselves through direct bodily reaction, including non-verbal means and exclamations. As such, the teacher can suggest examples and provide exposure to similar English settings and speech patterns with the same connotations.

IV. *Understanding the categorization of emotions is part of teacher psycholinguistic competencies.*

As the discrepancies in using L2 emotional language have cognitive and cultural roots, students should be exposed to L2 emotion phrases as soon as possible – both implicitly, through acculturation, and explicitly, via direct teaching and explanation of the new subjective language. It will encourage students to: (a) express their own emotions in the L2; (b) get emotionally involved in learning experiences to enrich motivational strands; and (c) improve the linguistic palette of conscious self-expression.

The structure of interjections used by students indicates the degree of cognitive maturity or awareness of the attitude expressed. By cognitive-conceptual maturity, I mean the rationality rate or correlation of consciousness and emotion in the language used. To empower learners with an ability to reflectively describe their own affective state, it is useful to introduce them to the categorization stages of emotional language and the patterns of polite speech, ethical traditions and stereotypes of L2 culture. However, it is difficult to identify behavioral stereotypes and social interaction norms in multicultural contexts without having a framework for emotional language description. Both teacher talk and the syllabus should consider the cultural context and personal needs of the learners. Furthermore, both should gradually and consistently involve and expand the use of subjective language and speech interaction patterns.

V. *Let the students become initiators of conversations, designers of their learning activities.*

Our observations and classroom mini-experiments prove that the embedding of emotional situations with L2 interjections, expressive lexis, and modal phrases promotes critical thinking and reaction towards behavioral constraints. These, in their turn, enhance learners' identity awareness, personalized speech activity and self-confidence.

One way of initiating self-expressive emotional discussions in the L2 classroom is encouraging topics of personal and axiological significance; that is, analysis of ethical, cultural frameworks, behaviors, etc. Even the most emotionally charged and sensitive issues need a form of explicit discussion, and non-disruptive expression of emotions both by the teacher and the students can serve as a strong learning motivator. Another technique is asking for student opinion as a form of reflective evaluation or feedback. Through this method, teachers can link classroom emotional experiences with the corresponding language and discuss the attitudinal aspect of emotional expressions in a conversation. This kind of activity stimulates learners' L2 personality encounters through verbalization of their viewpoints.

Overall, L2 emotional language is an instrument that teachers use to bring to life the ideal L2 persona by balancing on the edge of the proximal zone of learners' cognitive and personal development. In successful cases, the classwork turns into an emotionally particolored learning experience imprinted in the memories of developing second language identities.

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From Scribbles to the Launch of a Creative Writing Anthology: The Emotional Investment of Omani Learners as Co-Creators

Yasmin Ladha

Abstract The author has used creative writing techniques in ESL/EFL classrooms in Calgary, Chonju and Muscat to enable learners to write originally and effectively in English. Creative writing techniques free up space for multilingual learners to engage as co-creators; they invest emotionally because the native language is utilized. In an Omani classroom, a learner delights in learning the name of the bird mentioned in the Holy Koran: *hudhud* (hoopoe). The alliterative alliance of *hudhud*-hoopoe brings the learner further delight. Hoopoe is *familiarly different*. Here, English becomes an extension of what the learner already knows. Being grounded in a word emotionally facilitates new discoveries; perhaps names of other regional birds in English. The learner demonstrates independent learning and might be disinclined to short term memorization as the commitment to the English language is genuine, not opportunistic. They become keepers of their backyard: Hajar Mountains, Indian roller. Creative writing works in tandem with academic writing as both share commonalities: content, support, opinion, cohesion and conclusion. Creative writing is more natural, intuitive and lifts the rigors of academic writing. The learner *feels* included, not annihilated. For instance, organization in creative writing parlance is oranges in the orange basket, meaning, support sentences cluster under the main idea of the paragraph, not elsewhere on the page. The chapter is evidence-inspired, from assignments, *isharik* (in Arabic, it means 'sharing') writing workshops, contributors' writing, bio-notes, and editor's notes.

Keywords Anthologies · ESL/EFL · Co-creators · Contributors · Power of detail · Emotional investment

Y. Ladha (✉)
University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: BLadha@hct.edu.om

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1 Introduction

I want learners to fall in love with English. When I ask why they want to learn the language, many say, “This is most important in the world”. This means that for a successful career and a good lifestyle, it is imperative to know English. So, the English language is acquired as a commodity. Here is another perspective: think of the learner as a salary-person working for the Zaibatsu. In this case, the Zaibatsu is not a conglomerate of a few powerful companies dominating the rest, but the one and only company. In our interconnected global economy, English reigns supreme. Like the salary-person, the learner might be resentful of the proprietorial and pervasive Zaibatsu – in this case, English – but has no choice and submits to learning the language.

Here is yet another perspective, a perspective derived from the following questions: is English an egalitarian and a global language? Does knowing the language offer carte blanche privileges to its speakers? Why are speakers divided into native (premium) and non-native (inferior) categories? What is the role of the educator in teaching English as a foreign or second language? Do employers court native speakers? Whose accents are coveted and whose are emulated? Whose face is on promos of a company? Does the language create demarcations within a family, society, and, finally, a country?

“Don’t fence me in” is a line from Robert Fletcher and Cole Porter’s (1934) cowboy song bearing the same title, as sung by Johnny Bregar in 2010. Like the cowboy in the song, I, an English teacher, will not be fenced in. Neither will the learners I teach. Many learners are proficient in other languages besides English. I can only read and write in English but speak Kutchi, a spoken language from the Indian state of Gujarat, as I was born into a Kutchi family. I like phrases and nuances in Kiswahili, which is an official language in Tanzania where I was born 2 years before British rule ended in 1961. I filch words from other languages; I even use them in English classrooms. Explained differently, other languages are part of my mosaic identity (Canadian, Indian, Korean, Omani and Tanzanian).

Like an accordion with its expanding bellows, the English language has the extraordinary ability to absorb words and nuances from different languages, making it richer and diverse and deeply personal to its speakers. In my classroom, learning English is fortified by pabulum of diverse cultures and the mother tongue. The mother tongue is not aborted; rather, it extends into English to produce synergy. The learner is differently grounded in the process where English is not an imposer, an aristocrat or a Zaibatsu. Nor is the learner a subordinate or a salary-person. This is what I mean by wanting learners to fall in love with the English language. Binaries or impositions of any kind are rejected.

So, how do I teach English to Level 2 (pre-intermediate) Omani learners, male and female, aged 19 to 21? I take a creative writing approach. The learner is a co-creator in the process, not bereft of imagination, experiences and critical thinking. Does creative writing contribute to reading, listening and speaking? Yes. But this is not the focus of the chapter. Briefly, creative writing is not exclusive in itself. In fact,

any single component of language cannot be contained. Its inherent nature is to *flow out*. Therefore, what is felt, learnt, experienced and written about in creative writing seeps into other areas of language acquisition. Good teaching practice, however, is to integrate the four skills in a language class and to draw learners' participation in the process.

Here is a structural overview of a creative writing approach in an Omani classroom:

- Build a community
- Build an emotional relationship that embraces peers and the teacher
- Integrate creative writing skills in the classroom
- Launch a creative writing anthology

2 Build a Community

Firstly, to build a community in a classroom, a teacher must learn the names of the students quickly. To quote Henry David Thoreau, "A name pronounced is the recognition of the individual to whom it belongs" (Thoreau-online, 2020, p. 137). Pointing to a learner, or to take-off from what the learner says, shrinks the essence of both what is asked and the response. Addressing the learner by name is an acknowledgement, or a teacher's declaration of honoring the learner. The learner's response may be correct, mumbled or wrong, with the point being that the connection is not casual.

Generosity and humor also contribute to building a community. When I cannot remember a name or when I pronounce it incorrectly, my homework is to practice it for the next day. But I make mistakes: I flub when Arabic names rhyme. In her bionote in, *Why All These Clouds in My Eyes?*, Shahad Al-Amri (2016a, b) writes, "Yasmin calls me Fahad instead of Shahad! Not only Yasmin. At home, they call me Fahad or Fahdon" (p. 16). Most learners are forgiving. Like Shahad, they might even turn gaffe into wit. Others allow me to shorten their name, for example, from "Qusai" to "Q". Sometimes they shorten mine: "Yas". I take the cue from a group. Some learners, even groups, are reticent. My approach then, which is creative writing, is still the axis, but the style changes to become more traditional and less experimental. But every learner is observed and encouraged. Emotional care motivates even reluctant learners to perform better. However, the teacher is resolute about one matter and conveys the same to the learner: progress is expected.

Other Drawbacks For learners, increasingly, challenges at home and at the college are rising. Learners need to develop more solid skills in time management and independent learning. Already, an exponential number of learners are joining the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (formerly the Higher College of Technology) in Oman, with an average of twenty-eight learners to a group. Classrooms are occupied from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. So, twice a week, different groups begin at 2:00 PM or 4:00 PM. Are late classes conducive to learning?

Transportation is another issue. As soon as learners are at the university, there is the nostomania to return home. If they miss a ride, they must spend hours on campus. Those who commute on private buses come very early and leave very late. Poor transportation creates anxiety and fatigue. In these circumstances, how much emotional labor is the learner going to put into learning English? With the COVID-19 crisis at the time of writing, it looks as though the approaching academic year might be grueling. Do learners have the right tools and discipline for online education, and will the quality of education be maintained? Adding to these challenges, the caliber of learners joining college has changed. Many would fare much better if they trained in a trade at a vocational college.

Back to Building a Community To recapitulate: a) the teacher remembers learners' names and, in turn, discerns the individual from the group; and b) the spirit of generosity and humor budding in the classroom are factors that coalesce into a community. In addition, the sense of belonging to a group increases during academic advising sessions, otherwise known as office hours. The sessions might consist of a few learners, or a one-on-one session with the teacher. It is good to use the same meeting room, as a familiar place for informal learning relaxes learners and the teacher: we *enjoy* a different atmosphere. "To change the weather", is an expression Omani learners often use. It means breaking the monotony. One goes to the beach or on a weekend trip to change the weather. During academic advising, peer-tutors step forward and the teacher is also part of the circle, not the chairperson. Film maker and writer, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), in "The Story Began Long Ago…", writes of a remote village where:

> The chief of the village does not "have the floor" for himself, nor does he talk more than anyone else. He is there to listen, to absorb, and to ascertain at the close what everybody has already felt or grown to feel during the session (p. 2).

Our meeting room becomes a place for suggestions, sharing ideas, and a place to gab. In a way, our meeting room is a place of mini pow wows. Another way to jell a community is by naming worksheets. A silly name amuses learners. The name also can be from the learner's milieu. Most classes start with quickies, or 10 min of fun. These can include alliteration, slogans, phrases, abbreviations, currencies, "p" and "b" sounds (often challenging for learners as the letter "p" does not exist in Arabic), confusing words, and idioms. I choose names with cunning to trigger an "aha!" response. The objective is to create an atmosphere where the mind is alive and buzzing. Here is a short list of names of some our grammar and vocabulary worksheets:

- Cockroach
- Shakira
- *Khali-wali* (Arabic slang: "Keep it or leave it")
- Turmeric
- Burp
- Ali Bahar (a popular Bahraini singer)
- Rolling pin

- Phew!
- Fussy (sounds like "fart" (*faasi*) in Arabic)

Group connectivity is, in fact, a cognitive approach, and is crucial to creative writing. It creates a space that frees learners to take risks. Competition ceases. Help is available. In such a community, learning circulates as if it were a toolbox to which things are added in and others are pulled out.

3 Build an Emotional Relationship That Embraces Peers and the Teacher

Khalid Al Rawahi,[1] who was a student of mine in 2015, recently sent me a voice message on WhatsApp which is transcribed below:

> When it comes to writing, if I'm being totally honest, I didn't become interested in writing itself, no, I become interested in the language as a whole… *lekin*… learning the language. And I don't think there is a specific reason why I became interested. No, I think there is many, many reasons and all these reasons built up, like slowly. Maybe one of the things… I don't know if I can express in words, but I will try. The first thing… I believe… like as a teacher… the teacher should understand the students, and they should understand the mentality of the students, and also… they understand… they are human, and they have limit, and they have feelings. And I remember, one day, I remember to this day [laughs]… one day I was sleepy in the class… I couldn't understand or focus… I remember you saying to me, "Go and grab you a coffee." And I was thinking, wow! I really… *yaani*… back at school, or in all classes, there is no teacher telling me, "Oh, you are tired, go and grab your coffee." And I feel this was one of the reasons that helped to establish a relationship, or bond, or friendly relationship with teacher. The teacher understanding the student and the students also understanding the teacher. I feel this is the first thing – when teacher have friendly relationship with students, this will make the student, like, wanting to learn. And also, I think that the way of teaching. You didn't follow a specific way of teaching… we were going to the lab… and we were reading the books, we then study at class… small group of students working together. All these ways I like it (Personal communication, June 9, 2020).

The teacher did not admonish; she wanted Khalid back in class refreshed. It might have been a morning of Sunday (the first day of the work week in the Arab Gulf) blues, or after lunch when energy wilts. Khalid was moved by his teacher's compassion, and this extended into a personal connection with the English language: *I didn't become interested in writing itself, no, I become interested in the language as a whole*.

The next example is of peership in a coeducational Omani classroom. In a controlled setting, learners are exposed to male-female dynamics, perhaps for the first time outside the home. In class, they might work in groups or as tutors. In the long run, the exposure prepares them for the workplace. More importantly, they learn a critical life skill: they become better communicators. I requested Ruqaiya Al Balushi to aid her classmates, Khalid and Mohamed Hilal, in the Self Access Centre (SAC)

[1] All names in personal communications are used with the permission of the learners involved.

at the English Language Centre. This is Ruqaiya's experience as told in her, "Khalid, Mohamed Hilal and I in SAC", which featured in *Why All These Clouds in My Eyes*?

> I thought how could I work with a boy, no two boys! Before our first meeting, I stood in front of the mirror and practiced. At our first meeting, I was tense and shy. I just looked down. Then I got comfortable. Khalid is good and a bit crazy… I laugh at his handwriting. Mohamed Hilal is like me, shy… I am learning a lot from Khalid and Mohamed Hilal, and a lot about myself… Both of them treat me gently (Al-Balushi, 2016, p. 27).

A lot of can be observed about the three classmates: there is laughter. Often in such a classroom, the group wants to share laughter, but is gauche. Other times, male laughter might be pejorative or chauvinistic. But the three classmates are changing this: Ruqaiya, the tutor, is honing leadership skills and wants to be a team player. Khalid is the entertainer. A bit of fun in the class (or the workplace) is time well spent. Both Khalid and Mohamed Hilal treat Ruqaiya "gently". The boys are polite and they are also demonstrating a subtle but central skill: tone. At the college, the workplace and at home, the right pitch in the voice makes all the difference.

Here is a negative example when banter between male and female classmates turns sour. Even when the matter is settled, and the male student cleared of blame, it still shocks him. As therapy, I ask him to write about how he feels. Shihab Al Balushi's poem, "Watch out!", appears in *Back to Back*:

> Don't joke
> Though
> The other person can
> When a jokes wobbles
> Goes the wrong way
> You are fired (Al Balushi, 2015, p. 17).

Who is implicated instantly when a joke goes wrong? *Don't joke / Though / The other person can*. In Oman, as mentioned earlier, coeducation is in its developmental stage, and the poet alludes to one gender being favored over another, because of prejudice. Shifting the focus to language itself, Shihab's poem is more than language acquisition. Shihab, at his lowest, expresses his bitterness in English. Like Shahad Al-Amri, Khalid Al Rawahi, and Ruqaiya Al Balushi, English, alongside Arabic, is also now a part of Shihab, a part of who he is.

Early on in any given semester, learners learn about labels and stereotyping. In class, a successful approach is watching video clips of stand-up comics who unpack the theme in their acts, like American-Iranian Maz Jorbani and Jeddah-born, Jordon-educated, Wonho Chung. Culturally and emotionally, learners get the comedians' jokes. Certainly, awareness and critical thinking sets in.

Free Seating Works! This is not a new idea. Learners sit at the back, in pairs or chatty groups. At times, the teacher's authority goes out the window. However, in the higgledy-piggledy atmosphere, reticent learners contribute within a group. Zoomed out of scrutiny of others, they participate. Their bodies relax. They look up words and phrases, and, sometimes, switch to self-conscious English. The teacher might not be allowed to listen in: "Ms., we are okay", that is, she is gently told to exit.

A different seating arrangement takes place in our workshop classes called *isharik* ("sharing" in Arabic). *Isharik* sessions are a one-big-circle affair. In the workshop, learners' collective mistakes are typed on a worksheet. The interactive sessions of sharing and learning, including chuckles about goofy errors, create solidarity. Learners also let the teacher know what they want (e.g. more clarity or a tailor-made grammar lesson pertaining to the task), and there are no good or bad writers in *isharik* classes. A startling detail might come from a learner struggling with sentence structure.

Isharik sessions are also a time for self-reflection. In "About Writing", Rinad Al Amri (2019) writes, "I write in a perfect way. My grammar is correct. But I am afraid to write deeply because I will make more mistakes" (p. 14). To *write deeply* would mean to cease expectations of a 10/10 mark, and to step out of template writing, or, to use Minh-ha's (1989) phrase, "well-behaved writing" (p. 17). Rinad also believes, "I don't have many ideas" (p. 14). I disagree. Critical thinking is not expected of her, only correct grammar and unambiguous clichéd work. (Original first drafts are generally fraught with errors.) Rinad concludes, "Now I am trying… to be messier, to be braver and make mistakes" (p. 14). In the final part of the next section, a modified example of an *isharik* worksheet is presented.

Lastly, a good teacher celebrates an individual learner's small gestures and progress. When a learner helps the teacher or a peer, sheds light on something, uses a new word, brings a lighter moment to class, or startles the group with a detail, the teacher lets the learner know in a personal way. It could be a phone call, a personal note (in an envelope), a card, a chocolate bar, or a text rampant with the emoji that learners have a penchant for, and it must be done before the next day; otherwise, the excitement for both the peer and the teacher wanes. Similarly, the teacher inquires when a learner is distant or unusually quiet in class. A prompt, "All well?" text query usually suffices. A text message will usually arrive by nighttime. Acknowledgement, a thank you, or an apology from the teacher reinforces a learner. To quote Albert Einstein, a student "is not a container you have to fill but a torch you have to light up" (Allauthor, 2020, para. 1). A teacher wakes up a learner's potential.

4 Integrate Creative Writing Skills in the Classroom

The previous two sections are the groundwork, gearing learners towards expressing themselves in English. They know their peers and they know their teacher. They ask questions, have opinions, and enjoy the "feel good" vibes of the language. Some speak more Arabic than English, and a few are dependent on peers. They use peers as a traffic signal – that is, when to start, stop or go in the language. The class understands that we are a multi-level group. Mistakes are welcome. So, the infrastructure is in place. For integration of creative writing skills, the techniques learners practice are:

- Power of detail
- Show, don't tell
- Be specific
- Do not overtell
- Do not take the reader from room-to-room
- Lie

In the power of detail, learners train their eye to be the camera: "A key chain, / a white *dishdasha* button, / small coffee cups in the village" (Al Ismaili et al., 2012, p. 15). Another creative writing adage is show, don't tell! One does not write *about*, one dives in, and writes! In Level 2, the two phrases free the learner. And they grasp the manic energy of verbs, how they put nouns into locomotion. Adjectives gossip about nouns: a *gushy* lion, a *delicate* boxer, *seven* fiancées. But, first, words. A cabinet-maker's craft is woodworking and a writer's craft is word-making. This is Natalie Goldberg (2010), author and creative writing teacher, in her book, *Writing Down the Bones*: "Learn the names of everything: birds, cheese, tractors, cars, buildings. A writer is all at once everything – an architect, French cook, farmer – and at the same time, a writer is none of these things" (p. 78). I, the teacher, pack in word-nourishment. Learners are fed a medley that they imbibe, spit out or forget. They might even be like a small fish that sucks what it can and swims off. Here is a sample of assortments:

- house: balcony, courtyard, storeroom
- action verbs: swallow, burp, gab
- cooking verbs: stir, chop, garnish
- Omani landscape: ghaf tree, Hajar Mountains, frankincense
- Omani birds: seagull, heron, owl
- Sea of Oman: turtle, jellyfish, diver
- fish: anchovies, kingfish, prawns
- insects: cockroaches, bees, ants
- alliteration: dilly-dally, wishy-washy, mishmash
- tools: stethoscope, rolling pin, crutches
- interjection: phew! aha! grr!
- sounds: gasp, fizzle, hiss
- activist words: domestic help, homemaker, flight attendant

The list changes according to the disposition of the group. The teacher crafts a fit for individual groups. The majority of Level 2 learners are elated about words, especially if they are not text-bookish. They might not use them in an assignment or a test for fear of mistakes, or when they want to hurry up with a writing task. Then they will choose words they have written forever, like the ubiquitous "nice". A nice game. A nice time.

During pre-writing, in planning, learners skim through their mini vocabulary notebooks for words they could use for the task at hand, which is a practice the teacher has to enforce. Mini vocabulary notebooks are their very own word-maker notebooks that they can slip into their purses or *dishdasha* pockets. They

record words they learn in class, words they are drawn to. It takes practice for learners to resist the temptation to write down all the new words, but only select ones that interest them. In fact, the titles of one of our anthologies is, *My* Habibi *Book*. But the teacher's intention, the medley of words, is for leaners to savor. And words demystify language. Be specific is another aspect of detail – and more. Here is an example of being specific; in class lingo, "Don't tell me a rose, show me a rose".

Taif Al Jabri, on the topic of "Last Eid", writes, "My uncle and his wife give us beautiful gifts". In my edits, I asked Taif, "What did they give you last year?" In her 2nd draft, Taif tweaks her sentences: "Every Eid my aunt gives us beautiful gifts. Last year, she gave me a very nice bag" (Personal communication, June 4, 2020). The word "nice" persists, but the gift is made specific.

In the context of English being a global language, being specific must not be confused with linear clarity. Clarity may be expressed in diverse ways. In many non-Western languages, descriptive writing veers toward nuance and inference. Then, when writing in English, must the learner write linearly? Minh-ha (1989) observes that, "Clear expression, often equated with correct expression, has long been the criterion set forth in treatises on *rhetoric*, whose aim was to order discourse is to *persuade*" (p. 16). She further observes that, in Western thought and literacy, "Obscurity is an imposition on the reader" (p. 16), and that, "Clarity is a means of subjection, a quality both of official, taught language and of correct writing, two old mates of power: together they flow, together they flower vertically, to impose an order" (pp. 16–17). So, there is a distinction between specificity (a very nice bag) and one type of clarity. There are many kinds.

In Korea, for example, a customer requests for four or five oranges. To say "four" is considered too direct, even in commerce. The seller might put five oranges in the customer's bag, but charge for four, or may put four and charge for four. Here is another example: a voice message and chat on WhatsApp between a learner, Rayyan Al Badri, and me. In a writing assignment, Rayyan's details are sharp, but her organization is a mishmash.

Yasmin: I can send you Taif's work, but I want to ask her, and I want to ask you, if you would like to read it. You just need an idea about organization, and you can take it from there…

Rayyan: Yes Ms., of course, I will solve my problems when I see my friends work.

Yasmin: Yes or no to Taif's work?

Rayyan: Yes (personal communication, June 10, 2020).

As global English speakers, be it a teacher, a boss, a leader or a guide, we must include diverse ways of communication in English. With Rayyan, I wanted linear clarity, "yes" or "no", missing Rayyan's nuanced response: *Yes Ms., of course, I will solve my problems when I see my friends work,* accommodating and respectful (towards Taif and me). In "Body Language", in *Why All These Clouds in My Eyes*, Alaa Al-Amri (2016a, b) writes:

> …my uncle's family was visiting, and we were all in the living room, talking and laughing, and through all this, my mother looked at me. She moved her head a bit towards the kitchen. I directly understood. My mother wanted me to bring coffee for our guests (p. 3).

English is multi-cultural. But certain ways of communication and content are classified as "other". Writing in English must strive for no demarcations: Alaa is an individual writer. Minh-ha (1989) questions:

> Have you heard the grievances some of our sisters express on being among the few chosen for a "Special Third World Women's Issue" or on being the only Third World Woman at readings, workshops, and meetings? It is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone's private zoo (p. 82).

Only one kind of clarity, the status quo, stifles the speaker *and* confines the English language. I raised questions in my introduction within the framework of English being an interconnected, global language. And this pertains to writing too: it must not be slotted mainstream or other, then read in a contrived context. Alaa in not a purveyor for all her Arab sisters.

Taking the reader from room-to-room is a mistake learners make when they report on everything. The teacher has to break the fixed habit. They also write quantity (or flab) to meet the Level 2 word quota of one hundred fifty words. In my editor's note, in *Knock at the Heart, My Back Shouts*, I write:

> The contributors are still weaning off ingrained habits, for instance, taking the reader from room-to-room: I went to the bathroom, I brushed my teeth. Does the reader really care? Bathroom door shut, the reader gets it. But certainly, a reader is nosey about the brand of toothpaste: Colgate or Close-up? (Ladha, 2019, p. 2)

It takes critical thinking skills to discern salient points for a writing task. Therefore, pre-writing is integral. I choose from other components of the language: listening, speaking or reading. The approach is interdisciplinary and generates eclectic ideas. Pre-writing can be a song, a poem, a video clip, points on the board, or bouncing off ideas. Then comes planning. Students are reminded to skim through their mini vocab books to find vocabulary they can use. I am not completely successful with planning, but it does slow down learners to think, talk and jot, and therefore, to be cognizant of the task.

Another point is that learners need to know how to transplant detail, or to lie. They want to report details *as is.* Or get carried away. Goldberg (2010) writes, "You don't have to be rigid about original detail. The imagination is capable of detail transplants, but using the details you actually know and have seen will give your writing believability and truthfulness" (p. 53). The lie must bear authenticity. A learner cannot write about a fisherman from Haima, in central Oman, where there in only desert. Learners must think critically when they relocate detail. At times, learners' imagination goes willy-nilly, but realization settles in. Learners understand that writers write lies to tell the truth.

To reiterate the writing process:

- Pre-writing
- Planning
- Draft one
- *Isharik*
- Redraft

Do we follow the process consistently? At the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, a teaching semester consists of 12 weeks. Until the mid-semester exam, the writing process is followed. After the exam, learners' commitment slackens. They wish to move on and display limited attention rather than focus. Fatigue also sets in. However, learners are attuned to the process. Peers and the teacher are available for help. Academic advising sessions remain our constant: two-to-four learners meet the teacher each day. The circadian rhythm of a connected classroom prevails.

There is another important technique I integrate alongside creative writing techniques. I use Arabic words to ground the learner in the familiar. This way, their analysis and opinion eases or segues in. The Arabic words are used in workshops, discussions and during academic advising, and are part of discourse. They are:

- *Tafasil* – detail
- *Tanowa* – variety in a paragraph
- *Insajam* – harmony between topic and final sentences; and, paragraphs
- *Katima-yatima-fatima* – the ending; a hodgepodge alliterative phase of my making
- *Isharik* – sharing, an interactive workshopping session to discuss writing errors

Below is a modified version of an *isharik* worksheet. There are about seven to twelve *isharik* workshops in the course of a semester. Generally, each writing assignment culminates in an *isharik* sharing, after learners have submitted a first draft, but before their redraft. *Isharik* workshops are original hands-on documents. Learners know what they have to do in the redraft. They slow down. The second draft engages them differently. There is a saying that real writing occurs in rewriting. Both *isharik* discussions and the teacher being on hand on WhatsApp eases learners' stress. They do not find a second draft daunting. The drawback is workshops are time consuming, so mid-mornings are the ideal time. When learners are tired, it is best to fold up, and continue the next day. *Ishariks* are a treasure-trove; learners wake up to writing, still inarticulate, but evolving.

A Modified Sample Compiled from Four Isharik Worksheets

1. **Vocabulary review: Fill in the blanks and answer the questions**:

   a. Pet and pat: Do you ____________________ your ____________________ on the head?

   b. **One word answer**: Is your domestic help a refugee or an expatriate in Oman?

   Answer: ____________________

2. **Foreign words in English: select the correct answers:**
   a) Khanjar or b) <u>Khanjar</u> c) *Khanjar*?
   Answers: ____________________.
3. **What about film titles?**
   a) Bad Boys for Life. b) <u>Bad Boys for Life</u>. c) *Bad Boys for life*.
   Answers: _____________________. ___________________________.
4. **Spelling and when do we want the test? Date:** ______________________________.
   Netflix, Ramadan, the Holy Koran, hobbies, develop, something, anything, what, when, where, enjoy, parents, house, the USA, the UAE, music, program, better, younger, family, every, watch, English, activities, London, seagulls, Lamborghini, family, coffee, Mutrah Souk, Muttrah Souq, friend, technology, beautiful, PUGB, McDonald's.
5. **Use the right verb (go, do, on):**
   I _____ yoga. I _______ Zumba. I _________ bowling. I run ________ the treadmill.
6. Do not jam your Fridays**:** mosque, football, cinema, shopping, football, swimming, coffee. I do not believe you!
7. Nice is banal<u>!</u>
   Write two synonyms for "nice": ___________________________, _____________________.
8. Original detail: not paper but *Al Watan*. Not snack but Chips Oman. Nescafe.
   <u>Write down two original details</u>: ________________________. ________________________.
9. **Barbeque or BBQ?** _________________________.
10. **Going to or gonna**? ______________________.
11. Do not overwrite! "We wore new Eid clothes and celebrated together on our farm in Barka, in Oman" (personal communication, 5 June 2020).
    Do I need "in Oman?" ____________________ **Yes, No.**
    Don't overdo: that is too much turmeric in the *biryani*!
12. **Guided writing on instructions.**
    Learner's sentence: "First, design invitation cards. Make gray cards. The color is attractive."
    Teacher: What is the task about?
    Class: Instructions about organizing a party.
    Teacher: In how to/instructions, do we need the writer's opinion about a gray card?
    Class: No (personal communication, 30 March, 2020).
13. Some of you repeat the phrase "free time" over and over. You repeat "also" over and over! Don't!
    Write a few sentences about "Free Time" using different connectors:
    ____
    ____
    ____
    ____.

14. Slow down! When you move to another point, don't jump to it! Let the reader know you are moving to another point. Slow down!
15. Do not list! I like to spend time with my family. I like to go to the cinema. I like to draw.
16. Banal: I like football. I play with my friends. Football gives me a healthy body.

    Tanowa (Variety):

    I am a footballer. I like to watch matches and am a fan of Messi. My teammates and I play football at Al Seeb Beach. These days, I am practicing my kicks.

    List details do you find interesting.

    ____

    ____

    ____

5 Launch a Creative Writing Anthology

Formative learning culminates in being part of a creative writing anthology. The learner is now a contributor or writer. All along the semester, the teacher follows the delivery plan, meets the course objectives, and readies learners for tests; but, underneath the practice, her intention has been the anthology project. Until the midway point in the semester, the teacher mentions the project several times, though briefly as a reminder. In assignments, she is on the lookout for potential anthology material, and writes "Anthology" on top of such papers. Further, the teacher observes things learners share. It could be detail, humor, or an incident. They make for original bio-notes.

The project begins with scribbles: raw, messy, frustrating, or even exhilarating. (One time, a group of males goes to the washroom to unpack a collaborative idea.) Others feel as if they are drowning. Once the teacher makes a learner cry. Mortified, the ghost-teacher stands in a corner.

The teacher, now the editor, aids contributors. She has been a keeper of their anecdotes; she nudges them towards a topic or to expand on something they have already written – what appeals to writers is that they can write something quite short. Anthologies are launched only in the first and second semesters. The third semester is truncated, so the project is not taken up.

Contributors work on eclectic writings, including poems, anecdotes, skits, and collaborations. The timing is perfect, immediately after the weighty mid-semester exam. Contributors want respite from the monotony of topic sentence-support-conclusion. In class, group over individual work is preferred, and learners are militant about the amount of homework. They want limited homework and the editor makes concessions. Contributors are aware of the privilege. In turn, they are responsible for revision and completion of assignments. And they must maintain their academic advising meetings.

The editor is stepping back, giving contributors freedom to manage their time and studies. Only investing in grades is insufficient learning. Females are generally on track 75%, although the males are usually around 35–40%. However, something else is happening. Learners are thinking, imbibing and rejecting. They get off track, they get back on. I suggest they are "composting" or that, in the words of Goldberg (2010), that they are undergoing a process as writer:

> Our senses by themselves are dumb. They take in experience, but they need the richness of sifting for a while through our consciousness and through our whole bodies. I call this "composting." Our bodies are the garbage heaps: we collect experience, and from the decomposition of the thrown-out eggshells, spinach leave, coffee grinds, and old steak bones of our minds comes nitrogen, heat, and very fertile soil. Out of this fertile soil bloom our poems and stories (p. 18).

In class, the editor facilitates the sifting process. During a Goldberg (2010) exercise that I have modified, writers write for 5 min and do *not* put breaks on their thoughts. When their minds go blank, they write the word "red" until they sputter off again. They are not obliged to spell correctly nor to pay attention to sentence structure. Their task is to scribble thoughts as they come. Here is a sample from "Crazy Writing" by Al Asbat Al Mandari (2017), who chose "cat" instead of "red", and asked for an extension of another five-to-seven minutes:

> What Ms. Yasmin asks me to do makes me crazy! She wants me to write for 5 minutes without stopping! Cat…cat…cat…cat. This is stupid! There are still two minutes left. What to write about? Cat…cat…cat. Did I switch off the AC before I came to HCT? Cat…cat…cat. So sad and happy at the same time. My birthday is on October 9. But my father will be travelling in 3 days. He has business in China. I think I will stop after another 3 minutes. Cat…cat…cat… I want to a new phone. Cat…cat…cat. I want to go to Dubai to try skydiving. Cat… (p. 7).

For females, anthologies can be private spaces to write about freedom – or lack of it. In a tizzy about studying with male learners first time, Anwaar Al Atabi (2019), in "My Back Shouts!", writes:

> In fact, I am so shy. Sometimes without a reason. I am mostly shy around boys, especially the boys in my class. I don't understand myself… When a male classmate speaks to me… My head whirls. My back shouts! (p. 12).

Narjis Sadiq's (2014) poem, "Bint-a-Pink", is about girl-freedom: "There won't be questions like 'Mama, can I go out with friends?'". In her world sans boys, pink reigns, "& pinkish sporty car / & no signs on bathroom doors" (p. 11). Sara Al Fahdi's, "Am I a Nerd? No!" (2013), offers quirky humor in the line, "When I wear glasses, I feel I have a paunch" (p. 4). In fact, anthologies can also be viewed as female anthropological documentation, where Omani females are establishing ground in a coeducational classroom and outside its confines.

Learners whose basic English skills are extremely weak, and speech even weaker, make incongruous details work. Said Al Ghazali first wrote his poem, "Abeer", using Google Translate. It made no sense. Two of his peers aided him to translate his feelings. Abeer, a nurse, was Said's sister, who did not come home for lunch one afternoon. She was killed in a car accident.

> Where is the nurse who departed long ago!
> Yaah Abeer! My eyes of doom are tired.
> Tired from tears and many thoughts
> Don't blame my ribs, if dried and melted (Al-Ghazali, 2014, p. 21).

"My eyes of doom" is familiar, but Said startles the reader with the last two words in the line: My eyes of doom *are tired.* Then ribs "dried and melted" does not make sense: how can something be dried and melted at the same time? It does not matter. Said, the co-creator, brings grit from Arabic. In his choice of impossible verb combination, his grief is physical, palpable. He creates *across* to the reader that his mourning is not over.

Said is an example of a writer unleashed: there are no constraints on words. In my editor's note in *Knock at the Heart, My Back Shouts* (Ladha, 2019), I observe:

> Never mind "t-h-e-m" is spelt "t-h-i-m"… They [contributors] are toothsome about new words, never mind a "garnish-decorate" fender-bender. Garnish a cake. Decorate a cake. But one can't garnish a room. A fender-bender hug. A tender hiccup learning a language (p. 2).

Contributors are curious. Why not garnish a room? I tell them that in Kiswahili they say, *naa sikiya njaa*, or, I hear hunger. As a group, we share the moment, the intricacy, the ambiguity of the language, without over-explanation. In fact, we do not want it. It would be over-writing, or, in our colloquial parlance, that would be "too much turmeric in the *biryani*". "Salt" might be more acceptable to the general reader, but choosing "turmeric" is our idiosyncrasy.

Freed from template writing, writers cotton on to nuance. There are shades in their work, "and yes, hubris as well, a bit of big-headedness: 'Wow, I wrote this!'" (Ladha, 2019, p. 2). Contributors stick to avuncular words like "nice", but out of the confines of tests and grades, they are excited explorers. However, what flusters contributors are bio-notes. In my editor's note from *Fired Up!* (Ladha, 2013), I state:

> Bio-notes had to be explained: A-B-C. Was my explanation a hodgepodge…?
> "Um… this is what you want, Miss"
> "No… you write a tidbit about yourself!"
> Arabic, Arabic, Arabic, mumble, mumble, mumble, *yaani*, "What does she want!" (p. 2).

Contributors want to write the very best about themselves, like dressing up for a portrait photograph. They will go for the bombastic, like wanting to be famous, whereas they already have spitty gems about who they are. Here are samples of bio-notes from various anthologies:

- I fell down the stair and who buried the gold bars there?
- My personality is like a bomb. If you play with me, I'll blast you!
- An Omani staple is cornflakes☺
- I quit eating chocolates. Am building muscles at the gym.
- I'm modest but I have the wisdom to know that I'm also different

There is also an office side to an anthology. The launch date is given 4 weeks in advance. An appointed accountant collects money for printed copies – approximately 1.3 Omani Rials, or about US$3.40. It is the editor's task to type the work, design the covers and take the manuscript to the printers. It is also her task to book the venue and the services of the college photographer. Our readers/guests are staff

members of the English Language Centre. Writers' friends also attend the launch. Invitations are sent 5 days in advance. Bio-note announcers – there are four – read the contributors' titles and bio-notes. Each announcer has a list of seven contributors: the announcer reads the title and bio-note and the contributor reads the selected lines from their writing. Four announcers lend pace to the event. Acknowledgements are read by one of the announcers and the editor's note by me. The launch is over within 80 min, and the pace is brisk as a drawn out book affair is tedious.

Inside preparation involves contributors choosing three to five lines from their work that they practice aloud. Bio-note announcers practice aloud as well. Practice goes on for 3 days, heed paid to the commas, periods and exclamations. And they practice pitch and tone. The editor practices aloud as well. We face the wall to practice. Males and females might then like the room to themselves. Some prefer to memorize, part of the Arab tradition of recital. That is fine. Nervous readers have a companion.

On launch day, writers see their work in a book for the first time. They realize now their work is public and that there is a reader. They are, however, reluctant to sign one another's anthologies. There is excitement as readers arrive. Today, the writers are celebrities, photographed and their words listened to. They make news. Their pictures are uploaded onto the university's website.

6 Conclusion

In the words of one of my students, "You heal my wounds when I fall down and push me to run again". These are Faris's words on a sticky note. Faris, a former learner, is now a flight attendant. Indeed, the teacher is the plinth. She does not give way when the learner is disgruntled, dispirited, distressed or demotivated. But Faris's words are disquieting as well. There is self-doubt on the teacher's part. She self-checks constantly: is she imposing her personal and cultural values and displacing those of her learners? Is she pushing a learner too hard in a world that is changing so rapidly that it feels transient? The English language is cosmopolitan, multicultural and activist in approach, currently dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, artificial intelligence, online learning, the Me Too movement and Black Lives Matter.

In the classroom, at times, things will go wrong. They nearly did, as in Shihab Al Balushi's poem, "Watch Out", discussed above, where a male learner is blamed for offending a female learner, even before he could say anything in his defense, when the banter, the persiflage was from both sides. In the context of learning English in a very complex world, a world in flux, the learner's path is not straight and narrow. The teacher bears the weight of *easing in* change – a formidable challenge.

Amidst self-doubt and change upending everything, the one constant, inherent in animals and humans alike, is empathy – sharing and feeling what the other is going through. In an interview with Stephen Sackur on *HARDtalk*, BBC (2020), titled, *A Life with Chimpanzees*, conservationist and naturalist, Jane Goodall, talks of

empathy. She says that, "Only when you have empathy, you see something you don't understand and just have this feeling as to why it's happening, and so then you can stand back as a scientist, which is what Cambridge taught me, and check whether your intuition is right or wrong". Diagnosis is very much a later step. In a classroom, when a teacher steps back to understand, the learner guides the teacher, their agency is not effaced by the teacher's (inadvertent) imposed solution. The emotional connectivity between them makes this possible, and this stems from empathy.

Once again, I state my intention, which is to make the learner fall in love with English. My practice falls under the four categories of building a community, building an emotional relationship that embraces peers and the teacher, integrating creative writing skills in the classroom, and launching a creative writing anthology. Finally, it is the teacher's own métier, area of specialization and expertise garnered. Normally, a teacher's métier is a combination of inherent and acquired. I am a writer of poetry, fiction and non-fiction *and* a teacher of English as a foreign language. For me, a distinction between the two jobs does not exist. I teach language as a writer, as an artist.

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An Evaluation of the Conceptual Validity of Vowel Blindness as an Explanation for Differences in Arabic Readers' L2 Word Recognition

Ndrew Allmark

Abstract In an influential study, Ryan and Meara (Read Foreign Lang. 7(2):531–540, 1991) posited that errors in the L2 reading and writing of L1 Arabic learners could be due to vowel blindness: a reduced sensitivity to written vowels deriving from the learners' L1 Arabic reading experience. Vowel blindness is frequently cited as a cross-linguistic effect influencing the L2 reading and writing outcomes of Arabic learners, yet its conceptual validity has rarely been scrutinised. This article evaluates the validity of the theory as an explanation for differences in L1 Arabic readers' written word recognition of languages with alphabetic writing systems. The empirical studies included in this review were identified in a systematic scoping review of Arabic L2 word recognition of alphabetic writing systems (reported in Allmark N. A systematic scoping review of evidence pertaining to L2 word recognition among L1 readers of Arabic and its implications for the validity of vowel blindness. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 2019) whose methodology is summarised in this chapter. The review demonstrates that the current, published evidence is too limited and conflicting to validate vowel blindness. Furthermore, the included studies have methodological weaknesses that limit the overall trustworthiness of their findings. Further research is therefore needed before this phenomenon can be accepted as a factor in poor word recognition among Arabic learners. Recommendations are made for future avenues of research that could improve our understanding of either word recognition or the validity of vowel blindness, and for raising the methodological standards of research in this field.

Keywords L2 reading · Word recognition · Cross-linguistic effects · Vowel blindness

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N. Allmark (✉)
Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman

University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
e-mail: ndrew@squ.edu.om

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1 Introduction

Arabic is the fourth most widely-spoken language in the world and the second most widely used phonemic script after Roman (Saiegh-Haddad & Joshi, 2014). L1 Arabic speakers constitute a large population of L2 language learners. However, it has been observed that L1 Arabic learners exhibit particular difficulty in developing L2 reading skills including slower and less accurate word recognition (e.g. Masrai & Milton, 2018; Saigh & Schmitt, 2012). As accurate and efficient word recognition is a prerequisite for successful reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Nassaji, 2014), identifying the causes of this pattern should be a priority for educators working with Arabic learners.

It is widely believed that cognitive processes used in L1 reading transfer to L2 reading resulting in systematic differences in the reading development and outcomes of L1 language groups (Koda, 2005). The weak L2 word recognition observed among Arabic learners could therefore be related to features of the L1, its writing system and the learners' L1 reading experience. As a result, an improved understanding of cross-linguistic transfer deriving from L1 Arabic reading experience could make a valuable contribution to our understanding of Arabic learners' L2 reading development.

There are many features of the Arabic language that could affect second language reading. However, in the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature it is the lack of written short vowels that has received the most attention. Arabic is a consonantal writing system whose letters only represent consonants and long vowels; any indication of short vowels is typically omitted. This led Ryan and Meara (1991) to propose that Arabic learners may be less sensitive to L2 written vowels due to their L1 reading experience. They labelled this phenomenon vowel blindness and suggested that it could explain a range of receptive and productive errors, including slower and less accurate word recognition. Vowel blindness has since been frequently cited (e.g. Koda, 1996, 2005; Ryding, 2013); however, its validity remains largely untested, and most educators of Arabic learners are unaware of the extent or strength of the empirical evidence supporting the phenomenon.

This chapter aims to examine the empirical evidence base for vowel blindness as an explanation for Arabic learners' L2 English word recognition performance. It describes key features of the Arabic language and writing system drawing upon Saiegh-Haddad's (2018) Model of Word Reading in Development (MAWRID) to identify factors affecting L1 reading development. Dual-route models of word recognition (Coltheart et al., 2001) and the Orthographic Depth Hypothesis (ODH) (Katz & Frost, 1992) are used to highlight the potential impact of linguistic and orthographic distance on L2 reading development and outcomes. These theories frame a discussion of vowel blindness (Ryan & Meara, 1991) and its theoretical and empirical foundations. Published empirical evidence pertaining to vowel blindness was identified through this author's systematic scoping review of Arabic L2 word recognition of alphabetic writing systems (Allmark, 2019). The methodology of the scoping review is summarised, and the findings that pertain to vowel blindness are presented, evaluated and discussed.

2 Literature Review

The Arabic alphabet contains 28 letters which correspond to the 28 consonant phonemes of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the formal, standardised register of the language. The mapping of phonemes and letters in MSA is highly regular; the primary exceptions being three letters which act as *matrēs lectionis*, letters that can represent either a consonant or an associated long monophthong vowel (Daniels, 2013). As MSA has only three long monophthong vowels, the 28 letter alphabet is sufficient to represent all the consonants and long, monophthong vowels of the phonemic system in a very regular manner. MSA also has three short vowels which do not have associated letters; diacritics can be used to represent these short vowel sounds, but the symbols are omitted from the vast majority of texts. There are also two diphthongs which occur due to the blending of adjacent vowels and therefore do not require their own graphemes.

Despite the regularity of the sound-spelling relationship, L1 Arabic word recognition is typically slower than word recognition in other scripts, even among skilled native speaking readers of Arabic (Ibrahim & Eviatar, 2012). Myhill (2014) further observes that the basic literacy rate of every Arab nation is lower than would be predicted from its GDP. Arabic nations are typically 47 places lower in UNESCO's global rankings of basic literacy than countries with similar size economies.

A number of explanations have emerged to explain this low level of reading attainment, including those based on features of the Arabic language and observations of L1 Arabic reading development. In her MAWRID framework, Saiegh-Haddad (2018) identifies three aspects of the Arabic language and its orthography that influence L1 Arabic reading development: vowelisation, morphological structure, and diglossia. Furthermore, a number of writers identify the visual complexity of the Arabic script as a cause of slower L1 word recognition (Eviatar & Ibrahim, 2014; Jordan et al., 2011).

2.1 *Vowelisation*

Arabic texts can be written in one of two forms: the vowelised form features diacritic symbols which are added to indicate short vowels, gemination (consonant lengthening) and the vocalic and consonantal case-endings of formal MSA, while the unvowelised form omits these symbols. Children learn to read using vowelised script before moving onto the unvowelised script in the third or fourth grade of primary school (Fender, 2008). In later stages, Arabic readers rarely encounter vowelised texts as the vast majority of authentic texts for adults are unvowelised with the notable exception of certain religious texts (Alhawary, 2011).

As Saiegh-Haddad (2018) describes, early readers learn to decode a very complete written representation of a word using both letters and diacritics as part of a grapheme-based phonological recoding mechanism. To adjust to the less complete

unvowelised text, the learners must adopt a letter-based morpho-orthographic recoding mechanism in which knowledge of morphology is used to support word recognition.

By not representing the short vowels of words, unvowelised Arabic has greater scope for homography, in which a single orthographic form can represent more than one meaning and pronunciation. For instance, the written form علم can represent the pronunciation /ʕɪlm/ (knowledge) or /ʕalam/ (flag). This prevalence of homographs is thought to be problematic for L1 Arabic reading affecting both skilled and poor readers (Abu-Rabia, 1997a). To resolve homography, readers are thought to draw upon the broader context (Fender, 2008) and apply knowledge of morphology and word frequency (Hansen, 2010). Arabic vowelisation therefore affects the degree to which readers attend to different types of information while reading leading to processing preferences that could affect how Arabic learners read in an L2.

2.2 Morphology

The morphology of Arabic is also believed to affect how Arabic learners read. Arabic has a root-based system of morphology in which Arabic content words are formed from two bound morphemes: a root and a word pattern (Abu-Rabia & Taha, 2006). The root is a fixed sequence of three, or occasionally four, letters which imply a core, general semantic meaning associated with a family of words. The root combines with a word pattern to complete the word's phonological form. An advantage of encoding only consonants and long vowels is that it facilitates the identification of the word root which L1 Arabic readers are thought to utilise during word recognition (Saiegh-Haddad, 2018).

The word pattern provides a prosodic template which includes short vowels, syllabification and any required gemination. It also indicates word-class, and the person, number, gender and tense of verbs. Word patterns may be solely comprised of features of pronunciation not encoded in unvowelised Arabic; two words with different pronunciations may therefore share the same spelling. This contributes to the homograph phenomenon described above. Patterns may also include consonantal or long vowel affixes, including prefixes, infixes and suffixes (Boudelaa, 2014; Milin et al., 2018) which are always written as letters. The addition of consonantal or long vowel affixes never affects the order of the root letters, only their proximity to one another. It seems clear that Arabic learners utilise morphological information in L1 reading in a manner that is qualitatively different from readers of non-Semitic languages, and cross-linguistic approaches would assume that this affects their processing of L2 texts.

2.3 Diglossia

Diglossia has been implicated as a cause of relatively low patterns of L1 literacy observed throughout the Arab world (Saiegh-Haddad & Spolsky, 2014). Diglossia is a situation in which a so-called high (or H) register and at least one low (or L) spoken register co-exist (Ferguson, 1959). Arabic has numerous spoken varieties which differ from MSA in terms of grammar, lexis and phonology. These spoken Arabic varieties are acquired naturally by Arabic speakers (Saiegh-Haddad, 2018). They are unstandardised in both speech and writing, and they are extremely diverse.

MSA is the H-register of Arabic; it is a highly formalised variety, derived from Classical Arabic, and it has a standardised writing system. MSA must be explicitly taught, particularly in its most formal forms which apply case-endings to content words to mark grammatical function. It is also the language of reading instruction for Arabic children, despite these readers not being orally fluent in the register (Eviatar & Ibrahim, 2014).

Saiegh-Haddad (2018) estimates that only around 20% of an Arabic child's spoken vocabulary is identical to MSA, 40% are nonstandard words with no established written form, and 40% are cognates with related but divergent pronunciations. Diglossia may also complicate parents' decisions when trying to support the development of their children's L1 literacy (Korat et al., 2014).

2.4 Visuo-Graphemic Complexity

Several writers stress that the visuo-graphemic complexity of Arabic script may negatively affect letter recognition and L1 Arabic reading fluency (Eviatar et al., 2004; Jordan et al., 2011). Although there are 28 Arabic letters, these are formed from 18 letter shapes which can only be distinguished by the addition of dots above, within or below the letters (Daniels, 2013). The script is always written cursively with most letters joining to their neighbours within a word; as a result, letters can appear in a word-initial, word-medial, word-final or independent position. Letters can thus have up to four allographs determined by their position within a word (Daniels, 2013; Simon et al., 2006), resulting in around 97 contextually determined forms within the alphabet as a whole (Cook & Bassetti, 2005). Furthermore, the cursive text leads to crowding, which can further complicate letter recognition (Jordan et al., 2011).

In summary, reading development in Arabic learning is shaped by features of the language and its writing system. This is made slower and more difficult by the diglossic registers of the language and the orthographic complexity of the script. Arabic children must also adjust from reading vowelised text to reading unvowelised text, consequently supplementing or modifying their cognitive reading processes.

2.5 L2 Literacy Development

It is generally assumed that similarity between the orthographies of two languages facilitates L2 reading development, while greater orthographic distance has a negative effect (Han, 2015). Katz and Frost's (1992) ODH is widely used to describe and compare writing systems. The authors consider orthographic depth in terms of three qualities of a writing system: regularity, consistency and completeness. In regular writing systems the written form of words follows grapheme-correspondence rules; consistency relates to whether graphemes have unique phoneme-correspondence (i.e. whether spelling patterns can represent single or multiple phonemes); while completeness relates to the amount of phonological information encoded in a written word form (Brown & Haynes, 2005; Frost, 2005).

The ODH assumes a dual-route model of word recognition; such models constitute the dominant paradigm in visual word recognition research (Frost, 1998). Dual-route models presuppose two procedures (or routes) through which written words may be recognised: the non-lexical procedure and the lexical procedure (Coltheart et al., 2001). The non-lexical procedure decodes a word's phonological form by applying rules of letter-to-sound correspondence to visual input, while the lexical procedure uses the whole visual sample of a word to identify its phonological form in the mental lexicon (Coltheart et al., 2001).

These two procedures are effectively in competition with one another, and there are a number of factors that influence which of the routes is utilised. Irregularly spelled words require use of the lexical procedure, as the application of phonological rules would lead to misidentification of the word's phonological form. As the lexical procedure can only identify words whose orthographic forms are familiar to the reader, unknown words and pronounceable letter-strings could not be processed through this route and would require non-lexical decoding. The lexical procedure is believed to be faster, and it is assumed that frequently encountered words are more likely to be recognised through the lexical route, and reading experience is therefore thought to lead to greater use of the lexical procedure.

The ODH claims that shallow writing systems, those which are regular, consistent and complete, allow for greater and more efficient use of phonological decoding, and hence the non-lexical route is used to a greater extent. In deep orthographies, the irregularity, inconsistency and incompleteness of the written form prevents the efficient use of non-lexical processes, leading to greater and more effective use of the lexical route. As a result, distinct processing preferences emerge during L1 reading development, and these are thought to influence the development of L2 reading (Katz & Frost, 1992; Koda, 2005).

2.6 Arabic and English

All studies of vowel blindness known to this author focus on L2 English reading. Both English and unvowelised Arabic can be labelled as deep orthographies (Perfetti & Verhoeven, 2017), but they differ in their consistency, regularity and completeness.

The alphabetic orthography of English encodes both long and short vowels and thus has a higher level of completeness from an ODH perspective than unvowelised Arabic; however, Arabic is both more regular and consistent than English. While the relationship between phonemes and letters in Arabic is generally one-to-one, in English the spelling of many words conflicts with established sound-spelling conventions. One phoneme can be represented by several graphemes (such as the spelling of /k/ as <c> or <k>), and one grapheme can indicate several phonemes (such as the sounds represented by <ow> in 'snow' /əʊ/ and 'how' /aʊ/). However, the ODH does not explicate the relative contributions of these three elements in shaping L1 reading development.

In addition to the elements of orthographic depth, the two languages differ in terms of their phonemic systems, and in the lengths of the graphemes used to encode written words. English has a larger overall phonemic inventory than Arabic due to a greater number of vowels. MSA has eight vowels including its two diphthongs; while Standard British English has 20 vowels consisting of 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs (Perfetti & Verhoeven, 2017). Phonological awareness is a predictor of reading success in both languages (Perfetti & Verhoeven, 2017), and a lack of L2 English phonological knowledge and awareness is likely to exacerbate the difficulties caused by the irregularity and inconsistency of English spellings.

Finally, while Arabic graphemes are virtually all single letters, English utilises many multigraphs and these can include the use of consonant letters in the spelling of vowel sounds (for example, <oy> in 'toy', or <igh> in 'night'). Consequently, L1 English word recognition utilises a number of processing strategies, such as multiple-letter analysis and awareness of neighbour-frequency effects, which Arabic learners are unlikely to have developed through L1 reading experience (Hansen, 2014).

This discussion has identified a range of features of L1 Arabic that could affect L2 reading, including, but not limited to, the readers' experience of unvowelised script. The comparison of the two languages illustrates some key differences, while highlighting some of the limitations of the ODH. We should now turn our attention to the claims and theoretical foundations of vowel blindness.

2.7 Vowel Blindness

Ryan and Meara's (1991) theory of vowel blindness attributes a range of reading and writing errors among Arabic learners to their L1 reading experience. It purports that L1 reading experience of unvowelised Arabic and its consonantal writing system leads to a decreased sensitivity to vowels in alphabetic writing systems, including poorer word recognition. However, despite providing a speculative theoretical outline of vowel blindness, Ryan and Meara's seminal article did not provide empirical evidence that could adequately support the theory. Their report contained anecdotal discussion of productive spelling errors made by the researchers' Arabic students, and it reported an empirical word-matching experiment.

The experiment focused on the performance of three groups of participants: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students of L1 Arabic backgrounds, EAP students of non-Arabic L1 backgrounds, and a group of English native speaker teachers. The Arabic students were described as being of lower-intermediate to intermediate level proficiency, and their counterparts were described as being of a "comparable" proficiency level. Participants were instructed to decide whether two spellings, displayed consecutively, were identical. One vowel was removed from each erroneous spelling; however, the correct consonants were preserved in all stimuli. The speed and accuracy of the responses were taken as indicative of the participants' L2 word recognition ability. The Arabic group demonstrated the slowest and least accurate responses suggesting a general weakness in L2 word recognition. However, in the absence of a consonant error condition, the results could not demonstrate a difference in the groups' processing of vowels and consonants. Ryan and Meara (1991) acknowledged this in their discussion and called for future research to explore vowel blindness further. However, they proceeded to draft a diagnostic test to identify vowel blindness (Ryan & Meara, 1996).

Vowel blindness was postulated before extensive research had been carried out to explore the role of short vowels in L1 Arabic reading development (Alghamdi, 2015). Since then, a relatively extensive body of L1 Arabic research has emerged that explores L1 vowel processing. Abu-Rabia (1996, 1997b, 1998; Abu-Rabia & Siegel, 1995) has consistently observed that the presence of vowel diacritics facilitates word reading accuracy among L1 Arabic readers. Furthermore, the addition of incorrect vowel diacritics lowered participants' accuracy in an Arabic read-aloud task (Abu-Rabia, 1998). This suggests that Arabic participants are not only capable of making use of short vowel information in L1 reading, but they also struggle to inhibit their processing of this information, despite years of experience reading unvowelised texts. As Alghamdi (2015) suggests, if a desensitivity to short vowel information cannot be demonstrated in the L1, it may be unreasonable to assume its presence in L2 reading.

Vowel blindness and Ryan and Meara's (1991) study are frequently cited in discussions of Arabic L2 learners (see Koda, 1996, 2005; Ryding, 2013); however, there has not been adequate discussion of its validity. This is partly because published studies exploring word recognition among L1 Arabic readers are spread over numerous journals and publications including many with low impact, or the ideas are explored in theses and unpublished literature that are less easily accessible. Educators of Arabic learners tend to be unaware, therefore, of the extent or strength of the empirical evidence supporting the phenomenon.

3 Identification of Included Studies

The studies discussed in this chapter were identified in a recent systematic scoping review (reported in Allmark, 2019). Systematic reviews follow rigorous, replicable and transparent methodologies to reduce bias and ensure that relevant evidence is not excluded arbitrarily (Siddaway et al., 2019). Scoping reviews are conducted

when reviewers aim to describe the extent and nature of a field of research (Gough et al., 2012). The recent review aimed to provide a map of the published evidence pertaining to L2 word recognition among Arabic learners reading in alphabetic writing systems, guided by the following questions:

1. What is the published evidence pertaining to the word recognition processes of L1 Arabic readers engaged in L2 reading of non-consonantal, alphabetic writing systems?
2. According to the literature identified in RQ1, what factors are identified as influencing L1 Arabic readers' L2 word recognition processes, and what is the nature and extent of their contributions to word recognition?

Studies identified in the scoping review that pertained to the relative processing of vowels and consonants in L2 reading were then used to answer the third research question:

3. To what extent does existing evidence support the conceptual validity of vowel blindness?

The primary method of identifying studies was through electronic searching of four online bibliographic databases covering a broad range of journals and dissertations in the field of education and linguistics:

- ProQuest Linguistics Collection
- MLA International Bibliography
- Web of Science Core Collection
- Scopus

However, several additional methods were also used to overcome any unforeseen limitations to the electronic search strategy (as recommended by Brunton et al., 2012). These were:

- backwards citation of included studies: i.e. searching the reference lists of studies selected for inclusion in order to find potentially relevant articles;
- forward citation of included studies: i.e. using additional electronic searches to identify studies which cite the articles already selected for inclusion;
- studies that were known, or made known, to the author.

A search string was piloted and refined iteratively to help ensure that it was both sensitive enough to locate the maximum number of relevant records, and precise enough to reduce the number of irrelevant studies to a manageable amount. The final search string contained three fields: (1) words related to word recognition, including terms related to vowel-blindness, component sub-processes of word recognition, and empirical measures of word recognition; (2) words beginning with 'Arab*'; and (3) terms related to second language learning.

The electronic database search identified 1812 candidate sources whose bibliographic data were uploaded to the online systematic review platform Rayyan (Ouzzani et al., 2016). Rayyan identified potential duplicate entries, of which 150 were confirmed and excluded by the reviewer leaving 1662 studies. The reviewer

and a research assistant double-screened 10% ($n = 166$) of the titles and abstracts by applying the eligibility criteria detailed in Table 1 using a cautious, over-inclusive approach as recommended by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) to prevent the arbitrary exclusion of relevant studies. The inter-rater reliability level was 90.4% and any disagreements were resolved through discussion. The remaining titles and abstracts were then screened by the main reviewer.

Ultimately, 1531 entries were excluded and 131 potential entries were retained. The author attempted to obtain full-texts for these reports using the Bodleian library online system, inter-library requests, inter-library loans and direct requests to authors. Double-screening was undertaken for 10% of the retrieved full-texts; however, this led to an unacceptably high level of disagreement (23%). The majority of the disagreements related to whether or not the study was exploring L2 word recognition. To overcome this, an addendum was created that stipulated that studies focusing on the speed, accuracy or nature of the processing of words, pseudowords, word-parts or lexical chunks were to be included; while studies were excluded that solely focus on the comprehension of whole clauses, sentences or texts, or which use surveys to indirectly explore reading processes without an accompanying reading task. All of the full versions of the texts retrieved were then double-screened and the disagreement rate was below 12%. This was considered adequate, and disagreements were resolved in a meeting. Any remaining texts that had not yet been retrieved were later single-screened by the main reviewer.

Table 1 Eligibility criteria

	Include/Exclude criteria
Bibliographic information	**Include 1:** Complete or sufficient bibliographic information.
	Exclude 1: Insufficient bibliographic information for text retrieval.
Focus of study	**Include 2:** Explores L2 word recognition of alphabetic (and non-Abjad) writing systems.
	Exclude 2: Research that does not explore L2 word recognition, or only explores L2 word recognition of syllabic, logographic, or alphabetic-abjad writing systems.
Outcomes	**Include 3:** Includes direct measures of L2 word recognition.
	Exclude 3: Solely based on the analysis of secondary data, or does not include measures of L2 written word recognition.
Participants	**Include 4:** Includes analysis of one or more distinct groups of Arabic learners.
	Exclude 4: Participants do not include L1 Arabic learners.
	Include 5: Adult (18 years) language learners/users.
	Exclude 5: Non-adult L2 language learners/users.
	Include 6: Participants are literate in L1 Arabic.
	Exclude 6: Participants are explicitly described as not being literate in their L1, or as having low L1 literacy.
	Include 7: Participants are typically developing (i.e. the entire sample does not have learning difficulties, language disorders, or sensory disorders).
	Exclude 7: Participants are described as having specific learning difficulties, language disorders, or sensory disorders.

A further 92 texts were identified through other means: backwards citation, forward citation searching using the ‘cited references search’ function of Web of Knowledge, or by being known by, or made known to, the author. The full texts of six studies could not be retrieved, and alternative write-ups were retrieved for a further two texts. Ultimately, 49 studies were included in the final synthesis, and the review revealed that of these only seven explored the relative processing of vowels and consonants by Arabic participants or attempted to address behaviours associated with vowel blindness. The full process of identifying and screening articles is summarised in the PRISMA diagram below (see Fig. 1).

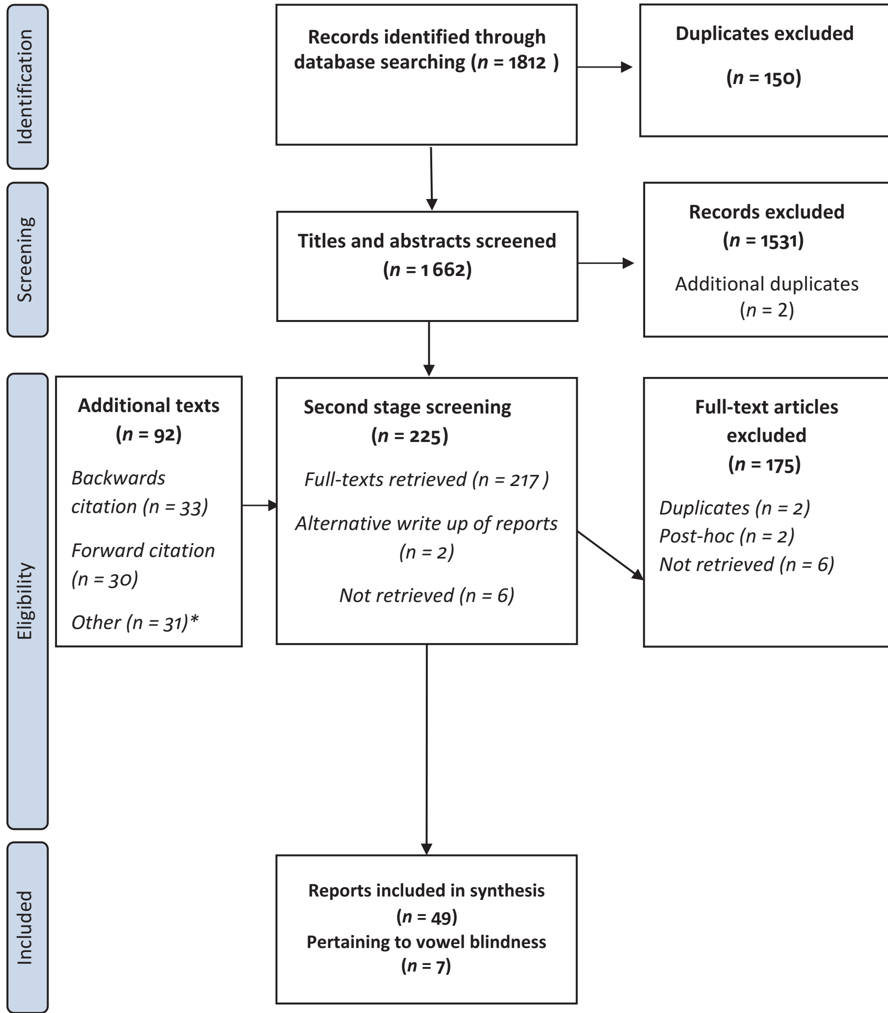

Fig. 1 PRISMA diagram of searching and screening
*The *Other* figure includes the two additional texts discussed in the chapter, bringing the total to 94

4 Quality Assessment

The Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies (Effective Public Health Practice Project, 1998) (hereafter the EPHPP instrument) was used to ensure a standardised and rigorous approach to the critical appraisal of the methodological standards of the quantitative studies included in the scoping review (Liabo et al., 2017). The instrument allows six categorical scores to be calculated based on closed questions, with these scores then used to allocate a global rating. Table 2 shows the EPHPP results for the seven studies exploring vowel blindness or vowel and consonant processing. This includes the seminal study by Ryan and Meara (1991), even though its methodology did not allow for the comparison of vowel and consonant processing.

The scores for the 'selection bias' category were affected by the apparent use of convenience samples in all these studies. Convenience sampling is common in linguistics for practical and financial reasons; however, this approach reduces the confidence with which findings can be generalised to wider populations. Studies that defined their populations broadly (e.g. Arabic or Arabic English as a Second Language (ESL) learners) and yet included narrow samples were marked low. Moderate scores were allocated to studies that defined their populations more precisely and avoided premature generalisations to wider populations.

In the study design category, case-controlled and quasi-experimental studies were ranked as moderate, while within-subjects studies were ranked low as the lack of a control group reduces certainty that the performance of participants derives from the causal factors being investigated. The EPHPP instrument identifies

Table 2 EPHPP instrument results

	Selection bias	Study design	Confounders	Blinding	Data collection methods	Withdrawals/ Dropouts	Global rating
Al Juhani (2015)	3	3	N/A	1	2	N/A	**Weak**
Alhazmi et al. (2019)	2	2	2	1	1	N/A	**Strong**
Alsadoon and Heift (2015)	3	2	3	1	3	3	**Weak**
Hayes-Harb (2006)	3	2	2	1	2	N/A	**Moderate**
Ryan and Meara (1991)	3	2	3	1	3	N/A	**Weak**
Saigh and Schmitt (2012)	2	3	N/A	2	2	N/A	**Moderate**
Stein (2010)	2	2	2	2	3	1	**Moderate**

randomised controlled trials as the strongest study design; however, none of the included studies used this design.

The case-controlled and quasi-experimental studies were also graded for how well relevant confounders were controlled for. The following potential confounders were identified based on the researcher's background research: gender, proficiency/L2 experience, reading comprehension, age, regional background or spoken Arabic variety, education level, L1 print experience, language of prior education or primary language of literacy, length of residency in host country, and pre-intervention scores. For each study, a percentage was calculated based on the proportion of relevant confounders from this list that were controlled. No studies controlled for the 80% of relevant confounders required for the high score. Studies that controlled for less than 60% of relevant confounders were allocated low scores.

Blinding scores were calculated based on the assessor's reported awareness of the participants' status as experimental or control, and the participants' awareness of their own status and of the goals of the research. Computerised data collection instruments help to ensure objectivity in the collection of data such as speed and accuracy of responses or eye-movements; hence, the use of such instruments positively affected a study's score. Studies were also given more positive scores if there was no evidence that participants were told the purpose of the experiment, and the instructions to participants were clearly reported.

The data collection scores are based on the evidence for the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments. The validity of instruments was typically justified through references to the literature. Reliability, however, was rarely discussed or evidenced thus weakening the trustworthiness of the studies' findings. Scores for withdrawals and dropouts were only assigned to those studies which required participants to attend more than one session of data collection or learning.

The EPHPP instrument also includes questions related to intervention integrity and the statistical analyses used, though these answers do not affect the scores calculated by the instrument. Statistical analyses were generally appropriate; the main exception was Stein (2010) who decided to exclude non-Egyptian Arabic participants from her analysis and yet drew conclusions pertaining to Arabic speakers in general.

The EPHPP instrument results indicate that we should exercise caution when drawing conclusions from the included studies, especially when generalising to the large and diverse global population of Arabic language speakers learning English. There remains considerable scope for improvement in the methodological rigour of vowel blindness studies. The scores also show the variation in the trustworthiness of the studies' findings. It is important that these are considered as we discuss the specific methodologies and findings of the individual studies.

5 Evaluation of Individual Studies

The included studies used a range of methodological instruments to explore vowel and consonant processing. However, the word-matching task was the most commonly used instrument. Such tasks make intuitions regarding word recognition

processing based on the speed and accuracy of participants' judgements of the similarity between two stimuli. Ryan and Meara's (1991) seminal investigation used a word-matching task; however, as it only included vowel-error stimuli, the researchers were unable to draw conclusions regarding the participants' relative sensitivity to vowels and consonants.

In a partial replication, Hayes-Harb (2006) added a deleted consonant error condition to Ryan and Meara's (1991) task. She controlled the frequency of word stimuli more tightly by only including words with a frequency of over 100 per million. Her three groups of participants mirrored the groups of the original study: L1 Arabic, non-Arabic ESL and native speakers of English. All ESL participants were described as intermediate level, slightly higher than Ryan and Meara's lower intermediate participants, though neither study clearly describes how proficiency descriptions were ascertained.

It was hypothesised that the presence of vowel blindness would lead to faster and more accurate processing of consonant error conditions among Arabic participants. However, all three groups demonstrated faster responses to the deleted vowel condition than to the deleted consonant condition ($F(1,29) = 9.416$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta 2 = .25$) with no significant effect of language group or stimulus type on the accuracy of the ESL participants' responses. The experiment could therefore not provide evidence of vowel blindness. The researcher attributed this surprise result to the small sample size and the subsequent weaker statistical power of the analysis.

Hayes-Harb (2006) then conducted a second experiment, a letter detection task with 45 participants using the same three group types as the previous experiment. Four short texts were administered, and participants had 50 seconds to read for comprehension while circling all instances of either the letter 't' or 'o', before turning over the text to answer comprehension questions. It was hypothesised that the presence of vowel blindness would lead to a weaker performance in the 'o' letter condition. The Arabic participants' performance was similar when detecting target vowels and consonants; while the other groups were significantly more accurate when detecting the vowel 'o' than the consonant 't' ($p < .01$). The author stated that the findings could not be attributed to differences in general English word processing and suggested that this could be due to the cross-linguistic transfer deriving from the less prominent role of written vowel information in Arabic.

Hayes-Harb (2006) argued that the second experiment more closely resembled natural reading, and she queried the validity of the word-matching task for detecting vowel blindness as it does not require the reader to access the form or meaning of the word. However, the author acknowledged that the letter detection task had not been used previously to evaluate the amount of visual attention given to particular types of letters. Furthermore, the task required participants to complete two activities concurrently which may disadvantage readers with slower and less automatic word recognition, qualities commonly associated with Arabic participants.

Al Juhani (2015) also conducted a partial replication of Ryan and Meara's (1991) word-matching task with a larger sample of Arab participants ($N = 35$). Like Hayes-Harb's (2006) Arab participants, Al-Juhani's subjects' response times were faster in the vowel condition; however, their performance was significantly less accurate ($p < .001$) with a large effect size (partial $\eta 2 = .54$). Her results therefore partially

contradict the surprise findings of Hayes-Harb. The study lacked a non-Arabic comparison group. We therefore cannot be certain that results were not affected by confounding variables introduced through the stimuli or test administration.

The other studies in the review all used original designs. For instance, Saigh and Schmitt (2012) administered a pen and paper lexical decision task to Arab ESL students ($N = 24$) with an IELTS score of at least 4.5. Lexical decision tasks require participants to indicate whether a letter-string is a word. In this experiment, the stimuli incorporated two conditions: vowel length (long or short) and error type (correct vowel, incorrect vowel and missing vowel). This was the only study which distinguished between long and short vowels, reflecting differences in how these phonemes and graphemes are encoded and processed by speakers of Arabic as a first language.

The participants were significantly more accurate when recognising long vowel errors ($p < .05$). However, the authors did not consider the increased visual saliency of long vowels in written English. Long vowels are typically written with multigraphs which are more noticeable. This may have contributed to the improved performance. Furthermore, the instrument could have been testing vocabulary knowledge and spelling, rather than word recognition. Words were selected from a list of the 4000 most frequent words in English. For students with the minimum English proficiency of IELTS 4.5, some of these words may have been unfamiliar. There was also no time limit for the test, and the pen and paper format disallows the collection of response times. The study also followed a within-subjects design with no non-Arabic comparison group. We cannot, therefore, be confident in the trustworthiness or generalisability of its findings.

Alhazmi et al. (2019) used eye-tracking technology to explore the validity of vowel blindness. Such technology allows researchers to measure the length of time spent fixating on individual words, letters or areas of a text, and it is assumed that longer fixation times indicate greater processing time (Stevenson, 2015). This methodology can be combined with natural, self-paced reading activities that are similar to real-life reading activities and which allow participants to approach texts using their individual reading strategies (Witzel et al., 2012).

Upper-intermediate and advanced Arab learners of English ($n = 30$) and a comparison group of native English speakers ($n = 20$) were administered a silent English word-reading task. As they read, the number and length of fixations on consonants, vowels, and words were measured. It was assumed that the presence of vowel blindness would lead to a lower amount of time fixating on vowels relative to consonants. The researchers observed that the Arab participants read at around half the speed of their English counterparts; however, the two groups spent similar proportions of their reading time fixating on consonants and vowels. The Arab participants actually demonstrated a slightly longer, yet statistically significant, fixation time for the vowels ($t(29) = 3.284$, $p = 0.003$). It was therefore concluded that there was no evidence for the transfer of an L1 desensitivity to vowel information. However, the Arab participants' high proficiency could have made the symptoms of vowel blindness less salient. L1 processing habits that inhibit L2 reading development are believed to diminish with L2 reading experience and proficiency (Koda, 2005).

Stein (2010) used a 'silent pronunciation task' to explore how consonantal context affected Arab participants' processing of vowels. Participants were instructed to silently read a target word before hearing the experimenter read two words aloud; they had to choose which rhymed with the written word. The spelling patterns investigated included onset-to-vowel associations at the beginnings of words and vowel-to-coda association at the ends. At the beginning of the study, there were 108 volunteers including 20 Arab speakers. However, an auditory discrimination task was used to filter out students whose phonological awareness was too weak for the main task. Only six Arab participants passed this test, of which five were Egyptian, and only the Egyptian Arab participants' data were used in the final statistical analysis. The author observed a non-statistically significant sensitivity to the consonantal constraints imposed by onset-to-vowel consonantal constrains, but no similar sensitivity for vowel-to-coda associations. However, it was ultimately acknowledged that the lack of data prevented a firm conclusion.

Finally, Alsadoon and Heift (2015) explored whether textual input enhancement could counter the supposed symptoms of vowel blindness. Thirty beginning level female students from Saudi Arabia completed a reading task as their eye-movements were recorded. For the experimental group, the target words and their vowels were made more salient through textual enhancement (bold text, underlining and red font). This group demonstrated significantly longer fixation times for target words and re-read them more frequently ($p < .001$). This correlated with improved performance in post- and delayed post-tests featuring the target words. The results suggest that the receptive and productive errors associated with Arab learners' L2 English literacy can be reduced or overcome with appropriate teaching and learning interventions. However, the study cannot show that these symptoms are the result of a desensitivity to vowel information, and do not, therefore, provide evidence regarding the validity of vowel blindness.

6 Discussion

The studies featured in this review support the observation that Arab L2 readers typically demonstrate slower and less accurate word recognition compared to other L1 groups. However, the evidence presented in the studies is too conflicting and limited to validate or refute the phenomenon of vowel blindness.

The most commonly used instrument was the word-matching task. However, the studies utilising this instrument (Al Juhani, 2015; Hayes-Harb, 2006; Ryan & Meara, 1991) provided conflicting results. Ryan and Meara's original study did not include a deleted consonant condition and could not therefore provide evidence of differences in the processing of written vowels and consonants, while the two replication studies, which featured separate vowel and consonant error conditions, failed to provide unambiguous or concordant evidence supporting vowel blindness.

Hayes-Harb's (2006) second experiment, involving the letter detection task, appeared to support the validity of vowel blindness. However, while the observed difference between the Arab and non-Arab participants' results is hard to explain,

we must remain cautious of these findings until sufficient evidence of the validity and reliability of this use of the instrument is available. Saigh and Schmitt's (2012) lexical decision task was the only study which included separate conditions based on the vowel length. Vowel length could prove to be an important factor affecting L1 Arab word recognition processes and should be explored in future studies. However, operationalising vowel length objectively may pose a number of challenges due to differences in how short and long vowels are encoded in English.

Alhazmi et al. (2019) and Alsadoon and Heift (2015) used eye-tracking to explore participants' online reading behaviours. Most notably, Alhazmi et al.'s vowel blindness study suggested that the major difference between the Arab and non-Arab participants was the overall speed of processing regardless of letter type. However, their participants were upper-intermediate and advanced level students, and we should be cautious in generalising these findings, particularly to lower-level learners, as cross-linguistic transfer is likely to diminish with increased L2 reading experience (Koda, 2005). Eye-tracking could also be a promising avenue of research for vowel and consonant processing, including its use to triangulate the outcomes of reading tasks. This technology is useful in L2 reading studies as it provides data on the unfolding process of reading, rather than its outcomes, without affecting the main characteristics of the task (Dussias, 2019).

Stein (2010) identified consonantal context as a promising line of research. However, several methodological factors in the study design prevented it from providing trustworthy findings. A more focused replication of the study with a smaller number of conditions could produce useful insights into written vowel processing.

Considering the limited and conflicting empirical evidence presented in this review, there is certainly scope for further research to explore Arab participants' processing of vowels and consonants and to test the validity of vowel blindness. Such research could comprise replications or original study designs. Replication studies serve an important role in confirming and disconfirming the results of previous studies and for directing further exploration of psychological processes (Brandt et al., 2014). However, replication studies that pertain to vowel blindness have so far been limited to word-naming tasks and these have failed to clearly replicate each other's findings.

Direct replications, those which avoid any intentional changes to the original study design (Marsden et al., 2018), could help to confirm whether the findings of the studies in this review are replicable and provide evidence of the studies' reliability and validity in exploring vowel and consonant processing in word recognition. However, they also run the risk of maintaining the methodological weaknesses of the original studies.

Partial replications are also required to explore whether observed findings could extend to different sub-populations of Arab learners. Of particular importance are partial replications with participants of lower- or higher-proficiencies. This could provide insight into the effect of L2 proficiency and reading experience on word recognition and the processing of vowels and consonants. Partial replication of Alhazmi et al.'s (2019) eye-tracking study with lower-level learners would be particularly welcome.

A common weakness across the included studies was the use of convenience sampling and general categories of miscellaneous non-Arab ESL learners. Logographic, alphabetic and syllabic writing systems differ in their encoding of vocalic information, and the performance of readers from each background could contrast in distinct ways with the performance of participants who are speakers of Arabic as an L1. Comparison groups that comprise readers of a single type of L1 writing systems could therefore facilitate more objective comparisons.

Future studies could also compare reading by L1 Arabic and Hebrew users as these represent the two major, consonantal languages with unvowelised standard written forms; if vowel blindness is genuine, we would expect it to be present in readers of other unvowelised consonantal languages. L1 readers of other languages that use Arabic script, such as readers of Urdu or Kurdish, could potentially help researchers corroborate whether observed effects derive from the script or from other causal factors.

Arabic and English writing systems differ in terms of the regularity, consistency and completeness of their written forms. This could directly contribute to differences in the accuracy and speed of vowel processing in L2 English. Future studies of vowel and consonant processing could also explore regularity and consistency effects and readers' preferred processing routes. These could include interventional studies that examine the effect of awareness-raising teaching activities that focus on vowel information and written word recognition, such as the effects of a programme of synthetic phonics. Affective and socio-cultural factors have also not been investigated or reported effectively; it is particularly concerning that no studies controlled for participants' L1 literacy experience given the increasing use of English-medium primary and secondary education. Mixed method studies could also focus on the impact of affective and socio-cultural factors in greater depth.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

Before considering the implications of this systematic review, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the systematic review did not meet Macaro et al. (2018) stipulation that a systematic review have multiple reviewers. Multiple reviewers can help prevent human error or the assertion of individual assumptions that can bias a review. However, steps were taken to reduce any potential bias and ensure that the methodology and its reporting were transparent. This included the use of a research assistant in the screening of potential studies.

In addition, six dissertations could not be retrieved by the review's retrieval deadline for full screening. It is possible that these studies included methodologies and findings relevant to the processing of short and long vowels. Their omission should therefore be considered a weakness of this review. If this review is updated or replicated in the future, effort should be made to locate these studies. Finally, the methodological quality of the individual studies was typically moderate or low, according

to the scores obtained using the EPHPP instrument, and the lack of statistically comparable data limits the extent to which conclusions can be confidently drawn from the review.

When Ryan and Meara (1991) first described their theory of vowel blindness, they acknowledged that the phenomenon required empirical validation. This review suggests that, almost three decades later, the empirical evidence remains limited and the findings of published studies are conflicting. Methodological weaknesses in the published studies limit the trustworthiness of their findings and our ability to generalise them to the broader population of Arabic learners. The existing empirical research is therefore insufficient to either validate or refute the theory of vowel blindness.

Further research is required to explore the causal factors that contribute to systematic differences in the word recognition processes of L1 Arabic language-users, and both original research and replications will support this agenda. It is imperative that methodological rigour is improved to increase the trustworthiness of findings, particularly the refinement of comparison groups, preferably using objective sampling strategies appropriate to the aims of the studies. The inclusion of eye-tracking in original studies and replications would also help to increase objectivity, triangulate the findings of tasks and provide insight into online reading behaviours. Furthermore, the role of contextual and sociodemographic factors has not yet been explored. There is therefore scope for qualitative and mixed method studies to explore the role of such factors, including L1 reading experience and language of education.

A number of recommendations can be made for the teaching and learning of students of English who speak Arabic as an L1. Poor awareness of the phonology of English and its writing system could contribute to the observed weaknesses in word recognition and vowel processing. Reading curricula should provide systematic and incremental development of learners' phonolexical awareness, including knowledge of the phonemes of the target varieties of English and the range of spelling patterns that encode these sounds in regularly spelled words. For instance, L1 English reading synthetic phonics approaches could provide a starting point for the design and development of effective L2 English syllabi.

Learners also need practice to develop fast and efficient recognition of high-frequency, irregularly spelled words. Timed reading activities, particularly those that focus on faster reading of easier texts with known vocabulary, should be integrated into the curriculum to promote the development of reading speed. Likewise, extensive reading resources of an appropriate level can support improved reading speed (Grabe, 2009).

It is clear that many Arabic learners struggle with L2 English reading and written word recognition. Vowel blindness does not seem to adequately explain the difficulties faced by this population, and there remains a lack of empirical findings to explain what makes L2 reading so challenging for them. In the absence of this evidence, the above suggestions could help educators to support Arabic learners in improving the speed and accuracy of their written word recognition.

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Part II
Research Perspectives: Teachers & Learners

Learners' Willingness to Communicate, Motivation, and Classroom Activity Preferences: Realities from the Iranian EFL Context

Abbas Ali Rezaee and Mahsa Ghanbarpoor

Abstract Influencing both language use and language learning, willingness to communicate (WTC), learners' linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency, and motivation, are among the most important affective variables in language pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Research also indicates that learners' attitudes towards classroom activities affect target language (TL) use. In an attempt to delve into the intersection between language learners' WTC, motivation, and preferences for classroom activities, this study examined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' preferences for classroom activities, and the possible impact of age and gender on these. The research further dissected the relationships between learners' preferences for various classroom activities and their linguistic self-confidence, motivation, and WTC. Analysis of the data, collected from three questionnaires completed by 188 EFL learners in Iran, indicated that classroom activities focusing on grammar were most preferred. A positive relationship was observed between learners' motivation and their preference for all (sub)-skills, while their level of reported WTC was found to have a relatively strong positive correlation with their preference for classroom activities focusing on speaking. Results of one-way between-groups analyses of variance pinpointed no statistically significant difference in learners' preference for the five categories of classroom activities examined in the study among the three study age groups. Results of an independent samples t-test indicated that learners' gender did not have a statistically significant impact on their preference for classroom activities focusing on different (sub)-skills. Implications of these findings for theory, practice, materials development, and future research in second and foreign language pedagogy are discussed.

A. A. Rezaee (✉)
University of Tehran, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
e-mail: aarezaee@ut.ac.ir

M. Ghanbarpoor
New York Film Academy, Los Angeles, CA, USA
e-mail: mahsa.ghanbarpoor@nyfa.edu

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Keywords Willingness to communicate (WTC) · Linguistic self-confidence · Language motivation · Classroom activity preferences · EFL

1 Introduction

Learners' cognitive and affective characteristics play a vital role in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Given that "minds without emotions are not really minds at all" (LeDoux, 1996, p. 25), in many instances, learning difficulties are resultant issues originating from emotions and affective states rather than intellect and cognitive capacities, including aptitude, learning strategies, and (multiple) intelligence(s). In fact, according to Gregersen et al. (2014), "Language learning is an emotionally and psychologically dynamic process that is influenced by a myriad of ever-changing variables and emotional 'vibes' that produce moment-by-moment fluctuations in learners' adaptation" (p. 574). Second language (L2) learners' affective characteristics have always been given considerable recognition in the literature, which signifies that affect plays a pivotal role in SLA, and, hence, has significant ramifications for the effectiveness of language learning and teaching. In fact, Gardner and Lambert's (1972) initial conjecture that L2 learners' attitudes have an impact on SLA has been substantiated by other researchers over the years and continues until now (see Lanvers et al., 2019).

The concept of WTC was introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985) and expounded upon the trait-like personality (see Goldberg, 1993) of individuals or, in other words, "global, personality-based orientation toward talking" (MacIntyre et al., 2003, p. 591) in their first/native language (L1), referring to their consistent tendencies to engage in L1 communications, given the choice. Later, WTC in L2 contexts was defined as a "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person, or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). In other words, L2 WTC could be referred to as a willingness to speak in the L2 with a particular person at a specific moment, and it is, hence, the final psychological measure of L2 communication initiation (MacIntyre, 2007).

Since L2 WTC, as a construct, encompasses both learners' stable, trait-like predispositions and situational, transient aspects of the situation where communication takes place, the present study looks at L2 WTC from the same perspective as MacIntyre et al. (1998) (see Sect. 2.1) to examine whether Iranian EFL learners' level of reported WTC is related to their preference for classroom activities focusing on speaking. The study also strives to address the concept of language learning motivation from a different perspective. The relationships between language motivation and learners' proficiency have been widely examined in the related literature, and it seems to be about time to step towards exploring relationships between motivation and learning behaviors (see Dörnyei, 2002; Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Weger-Gunthrap, 2008) as:

> Looking at the impact of motivation on concrete learning behaviors in a situated manner will result in a clearer and more elaborate understanding of L2 motivation than the tradi-

tional research practice whereby the most common criterion variable was a general achievement of proficiency measure (Dörnyei, 2002, p. 155).

The majority of previously conducted research studies on language learning motivation have looked at the relationships between learners' motivation and their language learning strategies (Brown et al., 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1996; Vandergriff, 2005; Yu, 2019), as well as foreign language learning motivational changes over time and the causes of such changes (e.g., Busse & Walter, 2013). Furthermore, a number of relevant studies have focused on the relationships between classroom participation and language motivation in both English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL contexts (see Ely, 1986; Naimen et al., 1996).

Looking at motivation as a variable in L2 development, which is no longer seen as the stable individual difference factor, Waninge et al. (2014) conducted research on variability in students' in-class L2 motivation. Results of their study affirmed that student motivation could be successfully examined through a dynamic systems framework given that motivation on an individual level changes over time, "while also being characterized by predictable and stable phases, and how it is inseparable from the learner's individual learning context" (p. 704).

Another line of research, to which the present study is closely related, has investigated the relationships between learners' attitudes and beliefs about general instructional practices, such as using only the Target Language (TL) during class time, in-class group work activities, the frequency of teacher feedback, and teachers' classroom behavior (e.g., Henry et al., 2015; Jacques, 2001; Schmidt et al., 1996; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001; Ushida, 2005). In an attempt to identify the contribution of language motivation to more detailed measures of typical language classroom activities, Weger-Gunthrap (2008) looked at learners' preferences for different types of reading materials, various genres of writing, and different speaking activities presented through discussions or via presentations in classroom contexts.

Building upon the literature, one part of the present study is concerned with investigating EFL learners' preferences for classroom activities and determining if there are any statistically significant relationships between these preferences and dimensions of both motivation and WTC, with a particular focus on speaking. Moreover, the study attempts to dissect whether there are variations in Iranian FFL learners' preferences for various classroom activities with regard to their linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency, age, and gender.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Willingness to Communicate

WTC is one of the affective variables (see Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) influencing language learning. As to the importance of WTC in the realm of L2 learning, it is worth noting that "being willing to communicate is part of being

fluent in a second language, which is often the ultimate goal of L2 learners" (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010, p. 161). WTC has also been studied as an aspect of one's personality-based readiness to either participate in L2 discourse or avoid doing so, when free to choose either of the two options (McCroskey, 1992).

In addition to L2 WTC and multilingual students' WTC (see Liu, 2018), L1 WTC has also received a considerable amount of investigative attention (see MacIntyre et al., 1999). In fact, when first introduced and studied, WTC would describe L1 communication and was regarded as a fixed and stable personality trait, remaining unaffected across various situations. However, when the term was used to illuminate L2 communication situations (MacIntyre et al., 1998), it was considered a situated variable which was affected and influenced by situational variations in language use contexts as well as inter-group relations among interlocutors. For instance, positive or negative past communication experiences are reported to have an impact on WTC (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), and visualization and goal setting can enhance EFL learners' L2 WTC (see Munezane, 2015).

Despite the fact that earlier research appearing in the literature viewed WTC as a trait-like, enduring orientation, further studies have shown that each unique communication situation and certain antecedents are capable of influencing an individual's WTC (Denies et al., 2015; MacIntyre & Clément, 1996; McCroskey, 1997; McCroskey & Richmond, 1990; Peng, 2007). For example, Kang (2005) adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the emergence and fluctuation of situational L2 WTC in conversation situations between language learners and their tutors. Situational WTC was reported to be a multilayered construct that could change under the influence of excitement, responsibility, and security, which are all psychological conditions. WTC, as a situational concept that is influenced by learners' choice to speak when the opportunity arises, could project the tendency to initiate talking about a demanding topic. However, it could neither predict learners' willingness to maintain communication nor their desire to talk about familiar topics. More recently, WTC has been conceived of as being dynamic and influenced by both situational and enduring variables (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Lu, 2007; MacIntyre, 2007). In the pyramid-shaped heuristic model of L2 WTC, originally proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), different variables influencing WTC are put together (see Fig. 1).

MacIntyre et al. (1998) stressed that, in the development of the model, psychological-affective antecedents, individual and social communication contexts, motivational propensities, and situated influences, are to be considered as they are interrelated in determining L2 WTC. Subsequently, the authors have brought together several linguistic, communicative, and socio-psychological variables in their model. The heuristic model of variables influencing WTC encompasses not only stable and trait-like influences, such as motivation, self-confidence, intergroup attitudes, intergroup climate, communicative competence, and personality, but also certain situational variables including state communicative self-competence, social situations, and desire to converse with a specific person. Addressing both enduring and situational variables, MacIntyre et al. (1998) ultimately referred to L2 WTC as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person, or persons, using a L2" (p. 547).

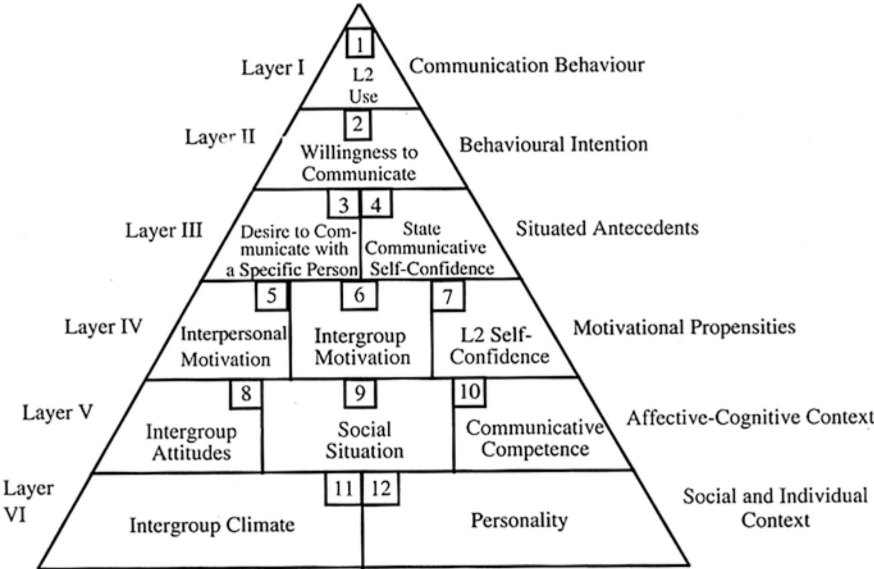

Fig. 1 Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC. (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

2.2 Linguistic Self-Confidence in Proficiency

Results of Hashimoto's (2002) study indicated that high levels of linguistic self-confidence in proficiency resulted in higher motivation, which, in turn, increased the frequency of L2 use in the classroom. By the same token, the researcher also found that WTC had some motivational properties. Hashimoto's results were in line with those of MacIntyre's (1994), in the sense that both studies suggested self-confidence in proficiency and language use anxiety were capable of influencing WTC, which has also been hypothesized by MacIntyre and Charos (1996) and discussed in detail by Young (1990) in addition to some more recent research (e.g., Denies et al., 2015). They also noted that truly motivated language learners and those who were more willing to communicate in the TL tended to use it more frequently. In addition, they attested that, not only do language anxiety and linguistic self-confidence in proficiency affect WTC, but that language use anxiety can also act as a predictor of perceived communicative competence. Furthermore, Kang (2005) noted that the particular demands of a communication situation could influence a learner's sense of responsibility, thereby affecting language anxiety and WTC. This contention could implicitly have an impact on learners' linguistic self-confidence.

MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) investigated the propensity to avoid L2 communication by examining it as a function of action control. The authors explored whether the action control system was capable of predicting major affective reactions to language communication. In their study, action control was defined in light of stable individual characteristics, with an emphasis on preoccupation, volatility,

and hesitation. MacIntyre and Doucette concluded that unwilling learners had high levels of hesitation, which contributed to both their lower perceived communicative competence and their higher language use anxiety. They further argued that volatility, i.e., an inability to stay focused on a topic, was directly linked to WTC in the classroom, and indirectly influenced WTC outside the classroom.

Similarly, findings offered by Denies et al.'s (2015) investigation of WTC and its determinants suggested that classroom WTC was a strong predictor of WTC outside the classroom. The researchers also argued that, in naturalistic settings, the role of integrativeness decreased as anxiety levels played a larger role – a finding that is supported by other studies on learners' foreign language anxiety (see Gregersen et al., 2014). More recently, in a study on Turkish EFL learners' WTC, Altiner (2018) reported that learners demonstrated greater WTC in controlled, rather than more meaning-focused, situations.

2.3 Classroom Activities: Learners' Participation, Attitudes, and Preferences

The literature indicates that certain factors have been known to be capable of affecting learners' classroom participation and L2 use. More than 40 years ago, Seliger (1977) proposed that those learners who actively participate in classroom activities display greater gains in L2 proficiency. Moreover, L2 proficiency, in both spoken and written tasks, is known to be improved through the use of the TL (Swain, 1998). Ely (1986) investigated discomfort, risk-taking, sociability, and motivation in L2 classroom contexts. Results indicated that students' level of risk-taking and motivation positively affected the frequency of L2 use, while language class risk-taking was also reported as a predictor of learner classroom participation. It was also postulated that language class discomfort had a direct negative effect on classroom participation and an indirect negative influence on language class risk-taking by lowering the level of language class sociability. The effects of language learning aptitude, attitudes toward the language class, and concern for grade were also examined by Ely, with these variables reported as having a negligible effect on classroom L2 use though.

In addition, a number of studies (see Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner et al., 1976; Gliksman et al., 1982; MacIntyre et al., 2002; Pavlenko, 2002) examined the frequency of L2 use during different tasks and activities in the classroom. Further research (Clément et al., 2003; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; Yashima, 2002) attributed the same capability to integrative motivation and anxiety, and concluded that the same held for the two aforementioned affective variables as they affect the frequency of L2 use by learners.

As stated above, Hashimoto (2002) conducted a study to examine the relationship between Japanese ESL students' reported WTC and their reported frequency of

L2 use in the classroom, in addition to the correlation between their motivation and L2 communication frequency. Results indicated that learners with greater motivation and WTC used the TL more frequently in the classroom. Saint Léger and Storch (2009) examined learners' attitudes towards classroom activities, alongside their perceived speaking ability and level of participation. The authors proposed that, "Attitudes to the tasks students are asked to perform have been noted as an important consideration in explaining students' willingness to actively contribute to the task" (p. 271).

The present study, however, examines the relationships between learners' preferences for various classroom activities and their linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency, motivation, and WTC. Some studies have focused on learners' preferences for learning methods. For instance, Magana et al. (2018) examined the preferences for learning methods and activities of electrical engineering students and found lectures to be the most effective learning method. However, research on language learners' preferences for different classroom activities (see Weger-Gunthrap, 2008) remains quite scarce, with the current research seeking to address this issue.

2.4 *Significance and Purpose of the Study*

The internal structure of language learning motivation has been widely examined in EFL contexts (Chen et al., 2005; Clément et al., 1994; Lamb, 2004; Schmidt et al., 1996; Warden & Lin, 2000; Yashima et al., 2004). In previous research, motivation has been mainly approached by examining its relationship with general learning beliefs (Jacques, 2001; Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2010; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001), with learning strategies (Brown et al., 2001; Vandergriff, 2005), or with learners' language proficiency (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000).

Despite this level of research interest, the intersection of motivation, WTC, and classroom activity preferences has not been thoroughly addressed in the literature. While much of the literature on L2 WTC has been concerned with ESL contexts, the concept of WTC has also been researched in EFL contexts (see Altiner, 2018; Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre, 1994, 2007; MacIntyre et al., 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003; Matsuoka, 2004; Rintaro, 2019; Saint Léger & Storch, 2009). However, the intersection of WTC, linguistic self-confidence, motivation, and learners' preferences for classroom activities in the Iranian EFL context is almost unaddressed.

It is these considerations, in addition to cultural norms ruling learners' communication patterns and behaviors (see McCroskey & Richmond, 1990), whose importance has been endorsed by several scholars (Barraclough et al., 1988; Wen & Clement, 2003), that contribute to the current study's significance. Further, previous studies on classroom activities (Jacques, 2001; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001) have mainly been concerned with classroom beliefs towards certain activities or

instructional procedures in the classroom, including types of feedback given to learners and the use of L1 or TL.

In addition, most prior studies have approached classroom activities in their general sense by including a single item/task to examine learners' general attitudes toward classroom practices (Schmidt et al., 1996). The present study, however, gives insights into possible differences in EFL learners' preferences between and across skills. In short, the study attempts to delve into Iranian EFL learners' motivation, linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency, WTC, and preferences for classroom activities, by focusing on different skills and the grammar sub-skill and on the impact of the variables of learner age and gender. In order to achieve this, the study examined the following research questions:

1. What classroom activities do Iranian EFL learners prefer? To which of the four basic skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and sub-skill (grammar) do Iranian EFL learners express a preference as to the classroom activities they wish to take part in?
2. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' attitudes about classroom activities (in terms of the preferred skills and sub-skill) and their language learning motivation, as hypothesized by Weger-Gunthrap (2008)?
3. Is Iranian EFL learners' level of reported WTC related to their preferences for classroom activities focusing on speaking?
4. Are Iranian EFL learners' preferences for classroom activities, in terms of different skills, related to their linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency?
5. Are there any significant differences in the classroom activity preferences among Iranian EFL learners on the basis of their age and gender?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

188 university students (109 males and 79 females) between the ages of 19 and 48, with an average age was 27, participated in the study. Participants were either B.A./B.S. or M.A./M.S. students at the University of Tehran, Kish International Campus, Iran, and were attending mandatory general English courses as an important requirement for their graduation. At the time of the data collection, participants were working towards developing their English language proficiency, as students with IELTS scores of 5.5 or above, and those who had a TOEFL PBT score of 550 and above or TOEFL iBT score of 80 and above, were exempted from attending Language Center English courses. Simple random sampling was employed, with all participants selected randomly from elementary, intermediate, and advanced students of English at the university's Language Center. The participants were informed by the researchers before embarking on the study that their choice of involvement or

non-involvement would not affect their final evaluation and that the questionnaires would be treated anonymously.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Participants were asked to complete three questionnaires. L2 WTC was measured through the WTC questionnaire, originally developed by MacIntyre et al. (2001), who reported very high levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.92$). The WTC questionnaire draws on a range of different questions depicting various communication situations and scenarios. Participants responded to its 27 items indicating willingness to use English to communicate both inside and outside the classroom on a 5-point Likert scale with response options of *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never*. In the current study, the WTC questionnaire's Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87 was considered to indicate high levels of internal consistency.

To measure the subcomponents of language motivation, the questionnaire used by Weger-Gunthrap (2008) was employed. The items in this questionnaire were adapted from, or inspired by, previously developed tools by Gardner (1985), Dörnyei (1990, 2002), Schmidt et al. (1996), Clément and Gardner (2001), Dörnyei and Csizér (2002), Dörnyei and Kormos (2000), Csizér and Dörnyei (2005), and Dörnyei et al. (2006). The finalized questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert response scale with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It consisted of 37 items concerning language attitudes towards English speakers, language attitudes towards English language learning, language attitudes towards general interest in language learning, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, cultural interest, linguistic self-confidence in one's proficiency, and language use anxiety. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the questionnaire in this study was 0.84, which was considered strong.

The third questionnaire that measured learners' preferences for different classroom activities was also adopted from Weger-Gunthrap (2008). It contained 21 items focusing on reading, listening, writing, and speaking activities in several genres, as well as explicit grammar practices. The questionnaire items had to do with various types of activities that participants would encounter in the English language courses they were taking. Learners were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert response scale how often they would like to do the different listed activities during class meetings. Response options were *never*, *occasionally*, *once a week*, *more than once a week*, and *every day*. Like the other instruments, the questionnaire's internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, of 0.87 was interpreted as indicating high levels of internal consistency.

Two English instructors translated each of the three questionnaires from English into Persian separately and discussed the minor discrepancies between the two translated drafts to reach a consensus on the finalized questionnaire. The finalized

questionnaires were once more checked by a third English instructor, who was a PhD student of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), to ensure the accuracy of the translations.

3.3 Data Analysis

To investigate learners' preference for classroom activities, the 21 activities of the third questionnaire were ranked in descending order based on their frequency, while, to find out which of the four macro skills and the grammar sub-skill learners expressed a preference for, the calculated means were standardized and compared. In an attempt to examine the relationship between the Iranian EFL learners' classroom activity preferences and their language learning motivation and linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency, as well as that of participants' preference for classroom activities focusing on speaking and their reported WTC, bivariate Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analyses were run to indicate the strength and direction of association between the variables under study. The acceptable probability level for these analyses was set at $p \leq 0.05$. Interpretations followed Cohen's (1988) guidelines for determining the strength of the relationship. That is, a correlation coefficient of .10 is considered weak or small, .30 moderate, and .50 or higher a strong or large correlation.

In addition, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the possible impact of learners' age on their classroom activity preferences, focusing on the four macro skills as well as the grammar sub-skill. An independent samples t-test was also run to determine whether statistically significant differences occurred between male and female Iranian EFL learners in terms of classroom activity preferences. Acceptable probability levels were again set at $p \leq 0.05$.

4 Results

4.1 Learners' Preference for Classroom Activities, Macro Skills, and Grammar

In order to determine what classroom activities Iranian EFL learners preferred, each of the 21 classroom activities was investigated in relation to the others. In so doing, the activities were ranked in terms of their frequency. Table 1 lists the activities according to learners' levels of preference in descending order.

Table 1 Classroom activities in descending order of desire to do frequently

Rank	Activity	Mean
1	Watch American movies	4.05
2	Learn about American idioms	3.97
3	Watch American TV shows	3.92
4	Listen to a teacher talk about English grammar	3.82
5	Watch American commercials on TV	3.63
6	Listen to American songs on the radio	3.57
7	Practice pronunciation of English words	3.56
8	Watch news broadcasts in English	3.55
9	Practice talking with a fellow student during class	3.54
10	Have discussions in class on different topics	3.51
11	Do grammar worksheets	3.48
12	Learn about English grammar	3.38
13	Read short stories in English	3.36
14	Give presentations in my class	3.34
15	Listen to lectures given by native English speakers	3.08
16	Read newspaper articles in English	2.99
17	Read magazines in English	2.91
18	Write academic research papers in English	2.86
19	Learn how to take notes during a lecture by an English speaking person	2.83
20	Write essays in English about my country or my culture	2.68
21	Write business letters in English	2.63

Table 2 Skills and grammar sub-skill in order of preference as to the frequency of desired classroom activities

Rank	Skills & sub-skill	Standardized mean
1	Grammar	3.67
2	Listening	3.52
3	Speaking	3.48
4	Reading	3.08
5	Writing	2.72

In order to investigate to which of the four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and sub-skill (grammar) Iranian EFL learners expressed a preference for in terms of classroom activities they wished to participate in, the mean calculated for each (sub)skill was divided into the number of items, i.e., the number of items in the administered questionnaire that were reflective of each skill and the grammar sub-skill. Through this process, the values were made standardized and comparable. The results are shown in Table 2 in descending order.

4.2 Relationships Between Classroom Activity Preferences and Language Learning Motivation

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to indicate the relationship between learners' preference for activities involving reading and their motivation for language learning. Preliminary analyses were employed to ensure that assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were met. There was a positive significant correlation between the two variables ($r = .31$, $n = 173$, $p < .0005$) which indicated higher levels of learners' preference for activities focusing on reading were associated with higher levels of motivation for learning English. A coefficient of determination was calculated to gain a clearer understanding of the amount of variance the two variables shared. The r value was squared and multiplied by 100. It was concluded that the two variables shared 9.61% of their variance.

Results of the correlation analyses also indicated a positive significant correlation between learners' preference for activities involving writing skills and motivation ($r = .23$, $n = 173$, $p < .002$). The r value, however, could be labeled as small (i.e., $r = .10$ to .29), and the coefficient of determination was 5.29 which indicates learners' preference for writing tasks helped explain around 5% of the variance in their motivation scores. There was also a positive relationship between respondents' preference for listening activities and motivation ($r = .33$, $n = 173$, $p < .0005$), with a medium strength relationship and a coefficient of determination of 10.89. The correlation between preference for speaking activities and language learning motivation was also positive with a medium strength ($r = .37$, $n = 172$, $p < .0005$) and with a coefficient of determination of 13.69. Finally, learners' preference for doing grammar activities helped to explain only 2.89% of the variance in their motivation. The correlation between the two variables was positive ($r = .17$, $n = 173$, $p < .019$), although not very strong.

4.3 Relationships Between Preference for Speaking Activities and WTC

The relationship between the Iranian EFL learners' preference for classroom activities focusing on speaking and their reported WTC was investigated using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a positive and relatively strong relationship between the two variables ($r = .46$, $n = 187$, $p < .0005$), and learners' preference for taking part in speaking activities was associated with higher levels of reported WTC. Learners' preference for engaging in activities focusing on

speaking helped explain 21.16% of the variance in their scores on the reported WTC scale.

4.4 Relationships Between Preferences for Classroom Activities and Linguistic Self-Confidence in Proficiency

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients indicated that there was a positive correlation between learners' preference for activities concentrating on all four skills and the sub-skill of grammar and their linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency. The relationship was stronger in the case of learners' preference for listening ($r = .33$, $n = 182$, $p < .0005$), speaking ($r = .32$, $n = 181$, $p < .0005$), and reading activities ($r = .32$, $n = 182$, $p < .0005$) – all of which indicated medium strength relationships (Cohen, 1988). The coefficient of determination for learners' preference for activities focusing on listening was 10.89, and that of speaking and reading activities was 10.24. Weaker relationships were found between linguistic self-confidence and preferences for writing ($r = .24$, $n = 182$, $p < .001$) and grammar ($r = .21$, $n = 182$, $p < .003$). Learners' preferences for writing and for grammar activities explained 5.76% and 4.41% of the variance in their linguistic self-confidence in their proficiency respectively.

4.5 The Impact of Age and Gender on Classroom Activity Preferences

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the possible impact of age on classroom activity preferences, focusing on the four macro skills and the grammar sub-skill. Participants were divided into three groups as follows: Group 1 – 24 years or less; Group 2 – 25 to 29 years; and Group 3 – 30 years and above (Table 3a).

Levene's test indicated that assumptions of homogeneity of variance were not violated in any of the ANOVAs. Table 4 indicates that there were no statistically significant differences at the $p \leq .05$ level in learners' preference for all five categories of classroom activities based on age (Table 3b).

An independent samples t-test was next calculated to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in classroom activity preferences based on the variable of gender. Tables 4a and 4b indicate that no statistically significant differences were reported.

Table 3a Classroom activity preferences by age

		N	Mean	Std. deviation
Preference for reading activities	Group 1: ≤ 24	62	10.0161	3.56436
	Group 2: 25–29	67	8.8657	3.43289
	Group 3: 30+	57	8.9123	3.94734
	Total	186	9.2634	3.65993
Preference for writing activities	Group 1: ≤ 24	62	8.3710	4.14188
	Group 2: 25–29	67	8.4328	3.97806
	Group 3: 30+	57	7.7544	4.07642
	Total	186	8.2043	4.05252
Preference for listening activities	Group 1: ≤ 24	62	25.9839	7.23492
	Group 2: 25–29	67	24.3284	7.76236
	Group 3: 30+	57	23.4035	8.99377
	Total	186	24.5968	8.02185
Preference for speaking activities	Group 1: ≤ 24	62	14.4918	4.42953
	Group 2: 25–29	67	13.4627	5.02216
	Group 3: 30+	57	13.9649	5.28463
	Total	186	13.9568	4.91208
Preference for grammar activities	Group 1: ≤ 24	62	14.7742	6.54973
	Group 2: 25–29	67	14.2836	4.68332
	Group 3: 30+	57	15.0351	5.22345
	Total	186	14.6774	5.50707

Table 3b Classroom activity preferences by age

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Preference for reading activities	Between groups	52.755	2	26.378	1.990	.140
	Within groups	2425.336	183	13.253		
	Total	2478.091	185			
Preference for writing activities	Between groups	16.760	2	8.380	.508	.603
	Within groups	3021.477	183	16.511		
	Total	3038.237	185			
Preference for listening activities	Between groups	205.279	2	102.639	1.605	.204
	Within groups	11699.479	183	63.932		
	Total	11904.758	185			
Preference for speaking activities	Between groups	33.822	2	16.911	.699	.499
	Within groups	4405.832	182	24.208		
	Total	4439.654	184			
Preference for grammar activities	Between groups	18.265	2	9.132	.299	.742
	Within groups	5592.380	183	30.559		
	Total	5610.645	185			

Table 4a Classroom activity preferences by gender

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Preference for reading activities	Male	105	9.2667	3.39475
	Female	76	9.5526	3.83804
Preference for writing activities	Male	105	8.4000	3.89428
	Female	76	7.9342	4.16441
Preference for listening activities	Male	105	24.8476	7.58767
	Female	76	25.1184	8.23645
Preference for speaking activities	Male	105	14.0381	4.68616
	Female	76	14.1600	5.03244
Preference for grammar activities	Male	105	15.0952	5.73539
	Female	76	14.4474	5.01304

Table 4b Classroom activity preferences by gender

Levene's test for equality of variances						t-test for equality of means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Preference for reading activities	Equal variances assumed	1.269	.262	−.529	179	.597	−.28596	.54024
	Equal variances not assumed			−.519	149.434	.605	−.28596	.55098
Preference for writing activities	Equal variances assumed	.565	.453	.771	179	.442	.46579	.60387
	Equal variances not assumed			.763	155.162	.447	.46579	.61043
Preference for listening activities	Equal variances assumed	.007	.935	−.229	179	.819	−.27080	1.18466
	Equal variances not assumed			−.226	153.635	.822	−.27080	1.20039
Preference for speaking activities	Equal variances assumed	.108	.743	−.167	178	.868	−.12190	.73070
	Equal variances not assumed			−.165	152.444	.869	−.12190	.73947
Preference for grammar activities	Equal variances assumed	.500	.480	.790	179	.430	.64787	.81995
	Equal variances not assumed			.807	172.666	.421	.64787	.80246

5 Discussion

One part of the present study elicited Iranian EFL learners' preferences for classroom activities via administering a questionnaire including 21 classroom activity items. The questionnaire items addressed: (a) skills and a sub-skill associated with frequently employed activities in the language classroom; and (b) different means through which learners gained hands-on experience with these skills, for example, listening to English songs on the radio versus listening to English language lectures. An average score of three equated to a preference for doing an activity once a week, and an average of four for doing an activity more than once a week. Fifteen out of 21 activities featured fell within this range of 3–4. Among these highly ranked activities, seven focused on listening, four on speaking, two on grammar, one on reading, and one on learning idioms with watching American movies holding the first rank. No writing activity was highly ranked.

Learners preferred to do six out of 21 activities, with an average range of two to three (i.e., *occasionally* or *once a week*), with three of the least preferred activities concerned with writing. Weger-Gunthrap (2008) took a similar approach in a study on 131 international adult learners of English, and concluded that the top two ranked activities, which were talking in pairs and having classroom discussions, were both interactive in nature. Despite the differences in learner preferences between the current study's findings and those reported by Weger-Gunthrap, in both studies the activities that held the lowest rank and, hence, were least preferred, were those focusing on writing.

Results of the present study also revealed that learners' motivation was positively related to their preference for activities focusing on all the four macro skills and grammar. However, the strength of the positive relationships between learners' motivation and their preference for doing speaking, listening, and reading activities was medium, while the relationships between their motivation and positive attitude towards writing and grammar activities were weak. Moreover, the strongest reported relationship was that of motivation and learners' preference for speaking activities, followed by listening, reading, and writing tasks. The weakest relationship was observed between learners' motivation and their preference for grammar activities. Results also indicated a relatively strong positive relationship between learners' preference for doing speaking activities and their reported WTC, with this preference explaining 21% of the variance in learners' total WTC scores.

Several studies in the literature have found that learners with higher language proficiency levels tend to have higher WTC (e.g., Altiner, 2018). In the present study, Iranian EFL learners' linguistic self-confidence had a positive relationship with their preference for doing activities focused on all four skills and grammar. However, the correlation was stronger in the case of learners' preference for listening, speaking, and reading activities than for those focusing on writing and grammar. In addition, no statistically significant difference was found in learners' preference for classroom activities based on the variables of age and gender. A similar finding was reported by Weger-Gunthrap (2008) in terms of learners' classroom

activity attitudes and their gender, although that study did report differences existed between the youngest learners (ages 18–22) and the oldest learners (ages 30–61) in this regard. In particular, unlike the youngest learners, the oldest learners in Weger-Gunthrap reported preferences for more frequent practice of activities concentrating on reading and writing.

6 Conclusion

Informed by Nunan's (1989) learner-centered philosophy, learners' classroom orientation will have a profound impact on their classroom behavior "particularly in terms of the value placed on different learning activities" (pp. 179–180). Findings of the present study suggested that Iranian EFL learners perceived listening and speaking activities more positively than writing and reading tasks, with writing activities being the least preferred in terms of the frequency participants' wish to engage with these activities. This finding contradicts McKay's (2002) argument which asserts that developing reading and writing skills is the primary goal of the majority of English learners.

Results of the present study could be attributed to learners' conception of their classroom, in addition to their social, immediate, and personal needs, and their consideration of face-threatening activities (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, as far as the four macro skills and the grammar sub-skill are concerned, classroom activities focusing on the grammar sub-skill were found to be the most preferred activities for Iranian EFL learners, followed by those concentrating on listening and speaking skills, respectively. Here, again, reading and writing skills were of low preference for the learners, with the writing skill being the least preferred. These findings have a number of practical implications for teachers when devising their syllabi and/or lesson plans.

Instructors teaching in the Iranian EFL context are to note that the more interactive classroom activities are in nature, the more related they seem to be to learners' motivation level. The speaking skill, which held the highest rank in terms of being related to learners' language motivation, is a productive skill, while listening, the second most highly ranked skill, is a receptive, aural one. Therefore, it cannot be simply concluded that highly motivated learners prefer to do activities calling upon their productive language skills. In fact, the paramount importance of speaking and listening activities to learners, which made the highest contribution to Iranian EFL learners' motivation, has been highlighted in previous research on students' classroom preferences (Jacques, 2001; Schmidt et al., 1996; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). It could be argued that oral fluency is of considerable importance to Iranian EFL learners, and they prefer engaging in activities using media and reflecting the culture or community of native English speakers. This may account for their interest in such cultural products of the TL as magazines, films, TV programs, and music (Dörnyei et al., 2006).

Informed by a sociocultural theoretical perspective, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) viewed learners as active agents whose learning goals, expectations, and attitudes assign significance to classroom contexts. Hence, learners' preference for a given type of task, such as those focusing on speaking in the present study, could influence their L2 WTC. Learners' attitudes to the task at hand could affect and explain their willingness to actively engage in the task. In their study, Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) found that learners' active participation in oral activities in the classroom, measured by the number of the words uttered and turns taken, significantly and positively correlated with their attitudes towards the task at hand – a finding that is supported by the current study and that could offer insights into the intersection of SLA research and materials development. Learners should be given opportunities to engage in speaking tasks, which could promote their WTC. As Tomlinson (2011) argues, it is important to expose learners to rich, meaningful, and comprehensible input and make them affectively and cognitively engaged in language learning.

Tomlinson (2011) continues that, "Learners need opportunities to use language to try to achieve communicative purposes" (p. 7). It has also been reported that self-confidence is positively affected through the combination of information gap tasks and interactional strategies instruction (see Van Batenburg et al., 2019). Findings of the present study suggest that WTC plays a key role in fostering learners' abilities to communicate effectively. Bearing this point in mind, it is suggested that teachers should take measures to encourage learners to speak up in the classroom by emphasizing the importance of oral practice in learning, especially as this is an activity they like. These measures will also allow teachers to focus on helping learners overcome the obstacles that hinder their WTC. Instructors teaching in EFL contexts should note that the classroom context is the best, if not the only, place where learners can converse and communicate in English.

Another point worthy of mention is that Iranian EFL learners' preference for speaking activities and its positive, relatively strong relationship with their WTC, also pertains to one of the basic principles of materials development in SLA – materials should achieve impact. Here, Tomlinson (2011) states that, "Impact is achieved when materials have a noticeable effect on learners, that is when the learners' curiosity, interest and attention are attracted" (p. 8). Materials can achieve impact through their novelty, variety, attractiveness of presentation and content, and the use of achievable challenge, which could all lead to learners' developing positive attitudes towards classroom activities in general, and speaking activities in particular, which could, in turn, promote their WTC. Achievable challenge is particularly important because, as Hue (2010) argues, task difficulty could cause unwillingness to speak. Language teachers should take learners' individual styles, abilities, and needs into account, and are to adjust the difficulty level of the tasks to suit learners' language competence and provide them with ample preparation time in speaking activities.

Future studies could explore whether Iranian EFL learners perceive a difference between doing activities frequently and finding them popular, as studied by Weger-Gunthrap (2008). The scope of the present study was limited to examining the relationships between language learning motivation and classroom activities. Exploring relationships between the two above-mentioned constructs and other learner

characteristics, such as gender, age, and level of proficiency, could provide an avenue for further research in the realm of SLA. This would offer further information about learners' perceived needs and preferences. Examining relationships between individual dimensions/constructs of motivation and learners' classroom activities preferences/attitudes could also fill some of the gaps in the literature, and using other instruments for measuring WTC is advisable as, in most research studies, the original WTC measure designed by McCroskey and Richmond (1996) has been employed. Finally, future studies could replicate the present work via approaching and assessing WTC and/or the other variables qualitatively, which would give room for comparison of the findings.

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Affecting Students' Motivation to Foster Foreign Language Acquisition: Juggling Pedagogical Tools and Psychological Diagnostics in the University Classroom

Karine Chiknaverova and Olga Obdalova

Abstract Generating and/or maintaining a certain type and level of motivation by employing pedagogical means can contribute to fostering the process of foreign language acquisition in general and in the university classroom in particular. An overview of the research confirms that motivation can be treated as a promoting determinant in the foreign language classroom. This chapter examines the interconnection between different types of motivation and the rate and success of foreign language acquisition while using pedagogical tools to enhance levels of motivation in the course of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to Russian university students. The study methods include the application of psychological instruments for measuring motivation as applied to the language classroom, pedagogical methods for assessing foreign language communicative competence (FLCC), and the use of paired and independent samples t-tests for analysis. The motivational characteristics assessed included social, learning, and professional factors, in addition to creativity, prestige, avoidance of failure, and communication motivation. Components of students' FLCC were measured to evaluate their EFL learning effectiveness. The findings revealed that there was a significant direct relationship between the level of components of FLCC and that of students' learning, creativity, communication motives, and less distinct and more variable relationships with social, professional, and prestige motivation factors. Finally, a negative relationship was found with avoidance of failure motives. The study confirms the positive influence of certain types of motivation on students' foreign language acquisition, as well as the possibility of affecting motivation by selecting special pedagogical tools that can be applied in combination with a certain style of teaching.

K. Chiknaverova
Odintsovo Campus of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (MGIMO University), Moscow, Russia

O. Obdalova (✉)
Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia

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Keywords EFL learning effectiveness · Foreign language acquisition · Motivation research · Higher education · Pedagogical tools · Teaching style

1 Introduction

Motivation in foreign language (FL) learning cannot be considered without reference to psychological research. Generally, motivation is seen as a driving force of human behavior that impacts behavioral patterns and changes. It has been analyzed through the lens of learning theories – primarily behaviorism – in addition to social learning and cognitive theories, such as expectance-value, x and y, two-factor and self-determination theories, and positive theories including Maslow's needs theory and flow theories, to name just a few. The activity-based approach is considered the most relevant to our research. According to supporters of this approach, the activity of a subject hinges on motive and consciousness as a core of human behavior. People's motivation to aspire to certain goals is influenced by individual and situational factors, with these including the anticipated outcomes and consequences of their actions (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018).

The analysis of motivation in language learning, as described in more detail below, is also recognized as a critical factor. Most researchers focus on second language acquisition and view the possibility of establishing contacts with representatives of the corresponding language community as a means of contributing to learner motivation. Investigations into FL learning are also numerous. However, in case of a FL, where contacts with native speakers of the language in the country where it is taught are highly unlikely, the natural language environment is only available abroad, and where the teacher is typically not a native speaker of the target language, motivation requires extra effort from both learners and instructors.

Although the research on motivation is rather extensive, it should be noted that, while some areas have been referred to very often with researchers supporting each other's findings, other areas have not received sufficient attention. This latter group includes interdisciplinary approaches to motivation research, and student motivation to learn certain languages other than English, or even their motivation to learn particular sublanguages.

In the research described in this chapter, we: employed methods of psychological diagnostics to measure learners' motivation and adjusted them to FL learning; identified types of motivation manifested in FL learning; determined the relationships between these types of motivation and the degree of their interdependence or mutual influence; selected and/or developed pedagogical tools to foster certain types of motivation that take into account students' age-specific cognitive processes as well as other situational and psychological factors; and conducted diagnostic tests to examine the relationship between motivation purposefully enhanced by the teacher-researcher and the level of FL communicative competence (FLCC) development.

2 Literature Review

The role of motivational factors in learning a second/foreign language has never been underestimated. By now, motivation has been part of the focus of language acquisition research for many decades. The intensity of publications and angles of research have changed along with the changes of social demands, teaching paradigms and the development of new language theories. Up until the 1990s, motivation investigations were heavily influenced by the social psychological approach, the foundations of which were laid by R. Gardner and his fellow researchers.

This approach incorporated learners' attitudes towards the social aspects of the language studied (Gardner, 1985). It considered language learning to be a unique and specific discipline. Motivation in second language learning is seen by Gardner as "the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). It includes motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and attitudes towards the act of learning the language.

Generally speaking, Gardner introduced the integrative motive, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery that is used as a psychometric test to assess affective factors in learning a second language and as a source of reference for motivation components, and the Socio-Educational Model (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). According to this model, attitudes to learning (a situation) and integrativeness are variables that influence second language learning motivation, while motivation, in turn, influences learners' achievements (Gardner, 2000). Gardner and Lambert (1972) claimed that, although language aptitudes influence individual variability in language learning achievement, motivational factors (influenced inter alia by national language policy and language environment) can override the aptitude effect.

There are numerous theories supporting Gardner's tenets and/or extending his ideas. Williams (1994) claimed that learning a FL affects the learner's self-image, and inevitably results in a new social and cultural pattern in behavior. Together with Burden, he offered the following definition of motivation in language learning – "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120). Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) saw a direct correlation between attitudes and behavior. The authors maintain that, the stronger the correlation is, the more successful the learners' actions are.

Even though Gardner and his followers are mainly thought of as investigators of social factors, they also studied other determinants in language (second or foreign) learning motivation. These included pedagogical factors, such as the classroom conditions, the ways instruction is conducted, students' attitudes to the teacher and the material and so on, language anxiety, and the influence of others (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Other models and theories include: the social context model (Clement, 1980); the self-determination model (Deci & Ryan, 1985); the willingness to communicate model (MacIntyre et al., 1998); and the theory of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and

language teachers style of training and communication in general (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 1999). Other motivation issues in language learning include: the integrative/instrumental dichotomy, as well as expectancy-value theory and self-efficacy (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 1996; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994); the extended motivational framework (Dörnyei, 1994); language learning strategies and language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, & Gardner, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1990); macro-context issues, such as multicultural, intergroup or ethnolinguistic relations (Laine, 1995; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995); self-concept (Laine, 1995; Schumann, 1998); success/failure aspects (Schumann, 1998; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995); and motivational techniques (Brown, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Significant research has been conducted by Clement and his colleagues that sheds light on the issues of the interrelationship between social contextual variables (including ethnolinguistic vitality), attitudinal/motivational factors, self-confidence, and the process of L2 acquisition/acculturation (Clement, 1980; Clement et al., 1994). In general, self-confidence is concerned with the belief people have the ability to produce results, accomplish goals, and/or perform tasks in a competent manner (Clement et al., 1977). It can be described as being associated with "self-perceptions of communicative competence and concomitant low levels of anxiety in using the second language" (Noels et al., 1996, p. 248).

Fostering learner autonomy in L2 classrooms in order to increase learner motivation by raising their degree of responsibility (e.g. Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1995) has been a valuable contribution to language learning motivation research. Among other aspects added, there were classroom-specific motives (Green, 1993) in addition to various attempts to characterize all motivational components. For example, Dörnyei (1994) analyzed various motivational components and classified them into language level, learner level, and learning.

New trends are encountered in "directed motivational currents" (e.g. Dörnyei et al., 2015; Henry et al., 2015). Numerous ideas about the ways technology can enhance motivation in L2 learning have been summarized by Stockwell (2013), while some of the most recent international investigations explore culture-specific motivational factors in EFL classrooms (Al Khalidi, 2019), motivational intermediaries of learners' self-regulation (Russell & Warner, 2017), motivational regulation in FL learning (Li, 2017), the effects of teachers' motivational intervention on their learners' EFL achievement (Alrabai, 2016), motivational strategies used by EFL teachers (McEown & Takeuchi, 2014), language learner motivational types (Papi & Teimouri, 2014) and so on.

2.1 Theoretical Background

It should be noted that in many publications researchers focus on motivation in the context of L2 acquisition in a country where the target language is spoken. However, in the current study, we deal with a FL that is not spoken in the area where it is

taught and, as such, requires higher levels of learner motivation. Further, except for providing a sketch of the characteristic of student adaptation and their motivation during their first year at university when students learn general English, we focus on teaching language for specific purposes (LSP). In the context of our research, we use one of the most comprehensive interpretations of motivation – "an internal process that gives behavior energy, direction and persistence in research" (Reeve, 2013, p. 2). To implement the experimental teaching, we adopted the socio-cultural educational model, taking into account learners' attitudes towards the learning situation (mainly attitude to the teacher and the teaching material), and their anxiety as an affective factor in language acquisition.

Among social contextual factors discussed in the literature, we focus on linguistic self-confidence in terms of "a person's perceptions of their own competence and ability to accomplish tasks successfully" (Clement, 1980, p. 151) as a key factor. However, in our context, we use methods other than contacts with members of the language community (as these are not available) to foster motivation.

We incorporate the ideas of cognitivism, according to which motivation is influenced by the way a learner perceives his/her abilities, potentials, limitations and past performances. It also differentiates intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation (Kecskes et al., 2018; Obdalova, 2014; Obdalova et al., 2016). In this respect, we follow self-determination theory, as well as the belief that language trainers promoting autonomy are more likely to boost intrinsic motivation in their learners. In addition, in conditions of conscious language acquisition, the student should take maximum control over the learning process (Williams & Burden, 1997) in terms of teaching material, conditions of learning, and such internal factors as their own mood, motivation and so on. There should be a strong focus on the learner(s), the teacher, the task, and the context, as factors determining students' motivation (Williams & Burden, 1997).

We share the cognitive approach in the belief that motivation should be seen as a dynamic phenomenon. It is important that its fluctuations in the process of teaching, its stages (preactional, actional, and postactional) (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998), and ways of measuring motivation in the course of training, are all taken into account.

Our theoretical framework also embraces ideas developed by Leontyev (2018), Littlewood (1981), Vygotsky (1991), and Zimnyaya (2004) (the activity, subject, competence, and communicative approaches). The subject and activity approaches see the learner as the subject of learning, and the relationships with the teacher are characterized as subject-subject. Such learning is result-oriented, and the process of teaching is adjusted taking into account the feedback and age-specific characteristics of the students, while all the activities in the course of teaching are interrelated. The communicative approach provides for the formation of communicative competence. This competence includes the ability to identify different goals and applications of LSP, and to understand the situation of communication and the roles and functions of its participants. The competence approach implies the formation and development of competences as complex units that include experience, personal qualities, knowledge, and skills (Obdalova et al., 2018; Obdalova & Kharapudchenko, 2019).

To measure learning motivation in the process of FL acquisition, we used diagnostics developed on the basis of the theory of motivation elaborated by Yakunin (1994) and Badmaeva (2005). According to Yakunin (1994), "Motive is conscious intent which determines a purposeful activity" (p. 89), while the basic components of a motive are "learning needs and interests" (p. 89). While acquiring a system of knowledge and ways of conducting an activity, a learner can "show an interest to learning at different stages and in different forms: in the form of curiosity, inquisitiveness, sporadic or conscious desire to learn something new, the urge for regular systemic intellectual activity" (p. 89). The researcher continues that needs, motives and interests serve as a foundation for internal goals which the learner can independently set.

2.2 Teaching Conditions

FL acquisition activity is characterized as a professional linguistic activity which incorporates the professional and personal interests of learners. The key motives are those related to self-determination, preparedness for independent life, and self-education (Yakunin, 1994, p. 87). The formation and change of motivation related to social and personal phenomena in the course of professional linguistic education (at the bachelor degree level) correspond to cycles in the development of FLCC.

In the course of FL acquisition at university, all motives are interrelated, although, at a certain stage, one group of motives prevails. As such, the motivational sphere characterizes different levels of students' readiness for language acquisition. In this case, we deal not with a single motive, but with a set, where all motives are determined by one key factor. In discussing the motives of students of a particular age, we should mention their age-specific characteristics and, in particular, their learning capabilities. Learners of the same age have common features in terms of their generality of mental ability, efficiency, independent thinking, flexibility of thinking processes, semantic memory, and the type of connection between visual-figurative and abstract components of thinking (Krutetsky, 1989).

Motivation can be adjusted based on the psychological and mental qualities of students of a particular age group, in addition to their individual personality traits, so that the process of teaching can become more efficient. Such teaching can be targeted at higher autonomy which is required to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and experience of FL speech. It shapes learners' readiness to master a language.

Apart from creating certain conditions corresponding to the goals of our experiment, it is important to offer an overview of the relevant teaching style. It is necessary to form a style of teaching that contributes to enhancing intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, confidence, activeness, interest, creativeness and student initiative. Teachers should try to avoid elements of pedagogical styles (for example, authoritative, noncontact, inflexible reaction, and hyporeflexive) that can provoke slower emotional reactions, aggressiveness, higher failure avoidance motivation, lower/

inadequate self-esteem, frustration, slower socialization, infantilism, lack of initiative, passiveness, inconsistency, lower learning motivation, and the prevalence of external motives over internal ones (Chiknaverova, 2018). Teachers should focus on developing learners' abilities to independently acquire new information, use it in non-standard situations, and form new knowledge on the basis of that already acquired.

In this respect, we introduced a style of teaching referred to as "active collaboration". The key elements of active collaboration are intensive communicative activity and moderate praise, the application of the personality-oriented model of communication, and communication through dialogue. This style provides for fostering and stabilizing motivation, higher self-esteem, confidence, activeness, interest, variability of ways of solving problems, and initiative, in addition to enhancing the development of certain students' qualities and their positive attitude to autonomous work (Chiknaverova, 2018).

The action-oriented characteristics of the teacher as a subject of the educational activity include adequate assessment of students that takes into account their age, individual differences, interests, inclinations, and moods, in addition to supporting students' efforts to acquire knowledge, increasing their autonomy, and enhancing their abilities to use the acquired knowledge in non-standard situations. The personal qualities of the teacher include subjectness of their personality, activeness, reactivity, empathy, tolerance, attentiveness, and self-control (Volkova, 1997, p. 120).

For the purposes of increasing motivation, we formulated the following conditions of teaching: (a) organizing teaching, taking into account the cyclicity of motivation complexes by means of selecting and structuring the content of teaching and forms of its presentation; (b) introducing students to the process of FL acquisition with the help of retrospective analysis methods, the extrapolation of linguistic and professional experience, and reflexion and conscious development of individual linguistic abilities; (c) organizing communication in the classroom by means of situations of quasi-professional communication in a FL; and (d) enhancing autonomy in the course of FL acquisition while simultaneously developing all types of FL speech activity. In such conditions, learners can identify common and individual characteristics of learning a FL, ensure continuity of FL knowledge, skills and experience, and apply and develop their own linguistic and compensatory abilities. Below, we provide more detailed characteristics of these conditions.

Due to the fact that all motives are interrelated, we should create conditions that enhance those motives which are the most relevant for students at a certain stage. It helps to sustain a desired level of student readiness to learn. Motives are formed in accordance with the specifics of a particular age group, the psychological mechanisms of motivation, and the dynamics of motive development. Teachers should elicit positive motivation for learning, taking into account learners' ages, future profession, and individual differences. They should choose particular zones that are relevant to motivate students at a particular stage, in addition to encouraging achievements, while taking into account professional and language interests,

professional modeling and forecasting. Thus, teachers constantly change the motives that they try to target, depending on a particular situation.

Generally, LSP courses are not available during the first year at university. At this stage, motivation can be boosted by means of the gradual introduction of methods and forms of teaching which are different and more engaging than those used at school, as well as by providing for the continuum of students' knowledge and trying to live up to their expectations in terms of the results of their learning and evaluation. It is also advisable to use innovative ways of teaching FLs, in addition to active methods and forms of teaching.

Moreover, it is important to let students know how much they still need to acquire. It should become clear to learners that, even though they have been successful and managed to gain admittance to university, there are gaps they need to fill which require hard work. These gaps include culture-specific knowledge, linguistic knowledge, as well as the skills necessary to compare, analyze and synthesize texts among many others. Students should realize the differences between school and university education, and the extent of their responsibility in the course of learning a FL. At this stage, it is important not to demotivate students by signaling that the course might turn out to be too difficult for them.

Starting from the second year, the most powerful motivation tool is an LSP course itself. In this respect, it is recommended to increase the credits allocated to LSP. Further, during classes other than LSP, students should have material which is related to their LSP learning. LSP syllabi should be designed together with other departments that are in charge of students' majors, and be both practice- and theory-oriented, providing for comparative analysis of culture-specific professional issues. In order to sustain this type of motivation, it is recommended to continuously deepen the area of specialization, starting with basic concepts and their interpretation, and moving to specific ones adopted in the narrow area of students' future profession. Besides a very careful selection of teaching material and its fine tuning in the process of language acquisition, trainers should also teach students, both implicitly and explicitly, means of self-motivation and overcoming frustrational processes and obstacles. Thus, students are taught by means of activating their personal potential.

Techniques that can be employed include the Extension of Control Potential, in which students are granted a certain degree of control over their learning. This allows learners to realize that, largely, their progress or failure depends on them, which, in turn, increases their motivation, initiative and activeness. It can be implemented by means of selecting a task to do, and through peer- and self-assessment. Other techniques include Avoiding Assessment (or General Evaluation) in Public, as using public evaluation/assessment can have a negative effect on motivation, provoke anxiety, and lead to failure avoidance behavior patterns.

Risk Encouragement (Bandura, 1997) is also an important technique. This implies exposing students to difficult tasks, and can be successful in those cases where the teacher is confident of students' success. It is also recommended that trainers use Situations of Success that inspire confidence and serve as a powerful means of motivation. If properly applied, this technique leads to positive emotions in relation to the activities performed, which makes the process emotionally and

intellectually attractive. This contributes to an active attitude to learning, making it a motive of a new activity, while also helping to remedy pre-existing negative or neutral attitudes. Such situations are not to be frequently employed as, when overused, they can lead to indifference, block learners' abilities to overcome difficulties and result in refusals to do a task.

Other efficient techniques are related to forms of learning and assessment. When we deal with interdependent learning, students share doing one and the same task or a series of tasks, and have the same mark notwithstanding their individual contributions. The technique of Parallel Assessment (which can also involve peer assessment) provides for a student to assess himself/herself simultaneously with one or more teachers and/or another student or students during a certain period of time, before comparing and analyzing the results either with the help of a trainer or independently. This technique supports learner responsibility and confidence, as it is required for learners to be objective and self-critical and, at the same time, to try and avoid anxiety and lower self-esteem.

Trainers create conditions of teaching that enhance students' learning motivation. In the framework of our research, it is not relevant to make students aware of the conditions, strategies, and techniques teachers use to boost certain types of motivation. Meanwhile, subject to the students' age-specific characteristics, and taking into account the particularities of the language material taught as well as goals set, the trainer selects/develops and teaches students strategies they are supposed to employ in class and during their independent work. These strategies are intended to be applied by students at the stage when new material is introduced, at the reflexion stage, and at the stage of implementation. The implementation can be both assisted by the teacher and autonomous.

While designing/selecting strategies, we rely on Oxford's (1990) definition: "Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to a new situation" (p. 8). In our training, strategies are selected in accordance with the approach to problem solving, ways of acting to achieve a certain goal, and self-control. The most relevant to the purposes of our research is the teaching model developed by Oxford. Based on this model, we are supposed to consistently introduce strategies to students, make sure students clearly and fully understand them, and collectively analyze advantages and disadvantages of various strategies. Similarly, learners should be taught to analyze and assess their self-esteem, monitor the extent of development of their language competences, and transfer the strategies taught to new situations.

The learning strategies we selected/developed and introduced to students are aimed at knowledge enrichment and the development of skills and abilities. They include self-stimulation to commence and complete a particular activity, positive self-assessment, confidence building, and self-reward strategies (by means of competition, exploring new ways of carrying out an activity, emotional self-encouragement, the analysis of the appropriateness of a particular activity, retrospective analysis of one's achievements, and comparative analysis of one's own and others' achievements).

Thus, in the case of decline in performance, it is possible to emotionally encourage oneself through a technique of "the search of positive emotions", which is not related, or is only partially related, to the task to be performed or to language learning. Students can switch to doing a task in a different form, for example, in small groups rather than alone. Self-stimulation can also be achieved when analyzing the appropriateness and usefulness of the activity performed, learners' own interest in the professional and linguistic part of the material, forms, methods and techniques employed, the interdisciplinary character of the knowledge and skills acquired, and whether their personal contributions are significant or whether there is a potential for creativity. Self-stimulation can also work if students recognize the model of the real professional situation in the educational one.

When students feel demotivated, they should be able to explore causes of the demotivation and remedy them either by switching to other forms of work (e.g. from autonomous to group work, pair work, discussions), or changing methods of work (e.g. from independent analysis to brainstorming techniques; or shifting, for example, from learning lexis employing associations to learning lexis on the basis of comparative analysis). Students should realize that their achievements are determined by their individual efforts, the amount of time spent doing a task, their individual abilities and the objective difficulties of the language material or type of a particular speech activity, and the strategies used to learn material or perform a task. Students are meant to be able to creatively transform the task or the material, taking into account their future professional activity, while also being ready to use the professional categories that take into account interdisciplinary overlap.

Self-motivation is also possible through positive self-assessment, including verbal public assessment and the general evaluation of one's results, in addition to determining one's strong points in terms of personal development and language learning progress, revealing causes of failures and finding remedies to them in private and in public, and comparing the results and conditions of performing a task of oneself and others. Strategies to inspire confidence and competitiveness include tracing previous success (for example, using a language portfolio) and comparing one's success to others and to oneself retrospectively, examining a period of success and analyzing the conditions and other factors promoting success during this period, and copying the strategies of others who seem to be more successful in general, or in performing a particular task more specifically.

In order to avoid a decrease in motivation after having mastered particular skills, students should permanently seek to explore new ones, which may include elements of previously mastered skills. Even if the whole group continues to work on the same materials and on developing skills that a particular student has already mastered, the learner should start exploring new skills outside the classroom. In case of achievements, especially during uninterrupted periods of such achievements, one should employ self-rewarding strategies while, at the same time, keeping track of trends that can lead to potential errors and one's weak points, even if the teacher failed to notice them due to the lack of time, inattentiveness and so on.

3 Methodology and Experimental Stages

While designing the experimental training program, we focused on motivation which can be traced through learners' capacity to adopt axiological and meaningful mindsets for their actions while implementing profession-oriented linguistic tasks. We also explored learner motivation through their ability to determine the possibilities of using the knowledge, skills and experience received, employ positive reasoning concerning their own knowledge, skills, abilities, language experience as a motivational factor, and reflect upon their motives. Thus, we focused on the following tasks:

1. Developing and using professionally valuable, scientific guidelines in the course of learning a FL;
2. Contributing to the motivation-driven choice of goal and meaning-oriented guidelines for students' actions while performing profession-oriented linguistic tasks;
3. Providing stimulating guidelines while performing classroom and out-of-classroom tasks in the FL;
4. Providing for the skills to determine the likelihood of applying the knowledge, skills, and experience in learners' future professional language activity both in scientific and practical spheres;
5. Teaching learners to use positive feedback about their FL learning knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience as a motivational basis to continue their activities aimed at FL acquisition;
6. Promoting actualization of learners' FL speech activity at the level of communication, profession, creative self-actualization, knowledge and skills acquisition and social development.

The pedagogical process involves teachers, students, the content of education, and the means and conditions of education, and their interrelations. These interrelations are traced through methods and techniques of teaching, organizational forms, various forms of teacher-student and student-student communication, the attitude of students to content, the means of teaching, and the interaction between teacher and content. The experimental teaching involved the incorporation of pedagogical tools that were aimed at boosting positive FL learning motivation and remedying negative factors. The teaching presupposed regular monitoring of both students' motivation and FL competences in order to trace the interrelation between them and adjust teaching tools correspondingly.

The experiment embraced introducing, teaching and controlling stages. The first stage involves arrangement procedures, such as selecting faculties where LSP is taught, forming experimental (EG) and control groups (CG), and deciding on psychological instruments to measure motivation and pedagogical motivation boosters in accordance with the goal of teaching LSP at university. This stage also involved

examining students' age and age-specific cognitive characteristics, and other specific age-related psychological characteristics, learners' adaptation process, and the general conditions of teaching FLs at university. It also required determining components of FLCC that can be identified to measure the overall level of FLCC development, as well as specifying types of motivation to be measured and the criteria necessary to measure them. This stage included initial diagnostics to both measure the level of motivation and FLCC, and required formulating the initial hypothesis of the experimental teaching.

The teaching itself presupposed selecting, using, and adjusting the content of teaching in general and classroom teaching in particular, monitoring the interrelation between certain types of motivations and FLCC, introducing the corresponding changes to the teaching process, reconsidering the hypothesis and, if necessary, making corresponding changes. Control involves final diagnostics, employing statistical data analysis, determining the levels of motivation and FLCC development as well as drawing conclusions for practical implementations and theoretical generalizations.

In order to monitor and adjust motivation in the course of teaching LSP, we identified motivation assessment criteria, indicators of motivation and levels of motivation. To measure motivation, we used psychological diagnostics. The tool employed was originally developed by Rean and Yakunin, and was later elaborated by Badmayeva (2005). The psychological tool we employed to measure motivation helped identify the extent and manifestation of different types of motivation in FL learning and measure how explicit a certain type of motivation is (prevalent, distinctly manifested, noticeable on a regular basis or unsystematic, or not traced).

The diagnostics identify intrinsic, communicative, professional, prestige, and social motives; motives of failure avoidance also imply fear and defense motives; and creativity motives presuppose creative self-expression. In addition, it is also possible to examine skills of choosing motivation guidelines, and skills of stimulation/suppression (with/without external assistance) of different types of motives, which can be developed, underdeveloped, or not developed. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data. Paired sample t-tests were employed to determine if statistically significant changes occurred before and after the experiment, and independent samples t-tests to compare the CG and EG.

In LSP teaching, we mainly focus on communication and rely on profession-oriented and communicative activities with the emphasis on linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects of the activity and the development of professionally significant language skills (in accordance with the activity, subject, communicative, cognitive and competence approaches to teaching FLs). Thus, we gauge FL teaching results by measuring students' levels of FLCC development. Its structure includes the following factors: linguistic (knowledge of different sections of LSP and the corresponding skills of different types of speech activity); discourse (analytical skills, making different types of statements used in communication, as well

as the creation of coherent and logical utterances of different functional styles); strategic (skills of using verbal and nonverbal strategies that can compensate for insufficiently formed skills or gaps in knowledge to achieve the goals set in a certain situation of communication); sociocultural (knowledge and skills of using culture-specific lexis, culture of the FL under study, the subculture of the LSP field); and sociolinguistic (knowledge and skills of using language means in different social contexts taking into account the courtesy norms, registers, linguistic markers, social roles etc.).

Teaching focuses on information processing and analysis, text compression, practical use of oral and written skills in professional contexts, and translation and interpretation in the framework of students' future professional activities. To test the level of FLCC, we identified tasks and determined the maximum score for each of them (see Table 1).

The overall available mark is 100%. The criteria for errors for all tasks, except translating/interpreting, are borrowed from IELTS standards and adjusted for LSP purposes. When assessing translation/interpretation, certain percentage points (depending on the type of error) are subtracted from the maximum score (100%): distortion −10%; inaccuracy −5%; lexical/grammar error −3%; and stylistic error −2%. The omission of one word or a word combination equals one lexical error. If the translation is not complete, the points subtracted depend on the ratio of the omitted fragment to the whole original text.

To conduct the experiment, we identified a sample of 2–4-year students ($N = 615$) from Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow) who were pursuing a bachelor degree in the faculties of law and economics. After the exploratory experiment and the selection of procedures, the remaining students were divided into a CG and EG in accordance with their academic and language learning achievements and levels of motivation. The general characteristic of control and experimental samples is given in Table 2.

Table 1 Assessment tasks and points

Type of assessment	Points (%)
Witten:	
Translating profession-oriented and professional texts from English into Russian and from Russian into English;	−20
Drafting a document (depending on the profession; e.g. contract, report etc.).	−20
Oral:	
Rendering profession-oriented and professional texts;	−20
Discussing profession-oriented and professional texts;	−10
Talking on a professional theme;	−10
Translating profession-oriented and professional texts from English into Russian and from Russian into English.	−20

Table 2 General characteristics of control and experimental groups

Characteristics	Experimental group	Control group
Non-variable	1. Students of the same year (2–4 years of bachelor studies) and the same gender and age; 2. Groups with equal motivation, FL (English) and other achievements; 3. Methods of data interpretation; 4. Time of studying at university and learning English	
Variable	Experimental teaching	Standard program

Table 3 Motivation indicators for experimental and control groups before the experiment

Type of motive	Experimental group	Control group	T-criterium
Social motives	3.61	3.69	−1.19
Learning motives	3.54	3.62	−1.77
Creativity motives	2.92	2.99	−1.22
Professional motives	3.38	3.38	0.054
Prestige motives	3.82	3.73	1.24
Failure avoidance motives	3.07	3.05	0.39
Communication motives	2.63	2.90	−1.74

*$p \leq 0.05$
**$p \leq 0.01$

4 Results and Discussion

The results of the psychological diagnostics of motivation indicated differences in the levels of various types of motivation in the EG and CG before and after the experiment. The measurement of FLCC development and each of its components in particular revealed interconnection between motivation in the process of FL acquisition and the development of FLCC. Table 3 offers average group motivation indicators for the EG and CG before the experiment.

The data shows that motives in the CG and EG did not have any statistically significant differences before the experiment. However, we can see small and statistically insignificant differences in the EG, where the level of some types of motivation is lower. Both in the process of teaching and afterwards, the changes in motivation in the EG are generally statistically significant (see Table 4 below).

After teaching, all motives for the EG experienced statistically significant increases in values, except for the failure avoidance motives which became lower, declining from 3.07 to 2.00 at $p \leq 0.05$. Different types of motivation varied during teaching. Prestige motives displayed only a small, though statistically significant, change, which may be attributed to the growth of intrinsic motivation and creativity motives, awareness of the personal significance of the skills and knowledge received, and a greater extent of autonomy. The decline in failure avoidance motives can be interpreted as positive as students have learned how to overcome anxiety, lack of confidence in their potential and linguistic abilities, as well as the effect of any

Table 4 Changes in motivation in the EG after teaching

Type of motive	Experimental group before	Experimental group after	T-criterium
Social motives	3.61	4.27	−10*
Learning motives	3.54	4.20	−13*
Creativity motives	2.92	4.08	−21.2**
Professional motives	3.38	3.97	5.9*
Prestige motives	3.82	4.01	3.0*
Failure avoidance motives	3.07	2.00	8.31*
Communication motives	2.63	3.76	2.34*

*$p \leq 0.05$
**$p \leq 0.01$

Table 5 Changes in motivation in the EG and CG after teaching

Type of motive	Experimental group	Control group	T-criterium
Social motives	4.27	4.27	−0.056
Learning motives	4.20	2.81	21.45**
Creativity motives	4.08	2.61	24.75**
Professional motives	3.97	3.80	2.07*
Prestige motives	4.01	4.24	−3.74*
Failure avoidance motives	2.00	3.90	0.39*
Communication motives	3.76	2.53	−22.88**

*$p \leq 0.05$
**$p \leq 0.01$

previous negative linguistic experience. Paired sample t-tests after teaching in the CG and EG revealed significant changes of all motives except social motives (see Table 5).

Table 5 indicates that the communicative motives are at a higher level in the EG, as a high level of FLCC provides opportunities for successful communication, both written and oral. However, in the CG, students realize the low level of communication skills, which resulted in lower communicative motives and a higher level of failure avoidance motives both in acquiring new skills and in general. There are no statistically significant differences related to social motives in the CG and EG, which implies that students from both samples have high expectations related to their future professional activity.

To monitor changes in motivation, we also conducted monitoring in the EG during teaching. The results of the first test reported in Table 4 show growth of all indicators, except failure avoidance motives, and a relatively low growth of prestige motivation. The interim test in the EG, calculated by paired sample t-tests, revealed the following statistically significant changes: failure avoidance motives: 2.98–2.67, $t = 3.98$, $p \leq 0.01$; prestige motives: 3.92–3.79, $t = 3.09$, $p \leq 0.01$; creativity motives: 3.24–3.41, $t = 4.33$, $p \leq 0.01$; learning motives: 3.78–3.85, $t = 2.20$, $p \leq 0.05$; and social motives: 3.77–3.63, $t = 4.02$, $p \leq 0.01$.

At this stage, certain indicators stabilized; in particular, communicative motives (2.73–2.86, $t = 1.50$, $p \geq 0.05$) and professional motives (3.45–3.46, $t = 0.375$, $p \geq 0.05$). During this period, students face numerous difficulties in LSP acquisition as their style of learning is in the process of adjustment and learners are testing strategies and techniques that can be optimal for their learning. At this time, much attention is paid to developing students' self-control, the role of communicative and professional motives declines as the prospects of being involved in real professional activity in a FL are distant, and they have not yet had any apprenticeships. As a result, the methods of teaching are adjusted.

The second paired sample t-test revealed significant changes in all motives with the exception of prestige motives. All the previously identified trends are again apparent, with prestige motives showing the least growth. These trends are in force until the end of teaching. As discussed above, this result can be explained by higher learning motivation, creativity, and less dependence on external influence. The comparative analysis did not reveal any significant differences at $p \leq 0.05$ between levels of FLCC in the CG and EG before teaching ($M = 59.85$ in the EG and $M = 64.42$ in the CG). Whereas, at the end of the experiment, differences were encountered at all levels. In the EG, the development of FLCC components is stable and high. In the CG, we encountered significant changes after the first test (64.4–70.4, $p \leq 0.01$), but we did not find any significant differences after the second test (70.3–69.2, $p \geq 0.05$).

In the CG, we can also trace a growth of FLCC, although the components of FLCC do not develop consistently. There is sharp growth during the first half of teaching, but no significant changes during the second one. Even though significant changes are identified in both the CG and EG, in the EG the changes are higher, more consistent and stable (59.9–69.2, $p \leq 0.01$; 69.2–76.8, $p \leq 0.01$). It should be noted that the criteria used to assess FLCC at school and university are different. At the beginning of the study, participants in both the EG and CG had higher expectations of their marks than the ones they actually achieved. By the middle of teaching in the EG, the number of students with overly high expectations declined and their self-esteem stabilized, whereas, in the CG, the percentage of such students remained approximately the same.

The linguistic component of FLCC in the EG has the same dynamics as FLCC in general, whereas the sociolinguistic component was the lowest before teaching and its dynamics were rather high afterwards. The discourse component is also characterized by significant growth as we introduced more logical and analytical operations in the course of teaching. The strategic component shows the lowest dynamics, as even students' skills in forecasting, reconstructing language material, and developing a system of expectations based on the language experience continue to be developed. As the overall level of students' linguistic competence grows, they no longer need compensatory skills to the same extent as before. The number of students with low motivation declined in the EG by 47%, whereas, in the CG, it declined by 11%. The difference between the EG and CG in terms of the increase in the number of students with high FLCC is 39%.

Based on the results of the experiment comparing the psychological diagnostics of motivation and the pedagogical measuring of students' FLCC in addition to

applying comparative analysis, we can conclude that it is efficient to adjust students' positive motivation to learning LSP in the course of teaching and to use motivation as a tool to boost the process of FL acquisition. Even superficial monitoring in the EG shows an increase in recognition of lexical units, grammar constructions, morphological forms, syntactical patterns, and a decrease of instances of their incorrect use. This increase is accompanied by deeper, more confident and quicker understanding of content, conceptual and extra textual information, more automated skills of logical and analytical operations, better recognition and differentiation of sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts, a higher percentage of correct usage, and structural, semantic and associative forecasting.

Motivation has a positive relationship with levels of achievements, anxiety (if the anxiety is average), and creativity. Moreover, in those cases where students lack particular abilities but are characterized by high learning motivation, they still have the potential for high achievement by implementing ad hoc strategies, and through purposefully developing certain personality qualities. Thus, they can show results equal to those of more capable students. In order to achieve this, a student has to be able to realize the individual difficulties in LSP acquisition, and constantly apply relevant strategies to remedy them. These individual strategies can include repetition of the material already covered as independent work, doing a task for the second or third time after it has already been checked by the teacher and the errors have been analyzed, doing translation when the task involves only rendering a text, and preparing to do a certain task that is to be performed without any prior preparation. Other useful strategies include spending more time than average doing home tasks, and learning by heart texts that were supposed to be discussed or rendered (at the initial stages).

Anxiety can act as both a positive and negative factor affecting motivation. When anxiety is low, students might fail to identify problem zones if their achievements are still satisfactory to them. At the same time, when anxiety is high (but only during a short period), it can contribute to successful learning. However, such success is achieved at the expense of extra efforts taken by students, which can adversely affect their physical and psychological health. Low-average and average levels of anxiety can act as boosters of motivation of achievement. In order to illustrate how positive motivation can be traced in the course of teaching, we provide excerpts from students' discourses in Table 6.

The mix of types of motivation and their levels is different and individual. Thus, the diagnostics proved that, even if all conditions of teaching are similar in the CG and EG, except for the fact that in the EG the teacher employs a special arsenal of pedagogical tools aimed at boosting positive learning motivation and other types of motivation associated with enhanced learning, such as creativity and communication motives, then the processes of teaching LSP can be stimulated. Thus, the number of students with a high level of FLCC can be significantly higher in the EG, the forecast of FLCC formation can be more precise, and the development of the relevant competences more consistent.

Table 6 Description of low positive motivation (discourse 1) and high/upper average positive motivation students discourse (discourse 2)

Description of discourse 1	Description of discourse 2
Students do not understand the assessment system in use; show unwillingness to analyze and reflect upon the procedural stage of education; use typical excuses to explain their irregular learning style (the excuses are frequent). They sometimes show slight aggression, which might be caused by unsatisfactory results and the seeming suppression of their self-esteem; frequently refer to their unawareness of requirements, home task assignments etc., which is caused by inattentiveness and misunderstanding. They often are dissatisfied with the teacher's assessment, especially in cases when they attend all classes, and formally are ready with their home task, while ignoring the quality of their performance.	Students often use questions, analysis, and reflection of their activities; willing to jointly reflect upon their performance; show interest in frequent analysis and assessment by the teacher. When they are not satisfied with the teacher's assessment, they always try to provide grounds for this, and it refers to the quality of their performance, their knowledge of the material, as well as the previous assessment made by the teacher.

5 Conclusions

Motivation in LSP learning implies a cluster of motives that are interrelated and determined by various factors, such as the learners' age, interests, needs, cognitive abilities, styles, the social environment, social demands, the requirements of the labor market, their future professional aspirations, whether the language taught is in demand in general and in their future professional activity in particular, and so on. While investigating the motivation of FL learning at the university level, one should also consider the general conditions of learning and the processes of adaptation of learners to studying at university.

Thus, it should be taken into considerations that different years of studying can provoke and boost particular types of motivation, even if the teacher does not purposefully encourage them. For example, during the final year of university studies, professional motives and social motives can become prevailing in cases where learners' future professions and professional FL are in high demand, in addition to motives of prestige. The same motives can act as a booster when entering university. However, as adaption processes are triggered, students begin to become involved in new conditions of learning, each of them facing various difficulties starting with increased workload, new forms of classwork and assessment, less instruction and teaching, and more responsibility and autonomy. Such motives then might no longer serve as a booster to learning a FL. Teachers should take into account natural processes and not waste efforts enhancing those types of motivation that are anyway naturally fostered. With the help of psychological monitoring, teachers should explore the signals of demotivation and immediately introduce ways to prevent such demotivation.

It is obvious that, once intrinsic motivation is high, the learning process itself will be engaging for students. However, it is difficult to rely on intrinsic motivation solely as, once students realize there is no practical immediate implementation of the knowledge and skills they require, it will inevitably decrease. Thus, it is

primarily important to structure the materials and the teaching process in such a way that students constantly realize the practical value of the tasks they perform, see future paths they can take to either becoming a practitioner or researcher and, hence, comprehend the skills and knowledge this requires. Learners should always see links between the disciplines they study and the FL taught. Consequently, both the material and the tasks should be authentic. In this respect, it is useful to invite experts working in particular fields to talk about students' future jobs and to organize internship and volunteer work for students.

Additionally, introducing more opportunities for creativity can become a factor contributing to higher motivation, as it implies more freedom and independence for students, provides for the development of their creativity and potential in general, and implicitly presupposes trust by the teacher and his/her recognition of learners' capabilities. Communicative motives are, to a great extent, related to professional ones, as in LSP classes learners realize the communicative nature of the language. Consequently, professional communication, which is a key element of any professional activity, is one of the assets perceived by students.

Another angle encompasses forms and methods employed, which are not intended to be too easy and manageable or extremely cumbersome, but, at the same time, should not be excessively gamified, so that students do not grow unaccustomed to serious challenging tasks requiring concentration. It involves the general strategy employed by the teacher and private strategies used in particular situations, as well as the professionalism and personality of the teacher in general and the mix of pedagogical styles to be employed, depending on the situation and year of study. In this respect, team or pair teaching can also be useful.

Moreover, individual student difficulties are not always noticed by teachers. In this respect, teachers should introduce an arsenal of strategies and techniques and help students adjust the arsenal to their needs in the course of learning. Thus, learners can trace obstacles, find their sources, and devise ways to remedy them. In cases of individual difficulties related to learners' cognitive styles and lack of particular abilities, they can develop compensatory strategies that ensure achievements similar to those of students who display higher levels of capability.

In the framework of this chapter, it is difficult to describe all possible ways of motivation diagnostics in the FL classroom. Therefore, we only focused on the results of psychological diagnostics. However, it is also useful to employ pedagogical questionnaires, methods of dialogues, analyzing products of learner's activity, testing and observation. It is quite informative to employ a test to infer the obstacles in language learning. Such means of diagnostics can reveal learners' needs, attitudes, and the demands which are not monitored through other means. One can also resort to observation protocols as a tool of observation, they can be completed on a regular basis by a colleague, a researcher and a teacher. Such protocols can measure learners' behavioral characteristics and changes compared to previous observation results. They can also be employed for other specific purposes; for example, to trace students' reactions to a particular method or form of teaching.

It is also valuable to record and analyze students' and teachers' discourse in the classroom. This may involve, first of all, recording teachers' comments, remarks,

and the ways they formulate a task, address students, provide oral feedback and, in particular, assess learners. This can be a valuable source of information for a researcher. Knowing appropriate teaching styles and factors that can demotivate students, one can formulate comments and recommendations to the teacher to be introduced in the classroom. This results in adjusting the teaching process to achieve the highest level of student motivation.

When analyzing students' discourse, it is possible to record the signals of declining motivation, as well as demotivated students or indifferent ones, by their inert reactions, unwillingness to receive feedback or indifference to it, inactiveness, or aggressiveness, continuous disagreement and dissatisfaction etc. If conducting such monitoring at particular periods of time such as the beginning, middle and end of semester, it is possible to introduce timely changes related to conditions of teaching and strategies employed in general, as well as material used, methods and forms of work in the classroom, attitudes to homework in terms of its form, the load of work to be done, or, perhaps, even the transparence and fairness of control and assessment, and also general class management issues.

In the framework of this chapter, we did not present results of correlation and factor analysis. These tools can also be valuable in order to explore the correlation (whether positive or negative) of particular types of motivation and whether they can form clusters within the factor structure of motivation. Thus, while developing pedagogical tools aimed at enhancing particular types of motivation, teachers could expect a rise or decline in the others and take relevant measures.

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Escaping the Confines of Essentialism: Conceptualizing New Spaces of Identification Among Native and Nonnative ESL Instructors

Fajer M. Bin Rashed

Abstract Emotional tensions play a vital role in examining teacher identity development, in which the native-nonnative dichotomy between teachers is often reinforced. The majority of language teaching research, thus far, has particularly focused on nonnative English-speaking teachers as a starting point for exploring the interplay between cognition and emotion and for examining the emotional demands of teaching; some of which result in low self-esteem and anxiety. This research project attempts to reconceptualize native and nonnative speakers as social subjects that are devoid of preconceived archetypical notions. It focuses on the case of a language instructor negotiating emotional-related challenges that she often faces while teaching English in an L2 setting. The chapter aims to broaden the scope of teacher identity by addressing an underexplored group in that the focal research participant, Wafa, holds a special position as a Kuwaiti-British citizen, who, despite being born in Kuwait and holding Kuwaiti citizenship, considers herself a native speaker of English and identifies more with the English language than Arabic. The research examines Wafa's reflexivity practice as a way to negotiate a number of emotional challenges in her experience as an ESL instructor at a mid-sized college in Kuwait. The analysis of Wafa's experiences indicates that reflexivity is significant for obliterating the dividing lines between native and nonnative identities. The chapter concludes that, through re-examining the role of Jacques Derrida's deconstructed democracy concept as a mechanism for identification and inclusion, the confines of the essentialist characterization of nativity and its consequences on nonnative speakers of the target language could be escaped.

Keywords Teacher identity · EFL/ESL · Non/native English-speaking instructors (NEST/NNEST) · Emotion · Cognition · Negotiation · Reflexivity · Reflective pedagogy

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F. M. Bin Rashed (✉)
United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

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1 Introduction: Teaching as an Emotionally Driven Process

The study of teacher emotions is significant for understanding teacher identity development. According to research, teaching English as a second language has become situated within the emotional perimeters of wider sociocultural, institutional, and economic forces (Benesch, 2017; Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Turner & Stets, 2005; Wolff & De Costa, 2017; Zembylas, 2002). Situating teaching ESL within such emotional perimeters necessitates a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of English language instructors, while attempting to adapt to diverse educational contexts and teaching experiences.

The Douglas Fir Group (2016) defines language learning as an "emotionally driven process at multiple levels of experience" (p. 36). In addition, Turner and Stets (2005) assert that emotions are "the result of a complex interplay among cultural, social structural, cognitive, neurological forces" (p. 9). The same can be argued about second language teaching, as Miller and Gkonou (2018) view teacher emotions as "socioculturally and ideologically fostered phenomena" (p. 50) that are driven by different lived experiences. The emotions that have been studied in research in relation to second language acquisition and teaching are mainly induced by learner motivation, their willingness to communicate, and foreign language anxiety (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). These are argued to be some of the factors that can influence teacher emotions and thus lead to emotional tensions.

Turner and Stets (2005) emphasize the importance of examining how cultural, social, cognitive, and neurological forces are interconnected with teaching. They argue that considering changing one's teaching strategies to adapt to these forces can, in fact, lead to effective emotion management inside the classroom. Hochschild (1979) refers to emotion management and emotion labor as shared feelings that are tied to a workplace, thereby making them vocational in nature. Benesch (2017) defines emotion labor as the efforts by which "humans actively negotiate the relationship between how they feel in particular work situations and how they are supposed to feel, according to social expectations" (pp. 37–38). The author further posits that emotion labor is not restricted to extremely charged situations, but can also refer to everyday teaching dynamics and experiences. Emotion labor can be triggered while managing classroom discussions, providing feedback on learners' oral and written assignments, dealing with demotivated learners, and/or catering for learner differences and special needs. Hochschild (1979) refers to the social guidelines that dictate how one should feel and is expected to feel as *feeling rules*. Hochschild explains:

> There is a distinction, in theory at least, between a feeling rule as it is known by our sense of what we can *expect* to feel in a given situation, and a rule as it is known by our sense of what we *should* feel in that situation. For example, one may realistically expect (knowing oneself and one's neighbor's parties) to feel bored at a large New Year's Eve party and at the same time acknowledge that it would be more fitting to feel exuberant (1979, p. 564, emphasis in original).

In other words, feeling rules share common properties with the rules of social interaction within a given situation, as they dictate the fits and misfits between emotion and any given social situation (Hochschild, 1979). For instance, feeling anxious while teaching becomes naturally regarded as unfitting, because instructors are 'expected' to feel confident in managing their classroom instruction. Therefore, feeling anxious while teaching is automatically deemed inappropriate.

In addition to briefly exploring emotion labor in the context of teaching English as a second language, this chapter offers an examination of Wafa's practice of reflexivity, or reflective pedagogy, which she employs by way of negotiating a number of emotional challenges throughout her experience as an ESL teacher at a mid-sized college in Kuwait. Narrative inquiry was employed, with data for this chapter gathered through a structured interview with the respondent in addition to content analysis of the journal entries that she provided for this study.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Nativeness and Nonnativeness

Are nativeness and nonnativeness two sides of the same coin? The first language that one learns to speak is identified as a native language. Davies (1996) defines the term *native language* from a bio-developmental perspective as the language learnt in childhood. Nativeness has also been defined in opposition to nonnativeness (Davies, 1991), creating a dichotomous relationship between the two groups of speakers. While poor pronunciation skills have been linked to nonnative speakers (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005), native speaker stereotypes have been associated with flawless pronunciation, influencing the perception of them as instructors with superior pedagogical capacities (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2012).

A number of claimed proficiency aspects have been highlighted in the research as what differentiate native speakers from nonnative ones. One of which is the subconscious knowledge of grammar rules (Stern, 1983). To explain, native speakers are argued to acquire the grammar rules of their native language rather than gradually learn them, which is the normal process in an L2 setting. In light of this, Stern (1983) argues that native speakers have an intuitive grasp of meaning and a distinctive creativity of language use, while Davies (1996) highlights that fluency is another characteristic that differentiates native speakers from nonnative ones.

It is safe to argue that native speakers do acquire the grammar rules of their native language as opposed to learning them. This particular characteristic is rendered an obvious one for native English-speaking teachers/instructors (NESTS), although native speakers of Arabic, for instance, in fact explicitly learn the grammar of standrad Arabic for many years at school. Therefore, this characteristic cannot be applied to native speakers of Arabic, or at least to native speakers of Arabic in

Kuwait. Nevertheless, in his criticism of considering fluency as a quality for native speaking, Cook (1999) argues that some native speakers "are far from fluent in speech, some, such as Stephen Hawking and Helen Keller, having to communicate via alternative means" (p. 186).

Also, Cook (1999) explains that creativity is not necessarily applicable to every native speaker, and that it embodies a small percentage of this group, including rap singers and poets. As such, the aforementioned characteristics are "therefore variable and not necessary a part of the definition of native speaker" (p. 186). The absence of any of the above characteristics should not disqualify a person from being a native speaker; on the contrary, these characteristics should be regarded as incidental (Cook, 1999) as they help to gauge how well an individual uses a language in general, regardless of it being their native language or their L2. For instance, in Kuwait, Arabic is often used for conversation and asking questions by L2 learners about English, especially in their early stages of English language learning, while English is mostly used for writing, reading, and speaking at the university level.

The distinction between the two languages is, according to Baker (2011), "referred to as the difference between ability and use", which is sometimes "referred to as the difference between degree and function" (p. 3). In other words, L2 learners in Kuwait often resort to their L1 in order to comprehend the L2, which categorizes Arabic as a language of ability and English a language of use. Nevertheless, regardless of what language is in use and by whom it is used, these proficiency characteristics, including fluency and creativity, can still be applicable in measuring how well a language is employed. After all, characteristics like fluency and creativity are part of what prescribe the learning outcomes for language teaching and assessment in ESL and EFL curriculums.

In his attempt to define nonnativeness, Cook (1999) refers to nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTS) as L2 users, who are further distinguished from L2 learners. Referring to them as L2 users is reflective of their constant learning process of the target language, since it is difficult to define the final stage of L2 learning. This resemblance between the constant nature of learning and using L2 in the example of its learners and users (in this case, NNESTS), and the continuous relationship between native speakers (here, NESTS) and their use of English as an L1, brings the two groups closer rather than sets them apart. That is, what is comparable between the native speaker of a language and the language user is the uninterrupted relationship between the language and its native and nonnative users. Whether the language is employed as a language of use or ability, using the language is what creates affinities between the native and nonnative speakers of that language.

Ellis's (1997) U-shaped course of development can be understood to interestingly equate the experiences of L2 learners and NESTS in light of learning a language, being a first or an interlanguage (IL). His U-shaped course of development illustrates the result of language imitation in stage 1, where the (non)native speaker is argued to mimic/parrot the teacher in a classroom setting or a parent at home. The second stage, however, is transitional and is regarded as more advanced than stage 1, since learners start to overgeneralize grammar rules autonomously. Stage 2

reflects the learner's variety of functions and their ability to experiment with language, and in the third stage, the learner is seen to make the correct form. Nevertheless, arguments for equating L2 learners and NESTS' language learning experiences should always be approached with caution, as they could imply comparing and equating L2 competence with monolinguals' L1 competence, which is problematic and ineffective (Bin Rashed, 2018; Cook, 1997, 2001). This is because the definition of success in becoming a native speaker is different from becoming an L2 user, and it automatically sets L2 users to fail rather than motivates them to learn the language in collaboration with their L1 (Bin Rashed, 2018; Cook, 1997, 2001). Therefore, the standards of L2 users should not be compared to those of native speakers, as success in becoming an L2 user differs from that of a native speaker (Cook, 2001).

In the same way language learners are often defined by what they lack linguistically and intuitively, NNESTS are also defined by what they are not in comparison to native speakers. Nonnative speakers have also been referred to as bilinguals. Bilingualism has often been defined as the ability to speak two languages (Cook, 1997, 2001). Nonetheless, a person may be able to speak two languages, but their competency level in one of them may be limited. Cook (1999) explains that:

> *Competence* is a neutral term in linguistics for the native speaker's knowledge of language; it does not involve a judgment about whether such competence is good or bad according to some outside criterion. In a sense, whatever the native speaker does is right – subject, of course, to the vagaries of performance and the like… the difficulty is that, whereas all speakers of an L1 arguably have similar competences, L2 users notoriously end up with widely differing knowledge (p. 190, emphasis in original).

In light of bilingualism, the term *multicompetence* is used to refer to the compound state of a mind with two languages, implying that L2 teaching develops in a mind that already contains the learner's L1 (Cook, 1999). NNESTS are regarded as more flexible in their cognitive methods and are less ruled by cultural stereotypes. Cook (1997) states, "A second language extends rather than diminishes the individual's capabilities. In one sense, this is obvious: a person with two languages has access to a range of situations and experiences that are not available to the monolingual" (p. 289). Similarly, Llurda (2005) claims that NNESTS score higher in cultural awareness as they share a common ground with their students. That is, students in ESL and EFL settings regard sharing the same cultural background with their instructors as an added benefit (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2012). Seidlhofer (1999) claims that this shared background makes "non-native teachers uniquely suited to be agents facilitating learning by mediating between the different languages and cultures through appropriate pedagogy" (p. 235). In addition, NNESTS are argued to show more empathy for their students, as they also previously learned the language rather than having acquired it (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2012).

Evidently, NNESTS are distinguished from L1 monolinguals in their flexible ways of thinking and for being less governed by cultural stereotypes, but these differences cannot justifiably decide which group is more deserving to be the 'legitimate model' for the spoken language. The implications of being called 'native' on both native speakers and L2 users should be deliberated. *What does it mean to be*

native? Should all native speakers, regardless of making 'native-like' mistakes, be regarded as models for their native languages? Should these mistakes be looked at as 'native like qualities' or deficits? And, is having a native speaker 'model' necessary for learning? The term native speaker has become an identity that is filled with preexisting notions about one group against another. Poststructuralist approaches have been put forth as suggestions about how to escape attributing preexisting identity categories while trying to conceptualize a person's social performance/s (Aneja, 2016). Such approaches dictate that identities are always in flux, encompassing individual agency within local and public contexts (Aneja, 2016).

In his explanation of identity, Nietzsche writes, "There is no being behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (cited in Smith, 1996, p. 29). Smith's (1996) idea that the subject is something "added to the deed" (p. 29) resonates with Butler's (1990) notion of gender as theoretically performative rather than performed. Butler views *gender* as a verb rather than a noun, as it is constructed through a set of acts that comply with societal norms and social expectations. An example of this, when applied to infancy, is when social expectations are constructed from the moment one is born, arguably even before that. Assigning a specific color of clothing, being pink or blue, to a newborn baby views gender as being performative rather than performed.

Similarly, teacher identity, shaped by institutional policy, power relations and educational practice, is perceived as performative. As *girl* is defined in opposition to *boy*, *nativeness* is defined in opposition to *nonnativeness*, and vice versa. Such dichotomies do not allow for language to create new possibilities and pluralities of identities. Both Canagarajah (2010) and Christison (2010) allude to the concept of membership as one that forms through language. More importantly, they highlight the concept of solidarity in light of community, as they explain that one is able to situate themselves in relation to others and establish their allegiance to a specific community by choosing to speak a specific language. For instance, Christison (2010) posits, "Reciprocal linguistic forms used within a community also create solidarity within a group, and this solidarity is important for the survival of the community" (p. 78). Conversely, the language identity of nonnative speakers of English, through which they are supposed to understand their relationship to the world as well as utilize for accommodating mobility, diversity, and new linguistic possibilities, is often condemned by the Other, making the English language an exclusionary tool that regulates membership to its linguistic system(s) and its culture(s) rather than one that creates solidarity.

Giddens (1991) describes identity as a project; a collection of traits that is always in flux and always moving rather than arriving at a final stage. According to Barker (2003), identity is wholly social and cultural as:

> The resources that form the material for an identity project, namely language and cultural practices, are social in character. Consequently, what it means to be a woman, a child, Asian or elderly is formed differently in different cultural contexts (p. 222).

Similarly, the markers that make up the identity of a native speaker are wholly social and cultural, contingent to the situational power from which one's cultural

and linguistic competencies are derived. It matters whether one is black or white, male or female, young or elderly, rich or poor, because of the cultural resources that one has access to. The subject is made up of a core self that is able to "reflexively co-ordinate itself into a unity" (Barker, 2003, p. 224). Hall (1992) argues that:

> The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self." Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about. If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves (p. 277).

Identity is understood not to be a fixed entity; instead the concept of identity refers to a "regulated way of 'speaking' about persons" (Barker, 2003, p. 228). It is understood based on the notion that language does not refer to essential identities. To explain, linguistic signifiers generate meaning in relation to other signifiers. For instance, the signifier *man* is rendered meaningful in relation to *woman*. Likewise, *nativeness* is only meaningful in relation to *nonnativeness*. In this example, the signifier *nativeness* connotes a number of signified concepts including political supremacy, fluency and linguistic superiority and accuracy.

However, Barker (2003) argues that language is not used to represent pre-existent meanings, but rather meanings are constructed through discourse. The author contends that language does not express "an already existent 'true self' but the self into being" (p. 229) through a series of discourses and processes of signification. As it is often understood as a collective "one true self" (p. 229), identity is believed to be formed out of a common history. For instance, *American*, as an identity, is argued to be formed out of a shared and common history that revolves around the memories of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Civil War from 1861 to 1865, and other historical events. However, to consider *American* as a collective self is problematic, as it assumes the existence of merely one self, one story, and one history, which often excludes a specific race, gender, and sex from what constitutes the target identity.

To illustrate this point, Lash (2014) states that, after the American Civil War, three constitutional amendments were passed affecting the women's rights movement. The Fourteenth Amendment affirmed that everyone born in the United States, including former slaves, were American citizens. The first mention of gender was added to the constitution through this amendment, Lash continues, as it dictated that all male citizens over 21 years old should be able to vote, regardless of their race. Excluding women from voting in this case means that women are no longer regarded as citizens. Therefore, the term *American* cannot be regarded as a whole, because it actively excluded gender, amongst other aspects, from what constitutes its otherwise 'whole' identity.

As such, what it means to be *American* needs to be redefined as, in some certain instances, groups like women and African Americans were not considered as part of that 'shared' history. Furthermore, the presence of Arab, Asian, Chinese, and African populations in America makes it rather a necessity to redefine what

American stands for. Just as it is problematic to consider *American* as a "one true self" (Barker, 2003, p. 229), the same can be applied to linguistic nativeness.

Teacher agency is argued to be historically and socially contingent. "When considering teacher agency," Miller and Gkonou (2018, p. 50) write, "one needs to consider the teacher's 'history-in-person;' that is, one needs to explore how individual teachers are, in part, constituted, and, in part, constitute themselves". By taking part in social, sociocultural, and sociopolitical practices, the authors continue, teachers' agencies are constituted. Therefore, teacher agency is understood to be fluid; its description is contingent to a number of changing historical and social influences.

Miller and Gkonou (2018, p. 50) state that one can avoid looking at teachers as "*a priori* agents" and/or saviors of students because they are mainly a product of complex social and historical practices. Rogers and Westzel (2013) define agency as "the capacity of people to act purposefully and reflectively on their world" (p. 63). Nevertheless, human beings are neither independent agents, nor are they completely controlled by others or the social conditions in which they exist (Ray, 2009).

Kayi-Aydar (2015) argues that agency is influenced by one's social contexts and conditions. Agents often reproduce social conditions that constitute expected practices, being gendered or others, then act in accordance to them resulting in reproducing them again. Therefore, it has become important to trace what it means by nativeness in light of plurality. That is, to be an Arab native speaker of English is not the same as being an American or British native speaker of English. The current case study takes this as its springboard in an investigation of the dividing lines between native and nonnative identities with a Kuwaiti-British ESL teacher in Kuwait.

2.2 The Need for Democracy

Martin Heidegger (2001) was the first to introduce the idea of placing words under erasure or *sous rature* in his book, *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: World, finitude, solitude*. Placing words and concepts under erasure causes them to be "at hand and yet at the same time not at hand" (Heidegger, 2001, p. 61). To examine this idea, Heidegger utilizes erasure to deconstruct textual mediums in order to reconstruct them with different forms and meanings. Accordingly, *sous rature* is rendered a "typographical expression of deconstruction", through which erased textual mediums become semantically as well as stylistically altered (Taylor & Winquist, 2001, p. 113). In her translator's preface of Derrida's *Of grammatology*, Spivak summarizes Heidegger's philosophy by writing, "Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since the word is necessary, it remains legible" (Derrida, 1997, p. xiv). Heidegger's *sous rature* very much corresponds with Derrida's concept of "trace" expounded in his 1997 book. In it, Derrida writes:

> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin – within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin (p. 61).

Derrida (1997) believes that trace is a structure of reference, which operates as a non-originary origin because it is not derivative of a primary present meaning. Following this, by putting the concept of *fraternal community* under erasure (Derrida, 2005), it becomes "inadequate and that it is necessary" (Sarup, 1993, p. 33). Crossing out the concept ~~fraternal community~~ removes it from its metaphysical presence, which receives its meaning from a number of signified concepts, some of which are race, gender, origin, and birth (Derrida, 2005).

Derrida (2005) examines the concept of fraternity as a mechanism for identification and inclusion. Treating all members as brothers in a fraternity neutralizes the differences between them (Bennington, 1997; Derrida, 2005). As a result, a fraternity can include apparent non-brothers in it; for example, a woman, who is an obvious non-brother to men, can still join a fraternity of men as a 'brother' in humanity. Here, the word *brother* signifies the relationship between siblings that share the common archetype: humanity. Nevertheless, Derrida (2005) examines the concept of true and strict fraternity by analyzing the thread of paradoxes between the two models:

> True fraternity, fraternity in the literal sense, would be universal, spiritual, symbolic, infinite fraternity of the oath, etc., not fraternity in the strict sense, that of the 'natural' brother (as if such a thing ever existed), the virile brother, by opposition to the sister, the determined brother, in this family, this nation, this particular language (p. 240).

In the same vein, Derrida explains the meaning of brotherhood in an interview with Bennington (1997):

> What does brotherhood mean? It means of course the family, the familial schema, filiation, it means brother instead of sister and there are a number of texts in which sister is simply a case of brother, no different, and it makes no difference. So, you have here all the conditions for the canonical definition of politics, of the state, the relation to autochthony in Greece, to the territory, the nation-state, filiation, representation, sovereignty, all these share this phallocentric concept of the social bond as friendship (para 14).

As explained in the above quote, fraternity is a phallocentric concept of friendship, but this does not necessarily mean that a woman could not have the experience of friendship with a man. It basically means that, within such a phallocentric society, there is no voice, no discourse, and no possibility of acknowledging excluded groups (Bennington, 1997).

Similarly, it has been impossible for native and nonnative teachers/instructors to join the same 'fraternity' considering the deemed phallocentric nature of any fraternal group. Although teaching English as a second language is considered as a shared archetype between the two groups, which should be sufficient to neutralize the ethnic, gender, and racial differences between them, nonnative speakers are often excluded from the native speaking fraternity.

Another common archetype that could lead to inclusivity rather than exclusivity is the emotionally tensed experiences that ESL instructors go through inside and/or outside the classroom. Experiencing such emotionally charged experiences should bring individuals together rather than apart. However, no matter how inclusive a fraternity is, it is evident there will always be a possibility for exclusion. For instance, a fraternity that shares teaching ESL as a common archetype can naturally exclude math teachers. In his book, *The politics of friendship*, Derrida (2005) explains:

> Fraternization is always caught up, like friendship itself, in a vertiginous process of hyperbolization. There is always someone, something, more fraternal than the brother, more friendly than the friend, more equitable than justice or the law – and the measure is given by the immensity and incommensurability of this "more" (p. 239).

Although a fraternity can be used as a process of inclusion, it can still exclude others that do not fit certain criteria. Therefore, Derrida suggests a non-phallocentric model of democracy as a mechanism of identification and inclusivity. Derrida defines this model of democracy to Bennington (1997) as:

> A democracy, which is so strange that it, is no longer simply reducible to citizenship, to the organization of a regime for a given society as nation-state. I've nothing simply against the nation-state, I've tried to understand what today goes beyond the borders of the nation-state, and I'm now slowly approaching the last question of hospitality (para. 16).

Such a deconstructed archetype of democracy, which goes beyond the limits of the classical nation-state model, allows for questioning the canonical concept of friendship/fraternity. Moreover, by adopting Derrida's deconstructed version of democracy, one is able to celebrate singularity, away from classical politics and classical models of friendship. It is through maintaining justice for each singularity in its absolute particularity and uniqueness and by not treating one as a brother, a non-brother, or as a member of a definite fraternity, a new space will be created where one and the other can meet (Derrida, 2005).

3 Research Methodology

Although nativeness and nonnativeness may seem to be different in what they stand for, their interconnectedness cannot be denied. Any changes that might occur to a teacher's identity are expected to cause modification in selecting and using their teaching strategies. Native and nonnative teachers/instructors alike often find themselves needing to try different teaching methods and strategies by way of adjusting to a new teaching context and/or group of speakers. That is, teacher identity and a teacher's preference of instruction methods are contingent on the social, cultural, historical, and institutional conditions in which they are situated. Therefore, changes in a teacher's identity and the use of their teaching strategies have to cater to their professional needs.

The focal participant in this research, Wafa, holds a special position as a Kuwaiti-British citizen who, despite being born in Kuwait and holding Kuwaiti citizenship, considers herself a native speaker of English and identifies more with the English language than Arabic. The name Wafa is used here as a pseudonym in order to help ensure the participant's anonymity. The researcher approached the participant about the case study during the author's pre-writing stage. After being informed of the nature of the research and of her rights if she chose to participate, Wafa immediately agreed to take part in the research study and signed a consent form detailing information about the study's voluntary nature, right of withdrawal, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Through first-hand experience with the respondent, the researcher was convinced that Wafa's need to continuously adjust to new teaching contexts and different groups of learners made her a suitable candidate for the case study. As she has acquired the English language by being exposed to it as a first language at home, teaching English as a second language in Kuwait is deemed to be a new pedagogical setting for her. Living and studying from the age of 2–9 years in the UK, while also studying it as a first language in an English-medium school in Kuwait at a later stage of her childhood and adolescence, are two underlying factors for considering teaching ESL in Kuwait as a new educational setting. In other words, the group of local learners that Wafa teaches in a mid-sized college in Kuwait have a different outlook on the English language than the participant. This is evidenced by the fact that, despite being Kuwaiti, Wafa sometimes cannot relate to her students' inquiries about some English grammar ambiguities.

Like the nonnative teachers/instructors of English that encounter various tensions as they attempt to position themselves through ways that legitimize them as English teachers/instructors and speakers, native speakers like Wafa also encounter the same anxieties while attempting to explicitly teach English grammar. This chapter's findings and discussion section analyzes Wafa's personal experience with teaching English in an L2 setting through a narrative lens. As much of the research on second and foreign language teacher identity has been conducted through a narrative lens thus far (Barkhuizen & Benson, 2008; Barkhuizen et al., 2014), narrative methods have been opted here in order to gain a greater understanding of the nuances of the findings. Conducting research through a narrative lens is also referred to as narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Barkhuizen et al. argue that:

> Narrative has become both a legitimate mode of thinking and writing in research and the focal point of a variety of approaches that come under the heading of 'narrative inquiry,' [which is] complementary to experiment, observation, survey, and other research methods (p. 1).

Narrative inquiry is a research method that brings together research and storytelling by using stories as research data or by employing storytelling as a tool to analyze or present findings (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). Storytelling is an organic way of making sense of life and has great applications as a tool for reflective thinking in teacher development. Barkhuizen and Benson (2008) argue that teachers are natural storytellers who tend to incorporate narrative activities in their professional

development. As all personal experiences are naturally storied (Barkhuizen & Benson, 2008; Bolton, 2006), storytelling is also considered an important way of communicating and understanding in the field of professional development. Golombek and Johnson (2017) call for a focus on John Dewey's (1933) theory of experience in which Dewey argues that for experience to become of an educational value rather than a mere habit for students, learners need to engage in a:

> Reflective cycle – a process of active, persistent, and careful observation, consideration, and reflection; thus, to engage in that cycle, students needed to adopt a mind-set exhibiting open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination) (p. 16).

Through shedding light on Dewey's (1933) theory, Golombek and Johnson (2017) are able to argue that teachers also need to engage in a process of self-reflection and self-observation in order to reach the potential changes that self-examination can produce. Johnson and Golombek (2002) write that:

> Inquiry into experience enables teachers to act with foresight. It gives them increasing control over their thoughts and actions; grants their experiences enriched, deepened meaning; and enables them to be more thoughtful and mindful of their work (pp. 6–7).

As mentioned earlier, teacher identity and a teacher's preference of teaching materials and methods are influenced by the situational conditions in which they are teaching. Similarly, the knowledge that is generated through narrative/teacher inquiry is shaped by the local situation and experiences of the teacher (Golombek & Johnson, 2017). As narrative inquiry is believed to be the most suitable tool for capturing the nature of experiences once they are analyzed from the perspective of those who experience them (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), this chapter utilizes Wafa's teaching reflections as data which are analyzed as research findings. Wafa's narratives are extracted from a corpus of data that includes a structured interview and reflective journal entries. These extracted narratives are analyzed to add to the research corpus of teacher identity, emotion labor and teacher reflexivity.

The following interview questions were used to guide the research by prompting the participant to elaborate on her specific teaching experiences and share her conception of teacher identity and emotion labor. It is vital to note that reading the findings of Árva and Medgyes's (2000) study inspired the phrasing of some of the following interview questions:

1. In Kuwait, are native teachers/instructors *taken seriously* by the students in class?
2. Would you say that native teachers/instructors *know the language* more than nonnative teachers?
3. Do you find nonnative teachers/instructors to have a superior metacognitive knowledge of *English grammar*? Why, why not?
4. Do you find yourself more lenient than nonnative teachers/instructors with *following textbooks/course books*?
5. Do you find yourself much more tolerant of *student mistakes* while teaching in class?

6. Would you say that native teachers/instructors are more able to *motivate* the students about learning the language than nonnative teachers?
7. Would you say that native teachers/instructors are able to provide more *cultural insights* when teaching the language? Is that important to your teaching approach?

4 Research Findings and Discussion

Identity cannot be defined in a binary way or in isolation, for the simple reason that individuals are made up of different characteristics that they experientially acquire or biologically inherit. These identity characteristics are naturally multiple and thus cannot be dualistically defined. Ricento (2005) states that an individual's identity consists of different memberships based on race, gender, class, and linguistic repertoire, which are understood and are employed differently based on the situational context one is in. However, these memberships are often overlooked when nativeness and nonnativeness are defined in a binary fashion. Identity is negotiable and one's individual identity cannot only be understood in relation to the Other. Expanding upon this point, Tsui (2007) explains that identity cannot just be regarded relational, as it is experiential, or shaped by one's lived experiences.

In the interview, the researcher has attempted to explore Wafa's ideas about teacher identity and her emotion labor affected experiences. The following excerpt is part of Wafa's attempt to define nativeness:

> Students at college or university undertaking an English foundation course, I feel, expect to be taught by a native teacher let's say from the UK, the States, or Australia (Response to question #1.)

Native teachers/instructors are defined here as mainly those coming from the UK, the USA, or Australia, implying the exclusivity and legitimacy of a certain group as English speakers and bearers of the English culture. Here, Wafa explains:

> For example, when teaching [author] stance, I have had to explain a certain phrase that is commonly used in Britain, or when reading a story set in the UK, old English may be used or difficult vocabulary that Kuwaiti students are not accustomed to hearing. Overall, this is not what makes an English teacher (Response to question #7.)

It is vital to note that Wafa is aware that to be a 'bearer' of a certain culture does not qualify one to teach the language of that culture. However, her previous attempt to define identity based solely on citizenship works against her hybrid situation. It is because identity is pluralistic in nature that a Kuwaiti-British citizen, like Wafa, can still be categorized as a native speaker of the English language. If nativeness was defined solely in terms of citizenship, native speakers like Wafa, who holds Kuwaiti citizenship, and speakers who do not come from inner circle English-speaking countries would be deprived of the opportunity to be perceived as legitimate English language teachers/instructors and speakers.

What is interesting to note about Wafa's case is that although she defines nativity in citizenship terms, thereby connoting the fixity of what makes up an identity, it is

by grouping herself as a Kuwaiti-British citizen in the native speaker group that she is able to defy strict and rigid discourses of nativeness. Believing that identity is a fixed and stable entity should automatically and logically exclude a citizen of an Arab country, like Wafa, from being a native speaker of English and a bearer of its culture. Being a hybrid makes it much more complex to reduce nativity to a citizenship dependent identity. Similar to Davies' (1996) definition of nativity, Wafa defines nativity from a bio-developmental perspective, which implies attributing a much superior understanding of English vocabulary and word pronunciation to native speakers because English is their mother tongue. Her following response is reflective of this theory:

> Yes, they may know more vocabulary and have a higher understanding of how words are pronounced because the language is, after all, their mother tongue and they have been exposed to it longer than nonnatives. However, I feel nonnatives can tell you why a sentence is grammatically correct and structured in a certain way, whereas a native will just know – there's that gray area again! (Response to question #2.)

Two aspects that Wafa brings into play when differentiating between native and nonnative teachers/instructors in the above excerpt are lexical knowledge and pronunciation. That is, she explains that native speakers are supposed to go beyond any lexical limitations and have flawless pronunciation, while nonnative speakers are not. This is problematic, as it naturally excludes native speakers, labeled as so by citizenship, who are far from fluent in speech from this equation. This assumption also works against nonnative speakers who are regarded as fluent in English and enjoy a 'native-like' lexical range. The absence of any of the above characteristics should, therefore, not disqualify a person from being a native speaker, but should be regarded as incidental (Cook, 1999).

Another aspect that Wafa notes when differentiating between native and nonnative teachers/instructors is dealing with grammar mistakes in class. Placing two speaker groups in a binary automatically makes it a black-and-white situation, where it becomes unacceptable to tolerate things in the gray area. Wafa's Kuwaiti identity is negotiated when answering questions about teaching grammar lessons to students in Kuwait.

> I shy away from grammar and do have to refer to textbooks or the Internet when lesson planning if a grammar rule will be explicitly taught in a particular lesson. Although basic grammar is taught at school, from year 3 onwards usually, nonnatives are taught grammar rules and are required to memorize irregular verbs, for example, whereas natives have learned the correct verb to use since infancy, it becomes a habit so to speak (Response to question #3.)

Negotiating her Kuwaiti identity in this situation is only natural, as individuals are expected to constantly negotiate and reconstruct their multiple identities when interacting with others in different situations and contexts. Furthermore, admitting to "shy away" from explicitly teaching grammar indicates that this aspect of English teaching causes an emotional tension – an issue that may not be limited to just nonnative teachers/instructors. Another example of Wafa experiencing identity negotiation can be witnessed in her following response:

> No, I am not lenient with mistakes in grammar, for example, and always fight the urge to correct every mistake in a student's paper. I believe a nonnative instructor would understand why students are making certain mistakes, especially Arab instructors, and would therefore be more lenient. Perhaps even grade a bit more fairly because of an affiliation with their own past issues when learning the English language (Response to question #5.)

According to Wafa's response, nonnative teachers/instructors are perceived as more lenient with grammar mistakes as they themselves faced difficulty while learning the language – making it a black-and-white situation. This interestingly contradicts Árva and Medgyes's (2000) finding that NESTs were more tolerant of student errors. As a result, it becomes almost impossible to accept the notion that nonnative teachers can also be non-lenient with grammar mistakes. This in fact resonates with Thompson and Fioramonte's (2012) previously mentioned argument about nonnative teachers showing more empathy for their students, as they also previously learned the language rather than having acquired it. Nevertheless, by negotiating her Kuwaiti identity, Wafa clearly removes herself from the nonnative teacher group when dealing with grammar mistakes in class.

There is an obvious distinction in her answer about how native teachers/instructors deal with grammar mistakes in class as opposed to nonnative ones. By stating that nonnative teachers/instructors are perhaps more lenient with grammatical errors, Wafa does not try, by any means, to place native teachers/instructors at a superior level to nonnative ones. This is because her belief that nonnative teachers can sometimes be better at teaching grammar than native ones is also encapsulated in the following response:

> Yes, from my own experience, nonnative teachers in the department I teach in have a much higher understanding of English grammar than I do, and I would be the first to admit it (Response to question #3.)

Another distinction that Wafa makes between the two groups is in relation to following textbooks while teaching. This distinction is apparent in the following response:

> I think, for the most part, this is a teacher preference, however, in my case I do find myself to be more lenient when following textbooks as I do believe that students learn the language better when listening to it or practicing it rather than completing exercise after exercise on paper. I also feel that a nonnative, who has gained a position as an English instructor, has acquired their proficiency of the English language from textbooks and memorization and would, therefore, have more trust and belief in the ability of textbook teaching than I would (Response to question #4.)

Arguing that NESTs are more lenient about following the textbook is resonant of Árva and Medgyes's (2000) finding that "non-NESTs were alleged to stick to the textbook, whereas their native colleagues were using a variety of materials" (p. 364). Wafa's mention of the word "memorization" is worth noting here. Being graduates of government schooling in Kuwait, most students are known to have excelled in school, mostly based on memorization. Foundation English students in Kuwait who come from government schools are often reported as doing much better at oral presentations and vocabulary tests due to memorization. Unfortunately, these students

were trained to memorize information rather than critically analyze it. Nevertheless, what is interesting is that memorization has also been attributed to nonnative teachers/instructors by Wafa, thereby placing both nonnative students and nonnative teachers/instructors in the same group.

This finding arguably echoes Cook's (1999) coined term *L2 users*, which he employs to refer to nonnative speakers, excluding L2 learners, "because of the difficulty in defining the final state of L2 learning" (p. 188). However, any L2 learner is argued to become an L2 user whenever they use the language outside the classroom (Cook, 1999). Nevertheless, L2 learners and L2 users have been grouped together in Wafa's responses, reflecting a different affinity between their learning backgrounds, founded mainly on memorization.

In addition, Wafa argues that sharing a similar learning background has positive effects on the students, because it becomes a source for motivation, as highlighted in the following excerpt:

> For a Kuwaiti student to be taught English by a Kuwaiti instructor, who attended government school, must be a huge source of motivation for them. I should imagine that they feel a great sense of pride and enthusiasm to learn English as their instructor did (Response to question #6.)

Yet, Wafa's below comment conversely sheds light on nonnative students preferring to be taught by native teachers rather than nonnative ones:

> This, I believe, is mainly because of their past experience at government high schools where English teachers, generally, are nonnatives and make mistakes, especially when it comes to pronunciation. For example, in Kuwait, many jokes are shared about the low level of English taught at government schools; therefore, students tend to have more faith in a native teacher, and may even feel a sense of confidence that they are learning the language in the best possible way. This of course is debatable, for many reasons, which I'm sure, will be covered in this interview (Response to question #1.)

Although Wafa seems to be confident that the majority of students in Kuwait prefer to be taught by native teachers/instructors, defined by Wafa as ones that come from inner circle English-speaking countries like the USA, the UK, and Australia, she still believes it is debatable. Wafa's uncertainty arises from the fact that defining nativeness and nonnativeness as objectively distinctive categories is in itself questionable. This is evident in Wafa's previously indicated realization of the complexity and the fluidity within each archetype. In addition to the interview questions above, I explored Wafa's reflexivity attempts through analyzing her two journal entries that reflect two of her teaching experiences inside the classroom.

4.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity, also known as reflective pedagogy (Bailey, 2012), has served as a "valuable platform for teacher identity development" (De Costa, 2015, p. 136). It has been particularly important for nonnative teachers, as they are argued in the literature to encounter several tensions while attempting to position themselves in ways

that legitimize them as English teachers and speakers (De Costa, 2015). However, this is only partially true, as it limits the need for reflexivity or reflective pedagogy to nonnative teachers/instructors only. Bailey (2012) defines reflective pedagogy as the process in which professionals evaluate their pedagogical practices, motives, and rationales.

In developing this argument, Bailey (2012) offers Dewey's (1933) views of reflective pedagogy, in which he states, "Wholehearted teachers regularly examine their own assumptions and beliefs and the results of their actions, and approach all situations with the attitude that they can learn something new" (Dewey, 1933, p. 11, cited in Bailey, 2012). Regular examination and reflection of one's teaching practice should not be limited to one group of speakers, because it is an important element for professional development. Wafa, who considers herself a native speaker of the English language, also resorts to reflexivity as a means to evaluate what happens in the classroom and to decide on more suitable teaching methods for achieving intended learning outcomes.

In her first journal entry, which she entitled *Sarcasm and Idioms*, Wafa recounts the struggle she experienced when coming across idioms and sarcastic phrases in reading classes. She explains, "Arab students generally take such phrases very literally; therefore, they can miss the tongue in cheek stance of the author. In addition, the meanings of idioms are unpredictable and cannot be analysed word for word". (Journal entry- *Sarcasm and Idioms*.) As a result, Wafa opted to skip explaining idioms in class as a way to avoid the emotional strain it caused her. On the contrary, soon after reflecting on what was happening in class, Wafa realized the emotional tensions that this new teaching habit was still causing; she explains:

> Skipping over them became a habit I had succumbed to when teaching challenging articles to weaker students. Such a habit developed because it can be very tedious and frustrating to explain sarcasm and idioms. To a native speaker, they come naturally and idioms, undoubtedly, have a strong connection to culture – a culture I was raised in and they, ultimately, were not. Hence, I soon became aware of communication failure between myself and my students, not only when analysing articles, but also when speaking freely or using humour in or outside the classroom (Journal entry- *Sarcasm and Idioms*.)

After evaluating the situation, Wafa was able to diagnose the issue at hand by realizing that the students were not exposed to enough cultural elements of the target language while learning it in their formative years. Consequently, she came to the conclusion that integrating sarcasm and idioms more often in class would help students become more aware of the target language and its culture. Wafa is now able to overcome any emotional strain caused by teaching metaphorical language by naturally integrating more of it in class. She now integrates it into her teaching as follows:

> Using sarcasm regularly, particularly when students misbehaved, and pointing it out to them in everyday speech consequently helped them identify it easily as time passed. Furthermore, I now approach idioms through extended context and prediction rather than attempting to dismiss them entirely. Overall, these concepts are an important aspect in any language and need to be practised by learners so they can express emotions and ideas the way a native speaker might (Journal entry- *Sarcasm and Idioms*.)

In her second journal entry, entitled *Writing Class – Grammar*, Wafa highlights the struggle experienced when teaching grammar in an ESL class. At the start of her reflection piece, she clearly differentiates between native and nonnative speakers and their abilities and skills to teach grammar explicitly. She also describes the emotional tension caused by such teaching experience as follows:

> As a native speaker, I dread certain grammatical aspects of a writing class in fear of not being able to explain exactly why a sentence is constructed the way it is. "It just sounds right" is not an adequate nor appropriate answer for an ESL learner, however, I would be lying if I said the thought never crosses my mind (Journal entry- *Writing Class – Grammar*.)

Zeichner and Liston (1996) define teaching as "a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works" (p. 6). As stated above, Wafa's English language abilities are acquired rather than learned. They are shaped by the social conditions she was born into; therefore, justifying why a sentence is structured a certain way by saying, "It just sounds right", expectedly becomes a natural explanation about many grammar points. However, such justification is deemed to be inadequate by Wafa, as her current experience with the English language is formed by the social conditions under which she works. Nevertheless, after recognizing her grammar teaching related struggle, Wafa was able to evaluate her teaching methods in class and seek help from her colleagues, as demonstrated in the following entry:

> I have often asked other teachers in my department for tips and strategies on how to conduct a particular grammatical exercise, and more often than not, these teachers have all been non-natives! I clearly took the English language for granted before starting my job as an ESL teacher and have had to better my understanding in order to feel confident in the classroom (Journal entry- *Writing Class – Grammar*.)

Both reflective journal entries indicate the significance of integrating reflexivity or reflective pedagogy by native and nonnative speakers alike, as it is considered a vital element for overcoming emotional tensions and for sustaining effective teaching and professional growth.

5 Conclusion: Summary and Ending Thought

Emotional tensions indeed play a vital role in examining teacher identity development. Such examination often invokes a native-nonnative dichotomy between language teachers. While nonnative English-speaking teachers/instructors have always been the center for exploring the interplay between cognition and emotion, this study attempted to reconceptualize native and nonnative speakers as social subjects, free of any preconceived stereotypes. This case study has come to the conclusion that, since some L2 users can pass for native speakers, even if this number may only be relatively small, and since some native speakers are argued not to be 'fluent' in

their mother tongue, the attainment of a native-nonnative dichotomy must be reconsidered. In addition, it has become very problematic to define nativity based solely on citizenship, as it works against the pluralistic nature of identity.

If nativeness is merely defined by citizenship terms, it deprives nonnative speakers and hybrid native speakers like Wafa, who do not come from inner circle English-speaking countries, from being perceived as legitimate English language teachers/instructors and speakers. By examining the case of Wafa, this chapter has aimed to broaden the scope of English language teacher identity. However, addressing this issue is not only limited to cases of hybridity, as it has become generally difficult to identify what differentiates a native speaker from a nonnative one.

As an attempt to obliterate any dividing lines between NESTS and NNESTS, this chapter has examined the significance of practicing reflexivity or reflective pedagogy as a way to negotiate a number of emotional challenges by both native and nonnative teachers/instructors. It has also concluded that, through re-examining the role of Jacques Derrida's deconstructed democracy concept as a mechanism for identification and inclusion, one could escape the confines of the essentialist characterization of nativity and its consequences on nonnative speakers of the target language. Wafa, and all educators, should be treated as singular beings, devoid from predetermined ethnic, gender, and racial conceptions. It is by treating each case singularly, that one is able to conceptualize and hopefully create new spaces for possible identification, where educators can grow, relate, and empathize with each other.

It is important that more studies are conducted to explore this area in greater detail. Before the findings of the current case study can be generalized to other contexts, a larger systematic investigation needs to be conducted. Although studies with a small number of subjects can be conducted in a relatively short time, with regard to enrolling the subject(s), interviewing them, requesting them to complete journal entries, and reviewing their records, inviting more participants in similar future studies would add another level of validity and generalizability to the findings. This, naturally, requires extra time, effort, and resources. However, by pursuing further studies in this area, the potential value of such investigative work can be sustained.

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The Effect of English Study at School on Later Foreign Language Learning: How Chinese People Experience Learning and Using Japanese While Living and Studying Overseas

Lanzhen Zhang and David Coulson

Abstract English is taught intensively and prescriptively in China. The insistence on accuracy in English instruction in the country is driven by competitive entrance examinations. However, it can induce a strong sense of foreign language-learning anxiety. Our focus is how later third-language (L3) learning of Japanese is influenced by the early experiences of English education in characteristics such as Willingness to Communicate (WTC), perfectionism and tolerance of ambiguity. Through a combination of a questionnaire and qualitative interviews, the experiences and attitudes of 57 Chinese L3-speakers of Japanese were solicited. Issues such as a fear of loss of face, which springs from an insistence on accuracy in Chinese education, is reproduced in this second foreign-language learning situation. This feeling is related to perfectionism, of which the item relating to personal standards proved to be the most important item. Results showed that, while the attitude of "ingrained correctness" was pervasive, encountering new practical criteria for learning and use gave them a strong, clear sense of themselves as proficient language users. Moreover, their positive experience with Japanese may also lead to a reappraisal of their ability in English, leading to a new understanding of the purpose of knowing English, and even the desire to relearn it.

Keywords Prescriptivism · Accuracy · Anxiety · Perfectionism · Tolerance · Willingness to Communicate (WTC) · China · Japan · English L2 · Japanese L3 · Reappraisal

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L. Zhang · D. Coulson (✉)
Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan
e-mail: gr0345hk@ed.ritsumei.ac.jp; coulson@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp

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1 Introduction

This chapter considers the long-term effect of the highly-pressurized, secondary-school education in China on the subsequent learning of foreign languages after the end of obligatory English education. High scores in standardized examinations of English are an index of academic success in China, and an extremely strong emphasis is placed on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary memorization. Due to this, many Chinese students feel anxiety over their use of faulty English, and this affects their confidence in required examinations. They also experience anxiety when Chinese teachers call on them in class in English. This is linked to a fear of losing face in front of their peers and the teacher (Li et al., 2004; Liu, 2007; Liu & Jackson, 2011; Wei, 2014).

For students who study other second languages, a common choice is Japanese. While Japanese and Chinese have distinct grammars, they share many characters, and this provides a benefit in terms of the rapid acquisition of reading proficiency. Japan is also a popular choice for many Chinese students due to its geographical proximity, relative affordability of tuition fees and reputation for safety. A high grade on the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) is a necessary precondition to enter universities and also affords chances to work in part-time jobs. Thereby, it provides chances for interaction with local people in Japan. Unlike their experience with English, the learning of Japanese is much more aligned with practical usage. Our question is whether, in this new learning environment, students' anxiety about making mistakes decreases, resulting in a greater Willingness to Communicate (WTC), or whether the ingrained experience of English learning is dominant.

In China's high schools, the typical daily schedule for students is to leave home before 7 am. Lessons end at around 6 pm, but some students may not return home until 10 pm in order to attend self-study sessions on school grounds. They may even take their evening meals at school. Tests for university entrance emphasize accuracy, so students associate this intense regimentation with the goals of foreign language learning. Those students who aim for a good university, and career, have to follow it.

The first author feels that this situation creates a high degree of perfectionism in young people. The effect of this persistent focus on accuracy on subsequent foreign language learning is one of the foci in this chapter. The issue of tolerance of ambiguity is another focus since the education system of China and, indeed, Chinese culture itself, does not encourage students to develop tolerance of linguistic features which are unclear to them (Wen & Clément, 2003). In this philosophy, the definition of a good learner is one who attends to accuracy from age nine when mandatory English lessons begin.

The first author also recalls from her school days how many pupils had high levels of anxiety in all subjects. However, whereas attaining high scores in the key subjects of mathematics and science often brought a sense of satisfaction among her peers, high scores in English tests left them with a sense of inadequacy or dissatisfaction in their communicative skills. This feeling was compounded by the fact that

school tests barely emphasized speaking skills. Generally, the result of this approach is a lack of confidence and limited WTC in English (see Liu & Jackson, 2008). Similarly, many Chinese people report a frustrating sense of not meeting expected standards in their subsequent second-language study. Many who later go to live and study in Japan may study Japanese grammar to a high level in order to pass the JLPT, but they also commonly report anxiety about their communicative ability. Their Self-rated Language Proficiency (SLP) might also be low due to their persistent anxiety related to their accustomed foreign language learning practices. Therefore, the issue of perfectionism and Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity (SLTA) is also a focus of this paper.

The experience of going through English education in China impacts the trajectory of second foreign-language learning of Japanese. A finer-grained analysis of the experiences of Chinese people can be gained through the use of qualitative interviews and a detailed questionnaire drawing together earlier research in this area. The questionnaire used here investigates WTC, Perfectionism and SLTA. In addition, participants' self-reported data on their Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) level and SLP of English and Japanese are also examined.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Willingness to Communicate

WTC refers to whether people communicate when they have freedom of choice to do so. McCroskey (1992) treated WTC as a personality trait, stating that it is related to communication apprehension, perceived communication competence, introversion-extroversion, self-esteem and so on. MacIntyre (1994) found that the factors most directly influencing WTC are perceived communication competence and communication anxiety. Later, MacIntyre and Charos (1996) amended this model, showing that these same two factors also predict WTC in second languages.

Unlike the well-established first-language ability that most people have, the use of second languages often requires learners to communicate for specific purposes, possibly with limited or insufficient proficiency. Moreover, cross-cultural communication is complex. MacIntyre et al. (1998) constructed a model which presents WTC as a situation-based variable rather than a fixed trait (see Fig. 1). It is comprised of six layers. Layers I-III show situation specific-factors and layers IV-VI represent 'enduring' (p. 547) factors. WTC underlies communication. Whether people actually use their L2 (Layer I) is strongly linked with the concept of WTC, which is shown in Layer II. In Layer III, there are two more critical factors related to WTC – Desire to Communicate with a Specific Person and State Communicative Self-Confidence. The latter factor, in particular, is affected by perceived communicative competence and communication anxiety. In fact, all 12 factors rise vertically from the bottom to the top, and the situational-based variables (Layers I-III) directly

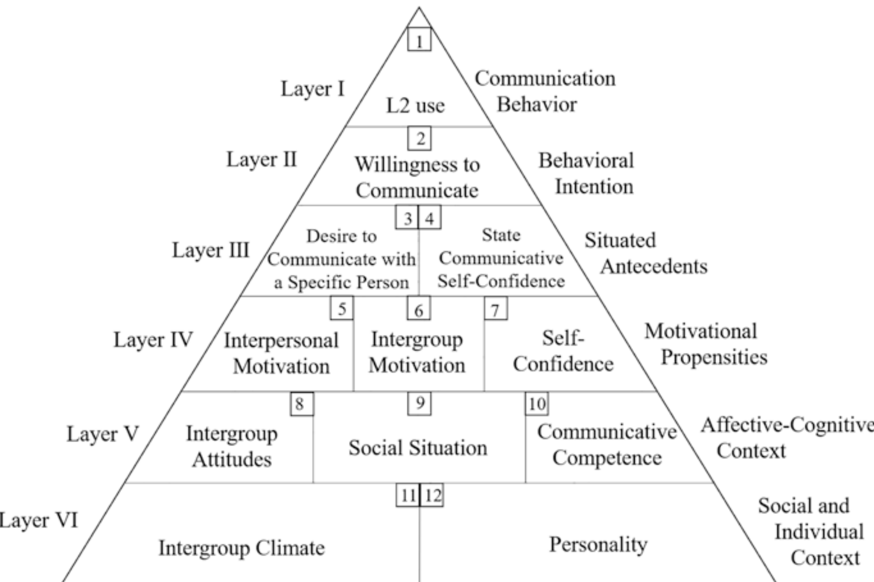

Fig. 1 Heuristic model of variables influencing WTC. (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

affect WTC and whether an L2 is actually used. Moreover, these situational-based variables are cultivated by the enduring factors in Layers IV-VI. In sum, all layers form an important, unified whole.

MacIntyre and Legatto (2010) developed a new approach to the relationship between dynamic systems and WTC, conceptualizing WTC as a dynamic system in which individual differences should be considered on a moment-to-moment basis. To investigate this, they recruited six English L1 female college students of French with similar backgrounds. The subjects completed three questionnaires: WTC-Trait (MacIntyre et al., 2003); Anxiety, PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982); and Extraversion (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). They were video-recorded talking about eight different topics before being asked to watch their performance and evaluate their WTC changes (−5 to +5). Participants' WTC maps were printed and, referring to these, they were asked to discuss the reasons for their WTC changes. The videos were also evaluated by the researchers for their emotional state through non-verbal signals. The observations of non-verbal signals may not be consistent with the personal feelings of the subjects' self-reports. Further, sudden falls in WTC were directly related to the unfamiliarity of the topic and the degree of mastery of the topic-related vocabulary. That is, the learners' perceptions of their own ability influenced the immediate change in WTC. This research demonstrated that anxiety is not necessarily related to immediate WTC changes in an independent manner. The most important factor is subjects' self-perception about whether they think their language ability can fully cope with the current topic.

MacIntyre et al. (1997) reported a correlation between anxiety, perceived L2 competence, and actual L2 competence among English L1 university students of French. Perceived communication competence has a strong relationship with WTC, and how a person perceives their competence is strongly linked to their WTC in a foreign language. Unlike previous research, the authors showed that learners cannot actually evaluate their language proficiency very accurately. If biases of self-rating occur, then self-enhancement is better than self-derogation in the process of language learning.

Dewaele (2017) investigated the relationship between Perfectionism and FLA with a large sample of 400 subjects with diverse cultural backgrounds. He found a very strong positive correlation between Perfectionism, especially the fear of making mistakes, and FLA. Further, Dewaele and Shan Ip (2013) examined the link between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and SLTA in Chinese learners of English studying in Hong Kong through the use of a questionnaire. The results indicated that students with a high level of tolerance of second-language ambiguity were less anxious and felt more confident of their second-language proficiency.

Rubin (1975, p. 45) stated that SLTA can be considered as a characteristic of good language learners since such individuals are good at dealing with uncertainty. The authors found a significant, negative correlation between classroom anxiety and tolerance of ambiguity. For learners with a traditional Confucian learning-culture background to claim to be proficient in a language implies a high degree of confidence with formal accuracy. This is consistent with Wen and Clément (2003) who claimed that Chinese students have less tolerance for ambiguity than learners in other countries.

2.2 Chinese Learners' Foreign Language WTC

Wen and Clément (2003) argued that to understand the WTC of Chinese students rooted in their completely different L1 Chinese cultural context, the pyramid model of MacIntyre et al. (1998) needs to be reinterpreted. In China, Wen and Clément continue, English is considered as one crucial factor for university admission, and this is seen in how English learning accounts for up to 20–25% of Chinese students' study time (p. 19).

The emergence of concern with saving face is based in the Chinese culture of Confucianism, and children are educated in such behavioral standards from an early age. Therefore, as adults, they may still be quite sensitive to social evaluation and are generally cautious in public. Further, as Chinese learners learn new second languages, some still feel cautious about classroom communication, connected to the possibility of others evaluating them.

Liu and Jackson (2008) investigated 547 Chinese non-English major students and found that: (1) most students were more willing to engage in English conversation on an interpersonal level rather than in classrooms; (2) over one third experienced FLA in their English classroom, especially over the fear of being negatively

judged; (3) unwillingness to communicate and FLA significantly positively correlated with each other and with participants' self-rated levels of English proficiency.

In addition, loyalty to their culture and the shame of betrayal may make it difficult for Chinese to adapt their cultural identity and to integrate into local norms while living abroad for extended periods. Conversely, concerning obedience to authority, Shi (2006) reported that Chinese students do not strictly follow their textbooks or teachers as much as before. Therefore, it can be stated that current research should adopt a dynamic rather than a static perspective on the impact of traditional culture on Chinese students (e.g. Peng, 2012).

In the first author's experience, teenagers who grow up in today's more open and diverse cultural atmosphere are less likely to dwell on negative inner feelings. Jiang and Dewaele (2019) reported that Chinese students' enjoyment of foreign-language learning is predicted more strongly by teacher-related variables (43.2%), such as whether they are encouraging and engaging, while FLCA is predicted mostly by learner-internal variables (37.3%). However, Chinese students may still be more anxious than students in other countries.

As the literature presented here indicates, it is clear that the background educational philosophy of China often leads to low levels of tolerance of ambiguity and high personal standards which, in turn, result in high levels of learner anxiety. Chinese students generally study foreign languages intensively in China, and the lasting effect of this means that Chinese students' use and learning of second languages overseas are still strongly influenced by the typical Chinese learning mindset. Thereby, it is difficult for Chinese learners to achieve "readiness" for communication, and this is reflected in their possible unwillingness to communicate. However, the nature of WTC also reminds us that there are large individual differences. Therefore, it is important to research the issue of FLA from an individual perspective.

Concerning the characteristics of Chinese culture and educational concepts described above, two traits – Perfectionism and SLTA – attract special attention. The interrelationship of these two key variables is presented in Fig. 2, based on the review above. FLA and SLP are directly linked to WTC. They are also related to each other. Further, Perfectionism and SLTA are related to FLA. As Dewaele and Shan Ip (2013) reported, there is a strong correlation between SLTA and

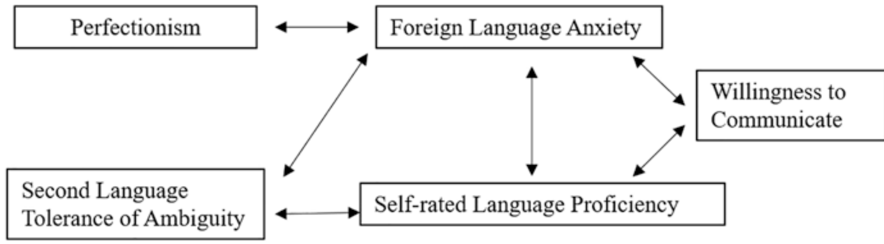

Fig. 2 The correlation between WTC and four factors

SLP. Concerning these points, the research presented in this chapter will investigate whether the correlation shown in Fig. 2 also holds true in multilingual Chinese.

2.3 Research Questions

In order to explore these issues in more detail, one dependent variable (WTC) and four independent variables (FLA, SLP, Perfectionism, and SLTA) were identified for further investigation in the current research. Concerning these factors, the following research questions are posed:

Q1: Perfectionism:

Which sub-dimensions of Perfectionism are significant among multilingual Chinese?

Q2: SLTA:

(a) Is low SLTA common among multilingual Chinese?
(b) Is there a relationship between knowing more languages/dialects and SLTA?
(c) Is there a link between time spent living in the target community (Japan) and SLTA?

Q3: Perfectionism, SLTA and FLA:

What are the correlations between Perfectionism, SLTA and FLA (English and Japanese) of multilingual Chinese people?

Q4: SLP, FLA and WTC:

What are the correlations between SLP, FLA and WTC in both English and Japanese of multilingual Chinese people?

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants

The main participant group in the study consisted of 57 Chinese people living in Japan who were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix A). They all reported that at least one of their second languages was at an advanced level, and, in the case of Japanese, they have either passed the highest level of the JLPT or lived in Japan for over 10 years. In the case of English, they needed an IELTS score of 6.0 or equivalent.

A subgroup of six respondents who were identified with English pseudonyms was drawn from the main participant group to take part in qualitative interviews. These were conducted in their native Chinese. Their mean length of residence in Japan was around 5.6 years, and they were either working or enrolled in graduate programs. Their Japanese ability was strong, with 5 having JLPT Grade 1 and one having lived in Japan for 14 years. The criteria for selection included knowing at least two foreign languages which were usually English and Japanese. Interview participants' ages ranged from 24 to 37 and they had a range of educational experiences. All interview participants were acquaintances of the first author. Appendix B details this group's demographic information.

3.2 Materials and Procedure

One dependent variable (WTC) and four independent variables (FLA, SLP, Perfectionism, and SLTA) were measured in the questionnaire as detailed in Table 1.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. First, participants' background information was collected with a specific focus on gender, profession, education level, time lived in Japan, number of languages known, self-rated L2 proficiency, and FLA level. In the second questionnaire, three of the scales from Table 1 (English and Japanese version of the WTCS, FMPS and SLTAS) were employed. The Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTCS) is a probability-estimate scale which scores from 0 to 100 (0 = never, 100 = always). Response options for the FMPS and SLTAS scales were in a 5-point Likert-scale format, with options ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

The research tool for the qualitative phase of the research was Steps for Coding and Theorization (SCAT) – a semi-structured interview technique (Otani, 2011). The six interviewees first completed the same questionnaire with the main participant group before being interviewed. Immediately following questionnaire completion, the interviews were conducted. Questions prepared for the interview, as shown in Appendix C, concerned foreign-language learning experiences, self-rated L2

Table 1 Variables and measurements

Variable	Measurement
Scales	
Willingness to Communicate	Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTCS) – McCroskey, 1992
Perfectionism	Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) – Frost et al., 1990
Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity	Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (SLTAS) – Ely, 1995
Self-Reported Measures	
Foreign Language Anxiety	Self-report (1–5)
Self-rated Language Proficiency	Self-report (1–5)

competence, level of self-reported second-language anxiety and fluctuations of WTC. Following coding of the interview data, theoretical descriptions based on the answers from each participant were written.

4 Results

4.1 Results of Qualitative Research

This section first describes the results of the six participants' answers to the questionnaire, followed by the theoretical description, based on the SCAT coding, for each participant. Finally, the results of the group with the selected six participants are detailed. Table 2 features questionnaire scale and self-reported scores for the six interview participants.

Analysis of the six SCAT interviews revealed that participants fell into two distinct categories, which we labeled G1 and G2, based on the learning profiles of their first foreign language (English). G1 consists of Alex, Betty and Helen. Their performance and grades in English at school were strong, and they had successfully passed the Chinese college entrance examination to pursue undergraduate studies in high-ranking universities. G2 consists of Chris, Daniel and Gloria. Their English grades were poor, and they all indicated that they had given up learning English at certain stages of their secondary schooling. Their scores were not good enough to enter high-ranking universities in China, admission into which is associated with better career prospects. Chris and Daniel chose to come to Japan to start their undergraduate studies, while Gloria went to work in Japan after graduating from a vocational high school in China.

Table 2 Interview participants' scale and self-reported scores

Name[a]	Alex	Betty	Chris	Daniel	Gloria	Helen	*Mean*	*SD*
Scale scores								
Japanese WTC	74.5	51.4	63.1	55.3	62.5	56.5	60.6	7.4
English WTC	57.3	65.2	39.6	87.5	57.5	57.6	60.8	14.2
Perfectionism	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.5	2.0	3.7	3.1	0.6
SLTA	41	40	42	49	28	42	40.3	6.2
Self-reported scores								
Anxiety of Japanese	3	3	1	1	1	3	2.0	1.0
Anxiety of English	4	2	4	3	2	2	2.8	0.9
Self-rated Japanese proficiency	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	0.5
Self-reported English proficiency	2	4	2	2	1	4	2.5	1.1

[a]Participant pseudonyms

Participants in Group 1

Alex: Alex strongly desires to show her "unique self". This refers to her identity based on her knowledge of unusual Chinese dialects and foreign languages, and her ability to think critically. Concerning her academic ability, she is humble and dislikes praise as an "extreme situation" to be resisted. This emotion springs from her strong requirement for precision and accuracy, reflecting her perfectionist tendency. In describing what comprises her WTC in English and Japanese, including during language classes, she states that in the past only being with her "internal" friends allowed her to relax which facilitates her WTC. After 2 years in graduate school in Japan, Alex eventually became more willing to communicate, because she had gained the approval of her academic advisors and classmates in using Japanese. Consequently, her self-rating in Japanese improved to a standard she wanted, like her English.

The word "internal" embodies two points. First, it matches the influence of interpersonal motivation in the WTC pyramid since, with her intimates, there is stronger WTC. Second, it shows the influence of "internal and external differences" in Chinese culture on her. In China, many people feel that they have to save face in front of people who are not close friends. Language confidence and overall confidence affect Alex's WTC in negative and positive ways. If she rates herself as having low competence in Japanese, her WTC declines. When her self-evaluation rises, she can accept praise from others more easily. That is, the improvement of self-confidence and acceptance through positive external evaluations strengthens her WTC. In this way, she can once again feel her "uniqueness".

Betty: Betty has low tolerance of linguistic ambiguity. She also demands accuracy of herself in her own language skills. If her speech is not sufficiently accurate for what she wants to express, she becomes anxious and downgrades her own ability. Then, if her interlocutors show confusion about what she says, she is likely to take it as a negative evaluation, which deepens her anxiety. She describes herself as a perfectionist who must have everything as she needs it. Concerning her foreign language skill, as her proficiency rises, she becomes increasingly strict with herself. Her reflection on past errors, even from many years before, also shows this trait, but she also recognizes the effect of perfectionism on her and does try to moderate her anxiety about mistakes. This displays her self-monitoring and adjustment, a behavior also encouraged in Chinese culture.

Betty's English identity is very important to her. She is not so much influenced by other people's perceptions of her as self-oriented to satisfy her own expectations. This comes from her desire for personal growth. The effect of Chinese-style English education had a deep effect on her, so the pursuit of flawless foreign language competence in any foreign language was internalized. In the early days of learning a second foreign language (Japanese), she felt very anxious because she could not reach the same level of accuracy as her native Chinese ability, and, for this reason, she became unwilling to use Japanese.

She regards the level of her English ability as the only acceptable standard for her learning of Japanese, and also regards the requirements of Chinese-style English education as the critical standard for learning Japanese. Therefore, even though she is living in Japan now and uses Japanese for daily life and academic activities, she still has a low self-rating of her Japanese proficiency.

Helen: Helen, by her own judgement, is a perfectionist. She is enrolled in an elite Japanese university graduate program, studying through the medium of English. She pays much attention to her mistakes and feels that others will lower their evaluation of her because of her language errors. She is cautious and very concerned about her academic reputation among teachers and classmates. She has a certain degree of anxiety based on the formality of the occasion, but she can control her anxiety level in English by relying on her well-trained academic skills. Her tolerance of ambiguity in English is low since English is connected to her academic career, which was premised on accuracy. She hopes to reduce ambiguity during her use of languages through further learning, rather than being more tolerant of it.

Her tolerance of ambiguity for French and Japanese is higher than that of English because her proficiency of these two languages is still evolving. Neither French nor Japanese was a compulsory subject in school, and they rather serve more as Helen's hobby. In this way, they do not affect her grades and rankings and the proficiency of these foreign languages is not harmful to her ideal "good student" status.

Helen also has a clear understanding of her proficiency because her foreign languages have all been used in target language environments. She has moderate confidence in all of them. She is a person who does not have strong WTC, but she is not afraid of foreign language communication. She adjusts her expectations for her languages based on the evaluation of native speakers.

Participants in Group 2

Chris: For Chris, "immediacy" and "practicality" are central to his English and Japanese learning and use. English study in high school classrooms was of no interest to him since he did not care about exam grades. He is more concerned with the practicality and emotional expression of his foreign languages. The use of Japanese has enhanced his motivation to learn, so his Japanese ability has improved rapidly. He repeatedly mentioned the importance of target language "environment", and this is related to his expression of what he actually feels. However, he also has a sense of perfectionism, and this is reflected in how he sets high standards for himself and then tries to meet them. Therefore, this perfectionist tendency has little effect on his language anxiety.

He expressed his confidence in his language proficiency without worrying that other people think he might be immodest. Intergroup attitudes play an important role in his WTC. His desire to integrate into the L2 culture is reflected in his desire

to achieve emotional interaction with Japanese people. He greatly likes Japan but he cannot abandon his cultural identity. He chose a compromise by launching a career related to Japan in China. His anxiety about his proficiency has decreased as he has become more familiar with Japan, through recognition and encouragement from Japanese people. As a reflection of his gratitude, his WTC with Japanese people, and his desire to learn Japanese, has strengthened.

Daniel: Daniel is a PhD student in Japan. He is very confident in his Chinese L1, but he also believes that his Chinese is inadequate. He defines "good" as being able to use language "artistically", which is related to the Chinese esthetic concept of *yuwen hao*. He feels that, for every act and decision he makes, he is torn between his personal standards and the standards of Chinese cultural refinement. His motivation for learning shows strong self-awareness. In foreign language learning, he requires immediate feedback. He spends a lot of time and energy on learning languages, but it must principally be helpful for his personal development. He expects that his language learning is for interpersonal communication rather than examinations. Personal standards are more important to Daniel than objective measures and are more important to fulfill. He has a strong sense of perfectionism and always wants to do the best he can.

Daniel's SLP has a large impact on his language anxiety. Therefore, low-ambiguity communication helps him relax. He states that he gave up English after he met an unpleasant English teacher in grade 8. Although, he has formally learned English since junior high school, he claims that he only really learned English after starting his PhD. That is, previously he had emotionally given up on English. At one point, he believed that to do research in Japan, he only needed Japanese. However, when chances came to participate in international conferences, he finally acknowledged the importance of English in his field. In this way, English use revealed itself as important and worthwhile to him. Nevertheless, even after making practical use of his second foreign language (Japanese), Daniel still thinks the most important thing in learning English is vocabulary and grammar. In this way, he reflects the beliefs of Chinese foreign language education which are deeply rooted in him.

Gloria: Gloria is extroverted and her desire to communicate is very strong. Her personality plays an important role in her WTC and her low level of anxiety. Even if she judges that her English language proficiency is not good enough for a conversation, she is still willing to communicate through the use of single words and non-verbal communication. She can more easily tolerate non-Chinese style teaching situations, and ambiguous communication, than most of her peers. Except formal occasions at work, her FLA level is relatively low. Further, compared with other subjects, her age of leaving school was young and a long time ago, so the impact of Chinese educational concepts that she grew up with has weakened. In this way, the effect of early foreign language education has not proved permanent.

Gloria's present foreign language learning of English is based on self-study, so she does not feel any pressure to pursue accurate language output. She is more

concerned with making progress towards communicative ability during the learning process than accurate output that conforms to grammatical rules. Therefore, her learning motivation can be maintained at a high level.

4.2 Results of Quantitative Research

This section describes the statistical results of the 57 participants' answers to the questionnaire. Tables 3 and 4 feature questionnaire results for SLP, self-reported language anxiety level and WTC. Note, in particular, that we can see in Table 4 the descending degree of WTC in the four contexts: Interpersonal > Group Discussion > Public Speaking > Meeting. In both Japanese and English, WTC with a friend is lower than WTC with acquaintances.

The two most significant sub-dimensions of Perfectionism are Concern over Mistakes ($r = .879$, $p < .0001$) and Personal Standards ($r = .819$, $p < .0001$). The score of SLTA ranges from 12 to 60. The higher the score, the lower the tolerance for language ambiguity. Multilingual Chinese people involved in the study have a relatively low level of SLTA ($M = 41.2$, $SD = 8.83$, ranging from 22 to 58). Further analysis showed that items 5, 7 and 8, concerning pronunciation, grammar and accurate self-expression respectively, score higher than the others. Two factors addressed in this study (time lived in Japan and the number of known languages/dialects) are shown in Table 5.

A one-way ANOVA revealed that the number of known languages/dialects is unrelated to SLTA ($F = .081$, $df = 56$, $p =$ ns). A Pearson correlation analysis showed that time lived in Japan is negatively related to SLTA score ($r = -.272$, $p < .05$) in a statistically significant manner. This indicates that the longer participants have lived in Japan, the lower their SLTA score, and the higher their level of SLTA. Correlations between Perfectionism, SLTA and FLA (English and Japanese) are shown in Table 6.

Overall, no significant correlation was found between Perfectionism and FLA (r(E) = .112, r(J) = .103, ns). Further analysis between FLA and each sub-dimension of Perfectionism indicated that only one sub-dimension is related to FLA among participants, namely Doubt about Actions (r(E) = .298, $p < .05$; r(J) = .399, $p < .01$). Pearson correlation analyses revealed that SLTA is significantly and positively

Table 3 Results of self-rated language proficiency and self-reported language anxiety level

		M	*SD*
Self-rated language proficiency[a]	Japanese	3.32	0.705
	English	2.39	0.932
Language anxiety[b]	Japanese	2.61	0.987
	English	3.53	1.272

[a]ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = hardly communicate, 2 = basic conversation, 3 = daily use, 4 = academic/business use, 5 = nearly native); [b]ranged from 1 = never to 5 = always

Table 4 Results of WTC

	Japanese	English
Four contexts		
Interpersonal	61.8	50.5
Group discussion	59.2	50.4
Public speaking	56.8	45.5
Meeting	52.6	42.3
Three kinds of interlocutors		
Stranger	37.2	32.9
Acquaintance	68.5	56.3
Friend	66.8	52.6

Table 5 Time spent in Japan and number of known languages/dialects

Years lived in Japan			Number of known languages/dialects		
1–3	4–6	6+	3	4	5+
25 people	17 people	15 people	11 people	27 people	19 people

related to both Perfectionism ($r = .566$, $p < .0001$) and FLA ($r(E) = .262$, $p < .05$; $r(J) = .296$, $p < .05$). Correlations between SLP, FLA and WTC in both English and Japanese are shown in Table 7.

FLA of English and Japanese ($r = .455$, $p < .0001$) was found to be significantly related. The same correlation was found in the WTC of English and Japanese ($r = .583$, $p < .0001$), although it was not found in SLP. For both English and Japanese, a significant relationship emerged between SLP and FLA ($r(J) = -.329$, $p < .05$; $r(E) = -.601$, $p < .0001$). FLA and WTC ($r(J) = -.355$, $p < .01$; $r(E) = -.636$, $p < .0001$) are significantly, negatively correlated. No relationship exists between SLP and WTC ($r = .158$, p = ns) in Japanese. However, a significant correlation was found between SLP and WTC ($r = .529$, $p < .0001$) in English.

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Qualitative Research

For the multilingual Chinese participants of this study, their motivation to use their second languages is a complex mix of background learning of English under the arduous study conditions of China, and their subsequent learning of L3 Japanese in the freer conditions of actually living in the target language community as workers or students. This study has shown that their language learning psychology is deeply rooted in both sets of experiences.

Table 6 Correlations between Perfectionism, SLTA and FLA

	Perfectionism	SLTA	Anxiety of Japanese	Anxiety of English
Perfectionism	–	***	ns	ns
SLTA	***	–	*	*
Anxiety of Japanese	ns	*	–	*
Anxiety of English	ns	*	*	–

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .0001$; *ns* non-significant

Table 7 The correlations between SLP, FLA and WTC

	Japanese			English		
	SLP(J)	FLA(J)	WTC(J)	SLP(E)	FLA(E)	WTC(E)
SLP(J)	–	*	ns	ns	–	–
FLA(J)	*	–	**	–	***	–
WTC(J)	ns	**	–	–	–	***
SLP(E)	ns	–	*	–	***	**
FLA(E)	–	***	–	**	–	***
WTC(E)	–	–	***	**	***	–

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .0001$; *ns* non-significant

The six participants, all resident in Japan, had started to learn English from at least before the age of nine in a rigid, prescriptive manner. In this system, some had succeeded (e.g. Alex, Betty, and Helen) whereas others had not (Chris, Daniel, and Gloria). This learning experience, whether successful or not, affected their L3 (Japanese) learning in various ways. Their English learning experience taught them that, by definition, accuracy is key. Most of the participants later started to learn their second foreign language after graduation from high school. However, their SLP and anxiety, and consequently their WTC, were influenced by their earlier learning experiences. The theoretical descriptions from the qualitative interviews showed differences between the six participants, but numerous commonalities were also seen, in reference to the five aspects of SLTA, Perfectionism, FLA, SLP and WTC.

Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity

The typical Chinese educational concept places great emphasis on accuracy. Concerning language education, the pursuit of accuracy is reflected in the strict requirements for grammar knowledge. Mistakes in grammar and spelling are called “low-level errors” by teachers, and are expected not to appear in students’ test papers, speech and so on. After years of school education training, this “ingrained correctness” in pursuit of accuracy has been internalized by students into their own requirements and standards. This leads to the situation that, for Chinese students, ambiguity is not an appropriate thing to be tolerant of. However, the interviews with the six participants showed that, after leaving the Chinese school environment, and

especially after coming to an authentic foreign language environment in Japan, the reality and significance of ambiguity gradually became accepted by them.

Perfectionism

Hewitt and Flett (1991) reported a positive but weak correlation ($r = .30$) between self-orientated/socially prescribed perfectionism and anxiety. 'Self-oriented' means that individuals push themselves because they want to meet their own needs, and 'socially prescribed' means that they are affected most by the evaluation and attitude of other people. From the six descriptions above, it can be seen that some participants (e.g. Daniel) require themselves to meet both social standards and self-standards. The complexity of trying to fulfill multiple standards in this way makes it more likely that people might feel inadequate.

The most significant Perfectionism subscale of these six individuals is personal standards. There was a wide range of Perfectionism among the six participants. Gloria had the lowest perfectionist tendency. She repeatedly commented that it is difficult to understand many of the items of the FMPS, especially the negative wording of some items, such as concern over a mistake or parental criticism. Strong perfectionists, like Betty and Helen, showed varying emotional responses to the questionnaire items. They reported that sometimes these activated deep memories. For example, the items of the FMPS reminded them of unpleasant memories of growing up in a strict family and school environment, to the extent that they even showed a loss of interest in completing the questionnaire.

Alex and Betty commented that they are highly perfectionist, although the responses to the questionnaire showed a more complex situation. They chose 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' for most items related to Concern over Mistakes, whereas their interviews revealed excessive attention to mistakes. There are two possible explanations for this. One is that there is a connection to their self-monitoring; while doing the questionnaire, they might have unconsciously tended to show a more ideal self before selecting an answer. The FMPS contains both positive and negative descriptions, so it is possible that they may have avoided associating themselves to negative options. The other explanation is that, as they grow older and their social experiences increase, the participants might have gradually come to realize that excessive Perfectionism is harmful and unrealistic. Similarly, they might have tried to rid themselves of negative associations of their school education, thereby becoming more self-oriented. It should be added that this might also reveal a limitation of the self-report approach, in which the participants choose items that are less troubling to them.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Personality has a significant influence on overall anxiety and FLA. Overall anxiety and FLA are interrelated. The correlation between anxiety, Perfectionism and SLTA has been consistent in past studies (e.g. Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & Shan Ip, 2013). In addition, most of the subjects' anxiety comes from the pursuit of accurate self-expression. In language learning, interlanguage errors are frequent and normal. This "normal" process is *de*normalized by such teachers. A student who can learn things quickly and correctly is considered ideal. If the same mistake occurs repeatedly, the student will be severely criticized in the traditional Chinese approach.

Some teachers impose a sense of shame (through repeated negative judgments to convince students that they should feel sorry for their mistakes) in a misguided attempt to raise students' self-esteem to make them study harder. Those who have experienced this kind of teaching during their childhood might avoid being a 'poor' student, but still feel anxious because they are afraid of the same criticism. Among the six participants, two of them (Daniel and Gloria) reported that they had been criticized and humiliated by their teachers, which resulted in them quitting a subject or even school.

Self-Rated Language Proficiency

The female participants were mainly cautious and modest about their skill and avoided overestimating their language skills. The two male participants, Chris and Daniel, have higher self-evaluation and expressed strong confidence in their language ability. Concerning this, a survey of 1736 (1287 female, 449 male) foreign language learners by Dewaele et al. (2016) also showed that female learners were more worried about their mistakes than their male counterparts and were less confident in using a foreign language.

Willingness to Communicate

The six participants in this study showed considerable variation in WTC. Concerning the results of the questionnaire, WTC was not necessarily connected to FLA or SLP. In most cases, the relationship between the individual and their language environment is the decisive factor which influences their second language WTC. They are more willing to communicate when they know they are not likely to be ridiculed and lose face in front of their friends. Strong perfectionists, such as Helen, are unwilling to communicate in formal occasions. Many of the participants mentioned the influence of the language environment. This refers to Japanese-speaking situations where they feel obliged to use Japanese. The requirements of such environments become internalized as a self-requirement. In addition, their WTC in Japanese becomes enhanced when it concerns their career, academic success and appreciation of Japanese culture. This is in accordance with Yashima et al. (2004), who

reported that international posture leads to enhanced WTC and communication action.

5.2 Discussion of Quantitative Research

The result for WTC in the four contexts showed that there are two factors that play an important role in distinguishing situations: formality and openness. The Chinese who participated in the survey had the weakest WTC in Meetings. This is because, compared with Public Speaking which emphasizes only openness, meetings also focus on formality. This is consistent with the results of the qualitative study. Formal occasions mean that the speaker is confronted with the judgments of those gathered in attendance. The fear of mistakes and failure makes people reluctant to communicate. The finding that WTC in Japanese with a friend is lower than WTC with an acquaintance among these Chinese people was unexpected. This might have been due to their understanding of the WTC scale.

The wording in the description of the scale is: "Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in Japanese/English in each type of situation". The reality is that, even though the participants are living in Japan, most of their friends are still Chinese. In the situation they imagined, in the case of complete free choice, their preferred language of communication between friends is Chinese. That is, they do not need to speak English or Japanese with "friends".

Quantitative results were used to address the research questions. To answer Question 1, the most significant two sub-dimensions from Perfectionism in this study are Concern over Mistakes (CM) and Personal Standard (PS). This is consistent with the results of the qualitative phase of the research. People with a higher degree of CM and PS tend to be more perfectionist. In addressing Question 2, the participants in this study have a relatively low level of SLTA. This was reflected in their own language output and the focus on pronunciation and grammar. The result that the number of known languages/dialects is unrelated to SLTA is consistent with research which investigated 73 middle school students in Hong Kong (Dewaele & Shan Ip, 2013). However, the correlation between these two factors was found in much larger, multiple samples of adult multilinguals (e.g. Dewaele & Wei, 2013; Dewaele et al., 2008).

Dewaele and Shan Ip (2013) suggested that there are two possible explanations. One is local effects, which is related to Chinese students' self-conception of their language ability. Second, since all of the Hong Kong students in Dewaele and Shan Ip's study had not lived abroad, they also hadn't been able to use foreign languages in an authentic language environment over a long period. In contrast, the individuals in this study are Chinese who have lived in Japan. This distinction allows us to focus on local effects.

As mentioned above, the pursuit of accuracy constrains tolerance of ambiguity at the beginning of foreign language education. The impact of this connection is not

greatly diminished just by leaving school. Pursuing accuracy from the very beginning when learning any foreign language has become the accepted standard for Chinese people. However, living in the foreign language environment of Japan for a long time has raised their level of SLTA. Through switching their mindset about foreign languages from being a learner to a user, they realize the practical significance of SLTA in actual language use.

Concerning Question 3, although no significant correlation was found between FLA and overall Perfectionism, an additional correlation between Doubt about Actions and FLA was found. Further, in this study, FLA had a significant, albeit not very strong, correlation with SLTA ($r(E) = .262, p < .05; r(J) = .296, p < .05$). These results are partially inconsistent with past research (e.g. Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & Shan Ip, 2013). A possible explanation is the limitations of self-reporting. It would be valuable to consider how people view themselves in this way. However, anxiety, which has been seen as a negative emotion, may be misinterpreted by them as the influence of face-saving or self-enhancement strategies.

In seeking to address Question 4, most of the results of the relationship among WTC, FLA and SLP are consistent with past studies, except for the fact that no relationship exists between SLP and WTC in Japanese, while a moderate significant correlation ($r = .529, p < .0001$) was found in English. There are two possible explanations for this outcome. First, the participants involved in this study had all been living in Japan. They might have felt forced into using Japanese, and the demands of this environment became internalized as a self-requirement regardless of their ability. Second, their self-rated Japanese proficiency ($M = 3.32, SD = .705$) is higher than English ($M = 2.39, SD = .932$).

43 of the 57 participants reported having passed the JLPT Level 1 test, indicating high enough Japanese proficiency to use it freely in most situations, even if sometimes they feel inadequate about their language proficiency. From the qualitative investigation, we also found that many have higher standards for the L2 which they are more familiar with. Most likely due to their cautiousness and the fact that they are actually living in Japan, they know that there is a gap between their language proficiency and native speakers. On the other hand, although their self-rating on language competence is not necessarily high, continuous practice allows them to have developed practical coping skills.

Overall, the foregoing discussion underlines how traditional culture and educational concepts of their home country leave a deep mark on the foreign-language learning of Chinese people. This is particularly the case with the reality of fierce competition, encouraged by parents, and the fear of ending up with the label of being inferior. One of the questions in the Perfectionism scale of the questionnaire (I expect higher performance in my daily tasks than most people) scored an average of 4.18 ($SD = .75$). To bring this high expectation to fruition, the pursuit of accuracy takes on great importance in the entire education system. If an individual wants to enter a good university, then, from the beginning of primary school, all subjects and every examination need to be attended to assiduously. Further, if a student fails at a particular stage, catching up is difficult. This fear of making mistakes is particularly prominent in 'good' students. Therefore, excessive attention to mistakes is

common, and often creates high levels of anxiety, including many of those who choose to go abroad to learn a new second language.

This result was also seen in the findings of the qualitative investigation (e.g. Helen, a so-called 'good' student) and also sometimes reflected in their attitudes, such as unwillingness to communicate, which is disconnected from actual, or self-rated, language behavior. Fear of making mistakes and losing face inhibits them from communicating, especially on formal occasions, not only in English but, by extension, Japanese, too. It was also evident that some participants who had lost motivation to learn English, such as Chris and Daniel, were more likely to more highly self-rate in the process of learning Japanese. They have invested a lot of emotion and energy in Japanese, and Japanese has become an important part of their identity which they are confident in. Their successful experience with Japanese has had a positive impact on their regaining confidence in their English.

These multilingual individuals now live in a multicultural environment. The importance of Intergroup Attitude and Intergroup Motivation (MacIntyre et al., 1998) is evident here. For those who are deeply interested in the target language culture, their WTC for that language is higher. If they can do well in their academic studies or career by using this language, their WTC will be greatly enhanced (e.g. Daniel). Moreover, their multiple foreign language learning processes appear to interact with each other. From the results of the quantitative study, a very significant correlation between WTC and FLA in both English and Japanese was seen.

It was evident that the influence of the foreign language learning concepts brought about first by English language learning is significant. Whether in English or Japanese, the pursuit of accurate vocabulary, grammatical use, and standard pronunciation is reflected to varying degrees in each participant. Conversely, it was also the case that, by living in the target language community (Japan), the effects of English language education in Chinese schools on these participants has been attenuated. The experience of practical use of L3 has changed how their educational concept influences their learning practices to a more personal motivation as a language user.

Overall, the relationship between English WTC and related influencing factors in this study is consistent with previous studies. FLA and SLP were found to be significantly related to the Chinese participants' English WTC. However, there are some inconsistencies in the Japanese WTC study. From the results of qualitative research, for people living in Japan, the requirements of the environment have become the crucial factor affecting their Japanese WTC. Self-rated Japanese proficiency was not found to have a significant correlation with WTC, and the influence of FLA ($r = -.355$, $p < .01$) is not as strong as that of English. This requires further investigation of personalized daily language needs of the participants. Similar cultural backgrounds and educational concepts have produced commonalities, but the complex interactions of multiple factors also remind us not to ignore the importance of individual differences.

6 Conclusion

English language education in China is regarded as an academic discipline rather than a tool for communication, and as a marker for entering a good university and then securing a strong career. However, after learning Japanese as a second foreign language and coming to Japan, the identity of learners shifts to that of users, and the concept of using a second language practically emerges, where accuracy ceases to be the main goal of learning.

For "good" learners educated in the typical manner, they may experience frustration at being unable to confirm the accuracy of their output, and this may reduce their WTC. Equally, however, there is also the chance for them to re-examine ingrained attitudes towards the goals of learning, and for them to re-evaluate how they perceive their own competence and future proficiency. For the learners who failed in the first foreign language study of English, the study of the second foreign language can act as a kind of redemption, allowing them to discover that they can be effective foreign language learners.

It was seen in this study that some of the participants in the qualitative interviews had lost their motivation to learn English because of unpleasant learning experiences, or due to the evaluation elements inherent in Chinese foreign language education. However, the success of the subsequent foreign language learning experience gave them a new understanding of the purpose of their first foreign language, English, which even prompted the re-learning of English.

It was found in the quantitative survey that the respondents' WTC and FLA were strongly correlated. The significance of Concern over Mistakes and Personal Standards in the Perfectionism scale and the low SLTA results indicate that the above-mentioned Chinese education concept has a pervasive influence on Chinese students. In the process of learning languages, people not only learn language skills such as vocabulary and grammar, but also the perception of, and attitude towards, a language. The concept of foreign language learning that they were instilled with through the study of the first foreign language may often reassert itself in second foreign language study, but there is good reason for optimism that this can be mitigated through positive L3 learning experiences.

In seeking to apply these findings to other contexts, several limitations should be taken into account. The results of the qualitative and quantitative investigations constitute a somewhat limited portrait of WTC of multilingual Chinese in Japan. Some findings, such as the absence of a significant correlation between FLA and overall Perfectionism, remain unexplained, partly due to research design features that could be improved in future research. These included, for example, the self-reporting by subjects of their FLA level. Also, there were certain restrictions in the choice of subjects to participate in this research. Participants were multilingual Chinese in Japan, and the content of qualitative research involved complex, possibly previously unanalyzed, emotional judgments.

In order to ensure subjects might answer questions as candidly as possible, the first author relied on research participants for the qualitative interviews who already

had a personal relationship with her. Such a non-random sample selection might have somewhat skewed the results. Therefore, future research could replicate these results by conducting interviews with individuals who are recruited more impartially.

Appendices

Appendix A: English Version of the Questionnaire

Survey of the willingness to communicate of multilingual Chinese in Japanese.

This survey consists of a background investigation and four scales that may take up to 10 min. Please read the questions carefully and answer them. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is your highest education degree?
4. How many years have you been in Japan?
5. Please choose your Japanese level (self-evaluation, 1 = "hardly communicate", 2 = "basic conversation", 3 = "daily use", 4 = "academic/business use", 5 = "nearly native").
6. Please fill in your Japanese test scores if you have one (JLPT/J-test, etc.).
7. Please choose your English level (self-evaluation, 1 = "hardly communicate", 2 = "basic conversation", 3 = "daily use", 4 = "academic/business use", 5 = "nearly native").
8. Please fill in your English test scores if you have one (CET4/6, TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.).
9. If you have foreign language skills other than Japanese and English, please fill in the language and corresponding ability self-evaluation (if you have the corresponding language test scores, please also fill them in).
10. If the Chinese language proficiency of an ordinary Chinese native is 3 points, please rate your Chinese ability (1 is the worst, 5 is the best).
11. How many dialects do you know?
12. Please rate your anxiety level in Japanese (1–5; 1 = never, 5 = always).
13. Please rate your anxiety level in English (1–5; 1 = never, 5 = always).
14. Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in Japanese in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left of the item what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. (0 = never to 100 = always)

    – Talk with a service station attendant.
    – Talk with a physician.
    – Present a talk to a group of strangers.

- Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- Talk with a police officer.
- Talk in a small group of strangers.
- Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- Talk with a secretary.
- Present a talk to a group of friends.
- Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- Talk with a garbage collector.
- Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- Talk with a spouse (or girlfriend/boyfriend).
- Talk in a small group of friends.
- Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

15. Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in English in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left of the item what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. (0 = never to 100 = always)

- Talk with a service station attendant.
- Talk with a physician.
- Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- Talk with a police officer.
- Talk in a small group of strangers.
- Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- Talk with a secretary.
- Present a talk to a group of friends.
- Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- Talk with a garbage collector.
- Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- Talk with a spouse (or girlfriend/boyfriend).
- Talk in a small group of friends.
- Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

16. Please read the questions carefully and evaluate how well the following descriptions match your situation.
    (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

- My parents set very high standards for me.
- Organization is very important to me.
- As a child, I was punished for doing things less than perfect.
- If I do not set the highest standards for myself, I am likely to end up a second-rate person.
- My parents never tried to understand my mistakes.
- It is important to me that I am thoroughly competent in everything I do.
- I am a neat person.
- I try to be an organized person.
- If I fail at work/school, I am a failure as a person.
- I should be upset if I make a mistake.
- My parents wanted me to do the best at everything.
- I set higher goals than most people.
- If someone does a task at work/school better than I, then I feel like I failed the whole task.
- If I fail partly, it is as bad as being a complete failure.
- Only outstanding performance is good enough in my family.
- I am very good at focusing my efforts on attaining a goal.
- Even when I do something very carefully, I often feel that it is not quite right.
- I hate being less than the best at things.
- I have extremely high goals.
- My parents have expected excellence from me.
- People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake.
- I never felt like I could meet my parents' expectations.
- If I do not as well as other people, it means I am an inferior human being.
- Other people seem to accept lower standards than I do.
- If I do not do well all the time, people will not respect me.
- My parents have always had higher expectations for my future than I have.
- I try to be a neat person.
- I usually have doubts about the simple everyday things I do.
- Neatness is very important to me.
- I expect higher performance in my daily tasks than most people.
- I am an organized person.
- I tend to get behind in my work because I repeat things over and over.
- It takes me a long time to do something "right".
- The fewer mistakes I make, the more people will like me.
- I never felt like I could meet my parents' standards.

17. Please read the questions carefully and evaluate how well the following descriptions match your situation.
    (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

- When I'm reading something in a foreign language, I feel impatient when I don't totally understand the meaning.
- It bothers me that I don't understand everything the teacher says in a foreign language.
- When I write foreign language compositions, I don't like it when I can't express my ideas exactly.
- It is frustrating that sometimes I don't understand completely some foreign language grammar.
- I don't like the feeling that my pronunciation of a foreign language is not quite correct.
- I don't enjoy reading something in a foreign language that takes a while to figure out completely.
- It bothers me that even though I study foreign language grammar, some of it is hard to use in speaking and writing.
- When I'm writing in a foreign language, I don't like the fact that I can't say exactly what I want.
- It bothers me when the teacher uses a foreign language word I don't know.
- When I'm speaking in a foreign language, I feel uncomfortable if I can't communicate my ideas clearly.
- I don't like the fact that sometimes I can't find foreign language words that mean the same as some words in my own language.
- One thing I don't like about reading in a foreign language is having to guess what the meaning is.

Appendix B: Background Information of Qualitative Research Subjects

No.	Name (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Profession	Years lived in Japan	Education level	# of languages/ dialects
1	Alex	27	Female	Accountant	3	Master	3/3
2	Betty	26	Female	Student	2.5	Bachelor	3/2
3	Chris	24	Male	Private Owner	5	Bachelor	3/4
4	Daniel	28	Male	Student	7.5	Master	3/2
5	Gloria	37	Female	Sales	14	College	4/2
6	Helen	25	Female	Student	1.5	Bachelor	4/3

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me your dialects and describe your native language level – Ordinary Chinese native speakers are 3, 1 is the worst, 5 is the best, please give me a score of your native language level.
2. Please describe your English and Japanese learning experiences, including: start time, length of study, study method, frequency of study and motivation.
3. Please self-evaluate your Japanese and English level, and explain why you give yourself this evaluation – 1 is hard communicate, 2 is basic conversation, 3 is daily use, 4 is academic or business use, 5 is nearly native;
4. How anxious are you when you are using Japanese and English? Why do you feel anxious?
5. Please explain what determines your willingness to communicate in Japanese and English.

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Introducing Swalesian Genre-Pedagogy to Arab EFL Learners: A Case Study

Priya Mathew, G. R. Kiran, and Radhika L. Sankara Narayanan

Abstract The need to identify pedagogical genres at the tertiary level and examine their rhetorical organisation and lexicogrammatical features to help students meet their disciplinary writing requirements has long been acknowledged. This chapter presents a model for writing instruction based on the Swalesian Move and Step text analytical approach to genre. Moves are sections of a text with a coherent communicative function and Steps are text segments realising the Moves. The first phase of the project involved piloting the genre-based pedagogical model amongst postgraduate students by the Centre for Academic Writing at Middle East College, Oman. A corpus of 20 assignments that received high grades was used to identify the Moves and Steps of the Reporting Survey Findings, a 'part genre' that forms a section of their final-year dissertations. A move analysis structure was designed to familiarise students with the macrostructure and the Moves and Steps of the target genre. Close collaboration with subject lecturers, and reading of the assignment briefs and student assignments, informed the process of analyses of the texts. The lexicogrammatical features that realised the Moves and Steps were also identified, and consciousness-raising learning tasks were designed to help students link the rhetorical patterns and the linguistic devices underlying them and apply the Moves and Steps to writing their assignments. The paper concludes by discussing the students' perceptions and attitudes to the pedagogy and provides recommendations to improve the design of discipline-specific writing materials by drawing on such student corpora.

Keywords Academic writing · Corpus · Disciplinary writing · Arab EFL learners · Genre analysis · Genre pedagogy

P. Mathew (✉) · G. R. Kiran · R. L. Sankara Narayanan
Middle East College, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: priya@mec.edu.om; kirangr@mec.edu.om; radhika@mec.edu.om

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1 Introduction

Global developments in internationalisation and paradigm shifts in educational philosophy, such as equal opportunities of access, have resulted in massive changes in approaches towards higher education around the globe (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). There has been an influx of international students into the higher education system alongside a change in the composition of students who enter higher education. Although many students may not have had the advantage of a mainstream education in the Western tradition, nowadays they have access to higher education because of the inclusive philosophy adopted by many universities worldwide. This has resulted in an increasingly heterogeneous student population; a trend that can be seen not only in Western higher education institutions (HEIs), but also in many countries such as Oman and the UAE where English is adopted as the medium of instruction and assessment.

Many HEIs in these countries function as satellite campuses for their Western university partners, usually located in the UK, the USA and Australia. In these countries, English has acquired the status of a lingua franca because of their large expatriate populations. English is thus also the medium of communication in workplaces (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2017). In this context, proficiency in the English language can be seen as critical for academic success. Unfortunately, many students, especially in countries where English is not the first or second language, are not equipped with the English skills required to successfully meet the demands of their undergraduate programmes. A similar situation is faced by some international students enrolled in Western universities.

Unfortunately, research in student writing is largely inadequate; perhaps the challenges associated with collecting and analysing student assignments may be one of the reasons for this paucity. Swales (1996, p. 46) attributes this to the ‘occluded’ nature of student assignments. The term ‘occluded’ has been defined by Kanoksilapatham (2012) as “a genre to which access is normally denied to those outside the discourse community” (p. 297). As a result of these constraints associated with the study of student assignments, many researchers (e.g. Chen & Baker, 2010; Hyland, 2008a) have attempted to apply findings from the study of expert texts to student genres. Since the purpose and target audience of pedagogical genres is very different from that of research articles, conclusions based on these findings can only be tentative. Student genres merit attention in their own right (Parkinson, 2017), and this kind of research is critical considering that millions of students may be struggling to acquire the academic writing conventions associated with genres and their disciplines.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Background

Swalesian genre analysis is a frequently used text analysis tool applied to Research Articles (RA). Originally devised to analyse the Introductions of RAs, this approach later began to be adopted to analyse other parts of RAs such as Discussions and

Conclusions (Kanoksilapatham, 2015; Samraj, 2005) and even other pedagogical genres, such as Lab Reports and Case Studies (Nathan, 2013; Parkinson, 2017; Tribble & Wingate, 2013). In this type of analysis, text segments are divided into 'Moves' and 'Steps', with one Move having one or more Steps realising its communicative intent. Swales and Feak (2004) identified three main Moves in RA Introductions: (1) establishing a territory; (2) establishing a niche; and (3) presenting the present work. Acknowledging disciplinary variation and the constantly evolving nature of genres, the authors suggested some 'Optional' and 'Probable in Some Fields (PISF)' Steps under the Moves as shown in Table 1.

An important development in the area of English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) is the compilation of large scale student corpora, such as the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus and Michigan Corpus of Upper Level Student Papers (MICUSP) (Flowerdew, 2016). The BAWE contains around 3000 proficient student assignments collected from four UK universities across four levels of study, while the MICUSP contains about 800 samples of student writing collected from Michigan University in the US, representing three levels of study.

Based on BAWE assignments, Nesi and Gardner (2012) identified 13 genre families: Explanations, Exercises, Critiques, Essays, Research Reports, Literature Surveys, Methodology Recounts, Problem Questions, Proposals, Design Specifications, Case Studies, Narrative Recounts, and Empathy Writing. These were further grouped into five categories based on their major communicative and social purposes: (1) demonstrating knowledge and understanding; (2) developing powers of independent reasoning; (3) building research skills; (4) preparing for professional practice; and (5) writing for oneself and others (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p. 27).

These frameworks developed by Nesi and Gardner (2012, pp. 26–27) are fairly comprehensive because they are based on a wide variety of assignments representing coursework assigned to students in the four universities (Oxford Brookes

Table 1 Move structure of RA introductions (Swales & Feak, 2004)

Move 1 Establishing a territory (citations required) via:
Topic generalisation of increasing specificity
Move 2 Establishing a niche (citations possible) via:
Step 1A Indicating a gap or
Step 1B Adding to what is known
Step 2 (optional) Presenting positive justification
Move 3 Presenting the present work via:
Step 1 (obligatory) Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively
Step 2 (optional) Presenting RQs or hypotheses
Step 3 (optional) Definitional clarifications
Step 4 (optional) Summarising methods
Step 5 (PISF) Announcing principal outcomes
Step 6 (PISF) Stating the value of the present research
Step 7 (PISF) Outlining the structure of the paper

University, University of Reading, University of Warwick, and Coventry University). Hence, they can be used as a basis for other studies seeking to categorise student genres into genre families on the basis of their broad social purposes.

2.2 Pedagogical Approach

This study investigates the effectiveness of introducing genre-based pedagogy in teaching writing by conducting a case study of Arab English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students doing their MBA for IT course at Middle East College (MEC). It is intended to measure the effectiveness of a pedagogy that was introduced with the aim of supporting students writing project reports. Traditional English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks and a general English approach were often found to be inadequate for preparing students for their disciplinary writing requirements. Hence, the Writing Centre chose to pilot a genre-based pedagogical approach that may be appropriate for supporting discipline-specific writing requirements. The authors wished to investigate whether this model would appeal to students in ways in which conventional teaching methods have failed. Our pedagogy has evolved over the course of the study and we have chosen certain methods to implement the genre-based approach that would best serve students.

From our discussions with the disciplinary experts teaching the MBA-IT programme, it was concluded that one of the most important academic writing tasks facing these postgraduate students is analysing and interpreting survey results (ASR). The subject experts mentioned that, in most of the reports, students tend to focus on individual findings rather than synthesising the key findings and interpreting them. Although writing about data is the key component of the analysis chapter, most students do it poorly as they do not know how to translate the quantitative data into persuasive arguments. This may be due to a lack of knowledge of linguistic devices, genre structure, or even lecturer expectations. Some of the low scoring assignments, the experts pointed out, even failed to mention their research conclusions.

It is indeed a daunting task for some students to draw conclusions, as many tend to avoid making "clear recommendations or generalizations for fear of being wrong" (Wolfe et al., 2011, p. 127). The primary purpose of this genre seems to be to display knowledge and familiarity with disciplinary conventions. These student assignments have a pedagogical purpose and are not a simulation of workplace genres. However, the ASR fulfils three social purposes according to Nesi and Gardner's (2012) framework: demonstrating knowledge and understanding; developing powers of independent reasoning; and building research skills. Following their practice, we identified ASR's primary purpose as 'building research skills'.

3 Methodology

3.1 Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research design as the objectives were to understand student and teacher perceptions of the genre-based pedagogic model. These research objectives could only be answered using qualitative research instruments, such as focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Since both the number of student assignments and participants are relatively small, a qualitative design was considered to be better suited for the study's purpose.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that the format of semi-structured interviews "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (p. 111). We adopted this technique since there were only two subject lecturers whom we consider 'specialist informants', similar to Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) 'key informants', since they "can express thoughts, feelings, opinions – that is, offer a perspective – on the topic being studied" (p. 129). The interview format also allowed for flexibility to follow up interesting digressions which can sometimes offer deeper insights into the topic being studied.

In focus group discussions, "data collection occurs in and is facilitated by, a group setting" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, p. 17). This type of data collection allows for participants to interact and refine their ideas in light of the views of others. We adopted the technique of data collection from students because we believed students would be more comfortable in a group setting and, also, we expected that interacting actively with peers on a topic of common interest would generate more interesting and insightful discussions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two subject teachers, while the focus group discussion was held with five of the students from the session in which Genre-based Pedagogy was implemented. Participants were informed prior to the meeting that the interview was intended for research purposes and that their identities would be kept strictly confidential.

As student participants were at the postgraduate level, they could speak English fluently and, as a result, interviews were conducted in the language. The length of the focus group discussion was about half an hour, and the data gathered was thematically analysed. The interview and focus group discussion transcripts were read independently by the authors with emerging themes identified and compared.

3.2 Research Site

The research site is MEC, which is one of the largest private HEIs in Oman. With a student population exceeding 4500, it offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in many disciplines ranging from Engineering to Management Studies.

The two postgraduate programmes offered by MEC are in the domain of Management Studies.

Although English has been adopted as the medium of instruction and assessment in higher education in Oman, a vast number of students tend to struggle to acquire the language proficiency required to meet the academic writing requirements of their disciplines. As a result, most students complete a one-year preparatory programme before they enrol on undergraduate courses so that they develop a range of skills including English, Computing, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Since these students need continuous support in enhancing their language skills, many HEIs offer language modules in tandem with content modules (Al Jardani, 2017).

The authors of this chapter believe that students enrolled on master's programmes also require support in language skills; this was based on our discussions with subject teachers and students, and comments from external examiners. This is especially so with most postgraduate students at MEC as almost all of them are employed and some of them have enrolled on postgraduate programmes after a long absence from higher education. Since there is a corresponding increase in the complexity of written tasks as the level of study increases, postgraduate students need discipline-specific writing support.

There is consensus among researchers that each disciplinary community has their preferred genres and academic writing conventions, and that students need to be socialised into their disciplines by learning to communicate in the discourse of their academic fields (Gardner et al., 2019; Hyland, 2012). The role of language teachers in this situation has been summed up by Hyland (2008b, p. 561) as follows: "By becoming researchers of the specific genres our students will need in their fields of study, we can help them understand the reasons for language choices and scaffold their effective use of them". This implies that, as language specialists, we need to work collaboratively with subject lecturers to understand what genres our students are expected to engage in and, then, identify student needs on this basis so that we can adequately support our students.

The Centre for Academic Writing (CAW) at MEC was established in 2014 to support undergraduate and postgraduate students in their academic writing requirements. Various activities have been designed by the CAW as part of developing a comprehensive strategy to support students, including scheduled classes for selected content modules, individual consultations with writing tutors, and weekly workshops on academic and research writing. Most importantly, CAW's approach is grounded in research-informed pedagogies and activities.

The introduction of the genre-based pedagogy model is the realisation of the CAW's vision of focusing on discipline-specific writing requirements based on research and needs analysis. The corpus based pedagogy model was piloted on a group of final-semester postgraduate students from the MBA-IT programme. This model allows learners to focus on the structure of particular genres and a limited range of linguistic devices. By narrowing the range of both the genre and the language items to be learnt, the researchers felt that the cognitive and emotional burden

on the students would be reduced. This pedagogy thus seemed ideal for this English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context where this study was conducted.

3.3 Corpus

A corpus of 20 student assignments at the master's level was compiled in order to identify the Moves and Steps in them. A consent form was placed on Moodle advising students of their rights to withdraw their assignments from the study. A participant information sheet, which was also placed on Moodle, provided details about the study. Two lecturers teaching the postgraduate cohorts were informed about the study and were asked to provide ten proficient samples each from their sessions. The researchers explained that, by 'proficient', they meant assignments that had scored at least an A or B grade, and that had fully met the lecturers' expectations. Proficient samples were chosen because the Moves and Steps needed to be identified from assignments that met the expectations of lecturers. This method of collecting proficient assignments to compile written corpora of student assignments can be seen in the two largest student corpora in the world, the BAWE (Alsop & Nesi, 2009) and the MICUSP (Römer & O'Donnell, 2011) corpora.

4 Move Structure Analysis

A move structure analysis of the part genre, Analysis of Survey Results, was undertaken by consulting the content lecturers, assignment briefs, and the assignments themselves. The Moves and Steps of the Analysis chapter in ten assignments were independently identified by the authors, after which there was a round of discussions between the raters to resolve any differences in the identification of Moves and Steps. Inter-rater reliability was close to 100% as the sequencing was fairly consistent across the 10 assignments.

Subject lecturers and module leaders were consulted to discuss the assignment briefs before the final list of Moves and Steps was drawn up. The Moves and Steps were transferred to an Excel sheet and the remaining ten assignments were analysed in terms of the final Move and Step list. The presence or absence of each Step was marked in the Excel sheet after which descriptive analysis was performed to find how many texts contained each Move and Step. The subject lecturers informed us that, although the proficient students were able to structure this chapter well, many students still did not realise the importance of some Steps, such as interpreting the results in light of the literature or even connecting their findings to their research objectives.

Following Parkinson (2017), we consider as 'Obligatory' those Moves and Steps which are found in at least 80% of the texts, and as 'Optional' those that occur in fewer than 80% of them. The assignments were analysed to identify the obligatory and optional Moves and Steps based on discussions with the subject teachers who were our specialist informants. We identified three main rhetorical stages in the Analysis and Discussion of Survey Findings sections of student assignments based on our reading of the actual assignments themselves, discussions with the two subject teachers, and a close reading of the assignment brief and the guidelines.

This triangulation of methods helped us uncover the genre macrostructure. The main stages of this section are: (1) introducing the survey; (2) announcing the results; and (3) commenting on the results. Each Move is labelled by the initials of the section followed by the number; for example, the first Move of the genre covering the Introductory section has been labelled MI1, the second Move about the Announcing Results section is named M AR1 and so on. The Steps under each Move are then numbered sequentially. Table 2 provides the Move Structure of the Survey Analysis section of dissertations submitted by MBA-IT students.

Move I1 contains four Steps which mainly introduce the participants, justifying the research design, describing the data analysis, and justifying the research instrument. Except for the last Step, all Steps were found in the 20 assignments analysed. In Move AR2, the four Steps include displaying the results visually using graphs and charts and labelling them, referring to the results using Location Statements, and describing the results using numerical information. All these Steps were found in at least 80% of the assignments, making them Obligatory.

The first Move in the section entitled Commenting on the Results has the most number of Steps and mainly involves applying statistical tests to the responses for each question before interpreting them. About 60% of the assignments had the Testing Hypothesis Step and 100% summarised the key findings and drew conclusions. This was followed by Moves 2 (M L2), 3 (M R3), and 4 (M A4), which are Stating Limitations (65%), Making Recommendations (100%), and Stating Achievement of the Aim (100%). However, the Referring to the Literature Step under M A4 was found in only 20% of the assignments. To the best of our knowledge, the move analysis of student assignments belonging to this part-genre has not been undertaken previously; therefore, it would be difficult to compare this text organisation with student texts from other contexts.

As can be seen in Table 2, only three of the Steps were found in less than 80% of the assignments. They were: Justifying the Research Instrument, Applying Statistical Tests to Test Hypotheses, and Referring to the Literature. When subject teachers were consulted, they revealed that they considered these Steps to be Obligatory. They stated that many of the Steps identified in the Move structure were absent or not properly articulated in the assignments of less proficient students.

Table 2 Moves and Steps in analysis of survey results (from 20 high scoring student assignments)

Steps		Examples	Percentage
Move 1 (Move I1) Introducing the Survey			
Step 1	Number of participants, number/percentage of responses, characteristics of the respondents, (gender, occupation etc.)	*The sample size of the data collected was 54 of the working academic staff at SQU; although this sample seems quite small compared to the real population size as it represents nearly 5% of the total population size amounting to an average of 957.*	**100%**
Step 2	Stating and justifying the research design	*Whereas, quantitative research methodology represented in a questionnaire-based survey method was used for data collection in this project, followed by a statistical analysis of data as these methods helps to target a larger sample size, and saves the time, so it is more convenient due to the time constraint.*	**100%**
Step 3	Describing the data analysis	*Viable System Model (VSM) technique is used as one way of System Thinking techniques which are used to critically analyze and evaluate strategic management systems. Finally, SOWT Analysis is used as part of Analytical Analysis done on data collected from secondary sources.*	**100%**
Step 4	Justifying the research instrument	*In this research, highly structured methods are widely used such as; surveys, structured observations and questionnaires. The analytical objectives of this type are to quantify variation and to calculate causal relationships. Also, it explains the characteristics of a population. Therefore, closed-ended questions format and Numerical data format are mainly used to achieve these objectives.*	**60%**
Move 1 (Move AR1) Announcing Results			
Step 1	Displaying results in a graph /table		**85%**
Step 2	Numbering and labelling the graph/table	Table 1 *Number of Years Worked by the Participants*	**85%**
Step 3	Using location statements	*Figure 4 Participants Years of Experience*	**85%**
Step 4	Using numbers, percentages, fractions, and other quantifiers to report results	*12.5% of the respondents are first line managers. While 17.5% of the respondents are top-level managers, the highest number of respondents, that is, 70% of the respondents are middle managers.*	**80%**
Move 1 (Move C1) Commenting on the Results			
Step 1	Applying statistical analysis to each question	*Also, the other enabler "availability of infrastructure and facilities" is positively correlated with both directions but has a higher correlation value of 70% with "entrepreneurship & talent development". Whilst, the lowest correlation is found between the "availability of infrastructure and facilities" and "knowledge dissemination" by 21% only.*	**70%**

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Steps		Examples	Percentage
Step 2	Interpreting the results of each question	*The positive relation between "governance and management" and "entrepreneurship & talent development" represents the highest percentage of correlation. This indicates that as effective the rules regulating knowledge management & innovation are as higher the innovation performance and talent development level.*	**80%**
Step 3	Applying statistical tests to test hypotheses	*The p value of .269 means that the relationship is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be accepted, that is, the hypothesis four is not supported. Somehow, Laissez faire leadership has no significant effect on employee performance.*	**60%**
Step 4	Summarising the key findings	*Amongst the respondents, the majority buy tickets with a maximum frequency of 9 to 10 tickets per year.*	**100%**
Step 5	Drawing conclusions	*The 9 satisfaction constituents or factors influence passengers' overall satisfaction both positively and significantly, meaning a positive change in these constituents would result in a positive change in the passengers' overall satisfaction.*	**100%**
Move 2 (Move L2) Limitations			
Step 1	Stating limitations	*The study had a relatively small sample considering the fact that there are many users of the e-CRM platforms of the airline companies.*	**65%**
Move 3 (Move R3) Recommendations			
Step 1	Making recommendations	*The recommendations are as follows:* *1. Work on providing staff with various courses and workshops related to concepts of knowledge management* *2. Provide clear strategies that support and stimulate the adoption of the concept of knowledge management*	**100%**
Move 4 (Move RL4) Achievement of Aim			
Step 1	Referring to the literature	*…the finance industry is one sector that can benefit from the adoption of Block Chain technology. However, the government needs to put the proper regulations in place that will provide guidelines for the control of data stored in Block Chain (Collomb and Sok 2016).*	**20%**
Step 2	Stating the achievement of the aim/contribution	*To conclude, this research has developed a new KM-related strategic model that can be deployed more effectively and enhance the knowledge creation and innovation performance.*	**100%**

5 Implementation

The genre-based approach to writing the results chapter was introduced to the students through workshops and one-to-one consultations. Students were then given samples of both high scoring and low scoring assignments (two each) and, with the help of the genre-based guidelines, were asked to reflect on what constitutes good writing. They were then asked to analyse the texts in groups and provide comments on both the samples. The students discussed how to differentiate between good and bad writing, and this consciousness-raising activity helped them notice the expected Moves and Steps in writing the analysis of the responses to their survey.

This initial session with students allowed them to come up with the Moves and Steps that they thought should be included when writing the results and analysis of surveys. A template consisting of the Moves and Steps for writing the survey analysis chapter was then created to provide students with guidelines on how to sequence sections of their text. A few lexicogrammatical features corresponding to each Move were also provided to support students in realising their communicative purposes. For example, students were given a list of modals that would help them boost or hedge a claim.

The students were introduced to the template with the Move Structure through a series of workshops. They were also reminded that genres are constantly evolving and that these Moves and Steps are not prescriptive. They were given some background from the literature about how the same genre might vary across disciplines using Nesi and Gardner's (2012) examples. The aim of the workshops was to raise students' "perceptions and sensitivities to the language and structure of texts" (Swales & Feak, 2011, p. 1) through the guided discovery method where students are provided examples of language items with Moves and Steps so that they could figure out the expected Moves and Steps on their own.

During the workshop, the students were introduced to the language for describing the survey methods, and writing the results of the survey through examples culled from student assignments. The Moves and Steps for describing survey results derived from the analysis of 20 student samples were then given in a jumbled format and students were asked to match the Moves and Steps with the description (see Fig. 1). The aim of this activity was to raise genre-consciousness.

The second phase of reinforcing the macrostructure of this genre took place through one-to-one consultations with tutors from the writing centre. Students brought samples of their written texts and discussed the staging, Moves and Steps, and the language used. Based on these discussions, they re-worked their first draft and brought their revised drafts to the next workshop.

Since close collaboration between the writing instructor and the subject teacher is required to understand the actual requirements of the assignment, both the tutors were present in the workshops to assist students with the content and the language required for writing the results section of their dissertation. Students were thus given another round of feedback. A total of three workshops were conducted for 19 participants from the final-year MBA-IT programme.

Match the Steps with the examples

Move 1: Announcing Results	Examples
• Step 1: Displaying results in a graph/table • Step 2: Numbering and labelling the graph/table • Step 3: Using Location Statements • Step 4: Using numbers, percentages, fractions, and other quantifiers to report results	1. The majority of students (90%) felt that their digital skills have improved as a result of using an ePortfolio during the course. 2. Figure 1 illustrates the advantages of using an ePortfolio by ESP learners. Digital skills acquired while creating an ePortfolio (n=26) 16 9 16 15 9 9 9 Organise e-folders Share materials electronically Use advanced features of MS Word Use digital camera to take photos Scan images Share videos/hyperlinks Record digital audio

Fig. 1 Snapshot of the Moves and Steps activity given during the workshop

6 Findings and Discussion

The effectiveness of the genre-based approach to teaching writing was evaluated by gathering feedback from subject teachers and students. Semi-structured interviews with the subject teachers involved with the two sessions and a focus group discussion with five students were conducted to determine their perceptions towards genre-based pedagogy. Since the participants were few in number, a thematic analysis of transcripts was performed manually. The main themes identified from both sets of data were: consciousness raising about the structure of the genre, application of genre awareness to other genres, the association of specific lexicogrammatical features with particular communicative purposes, and the pedagogical implications of this experiment.

During the semi-structured interviews, both the teachers stated that increasing the genre consciousness of students will improve their performance. As one of the teachers noted, "Those students who attended the sessions/workshops by CAW were clear on report requirements. We can observe the students who used this opportunity to improve their assignments and reports had a focused approach in presenting the contents to meet expectations". Teachers admitted that they did not explicitly articulate the assignment expectations in terms of sequencing and structure. They also informed the researchers that they would consider being more explicit about genre requirements in their classes after having participated in the implementation of the genre-based pedagogical model.

Another point raised by both teachers was that this experience of the students would help them think about applying genre analysis to unfamiliar genres and this

would, therefore, be useful. The subject teachers were also convinced that knowledge of the specific lexicogrammatical features would support students, and especially less proficient students who might be overwhelmed if they are taught a wide range of genres and a number of linguistic features, some of which might not even be relevant. One subject teacher pointed out that "one-to-one support sessions conducted by CAW helped students with weak skills to improve their academic writing and it was evident in their final report".

During the focus interviews, the students raised similar points. One of the students said that she had not thought about the structure and the communicative purpose of text segments and that this approach to text analysis had helped her immensely. There was also consensus among all participants that they would apply this technique to other genres. They also suggested that subject teachers could collaborate with the CAW to help them analyse other genres they were expected to attempt as coursework.

Regarding the language features taught, student participants pointed out that, although they were familiar with some of the language features, such as Location Statements (e.g. *Figure 4 illustrates…*), it helped when their communicative purpose and their functions were explicitly examined. One student mentioned that linguistic devices, such as hedging (e.g. *possibly, might* in the Interpreting Results Step), helped to make his writing more sophisticated. Another student responded that knowledge of these features became more relevant when they were combined with the specific Move and Step where they could be used. One student expanded upon this point by saying, "Give us more such samples for practice".

The positive perception of students towards the workshops can be discerned by the number of positive comments during the focus group discussion. All respondents evaluated the intervention positively as evidenced by comments such as, "It was a very useful way to learn to write our assignments", "These workshops are very good", and, "We should have more such sessions for PG students".

The findings clearly indicate that the participants of the study, both teachers and students, viewed this pedagogy as beneficial in increasing their genre-consciousness. This positive response to genre-based teaching has also been reported by Wingate (2012) who implemented genre-based teaching of academic writing at Kings College London among undergraduates in the field of Management. Perhaps narrowing the focus for learners to specific genres and limited linguistic features can help them, and especially those who are less proficient in the language, to meet the writing requirements of their disciplines. This pedagogy seems to be one of the feasible approaches that can be implemented from an ESAP approach.

The pedagogy may also be considered for wider application, not only in the Omani context but also in similar contexts worldwide where students from predominantly non-English speaking backgrounds are expected to attempt written coursework in English. These preliminary findings are encouraging since they suggest that applying such a genre-based approach might also be successfully introduced in teaching other pedagogical genres, such as Literature Reviews, Lab Reports, Case Studies and so on.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results of this pilot study on the perceptions of students towards the genre-based pedagogic model, it is evident that these findings are quite encouraging for EAP lecturers and writing centres focused on a discipline-specific approach towards enhancing learners' academic writing skills. The possibility of creating data-driven learning material based on concordance lines generated from corpora of proficient student assignments to draw attention to specific linguistic devices is another promising line of enquiry. The next phase of this project will, therefore, involve the collection of more samples of student assignments which will be converted to a corpus. This will facilitate the generation of authentic learning material that is relevant for student writing needs.

The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion with subject lecturers and students revealed that students' genre-consciousness was enhanced and that they were able to apply a range of linguistic devices to realise the communicative purposes of each Move and Step. The findings also indicate that this increased awareness of the unique structuring of genres will have a positive effect, even when students encounter unfamiliar genres.

Since the case study involved only a small batch of postgraduate students belonging to an MBA for IT Programme, findings might not be generalisable to other disciplines across different levels of study. However, the initial study findings indicate that the genre-based pedagogy was perceived positively by students and faculty members and improved the performance of students who participated in the genre-based workshops designed by CAW at MEC.

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Quantifying Quality: Examining Student Satisfaction and Enjoyment of a Middle Eastern Tutorial Centre

Ryan McDonald and Susan Finlay

Abstract This piece of exploratory research is an attempt to draw parallels between students who attend Tutorial Centre sessions and their experience in and perceptions of the centre. The research involves quantitative analysis of student feedback based on their perceptions and experiences in the Tutorial Centre as they relate to student learning and development, as well as data collected from the online scheduling database, WCONLINE. Participants were 51 Foundation Programme students from the same course who completed a survey, written in Arabic and English, featuring questions about their experiences of Tutorial Centre sessions and perceptions of how these impacted their learning and level of satisfaction. Analysis of participant responses also indicated whether there was any connection between this information and their number of visits to the Tutorial Centre. Student satisfaction is one key indicator of return visits, and understanding the quality of service from the students' point of view provides informative and meaningful feedback to guide future improvements. It was found that the rate of satisfaction did not significantly increase for students attending multiple sessions; however, overall results suggest students overwhelmingly find their sessions enjoyable and valuable. Implications of these findings for similar contexts around the world are discussed.

Keywords Tutorial Centre · Peer tutoring · Experiences · Perceptions · Satisfaction

R. McDonald (✉)
Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: rmcdonald@squ.edu.om

S. Finlay
University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, UK
e-mail: Susan.Finlay@glasgow.ac.uk

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1 Introduction

"اعتذر! لا يوجد شاغ" pronounced roughly as, "Aetdhr! La yujad shaghir", is something often heard in our Tutorial Centre at the Centre for Preparatory Studies (CPS), Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman. It translates as, "I'm sorry, but we are fully booked". Primarily servicing 4000 general foundation university students, and having only 10 tutoring tables at any given time, students often have to wait 2–3 weeks for a 30-minute appointment. This is not an altogether unique experience for the region.

While tutorial centres are still a nascent resource in many Middle East and North African (MENA) universities, the Middle East and North African Writing Centre Alliance (MENAWCA), led by board member Jodi Lefort, has been working on ethnography studies to trace the history and evolution of regional writing centres, and the current count is fewer than 40 across the region. Due to the eclectic nature of MENA universities, drawing broad conclusions or assumptions is not easy. However, Eleftheriou (2011, 2015), Eleftheriou and Ramadan (2016), and Ronesi (2009) have published profiles of their centres detailing challenges and opportunities.

Further, MENAWCA, through its biannual regional conferences and meeting with members, has established that regional centres are well attended and in high demand. Most of the regional research has focused on either writing centres or tutorial centres working with bachelor's and master's students, so the area of Foundation Programme (FP) students' relationships with tutorial centres has much room for expansion. In the MENA region, an FP programme provides structural language support for students who are not yet proficient enough to succeed in fully-academic English courses at university.

At SQU, Tutorial Centre students overwhelmingly come from the lower levels of the FP. Students enrolled in the FP spend one to four semesters improving their English skills so they can be effective in their college credit-bearing content courses. The high participation rate in the services provided by the Tutorial Centre among FP students is likely due to a strong orientation programme and collaboration with the course leaders of the lower programme levels. However, there is also an aggregate effect in that students who use the centre's services continue to return semester after semester.

As former coordinators of the centre, we have a particular interest in understanding why students decide to make use of a service that is non-compulsory. Perhaps even more importantly, we are interested in why students continue to attend sessions, with some participating multiple times a week over the course of a single semester despite the fact that no marks are given for attendance. Of course, such broad questions would have many potential answers, but as educators and directors, pragmatic, actionable data relating to our staff services, students' perceptions of their experience while in the centre, and the impact the sessions have on students' confidence and language learning ability, are especially useful.

Particularly in the MENA region, tutorial and writing centres are still an emergent concept, both in theory and practice, but they are becoming more well defined each year. With this increased clarity in mission and values statements, training, policy, and feedback, comes better services and increased participation by the student body. However, if the services and benefits (real or perceived) are not impactful, measurable, and meaningful, writing and tutorial centres are at risk of declining participation rates and possible closure.

The distinction between a tutorial centre and writing centre is not always obvious. A writing centre can be staffed by students, teachers, or professional writing consultants, and will generally focus on higher order and global concerns over lower order and local concerns. In practice, it means writing centres focus on content and meaning over grammar and mechanics as a general policy. Tutorial centres are staffed by students and offer a wider range of services, generally including discrete skills or systems practice, such as speaking, spelling, and grammar, in addition to the full services of a writing centre. There is a current debate regarding how directive/non-directive tutors should be in sessions. In general terms, being directive involves telling a tutee information, whereas non-directive approaches encourage showing or leading a tutee in a particular direction. In most writing and tutorial centres, a mix of both directive and non-directive approaches are used in a session.

It is the intention of the researchers that this chapter represents a cross-section between theory and practice. Over the past five years, the Tutorial Centre at SQU has continued to expand both services and appointments to the point where there are now nearly 3000 sessions per semester and maintains a staff of nearly 60 tutors. With the MENA region's increased focus on providing support services to students, it has become increasingly important to highlight the connections between tutorial centres, student satisfaction, and learning.

This study attempts to examine those connections. To do this, 51 students from the same FP course who attended the Tutorial Centre during one semester completed a survey requesting information about their experiences at the centre and their perceptions of what they gained from these experiences. These students were selected because they comprise the largest number of students from one course on the FP.

2 Literature Review

Writing and tutorial centres often face challenges that are somewhat unique in academia, in that results are not determined by exit exams, essays, and assignments; rather, the skills and techniques practised function as reinforcement of classroom instruction, and are therefore difficult to quantify. This can, at times, call into question the importance or impact of support centres, particularly when viewed by administrators who often lack experience with those services. Boquet (2002) called for a deviation from the anxiety of administrative requests for quantitative, value-added justification, which she refers to as "bean counting". However,

for many directors, quantitative justification of measurable impact (value-added) services can not only be helpful, but also a requirement. Lape (2012) helps shed light on the challenge by describing two common approaches to satisfying administrative requests. The first is a quantitative appeal, focusing on student numbers, budgetary requirements, and overall usage and popularity. For administrators requiring further convincing, a value-added quantitative appeal, where data and statistics are used to explore qualitative experiences and learning, is appropriate, particularly when support centres are emergent and less well understood by administrations.

Support centres in the Middle East have continued to develop over the past 15 years and, while the localised practices may differ from centre to centre, the core issues of how best to meet students' expectations remain. Universities such as Texas A&M University in Qatar, the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, as well as the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), both in the UAE, are now using structured feedback either at the end of a session, or at the end of a series of sessions, in an attempt to understand students' impressions of their services and how to best encourage growth and learning. There is consensus that a support centre session is, at its heart, an emotional and experiential process for both the tutor and the tutee – frustration, anger, or joy often manifest themselves. It almost goes without saying that support centres strive to create an environment that not only encourages emotion, but also seeks to capitalise on positivity and use it to enhance language acquisition. However, this type of emotional interaction provides challenges for those interested in quantitative analysis – it is not easy to discern students' affective experience and perceptions. In other words, the connection between support centres, student learning, and student perceptions is still murky at best.

That being said, there are a few studies from the MENA region which shed some light on the issue AUS has been studied extensively (Eleftheriou, 2011, 2015; Eleftheriou & Ramadan, 2016), including in terms of various engagement patterns between tutors and tutees to determine whether a directive or non-directive approach is preferred, as well as options for online synchronistic and asynchronistic tutoring. Primarily focusing on tutor methods, training, and reflection, Eleftheriou's work has begun to demystify what constitutes effective practice in a MENA tutorial centre. Ronesi (2009) authored a profile of the AUS tutorial training course and situated MENA tutorial centres in the larger international context. In describing her tutor training course, the author details some of the challenges, noting that "in addition to highlighting linguistic differences, the training course, subsequently, would also need to address the different cultural norms of North America and Sharjah" (p. 78). Ronesi explains an interesting phenomenon in that, while western US-centric models are quite different in terms of student profile, cultural norms, expectations, and linguistic abilities, the student-centred practice and theory advocated by those models can be quite successfully adapted to the AUS context.

A recent study by Tiruchittampalam et al. (2018) focused on determining the impact of UAEU writing centre sessions on students' academic writing. The study indicated that students attending sessions in the writing centre showed marked

improvement over the control group, particularly in terms of task fulfilment and overall coherence. As these two categories are consistent with 'global' and 'high-order' concerns mentioned earlier, the study functions as an affirmation that writing centre theory is informing practice in the MENA region.

Previous investigations have been carried out in the current research context at SQU on the impact of peer tutoring on the peer tutor, including in terms of personal and academic impacts (Finlay, 2019). From analysis of the interviews conducted, Finlay reports the impacts were overwhelmingly positive; indeed, when specifically asked if the tutors perceived any negative effects of tutoring, the tutors could not recall any. The positive personal impacts tutors discussed included feeling more at ease when in the company of males (at SQU, the vast majority of peer tutors are female, and the majority of tutees are male), widening their social circle (through becoming friends with other peer tutors and with tutees), and the feeling of pride and satisfaction in helping others develop their English language skills. It could be concluded, then, that if these positive impacts are felt by the tutors, then these must also spill over and positively affect the tutees.

Student satisfaction theory has been well explored from the perspective of general education, but less so when considering English language learning (ELL) contexts. The "happy-productive" student theory put forth by Cotton et al. (2002) describes a correlation between overall production and several factors, including stress and coping mechanisms. Students engaging in emotionally satisfying educational tasks are more likely to see increased production. It is no surprise that most student support centres have policies, procedures, and training that are centred around this idea. Welch (1993) comments on the way a support centre can transform learners by offering a space to explore, deconstruct, and even subvert traditional academic expectations. In this way, well run support centres can create environments where students not only benefit from the experience, but where they perceive the experience as valuable and important. Both studies lay the groundwork for current MENA practices.

When considering learners' language development, researchers have also made claims that support centres are well situated to address learners' specific needs. In particular, the directive/non-directive approach mentioned above can be re-thought to operate within the framework of Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. As Nordlof (2014) explains:

> Vygotsky sees linguistic development as a process that begins with external, socialized communication, only later to be translated to what he terms 'internal speech'. This points to a concept of how growth happens through the process of interaction with a teacher or tutor (p. 56).

In other words, because a support centre operates on a social, emotional, and individual level, it is particularly well suited to aid in language acquisition.

Student satisfaction is also linked to tangible rewards. In essence, if students feel that attending the support centre is correlated with the achievement of higher marks, they are incentivised to use the service and maximize their benefits. This echoes Rusbult's (1980) investment theory which, although it can apply to many aspects of

life, Hatcher et al. (1992) found to hold true in academia as well. Students prefer to be in an environment with reduced constraints and increased options – both categories are specialties of support centres: students can attend sessions at no charge, and tutorial pedagogy encourages learner autonomy and choice. Furthermore, Cropanzano and Wright (2001) identified key components that correlate between happiness and performance: subjectivity – in that the experiences are perceived rather than prescribed; positivity – which includes not only a high presence of positive emotions, but also an absence of negativity; and totality – in that the experience is looked at as a whole, rather than piecemeal.

While Cropanzano and Wright (2001) were positing theories that directly relate to employment satisfaction, it is reasonable to assume that the concepts would be applicable to learning centres as well. The idea also echoes Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis in that students face a number of emotional barriers that could inhibit language acquisition, and when those barriers are mitigated or removed, more effective learning can take place. These ideas are reflected in the focus of tutor training; namely, the importance of positive emotional support and building strong rapport with the tutee both before and during a session.

Considering students' affect in a support centre seems intuitive. However, it is not something that is well studied. Swain (2013) aptly notes that:

> Emotions are like 'the elephant in the room'. Everyone is aware of them but they reflect an unspoken truth: that they have a significant impact on what has happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future. In fact, emotions are an integral part of cognition (p. 195).

Imai (2010) argues that emotions are much more complex than simple binaries – positive and negative. Rather, the author claims that emotions operate on a spectrum that can facilitate or negate student learning depending on a variety of factors. Through case studies of Japanese learners of English working collaboratively to achieve language learning goals, Imai found that students' emotions played a key role in their cognitive process, and that emotions, even when negative, had the potential to be driving factors in making progress. The implication is that emotions and cognition are more interrelated and complex than most current ELL research demonstrates.

Writing and tutorial centre directors are well aware of the importance of emotion in sessions. Much of tutor training focuses on reducing student stress, making tutees feel comfortable and relaxed, and trying to build rapport at the start of a session. There have been many studies on the physical space of a centre, the ideal staffing models, and appropriate feedback methods – all of which keep the importance of a tutee's emotional well-being at the centre. Some institutions demonstrate this idea in other, more tangible ways as well; for example, by providing sweets for the students as a small way to make them feel welcome and comfortable. These methods mirror Anderson's (2001) contention that a collaborative, non-threatening, and interactive conference will provide greater results. While Anderson was speaking as a content teacher in the United States working with school children, the practice is sound and has been successfully implemented in support centres globally.

With regard to the academic outcomes of peer tutoring support, various studies have been conducted on peer tutoring of content subjects. The American River Project (1993) researched both aspects of maths and science students in the United States, comparing students who were peer-tutored (by trained and paid "learning assistants") in small groups to those who did not receive such tutoring. Pre- and post-tutoring test results showed that those who were tutored performed as well as the control group, despite having started the course with a lower high school GPA. In a post-tutoring survey, 69% of the students reported that the group tutorials were considered to be anywhere between "quite helpful" to "a life-saver".

First-year law students were the focus of a quantitative study conducted in the Netherlands by Moust and Schmidt (1994). The researchers compared those who participated in group tutorials led by student tutors with those led by staff tutors. The subjects completed a pre-course test, an end of course programme evaluation questionnaire, and an achievement test in the form of essay format answers to open questions. Results indicated that the students who were in peer tutor-led tutorial groups performed just as well as those in staff-led tutorial groups. In Hong Kong, Loke and Chow (2007) investigated nursing students who were tutored one-to-one by more senior students for one hour per week. From focus groups and mid- and end-of-semester interviews designed to evaluate the tutees' experiences, these were found to be more positive than negative.

While overall student satisfaction is informative, focusing on specific experiences can provide meaningful insight as well. Carino and Enders (2001) examined the connection between student satisfaction and number of visits per semester. The researchers found the strongest positive correlation was between number of visits and students' confidence in their abilities as writers. This correlation demonstrates the experiential benefits a support centre can have on students. In other words, the experience of discussing writing and sharing ideas in a meaningful way provides students with more confidence about their writing.

Schmidt and Alexander (2012) developed this concept further by exploring the connection between self-efficacy, or the belief that a person can succeed at a given task, and writing centre visits. Their large study involved over 500 university students and revealed strong statistical evidence for the development of self-efficacy for students who attended at least three sessions in the writing centre. The results of both Schmidt and Alexander (2012) and Carino and Enders (2001) suggest that students who attend sessions more regularly are more satisfied with the development of their writing skills and perceive themselves to be more confident writers.

Within the Sultanate of Oman, the current research site was also the subject of an investigation by Alraji and Aldhafri (2015) into tutees' English self-concept. One hundred and twenty-five FP students completed an English Self-Concept Scale and a Tutorial Program Factors Scale to indicate their perceptions of the effects on self-concept of Tutorial Centre sessions. Results indicated the positive influence of peer tutoring on participants' English self-concept. More recently, Finlay (2017) conducted research on three struggling FP students who were regular users of SQU's

Tutorial Centre and who attended 19, 9 and 16 sessions respectively during one semester. The researcher used interviews to examine respondents' perceptions of how their sessions helped develop their English language skills. All three reported an increase in confidence, to varying degrees, which allowed them to participate more in class and to talk to their teachers outside of class. An increase in understanding the teacher was also mentioned as a perceived benefit.

3 Methodology

3.1 Support Centre Context

The Tutorial Centre at SQU, one aspect of Student Support (with the others including the Writing Centre (WrC), an extensive reading library, an extra-curricular activities office, as well as an independent learning hub, known as Self Access), has been in existence since 2011. It has grown from 12 peer tutors and approximately 450 appointments in the first semester of operation, to over 50 peer tutors per semester and more than 4000 appointments per year (roughly 2500 in the Fall and 1800 in the Spring semesters) from 2014. In addition, since Fall 2016, tutoring services have also been offered to FP Maths and IT students. While the content is different for these students, the core methods and training are similar.

Senior students are recruited each semester, and are mainly Education (English), English Language and Literature, and Translation majors, although a growing number are from the College of Economics and Political Science, the College of Law, and the College of Engineering. Successful applicants whose writing has been assessed and who have passed an oral interview attend 10 hours of training prior to tutoring. They are allowed to work for up to 5 hours per week and they are paid an hourly rate: the equivalent of $US10.50 per hour. During the first semester of work, new peer tutors are paired with a mentor who is an experienced peer tutor. The mentor is both observed by and observes their mentee. The coordinator also listens and provides feedback on an audio-recording of one Tutorial Centre session by each new tutor, which provides another strand of quality assurance. The training process is extensive and ongoing. As student satisfaction is a key component to repeat visits, there are several training points that are focused on more than others, including empathy, engagement, scaffolding, and agency.

Perhaps one of the most important skills a tutor can have is the ability to empathise with their students (Kaiden, 1994). Learning a language can be difficult and stressful, but going to a support centre to ask for help can be doubly so. For this reason, tutors are trained on soft skills like building rapport and acknowledging the difficulty of any particular task. Additionally, all of our tutors have learned English as a second or additional language, and some have completed the FP at SQU. This shared experience enables tutors to understand and empathise with the students,

thereby improving the emotional experience for tutees. Once the groundwork has been laid, the tutor and tutees can then move on towards engaging in the task.

There are various strategies that are well established in tutoring, but to keep training more efficient, we focus on engaging in two general approaches – directive and non-directive – which have been discussed at length in the literature (see Clark, 2001; Eleftheriou, 2011; Harris & Silva, 1993; Nordlof, 2014). There are a number of basic approaches within these methods, although the tutors are trained specifically on elicitation methods, working within a tutee's linguistic framework, rather than the tutor's, and using appropriate times of silence and thought. It is also worth noting that tutors are given latitude during a session to determine what is best for the student, the task, and the moment. The decision on whether to use a direct or non-direct approach is largely left to the discretion of tutors, who are trained to consider task, purpose, outcomes, and the tutee's needs when choosing the most appropriate way to conduct a session.

One measure of success in tutoring (or teaching, for that matter) is that the students are able to grasp the concepts being discussed and apply them in a way that is meaningful, memorable, and achievable. Tutors are trained to break down tasks and present them in a manner that is engaging for the tutee, but also within the students' capabilities. As an example, if a student were to attend a session with a particular task of writing an email to a friend about their weekend, and wanted to work on such an assignment with the tutor, the tutor is trained to break down the task and work with the student one step at a time. This task would require brainstorming of common actions performed over the weekend, places one might go, listing subjects who perform those actions, changing the verbs into the past tense, and determining which verbs are regular and which are irregular. Each task may only take a few minutes, but each is an important step. Learning is, therefore, more achievable for the tutee, and they leave the session with practical knowledge that can be applied to other tasks.

The final core component to the training revolves around the concept of agency. Essentially, ownership must stay with the tutees – a tutor writing on student work or completing tasks for them is not allowed. Tutees should maintain ownership of their ideas. This seems straightforward; however, there are a few challenges. First, we are using a sociological concept that is culturally bound to apply a rule to groups of people who may have alternative understandings of agency. In other words, the same understandings of ownership do not apply to all cultures. Moreover, Geisler (2004) argues that the idea of rhetorical agency is changing with the ubiquitous nature of online writing and the multitude of developing genres. This, in turn, raises the question of whether or not the entire concept of rhetorical agency needs to be scrutinised further and perhaps re-defined. As defining and understanding the concept can be elusive, for practical purposes, tutor training at SQU focuses on the traditional western understandings of agency.

3.2 Promotion and General Procedures

The centre is promoted to the lower levels of the FP, but all students at any stage of their studies, up to PhD students, are welcome to attend sessions. This makes the type of tutoring carried out in the centre mainly "dyadic cross-year fixed-role" (Topping, 1996, p. 335), meaning that most sessions are one-to-one, between students at different stages of their university career, and non-reciprocal. Students make their appointments via an online booking system (WCONLINE), where, as well as giving information about their level and subject area, they select their intended focus of each session: reading, writing, speaking, presentation skills, vocabulary or grammar. The most popular focus is speaking, followed by writing, and then grammar.

After each session, the peer tutor completes a client report form stating what was covered in the session. This is automatically emailed to the tutee who can then add it to their assessed portfolio of work as evidence of self-study. The report form is written in the style of a "thank you" letter, addressing the tutee by name, and encouraging the tutee to return for additional sessions. This is a small but important way to build further rapport once the student has left the centre. The Tutorial Centre space is shared with peer tutors who tutor FP Maths and IT, and WrC consultants, who are graduates or postgraduates and generally non-Arabic speakers. The WrC is promoted to students in the higher levels of the FP and only focuses on writing but, as with the Tutorial Centre, all university students are welcome to make appointments.

Participants in this study were FP English Language (FPEL) 0340 students during Spring semester 2017. These students are pre-intermediate to intermediate level, or the equivalent of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2/B1. Most of these students progressed from the previous level in Fall 2016, although some may have failed FPEL 0340 and were repeating the course, or they achieved a 'D' in the previous level and so were repeating the second half of the FPEL 0340 course. The students following this course were selected as they formed the largest course grouping of students who attended the Tutorial Centre in the semester of the study.

3.3 Survey Methods

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How satisfied are students with their experiences at the Tutorial Centre?
   (a) Does this level of satisfaction change based on number of visits?
2. How do students perceive their visits to the Tutorial Centre?
   (a) Does this change based on number of visits?

The first question addresses a critical issue in tutorial centres. As former directors, we have countless anecdotes concluding that students participating in the centre are satisfied. In fact, many of the tutors first discovered the centre when they came to seek assistance, and enjoyed the experience enough to apply for a position as a tutor later in their degree programme. While anecdotes such as this help to paint the picture, they do not provide quantifiable data that is actionable for a director.

To refer back to an earlier point, many administrators would like to see tangible, quantifiable evidence that the centre is doing well, which enables greater advocacy for increased funding, promotion, staffing and expansion. It is also possible to gauge the success of a centre simply by numbers alone. In the case of the SQU Tutorial Centre, the numbers speak for themselves. It has grown nearly threefold in a short period of time. However, just because more students are attending sessions does not necessarily mean that they are actually satisfied with those sessions. Perhaps we have increasing numbers of students who come only once; alternatively, we could have the same number of students attending an increasing number of times. The first research question is an attempt to clarify if the students are actually enjoying the sessions, and whether satisfaction is related to number of visits.

The second research question explores the connections between emotion and learning – Are there positive connections between the perceived impact sessions had on language learning and overall satisfaction? In other words, do students enjoy sessions more if they feel they are improving their language, or do they simply enjoy the interaction of the space? Directors can use this knowledge to modify training and practice, and improve the overall experience of a tutorial centre session. As the concept of tutorial centres is relatively new to the MENA region, and completely new to SQU Omani students (the authors are not aware of the existence of any support centres in Omani government schools), it is unclear as to how students perceive the space and the experience they have here.

Towards the end of the semester, all tutees were encouraged to complete a survey to gather information about their level, how many times they had attended sessions at the Tutorial Centre, their experiences at the centre, and their perceptions about how they felt their sessions at the Tutorial Centre had impacted on their English language abilities (see Appendix). Fifty-one FPEL 0340 students completed the survey, which was available in both English and Arabic. Participants were asked to complete the survey after being reminded of its voluntary and anonymous nature. The centre's desk staff handed out surveys at the end of a session to those students who indicated a willingness to participate. The survey was not completed in front of the tutor or under the supervision of the desk staff. Throughout the research process, the students were identified by ID numbers rather than names, and their anonymity was protected in the presentation of the data, as no further identifying information was included.

Survey questions were developed on a 4-point scale with response options of Poor to Excellent for the survey category concerned with experiences of the Tutorial Centre, and of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree for the survey category about perceptions of the centre. Using a 4-point scale was a deliberate choice for both survey categories as students were required to respond positively or negatively to

survey items. All items were positively worded, and distributed between the two main survey categories of student experiences (8 items) and perceptions of the Tutorial Centre (5 items). After the surveys were completed, the data was entered into GNU PSPP for analysis.

To investigate the research questions, several analyses were carried out. First, descriptive analysis was conducted to determine means and standard deviations for all items on the experiences and perceptions survey categories. To aid in the interpretation of means, all scores above 2.50 on the 4-point scale were interpreted as indicating higher levels of satisfaction/agreement with the positively worded items, and scores under this point were deemed to indicate lower levels of satisfaction/agreement. Overall means for each survey category were also calculated and interpreted in the same manner.

To address the research sub-questions regarding the impact of number of visits on participants' experiences and perceptions, inferential analysis was used. One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to explore the impact of number of visits (based on the categories of 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, and 10 or more) with each item from the experience and perception survey categories. Given the possibility of inflated type I error due to multiple testing in this approach, a Bonferroni correction was made with resultant acceptable levels of statistical significance being set at $p \leqslant 0.01$. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also calculated for both survey categories as a measure of internal consistency, with a level of 0.70 deemed by the researchers as acceptable given the exploratory nature of the research.

4 Results

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for both survey categories was 0.80, thereby indicating a good level of internal consistency. Table 1 features means and standard deviations for the 8 items associated with the survey category of students'

Table 1 Experiences of the Tutorial Centre

Item	Mean	Std. deviation
Convenience of online booking system	3.02	1.07
Assistance of office staff	3.47	0.81
Session length options	3.37	0.72
Tutorial Centre atmosphere	3.10	0.83
Suitability of task(s)	3.08	0.80
Helpfulness of peer tutors	3.18	0.82
Amount of speaking practice	2.90	0.83
Overall satisfaction	3.33	0.65
Category Total	3.13	0.52

Table 2 Perceptions of the Tutorial Centre

Item	Mean	Std. deviation
My Tutorial Centre sessions were enjoyable	3.22	0.50
My Tutorial Centre sessions made me feel more confident about my English	3.22	0.73
My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my overall English	3.24	0.76
My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my exam scores	3.06	0.73
My Tutorial Centre sessions made me become a more independent learner	2.94	0.73
Category Total	3.16	0.52

Table 3 Experiences and perceptions by number of visits

Item	Number of visits	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Experiences	1–3	21	3.03	0.64
	4–6	12	3.05	0.29
	7–9	8	3.30	0.46
	10+	10	3.38	0.41
Perceptions	1–3	21	2.94	0.48
	4–6	12	3.12	0.40
	7–9	8	3.20	0.64
	10+	10	3.40	0.51

experiences of the Tutorial Centre ($M = 3.13$). The table indicates that participants displayed highest levels of satisfaction with the assistance of office staff ($M = 3.47$). This was followed by session length options ($M = 3.37$), overall satisfaction ($M = 3.33$), and the helpfulness of peer tutors ($M = 3.18$). Items recording the lowest means on this category were Tutorial Centre atmosphere ($M = 3.10$), suitability of task(s) ($M = 3.08$), convenience of online booking system ($M = 3.02$), and amount of speaking practice ($M = 2.90$). However, in each of these cases, item means remained above the cut-off point of 2.50 detailed above, thereby indicating relatively high levels of satisfaction.

Item mean scores in Table 2 indicate that students responded positively to all five questions about their perceptions of the Tutorial Centre ($M = 3.16$). Students agreed most strongly to questions about overall satisfaction, confidence, and enjoyment. That is, items that recorded the highest means were, “My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my overall English” ($M = 3.24$), “My Tutorial Centre sessions were enjoyable” ($M = 3.22$), and, “My Tutorial Centre sessions made me feel more confident about my English” ($M = 3.22$). The two items with the lowest means from this category were, “My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my exam scores” ($M = 3.06$), and, “My Tutorial Centre sessions made me become a more independent learner” ($M = 2.94$). However, similar to the results to the first survey category, these were again above the 2.50 cut-off point, thereby indicating relatively high levels of participant satisfaction.

Table 3 features the breakdown of overall means and standard deviations for the two survey categories based on number of visits made to the centre. An examination

Table 4 Number of visits and satisfaction of experiences ANOVA

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Convenience of online booking system	Between groups Within groups Total	10.20 46.78 56.98	3 47 50	3.40 1	3.42	0.025
Assistance of office staff	Between groups Within groups Total	6.09 26.62 32.71	3 47 50	2.03 0.57	3.58	0.021
Session length options	Between groups Within groups Total	2.38 23.54 25.92	3 47 50	0.79 0.50	1.59	0.205
Tutorial Centre atmosphere	Between groups Within groups Total	8.67 25.84 34.51	3 47 50	2.89 0.55	5.26	0.003*
Suitability of tasks	Between groups Within groups Total	0.69 31.00 31.69	3 47 50	0.23 0.66	0.35	0.791
Helpfulness of peer tutors	Between groups Within groups Total	4.82 28.59 33.41	3 47 50	1.61 0.61	2.64	0.060
Amount of speaking practice	Between groups Within groups Total	0.15 34.35 34.51	3 47 50	0.05 0.73	0.07	0.975
Overall satisfaction	Between groups Within groups Total	1.91 19.42 21.33	3 47 50	0.64 0.41	1.54	0.216

*Significant at the $p \leq 0.01$ level

of the means indicates that an increase in number of visits is associated with increasing levels of satisfaction. This general trend suggests that students increasingly felt more positive about their experiences in and perceptions of the Tutorial Centre as they attended more sessions. However, despite this apparent pattern, ANOVAs exploring the potential impact of number of visits on overall scores for the categories of experiences and perceptions did not reveal statistically significant differences.

Table 4 details the results of the ANOVA that investigated the impact of number of visits on item means from the survey category about student satisfaction with the Tutorial Centre. The only item where statistically significant differences were reported at the $p \leq 0.01$ level was for Tutorial Centre atmosphere. In response to this

Table 5 Number of visits and perceptions ANOVA

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
My Tutorial Centre sessions were enjoyable	Between groups	4.63	4	1.16	4.93	0.001*
	Within groups	21.12	90	0.23		
	Total	25.75	94			
My Tutorial Centre sessions made me feel more confident about my English	Between groups	5.37	4	1.34	2.79	0.031
	Within groups	43.22		0.48		
	Total	48.59				
My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my overall English	Between groups	4.88	90	1.22	2.40	0.055
	Within groups	45.71		0.51		
	Total	50.59				
My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my exam scores	Between groups	0.80	94	0.20	0.39	0.817
	Within groups	46.19		0.51		
	Total	46.99				
My Tutorial Centre sessions made me become a more independent learner	Between groups	1.42	4	0.35	0.61	0.659
	Within groups	25.58		0.58		
	Total	54.00				

*Significant at the $p \leq 0.01$ level

item, participants with 10 or more visits (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.47) and 4–6 visits (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 0.65) recorded the highest means, while those who had visited the centre 1–3 times (*M* = 2.81, *SD* = 0.87) and 7–9 times (*M* = 2.63, *SD* = 0.74) recorded the lowest.

The impact of number of visits on items from the survey category of perceptions of the Tutorial Centre are featured in Table 5. Again, statistically significant differences were only reported for one item from this category – "My Tutorial Centre sessions were enjoyable". Means increase for this item along with number of visits as follows: 1–3 visits (*M* = 2.95, *SD* = 0.38); 4–6 visits (*M* = 3.25, *SD* = 0.45); 7–9 visits (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 0.52); and 10 or more visits (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 0.52).

5 Discussion

The study sought to gain a clearer understanding of student participants' levels of satisfaction with their experience of SQU's Tutorial Centre and their perceptions of the centre, including whether number of visits impacted these

levels. It is clear from the data that students are satisfied with both the Tutorial Centre's impact on their language acquisition and their overall experience in the space. Out of a maximum score of 4.00, students recorded survey category means of 3.13 and 3.16 for experiences and perceptions respectively. As 2.50 was deemed the cut-off point between lower and higher levels of satisfaction/more positive perceptions, means over 3.00 can be interpreted as quite positive. Moreover, these results appear to support anecdotal reports from regional affiliates as well as learner testimonials that students, in general, enjoy their tutorial sessions.

In relation to the second research question, results of ANOVA analysis indicate that there was no statistically significant impact on number of sessions participants attended and overall satisfaction. While intuition would suggest that students who attend more sessions are more likely to be satisfied, it is interesting to discover that in the current research it was not an indicator or predictor of student satisfaction. While this result is surprising, it is not an altogether negative one. In fact, there is some reassurance that students who attend one session are just as likely to enjoy the experience as those attending more than ten times.

One plausible explanation for this finding is that the first time students come to the Tutorial Centre, tutees are provided with an overview of what the space is, how it functions, and how they are expected to interact with the tutors. Thonus (2003) refers to this as "sociopragmatic discourses". Because a support centre is an unknown entity to schools in Oman, it stands to reason that the first few sessions would be improved by the tutors helping students to relax and familiarising tutees with the procedures and protocols of the space. The CPS Tutorial Centre focuses heavily on this, not only in the initial, but also in subsequent sessions. It is likely that the emphasis on teaching students how to engage in the space effectively contributes to a feeling of ease and satisfaction, regardless of number of visits.

The results also speak to the nature and value of rapport. Much training is spent on relationship building, helping tutors establish rapport from the first session, and making students feel as comfortable as possible. This is particularly important when students are attending from the FP with a low level of English – risk taking can only be encouraged in a supportive environment. Rapport building does not end with the first session, either. Many of the tutees make regular appointments with specific tutors and, over the course of a semester, a tutor can develop a relationship with the tutee and provide a more specialised service. This could manifest as an understanding of particular learning styles (some students prefer visual whiteboard explanations; others prefer more kinaesthetic activities), or preference for experiential or rote learning. Moreover, it is also likely that the tutees themselves are developing their overall tutoring skills as the semester progresses. Because tutors can have as many as ten sessions a week, it is not unreasonable to assume that a tutor has had over 100 sessions during the course of a semester. Along with the regular discussions and problem-solving that happen among the Tutorial Centre staff, there is a

progression and development of shared expertise that likely contribute to positive sessions.

The results regarding students' experiences are also informative. Our desk staff are clearly successful in their mission of making students feel welcome and comfortable. This may in part be because they are former peer tutors themselves and have a strong sense of empathy and a shared commitment to a quality experience for the tutees. The Tutorial Centre has generally low turnover as many of the tutors have been with the programme for multiple years, furthering their experience and quality of service. The other noteworthy finding from this category sheds some light on an ongoing challenge in MENA tutorial centres – tutor versus student talking time. Amount of speaking practice recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction in the experiences survey category, and has been noted as a feedback point for future training. This result seems to confirm the findings of Eleftheriou (2011) that tutees in the Middle East context prefer egalitarian sessions where both sides are contributing. While there is training at SQU in which methods and techniques for reducing tutor talking time are discussed, it is clear that further training is advisable.

Regarding students' perceptions, participants' responses to the items, "My Tutorial Centre sessions made me feel more confident about my English", and, "My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my English exam scores", are particularly important as they demonstrate that students perceive their Tutorial Centre sessions as positively impacting both their overall English and their confidence as an English user. If no other questions were asked, this would demonstrate a strong rationale for continuing to expand the Tutorial Centre space and services. Students find inherent value in their time spent there, which in itself is a justification for additional resources to be allocated to the centre. This finding mirrors those of Carino and Enders (2001) and Schmidt and Alexander (2012): support centres provide important opportunities for students to develop and strengthen positive relationships with language.

The item, "My Tutorial Centre sessions made me become a more independent learner", recorded the lowest level of participant agreement. This finding is possibly related to a number of issues. First, the question may have been misplaced. Because the Tutorial Centre is a collaborative space, the notion of independent learning may seem contradictory to participants, even though students are aware that evidence of attending a session counts towards the 'self-study' component of their portfolio. Second, while tutors are trained in developing autonomous skill sets with students, many of the sessions are centred around speaking practice, where independent learning may be less relevant, or merely less explicit.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The first research question concerned how satisfied students are with their experiences at the Tutorial Centre. Overall, results indicate that students view their experiences positively. Whether considering interpersonal skills such as effectiveness

of the peer tutor and helpfulness of the desk staff, or impacts on student learning, exam marks, and confidence, students, it can be argued, based on these results, enjoy their time there. The mean score for all categories was above the cut-off point of 2.50 separating more positive from more negative responses, and almost all were 3.00 or higher. However, the answer to whether this changes based on number of visits is no. With the exception of Tutorial Centre atmosphere, students attending 1–3 sessions were just as satisfied with their visits as those attending ten or more.

Regarding the second research question, "How do students perceive their visits to the Tutorial Centre?", participants again had overwhelmingly positive perceptions. As this category was also concerned with whether participants believed their Tutorial Centre sessions had a positive impact on their academic and language skills in general, it is affirming to note that students responded positively to all items, with the only item receiving a mean score below 3.00 being, "My Tutorial Centre sessions made me an independent learner". Students clearly see a link between their sessions and academic achievement in general. However, number of visits again did not have a statistically significant impact on these results, although differences were reported in relation to the first item from this category.

When interpreting the results of this exploratory study, however, it is important to take into account several important limitations. The research focused on a narrow band of students in a large programme. The CPS Tutorial Centre English team services around 2500 students per semester across primarily nine FP English courses. Over 150 students completed surveys, but only 51, who were from the FPEL 0340 cohort, were investigated as they were the largest group of same-level responders. While the surveys were offered in English and Arabic, it is possible some of the terms such as "independent learning" were not fully understood as concepts. Finally, because the research is exploratory and limited in scale, it was difficult to benchmark results against similar institutions in the region. Another limitation is that, by using a 4-point response scale, students were forced to respond positively or negatively, and it is possible that Omani students, being eager to please and generally positive as a student profile, were reluctant to give negative feedback about a free service on campus. It could therefore be interesting to re-run the study using a 5-point scale that includes a neutral response option to compare results.

Additional exploratory research, both in the institution and the region, would provide a framework to build upon more robust research. The idea of student support as a necessary entity is gaining traction in Oman, and more institutions contributing to a body of research would enable institutional support allowing centres to emerge, evolve, and maintain a quality of service.

As students are generally satisfied with the services provided by the SQU Tutorial Centre, resources should continue to be allocated and developed to expand the services provided. The lowest "experiences" category (tutor-student talking time) should be addressed in two ways: (1) ongoing training and practice to help reduce the amount of talking by the tutor and increase

productive language use by the tutees; and (2) increased observations and more focused feedback sessions by the Student Support Coordinator and the experienced peer tutors. SQU would benefit from mirroring the work of Eleftheriou (2011) by incorporating audio and/or video recordings of all tutors as currently only new tutors are recorded, assessed, and mentored. Such a system would provide more assurance of quality and opportunities for developing tutorial skills.

A study that investigated the satisfaction of tutees with particular tutors would be informative to help determine which tutors are providing the highest perceived service. While the researchers have several tools to gauge the effectiveness of a tutor, including audio recording new peer tutors, providing feedback and gaining a sense of strengths and weaknesses, documenting peer observations, and informally listening in to sessions while they happen, more could be done. Two additional questions on the survey, “How would you rate your tutor?”, and, “What could your tutor have done to make your session better?”, would also provide further clarity on what methods students prefer and find valuable. The above questions were omitted from the current exploratory research as it was felt they could impact the positive environment of the Tutorial Centre. That is, the questions have the potential to be perceived as punitive or an attempt to rank the tutors, rather than a genuine inquiry into best practice.

In an attempt to address the item, “My sessions made me become a more independent learner”, tutors should be more explicitly trained in ways to develop autonomous learning and transfer. At the end of each session, it would be beneficial to focus on what skills were learned, and, importantly, how those skills could be applied to other tasks and language activities the tutee can be expected to do, particularly if this can be elicited from the tutee through guiding questions by the tutor. Some support centres keep a paper-based or e-folio on each student, focusing on the progression of student skills. Such a tracking and filing system may have benefits at SQU when attempting to develop independent learning skills.

Finally, future research could be conducted to determine the value-added component of student support. A structured longitudinal study following students over the course of several years could inform administration regarding the tangible impact that the Tutorial Centre may have on student marks and overall achievement, and would also have consequences regionally as new and existing centres benefit from examples of measurable impacts of tutorial centres.

Appendix: Data Collection Instrument

The CPS Tutorial Centre (TC) is very interested in your opinions about its services. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire about your experience of the TC this semester (FL 17). Please write a number or tick, as appropriate.

يسعى المركز التعليمي بجامعة السلطان قابوس للحصول على آرائكم حول الخدمات التي يقدمها. أكمل الاستبيان التالي معتمدا على خبرتك الحالية في المركز التعليمي خريف (2017) ضع إشارة صح أمام خيارك.

General information **معلومات عامة**

1. What is your ID number? الرقم الجامعي

2. Gender (الجنس): □ Male (ذكر) □ Female (انثى)

3. What is your current FPEL course?

البرنامج الدراسي الحالي؟

120 □ 230 □ 340 □ 450 □ 560 □ 604 □

4. Approximately how many times did you visit the TC this semester?

كم عدد المواعيد التي حجزتها في المركز التعليمي لهذا الفصل؟

1–3 times □ 4–6 times □ 7–9 times □ 10+ times □

5. Did you mainly work with the same tutor?

هل تحجز مواعيدك غالبا مع نفس المعلم الطالب؟

Yes □ No □

6. Did you mainly come for 30 minute or 1 hour sessions?

طول الجلسة التي تحجزها غالبا في المركز التعليمي؟

30 minute sessions □ 1 hour sessions □

Please turn over. *اقلب الصفحة*

Your experiences **خبرتك:**

7. Please rate the Tutorial Centre on the following: قيم المركز التعليمي من النواحي التالية:

(from 1–4: 1 = poor and 4 = excellent) حيث يمثل 1 أقل درجة في التقييم و 4 أعلى درجة

	1	2	3	4	
a. Convenience of online booking and walk-in procedure	□	□	□	□	• نظام الحجز الالكتروني والدخول دون ترتيب موعد مسبق
b. Assistance of front office staff	□	□	□	□	• المساعدة المقدمة من الموظفات في مكتب الاستقبال
c. Session length options	□	□	□	□	• خيارات طول الجلسة
d. Tutorial Centre atmosphere	□	□	□	□	• طبيعة المكان
e. Suitability of task(s)	□	□	□	□	• مدى ملائمة الانشطة المستخدمة
f. Helpfulness of peer tutors	□	□	□	□	• المساعدة المقدمة من الطالب المعلم
g. The amount of talking you did compared to your peer tutor	□	□	□	□	• مقدار تحدثك مقارنة بتحدث الطالب المعلم
h. Overall satisfaction with the sessions	□	□	□	□	• المستوى العام للرضا عن الجلسات

Your perceptions

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Please tick **one** box for each statement (ضع علامة صح في مربع واحد لكل عبارة) ما مدى موافقتك على العبارات التالية؟:

	Strongly disagree لا أوافق بشدة	**Disagree** لا أوافق	**Agree** أوافق	**Strongly agree** أوافق بشدة
a. My Tutorial Centre sessions were enjoyable. جلساتي في المركز كانت ممتعة				
b. My Tutorial Centre sessions made me feel more confident about my English. زادت جلساتي بالمركز من ثقتي بنفسي				
c. My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my overall English. طورت جلساتي بالمركز لغتي الإنجليزية بشكل عام.				
d. My Tutorial Centre sessions improved my English exam scores. حسنت جلساتي بالمركز درجاتي في امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية				
e. My Tutorial Centre sessions made me become a more independent learner. جلساتي بالمركز جعلت مني متعلما مستقلا				

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Metacognition and Language Learning on an International Foundation Programme

Steven Herron

Abstract Metacognition can be seen as a useful approach for teaching language tasks, a complex concept containing knowledge, strategy and reflective components, and connections to higher order thinking skills. This empirical study examined the presence of metacognition within an international foundation programme in a UK university using a sample of ten student participants. Core themes of learning styles and English level were identified from a review of empirical studies in the literature. A mixed methods research design was developed to explore whether metacognition was present and whether or not this fluctuated over time. Participants were given a self-scoring matrix consisting of twelve statements scored on a Likert scale that was completed over a period of five weeks, along with a weekly semi-structured blog. Teachers were also given a questionnaire to explore their perception of participant engagement. The findings revealed that participants engaged with metacognitive thinking and their self-scoring showed some fluctuations over the five-week period. Metacognitive thinking and reflection had a positive impact on teaching and learning as teachers responded to student comments and adjusted their teaching, thereby helping students to engage more with recording and reflecting.

Keywords Metacognition · Thinking · Reflection · Engagement · Learning & teaching

1 Introduction

Metacognition can be broadly defined as the way in which a learner understands what they need to do to perform a task, evaluate previous knowledge and their strategy base, select an appropriate action plan and evaluate the effectiveness of this with

S. Herron (✉)
Director of Learning, Teaching and Academic Affairs,
Oxford International Education Group, London, UK
e-mail: sherron@oxfordinternational.com

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refinements in order to formulate a suitable approach to the task (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995). It is possible to view metacognition in quite simplistic terms of strengths and weaknesses. However, it can also be seen in more complex terms with the development of the cognitive process to a task or situation and critical reflection to feed into more effective strategies (Oxford, 2011). A number of scholars highlight the strong connection between metacognition and procedural knowledge, or the knowledge of how to best complete a task, such as, for instance, writing an academic essay and so on (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 2011; Wenden, 1998).

Metacognition is important as learners generally use metacognitive strategies to build upon and develop their own critical approaches by using cognitive functions and being able to apply the most appropriate solution to a situation (Macaro, 2006). Many international students in the UK find the transition to higher education challenging due to the need to develop effective strategies to manage their learning and develop an understanding of British academic culture (Kim, 2001; Smith et al., 2006). The process of transition often requires students to develop their lexical range from general to academic discourse, understand academia, develop study management strategies, and cope with the acculturation process (Schartner, 2016; Young & Schartner, 2014). This is especially relevant for students on an international foundation programme (IFP) aiming for a level four undergraduate degree programme as the IFP is often the first experience they have of UK education systems.

To succeed in this new setting, students need to be able to reflect critically and constantly revise their strategies to provide more control over how they learn and how they approach classes, homework and assessment (Stefani et al., 2007). Metacognitive strategies can aid in this type of reflection, whereby students move from general ideas of what they have done to much more critical reflection, changing their approach to learning (Moon, 2006). It is due to the importance of these strategies that I have experimented with thinking skills and cognitive activities within my teaching (Herron, 2011, 2012), including using a range of tasks that require learners to find a possible response based on logic. I developed an approach of reflection in a semi-structured journal and a self-created reflective matrix based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning (the cognitive domain) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Many empirical studies connected with metacognition have focused on specific areas, such as Azevedo (2009) who examined types of research methods used in metacognitive studies, Zhang (2010) whose focus was correlation between metacognition and delivery style, and Ruan (2014) who examined one English skill in relation to metacognition. Most studies in metacognition suggest that there are benefits to encouraging the development of metacognitive strategies for learners. Methodologically, almost all of the studies in the field seem to favour using a questionnaire after some type of assessment. Therefore, there is an identifiable research gap in measuring instances and variations of metacognition over a period of time to see student levels of engagement fluctuate. Therefore, this chapter reports on an investigation into students' engagement with metacognitive thinking, including whether their engagement in metacognitive thinking impacted upon teaching and learning and whether it also fluctuated over time.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Metacognition

Metacognition has its origins in cognition and has some broad similarities in how it is both defined and applied across the literature. Flavell (1976) described metacognition as a step up from cognition, using previously acquired knowledge to actively control cognitive processes. This includes areas such as being able to develop strategies, approach tasks and consider the development at a personal level. Flavell continues that metacognition is where the person is able to draw upon what they know and apply this to themselves or to a situation in order to unlock a higher degree of academic potential.

Anderson (2008) describes metacognition as a way of enabling learners to learn from the medium of reflection and the evaluation of cognition, making appropriate changes to how they do things. This process involves the management of thinking and of learning. There is a broad distinction in some terms of how metacognition works as a concept across the literature that suggests two core elements of metacognition: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation (Dunlosky & Metcalfe, 2009; Serra & Metcalfe, 2009). The first term refers to the awareness of the self, the task and a range of thinking and application strategies based upon past experiences (Macaro, 2006; Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011). The second term focuses on the application of metacognitive knowledge so that it is drawn upon and used to evaluate, and then applied to, a situation (Dunlosky & Metcalfe, 2009; Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011).

Metacognition is connected to the broader area of critical and higher level thinking skills (Fisher, 2003; Leat & Higgins, 2002). Many of the principles suggested by Flavell (1976) have been linked with other bodies of work, such as Bloom's taxonomy of learning (1956). The work of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) in updating the taxonomy is particularly relevant to how metacognition is viewed. Oxford's metacognitive strategies can, in fact, be mapped quite easily into areas of remembering, applying, analysing/evaluating and creating. This suggests a possible link between metacognition and a higher order of metacognitive abilities that a learner may have to understand and develop (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 1990). The idea of the metacognitive strategy of critical reflection to inform practice is probably most related to the notion of *create* within the cognitive domain of the taxonomy of learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Oxford (1990) suggests that metacognitive strategies are an essential component of successful language learning by helping learners regain control over new language, skills and discourses. They aid the planning, understanding and application of language development as well as reflection and the assimilation of new knowledge with current/previous knowledge. Wenden (1998) claims that metacognition offers learners the opportunity to control their approach to language and skill learning and should be defined in relation to procedural knowledge. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) define procedural knowledge as the understanding of how to do

something; for instance, in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), how to write an academic essay. The process of actually writing the essay can be complex and involves many stages of metacognition.

Oxford (2011) suggests metacognitive strategies are broadly useful within education, but also very specifically in EAP teaching where the process of learning required skills often necessitates the learner taking what they have learned in one class and applying it to another. These strategies cover a process of pre-application (the idea of planning for and paying attention to cognition), application (implementing plans for cognition and orchestrating cognitive strategy use) as well as post-application (monitoring and evaluating cognition) (Oxford, 2011). What is required is that learners need to access a range of metacognitive strategies; however, this needs to be augmented as part of instruction and developed systematically in order for the learner to develop and utilise their own metacognitive knowledge and strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1998).

2.2 Does Learner Level Affect Metacognition?

O'Malley and Chamot (1995) suggest that the English level of students participating in any study about metacognition does not necessarily impede the search for signs of metacognitive awareness. Their results indicated that metacognition was based more on the level of the individual and their background rather than solely on their English ability. However, students do, nonetheless, need sufficient English proficiency to understand the teaching and the research tools and to communicate via the research tools. In this case, it could be suggested that empirical studies for metacognition may require frameworks to be established so that lower level English students could obtain something from their engagement.

Oxford (1990) said that metacognition might be present, although not particularly developed, in a number of learning situations. Thus, traces of metacognition fall into more basic functions of reflection rather than anything more detailed (in terms of linguistic and cognitive levels). One difficulty is identifying whether aspects of translation devices or peers also affect the responses provided. However, language level does not necessarily have a significant impact on the learner's ability to demonstrate some elements of metacognition, even if they may not be able to fully explain their understanding (for example, see Magno, 2010; Nosratinia et al., 2014).

One critical factor is that both studies, and many other similar types of investigations, examine metacognition using pre-determined scaled questionnaires, usually adapted from Schraw and Dennison (1994). In this case, it is possible for a wide range of language levels to be able to demonstrate some level of engagement. What is less clear from the literature is whether students are able to use and think metacognitively in productive tasks such as essay writing. In Nosratinia et al. (2014), for example, studies have used first language translations of the language and the concepts in addition to some prompts or help from researchers/teachers in order to

evaluate whether learners can still demonstrate metacognition despite limited English levels. The consensus seems to be that the main hindrance is for the learner to express their metacognitive strategies in English, but also that language learning might be affected by type of learning styles.

2.3 Learning and Thinking Styles

Metacognition is closely linked to learning strategies, language learning strategies and cognition. It is an understanding of these learning strategies that forms the focus for Macaro's (2006) work. Macaro maintains that the learning approach adopted by students forms the basis of how successfully they engage with their teachers' language learning approach. Oxford (2011) expands upon this by stating that it is the triangulation between knowledge, reflection and learning strategy that fosters better metacognitive thinking. Thus, a different challenge to that of language is that of the approach to study and to language learning itself. Some language learners may feel they have the learning strategies in place from their previous educational experiences before joining an IFP in the UK, yet teachers understand that this will require a process of adjustment, especially within the British academic context (O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Johnson, 2008). In fact, Johnson (2008) makes the point that metacognition has a usefulness more broadly to academic activities rather than just English language teaching (ELT).

Metacognition has been linked to thinking styles and patterns of how a person approaches different situations. Zhang (2010) used a qualitative observational focused study to identify the links between these aspects using a narrow definition of the term metacognition, returning to Oxford's (1990) point that traces of metacognition can be tracked in many learning activities if reduced to a simplistic definition. While openly acknowledging this and the issues of reduced validity within the classification and data analysis part of the study (Bryman, 2008), Zhang hypothesises that, if a person has lower levels of cognitive ability to understand knowledge, this can be compensated by a more developed sense of understanding of how to develop one's sense of how to learn better, how to improve and how to mask one's weaknesses, i.e. using metacognitive strategies.

Magno's (2010) findings indicate that metacognitive strategies/thinking are necessary to perform higher level thinking skills – critical thinking in this case – successfully. In the amended taxonomy that I have used in the past (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Herron, 2011), there is a connection between types of knowledge and cognitive strategies which adopt the same hierarchical order that Bloom envisaged. However, it is also possible to alter the order depending upon the type of problem or task given so someone might be able to create a solution or think creatively (I am linking this to an aspect of critical thinking here) before they recall any input provided in lessons, for example.

2.4 EAP Skills

A number of studies on metacognition have a specific focus on reading or listening (see Bozorgian, 2014; Cross, 2010; Ruan, 2014). Ryan (2000) states that improving a learner's written and oral communication skills helps the acculturation process by empowering the learner to apply metacognitive knowledge and strategies to develop their language. Cross (2010) examined the impact of metacognitive strategies presented in a cycle of reflection to aid the development of listening skills and assessment scores. Key findings suggested that, over a short duration, weaker students demonstrated more progression and engagement with metacognition than stronger students. Cross states that this result indicates the addition of metacognition provided a bridge to compensate for some of the weaker learners' limited knowledge or understanding.

Similar to Cross (2010), Bozorgian (2014) examined the metacognitive awareness of students in relation to listening skills and understanding of their own abilities. Students were actively taught reflection and metacognition before being assessed through the use of a questionnaire. The teaching and adjustment to the teaching of the skill had a positive impact on learners, as they were able to engage with the process of the teaching. Learners demonstrated a clearer understanding of the tasks and stages, especially in terms of, firstly, how they needed to perform and, secondly, how they needed to reflect and use previous experience to produce more effective metacognitive strategies to help with listening classes.

Ruan (2014) examined metacognition in relation to writing and claimed that, not only did it play a significant role in writing, it also enabled learners to develop more confidence. As many learners find the transition from different genres and situations for writing challenging, metacognition allowed a dialogue and development journey to be tracked during the process of the piece of work. Metacognitive thinking encouraged learners to engage with many of their anxieties about writing and grammar. Ruan made the important point that there was a significant connection to previous teaching styles and how learners believe their language level was, or was not, developing. Metacognitive thinking, according to the author, triggered this and enabled learners to consider the factors affecting their written ability and their confidence.

2.5 Issues of Learner Engagement with Metacognition

Engagement with metacognitive thinking or activities is not always straightforward. Jing (2006) suggests that there can be some tension between the conflicting views of teachers and learners on a programme of learning. For instance, learners may not buy into the concepts or ideology behind any reflection or need for metacognition, simply seeing it as an extra task to complete. Moreover, the author continues, the

way teachers measure or foster metacognitive language learning strategies may not naturally fit within the ELT pedagogy. Regular reflection or work to develop metacognitive strategies can be disruptive and tiresome as it requires constant thought and re-shaping in addition to the use of tasks to focus the thinking to metacognitive strategies. One way to address this issue is for teachers and learners to work together to shape and understand the curriculum/pedagogy to better train learners and to create better-guided instructions (Hall, 2011; Macaro, 2006). This, according to Macaro (2006), requires a suitable length of time in order to develop more successfully. As a result, it could be an issue that affects data collection that focuses either on a snapshot or a small period of time.

Another engagement factor noted by both Jing (2006) and Guo (2013) is culture. The term culture here refers to both the culture of the learning group, the past experiences of the group and what they understand about the culture they are entering (whether this is educational level or country). These factors, argue Guo, impact significantly upon the success, or lack thereof, of learners being able to work with the idea of developing metacognitive strategies. In fact, many of the issues that Jing encountered could be traced back to this point of having a monolingual group of learners all from, and still based in, Hong Kong. Thus, the challenge of metacognition extends to challenging existing practices and strategies that are already deeply embedded.

3 Methodology

3.1 Action Research

There are two broad approaches to research within education (and the social sciences, more generally). One is a top-down approach whereby the aim is to either change policy or stimulate debate within the academic research community (Hammersley, 2003). The other approach is from the perspective of the practitioner and takes the form of action research in order to change practice first and then, perhaps, policy later (Hopkins, 2008). This study adopted the latter approach. There are many examples of credibility given to this type of action research through professional bodies such as BALEAP and journals including *TESOL Quarterly* and *System* (Hopkins, 2008; McMillan & Wergin, 2010).

Action research does not necessarily aim for closure, nor does it achieve this. It is instead more interested in the process and the constant striving to improve practice and enable the narrative to evolve (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The study reported in this chapter is itself part of a larger piece of action research that began with some of my earlier work (Herron, 2011). The original research aims of the first cycle were to examine whether students would self-record metacognition and the impact of an intervention upon metacognition.

3.2 Mixed Methods and Research Tools

This action research employed a mixed methods approach for a small scale, longitudinal study over part of an academic semester. Denscombe (2010) claims that the choice of a mixed methods approach needs to derive from the usefulness of having the methods to answer a particular set of research questions that are to be investigated, rather than how well each aspect fits into quantitative or qualitative paradigms. A mixed methods approach is more than simply using a research design and tools from quantitative and qualitative approaches. Instead, it requires a rationale and justification of how the different data sets are to be used (Denscombe, 2010). In other words, justification for the research should come before justification of the individual research methodologies.

Three data collection tools were used in a mixed methods approach weighted as one third quantitative and two thirds qualitative. The research took an inductive approach whereby there was no hypothesis at the outset. Rather, an analysis of the data led to findings that are discussed in relation to other studies and the literature and that are also used to generate key arguments to investigate in future research (Bryman, 2008; Cresswell, 2009).

A self-designed quantitative matrix based on the first cycle of action research was designed to examine metacognition based on how students would self-score responses on a Likert scale (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The metacognitive matrix used a series of twelve statements for students to self-categorise based on a Likert scale, with 1 being the lowest score (disagree with the statement) and 5 being the highest (agree with the statement). The statements themselves formed an abridged version of Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) and incorporated Oxford's (2011) idea of metacognitive statements in the planning, doing and reflecting stages. This was completed on a weekly basis over a 5-week period, with this timeframe covering week 5 until week 9 of an 11-week semester to allow for a settling-in period at the start and completion of assessments towards the end.

The use of mixed methods to triangulate data and, in particular, the use of one data set to help understand or provide possible explanations for emerging themes, is a practice that is well developed in social sciences research (Cresswell, 2014). A convergent parallel mixed methods approach, in which qualitative data was used to explore some of the reasoning behind quantitative data sets when collected at the same time, was employed. Thus, the quantitative matrix was used in conjunction with two qualitative tools: a weekly semi-structured student blog completed at the same time as the matrix, and semi-structured teacher interviews conducted after the data collection (see Appendix C). For student blogs, the semi-structured approach was used in order to foster some responses and enable students to have a focus without forcing them to demonstrate metacognition. There were a series of questions used as prompts (see Appendix D), and students responded to these in any way they wanted to.

Triangulation between the qualitative and quantitative data provided reasonable levels of internal reliability as the quantitative data was completed based upon the

qualitative blogs. Issues about validity remain if participants did not fully understand what the qualitative categories are measuring despite the measures mentioned and, therefore, they may have made selections without a full understanding of the concepts behind the choices. While generalisations are always subject to challenges and the influence of extraneous variables (Bryman, 2008), there will be some element of external validity in the sense that it is hoped the profile of the level of English and foundation level student would be applicable to other similar provisions and cohorts in other UK universities.

3.3 Sample

The study initially consisted of 23 international students ($N = 23$) in the second semester of the IFP at Northumbria University, UK, of which 20 were male and three female. The 23 participants studied core modules in English together in two classes (one of 11 and one of 12 students) and then pathway (subject) classes in smaller groups. The data collection and focus of the sample was on their English classes as they had more than one class a week and were expected to draw upon skills from one class to apply to another. Students were from a range of countries, including Kuwait ($n = 11$), Qatar ($n = 3$), Bahrain ($n = 3$), Saudi Arabia ($n = 2$), Nigeria ($n = 2$), Bangladesh ($n = 1$), and Vietnam ($n = 1$). Some of the participants ($n = 7$) had studied English in the UK prior to this programme, while others ($n = 4$) studied in the USA. The remaining students ($n = 12$) had no other experience of studying English outside of high school in their home country. All participants had been on campus for the semester prior to the research, with that semester involving more of the formative assessment and acculturation process. Each semester consists of 11 teaching weeks. The middle block was chosen for the data collection period for the reasons described above. Twenty of the participants had the additional challenge of fasting during Ramadan that took place across the data collection period.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The research project reported in this chapter was scrutinised and approved by the Department of Humanities' ethics committee at Northumbria University. A key ethical consideration of any data collection that involves a research tool such as a personal journal is that respondents may inadvertently write information that is either sensitive in nature or too personal (Moon, 2006). For instance, they might write something that should be kept confidential or that is too personal if the student does not fully understand what they want or are required to share. In response, the research was set up in such a way that participants were given guidance sessions about the study's purpose in addition to who can access the information they provided. These sessions enabled participants to make informed decisions about their

involvement in the study in addition to the nature of their contributions. Participants were also given full editorial control of their journal contributions, including the option to edit or delete any of their posts. Teachers showed the students how to do this and were also available to troubleshoot when problems occurred during data collection.

Each journal was kept on the virtual learning environment (VLE) for the duration of the research and then closed off after the study was submitted. In terms of access, only the individual participants and teaching staff had access to the posts. I successfully trialled similar data collection tools in some of my earlier research (Herron, 2011, 2012), and one area that came up through the thematic coding was the number of welfare issues connected with metacognition and concerns about academic progress. Providing students with control and clear expectations about who can access the data enabled the comments to come through more freely. However, despite this, students are always cautious that teachers acting as data gatherers can see the data and some perhaps did not write as freely as others. Considering this, it might have been better, in hindsight, to remove the teachers from being able to see this data to remove this barrier (Bryman, 2008; Cresswell, 2009). However, this was not practical at the time of data collection.

3.5 Data Analysis

The sample used contained data sets from 23 students. However, not all of the students completed the data regularly to ensure that it could be used. It was decided that 10 sets would be used in the analysis as they were the most complete. This was determined by having a full set of matrix documents completed and most of the blogs uploaded. The other students did not complete a full set for various reasons, including tiredness during Ramadan and family visits during the data collection period.

The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS software with a focus on means and standard deviations for each statement during each week of the data collection period. A Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to examine the reliability of the data (Bryman, 2008). The alpha coefficient was 0.945, which indicates high levels of internal consistency (Bryman, 2008). The raw data from participants' responses to the statements was used to construct tables that highlighted themes found in the discussion. Some graphs were created to illustrate particular points where it was felt this would be clearer than tables. The qualitative blogs and teacher interviews were collated and then used to triangulate points raised that seemed to be of potential importance. Where no comments were present to explain the possible reasons behind the data, arguments were created based upon assumptions. The data found in the primary collection was then checked with other studies in the literature to identify similarities or differences.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Was Metacognition Present?

The types of metacognition that were examined covered metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies and reflection. These aspects were divided by statement and the mean score based on the Likert scale. As stated above, scores closer to 1 indicate disagreement with the statement, while scores closer to 5 indicate agreement.

Participant self-scoring clearly indicates that they consistently scored highly in metacognitive knowledge ($M = 4.36$), metacognitive strategy ($M = 4.02$) and, to a lesser extent, in metacognitive strategies and reflection ($M = 3.99$). This finding seems to support the idea that higher order thinking skills and metacognition would stretch the student's abilities (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 1990). The more challenging area of metacognitive strategy and reflection involved critically evaluating and creating more in-depth strategies to improve for the next situation. While the mean of 3.99 for metacognitive strategies and reflection is still reasonably high, it is lower than that of metacognitive knowledge with a mean difference of 0.37. All three aspects of metacognition are generally required for learners to demonstrate better use of metacognition (Oxford, 2011). This relates to practice when teachers have observed that students on the IFP generally understand aspects of grammar in cloze practice tasks but have little control of grammatical items in more open or freer practice. It is the language required for the assessment and curriculum of study as well as the discourse language of learning that students find more difficult to apply (Coyle et al., 2010). Comments from teacher participants in response to the questionnaire appear to add weight to this:

> Teacher A: Students were more confident with the skills we practised ready for the exams/essays. They were less confident with grammar and may have also over-estimated their language abilities as some did not produce structures they felt able to in the classes or assessments.
>
> Teacher B: Students tended to focus on the skills like skimming and scanning as we did this a lot in class and they did homework tasks for this to help with their reading assignment rather than language and grammar.

The point of students being able to complete more cloze practice and feeling they have knowledge of the language while perhaps struggling more with freer practice situations relates to teaching and learning strategies and previous learning experience (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Tables 2, 3 and 4 feature the different mean scores for each student according to the statement and week of the statement. Although some differences of scores were noted – for example, the standard deviations for S2WK5 and S9WK8 – generally the mean scores for each statement remain in the 4.00–4.99 range. There are some statements that record means that are lower than this. However, many means appear to be around 4.00 and higher. It is possible that some students did not wish to score themselves too low given this may indicate to themselves or their teachers

inadequacies in abilities – something that many of the IFP students are conscious of. In regards to this point, during the interviews the teachers made the following comments:

> Teacher A: I think that Ramadan made some of the students in the class tired and therefore some of the numbers that they had given themselves could have been a band higher however on the whole I think that the numbers are accurate and students took this project very seriously.
>
> Teacher B: Some of the students may have rated themselves slightly higher/lower as they worked on different skills/topics to help them to prepare for their exams/assignments.

It is important to remember that the students are self-scoring and they may have a different perception of their abilities compared to what they are able to accurately produce.

When examining student blog comments, there are a number of examples of metacognition in terms of both knowledge and awareness of strategy. While, in some instances, there is a limitation of how this is developed and articulated in English, there is evidence in the selection of comments below to correlate with the self-scoring in the matrix.

> Student I: I have written essays before but I need to be more careful with my word choice while doing them under exam conditions and make sure that the time pressure does not make me less academic. I will need to practice writing within a time frame in order to improve.
>
> Student A: I learnt how to write compound-complex sentence which is new for me. It was confusing in the beginning but I managed to understand it very well. I think I should practice on the compound-complex sentence to improve my level in English and to not forget it. I think if I know how to write the compound-complex sentence perfectly, I will improve my level in English so much. Also, I should work harder to use many academic words in my essay and next assessments because it is one of the weakness areas I have in English.
>
> Student F: i have developed on introduction and conclusion. i have used some of the phrase to develop my essay more. i now feel confident with the structure of my essay and i will word on how to make my conclusion better

From the student comments above, there is a connection between what they are self-scoring for statements and the comments made in the blogs. Student I identifies a specific area and explores a simple strategy to practise for further improvement of this area of word choice. Lexical development is something taught and fostered strongly on the IFP and, therefore, participants show a level of understanding related to what they need to do in order to perform better in the assessment. This type of metacognitive regulation relates to that of the first principle identified by Dunlosky and Metcalfe (2009) of metacognitive knowledge and awareness of the task.

There is a brief example of the second aspect, that of regulation (Macaro, 2006; Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011) when the student makes the final statement. This is similar to Student A who makes the point of bringing in the use of compound-complex sentence structures more often in their academic writing. This structure has clearly been taught, and taught for a purpose, for the students to include in a particular assessment. Student A is not only aware of this, but also keen to practise and implement a structure in their writing. While not more specific than this,

Student A has been able to briefly reflect on, and then identify a way to perform better, within academic discourse. Student F follows a similar pattern. This reflection enabled the student to take more ownership and control of their language and skills development (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1998). As these findings indicate, metacognition was present, while the fact that students can use one aspect to compensate is one that has been reported elsewhere in the literature (see Macaro, 2006; Zhang, 2010).

4.2 Were There Fluctuations in Metacognition?

Once the presence of metacognition was identified, the second research question asked whether metacognition showed any fluctuations over the five-week study period. In order to address this question, the mean scores for each statement were plotted in a graph to indicate any changes over time. The statements were grouped into the three main categories used above (see Figs. 1, 2 and 3). While not all of the individual students scored different values for each week as suggested by the lower standard deviations of Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, means were used to plot an aggregated score for each statement. In all cases, there were apparent fluctuations over the five-week period.

For metacognitive knowledge, statement 1 (EAP skills) showed a steady increase while statement 4 (language) indicated a decrease initially before increasing to a score near the starting point in week 5. These results could be explained

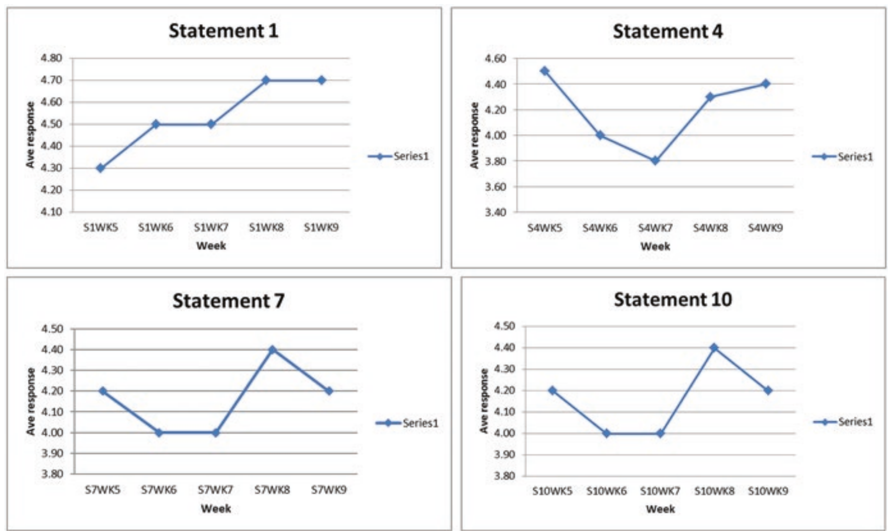

Fig. 1 Metacognitive knowledge fluctuations

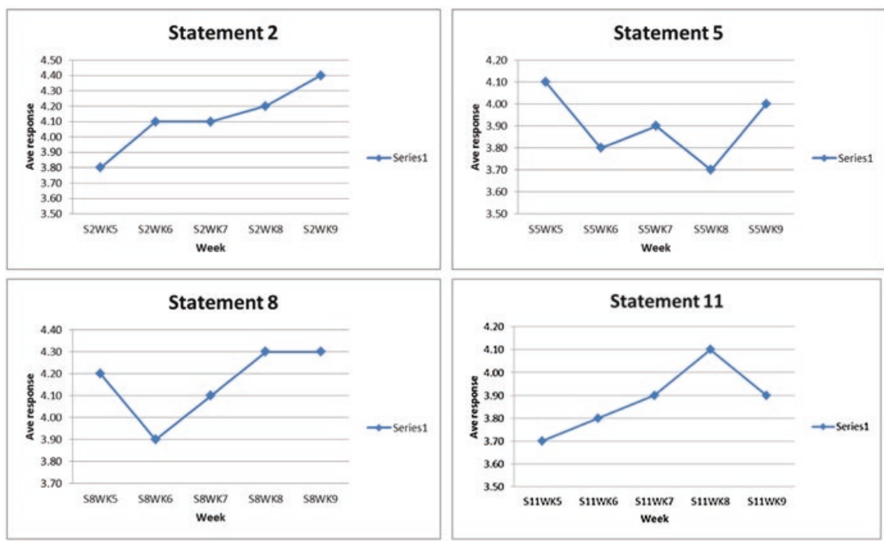

Fig. 2 Metacognitive strategy fluctuations

Fig. 3 Metacognitive strategy and reflection fluctuations

Table 1 Type of metacognition and statements from the matrix

Metacognition	Matrix statements	Average score
Metacognitive Knowledge	1, 4, 7, 10	4.36
Metacognitive Strategies	2, 5, 8, 11	4.02
Metacognitive Strategies and Reflection	3, 6, 9, 12	3.99

Note: Matrix statements are available in Appendix E

by what was happening in classroom teaching at that point, as week 7 was when new sentence-level structures were introduced along with more complex forms of sentence cohesion and collocation building. At the same time, the focus on skills increased as students gained confidence in the teaching as the semester continued. These developments are encapsulated by the following teacher response:

> Teacher B: In week 6 and 7, we brought in some aspects of language that appeared to be new for most of the students. They found it tricky at first but were able to develop confidence. Some still struggled up until the end of week 12 and others thought they understood but did not produce the structures in the final exam. However, they felt they had the knowledge and understanding of things like compound-complex structures, more formal noun phrases and nominalisations.

For statement 7 (relating to assessment) and statement 10 (critical thinking), the students reported that their knowledge followed the same trajectory. This does not indicate that the two statements were intrinsically linked, but more that these two areas of knowledge were something that developed over time and had more relevance the weeks just before submission (week 9 and week 10 for reading and writing coursework). Students commented that they had not covered any new ground in regards to these areas:

> Student A: This week there were not anything new except cohesive language most of this week lessons were completing last week's lessons. The only new thing I have learnt this week was cohesive language and I think I have to learn very well to expand my English
>
> Student I: To be honest, this week has not been very different compared to the weeks before. Topics we discuss and form arguments around change but most things have stayed the same over the weeks. We keep learning about what we have learnt before, but with more depth each time.

Metacognitive strategy showed a general increase across the mean statements over the five weeks with the exception of statement 5 (the application of language). Comparison of the student and teacher data suggested that the focus and main areas of improvement and confidence for metacognitive strategy were the EAP skills (statement 2) and critical thinking (statement 11). There was also a strong understanding of how the learning would impact upon the assessments in terms of metacognitive strategy (statement 8):

> Student H: I think that I have learned a lot from the writing lesson on the language and critical thinking and that has reflected on my essay. I think that my writing has massively improved which is something that changed to the better and my reading has stayed the same.

Table 2 Metacognitive knowledge

Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation
S1WK5	4.30	.675	S4WK5	4.50	.527	S7WK5	4.50	.850	S10WK5	4.20	.789
S1WK6	4.50	.707	S4WK6	4.00	.943	S7WK6	4.70	.483	S10WK6	4.00	.667
S1WK7	4.50	.527	S4WK7	3.80	1.229	S7WK7	4.40	.516	S10WK7	4.00	.667
S1WK8	4.70	.483	S4WK8	4.30	.949	S7WK8	4.30	.823	S10WK8	4.40	.516
S1WK9	4.70	.675	S4WK9	4.40	.516	S7WK9	4.70	.483	S10WK9	4.20	.632
Average	4.54	.613	Average	4.20	.833	Average	4.52	.631	Average	4.16	.654

Note: *S* statement, *WK* week

Table 3 Metacognitive strategy

Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation
S2WK5	3.80	.919	S5WK5	4.10	.738	S8WK5	4.20	.632	S11WK5	3.70	.823
S2WK6	4.10	.876	S5WK6	3.80	.422	S8WK6	3.90	.568	S11WK6	3.80	.789
S2WK7	4.10	.568	S5WK7	3.90	.738	S8WK7	4.10	.738	S11WK7	3.90	.738
S2WK8	4.20	.632	S5WK8	3.70	.675	S8WK8	4.30	.483	S11WK8	4.10	.738
S2WK9	4.40	.516	S5WK9	4.00	.471	S8WK9	4.30	.675	S11WK9	3.90	.738
Average	4.12	.702	Average	3.90	.609	Average	4.16	.619	Average	3.88	.765

Note: *S* statement, *WK* week

Table 4 Metacognitive strategy and reflection

Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation	Statement	Mean	Std. deviation
S3WK5	3.90	.876	S6WK5	4.00	.816	S9WK5	4.20	.789	S12WK5	3.80	.789
S3WK6	3.80	.789	S6WK6	3.80	.632	S9WK6	4.20	.632	S12WK6	3.80	.632
S3WK7	4.10	.738	S6WK7	4.10	.738	S9WK7	4.30	.675	S12WK7	4.00	.816
S3WK8	4.10	.568	S6WK8	3.70	.483	S9WK8	4.10	.876	S12WK8	3.80	.422
S3WK9	4.10	.568	S6WK9	3.90	.738	S9WK9	4.20	.632	S12WK9	3.90	.568
Average	4.00	.708	Average	3.90	.682	Average	4.20	.721	Average	3.86	.645

Note: *S* statement, *WK* week

> Student B: The new things week was a general information and how to do paraphrase better. I have learnt that each week I have leaning a new thing which will improve my language and I should focused to improve it. I have improved my skills. On every class my language is improving and I'm going to use that new information in all my assessments.

The final set of statements to show fluctuations (metacognitive strategy and reflection) all show an increase of mean scores from week 7. This was a point in the programme when students had received some feedback on draft assessments and had a tutorial with their teacher. This feedback and opportunity to ask questions directly and away from their peers seemed to have a significant impact on the self-scoring. One student commented on the feedback by saying:

> Student F: I have improve in doing assignment and extra work during my free time. It has increased because I have links to direct me to the information on the internet. it has changed my approach to learning because am now organise.

The student was also referring to information on the VLE and selecting the most appropriate materials and documents to aid their self-study and help with areas identified as weaknesses within the draft academic work commented on in the tutorial. This could also explain the decrease in week 8 for statements 6, 9 and 12, as students may have felt that their confidence in their own abilities was not as high as the previous week. It can often be the case when students received feedback that does not align with their own thinking of how good their performance was (Harmer, 2007; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). All of these scores then increased in week 9, perhaps reflecting the fact that, once students had the chance to reflect upon the process of writing and working on process-based academic assessments, they can grow in confidence (Coutinho et al., 2005; Ruan, 2014).

All of the self-scoring data indicates that students have thought about their learning and the impact of teaching, feedback and assessment within their metacognitive development. Students were able to use the weekly reflective blog and matrix to have an impact on their own learning. The teachers noticed some differences in how this affected student performance over the five-week period:

> Teacher A: As the weeks went on students used a greater range of learning strategies. Students came to the lessons the week after they had filled in their feedback sheets and said that they had discussed what they had written on their comments/matrix sheets. They had discussed their learning strategies which was really evident as I saw the students using different strategies/methods e.g. how to recall new vocabulary and practise their spellings.
>
> Teacher B: Students concentration and focus really improved over the weeks when they did the feedback. A few of the students in my class told me that the exercise had encouraged them to set goals and targets to improve in some of their learning. It helped to consolidate what they had learnt that week so they were clearer on what it was they had to focus on in their personal study time.

This finding links to the notion offered by authors such as Flavell (1976) and Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) that the type of thinking skills involved with cognition and metacognition will likely change over time. This could involve the

learner improving their skills or it could also be moving to a higher order of thinking skills, which could be weaker initially. Not all thinking skills follow this assumed hierarchy from one side of a grid to another (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). However, as the students have engaged with this process of mapping and reflecting on metacognition, they have also gone through a process of considering and reconsidering their understanding of their own thinking skills (Leat & Higgins, 2002).

The connections between the approaches to metacognition of Oxford (2011) and the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy of learning from Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) both suggest that, if used for mapping learning outcomes or a snapshot at the end of a unit of learning, students could achieve this goal by a non-linear trajectory. The results and comments from the teachers seem to align to this idea and the concepts of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategy can be further enhanced over a period of time with self and critical reflection (Magno, 2010; Moon, 2006). The findings here also seem to relate to other studies, such as Ruan (2014) and Cross (2010), that examined the development of metacognitive thinking in relation to one EAP skill where the use of discussion and student engagement over a period of time enabled students to conceptualise and formulate their metacognitive self-awareness.

4.3 The Impact on Teaching and Learning

One of the other key considerations is the impact that engagement with metacognitive thinking had on teaching and learning during both the five-week period and, by extension, the duration of the rest of the semester (Macaro, 2006). In the first cycle of the over-arching action research cycle (Herron, 2011, 2012), the research process was used in part to have a direct impact on the teaching and learning experience. It operated by teachers being able to respond to feedback in the student blogs and to their self-scoring. Students responded positively to this feedback, with changes usually implemented the following day or within the same week. This provided students with a sense of ownership and impact they could have upon the learning process (Coutinho et al., 2005).

As both the students and teachers worked through the weeks, it was clear that there was an impact upon teaching and learning and that this may have also triggered some of the higher mean scores in students as teachers responded to and targeted their needs more specifically. The following examples from students highlight some of the changes and how they noticed this to aid their development and preparation for assessments:

> Student F: The teacher teach us the same as last week but different way. I will make a plan before I start my essay, to be more organise. how to be more academic when writting and how to parapharesing article. i revieved a feedback on how to improve my essay.

> Student I: Most things have stayed the same, but one thing that has changed is that my understanding towards what is asked for us to do for the ICC assignment has become more clear.
>
> Student H: My writing has become more academic than last week and I have learned how to include several sources in my text to show evidence, also I have learned how to write a report.

From these comments, it is evident that the teachers took on-board how they taught the students one week and then added to this, or perhaps tried a different approach, in order to connect with them. The first comment suggests that a different approach, perhaps with a different type of lesson to cover the same learning outcome, was used to good effect. The second comment suggests some reinforcement of the teaching to ensure students have understood the key learning points. The third comment shows some examples of layering and adding something to build upon the previous week. From the teacher's perspective, they found the process to be something of value to aid their planning and adjustment of lessons:

> Teacher A: After they had all completed their feedback we had a discussion re: learning strategies and the students all said that they hadn't realised that there were so many different ways of learning and that they were going to use these different strategies over other parts of their learning and studying.
>
> Teacher B: They used a greater variety of learning strategies from module to module and I did see an improvement in some of their marks. I have incorporated some of the students learning styles into my teaching and use some of the methods they have found easier to follow.

Given the comments from both students and teachers, it is clear that there was a process of the metacognitive activities feeding into the comments students gave, which then enabled teachers to adjust their teaching producing a positive cycle of improvement seen in other studies (such as Goh & Hu, 2014). This was noted and identified in the following week's blogs and so forth. This process may have been responsible for some of the fluctuations increasing at certain points of the programme and, also, for the relatively high scores because there are links between learning strategies and metacognition (Macaro, 2006; Oxford, 2011). The ability of students to understand the usefulness of metacognition in academia (Johnson, 2008) may have also played a significant part in the buy-in and, seeing what they were able to get out of the process, even teachers adjusting their teaching in response to their comments, may have triggered a positive approach to developing their metacognitive understanding (Guo, 2013; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Wenden, 1998; Zhang, 2010).

In a recent study, the point of student engagement with metacognition and understanding how to improve or compensate for other areas of weaknesses using metacognition was shown to be successful, especially with students who have lower levels of thinking skills or who might be relatively new to their demands (Zhang, 2010). Therefore, the metacognitive activities not only appeared to have a positive impact for the students, but also informed the teachers of student needs (Guo, 2013). The adjustment of teaching was an extra step taken by teachers and this was welcomed by students.

5 Conclusion

Before the implications of these findings are discussed, it is necessary to re-iterate some of the study's limitations, all of which have been factored into the points made above. Data was collected in the second semester over a five-week period where participants had to balance the requirements of the study and not to increase student workload to unmanageable levels. The data was gathered during the holy month of Ramadan and many of the participants were Muslim, resulting in some possible issues of fatigue during this period. Further, only the 10 participants from the entire sample of 23 who completed the matrix and made comments each week were included as part of the standardised approach. Moreover, it is also possible that some participants may not have fully understood the criteria for each matrix statement, despite explanations at the outset.

With these potential limitations acknowledged, it is perhaps fair to say that there are two main implications for theory and practice that emerged from the current study. First:

- Metacognition is an important concept to language learning within university/EAP discourse.

It is clear that the students were able to use the metacognitive tools and thinking process to engage to different degrees with their own learning and next steps in terms of metacognitive strategy and reflection. This finding is supported by the literature in the field (see Coutinho et al., 2005; Cross, 2010; Goh & Hu, 2014; Guo, 2013; Johnson, 2008; Macaro, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1995; Oxford, 1990, 2011; Ruan, 2014; Wenden, 1998; Zhang, 2010). It is important to consider the possibilities for developing further understanding of metacognitive thinking and finding possible ways to aid practitioners to work with these findings to implement into programmes of learning.

The notion of mapping out the student learning journey with tools to capture and foster metacognitive thinking is worth discussion within the academic field. While all of the empirical studies suggest a usefulness for metacognition, the practicalities of how both students and teachers can use this, in addition to all of the other data at their disposal, to maximise potential cognitive development need further consideration. The matrix developed for this action research cycle may not be the best way to capture this data moving forward, and it may also not be appropriate to all foundation provisions either as each has a uniqueness depending upon the students recruited and what they need to do in terms of assessment to hit progression targets. One thing that is clear from this phase of the action research cycle is that further research on a larger scale is required to try and foster better understanding of the significance of the findings and see whether they are generalisable to a range of other provisions, firstly, within the IFP/pathway sector, and then wider into academia.

The second main implication of this study is:

- Metacognition requires investment from teachers and students in order to provide usefulness but can have a positive impact on teaching and learning at all levels.

This implication focuses more on the practicalities of implementation and the understanding of the requirements in order to provide a platform for useful engagement with metacognitive thinking on a programme of study. The findings in this study suggest that students at any level of language (measured with the lowest being IELTS (International English Language Testing System) band 5.0) could both engage and respond using the type of language to demonstrate metacognition. However, this does not guarantee depth of responses, nor does it suggest that lower English levels equate to lower levels of metacognition. Therefore, in order for this to work successfully, it would require some input at the beginning of the process in terms of both language and understanding the concepts. This was in fact done, to an extent, in this study.

During the process of data collection, the students seemed to enjoy the engagement with metacognitive thinking and this increased when teachers took note of what the students were expressing by adjusting or changing the curriculum and or teaching approach to target needs. The relationship between teachers and students increased and developed a closer sense of understanding by providing the students with a voice about their abilities outside from formative and summative assessment (Coutinho et al., 2005).

Apart from the student training, there is also the teacher training element to consider. Teachers attended a briefing session and were able to ask questions each week if unsure about the process. If up-scaled, it is worth consideration of a more formalised set of training sessions to ensure that teachers understand what metacognition is, what students could engage with, how to respond to the self-scoring or blog comments, and essentially how to help the students to improve by modifying their classroom teaching.

The final consideration here is whether it is practical to build metacognitive thinking into a programme of study that is likely to be already full of other equally important content, skills and teachings. When considering the implication for practice of these results, the thought of metacognition in terms of learning activities would involve some minor tweaking to encourage a range of different types of thinking and some critical reflection. However, most of the activities could take place outside of the classroom and work as part of self-directed learning time as long as some weekly contact time is given to a de-briefing or discussion based upon this work, if, for nothing else, at least for motivational purposes.

Appendices

Appendix A: Previous Matrix from Herron (2011, 2012)

The Knowledge Dimension	The Cognitive Process Dimension					
	Remembering / recalling and recognising information	**Understanding** meaning (could clarify, categorise, summarise, conclude, contrast or explain)	**Applying** a procedure to the task	**Analyse** important from irrelevant points / determine a point of view in discussion	**Evaluate** – judge which process is the best / determine if the result comes from logic	**Create** a hypothesis / a procedure for completing the task
Factual knowledge (of terminology and specific details: names, dates, key events)	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**
	...recognise or remember key facts such as dates, names, events, etc.	...explain the main reasons for / causes of situations or compare two situations (e.g. historical to modern day)	...apply factual knowledge to tasks, writing, discussions or while reading to add more depth	… distinguish between relevant and irrelevant points or determine the strengths and weakensses of each	...judge which method / idea is better based on your analysis and explain why	...produce new ideas / approaches to situations or contexts
Conceptual knowledge (theories, systems, etc.)	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**
	...recognise the names or key aspects of a theory, concept, system, model or structure	...explain a theory, concept, system, model or structure to summarise important aspects, explain them and give examples	...apply a theory, concept, system, model or structure to an example / context	...determine bias in an argument / structure evidence for or against a theory, concept, system, model or structure	...judge which theory, concept, system, model or structure is better for a given situation based on data and clear reasoning	…develop my own stance (original thinking) on a theory, concept, system, model or structure / create a new way to use the theory, concept, system, model or structure
Procedural knowledge (how to do something, e.g. write an essay)	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**
	...recognise different types of procedures and techniques / recall how they function	...explain how the procedure works and its importance or relevance to a particular situation (e.g. an exam)	...select and apply appropriate procedures to tasks (reading, research, essay writing, exam preparation, etc.)	...distinguish between relevant and irrelevant aspects in a procedure / structure procedures in order of usefulness for a task	...determine which process is the best to complete the task	…adapt current proceedures or create new proceedures for any situation to enable me to improve my performance
Meta-cognitive knowledge (knowing strengths and weaknsses,etc.)	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**	**Choose…**
	...recognise areas and degree of strength and weakness in relation to specific areas of learning (e.g. *'I am weak at writing'* is too general - *'I can write short-mid length sentences accurately, but not in an academic style'* would be better)	...explain in depth where my strengths and weaknesses are in relation to different tasks or skills and how to improve my performance / explain and summarise the requirements of different tasks	…think about my strengths and weaknesses in relation to each individual task and apply my understanding of what is involved and what I need to do from previous experience	...distinguish the demands of different tasks used for learning (similarities and differences) / organise my strengths and weaknesses appropriate to each task	...judge which approach will be better for each task / determine if there is a way to improve my weaknesses and enhance my strengths	...develop a plan to improve areas leading to better performance on specific tasks (e.g. improve essay planning for an SPSE structure, NOT academic writing generally) / create a detailed review of different tasks appropriate to the programme, their demands and how to approach them

Appendix B: Screenshot of the Metacognitive Matrix

Please note that the *choose* box contained a number between 1 and 5 as per the instructions.

The EAP metacognitive matrix

Instructions: Please rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each of the statements below. 1 = lowest (disagree) and 5 = highest (agree). Note that choosing 1 does not necessarily indicate anything negative. The ratings should reflect how you feel about your abilities each week. This may change (increase or decrease) or stay the same. Please be honest when rating yourself.

Aspects of EAP metacognitive competencies	Metacognitive process		
	Knowing	Doing / using	Evaluating
EAP skill (e.g. reading, writing, listening or speaking)	Choose...	Choose...	Choose...
	I understand what was covered in reading, writing, listening and speaking this week.	I am able to apply what was covered in class to practice activities and any homework given.	I am able to evaluate my own abilities in relation to what was taught, what I already know and how I can use this to improve my performance.
Language - grammar and lexis (e.g. word forms, collocations, AWL list words, phrases, clauses, hedging, etc.)	Choose...	Choose...	Choose...
	I understand what was covered in term of grammar and vocabulary this week. I am comfortable with any new language.	I am able to apply language covered in class or in homework activities to practice activities and any homework given.	I am able to evaluate my language and how I cope with new language in relation to what was taught, what I already know and how I can use this to develop my language.
Understanding of the assessment (matching your skills, knowledge and strategies against the type of assessment on the programme)	Choose...	Choose...	Choose...
	I understand how the lessons and homework activities this week relate to the assessment (coursework or exams).	I am able to apply what was covered this week directly to my assessments (coursework or exams).	I am able to evaluate my own abilities in relation to what is required for the assessment (coursework or exams).
Critical thinking (ability to critically evaluate, knowing how to do this and think in different ways to analyse skills, language use, the approaches to the task, your thinking about thinking, etc.)	Choose...	Choose...	Choose...
	I understand what was covered in terms of critical thinking (developing arugments and more in-depth responses) from the activities this week.	I understand how to use critical thinking from the learning activities this week to create arguments and provide more in-depth responses orally and/or in writing.	I am able to evaluate my own abilities to think critically and offer more developed arguments and/or more in-depth responses.

Appendix C: Questions for Teacher Interviews

1. Did the students find it difficult to engage with the metacognitive tasks? In what ways?
2. Did you notice any differences over the five weeks in terms of their metacognitive awareness (knowledge, strategy or reflections)? Could you provide examples?
3. How did any of your teaching or interactions with the students change over this period of time?
4. Did you teach anything in the classes that might have increased/decreased student confidence in any of the weeks? Was their part of the curriculum in any of the weeks that may have altered the student scores?
5. Do you agree with the student self-scoring based upon your own knowledge of the students and what you observed over the whole semester?

Appendix D: Student Blog Questions

Semi-structured Blog (After Each Reading and Writing Lesson)

Please reflect on your English modules this week and consider the questions below in relation to your understanding of your own thinking, language development, English skills development (e.g. reading, writing, etc.) and critical thinking. Use the questions as a starting point and use question 5 to reflect on reasons for your self-ratings in the matrix.

1. What were the lessons about this week (summarise in no more than 100 words and please write more than just "*reading – summarising*")?
2. What did you learn that was new or different this week? How did you manage with this? What went well/what do you need to improve?
3. If there was nothing new, how has this changed how you would approach your assessments (if at all)? Is this one of your strengths/areas to improve?
4. What have you learnt about your language, skills and critical thinking from this week that you will use to help prepare for the assessments and exams this semester?
5. Please comment on your self-ratings in the EAP Metacognitive Matrix. What has changed/stayed the same? Why has something increased or decreased? How does this change your approach to learning?

Appendix E: Statements and Coding

No	Statement
S1	I understand what was covered in reading, writing, listening and speaking this week.
S2	I am able to apply what was covered in class to practice activities and any homework given.
S3	I am able to evaluate my own abilities in relation to what was taught, what I already know and how I can use this to improve my performance.
S4	I understand what was covered in term of grammar and vocabulary this week. I am comfortable with any new language.
S5	I am able to apply language covered in class or in homework activities to practice activities and any homework given.
S6	I am able to evaluate my language and how I cope with new language in relation to what was taught, what I already know and how I can use this to develop my language.
S7	I understand how the lessons and homework activities this week relate to the assessment (coursework or exams).
S8	I am able to apply what was covered this week directly to my assessments (coursework or exams).
S9	I am able to evaluate my own abilities in relation to what is required for the assessment (coursework or exams).
S10	I understand what was covered in terms of critical thinking (developing arguments and more in-depth responses) from the activities this week.
S11	I understand how to use critical thinking from the learning activities this week to create arguments and provide more in-depth responses orally and/or in writing.
S12	I am able to evaluate my own abilities to think critically and offer more developed arguments and/or more in-depth responses.

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Part III
Research Perspectives: The Role of Technology

Construction and Launch of a Virtual Reality Laboratory for EFL Learners: A Crossroad Between Cognitive and Emotional Learning

Robert Hoffman

Abstract The Virtual Reality (VR) budget at an Omani technical college was utilized for the design, construction, and launch of a VR lab. The decision remained, however, as to what sorts of immersive activities/games would most benefit the English language students of the General Foundation Program (GFP). Over the course of 2 years, as approvals were given and equipment ordered, received, and tested, GFP staff members identified dozens of freely-available 360-degree VR videos and matched them to the general topics of each unit of every textbook in the program. They next created mini-quizzes in the form of "pop-up" multiple choice questions within the VR videos themselves, with score results being auto-emailed to teachers. During the roll out of the lab in academic year 2018/2019, inter-departmental meetings were held, and notes taken, on the perceived successes and failures of the new laboratory. Several clear areas for improvement were identified in the lab and video set up that could stunt the VR lab's growth if not properly dealt with. This chapter reports on the VR team's efforts to employ Extended Reality tools (e.g. VR, AR, MR) to "create new learning experiences, test new hypotheses, and inspire new models" (Bengfort J, Virtual reality advances bring new possibilities to higher education. EdTech. Retrieved from https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2020/02/virtual-reality-advances-bring-new-possibilities-higher-education, 2020, para. 4) in the English foundation program. The impact of VR on learners' cognitive and emotional learning is also presented, along with a discussion of pathways to enhance English learning through VR.

Keywords Emotional learning · Learning model · Laboratory · English as a Foreign Language (EFL) · Virtual Reality (VR) · Extended Reality (XR) · Augmented Reality (AR) · Spherical Video-Based Virtual Reality (SVVR) · Mixed Reality (MR)

R. Hoffman (✉)
Military Technological College, Muscat, Oman

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1 Introduction

The technology of Extended Reality (XR), which includes VR, Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR), has been with us in some way for nearly half a century, arguably starting with Ivan Sutherland's (1957) "Sword of Damocles", the first recognized fully head-mounted display system. Its longevity marks it as more than a passing fad, but the question remains as to whether or not it has pedagogical value in education, and, more specifically, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment, or whether it is a mere curiosity. Some social scientists now maintain that, where the goal of the twentieth century was international stability and economic growth, humanity's twenty-first century hopes rest upon the mobilization of technology towards the realization of "immortality, happiness, and divinity" (Harari, 2017, p. 21).

Should this be true, one would expect that all existing technology would be in a state of overdrive showing off its strength and potential for future applications. And while XR has been reported to be *trending*, "taking the center stage of technology that is used in libraries and museums" (Oyelude, 2018, p. 4), the hoped-for explosion in the use of XR technology in education cannot be said to have arrived. Nevertheless, there are few students/consumers worldwide who can claim ignorance of VR-based games such as The Sims, Minecraft, or Pokemon Go, or of mobile app filters on platforms such as Facebook Messenger or Snapchat that are able to 'augment' reality. This paper looks at the applications of XR in the EFL teaching environment at an engineering college in the Sultanate of Oman, via a customized VR lab in which students were able to watch 360-degree videos using headsets and answer virtual pop-up quiz questions based on the General Foundation Program (GFP) curriculum. Both the traditional study of cognitive language learning along with the humanistic approach of assessing the role of emotions in EFL are considered.

In an article by Bengfort (2020), teachers were questioned about the current and future applications of VR in education with one responding that it would, "Change… the way we work, play, and learn in the future" (para. 3), while admitting that XR as a whole remains unknown cognitive territory. In this paper, we are looking primarily at VR, which, according to Fuchs (2017), has the purpose of making "possible a sensorimotor and cognitive activity for a person (or persons) in an artificial, digitally-created world, which can be imaginary, symbolic or a simulation of certain aspects of the real world" (p. 12). However, more specifically, we will be commenting on the successes and challenges of using Spherical Video-Based Virtual Reality (SVVR), 360-degree videos within VR headsets. From either method, the questions remain similar in that it must be determined if VR/SVVR should "be considered as valuable pedagogical devices or if they were only fashionable for now" (Chateau et al., 2019, p. 270).

Besides the logistics of building a VR lab and effectively aligning it to course content in the GFP, the pedagogy had to be further considered as part of the rationale submitted to the school leadership. While cognitive learning is a core function of any EFL curriculum, it is especially respected as part of a foundation program that

actively works to train students in the mechanical and analytical thinking of engineers. Swain's (2011) list of the ingredients of cognition – thinking, knowing, representing knowledge, attending, processing of information, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making – make up the bulk of learning objectives listed by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) (2017). Therefore, the use of technology to deliver carefully matched content and skills testing to each level of our GFP student body in no way diverged from established learning structures.

That being said, it is evident from even the simple, initial 'marketing' of the VR lab, that students' emotional connection and engagement was being courted by the designers of the laboratory. Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, described by Swain (2011) as "a simple mechanism", initiated such a massive shift in thinking in the study of EFL because it revealed that perhaps half of all considerations to be made in language teaching/learning had been ignored; specifically, those based on "emotion". The "affective domain" has been defined as "the emotional side of human behavior" (Brown, 1994, p. 135). The input hypothesis proposed the existence of an affective filter, whereby positive emotions denote a low affective filter, and negative emotions a high affective filter, although there exist situations where a high affective filter may lead to higher levels of language production and achievement (Swain, 2011).

Krashen's theory led to the rise of the humanistic approach and its particular attention to the affective domain and emotional states (Mendez & Aguilar, 2013). As the VR lab 360-degree videos were being identified, chosen, and vetted for the project reported here, students' predicted emotional responses to the content was always at the forefront of the process. Swain (2011) makes clear that tasks do not simply engage learners to elicit a predetermined response, but in fact the emotional and motivational engagement created by task procedure can have a massive impact on the learning procedure and outcome. He added that the emotional state of a learner plays a central role in overall task performance. As we will see, with the exception of *anxiety*, it is difficult to accurately measure students' emotional states, which is perhaps the key reason these states were avoided during so many decades of study.

Within this context, this chapter examines the impact of VR on learners' cognitive and emotional learning with a specific focus on pathways to enhance learning through VR. In doing so, it discusses the educational context in which the VR laboratory was developed, the rationale for and process of constructing the system in which it would operate, in addition to the challenges, progress, and possible future alteration/expansion of the experiment.

2 Literature Review

While most of the literature on the use of XR in EFL confirms student engagement in more social applications of VR where dialogues and speaking practice are emphasized (Liaw, 2019), the question remains as to whether this technology is

more fad than revolution (Chateau et al., 2019). When Liaw describes these "(VR) environments that enabled different aspects of intercultural communicative competence to be exercised and developed" (p. 53), it is not clear if XR is the only means by which learners can effectively practice such communication. However, what has been confirmed is that VR can potentially increase learner engagement, motivation, and creativity as it provides learners with more opportunities to interact in meaningful contexts (Chen, 2016). SVVR fulfils such practice as it is immersive video content that allows users to look in every direction while also offering them the ability to control what they want to see (Walshe & Driver, 2019). SVVR can be an effective solution to the problems associated with conventional 3D graphic-based VR, which is generally highly technical while also being expensive in both time and money (McFaul & Fitzgerald, 2019).

Perhaps it is worthwhile to consider these sorts of XR, where the user has control over pacing and focus, as its own creative medium rather than just "technology". McCloud (1993) describes the medium of comics (and graphic novels) as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p. 9), and it has been added that "comics are not 'easy,' but they (do) appear so to students" (Hoffman, 2018, p. 294). The reality is that, as Jaffe (2015) states, the audience brings with them a lifetime of visual experience that allows them to view an image (e.g. a particular section of an SVVR video) and instantly empower said image by attaching meaning. In short, no student will watch the same 360-degree video in the same way, or, in the words of Nunan (2001, cited in Taheri et al., 2019, p. 2), "Human beings view internally and act externally at the same time". They are, to an extent, the directors of their experience, viewing it through their own internal lens, as opposed to a traditional video experience in a classroom where they are 'fed' information in a predetermined manner at a predetermined pace.

Taheri et al. (2019) noted that educators must "train and empower learners to plan for their own learning (cognitively) and react (emotionally) to what they have achieved" (p. 17). VR, immersive by its nature, can help learners to become more active in their learning. Taking virtual trips to popular cities, famous monuments, museums and so on, can stimulate interest and possible conversational scenarios among language learners, or among the learners and the native speakers found in those more interactive virtual worlds. These interactions fall within and illustrate several learning theories, such as the socio-constructivist learning perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and cognitive theory (Piaget, 1964), that maintain learning is an internal process that takes place through interaction with the environment. These theories echo the natural approach (Krashen, 1982) which has a focus on vocabulary acquisition and understanding of core messages rather than being totally subservient to grammar rules. Varela (1994) indicated that both bodies and emotions are integral to learning. As such, the use of multimodality as a means of facilitating language learning and the development of informal learning practices complement the language learning process (Sockett, 2014).

With the cognitive learning structures put in place during the design and construction of a VR project, it is then important to turn to questions of emotional

response. Emotions are so important that the decision on whether or not to participate in a classroom task or even to continue studying a given foreign language can be highly affected by them (Mendez & Aguilar, 2013). In a sample of 308 students, using a survey designed based upon 20 interviews with their classmates, Pishghadam et al. (2016) reported that, "EFL learners experience anger mostly over *listening* skills, enjoyment and pride over *speaking*, shame over *listening and speaking*, hope, boredom, and hopelessness over *writing and listening*, and anxiety over *all* the language skills" (p. 508). Further, results indicated that it was listening – a key skill in many VR scenarios – that was found to be the only skill which was associated with *all* of the negative emotions, which include anger, shame, boredom, and hopelessness.

Whether an XR experience is solitary or collaborative, Fredrickson and Branigan's (2005) broaden and build theory may apply. The broaden hypothesis states that positive emotions during learning increase "action-thought" tendencies, and the build hypothesis states that experiencing positive emotions results in resourcefulness and optimal functioning. The scope of attention and cognition was noted to broaden, thereby "prompt(ing) individuals to engage with their environments and partake in activities" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219). As this indicates, the educational context, including learning environment and student culture, is an important consideration in developing a VR lab to support English language learning and the engagement of learners' cognitive and emotional factors.

3 Educational Context

The overall approach of the technological college at which the VR lab project was implemented was to recruit, and award a monthly stipend to, students who had completed primary school with the desire to join the military and/or work in various engineering fields, whether civil, marine, systems, or aeronautical. Aspects of the college's vision include, "… (to be) amongst the best all-service providers of military and technological education and training (…)", and, "(to) generate and disseminate new ideas through research, higher degrees, and knowledge transfer within the Ministry of Defense and the nation" (Military Technical College, 2020). The capability of fully training Omani nationals along internationally recognized levels of competence was recognized as vital towards the country's leadership plan of meeting five-year milestones in all aspects of national progress. This concept for the engineering college, thirteen years in the making before the institution's doors opened in 2013, had the goal of ultimately offering education for military and civilian personnel in a *single* college of technology, replacing the existing structure of multiple, smaller training schools across several cities.

Admission to the college necessitates a minimum English proficiency requirement that closely pairs with the required level of its partner school in the United Kingdom. This means that if that requirement is not achieved beforehand via an IELTS certificate displaying a prescribed minimum score, a student will not be able

to enter any of the four undergraduate engineering programs until they have completed one-to-two years of compulsory English language courses (as determined by their placement test scores) along with classes in math, physics, and IT skills – all of which comprise the GFP. Upon completion of the GFP, students next move on to either a standard or advanced certificate in the engineering program over a subsequent three-to-four years of study.

Some of the undergraduate level classes rely on traditional lectures and assessment; however, much of the students' education is hands-on. Classes are held in traditional classrooms, in skill-specific laboratories, in other specialized labs, in fully outfitted hangars, and on real world equipment and machines. Naturally, there is an emphasis on the teaching of basic engineering skills through the use of traditional methods, although technology is highly incorporated into learning. It is understood that, in order for the college to achieve its mission and vision for its student body and for itself, the campus must be set up to support the inclusion of cutting edge technology in its teaching and learning.

While several major universities and institutions had already established programs and classes/research with the purpose of expanding their students'/users' access to advanced technologies, all eyes were on this new college which incorporated "technology" into its name, vision, and mission, to see what new leaps might be made. Although, as Bengfort (2020) claims, "Good teaching is good teaching, whether you're using technology or not, (with) real alignment to the objectives, course content, learning activities, (and) assessment of students" (para. 24), the college's early years were defined by an aggressively proactive focus on technological training. Funding for hardware, software, and infrastructure was rarely denied as each department began to outline its educational goals. There was perhaps additional value placed on the importation and application of high-tech equipment as the bulk of the student body would have little opportunity to travel/study abroad. Exposure to the latest developments in education and engineering were seen as paramount to the success of the school.

Over the course of the college's first seven years of operation, its budget was significantly affected by both the immediate and eventual repercussions of the 2008 global financial crisis which saw heavy drops in the value of crude oil, and the Covid-19 global pandemic. However, the VR department, along with all small-, medium-, and large-scale projects under its purview, never appeared to face cutbacks. In fact, vocal and financial support for these activities, if anything, increased year by year.

Long before the concept of a VR lab in the college library was ever conceptualized or discussed, there already existed various AR and VR priorities across departments. An entire military truck engine was created in AR in order to train civil and systems engineering students on design and repair of engine blocks. Additional AR/VR formative and summative assessment tools were created on engineering concepts such as "design load structure" and on basic physics/engineering problems to be used as part of recruitment activities during the college's "open days" to welcome prospective new students.

The ever-growing VR department, in an attempt to attract positive attention and publicity, solicited help from its core staff and from other departments to create an AR "escape room", winning first place in a national competition which included teams from more established XR programs at various schools/agencies in Oman. At the time of writing, the college is engaged in the development of its most ambitious project yet: a massive VR recreation of a battleship to aid in training large groups of marine engineering students without the necessity of transporting them to an actual seafaring craft.

All of these works, along with a slew of others in the planning stages, have had the benefit of support at all levels of college leadership. The resulting culture lent itself to the head librarian and his staff feeling comfortable and confident in reaching out to staff of the GFP in helping develop a VR space, having little reason to believe the laboratory would be denied funding or blocked in any way. Beginning the VR lab project in this environment was an undeniable boon to the entire operation.

4 Need for the Laboratory – Reasoning

For the most part, preparations for the VR lab had been made with the students of the GFP in mind. Although it has been vetted and developed to the point where almost any interested upperclassman could arrive to try out the VR quiz experience, continuing and future assessment of the lab will primarily rely on the feedback of those students and teachers to whom the quiz content has been purposefully paired.

When the idea of a VR lab being built and opened on the ground floor of the college library was first broached, the main justification was built on the repeated concern, as reported by both staff and students in and out of committee meetings, that they were not getting enough practice outside of the classroom. Although the textbooks and in-class learning were supplemented by multiple E-learning activities online, such as Moodle-based games, quizzes, and other practice activities, in addition to a Cambridge Learning Management System (CLMS) geared specifically to prepare certain levels for summative and formative assessment, higher performing students repeatedly requested opportunities for alternative practice in English.

As students remained on campus in dormitories during the week and returned home to their families on weekends, it was evident that for many the clear bulk of their English language practice was taking place solely within those 16–18 contact hours per week in the classroom and during sporadic summative assessments throughout each term. Were we able in some entertaining and effective way to offer curriculum-aligned practice that was entertaining enough to attract students outside of class time, it would likely prove an accomplishment lauded by both staff and school leadership.

The OAAA requires institutions of higher education in the Sultanate of Oman to perform quality audits on all school regulations, processes, and offered classes in the GFP. In the GFP, specific expectations on students' abilities to read, write, listen, and speak in English are gauged by prescribed OAAA standards. For example,

English Listening Standard 3.2 h is: Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, (and) register (OAAA, 2017).

Initially, and with some success, the GFP largely limited the online aspect of its teaching to the use of Moodle. Over several years, materials were developed to support in-class learning in line with department-wide feedback on the modules under constant construction and editing. As of 2017, in fact, the GFP led student satisfaction above all other departments, with 84% of students saying that they felt their Moodle module(s) contained enough helpful resources, whereas only 46% of upperclassmen in the engineering program stated the same.

From the very early days, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to not only have a VR experience available that matched the topics being covered in the textbooks in use, but to also create quiz questions that utilized the grammar and vocabulary specific to those units. As a GFP staff member responsible for E-learning within the program, the author ascertained that, across the eight different English modules being taught using eleven different textbooks, there were eighty units and thirty-six distinct topics being covered (e.g. Family, Tourism, Sport, etc.). It was decided to source freely-available 360-degree videos which lend themselves well to VR headsets from YouTube. These ranged from higher production National Geographic videos to simple city tours produced and uploaded by travel enthusiasts for entertainment and educational use.

It became apparent that, although there were thirty-six topics with which videos should be paired, certain videos actually complemented multiple topics. As the student would watch the video, every 45 s or so it would pause to allow for a pop-up multiple choice question that could be answered by either using a clicker or just staring directly at the correct answer: A, B, C, or D. Ultimately, it was found that just twenty to twenty-five 360-degree videos would suffice for all eighty of the planned video-quizzes. For example, a single video where the viewer experiences riding on a gondola throughout Venice, Italy, was used to create quizzes for the topics: Travel, Architecture, Food, Family, and Culture. Because these quizzes were built for the vocabulary and grammar of textbook units across the various proficiency levels, questions were graded to be less or more difficult as appropriate to the level.

As the video quizzes were being prepared, it was noticed that some videos worked better as listening practice, while most were usable for context comprehension. This was adjusted for as needed, still keeping the quiz questions produced as closely tied to each unit's grammar and vocabulary focus. As students arrived to the lab during pre-booked sessions or at random when the room was available, a library representative trained on the procedure and equipment would walk students/staff through the sign-in steps and provide instructions on how to wear and use the headsets.

As students signed in, their student ID number would automatically open up the level of which they were a member in that term. They would then be able to choose from the units in their book, usually choosing to review previous units or focusing on that week's unit. Upon completion of the quiz, the student's score out of a possible five would be automatically sent to their English teacher as an email

message. While these points were never added to any level's aggregate scores for the term, teachers were encouraged to review the marks and to award "participation points" or other classroom benefits as they saw fit.

As stated, support for the VR project was strong and unwavering among library staff and other school leadership. The fact that an existing technology budget for the library existed and had to be made use of (or risk being lost) launched the entire endeavor. Over the course of 2 years, quizzes were written, transcribed, and incorporated into multiple versions of the VR software and headsets to try to achieve the smoothest experience possible.

Periodically, members of the GFP E-learning team, and others, would be invited to test the hardware being chosen by taking one of the quizzes. Notes on layout, logic, resolution and so on were carefully collected by the library staff member tasked with "making it all work" so that subsequent tests would always see improvements. It was towards the end of this phase, and just before a beta-test rollout to a select group of students, that the challenges in reaching the shared vision of the previous 2 years made themselves most clear to the team.

5 Challenges and Progress

While support from above, both financial and vocal, never wavered for the project, a lack of manpower did extend the development period by a significant margin. What had been hoped to be accomplished within one academic year, in the end, took over two. It was decided that the lab and its contents should be as fully completed and ready for student and staff use before doors opened. The library engineer, having limited experience with VR hardware, proceeded through their due diligence in researching and testing several different types of headsets, such as Oculus Go, Samsung Gear, Google Cardboard, and Lenovo Mirage Solo, and tried several different types of conversion and display software to play the 360-degree videos smoothly and at as high a resolution as possible (within the limits of the local online network).

While it is difficult for teachers to design VR content (Merchant et al., 2014), the SVVR videos were well-suited to quiz development by the limited number of staff on the project. All new programs at the college begin by considering student health and safety. It was noted that, although VR equipment is "not recommended for people suffering from epilepsy, balance disorders, or heart problems" (Chateau et al., 2019, p. 269), the risk was very low as all students must undergo complete military health checks before being fully admitted to the GFP at the engineering college. As was noted in a Bengfort (2020) interview, "The technology evolves (making it)… hard to keep pace; finding content, especially content that is compatible with specific gear, is another challenge" (para. 18).

Jeanneau (2017) notes it is important that language centers be flexible when setting up new initiatives using XR. Meanwhile, the GFP staff – often a single teacher – had to go through videos to identify which ones match the textbook unit topics

while also creating level-appropriate questions that were properly spaced and labeled. Another step in the process which could slow the overall level of progress was the fact that all videos had to be vetted to be sure of their appropriateness for a school in the Sultanate of Oman where standards and laws on obscenity often veer to an extreme in comparison to many European, North and South American, and East Asian nations. An example of this would be a video of a festival, seemingly innocuous, but with a few glimpses of alcohol or male-female mingling that would automatically bar it from use in the project. Luckily, the head librarian and other school leaders invited to participate, were always empathetic and understanding of delays caused by such protocol.

As the lab's soft opening began to deliver results in the form of feedback and student quiz scores, some immediate issues became clear. The top issue with the videos themselves was with video resolution. In order for the 360-degree videos to run smoothly and without any pauses or jumps, the network would not consistently allow for maximum display quality. The second most mentioned issue was that of the student score delivery. Initially, the system was designed to allow for direct mailing of student marks on each video quiz via Microsoft Outlook to the students' teachers. However, the fact that there were some delays in mail delivery, and that some levels in the GFP had *two* instead of a *single* English language teacher, created difficulties. The solution was found in a single spreadsheet within a unique Outlook account where all student scores could be sent. The team leader for each English level would have access and, thus, be able to periodically mail results to each teacher as needed/requested. Though not ideal, the system has worked thus far.

There remained a challenge that superseded all others. One could not properly perform research within most any educational institution worldwide in the year 2020 without understanding that the Covid-19 global pandemic had an enormous impact on learning and teaching. The VR lab was built upon the idea of students and teachers putting on a VR helmet and experiencing an individual cognitive and emotional experience. Furthermore, since there were up to six helmets active in the lab at any one time, there was the added benefit of a *shared* experience between students or between staff.

Naturally, the decision of most educational institutions (including the engineering college) in the spring of 2020 to switch to distance learning meant that the VR lab in the school library would sit essentially empty for a minimum of half a year. Even upon reopening, there is a question as to whether the laboratory would be allowed to operate. There would certainly be a need for clear and enforced procedures on equipment sterilization and occupancy limits within the room itself.

The head of the library, well before school closure due to Covid-19, noted the strong traffic moving through the lab. It was ascertained that "good word-of-mouth" was the reason for near constant student and teacher use during the beta test of the VR lab. Moving to capitalize on this, the library produced an advertisement for the lab that immediately began running on flat screen televisions around campus. Though a simple visual of the lab itself with bullets of the benefits (and fun) of VR, it was certainly effective in spreading more awareness of the lab's existence.

Despite the issues encountered during the design, construction, testing, and roll out of the VR lab, it was considered an initial success. Any additions or improvements will be made on a solid foundation of hardware, software, and room layout. A library representative tasked with handling sign in and orientation within the lab found that visitors had very few problems in using the headsets to complete the activities. Satisfyingly, a great many of the lab's early users left the experience smiling or even asking for additional time to attempt more quizzes.

The positive impact on student learning showed itself as the final weeks of the beta test happened to fall just prior to GFP-wide formative testing. Rather than an expected drop in attendance due to students preparing by using their textbooks, notes, and online materials, the numbers appeared to continue to rise throughout the month. It was surmised that, besides the fun of the quizzes, the fact that the questions were precisely matched to the units the students would soon be tested on created a rationale in the test-takers' minds that the lab was worthwhile practice. In a way, the lab's "unreal" experience appeared to deliver on the students' requests for more authentic activities. Another positive experience in the process of introducing the project to the staff as a whole was during a weekly professional development session.

By connecting the headset to a large interactive white board, a room of nearly 40 teachers was able to observe, and even laugh with, one teacher who was willing to take one of the video quizzes live. In real time, teachers saw the relative ease of signing in, putting on the headset, choosing the level, understanding the video itself, and the answering of pop up quiz questions. Because the small team across the library and GFP had so much time to become familiar with every aspect of the process, every question had been anticipated and was able to be answered confidently. The hopeful staff feedback led the team to believe that, had on-campus activities not been interrupted due to the pandemic, students would have been positively encouraged by their GFP teachers to visit the VR lab throughout the spring and early summer.

6 Conclusion: Future Direction and Lessons

Although feedback from students and staff was exclusively verbal in test meetings and during the lab's beta test, steps have been taken to collect data for analysis. The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) department had previously modified the extensive VR survey of Tcha-Tokey et al. (2016) to create a survey appropriate to the engineering college. This instrument was subsequently simplified and produced in both English and Arabic in order to be accessible to even the first-level GFP students (see Appendix). It is hoped that, by conducting such a survey across all levels of the GFP, and across multiple terms, there will be a pool of reliable data from which to argue for or against the future allocation of further XR resources on campus.

In looking at the limited marketing the library has done, via text ads on campus screens, it has been decided to introduce some more imagery and taglines in order to gain more immediate attention for the VR lab upon the hoped-for reopening of campus in the early months of 2021. The new ads would use photos of students actually using the headsets in the lab, underneath a tagline like, "Have you ever flown an F-16 fighter jet? Have you ever floated along the canals of Venice? Have you ever surfed a 4-meter wave? …now you can." At risk of coming across rather commercial for an academic campus, the belief is that, if these ads can increase VR lab traffic to the point where there is a waiting list, the annual budget and prestige of the library project will be even more assured.

Yet another aspect for improvement to be assessed and revisited may be the nature of the quizzes themselves. At present, it remains an insular experience where materials are essentially being delivered to students via technology. Some amount of pre-quiz discussion points could serve to further immerse students and teachers into the experience of a 360-degree video. Making the experience more interactive in this way could open the process up to more creative expression. Not limited to discussion, it has been envisioned that students could be encouraged to script and film their own videos of life in Oman, or on whatever appropriate topic they wish, which would then be turned into personalized bonus quizzes for each level. If a student were to complete all ten or so unit videos for their particular level in the lab and then be able to unlock a bonus vid-quiz on their own city or village, the emotional payoff due to the high personalization would likely be significant. Further, if the scores between classes within a level were to somehow be gamified, perhaps through an auto mail mechanism similar to how the scores are delivered to team leaders, yet another level of engagement and interest might be activated.

It has been noted that, unlike other language skills, feelings of enjoyment and pride are mostly triggered by the speaking skill (Pishghadam et al., 2016). With much of the recent literature on VR in EFL settings emphasizing the value of introducing peer assessment (Chien et al., 2019), collaborative dialogue (Chateau et al., 2019), and other *social* activities, it may be that entirely new activities should be developed for the library VR lab in order to maximize its value as a language learning resource.

From the point of view of the administrators, still more possibilities for development of the lab might make themselves apparent in the post-pandemic lockdown. While the initial focus of the lab was to support the GFP student body, there is no reason why content could not be developed specifically for students studying in any of the engineering programs. Although the VLE department has already been hard at work developing AR and VR videos to be used to train and educate the higher-level students, video-quizzes run through the VR lab in the library could serve as a review for hundreds of undergraduates before facing rigorous midterm or final exams.

There has also been some interest from staff regarding the possibility of converting pre-recorded lectures into quizzes where, as in the 360-degree videos, multiple choice questions would pop up periodically throughout the speaker's presentation

requiring students to stay focused in order to 'pass' the lecture. While time-consuming for library staff to produce, such lecture quizzes could be constructed and launched quite quickly were the lecturers themselves asked to add the quiz questions as a word document or excel sheet to be incorporated into the quiz by library/GFP staff members.

Regardless of how any institution would decide to incorporate XR into a curriculum or into resources available to students/staff, there are several things that must be carefully considered and experimented with. Most schools will find the finance and budgeting of such projects to be a major stumbling block. Luckily, with the rise of competition in the business of VR visors and software related to XR, many more institutions will find that it is well within their means to purchase the necessary equipment and code to create their own XR resources. If those developing such projects remain aware that both hardware and software used in XR are in a constant state of evolution, though perhaps not quite as quickly as social media or mobile apps, they will be better prepared for the sudden shifts that might have to be made.

Staying flexible, instead of locking into one system, as well as customizing feedback surveys for participants at multiple stages of the project as priorities/plans change, will serve those designers of XR projects well. The engineering college found that starting from a comprehensive VR feedback list, such as that provided by Tcha-Tokey et al. (2016), and then pulling the relevant aspects to incorporate into a smaller survey designed specifically for the library VR project, greatly simplified the points on which data would be gathered.

The self-actualization of students is the pathway by which they will obtain their maximum potential for growth (Stevick, 1990). This focus, in the humanistic approach to language teaching, on the holistic development of the learner, personal relevance of the subject matter to the learner, relevance of imagination and creativity, and goal-oriented classroom activities (Amini, 2016), is one intersection between cognitive and emotional learning. In line with the idea that, "The relationship between cognition and emotion is, minimally, interdependent; maximally, they are inseparable/integrated" (Swain, 2011, p. 196), is Vygotsky's (2000) belief that learning cannot occur without struggle.

When recalling Vygotsky's (2000) description of "the existence of a dynamic system of meaning in which the affective and intellectual unite" (p. 10), it is not a large leap to imagine him placing a VR headset upon the head of a student or staff volunteer, talking them through the activation of a video, then stepping back and letting the user attempt to land a helicopter or marvel at a distant land. The student, happy to have some fun before the real work starts, likely won't realize that class has already begun.

Appendix

English and Arabic versions of the modified questionnaire based on Tcha-Tokey et al. (2016).

1. Have you heard about Virtual Reality before?
   ○ YES ○ NO

2. Do you have any previous experience using VR for learning?
   ○ YES ○ NO

3. How would you describe the VR lab facility? [1. Room 2. Chairs 3. Headsets]

VERY SATISFIED		SATISFIED		DISSATISFIED		VERY DISSATISFIED	

4. How many times have you used the VR room?

DAILY		WEEKLY		MONTHLY		EVERY 2–3 MONTHS	

5. How did you feel during the VR Videos?

VERY SATISFIED		SATISFIED		DISSATISFIED		VERY DISSATISFIED	

6. What was your favorite moment in the video?

STARTING PART		MIDDLE PART		ENDING PART	

7. Rate the LRC staff support in providing VR services.
Scale of 1–4: 1-very supportive 2-supportive 3-not very supportive 4-not supportive at all.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**

8.

Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
a. There was too much inconsistency/technical issues in the virtual environment [Resolution, Video Freeze]				
b. The instructional/lesson content of this VR experience was rich and well-structured				
c. The quiz questions in the video were appropriate to my level				
d. I felt stimulated/motivated by the virtual environment				

Do you have suggestions to improve this virtual reality environment?

___

___

___

هل سمعت عن تقنية الواقع الافتراضي من قبل؟

○ **نعم** ○ **لا**

هل لديك أي تجربة سابقة في استخدام تقنية الواقع الافتراضي في التعلم؟

○ **نعم** ○ **لا**

كيف تصف تجربتك بمختبر الواقع الافتراضي في الكلية؟

	راضي		راضي للغاية		غير راضي		غير راضي للغاية

ما مدى استخدامك لقاعة الواقع الإفتراضي؟

	يوميا		أسبوعيا		شهريا		مرة كل شهر- شهرين

كيف تصف شعورك بعد مشاهدة مقاطع الفيديو المصورة بتقنية الواقع الإفتراضي؟

	راضي		راضي للغاية		غير راضي		غير راضي للغاية

ما هي اللحظة المفضلة لديك في الفيديو؟

	بداية المقطع		منتصف المقطع		نهاية المقطع

قيم دعم موظفي مركز مصادر التعلم في تقديم خدمات الواقع الإفتراضي.
1-غير داعم للغاية 2-غير داعم 3-داعم 4-داعم للغاية 5-داعم للغاية بشكل مثير للإعجاب

5	4	3	2	1

الأسئله	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	أعترض	أعترض بشدة
كان هناك الكثير من المشكلات التقنية في تجربتي لتقنية الواقع الافتراضي.				
المحتوى التعليمي لتجربة الواقع الإفتراضي كان مثريا ومنظما				
أعطتني تجربة الواقع الافتراضي فرصة لتقييم مستوى التعلم لدي				
أجهزة التفاعل الخاصة بتقنية الواقع الإفتراضي (سماعة وأجهزة التحكم) كانت سهلة الاستخدام.				

هل لديك أي مقترحات لتحسين خدمة بيئة الواقع الافتراضي بالكلية؟

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Language Learner Identity and Games and Gamification in the Language Learning Classroom: Observations from the Japanese Context

Benjamin Thanyawatpokin and Carl Vollmer

Abstract Research into game-based language learning and gamification is a field that represents a new direction in second language acquisition. However, practical research regarding empirical observation of how this method can affect language learner identity and investment is still lacking. In this chapter, we show three different contexts in which games and gamification are used in the classroom to support and scaffold English lessons. A variety of gamification and game-based pedagogical interventions were used with classes at the high school and university levels. The interventions included pre- and post-game activities, while the activities themselves involved gamified online quizzes such as *Kahoot!*, and mobile games such as *Spaceteam ESL* and *Don't Get Fired!*. We then present evidence of the impact this method has in the form of surveys, homework responses, class discussions, and a range of other classroom observation-based data. It was found that games can substantially impact identity and positively increase learner investment in lesson content. However, findings suggest many factors can sway these benefits, which include teacher interventions, support materials, design of curriculum, and game or gamified activity content. Observations for this chapter exclusively come from Japan; however, the suggestions included can be applied to many different contexts.

Keywords Game-based language learning · Gamification · Identity · Investment

B. Thanyawatpokin
Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan

C. Vollmer (✉)
Ritsumeikan Uji Junior and Senior High School, Kyoto, Japan
e-mail: cvollmer@ujc.ritsumei.ac.jp

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1 Introduction

The field of language education is always changing and new approaches are constantly being tried and tested in classrooms around the world. In particular, technology has greatly expanded the possibilities for classroom practice, providing more resources to teachers and students than previously available (Godwin-Jones, 2014; Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012; York & deHaan, 2018). However just because there are more resources does not automatically mean that they are better, and just because they involve technology does not imply they are better than traditional approaches. The uses and impacts of technological resources must be empirically explored in order to reach a greater understanding of the effects on the learning process and on language learners. In particular, the research area of game-based language learning (GBLL) and gamification requires further study in order to provide teachers with insight into how using games might influence pedagogy in the language classroom.

While there are numerous areas to explore with regard to games in the classroom, how learners identify themselves to, and invest in the use of games in the classroom is of significant importance to teachers as those ideas and identities impact how learners engage in classroom activities. As this area of game-based research is still underexplored, further investigation is warranted. Seedhouse (2005) has argued that reaching an understanding of the classroom in practice, and not just based on theories and conceptions of research, is vital in order to build better informed classroom practice. As such, the responses and ideas of learners in relation to game-based pedagogy in the classroom is a valuable area to explore to better understand how games are interpreted and related to by learners.

The purpose of this chapter is to build upon the base of literature dealing with the practical implementation of games and gamification in the classroom. Authors of similar papers, such as deHaan (2019), have stated that there is currently a lack of practical information about how language teachers can use games to aid classes. Conversely, there is a surplus of theoretical papers outlining why games are viable for language education. Language learner identity formation is another area in which games and gamification research has yet to fully explore. Thus, considering practical considerations for classroom implementation, this chapter will outline various pedagogical methods and observations from the implementation of games and gamification. Attention will be paid to how the activities are implemented into the existing curriculum and the effects they have on language learner identity.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Language Learning and Identity

Identity is a well-developed area of language education research that has continued to evolve over time (Block, 2009; Darvin & Norton, 2015). One of the most widely used definitions of identity is offered by Norton (2013) as, “The way a person

understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). Individuals have multiple identities, which they access in various social contexts and situations (Gao, 2014; Norton, 2001, 2013). These identities can be affected and changed by a number of internal and external factors; such as, but not limited to, family values (Ochs, 1993), school language policies (Kanno, 2003), or personal relationships (Mori, 2012). Additionally, as a complex construct with various perspectives and influences, language learner identity research has developed in a number of areas, especially regarding relations of power. Areas such as cultural identity (Gomez-Laich, 2016; Vasilopoulos, 2015), race and ethnicity (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Reyes, 2010), and gender (Higgins, 2010; Kubota & Chiang, 2013) have been productive lenses through which to consider the various factors influencing language learning.

As such a complex construct, when exploring language learner identity it is impossible to claim that any identities found in a study are the only identities present in that learner, or that those learners will always display those identities. However, the fact that such a social orientation is made is indicative of an impactful idea, action, or situation which the learner has deemed important enough to take a stance on in relation to themselves. With such a wide range of both observable and unobservable possibilities relating to identity, much of identity research rejects the infallibility of the arguments and interpretations made from data, and highlights the situated nature within which data collection occurred (Norton & McKinney, 2011).

Identity has provided a valuable lens through which to consider numerous elements of the language learning experience. These insights have provided additional depth and complexity to our understanding of language learning and furthered the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Lee (2014) highlighted the lived experience of Mina, a highly motivated Korean engineering graduate student in the United States. Identity was a particularly insightful approach to analysis in this case because it was clear that, although she was highly motivated, communicative and engaged in her local, school, and church communities, there were still struggles in her academic life. Ou and Gu (2018) also provide insight into the challenges of international communication for Chinese students with native English speakers in transnational higher education in China. Thus, identity is both well-established in research and has proven its value to our understanding of language learning.

2.2 Identity and Investment

To what extent a learner is willing to invest in various elements of their language learning is vitally important for their progress in the language. While this area has been well explored through the psychological construct of motivation (Apple et al., 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), the sociological complement of investment also has valuable insights that highlight the importance of the social context within

which language learning is occurring (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Lee, 2014; Norton & De Costa, 2018; Norton Pierce, 1995).

The distinction between motivation and investment was described by Darvin and Norton (2015) in the following terms: "A student may be a highly *motivated* learner, but may not be *invested* in the language practices of a given classroom" (p. 37) (italics found in original text). Such examples have become well established in identity research (Lee, 2014; Norton, 2001, 2013), and are a core concept for understanding identity. Initially scholars such as Norton (Norton, 2013; Norton Pierce, 1995) conceived the complex social identity of the individual learner to be conveyed through their relationship with various social contexts and how those relationships change across time and space. Darvin and Norton (2015) proposed a comprehensive model of investment, integrating elements of the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1987) with the work of Norton (2013), where investment is the connection of identity, ideology, and capital. This model has been further argued for by Norton and De Costa (2018) as a critical lens through which to interpret the complex relationships of identity, ideology, and capital in the language learner. Each of these areas is relevant by themselves, but it is the interaction of these three elements that influence investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015). They are defined by Darvin and Norton as follows:

- *Identity* is the way in which an individual relates themselves to the world through time and space, constantly defining, and redefining how they will interpret and respond to various struggles and challenges. Individuals will utilize a plurality of identities based on social context and how the individual interacts with different social contexts.
- *Ideology* is the creation of a structure of power, which is enacted and spread across individuals by social practices that also determine what should or shouldn't be included or excluded within these practices. It is important to note that this definition also does not create a monolithic structure, instead opting for a fluid definition, which complements well with identity.
- *Capital* is the power provided through material, economic, cultural, and social means (Bourdieu, 1977). The role of symbolic capital, conceptualized by Bourdieu (1987), is of particular importance, in that what we consider to be valuable changes across time and space. What may be valued by one group, or at one point in time, may change with a different group or at a different time. Similar to identity and ideology in the definitions for this model, capital is also constantly changing, and fluid.

2.3 Why Play? Why Games?

Teachers can now support their classrooms with a variety of methods and materials that were not available a decade ago. Teachers can use online Youtube videos to quickly illustrate concepts being learned in class, teleconferencing to conveniently and quickly communicate with students from different countries, and a variety of

online applications, such as blog writing and social networking sites. This begs the question as to why a teacher would consider using a game in the classroom if the field is already quite saturated with different ways to scaffold learning. This becomes more apparent when considering that research surrounding game-based language teaching is still considered to be in a state somewhere close to emerging from infancy (Gee, 2007; Peterson, 2013; Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012).

As Gee (2007) stated, language which is removed from experiences is generally quite difficult to process. Contextless knowledge is often the weakest in terms of understanding and retention. Ultimately, it is content that is learned with rich experiences that solidifies learning. Examples of this kind of learning include the usage of videos, role-plays in the classroom, live demonstrations, hands-on work, or (for the purpose of this research) games. deHaan (2019) stated, "Games are concrete experiences (and) instantiations of language" (p. 15). Thus, games not only create an environment of play and learning, but can also provide the meaningful experience necessary to help promote acquisition.

Many researchers have created frameworks incorporating games into the language classroom (e.g. Gaudart, 1999; Nicholson, 2015; Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012; Reinhardt, 2019). However, the majority of the literature about learning with games or learning through methods inspired by games seems to revolve around two terms: GBLL and gamification (Blume, 2019; Kapp, 2012; Reinders & Wattana, 2015; York & deHaan, 2018).

2.4 Game-Based Language Learning (GBLL)

Coleman's (2002) study highlighted connections that game-based learning (*Simcopter* and *The Sims*) could have when using games in class to teach academic writing. The success of the class as described by the author, however, relied heavily upon the importance of the teacher in the classroom, mediation factors, and the design of tasks made.

Miller and Hegelheimer (2006) and Ranalli (2008) conducted two important studies building upon Coleman's (2002) work. These researchers looked at the usage of digital computer games (*The Sims*) in the classroom and moved the field away from exploratory or theoretical papers into practical insights of how teachers could incorporate and mediate GBLL in their classrooms. Students in the studies displayed statistically significant gains in vocabulary acquisition after a period of time with the game.

Despite these promising results, the field of GBLL still lacks a large base of studies which systematically investigate the role of teachers in mediating pedagogy. A meta-analysis presented by Cornillie et al. (2012) reported the current trend in the field is to focus on more exploratory or theoretical studies. However, recent developments in the field seem to be moving towards more practical investigations of pedagogical considerations for the game-enhanced language classroom (York & deHaan, 2018).

Many studies have also revealed a great deal about how games can impact foreign language learning in students. Suh et al. (2010) found standardized test scores in Korean elementary school students showed improvements after playing a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Verbal fluency benefitted in a study done by Grimshaw and Cardoso (2018) which used *Spaceteam ESL*. A pre-post-test design which involved the students recording a monologue showed the group which played the game to be more fluent by raters.

In six different case studies showcasing students using games to learn English, deHaan (2013) stated that single player games may also benefit areas such as vocabulary acquisition and acquisition of certain grammar forms. Games that contain an immersive story or text that the player must engage with were shown to be more effective at driving English acquisition than other, less story or text focused, genres such as action or shooting games. Franciosi et al. (2015) showed that games (in this study's case, *3rd World Farmer*) used in conjunction with online vocabulary study tools (*Quizlet*) aided in long-term vocabulary retention when compared with students who only used *Quizlet* to study vocabulary.

2.5 Gamification

Gamification is the infusion of gaming elements into activities or applications that would originally be more closely related to traditional styles of learning such as test-taking, flashcards, or skill drilling (e.g. Figueroa Flores, 2015; Lombardi, 2015; Nicholson, 2015; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018). Reinhardt (2019) states that gamification refers to when the "instructor applies game elements intentionally in ways and contexts that are not normally used" (p. 183). In the digital world, this could come in the form of taking vocabulary flashcards and making a cooperative fast-paced review "game" out of them, such as *Quizlet Live*, or making tests a class-wide competition with a program such as *Kahoot!*.

Research into this method includes Lombardi's (2015) work with a gamified classroom which revealed higher rates of participation. The research also found students stated they had fun during the classes while they also demonstrated better attitudes to learning English. Berns et al. (2016) used a developed-for-learning tool called *VocabTrainerA1*. They showed positive results in pre-post vocabulary tests and surveys which revealed that the students enjoyed the experience and believed it was useful to their education. Rachels and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2018) used *Duolingo* in their classes, though found no correlation between a treatment group which used the app and a control group which underwent traditional classroom instruction. The fact there was no difference between the two groups was presented as a positive result in that the application was argued to have proven itself equal to face-to-face teaching in foreign language learning.

Overall, much of the research surrounding gamification in language learning has yet to look deeply at language learner identity, willingness to communicate (WTC), or more qualitative measurements outside of student enjoyment or self-reported motivation. Dicheva and Dichev (2015) pointed this out by stating that the current state of research in gamification represents a serious lack of rigorous empirical data concerned with real language gains. This is attributed to the "hype cycle" around gamification and how it has gained an astonishing amount of popularity in such a short time. The authors stated, "Gamification in education is still growing and the practice has outpaced researchers' understanding of its mechanisms," (p. 1445). It seems the number of gamified applications that are available to teachers grows by the day, but the actual effectiveness of these applications is still highly variable.

2.6 Identity, Social Discourse, and Games

The field also contains a multitude of studies which show foreign language students benefiting from playing games in more profound ways than through simply measuring vocabulary retention of acquisition rates. Reinders and Wattana (2015) reported a higher WTC and lower affective barriers when students played an MMORPG (*Ragnarok Online*) in order to practice English skills. They emphasized the possibility of these games to help shy or non-willing students to communicate.

The above-mentioned study by Grimshaw and Cardoso (2018) also discovered that their game, *Spaceteam ESL*, was successful in reducing second-language speaking anxiety while also improving student WTC. Peterson (2012) discovered that MMORPGs could also benefit sociolinguistic competence. Participants in the study showed a better grasp of communicative strategies, such as turn-taking, politeness, and rapport-building, after an extended period of time playing the game and interacting with other players online.

It is important to note that there is a paucity in how language learner identity can be affected by playing games either in-class or extramurally. Gee (2005) wrote that games allow players to assume identities through play. They put themselves into the shoes of the character they see on screen and, thus, are able to adopt a new "identity" and experiment with the virtual world in that way. Squire (2011) echoes the same sentiment saying that games are "designed experiences" that can develop players' identities.

Zheng et al. (2015) showed that chat between natives and non-natives in virtual worlds can help form language learner identities. Blume (2019) also called for foreign language teachers to keep in mind that games can have a positive impact on the development of language learner identity. However, the field still lacks a larger body of literature detailing how classroom-based game usage can aid in the formation of language learner identities and pedagogical suggestions in which to facilitate it.

3 Methods

The previous sections explained the features crucial to identity, and the current state of research involving, GBLL and gamification. Also noted was the fact that research involving games and gamification has yet to take a comprehensive look at how games can aid in the formation of language learner identity and spur investment. Thus, this study will qualitatively explore how classroom interventions featuring games and gamification can impact identity and investment in order to fill a gap in the current state of the literature. In order to achieve this, the following research questions will be explored:

1. How do language learners identify with using games and gamification in the classroom?
2. How does the inclusion of games and gamification in the English classroom impact investment in English learning?

The implementation of games in each learning environment was slightly different; thus, they will be presented as independent cases linked by the common thread that they were all done to aid in language learner identity formation. Data taken from each set of classes comes mainly from written surveys about the activities the students undertook and teacher observations on how student interaction and use of the language changed over time with exposure to the games.

4 Results: Class Vignettes

This section features three different classroom contexts with a focus on how games or gamification was used in the classroom. Additionally, how student identity was measured and observed throughout the intervention will be reported. As each context used slightly different pedagogical methods, each context will be introduced separately.

4.1 First Year High School

Learner Profile The learners for this initial vignette were in their first year of an immersion program at a private high school in Japan. During their three-year high school experience, all learners study abroad for one year. The class used for this example was called the 'southern-hemisphere group' since all learners would study in either Australia or New Zealand. There were a total of forty students in this class that were split into two groups of twenty for their English classes. Data was collected from both groups.

After entering the program in April, the southern-hemisphere group received nine months of classes. Special emphasis was placed on English development to prepare them for their time abroad, which started in January. While abroad, the learners each live with a host family, and are placed in separate schools from each other. Upon returning to Japan, the content courses of the program (e.g. history, math, science) are taught in English, so the time spent abroad is not only a valuable experience for the learners, it is also essential for building the language skills necessary to succeed in later years of the program. Most learners in this group were born and raised in Japan, but some were raised, or had the experience of living, in other countries, such as Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and the United States. English was considered a valuable resource for this group, as it would prove essential in their eventual time abroad. Thus, learners showed a high level of motivation towards their English studies.

Curriculum The first year of the immersion program contains 10 h of English instruction per week – one three-hour home-stay English communications course, a three-hour vocabulary and grammar course, a two-hour academic English skills course, and a two-hour art course taught in English.

The data for this vignette were collected from the academic English skills course. This course was designed to give learners the skills they needed to succeed in an all English academic environment while abroad, as well as preparing them for their study of content courses in English upon returning to the immersion program. Skills covered in this academic communications course include note-taking, presentation, scanning for information, and focusing the topic of a presentation.

The course used the *21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking Level 1* textbook, which was challenging in terms of content and vocabulary for the learners. The vocabulary in this text includes words from the Academic Word List, with this often being the first time learners have been introduced to this type of vocabulary. Learners were required as part of the course to create vocabulary word cards – a technique well established to promote vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2013). In addition to using vocabulary word cards, and meeting the words in the context of the textbook, the online game application *Kahoot!* was used to provide additional opportunities for vocabulary study.

Pedagogical Intervention Games were not the main method of instruction in this course, but were used more as a supplementary material to review and further solidify knowledge the learners already had. The online response system *Kahoot!* allows the creator to make and share quizzes or surveys by displaying them on a board or screen with up to four choices for participants to choose. Participants can respond from their phone, tablet, or computer, using the game code that is given at the start of each game. This game has become widely used in education as a fun and interactive way to engage learners with the content of the lesson (Wang & Tahir, 2020; Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016). The game was used as practice in the class for upcoming vocabulary quizzes or exams.

The questions asked were similar to the types of questions learners would meet in the upcoming exams or quizzes, including identifying synonyms, parts of speech, and filling in the correct word for a sentence. By playing these games in class, learners were able to receive feedback on their answers individually, as well as compared to their classmates throughout the game. The rankings of the top scoring learners are displayed throughout the game, but lower scorers remain anonymous, allowing for feedback without the rest of the class knowing those results.

Observations For data collection, after playing a game of *Kahoot!* in class, learners were asked to complete a survey regarding their thoughts on using the game. The survey was adapted from a learner task assessment survey by Nunan (2004), and asked both open and closed questions, with space given to write comments for the closed questions. The survey took between 10 and 15 min to complete, and the comments were analyzed for common themes amongst responses.

One of the overwhelming responses from the learners was that they greatly enjoyed playing the game in class, as shown in the following comments:

> I think everyone had a lot of fun.

> I felt these were very good. I could enjoy learning words because these are like games, so we could play, talking with friends during these activities.

> I really enjoy this activity every time I do it.

In addition to these positive responses, some students gave even further detail on why they specifically enjoyed the game. The element of competition being a motivating factor in their enjoyment was mentioned by multiple students, including in the following responses:

> Since each of us was able to participate and have fun while doing our best to get the right answer, we were able to improve our abilities.

> It is fun to do this game with my friends and I feel that I don't want to lose this game.

> I want to get first place. So I think I shouldn't careless miss.

> These activities make me fun to study and our motivations are getting up. Also we can get confidence.

The importance of anonymity in the game was of particular importance to a few students, and allowed them to do their best without worrying that their incorrect answers would be shared with their classmates as witnessed in one participant who claimed:

> By not being able to see incorrect answers, the people who don't correctly answers aren't seen and don't need to feel embarrassed. It makes it easy to move on to the next question.

From these responses, it is clear that *Kahoot!* was viewed positively by the learners in this context. This positive response towards *Kahoot!* aligns with observations in other research (Wang & Tahir, 2020). In addition to being enjoyable, the learners also felt that competition was a motivating factor and increased their investment in the game and, by association, engagement with the material.

4.2 First Year University English – School of Law

Learner Profile Students in this class were in their first year in the school of law at a private university in Japan. Two classes received the treatment, encompassing 60 students in total. The two classes together have a total of 66 students, however six of those students were not present in some way during all the sessions in which the game was used, so their data was not used for this study. As per university requirements, all students must take at least one year of English classes. The students were of intermediate level of English (CEFR A2–B1). Some students had experiences travelling or studying overseas for brief periods, but there were no students who had spent a considerable time (i.e. a year or more) living abroad. All students were born and raised in Japan.

Curriculum This class was a general "four skills" English class. In other words, English reading, writing, speaking and listening were taught with a set textbook. This was the only English class the students took in their course load. Curriculum coordinators set a number of chapters the class must complete and any extra materials could be made at the teacher's discretion. As long as the textbook chapters were completed, the teacher could pace the class at any speed. The majority of the grading for the class came out of four main assignments: two presentations for the midterm and final, a week-by-week journal which the students had to write based on a topic related to the textbook or major class activities, and a 1,000-plus word essay to be turned in at the end of the semester. Suffice to say, day-to-day classroom activities had enough freedom which aided in the incorporation of GBLL opportunities and activities.

Pedagogical Intervention Games were used in the classroom; however, they were not the focus as the sole unit of study. Rather, they were used as support materials to solidify the content being learned in the textbook. The game selected supported an English learning article which highlighted working conditions in Asian countries where workers have to work long hours and overtime for no extra pay. The game used was a smartphone game called *Don't Get Fired!* which involves the player attempting to successfully find a job, work, and rise through the ranks of a company in Asia. The game has a rather melancholic tone to it, as players are often fired from their jobs and money is earned at an almost negligible rate. The game also includes a "part time job" mechanic where players can watch a short advertisement to gain in-game money at an increased rate. Implementation of the game in the classroom is described in Table 1 beginning from introduction activities to concluding assignments.

Formal assessment for the activity was done in three ways: the homework journal prompts which the students completed, participation in class discussions (which is an ongoing requirement of the class), and the choice of doing a final essay on a topic pertaining to the game content.

Table 1 Pedagogical interventions using *Don't Get Fired!*

Class #	Pedagogical intervention
1	The teacher assigns an article taken from online newspapers about working and the future. Content was picked based on coherence with the current textbook unit.
1	Students are given short worksheet which asks for their thoughts about working in Asia and their plans for the future. This worksheet also introduced the game *Don't Get Fired!* and included a short vocabulary section which reviewed common words in the game.
1	The students download the game as part of their homework. They are instructed to begin the game if they are curious about the contents of it, however starting the game is not mandatory.
2	The teacher shows students how to play the game and demonstrates the first two minutes so the students can observe someone playing it before they do.
2	Students are allowed to play the game for 30 min during class time. During this time, they are playing individually but are allowed to speak with each other.
2	Class discussion about their thoughts on the game, how they felt after playing the game in regards to joining the workforce in Asia, and their thoughts about if Japanese workplaces are similar to the workplace portrayed in the game.
2	Homework is assigned connecting *Don't Get Fired!* with the article read during the priming stage. Other prompts include student impressions of playing the game.
3	Students discuss their homework as an introduction to the third class. Answers are checked and discussed as a class on the white board.
3	Students are given another 30-min gameplay session in which they can freely play the game and communicate with other students.
3	A final discussion worksheet is given to the students about their evolving opinions about the game content (working in Asia) and their opinions about the game in general.

Observations Observations, homework journals, content-related worksheets given out before and after gameplay, and final essays written about the game content were employed as data. Initially, students viewed using games in class in a favorable light. Most of the students were genuinely curious and excited about the game they would play as indicated by the following comments:

> I sometimes watch Youtube videos in English. I want to try playing games in English also.
>
> I play a lot of games. But, I don't play games in English. I want to try it!

From this interaction, it can be considered that the students started this task motivated to learn through games. Upon playing the game, however, students felt that gameplay was not as fulfilling as they imagined. Initially students laughed and showed each other their smartphone screens each time they were fired, finding it amusing that they failed so quickly. However, this state did not last long; progression was slow to the point of decreasing enthusiasm. Students wanted to "win" by becoming rich, but the pace caused many students to feel they were not achieving anything. In their worksheet responses, they remarked that they felt less than enthusiastic about the game over time:

> The game was difficult. I don't know what I'm doing often. It's very easy to lose a job and money is not much. I lose motivation to continue.

> I don't like this game. It is difficult for me. It takes much time to get money.

Observations in class support this with the atmosphere becoming subdued with little interaction between students. Many students also noted that it was not "fair" that the part-time jobs would give more money than the actual job.

The slow drip of money in the game and the fact that part-time jobs pay more than their real job caused students to draw connections to real life. They connected the portrayal of working in the game to how they saw work in Japan. Students were highly engaged in discussions and wrote significant responses to journals and worksheet questions. This was corroborated in observing student interaction during gameplay in class and by reading through homework and essays that were turned in at the end of the semester. During the gameplay sessions, students began to note they felt less enthusiastic about playing the game. It was suggested in comments that this was due to the students drawing closer parallels to their own futures. They commented that this arose from the repetitive action of not doing much, getting very little compensation, and being fired for little to no reason:

> I feel difficult in that I have to care about boss feelings.

> This is exaggeration in this game, but Japanese working culture is like this game.

> It is power harassment. It is very unreasonable. Because the boss press a lot of hard job to subordinates. I feel bad.

Some who played the game said they wanted to work harder at their studies in English. This was because they did not want to fall into a workplace that they had become convinced would be like the game:

> I don't want to be like him (the on-screen character). Now, I want to study for the TOEFL exam more. I want to live in a foreign country.

> I want to work in foreign company now. I am more motivation for going on study abroad.

> You need language skill for jobs in Japan. Foreign language will help me find a better job than game job.

The game appears to have provided a significant boost in motivation to using the language outside of school. Students were not necessarily invested in the game itself. However, in envisioning themselves as working in an Asian company, it appears to have increased investment in learning English in general.

4.3 First Year University English – School of Business

Learner Profile The students who were enrolled in this class were studying business, management, and economics at a public university in Japan. In total, there were 42 students in the class. Two of these students were not included in the obser-

vations, as they were absent during the class periods when the game was used. Learners were streamlined into this class by English proficiency and the majority of students had TOEIC scores around 600 points (TOEFL IBT score of 65, or CEFR B1). Initially, the motivation to communicate in English was high; however, fatigue that originated from rigorous business and economics curriculum set in and caused the students to be less responsive during their English classes. This led to a general unwillingness to use English.

Curriculum There were three mandatory English classes the students had to enroll in during their first year: an English reading and writing class, a speaking and listening class, and an autonomous English E-learning class which consisted mainly of doing online grammar and vocabulary programs. The class in this section was the speaking and listening class. Therefore, the focus was on building skills to productively contribute to academic discussions in English. The course was 16 weeks long and consisted of four different topics (or units). One unit consisted of four once-a-week classes with journal homework every class dealing with a different aspect of the topic, a quiz in which students had to demonstrate their knowledge of certain discussion skills, and a graded discussion where students were to record a 5-min long conversation.

Pedagogical Intervention The game used for this class was *Spaceteam ESL*. Originally *Spaceteam*, this game was created by Henry Smith as a party game in which players would attempt to communicate instructions to other players in order to prevent a spaceship from crashing. An ESL version of the game was made with vocabulary that constitutes the first five thousand most common English words sorted by difficulty. As mentioned above, students in the class were discussing how technology impacts university students' lives as part of the curriculum. *Spaceteam ESL* was used to support these discussion themes. Prior research into the game has shown students who spend time playing it have lower affective filters, higher WTC, and higher English fluency rates (Grimshaw & Cardoso, 2018). A secondary hope for the introduction of this game to the class environment was to prompt students to produce more English during class time. The process of using the game during class time is outlined in Table 2.

Similar to the previous class outline, gameplay was not a focus of the class. Rather, spurring students to interact in English and, at the same time, gain a better understanding of how technology impacts student lives was the main goal of using the game.

Observations According to initial worksheet responses and beginning of semester surveys regarding student beliefs about using games in the classroom, students were split on their opinion about wanting to use games in the classroom and generally learning English with games. Some students remarked that they liked games as per the following responses:

Table 2 Pedagogical interventions using *Spaceteam ESL*

Class #	Pedagogical intervention
1	First priming discussion: students discussed whether smartphones can be tools for learning both inside and outside the classroom. Examples of learning applications are listed on the board by the teacher.
1	*Spaceteam ESL* is introduced to the students. Students are asked to search for and quickly read about the game using their smartphones.
1	A teacher-made pen-and-paper activity is given to the students which introduces mechanics from *Spaceteam ESL* such as information-gap and communication of rules and instructions from one student to the other.
1	Students are asked to download the game for homework and try it out if they have time.
2	During the next class, the teacher demonstrates the game to the students with an example group. Students are reminded of the rules (and the activity) from last week.
2	Students are given 30 min to play multiple rounds of the game in groups of four.
2	Class discussions are held about what the students thought about the game, their impressions of it, and also their changing thoughts on using smartphones and smartphone games to learn.
2	Students are given a topic which asks for their opinion on the game, whether they could see how the game connected to themes about technology and society, and whether they felt the game was effective as a learning tool.
3	Answers to the homework are discussed at the beginning of the next class, they are checked and discussed on the white board in front of the class.
3	Students play another 30-min session of *Spaceteam ESL*.
3	A graded (tape-recorded) discussion about the topic. Students prepare their answers to be discussed with random groups at the end of the class.

> I often practice English with online applications and games.

> I sometimes watch YouTube videos in English. I want to try playing games in English also.

In contrast, another student remarked:

> I like games. But, I don't want to use in class. We should learn from teacher and textbooks in class time.

Even with a demo session done by the teacher, it was difficult for students to initially grasp what they had to do in the game. It took them one game or 3–4 min of "hands-on time" in order to understand that they were not supposed to be showing each other their screens and that it was a game about communication. Once they understood the game, however, they felt it was easier to communicate as demonstrated by the following:

> When I am playing the game, I am a player. It is easier to speak in English when I am a player.

> Spaceteam ESL has real communication. I am not a student. I become a player.

This was supported by student journal homework and also through class observation. Students who were generally lacking in participation in English discussion time were much more willing to use English when it was done through the context

of the game. In homework responses, it was also mentioned that the time pressure to speak played a role in forcing students to communicate in English:

> I communicate in Spaceteam ESL because time limit is low. We must read and say English in short time for goal.

These same students had opportunities to speak during activities with time-limits before. However, those interventions did not involve game elements. Thus, it could be inferred that the game-based context allowed for students to adopt a "player" identity which facilitated communication.

Generally, the reaction to the game was positive amongst students. Many felt that the game helped spur them to communicate in English. However, it should be noted that students did not feel as though they had learned anything from the experience. Student reactions to the game very pointedly did not include any mention of its benefit to their English literacy; only that the game provided an easier environment to speak for those who would otherwise be hesitant to speak. Classroom observations after the treatment also attest to the fact that students who played the game were generally only more communicable during game sessions. Thus, the shift in identity to the game player and its benefits was only observed during those isolated instances.

5 Discussion

As stated above, research has concluded that gaming contexts can have a positive effect on language learner identities (Gao & Lamb, 2011; Peterson, 2012, 2013; Reinders & Wattana, 2015). However, those studies were carried out primarily in online, or informal, contexts. Building upon this, the current study yielded promising results regarding the integration of games into the classroom environment through pedagogical intervention.

It is also important to note that current findings may not be entirely generalizable as the majority of data consists of self-reported information that was, in some part, included in the assessment for the class. Thus, students may have felt that it was advantageous to report what they believed the teacher wanted to hear. However, the fact that the data was collected from a range of sources, including discussions and assignments, partly addresses this concern and offers support for its reliability.

The first research question posited was, "How do language learners identify with using games and gamification in the classroom?" To begin addressing this question, the use of *Kahoot!* in the classroom was viewed positively by learners and most felt that such games were beneficial for their English. Since this vignette was not taken longitudinally, it is not possible to make claims of long-term changes to the identity of learners based on using games, but it does speak to the generally high regard that the learners held for the game. The learners in this context recommended further use of games in class, although the extent to which more frequent use of such games would continue to receive this type of response is unexplored.

With respect to classroom use of *Don't Get Fired!*, responses from the students showed quite a high level of engagement with the game content even though it was presented in a foreign language. The repetitive and hopeless tone of the game turned many students off from wanting to play it, many citing "difficulty" problems. However, they were also able to identify with the on-screen game characters who experienced many of the trials and tribulations of working at an Asian company. This suggests that the game prompted an examination of personal identities in the real world and future career trajectories. Players implicitly understood that the game was showing them a parody of a working environment, but were still able to draw connections to real life. Finally, in terms of language development, students gained higher motivation to further their English studies through identifying strongly with the game. This translated to more interest in studying abroad.

These findings further support the fact that student identities were being impacted by gameplay, and by "trying on" the identity of a salaryman at an Asian company, learners found themselves wanting to go in a different direction that the game portrayed. Many of these findings were also observed in a study deHann (2019) conducted with a student who was exposed to several games. After this exposure, the researcher reported that the experience ultimately culminated in a higher degree of learner engagement with the language and willingness to participate in more learning opportunities.

Spaceteam ESL illustrated a different aspect of how students identified with the use of games in the classroom. Through playing games, students engaged with English much more than with conventional classroom tasks. Students saw themselves as being able to talk when they became "players" in the game. This seems to strip away many of the affective barriers and increased WTC – a finding also reported by Grimshaw and Cardoso (2018). Students attributed this to becoming a "player" or "game-player", thereby indicating the extent shifting roles and identities can impact students who use games to practice language skills. However, it was noted that students did not actually feel like they learned anything, and the transition into a different identity (that of a player) did not help them retain language knowledge. It should be noted, however, that outside of reviewing vocabulary for the game and connecting the game to class discussions, there was no intensive language focus placed upon the linguistic aspects of the game.

The second research question was, "How does the inclusion of games and gamification in the English classroom impact investment in English learning?" The high levels of investment shown towards the quiz game *Kahoot!* speak to its educational benefits when used in the classroom. Learners spoke of their increased interest in learning in this way as well as increases in their motivation for the class. While learning achievement and definitive proof of language acquisition are outside the scope of this study, the positive feelings and interest in the game suggest the potential classroom benefits of games such as *Kahoot!* for learner engagement and investment.

Impacting investment in language learning was most clearly seen in *Don't Get Fired!*, as some of the responses to homework and discussions involved students saying they wanted to study more English in order to not work in Japan. This

suggests game content was influential enough for some students to adapt their lifestyles/plans in order to avoid encountering the same situation. Many students also stated that obtaining a higher salary (or better job) was dependent upon their English skills, and to this they also attributed their higher investment in learning English. Overall, parodying the harshness of company environments to an overly exaggerated extent seems to benefit student investment. It was clear that they were engaging with the content and allowing themselves to take in the message.

While there were no learning goals reported, learners did learn vocabulary in order to play the game, although, outside of this, there was no mention of this game contributing to linguistic competence. Before the study began, the students did not comment on whether they were originally planning on going abroad; thus, the extent to which the game impacted them cannot be entirely ascertained. In other words, whether the game strengthened their resolve to study overseas or caused them to consider the program is not known.

Investment and engagement in the English language was somewhat of a more complicated issue when discussing *Spaceteam ESL*. Students commented that becoming a player allowed them to speak more; however, this was not a lasting change. Observations in class also revealed that the overall impact of higher rates of English communication was a phenomenon that was short-lived. In other words, benefits to investment and shifts in identity were only experienced for the duration of the game. This could have been due to students feeling that the game was merely another language-related activity even if the class content at the time closely related to it.

It should be noted that the content of *Don't Get Fired!* more closely mirrored class discussions and the focus of gameplay was more on content than linguistic capability. Students may have felt the game to be another task in a long line of activities given to them by their many English language teachers in order to spur more communication. While certainly successful on this part, the lack of relatability to their current lives could have caused the negligible impact the game had on benefitting language learning investment.

6 Conclusion and Future Research

Games can impart affectively powerful influences on language learners if both game content and pedagogical utilization work together. Many who played *Don't Get Fired!* were spurred to work harder in their English studies so they could bring their skills and talents abroad to companies they believe would treat them better. While this may not be the case, the game was nevertheless effective in facilitating the drive to move to a different country. *Spaceteam ESL* did show that allowing students to step into a different "role" than they are given in school could be for the benefit of English communication as well. The nature of the game and how it was set up more or less forced players to communicate in English. Thus, the content of the game was able to help students adopt the "English player" identity.

As quiz content differs from quiz-to-quiz, nothing definitive can be said about *Kahoot!*. However, engaging students in a "fun" activity for them to experience in the classroom increased investment for a short time. In essence, using English games can promote investment and understanding of content, although this varies wildly. Gamified activities such as *Kahoot!* were shown to promote investment and interest in learning English further; however, this was not seen with a game like *Spaceteam ESL*. Students admitted that they were engaged during the time they played the game, although it was observed that this does not necessarily mean they will improve after the gameplay session has ended. Further research could be done into how to make these positive identity shifts last for longer periods of time. This was a positive change, and thus new methods of teacher scaffolding during or after gameplay would benefit the field.

An extremely interesting anecdote that was observed with students who played *Don't Get Fired!* was that "fun" may not always be necessary to promoting comprehension of content or changes in learner investment. As mentioned above, the students thought the game was slow, difficult, and meaningless. However, they understood the connections to real life and many even stated they took away a deeper interest in furthering their English skills. Despite this, it remains that during gameplay sessions in class, there was no jovial atmosphere that researchers before have attributed to making games work in education (Godwin-Jones, 2014). Divorcing games from fun and observing how the link continues to work could be an avenue of future research.

Due to the variable nature of games in the classroom, giving generalizing implications across all games cannot be done in confidence. With this point acknowledged, certain conclusions pertaining to pedagogical implementation of games can be reached. First, it is imperative that teachers consider pedagogical structure when using games in their classrooms. As Miller and Hegelheimer (2006), Ranalli (2008), and deHaan (2019) have shown, games alone cannot be a "magic bullet". In this case, simply getting students to play games or take part in gamified activities most likely would not have allowed them to reflect upon the experience sufficiently to process them. Teachers cannot stand back and watch. They must form unique support materials to take full advantage of games and gamification in the classroom.

In conclusion, this study explored the classroom implementation of games and their relation to the identity and investment of learners in a number of classroom contexts in Japan. The results indicate that games can beneficially engage learners in the classroom if used with proper pedagogical support and that they are generally viewed positively by the learners themselves. The limitations of this study constrain the overall generalizability of our conclusions, but early indications emerging from the research should be explored further in a wider range of contexts and age ranges. The research field of game-based pedagogy in the classroom could be explored even further by looking at changes in identity and investment in games more longitudinally, as well as exploring the acquisitional benefits games may provide. Overall, games hold a lot of potential for future classroom and research implementation, and further exploration is warranted.

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Grasping Omani Students' Transitional Challenges: Focus on Computer Self-Efficacy and English Proficiency

Victoria Tuzlukova and Hranush Ginosyan

Abstract This study, conducted at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, explored foundation program students' transitional challenges related to their academic development and adjustment with a focus on computer self-efficacy and English proficiency. The study was designed within the framework of mixed methods research. The data were obtained through 10 semi-structured interviews with the coordination team of the English foundation program science course at the research site, focus group discussions with 21 student participants, and an online questionnaire administered to 143 students. Frequency analysis was used for quantitative data analysis, while data triangulation with the open-ended question responses and focus group discussions with students was used for the validation of findings. The results reveal that multiple social, emotional, and academic transitional challenges faced by students are partially rooted in their relatively low mastery levels in language skills and their comparatively low computer competence, both of which hinder their progress in writing and study skills course work. As a result, it is recommended that these issues are addressed when considering remedial work and the further development of general foundation programs in Oman. As an outcome of this study, general foundation program providers and educators in Oman and other educational contexts will have a better understanding of students' transitional challenges and be able to offer their students the tools and strategies for effective learning and thriving through their foundation studies.

Keywords Transitional challenges · Computer self-efficacy · Writing skills · Omani students · General foundation program

V. Tuzlukova (✉) · H. Ginosyan
Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman
e-mail: victoria@squ.edu.om; hranushg@squ.edu.om

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1 Introduction

The transition from school to university can be intimidating, challenging and overwhelming for some students due to its considerable effects on their psychology and studies (Bernier et al., 2005). Despite the fact that students feel excited about joining university, they experience deep anxieties about their new life, which is normally very different from their familiar social, cultural and academic environment. Bernier et al. (2005) contend that the period of transition is an immense challenge since many students consider it as a stressful social and psychological event.

Even though universities provide guidance for students by talking about strong ethics and good behavior and reminding them of the venues and timings of the activities scheduled for them, many students have difficulty coping with these changes as this is the period when they experience their first major break from parental and teacher supervision. According to Sanoff (2006), first year students need an effective orientation program to deal with the challenges they may face as students. In line with this, Bennett (2003) emphasizes the fact that universities need to make a collaborative effort to engage all types of support available, including university librarians, lecturers, non-teaching staff, experts in information and computer technologies, mentors and so on, to provide students with a supportive learning environment that maximizes their learning and use of technology.

Recognizing the complexity of the process of adjustment to the new academic context of higher education, this study makes an overall attempt to better understand the transitional challenges of foundation program students at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman in relation to their computer self-efficacy and English language proficiency. In particular, it focuses on the interrelation between the information technology (IT) and the Foundation Program English Language (FPEL) components of the foundation program, including in terms of their impact on students' adjustment to the academic environment. It also investigates the extent to which the IT and FPEL components match in terms of the learning outcomes (LOs) specified by the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs (Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA), n.d.), and the materials used to address those LOs. Finally, the study explores whether foundation program students' overall computer self-efficacy might obstruct performance in their English writing and study skills projects or, on the contrary, whether it might promote their performance.

To address these issues, the following research questions are raised: (a) Is the computer self-efficacy of foundation program students sufficient for their current studies in the program and in future studies in their colleges? If yes, to what extent can students apply their computer and IT skills in the FPEL writing courses? (b) To what extent does students' computer efficacy help them deal with the writing and study skills projects in their language courses?

2 Literature Review: Overview of the Context

In 2006, the OAAA launched a project to set up internationally recognized academic standards for Oman's general foundation programs (Carroll et al., 2009). This was intended to establish the ideas of bridging post-basic and tertiary education, maximizing young Omanis' potentials and allowing them to fully benefit from higher education, as well as providing further assistance to those exposed to the required academic standards but not yet successful in achieving them. Introduced in academic year 2009/2010 as a "formal, structured program of study licensed in the Sultanate of Oman and provided by a licensed higher education institution" (OAAA, n.d., p. 6), the general foundation program had an objective of developing Omani students' literacy, numeracy, computing, language and study skills.

Pursuing the recommendations embedded in the Oman Academic Standards, the general foundation programs implemented across the country's tertiary education providers have now created multidimensional and dynamic learning environments in which the development of students' skills is supported by a range of quality improvement opportunities "that are shared throughout the nation and that extend far beyond merely modifying curricula" (Carroll et al., 2009, p. 17). These include various teaching materials, online learning resources and tools, and opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their creativity and professionalism (Al-Busaidi & Tuzlukova, 2013).

In these learning environments, which often involve quick and radical changes to lifestyles and study habits, students are, however, faced with a multitude of new learning experiences and practice "on their journey from the beginning" (Chirciu & Mishra, 2013, p. 162). As a consequence, some of them may find the physical and social environment of the university new, awe-inspiring and frightening (Parker et al., 2004; Wangeri & Mutweleli, 2012), and may experience anxiety and, sometimes, inexplicable fears of failure, or other challenges related to their social-emotional and cognitive-academic development (Burns, 2013). In the literature, this situation is referred to as "traversing the chasm" (Wilson-Strydom, 2010), or the period of bridging the gap between eligibility for university and readiness for the university level study demands (Conley, 2008).

Other transitional challenges may include, though are not necessarily limited to, the adjustment to new sociocultural and physical learning environments (including co-education, multicultural teaching, etc.), new pedagogical methods and approaches (teacher-centered at school versus learner-centered at university), computer and internet-based tasks versus text-based at school and so on (Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). In addition, language skills and computer competences are becoming more interconnected and interdependent in the language classroom at the higher education level, and both have an impact on students' performance and their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1996) or individual confidence in the ability to employ the behavior needed to generate the preferred outcome.

A study by Bandura (1997) reveals that individuals with strong self-efficacy find it easier to solve problems and exhibit perseverance, whereas those with weak

self-efficacy tend to become frustrated. Consistent with this study, Compeau and Higgins (1995, cited in Howard, 2014) assert that self-efficacy may considerably affect students' performance. For example, students performing a computer-based task or activity in the English language classroom may have a certain perception of how able they are to manage the technology, based on their self-efficacy level.

In the context of Oman, the stressful social and psychological nature of the transition from school to university (Bernier et al., 2005) can be augmented by the change of the medium of instruction, which is Arabic in the country's basic and post-basic education schools and is mostly English at the tertiary level. Further, the country's general foundation programs usually introduce student-centered pedagogy and blend the traditional learning environment with the virtual one where the students are offered diverse tasks and activities. Moreover, a great deal of the English language coursework is largely based on computer and IT skills, and the use of innovative approaches to teaching and learning English. However, according to Goodliffe (2010), the language learning background of Omani school graduates is largely based on memorization and recalling information without analyzing and reflecting on the learning process. Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) add that many school graduates have difficulty using English effectively in different social, personal, school and work situations.

To ease students' transition from school to university, and to develop their English language proficiency and better prepare them for their further studies, teachers on the general foundation program assist them with the adjustment to the university's academic requirements, challenges related to social interaction and time management, and the expansion of their world awareness (Burns, 2013). Hence, they construct syllabi to effectively address the course LOs, to plan lessons that engage students and enhance their skills, and, broadly, to integrate information and computer technology in their language classrooms. Still, anecdotal evidence suggests that they believe students' computer competence should be better tackled and, consequently, one of the stated priorities and concerns in terms of assisting students in minimizing their academic transitional challenges remains the enhancement of the skills to deal with information and computer technologies, services and tools.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection Techniques

The study was designed within the framework of mixed methods research to address the research questions stated above by combining traditional qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It was also developed in a way to apply more than one sampling strategy and multiple types of data (Patton, 2002), thus minimizing many of the limitations which may inhibit the exploration process in detail.

Both qualitative and quantitative measures were used, including: (a) an online comprehensive English and Arabic student questionnaire with open-ended questions based on the LOs of the foundation program writing course and the skills required for the completion of the coursework; (b) unstructured interviews with the course coordination team and teachers to gain a broader perspective on the phenomena in question and to extract main themes for the questionnaire; and (c) focus group discussions with students to gain more insights about the problem.

At the initial stage, the team consisting of two researchers interviewed four members of the science writing course coordination team and six FPEL writing teachers. The first two interviews were completely unstructured to allow spontaneity and embrace a large number of variables. These were conversations about foundation program students and challenges they face throughout the semester. The interviewees, or informants, were sharing their ideas and concerns about the writing course content and requirements and common challenges they assumed students face while engaging in the coursework. The subsequent interviews were semi-structured, allowing prearrangement of the core themes that evolved from the previous open conversations.

Based on the key themes extracted from the interviews, focus group discussion prompts and questionnaire items were developed. There were two focus group discussions: one involving male students and the other involving female students. Prior to the discussions, the aims of the study were discussed and consent forms were signed. All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the items were reviewed by two members of the SQU Language Center research committee and suggestions for improvement were made. The revised items were piloted with a small group of six students and, based on their feedback, the language was simplified and the format was revisited to make the questionnaire more user-friendly. The questionnaire items were translated into Arabic to eliminate language barriers and to ensure full comprehension of the content.

3.2 Sample

Stratified random sampling was used to draw a representative sample of the science stream students at SQU who take exit-level foundation program courses. Consent forms were included on the cover page of the questionnaire sent to potential student participants. The form clearly stated anonymity of responses and confidentially of the information given by respondents. Participants proceeded to the questionnaire after selecting the "Agree" option.

One hundred and forty-three students completed the questionnaire. The majority of respondents are 18-year old Omani male (43.4%) and female (56.6%) public school leavers from different governorates of Oman, including Al Dakhiliyah (25.2%), Al Batinah North (21.7%) and Al Batinah South (19.6%). Most of the

respondents (89.5%) were from the science stream, with only 10.5% education majors.

The student sample population was representative of FPEL students in higher-level courses since the questionnaire had a very high response rate of approximately 87% (143 responses out of 164). There were 60 responses (around 82%) from FPEL0560 and 83 responses (91%) from the FPEL0604 course, respectively. These courses are exit level courses offered to students whose English proficiency level is intermediate or upper intermediate. Thus, the responses can be considered valid and generalizable to the larger exit-level FPEL sciences student population. In addition to the student questionnaire sample, 21 students (8 male and 13 female) participated in focus group discussions. These participants were recruited by the research team from the questionnaire sample following a general invitation to take part in the interviews, and the provision of information about confidentiality, anonymity, and the right of participation. Participants were requested to sign consent forms for this research stage.

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with teacher participants: four with the science writing course coordination team and six with FPEL writing teachers. Prior to the interviews, introductory emails were sent to potential participants introducing the project and seeking their consent to participate. Upon receiving the participants' initial expression of interest through email, pre-interview meetings were arranged and consent forms were signed. The consent form highlighted confidentiality and the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any point. The interviews aimed at gaining informants' views on the challenges they think students may face while engaging in foundation program coursework. In particular, the interview focus was placed on the academic aspects of these challenges.

3.3 Data Analysis

The validity and reliability of the research findings were examined through a process of data triangulation. The collected data were downloaded as Excel worksheets from Google Forms and exported to SPSS data analysis software. Frequency tables were generated for each questionnaire item, with related questions grouped and analyzed. The questionnaire responses were divided into the following categories: general computer efficacy, general study skills, writing and study skills. Item response frequency was considered for cross-validation between questionnaire categories and for the generation of valid claims. Descriptive statistics were employed with a specific focus on response percentage in order to make inferences, draw conclusions and make recommendations.

After analyzing quantitative questionnaire data, Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was conducted to analyze the qualitative data gathered through the interviews and through the questionnaire's open-ended questions. A semantic approach to TCA was used to analyze the explicit content of the qualitative data. This approach was selected to cross-validate the findings yielded through quantitative data

analysis. The transcribed interview responses and focus discussions were summarized and coded, core themes were extracted and relevant comments were grouped and analyzed. Responses to the open-ended questionnaire questions were grouped into five categories: time management, language, organization, paraphrasing and mechanics. Participants' comments were analyzed and compared against the questionnaire findings and student reflections. Cross-validating statements were separated and then combined in a table to facilitate the validation of their relationships.

In the final stage of data analysis, all sources of data, namely questionnaire responses, interviews with the FPEL Sciences Course Coordination team and writing course teachers, and focus group discussions with the students, were triangulated. Finally, results were compared with the findings of previous research as reported in the literature.

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Interviews with the Course Coordination Team and Writing Teachers

Before the beginning of the semester, ten interviews were conducted with six FPEL teachers and the coordination team of the FPEL science program that included a course coordinator, a writing course assistant, a reading course assistant and the writing teachers. Some common opinions and views were expressed during the interviews regarding students' computer and writing skills, as well as study habits in relation to their course project (a research-based report). Data from the interviews suggest that major challenges faced by students include academic environment change, co-education, inadequate language and computer skills, heavy workload, poor time management, and transportation to/on the university campus. As one teacher commented, "Very often female students feel shy and refuse to present their projects in the presence of boys". Another teacher stated that, "Most of our students do not know how to type and it takes them ages to type even one word".

One shared belief expressed by the course coordination team was that students do not possess adequate writing skills for the requirements of the coursework. The research-based report project is largely based on collecting, summarizing, synthesizing and paraphrasing relevant information from different sources. Although the above-mentioned skills are addressed in the course both directly and indirectly, students face major difficulties with the application of these skills. First, they cannot select relevant information to answer research questions and they include too many irrelevant details. Further, students' writing is repetitive due to inadequate synthesizing skills. However, the weakest skill demonstrated by students is paraphrasing, which may be attributed to insufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge. As a result, they produce awkward pieces of writing which are difficult to understand. "For paraphrasing students usually pick up any synonym suggested by the

dictionary on their phone. They don't know that words work differently in different contexts," commented one participant based on her experience as a writing teacher. Students also struggle with subject-verb agreement and passive structures.

Another belief shared by teachers was that students do not demonstrate adequate computer and IT skills to deal with the coursework. For example, students need to set up their own Google accounts in order to create their e-project. Even though students set up their accounts in the lab under their teacher's close supervision, while there is also a document that clearly details instructions on how to create an account, many students select or enter wrong information, or even forget their password. What is more, sometimes students select a wrong command and share their document with another person instead of the teacher and comment on somebody else's work. However, students are normally fast learners, and they eventually become proficient in using computers. Finally, the teachers believed that students have insufficient typing and editing skills.

As stated above, students are engaged in a research-based e-project, which is a Google Docs file shared by the teacher, and all the input, feedback and comments take place online. Reviewing and editing are also done in that virtual space. According to the teachers, students' writing is poorly edited and punctuated and contains numerous spelling errors. One teacher noted that "although the spell-checker is there, students don't use it to edit their work". Teachers also reported that both male and female students feel shy when presenting their projects in class as they come from single-gender classrooms and co-education is new to them. As two of the teachers mentioned, some female students ask the teacher to present their project in the teacher's office or when/if the male students are not in the classroom. Similarly, a few male students choose not to present their project in front of female students.

4.2 Focus Group Discussions

The views expressed by the students who participated in the focus group discussions further supported the opinions shared by the teachers. According to the students, they faced multiple challenges when joining the university. These ranged from social to academic challenges. This finding is in line with the research by Parker et al. (2004) and Wangeri and Mutweleli (2012). Nearly all of the foundation students who participated in the study mentioned that university life is very different from their school life and that they are not very comfortable. They have a lot of new courses with some of these being in English which makes it difficult for them to deal with the required work. The students singled out the report project, which is a new learning experience for them and which is done in Google Docs. What worried students about working on this new platform was the fact that all the required work depends on technology and computer and IT skills.

The students acknowledged that, although they do not type fast enough and they make a lot of language and spelling errors, they enjoyed working on this platform.

In particular, they valued getting quick and sometimes instant feedback from their teacher. This finding corroborates the claim in Compeau and Higgins (1995, cited in Howard, 2014) that students with higher computer self-efficacy make more frequent use of computers, enjoy using them more and are less anxious about doing so.

Students commented that they were becoming more proficient in typing and using a spell-checker for correction due to consistent application of computer and IT skills when working on their project. Another point raised by some female students was that they do not feel comfortable presenting their project in the classroom with the male students, which supports the comments made by the teachers and the claim in the literature that co-education is new to students and poses a psychological challenge to some of them in an Omani context (Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014).

4.3 Questionnaire Results and Discussion

General Computer Skills

On a 5-point Likert response scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), participants were asked to rate the extent of their agreement with statements related to computer skills. Results indicate that many participants demonstrate insufficient computer self-efficacy (see Table 1). More than half of the respondents surveyed (57%) are proficient users of MS Word, while about a third (32%) were moderate users. More specifically, 72% can create documents and save them, 65% can word-process a text, and 74% can highlight pieces of information in a text. However, only 48% can format their writing with correct punctuation marks and indentation styles, which clearly shows that this essential formatting skill has not been mastered by the students.

A similar trend was observed with regard to using a spell-checker (57%). Although this percentage is higher than that of formatting, it can be assumed that editing skills still need to be mastered by the students since the tools are there ready for use. This is in line with the students' interview responses, stating that their typing and editing skills are poor but improving due to the constant application of these skills while working on the report project. This finding corroborates Howard's (2014) assertion that high levels of computer self-efficacy promote a desired outcome in task performance. These twenty-first century skills are essential since nearly all means of communication and aspects of academic life are computerized and largely depend on technology.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, students' research reports are required to be word-processed which means that students need formatting and editing skills to handle their report projects. Thus, it becomes clear that students' poorly formatted and edited first drafts may account for their inadequate formatting and editing skills. This finding is further supported by students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire item regarding their main challenge in writing in English. Most of the students reported in response to this question having problems with formatting, spelling and

Table 1 General computer skills

#	Item	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	I can use most functions of MS Word.	7.0%	4.9%	31.5%	42.0%	14.7%
2	I can create a new MS document and save it.	2.1%	11.9%	14.0%	32.2%	39.9%
3	I can type texts using word processing functions.	2.1%	9.1%	24.5%	37.8%	26.6%
4	I can highlight a piece of information in a text.	2.1%	6.3%	18.2%	37.8%	35.7%
5	I can format my writing with correct punctuation marks and indentation styles.	2.8%	10.5%	39.2%	32.9%	14.7%
6	I can use a spell- checker to edit (correct my mistakes) my writing.	2.8%	11.2%	28.7%	33.6%	23.8%
7	I can work with tables and graphs using MS Office.	5.6%	13.3%	23.1%	42.7%	15.4%
8	I can print a document.	3.5%	8.4%	12.6%	25.9%	49.7%
9	I can use all functions (quizzes, clarity exercises, assignments) of Moodle displayed on the Moodle Page of my course.	3.5%	7.0%	34.3%	35.7%	19.6%
10	I can participate in discussion forums.	2.1%	16.8%	48.3%	25.2%	7.7%
11	I can start a discussion forum.	2.1%	19.6%	37.8%	31.5%	9.1%
12	I can comment on a post on a discussion forum.	4.2%	10.2%	42.0%	35.0%	8.4%
13	I can use most functions of MS PowerPoint.	2.1%	7.7%	21.0%	49.0%	20.3%
14	I can create effective slides with visuals (e.g. pictures, graphs, videos) and appropriate text format.	3.5%	6.3%	23.8%	36.4%	30.1%
15	I can add texts to my slides and edit them.	2.8%	5.6%	16.8%	32.9%	42%
16	I can add pictures to my slides.	4.2%	4.9%	9.1%	30.8%	51.0%
17	I can add videos to my slides and play them.	4.9%	9.1%	18.2%	30.1%	37.8%
18	I can use animations.	4.2%	9.1%	27.3%	30.1%	29.4%
19	I can choose and use appropriate slide transitions.	3.5%	5.6%	27.3%	31.5%	32.2%
20	I can run a slide show.	4.2%	4.9%	16.1%	30.1%	44.8%
21	I can write emails in English with subject lines and send them.	4.2%	6.3%	23.8%	40.6%	25.2%

Rounding error means some rows may not total to exactly 100%

punctuation, with many responses highlighting challenges in relation to “spelling and punctuation”, “use punctuation”, “I have spelling mistake”, “grammar and spelling”, “good punctuation” and so on.

After submitting the final draft of the report, students are expected to present their research project in class using MS PowerPoint. Therefore, the study contained items that aimed at measuring students’ MS PowerPoint skills. Questionnaire results indicated that the majority of the students surveyed (69%) have adequate skills in using MS PowerPoint for their coursework. More than two-thirds of respondents can create efficient slides (67%), 75% can add texts and edit them, and a significant number (82%) can add pictures to slides.

A similar trend was observed regarding adding videos to slides (68%) and using appropriate transitions (64%) and running a slide show (75%) – skills essential for a successful presentation. It should be pointed out that most students do well on the presentation since they score high on the use of visuals. Their high marks could

account for their efficient use of PowerPoint for their report project presentation, which is in line with the claim by Howard (2014) that computer self-efficacy affects students' performance.

A final interesting finding related to the presentation part of the project was the fact that, even though many of the students surveyed claimed to be able to use MS PowerPoint, only 48% could invite questions from the audience as reported in Table 3. This may account for students' lack of adequate language proficiency. Apparently, students do not feel confident about constructing questions in English and, consequently, avoid asking questions. If students were encouraged to ask more questions in class on a regular basis, they could develop a study habit of asking well-structured questions.

Writing Skills

Table 2 details questionnaire responses concerned with students' general study habits in terms of writing and editing skills. Overall, a large number of students (69%) believed that they can write an essay with an introduction, body and conclusion. Interestingly, another cross-checking item revealed that slightly under half of the respondents (48%) can write texts of 250 words using the correct format, organization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary, while more than a third (36%) were not sure about mastering this skill.

A closer look at the breakdowns of the essay components revealed that more than half of the respondents can write a clear topic sentence (55%), while slightly more than one-third (36%) were not sure whether they possess that skill. Similar percentages were observed with regard to writing a good introduction (60%), supporting details (62%) and a conclusion (56%), as well as using a variety of transition signals (55%). Interestingly, half of the respondents (50%) claimed to be able to write a good thesis statement, while 40% were not confident in this.

These figures indicate that only around half of the students surveyed are confident in their writing skills, whereas around one-third are not sure of their abilities. This finding is supported by Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) who argue that many Omani school graduates struggle with using the English language effectively in social, personal, school and work situations. Thus, a more analytical approach with a closer look at the segments of the essay and reports should be developed to help students enhance their writing skills while also raising self-confidence level.

Since the research report is assessed as both a process and a final product, it is submitted in three drafts, and students are awarded marks for reviewing and formatting their drafts. It was interesting to examine how students deal with feedback and error correction. Just under half of the respondents (42%) correct their own mistakes, while, as evident in Table 4, around 21% discuss their mistakes with their teacher either daily or almost every day, and a similar percentage (29%) discuss their mistakes with friends with the same frequency.

Table 2 Writing skills

#	Item	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	I can create detailed and organized notes.	7.7%	10.5%	32.2%	40.6%	9.1%
2	I can make a detailed outline for a writing task.	4.2%	14.7%	31.5%	41.3%	8.4%
3	I can write an essay with an introduction, body and conclusion.	2.8%	7.7%	21.0%	42.7%	25.9%
4	I can write a clear topic sentence.	2.1%	7.0%	35.7%	45.5%	9.8%
5	I can support my ideas with examples.	4.2%	6.3%	27.3%	49.0%	13.3%
6	I can write a good paragraph with a topic sentence and supporting details.	4.2%	9.1%	30.8%	48.3%	7.7%
7	I can write a good introduction.	2.8%	7.0%	30.1%	47.6%	12.6%
8	I can write a good thesis statement.	2.8%	7.7%	39.9%	39.9%	9.8%
9	I can write a good conclusion.	2.8%	9.8%	31.5%	46.9%	9.1%
10	I can logically link my introduction with the body and conclusion.	1.4%	9.8%	41.3%	43.4%	4.2%
11	I can use different transition signals (e.g., also, however, similarly) to make my writing easier to follow.	3.5%	9.1%	32.9%	41.3%	13.3%
12	I can summarize science-related texts.	2.8%	15.4%	49.7%	30.1%	2.1%
13	I can combine (put together) pieces of information from different sources.	1.4%	12.6%	39.2%	38.5%	8.4%
14	I can paraphrase information by using different techniques to avoid plagiarism.	4.2%	11.9%	45.5%	35.7%	2.8%
15	I can explain information in writing from tables and graphs.	2.1%	11.2%	39.2%	42.7%	4.9%
16	I can edit my writing (find my own mistakes and correct them).	3.5%	13.3%	41.3%	36.4%	5.6%
17	I can write a first draft.	4.9%	4.2%	22.4%	48.3%	20.3%
18	I can write a second draft by reviewing (making the ideas clear) and revising (using better grammar) my writing based on the feedback received from my teacher, tutor or peer.	3.5%	11.9%	32.2%	38.5%	14.0%
19	I can write texts of a minimum of 250 words using the correct format, organization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.	4.2%	11.9%	35.7%	41.3%	7.0%
20	I can write a report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, note-taking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarizing, using citations.	5.6%	22.4%	42.7%	28.0%	1.4%

Rounding error means some rows may not total to exactly 100%

These findings indicate that students' preferences for error correction are not distinct and the habit of error correction is hardly ever practiced. Therefore, students should be encouraged to discuss their mistakes with the teacher and friends more often in order to develop their editing skills and, consequently, writing skills. This finding corroborates another cross-validating item about writing first and second

Table 3 Study skills

#	Item	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	I can find specific information using the internet and electronic resources.	4.9%	9.1%	28.7%	43.4%	14.0%
2	I can use the online library catalogue to find a book or journal.	3.5%	18.9%	38.5%	30.8%	8.4%
3	I can use a contents page and an index to find information in a book.	3.5%	14.0%	39.2%	34.3%	9.1%
4	I can use skimming and scanning skills to find information in a chapter/section.	2.8%	12.6%	38.5%	37.8%	8.4%
5	I can choose a relevant and reliable source of information.	4.2%	11.2%	44.1%	33.6%	7.0%
6	I can select or reject (decide not to choose) a source based on difficulty level, relevancy and currency.	2.8%	16.1%	44.1%	32.2%	4.9%
7	I can find appropriate (suitable for the purpose) illustrations and use them as support.	2.8%	13.3%	49.0%	33.6%	1.4%
8	I can use in-text citations (paraphrased information from a source) and direct quotations (copied information from a source) in an academic style.	2.1%	9.8%	44.8%	37.1%	6.3%
9	I can write a reference list (information about the sources I used in my report).	2.1%	8.4%	32.9%	44.1%	12.6%
10	I can organize a project/portfolio folder.	4.2%	6.3%	23.8%	47.6%	18.2%
11	I can organize an e- project folder.	5.6%	4.9%	28.0%	45.5%	16.1%
12	I can invite questions from audience.	4.9%	8.4%	38.5%	40.6%	7.7%
13	I can answer questions addressed to me.	4.9%	8.4%	29.4%	39.2%	18.2%

Rounding error means some rows may not total to exactly 100%

drafts. While around two-thirds (69%) of participants claim that they can write the first draft, only half (52%) state that they can produce the second draft based on feedback. This finding clearly shows that students need more work on reviewing and editing skills.

Course-Specific Study Skills

Course-specific study skills (see Table 3) are higher-level thinking skills that are closely connected with the writing course LOs, with these contributing to the list of the academic challenges that students face. Participants were asked to respond to questions about course-specific study skills that directly involve the use of computer and/or IT skills for identifying and selecting sources for their reports. Results indicate that students lack these skills. For example, just over half of respondents (57%) can find specific information using the internet and electronic responses, 39% can use the library online catalogue to find a book or a journal, while 38% are not sure whether they can use the online catalogue. This indicates that students are not comfortable using online resources for academic purposes and, consequently, there

should be course activities that involve consistent use of technology throughout the course so that students develop this essential study habit.

Another skill that students struggle with is the ability to select reliable and relevant sources for their research project. Only around 41% of the respondents claim to have mastered this skill, while 44% are not sure of their ability in this regard. An even lower percentage (37%) can select or reject a source based on difficulty level, relevancy and currency, whereas 44% were again not sure. These results can be viewed in light of item responses in Table 2, in which only about a third (32%) of respondents claim to know how to summarize science-related texts, under half (47%) can combine information from different sources, and another 39% can paraphrase information by using different techniques to avoid plagiarism.

These findings are further substantiated by students' comments about experiencing difficulty with organization and vocabulary when paraphrasing information from sources. To illustrate, most comments regarding the biggest challenge in writing in English include "organizing the idea", "finding the right word", and "using new vocabulary". This finding corroborates the cross-checking questionnaire item discussed earlier which revealed that slightly under half of the respondents (47%) can write texts of 250 words using the correct format, organization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary, while more than a third (36%) were not sure about mastering this skill.

Another valuable finding that supports this claim comes from a cross-validating statement about students' abilities to write a report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, note-taking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarizing and citation. Only about one-third (29%) of the students responded positively to this statement, while the number of those who were uncertain was 43%, and 28% responded negatively. Thus, the skill of paraphrasing and revision needs to be addressed more intensely throughout the course.

Students' IT-Related Study Skills and Habits

Questionnaire results indicated that students' use of IT in their studies is limited (see Table 4). Only 11% of the respondents use IT devices in their academic studies every day and 20% use them almost every day. While 65% claimed that they can write emails in English, very few (13%) send emails every or almost every day, and 16% write emails around three times a week. Similar numbers were reported for typing texts in general (13% either daily or almost daily) and typing texts in English (20%). This may explain why students' word-processed first drafts of the report contain numerous typos and formatting errors.

Compeau and Higgins (1995, cited in Howard, 2014) claim that students with higher computer self-efficacy make more frequent use of computers. Perhaps, students' reluctance to integrate technology into their daily academic lives, like writing emails or typing texts, could account for their limited computer self-efficacy.

Table 4 IT-related study skills and habits

#	Item	Every day	Almost every day	Three times a week	Twice a week	Once a week
1	I use the computer and/or IT devices in my academic studies.	10.5%	20.3%	29.4%	28.0%	11.9%
2	I use Moodle in my academic studies.	9.1%	19.6%	23.8%	22.4%	25.2%
3	I write and send emails in English.	3.5%	9.8%	16.1%	35.7%	35.0%
4	I type texts in MS Word.	3.5%	9.1%	27.3%	25.9%	34.3%
5	I use a spell-checker to edit my writing.	9.1%	11.2%	26.6%	21.7%	31.5%
6	I type texts in English (assignments, emails, messages, posts).	4.2%	16.1%	22.4%	33.6%	23.8%
7	I use online dictionaries in my English courses (e.g., when I paraphrase).	13.3%	16.1%	32.2%	19.6%	18.9%
8	I use online translators (e.g., Google-translator) in my English courses.	15.4%	24.5%	23.8%	20.3%	16.1%
9	I discuss my writing mistakes with my teacher.	8.4%	12.6%	32.9%	25.2%	21.0%
10	I discuss my writing mistakes with my friends.	7.0%	21.7%	28.0%	22.4%	21.0%
11	I don't discuss my mistakes with anyone. I correct them by myself.	14.7%	14.0%	29.4%	22.4%	19.6%
12	I go to the Writing Center.	7.0%	14.7%	23.8%	26.6%	28.0%

Rounding error means some rows may not total to exactly 100%

It is very likely that engaging students in typing texts in English would help them integrate more IT skills in their studies and, consequently, develop these adequately. This would also help students to deal better with the online course component.

With regard to online discussions, surprisingly, results reported in Table 1 indicate that only slightly more than half (55%) of participants can use the Moodle platform, while about one-third (34%) are not sure of their ability to use the platform. Moreover, over one-third (41%) can start a discussion forum, comment on a post (43%) and participate in an online discussion (33%).

These results indicate that students seem to lack the writing, study and general IT skills that are necessary to cope with their coursework. However, they are moderately competent in using MS PowerPoint to present their report projects which could be an asset and could indicate that the IT and English components of the foundation program are aligned and complement each other.

5 Conclusion & Recommendations

General foundation programs in Oman provide an excellent induction to the academic environment while also ensuring the transition from Arabic medium schools to English medium tertiary education. They also have the potential to mitigate students' adjustment to the university environment, and to provide them with valuable learning experiences, including by enhancing their language, computer and study skills. However, Omani foundation program students still face multiple transitional academic challenges when moving from post-basic to tertiary education (Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). These include, but are not constrained to, how the academic environment functions and is structured and organized.

This study was an attempt to explore foundation program students' transitional challenges related to their academic development and adjustment with a specific focus on students' computer self-efficacy and English proficiency. Findings indicate that the challenges faced by most foundation students are partially rooted in their relatively low mastery levels in language skills and their comparatively low computer competence, both of which hinder students' progress in writing and study skills course work. In addition, students do not have an established habit of integrating IT-related skills into their course work. To address these issues, remedial work and further development of general foundation programs in Oman should be carried out.

Apart from the available continuous support provided by educators and counseling centers, more tailor-made tools and strategies are needed for effective learning and thriving through the foundation years of study as first year students need an effective orientation program to deal with the challenges they may face as students (Sanoff, 2006). In order to help students to overcome these barriers as effectively as possible, all channels of support should be employed. As Bennett (2003) suggests, the first year's transition to university requires a collaborative effort from librarians, professors, non-teaching staff, ICT experts, mentors, caterers, and so on, in order to help ensure students maximize their learning and their use of technology to cope with coursework. It is recommended that a more focused approach to providing support be implemented. All the common challenges should be categorized and tackled correspondingly, as the implementation of one generalized approach is unlikely to be effective.

Apart from regular orientation meetings that give complete information on the courses, class hours, career opportunities and expected outcomes, there should be sessions focused on university life and the students' own responsibilities when living alone and managing their time effectively. Another solution would be the establishment of online discussion forums – one for male students and another for females – where students can post their questions and receive advice and support from their peers. The forums could be set in Arabic, English or both. The advantage of Arabic forums is that students would be able to express their concerns and communication would be easier. English forums, on the other hand, would enable

students develop their English skills while also practicing typing in English (Ginosyan & Tuzlukova, 2015; MoodleDocs, 2013).

To aid students in improving their language, computer and IT skills, a blended learning approach could be a workable solution. To exemplify, in higher level writing courses of the English foundation program, students are engaged in a course-specific research project that requires an intense application of language, study and IT skills. Blended learning would give students the opportunity to apply the combination of these skills in a balanced and effective way. Apart from performing well in their projects, students would improve some essential twenty-first century skills, such as researching, critical thinking and problem solving, and they would improve the quality and speed of their typing and punctuation. Finally, collaborative learning leading to the establishment of better teacher-student and student-student interactions should be promoted to create a positive teaching and learning environment. This enables students to feel more comfortable and gain confidence, which is essential for their smooth transition to tertiary level studies.

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Nonverbal Indicators of Comprehension Among L2 Users of English Interacting with Smart Verbal Software Agents

Abdulmalik Yusuf Ofemile

Abstract Pervasive computing has engendered increasing interaction between speakers of English as a second language (EL2) and intelligent software agents using English as a first language. This extends discourse to contexts such as satellite navigation systems giving drivers directions, self-service systems in banks, and computer aided language learning (CALL) devices in Nigeria. Additionally, most research around listenership in Human-Agent Interaction (HAI) has focused on assessing listener feedback using verbal feedback or posed nonverbal behaviours with little attention paid to listener spontaneous nonverbal behaviours. This chapter reports a scoping study aimed at developing a better understanding of the nature of marked spontaneous nonverbal listenership behaviours displayed and their impact on listener-comprehension during interaction. Ten student-teachers of English were tasked with assembling two Lego models using vague verbal instructions from a computer interface and one human instructor within two 15-min interactions. The study used a continuum of four voices comprising two synthesised voices, one by a voice actor and another by a human instructor. A 5-h long multimodal corpus was built and analysed from these interactions. The results suggest that it is possible for humans to show their level and process of comprehending agent instructions through facial actions, nonverbal private talk and repairs during interaction. Furthermore, there is a potential for formulating a theoretical basis for researching interaction in similar contexts. Findings suggest that enhancing agents' emotive functionality may enhance HAI in English language learning contexts, but this requires further research.

Keywords Human-Agent Interaction (HAI) · Facial actions · Nonverbal listenership · Software agents · Private talk · Comprehension

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A. Y. Ofemile (✉)
FCT College of Education, Zuba Abuja, Nigeria

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1 Introduction

This chapter reports a scoping study carried out in Nigeria in 2015. Nigeria has about 519 living languages (Simons & Fennig, 2018), where Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are the most widely spoken, and English is a national language. While Nigerian languages share some roles with English in national life, English is predominantly the language of education, governance, commerce, and general interaction among Nigerians.

The Nigerian interaction context is changing rapidly and shifting from being solely for human-human interaction (HHI) to Human-Agent Interaction (HAI). Agents are described as highly inter-connected computational components capable of acting autonomously and intelligently (Jennings et al., 2014). These include intelligent personal assistants (IPAs), like Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri, and Embodied Conversational Agents (ECAs) used as instructors/advice-givers (e.g. sat-navs and map applications, automated checkouts in supermarkets, ATM cash dispensers etc.). This chapter discusses the use of simulated agents, i.e. rather than being commercially available software agents. The simulated agent is a simpler bespoke interface that takes in keyboard-based commands and returns appropriate speech-based output.

Results from the author's own study in the UK indicated that participants who were speakers of English as a first language nonverbally projected their comprehension and incomprehension of the agent's vague instructions and language use. Hence, the conclusion was drawn that agents should be adaptive to user linguistic capabilities and context since no one size fits all. This conclusion motivated a scoping study in Nigeria that aimed to understand how users in other contexts of English language usage comprehend and display their comprehension or incomprehension of L1 agent instructions during interaction. The Nigerian study enlarged the UK study's scope in terms of eliciting circumstances, research population, expanding the cline of voices from three to four, and replicating the study in a lower technology context where English is used as a second language.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Emerging Hybrid Space in Nigeria

Hybrid spaces of interaction are created from the meeting of interlocutors from different linguistic/cultural groups as outlined in Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity. Hybridity is also created from differences between entities with distinct interactional competences as seen between humans and smart devices within hybrid spaces (Ofemile, 2018). Furthermore, with pervasive ubiquitous computing, agents possessing the communicative abilities of users of English as a L1 and multilingual users of English as a L2 intersect, and a hybrid interaction context is created in

Nigeria. This, according to Simpson (2017), enables intersemiotic and interdiscursive practices to evolve in a participatory manner. The first describes switches between spoken and written, visual and verbal language and non-linguistic signs, while the second describes language use that occurs when unfamiliar discourse is experienced in intercultural interaction.

Humans, unlike agents, are capable of sensory functions like the detection of stimuli, perception, flexible and ingenuous innovation, inductive and deductive reasoning, and judgement. Agents, on the other hand, have speed, multitasking, computational and deductive reasoning, flexible autonomy, agile teaming and crowd sourced information gathering attributes, which constitute a culture that gives them a shared way of doing things in a way that is distinct from humans (Ofemile, 2018). Furthermore, human body gestures, unlike agent gestures, evolve over time and agents do not have natural gestures, faces or limbs (Dautenhahn, 2013).

These differences between humans and agents are so significant that each has what can be described as natural behaviour to them. Thus, whenever humans interact with agents, each of them brings distinct interaction patterns derived from their cultural backgrounds to play during interaction. For example, when withdrawing money from ATMs, one is made to conform to specific patterns of behaviour to get desired results. In the course of this interaction, agents give verbal and/or written instructions while humans react in specific ways to get money out. Humans bring to play experience, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as well as knowledge about the language of communication within that space. Agents bring to play speed, deductive reasoning, multitasking and computational skills by recognising passwords, disbursing correct amounts of money, and taking the withdrawer's picture.

The scenario is replicated severally when we access our emails, make phone calls, upload documents, learn or teach online, swipe our identity cards at entrances of offices or restricted areas to gain access, or even when making payments online. These behaviours are normalised in us and so are taken for granted in our daily lives, but when we remember our very first attempts at these actions, memories of false starts, negotiations and trials come back.

Similarly, agent characteristics are normalised internally in the agent's personal identity and linked to its verbal capabilities which may cause users to categorise agents as having a particular linguistic or vocal property. This is linked to the notion that agents conforming or not conforming to listener expectations may inform researchers on how users socially position agents during interaction (Clark et al., 2015).

2.2 Listeners Comprehension Process

Listening is a vital process for effective communication that provides input from interlocutors receiving aural stimuli and giving meaning to it (Nunan, 2002; Oxford, 1993). Researchers in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) and

applied linguistics generally accept that top-down processing and bottom-up processing interpretation theories can be used to explain how listeners decode speaker input (Harmer, 2007). Bottom-up processing holds that listening is a process of decoding speaker input incrementally beginning with the smallest meaningful unit of language reshaped into larger complex texts (Field, 2004). Thus, listeners progress upwards, decoding and linking smaller units to larger ones in order to make meaning of speaker input.

The top-down processing view argues that, "Larger units exercise an influence over the way in which smaller ones are perceived" (Field, 2004, p. 364). This suggests that listeners reconstruct speaker-meaning using aural stimuli as a guide; for example, listener interpretation of phonemes depends on their knowledge of that particular word. Therefore, listening is not sequential; rather, it is a framework of the two strategic actions of 'decoding' and 'meaning building' in which one runs into the other (Field, 2008). Although these two views seem like opposites, they are actually complimentary as outlined below.

Krashen's (1982) Comprehension Hypothesis maintains that we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages as 'comprehensible inputs' which are comprised of the things we read and hear. Thus, the more comprehensible speaker utterances are, the better a listener's comprehension during interaction. Listeners understand speaker utterances using their own knowledge, systemic information derived from context, inferential schemata and systemic processes (see Fig. 1).

In the figure, the downwards solid arrows indicate the predictive nature of listening where listeners continue to guess or be in a state of anticipation of what speakers will say or mean with each utterance, also called 'listening out' by Lacey (2013), based on information available. The upwards broken arrows indicate how listeners incrementally process speaker input as information while giving feedback. These arrows do not signify separate routes for distinct processes; rather, they suggest a continuous loop that meets at different points within seamless boundaries indicated by horizontal broken lines. Interaction between information sources and meaning making during comprehension may depend on listener role, listening purpose, text listened to and speaker verbal characteristics.

Harmer (2007) suggests that comprehension is activated by listener's schemata. Here schemata refer to inferential schemata, described as "the ways that successive turns in talk can be interpreted" (Coulthard et al., 2016, p. 10). Thus, when listeners relate speaker input to specific interaction contexts, such as instruction-giving, they interpret successive instructions using schemata and this may support and lead to the development of procedural knowledge.

Schematic knowledge comprises 'background knowledge' and procedural knowledge featured in Fig. 1. Background knowledge, or propositional knowledge, includes facts that listeners bring into interactions, such as knowledge about topics of discussion and implicit knowledge. Vandergrift (2011) suggests that strategic listeners unintentionally develop implicit listening comprehension knowledge performatively by using it unconsciously as a social asset without being aware of such knowledge, as seen in spontaneous turn-taking, facial actions and gestures displayed

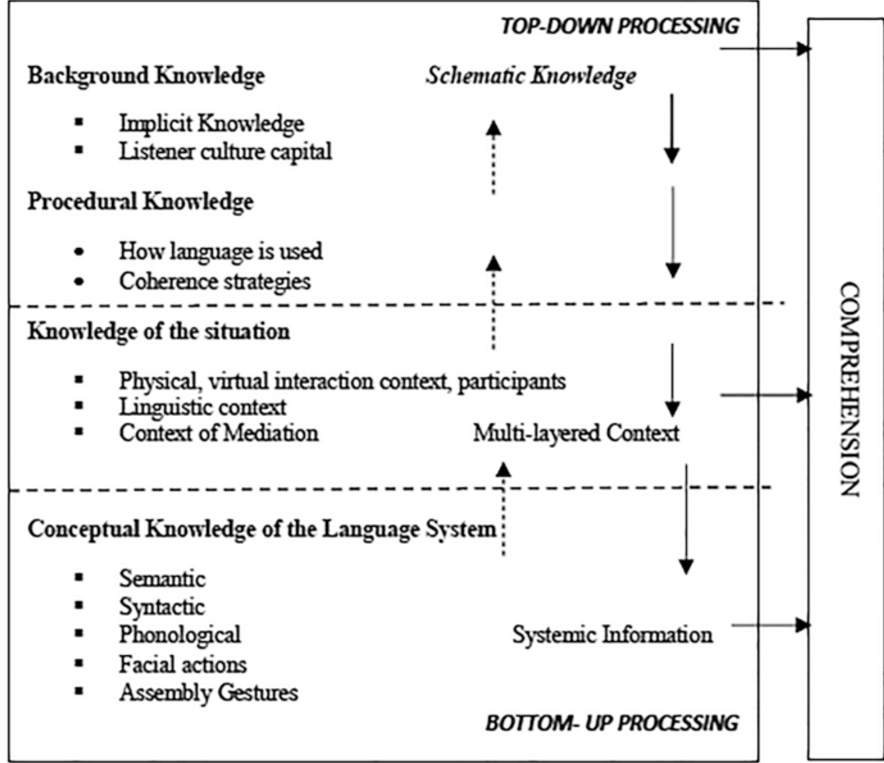


Fig. 1 Listener's comprehension process. (Ofemile, 2018, p. 14)

during interaction. Conversely, explicit knowledge is deliberately and consciously developed by listeners.

Listeners also use contextual information to compensate for inadequacies in communication media and, as Field (2008) observes, listeners seem to use more top-down information to compensate for gaps in their understanding during interaction. Listener-compensation strategies include schemata activation by making inferences from explicit meanings of speaker-utterances to intended conclusions (Mazzone, 2015). In task contexts, a frame like "select X" activates in listeners the schema of 'instruction taking' and the need to respond with suitable language frame or action, such as picking X or asking for clarification. The activated schema represents listener-culture capital brought into a new context.

Procedural knowledge is the sum of what listeners know of steps and actions done to achieve a goal (Rittle-Johnson et al., 2015), with a focus on how language is used in given contexts. Procedural knowledge compares favourably with Canale and Swain's (1980) strategic communicative competence as procedural knowledge allows listeners to manage their communication and to negotiate meanings, codes, and identities in order to achieve interaction goals.

Another source of knowledge is the multilayered interaction context. The notion of multilayered context is used here to project the understanding that, when people interact with technology, the context has layers, such as interaction context, linguistic context and mediation context. Interaction context refers to socially contextual situations where speech takes place as speech events or speech activities (Levinson, 2016). The concept is applied here to focus on listener comprehension processes in unidirectional instruction-giving contexts.

Forms of discourse used in interaction constitute another dimension for characterising context as linguistic, where linguistic contexts refer to descriptions of occurrences of semantic and syntactic forms of language used in interactions, including parts of speech (Ofemile, 2018). However, linguistic contexts require socio-affective strategies in order to build interaction among interlocutors, such as bootstrapping, which is the ability to predict relationships between linguistic forms and meanings (Huang & Arnold, 2016).

In addition, listeners require contextual cues to successfully make meaning of speaker utterance. Adolphs (2008) explains that contextualisation cues are used to analyse relationships between surface structures and context. These could be lexical, linguistic, paralinguistic or prosodic, indicating contextual suppositions at different discourse levels, and are used to encode speaker-expectations about upcoming discourse. Listeners use these features to enrich meaning, make it relevant, aid decoding processes and influence listener-orientation towards interactions.

Using a simulated agent-instructor with three voices in this study creates the context of mediation, which has been described as, "The physical medium of utterances and how it interacts with other interlocutors and layers of context" (Chun et al., 2016, p. 68). This implies that listeners' experiences in HHI and HAI contexts are influenced by media used in interactions, hence the need to compare behaviours emerging from both contexts.

The systemic source of information relates to listeners' conceptual knowledge that provides building blocks for bottom-up processing. Conceptual knowledge is the knowledge of abstract and general principles of language systems (Rittle-Johnson et al., 2015). This comprises verbal (semantic, syntactic, phonological and prosodic) and nonverbal (facial actions and gestures) components of languages that form aspects of co-text used by listeners during interaction. It also comprises knowledge of the language code (grammar and vocabulary), the conventions of its nonverbal and spoken forms, as well as written representations. These are critical to listeners' competent processing of speaker input, i.e. comprehension, because competence influences listener feedback and attitudes towards interaction.

Thus, Field (2008), citing Osada (2004), holds that listeners who are less skilled tend to either spend more time decoding unfamiliar words or have greater reliance on context to decode as they either pay too much attention to details or lack the linguistic competence necessary to properly decode utterances. Further, Hendrikse et al. (2016) posit that attitudinal reactions are concerned with a listener's willingness and ability to react and/or respond to the speaker's utterances and to reject or accept the message verbally and nonverbally.

2.3 Projecting Nonverbal Listenership

In order to assess how L2 users of English language comprehend L1 agent instructions and project their comprehension or incomprehension it is useful to understand the role of nonverbal listenership in interaction. Listenership is "the active, responsive role that listeners have in conversation" (O'Keeffe et al., 2007, p. 142). This implies that, in collaborative language use, listeners participate actively in any discourse even when they are not talking using backchannels as expected of them by speakers.

Backchannels, as proposed by Yngve (1970), are listener responses during one-way communication that can be verbal or nonverbal expressions, such as gestures and facial actions. White (1989) explains that backchannels imply that there are two channels of communication used by speakers and listeners. Speakers use the main channel, while listeners use the backchannel to interject speakers without claiming the floor. Backchannels are used to maintain the flow of conversation, indicate listener agreement with speakers, show listeners are paying attention to the speaker, and indicate that the information uttered is of interest to listeners and may be evaluative (Zimmerman, 1998). For the purpose of this chapter, backchannels include marked spontaneous facial actions and gestures emerging from interaction.

Spontaneous facial actions are "unmodulated emotional facial expressions that are congruent with an underlying emotional state" (Hess & Kleck, 1997, p. 271), while Givens (2015), citing Soukhanov (1992, p. 762), describes a gesture as "a motion of the limbs or body to express or help express thought or to emphasize speech". These definitions imply that spontaneous facial expressions will often agree or align with associative expressions, including in terms of voice, gesture or posture indicating fluency in communication. Facial actions are fundamentally related to emotions that are universal to people because specific facial muscles express specific emotions (Ekman, 2007). However, some facial actions express emotional attitude.

Gestures evolved alongside speaking and listening and with the advent of literacy, reading and writing. There are two broad classes of gestures. The first co-occur with speech and are variously called 'co-speech' (Mol et al., 2012), coverbal gestures (Xu et al., 2009), or illustrators (Ekman, 2007), that depict some content of the message. In a related development, Kita et al. (2017) suggest that people gesture when they think silently using co-thought gestures.

There are representational gestures, or emblems (McNeil, 1992), that convey semantic meaning through hand shape, position, or motion, and that do not occur with speech or content. They are used to produce and deliver spontaneous verbal messages encoded in body movements in an enculturation process. Examples include, "The peace sign (forefinger and middle finger up, palm facing outward) or 'good' (thumb up, hand in fist)" (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013, p. 2). Emblems are useful for communicating from long distances and in noisy places, such as crowded halls. As communicative and discourse-oriented gestures, they offer a channel for observing psychological activities that take place during interaction (McNeil, 1985).

In intrapersonal communication, they perform expressive functions, such as externalising listener comprehension of speaker-utterances through repairs as dialogic and monologic hesitation during interaction.

Representational gestures are also used to represent forms of task objects and the nature of actions to be used with those objects, scaffold conceptual development, provide, clarify and coordinate instructions during assisted assembly tasks (Kirk et al., 2005). Listenership repair systems are actual corrections of factual errors or faults in content (Frenečik, 2005; Knight, 2009). The types of repairs that occur in conversation include self-initiated self-repair (SISR), other-initiated self-repair (OISR), self-initiated other-repair (SIOR), and other-initiated other-repair (OIOR) (Clark, 2012).

This chapter reports on a study that attempts to understand how people use nonverbal behaviour to project their comprehension or incomprehension of agent instructions in a unidirectional instruction-giving context; thus, the type of repair relevant to this study is SISR because the "other" in this case is a simulated agent that can only give instructions. Clark (2012), citing Levinson (1983, pp. 340–341), defines SISR as repairs that speakers of utterances that need repair make without prompting from another participant. The concept is extended here to describe repairs of assembling errors that listeners taking instructions carry out without prompting from instructors during tasks.

The Computers are Social Actors (CASA) paradigm, later elaborated as Media Equation (M-E) theory by Reeves and his colleagues, is used to explain why and how humans behave when interacting with agents. The theories present user responses to physical and social features of computers and software agents in various settings of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI).

The CASA paradigm holds that, during interaction, people treat computers and computerised spaces as real people and spaces (Nass et al., 1994) based on a number of premises. The first is that people applied social norms and notions of self and other to computers or agents, responded socially to the computer itself, and did not see the computer as a medium of social interaction with the programmer. Secondly, CASA suggests that basic human communication devices are powerful because of their control and influence over people and events while social responses, such as facial actions and gestures, are automatic because they are naturally ingrained in us.

As a progression from CASA, M-E holds that social rules guiding interactions with people can apply equally to HCI, thus an "individual's interactions with computers, television, and new media are fundamentally social and natural, just like interaction in real life" (Reeves & Nass, 1996, p. 5). 'Social' refers to the disposition to treat media as if you were interacting with another person, while 'natural' refers to the disposition to treat media as if you were dealing with a natural physical environment. The medium becomes invisible and the human is oriented to its socialness or what is being seen (Reeves & Nass, 2014). Thus, people can be flattered by computers, similar to how they would be with other people, and perceive computers as having personalities similar to humans, while even small changes in creating these perceived personalities could elicit social behaviours from their users (Nass et al., 1999).

Reeves and Nass (2014) suggest that people respond socially and naturally to media because human brains have not evolved to adapt to twentieth century technology as the human brain evolved to accommodate a world where emphasis is placed on human-displayed social skills and perception of objects as physically real. However, Barrett (2012) posits that the human brain's plasticity enables it to adapt to emerging technologies due to pervasive computing in the everyday interaction context.

This chapter argues that nonverbal behaviours can project listener comprehension which is constantly changing, depending on the text interacted with. These changes occur naturally due to text contents and structure as mediated by our cognition (i.e. how we interpret information), disposition (how we feel at the time), and environmental factors (things taking place outside the person's body). Thus, it becomes important to understand how listener comprehension is affected by verbal and linguistic characteristics of co-interlocutors, how listeners project the impact using gestures and facial actions, and how these can be used to improve the agent's emotive functionality and associated user-experience in English language learning contexts.

3 Methodology

As stated above, this scoping study examined the listenership behaviours of participants from Nigeria where English is spoken as a second language. It aimed to understand user nonverbal projection of their comprehension of assembly instructions from L1 speaking verbal agents. Specifically, it sought to answer these research questions:

RQ1: Do participants nonverbally display comprehension signals (facial actions and gestures)?

RQ2: Are there differences in user nonverbal projection of their comprehension or incomprehension of instructions across the voice cline, e.g. human versus simulated agent?

3.1 Agent Design and Human Instructor Choice

A simulated agent was created on a computer interface for the study instead of a real agent because it provides users with experiences similar to those which actual agents provide (Clark et al., 2014). The interface allows participants to repeat instructions, but they cannot return to previous instructions – a condition imposed to ascertain self-propelled behaviours in participants.

There are three ranges of voice progression in the continuum, namely synthesised, human-like, and the target voice (see Fig. 2). The synthesised voices include

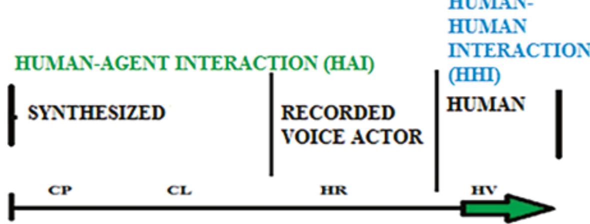


Fig. 2 The voice continuum

Cepstral Lawrence (CL)[1] and Giles from CereProc (CP)[2]. The recorded human voice was provided by a professional voice actor (HR) hired from http://voicebunny.com and the human instructor (HV) used his natural voice.

The three agent voices were male, had a southern RP English accent, and were aged between 45 and 60 years old. In creating the synthesised speech instructions, text files were inputted into a text-to-speech program (Text2SpeechPro) and exported as .wav files. For the human recording, a voice actor recorded the same text which was edited into individual .wav files using the software program Audacity[3].

HV is a Nigerian, 45-year-old male L2 speaker of English with an accent that is generally understood by most educated Nigerians. HV was used for this study because he is an experienced teacher of English and teacher trainer and has an excellent understanding of Educated Nigeria English (ENE) or Popular Nigerian English.

The instructors provide interaction as envisaged in real life HAI and HHI contexts, which made interactions natural and familiar as participants are used to taking instructions from agents and people in various contexts.

3.2 *Participants and Task*

Purposive sampling was used to select EL2 speakers as the target population in order to understand how they will respond to vague instructions during interaction. Ten participants were self-selected from among student-teachers of English at the FCT College of Education Zuba-Abuja, Nigeria. There were five males (50%) and five females (50%) aged 18–24 years old. These students have studied English at the further education level for at least two years, and can be classified as independent speakers of the language using Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors. Participants were given consent forms to indicate agreement and willingness to participate in the experiment followed by

[1] See: https://www.cepstral.com

[2] See: https://www.cereproc.com

[3] For more information: http://www.audacityteam.org

demographics forms for personal details. The task assignment was randomised to make sampling counterbalanced when allocating slots, voices, tasks and timings to participants, because it is straight forward, simple, and eliminates clustered selection (Dörnyei, 2007) and makes population and corpora balanced without researcher bias.

Participants were provided two Lego models in two separate tasks and were briefed that they will construct two different Lego models using verbal instructions from a simulated agent on a computer interface (Fig. 2) and/or HV within a 15-min time limit per model. In each task, the interaction pattern involves participants asking for instructions (by pressing the start button in HAI or giving the thumbs up sign in HHI). Participants can ask for a repeat of the same instruction by pressing the repeat button in HAI or raising the forefinger in HHI.

After executing the instruction, participants ask for the next instruction by pressing the next button in HAI and giving the thumbs up sign in HHI. The first model was given to them and, after 15 min or after the model was completed, the second model was assigned.

3.3 Data Collection

A clear record was obtained of interactions observed for measurements using two digital video cameras (Knight, 2009) that recorded the interactions from two angles – face and side (see Fig. 3).

The two cameras enabled the researcher to record both the individual sequences of body movements of different positions of the listeners during interaction and allowed for the analysis of synchronised videos in order to enable the examination of coordinated movement (across each view) following Knight (2009). However, power cuts forced the second camera to malfunction and the bright light from the window in the poorly lit laboratory made shots from the side camera blurry; thus, one digital camera was used to record face views of other interactions. While this made recordings less dynamic, it ensured that all recordings were acceptably clearer.

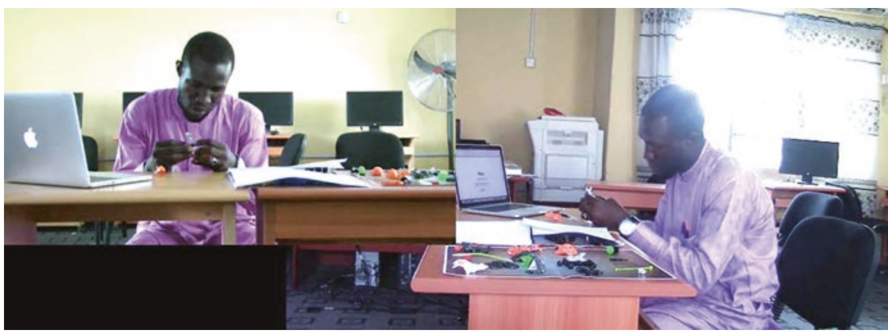


Fig. 3 Side and front camera views of interaction

A 5-h-long multimodal corpus was built and analysed from these interactions. ELAN-EUDICO Linguistic Annotator[4] (Wittenburg et al., 2006) and CLAN[5] (Computerized Language Analysis) software were used to manage and annotate the corpora for facial actions and gestures using adapted schemas, coding systems, and hierarchies (Ekman et al., 2013; Feng & O'Halloran 2013).

3.4 Data Analysis

Only samples that are representative of families of nonverbal behaviours displayed are presented because they have all the basic features of each family. Data analysis aims at developing a 'thick description' (Dörnyei, 2007) of the emerging nonverbal behaviour which relies on an annotation scheme that identifies annotation tiers, values and their descriptions. Thick description occurs in three stages: (1) linguistic annotation and segmentation; (2) classification; and (3) establishing interactive, communicative and task functions of nonverbal listenership behaviour (Ofemile, 2015).

Linguistic annotation of facial actions is done by first describing the neurobiological processes generating the facial action, such as the facial muscles responsible for an expression. These are described as Action Units (AU) outlined in Ekman's Facial Action Coding Scheme (FACS) (Ekman & Friesen, 1978a, b). The neurological processes also relate to the five senses that elicit emotions through stimulation (Ekman & Friesen, 1978a, b; Mixdorff et al., 2017). For example, when people enjoy touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or experiencing something they smile.

Gestures are described at the segmental level in order to capture every movement (Kendon, 1980; Kirk et al., 2005; Kita et al., 1998) along the G-phrase. Kendon (1980) designed a detailed kinesis structure – the Gesture unit (G-Unit) – which was later expanded and called the Gesture phrase (G-phrase) (Ofemile, 2018). The G-phrase comes with hierarchies for analysing gestures and defined terms required for implementation. The G-phrase begins with a rest pose then several gestures consecutively occur in succession, and it ends with another rest pose. The five procedural phases of gestures are preparation, stroke, retraction, holds, and recoils (Kendon, 1980; Kita et al., 1998; Ofemile, 2018). Following Zwitserlood et al. (2008), this study uses descriptive tiers grouping gesture under major headings, such as hand shape, position, and orientation.

[4] See: https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/download/

[5] See: http://childes.talkbank.org/clan/

3.5 Colour Coding

Research indicates that colour coding reduces confusion on the part of the reader and aids object detection (Dalal & Triggs, 2005; Papageorgiou et al., 1998). Thus, to make gesture analysis clearer, this study uses a simple colour and letter coding as this draws attention to specific aspects of the annotation. Table 1 features the colour and letter codes used. When the participants' clothes are the same or have similar colours with those specified, a contrasting colour is used.

The next stage is to determine the classification of the nonverbal listenership behaviour. Such categorisation enhances systematic analysis as a form of typology; thus, gestures and facial actions are categorised according to families (Ekman, 2007; Kendon, 2004). While the kinesic structure enables easy and systematic annotation, transcription and classification of gestures within the expanding boundaries of the G-phrase, research suggests that evolutionary and innate factors are responsible for nonverbal action characteristics in facial actions (Ekman, 2007). Within each family, there are varieties of nonverbal behaviours that are identifiable as distinct because of their manner of execution and communicative functions.

Linguistic segmentation and categorisation also focus on descriptive arrangement and discussion of the most frequent linguistic and multimodal bundles considered as indicators of agreement and variation in listenership behaviours, such as those observed in the listener comprehension process (Field, 2008; Oxford, 1993). As outlined earlier, listener nonverbal behaviour and their emerging functions may be shaped by listener cognition disposition, culture, relationship between interlocutors, interlocutor's state of mind, environmental factors and interaction context with the aim of identifying emerging comprehension patterns useful for rule setting (Ekman, 2016; Kita, 2013; Sekine & Kita, 2015). Following this, the analytical focus shifts to understanding the communicative practices of participants as listeners and motivation for communicative behaviour during interaction.

A second rater analysed and annotated videos of randomly selected interactions using the annotation scheme designed to provide another perception of listener nonverbal listenership behaviour and ascertain inter-rater reliability (IRR) as separately

Table 1 Colour codes

S. No	Colour code	Meaning
1	RH →	Right Hand code and movement
2	LH →	Left Hand code and movement
3	↔	Bidirectional Right Hand
4	↔	Bidirectional Left Hand
5	- - - - ▸	Intended movements

done in Clark et al. (2016) and Kita et al. (1998). Multiple methods were used for measuring IRR. These include percentage agreement or rule of the thumb analysis of first and second annotators' perceptions to establish the coefficient correlation, which is traced to their Kappa values (Gwet, 2012; Lombard et al., 2010). The other method uses inter-rater agreement calculator software (Geertzen, 2012) to assesses IRR and measure the corresponding Fleiss' Kappa (*K*) and Krippendorff's alpha (α) to establish an acceptable benchmark of 75% as suggested by Gwet (2012) and Wongpakaran et al. (2013). The percentage agreement between the two annotators for nonverbal behaviours displayed is 96% and 88% respectively. The resulting Kappa indicates almost perfect agreement and falls within the Landis and Koch, as well as the Altman, benchmarks of .81–1.00 (Gwet, 2012).

4 Results

The study examined the two research questions detailed in Sect. 3. The research questions are premised on research indicating that facial actions as emotive cognitive activities and bodily responses are controlled by the brain and may enable us to understand listener nonverbal feedback (Fortin et al., 2010).

4.1 Listener Facial Actions

Facial actions may externalise a person's attitude towards co-interactants, situation or task as positive, neutral or negative (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967). Consequently, facial actions displayed may also signal listener comprehension during interaction. Positive facial actions suggest likeability; thus, participants' smiles can be elicited by positive stimulation, including amusement, delight, contentment, satisfaction, beatific experiences, relief from pain, pressure or tension and success (Ekman et al., 2013; Ofemile, 2018), such as the felt smile.

The felt or Duchenne smile (A in Table 2) is made possible by the following facial movements: AU6 (Cheek raiser – orbicularis oculi; pars orbitalis) raises the cheek, gathers the skin around the eyes inwards, narrows the eyes apertures and produces crow's feet wrinkles; AU12 (Lip corner puller – zygomaticus major) pulls the lips sideways exposing the teeth; and AU7 (Lid tightener – orbicularis oculi; pars palpebralis) tightens the eye lids, raises the lower eye lid creating wrinkles below the lower eye lid. Participants also displayed other smiles, such as tight-lipped with closed lips, partial-half open lips, and nervous smiles indicated by sadness in the eyes during interaction.

The neutral face (AU0) indicating indifference (Ekman, 2007), as displayed by B in Table 2, does not show any emotion as facial muscles are at rest. This occurs when participants are listening to instructions (neutral concentration on instructions), engaged in task execution (neutral concentration on task), face down (when

Table 2 Comprehension levels inferred from spontaneous listener facial actions

Ref	Representative listener facial actions
A-Positive	
B-Neutral	
C-Negative	

cognitively processing information), neutral hard (when experiencing difficulties in cognitive processing or task execution), and when about to initiate turn-taking by asking for fresh and repeated instructions.

Participants also displayed the following negative microexpressions indicating anger, disgust and sadness. Microexpressions, also known as hot spots, are described as very fast facial actions that last between 100 microseconds and 500 microseconds. They provide the greatest source of information leakage from the human face even when people try to conceal emotion during interaction (Ekman, 2007; Ofemile, 2018). The participant (C in Table 2) displays full scale disgust produced by AU44, a separate strand of AU4 brow lowerer that narrows the eyes, AU9 nose wrinkler, AU5 upper lid lowerer, AU7 lid tightener, AU15 lip corner depressor, and AU16 lower lip depressor. Even though the participants are trying to remain calm, disgust leaks out probably due to perplexity (Ekman, 2007) during the task. This finding affirms Bartlett et al.'s (2009) research indicating that, when a person is experiencing emotions, the physiology takes over so that, even when people try to mask their true feelings, they still leak out.

4.2 Nonverbal Private Talk

Research indicates that people use nonverbal private talk for self-regulation that helps them to plan, monitor and guide a set of activity in demanding situations (Montazeri et al., 2015), such as during assembly tasks in unidirectional interaction contexts. Nonverbal private talk includes head nods as featured in Fig. 4. Sideways head nods occur in three Left-Right-Left movements using the following muscles: (1) AU51 – head turn left; (2) AU52 – head turn right; and (3) AU51 – head turn left again. Sideways head nods as a composite communicative action are used by Nigerians to indicate negation, disagreement with a co-interlocutor's view, and self-recognition of one's errors or inability to execute an action during interaction. The participant in Fig. 4 uses sideways head nods with a frown to indicate self-recognition of his incomprehension of the instructions and consequent errors during the task.

Fig. 4 L-R-L sideways head nods as self-recognition of self-errors

Preparation: P2 initiates the gesture with the **LH** in a hold, palm down with cupped digits. The **RH** is palm lateral and in a hold, too.
Stroke 1: Here, N9's **RH** zooms across the task space leftwards, palm down then grasps the first piece with coupler-shaped digits and pulls it up. N9's **LH** goes beneath the table.
Stroke 2: N9's **RH** spins ulnarly to grasp and pull up the second piece with coupler-shaped digits pulling it up.
Retraction: N9's **RH** goes backwards to drop the selected pieces on the table just as N9's **LH** comes up from beneath the table to a hold.

Fig. 5 The knowing hand indicating listener comprehension

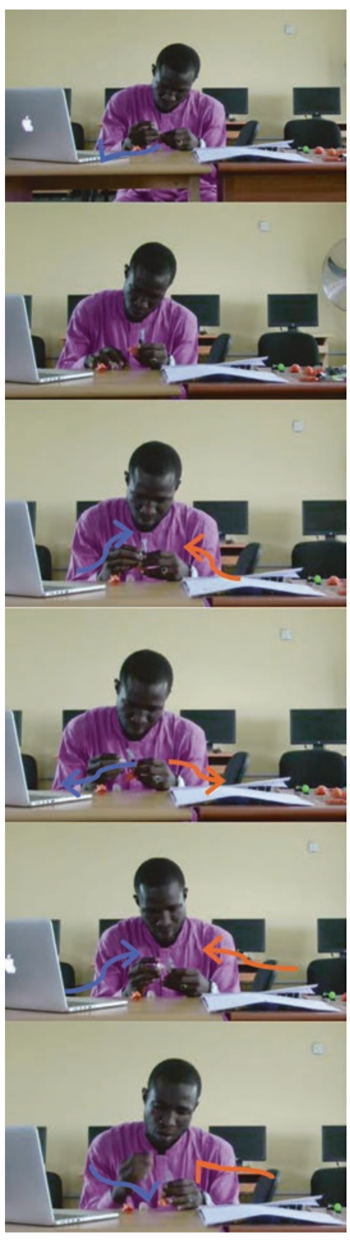
4.3 Assembly Gestures

This section outlines gestures displayed during interaction. However, the knowing hand and the failed joining hand gestures presented are representative of all families indicating listener comprehension and incomprehension of instructions.

The Knowing Hand Gesture This is a beat gesture that is the opposite of the wavering hands gestures (Kirk et al., 2005). The knowing hand indicates that the listener correctly decodes instructions and selects required piece(s) without hesitation. This is an assistive assembly gesture that aids the execution of operative gestures. The form and function of the knowing hand gesture are outlined in the vignette in Fig. 5.

Joining Hands The joining hand is an operative gesture that occurs when participants correctly connect assembly pieces in the right position with the right orientation. In contrast, the *failed joining hands* gesture suggests that the listener did not correctly decode the instruction in either one or all the stages. The gesture presented below is used to assemble parts of the feet by attaching the ball joints of the yellow pieces to the black sockets in order to build the shins of the Lego kit. The form and function of the gesture is shown in the vignette featured in Fig. 6.

Listeners could select wrong assembly kits; this failure is foundational and makes subsequent assembly stages incorrect. In addition, listeners could select the correct assembly kits but wrongly decode the assembly instruction and would thus fix them in the wrong positions with the wrong orientation (see Fig. 6). Participants



Preparation: N2 initiates this gesture with both hands holding the kit.

Preparation continues as N2's **RH** goes down palm down with digits held claw-like to pull up the 'white piece' from the task space.

Failed Stroke 1: N2's **RH** moves up, leftwards, palm lateral to connect the piece with the kit in the **LH** (receiving hand). Unable to successfully join the assembly bits, N2 aligns them to measure fit – Incomprehension of instruction leads to self-assessment as nonverbal private talk.

Retraction 1: As the piece did not fit, N2 retracts the **RH** rightwards while visually assessing the assembly bits (self-initiated self-correction suggesting a possible change in strategy from nonverbal private talk).

Failed Stroke 2: N2's **RH** moves leftwards, palm lateral to connect the piece with the kit in the **LH** (receiving hand). However, N2 only aligns them to measure fit again. **(Testing self-comprehension of assembly instruction again while holding concurrent private talk.)**

Retraction 2: As the piece did not fit, N2 retracts the **RH** rightwards again while visually assessing the assembly bits. The **LH** is in a hold.

Failed Stroke 3: N2's **RH** moves leftwards, palm lateral to connect the piece with the kit in the **LH** (receiving hand). The **LH** turns the receiving kit clockwise. However, N2 only aligns them to measure fit again. **(Testing self-comprehension of assembly instruction again.)**

Retraction 3: As the piece did not fit, N2 retracts the **RH** upwards in preparation for another picking hand in the next assembly gesture. While the **LH** rests on the table in a post stroke hold as presentation to visually assess the assembly bits.

Fig. 6 Failed joining hands indicating listener incomprehension

used the picking gesture to select the specified assembly bits in an extended preparation (P-P) and then tried to attach the pieces.

In the process, participants use the aligning hand, which is similar to Kirk et al.'s (2005, p. 11) 'mimicking hands', in an assisted assembly task because they enable the listener order and discover the fit of the assembly pieces before joining them together. This action is similar to taking aim before shooting. Concatenated gestures have inbuilt monologic gestures that externalise listeners' internal cognition processing procedures, such as self-repairs emanating from nonverbal private talk.

4.4 *Repeat Sequence*

Repetition patterns are potentially present in language and language users employ the various forms of repetition to project their comprehension of speaker input, way of seeing things and coping during interaction (Carter, 2004). The results suggest that repeats occur at different times and for different purposes during the assembly process. Repeats are consistent, reliable and rational communication strategies that promote active listening, set a communication standard and involve a continuous chain of events (Clark et al., 2015; Oxford, 1993). The results shown in Fig. 7 indicate that repeats occur at three different times during the task: before the assembly action, during the assembly action and after the initial instruction or the assembly action has taken place.

Participants ask for repeats before the assembly action or the next instruction occurs in order to get clarification or confirmation. Repeats that co-occur with the assembly action are strategic and are used to demarcate the task self-correct and to confirm assembly process in one instruction. Others occur after the assembly action has occurred or when the current instruction has been provided, and these could be for confirmation, task demarcation, or error correction. However, repeats operate discreetly and are often combined by listeners due to timing and task objectives. Repeats are not fixed as the illustration may suggest because, in real life, they tend to overlap in different combinations.

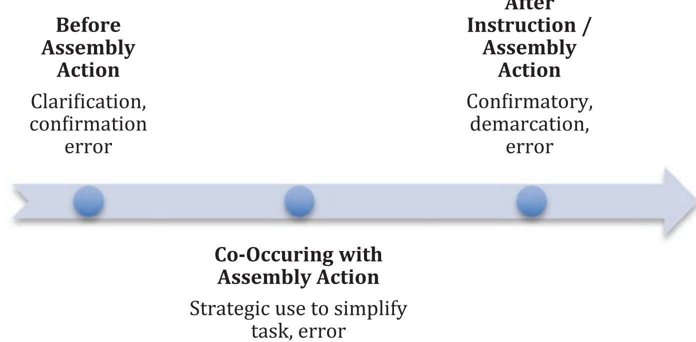


Fig. 7 The sequence of asking for instruction repeats

5 Discussion

5.1 Listener Attitudes and Comprehension

The results suggest that it is possible for humans to show their level and process of comprehending agent instructions through their facial actions, nonverbal private talk and repairs during interaction. Thus, the agent in the TESOL classroom should be adaptive enough to meet the needs of the language learning context.

The results reaffirm the view that attitudes might be reliably detected and measured through facial expressions, just as Meadors and Murray (2014) measured and classified bias through body language. Listener attitudes towards the interaction may also be distinguishable as positive, neutral or negative (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967), and these may also reflect listener comprehension of speaker input. Positive facial actions include felt smile, slight smile, and controlled laughter, and these represent 18% of the distribution. Neutral includes neutral, neutral concentration, workman effort face, and static searching head, representing 57% of distribution. Negative facial actions represent 25% of the distribution and include puzzled face, compressed or swallowed lips, disgust, slight disgust, slightly compressed lips, micro-frown and nervous smile.

Positive, neutral and negative facial actions constitute the three degrees of attitudes (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967, p. 249) used in this study to assess listener perceptions about instructions. In addition, Mehrabian and Ferris' (1967) study, citing Gates and Levitt's findings, suggests that focusing on facial actions and gestures may provide feedback comparable to that obtained from interpreting connected strands of multimodal resources or channels of communication as done in Bezemer and Jewitt's (2010) study.

Although the results indicated that there were more neutral facial actions than any other, the listeners were generally more consistent in the display of positive attitudes than neutral ones. This is evident to some extent in Table 3 as positive attitudes have lower standard deviations (1.73, 1.50, 1.26) for CP, CL, and HV instructors respectively compared to neutral (7.05, 3.83, 6.71), in addition to HV when compared to negative (1.36).

When viewed from the prism of instructors along the voice cline (Fig. 2), attitudinal and communicative results (see Tables 3, 4a and 4b) suggest that listeners are more consistent in having a positive attitude towards the human instructor, while experiencing more negative interactions with L1 speaking agents due to their easy comprehension of HV's instructions. Within group results for the positive attitudes suggest that listeners had a better comprehension of HR's instruction than the instructions from the synthesised L1 voices. These L2 speaker attitudes and comprehension levels suggest that, the closer an agent's voice quality is to a human voice, the more the agent is perceived as likeable and easier to understand.

These confirm earlier studies indicating that, the further away a speaker's voice quality and language use are from a hearer's norm, the more a speaker is perceived as less attractive and more incomprehensible (Babel et al., 2014). By implication, a

Table 3 Inferences from listener facial actions: Degree of listener comprehension of verbal instructions

	Inferred comprehension scores corresponding to instructor					
Inferred attitude	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Instructor						
CP	2.00	1.73	5.80	7.05	1.00	0.38
CL	2.75	1.50	3.80	3.83	1.70	0.86
HR	2.33	1.41	7.50	0.89	1.40	0.89
HV	0.63	1.26	2.00	6.71	0.88	1.36

software agent with verbal and linguistic characteristics that are adaptable to L2 contexts has greater potential for being more successful at teaching English language in L2 contexts such as Nigeria than one that is not. Adaptability is required in the areas of verbal qualities and language usage, making it closer to, for example, Educated Nigerian English.

5.2 Pragmatics of Interaction in Hybrid ELT Classrooms

As outlined above, language use is a form of joint action between instructors and instructees where each has responsibilities and communicative expectations. The results show that listeners use a combination of communicative gestures (Table 4c), such as self-initiated self-repairs, to focus on meaning-making, reposition task execution, identify errors and complete tasks using experiences gained from route knowledge. Route knowledge is used here to describe the spontaneous know-how a participant develops from carrying out repetitive assembly tasks.

Route knowledge parallels Tannen and Wallat's (1987) knowledge schemas to the extent that they both refer to the interlocutor's use of prior knowledge in current interaction contexts. Specifically, listeners mediate meaning using facts they bring as well as implicit knowledge developed unintentionally to interaction (Vandergrift, 2011). However, unlike repairs in HHI, repairs in HAI are more elaborate and reinforce the notion that there is a potential for all talk to be embedded in a power relationship (Hutchby, 2001).

Furthermore, the interaction is tied to L2 listeners' meaning making; thus, repetition is used to set interaction and learning expectations at different stages of task execution while developing reflective learning practices through self-regulation. These affirm earlier findings that self-initiated self-repairs provide a self-correcting mechanism for the organisation of language during interaction (Clark, 2012). In addition, when people interact with agents, they not only rely on cognitive processes, but also on other strategies in making sense of interaction (Murdoch et al., 2013.)

Table 4a Summary of spontaneous listener facial actions implying emotions and their communicative functions

Facial action family	Illustration			
	Child	Sibling buckets	Action units (AU)	Communicative function
Basic facial actions	Neutral	Neutral	AU0	May indicate indifference, relaxed composure, cognitive processing of on-going instruction while multitasking and initiation of turn-taking.
		Neutral face down	AU0+AU54	Cognitive processing of speaker input.
		Neutral concentration on task	AU0+AU8	Concentration on task execution, i.e. translating instructions into action.
		Neutral hard	AU0+AU44	Experiencing difficulty in cognitive or processing.
	Smile	Felt smile	AU6+AU12+AU7	May indicate positive interaction with instructor, task and self-resulting from correct comprehension of speaker input.
		Tight-lipped	AU6+AU6B+AU12B	Positive mask for real feelings of incomprehension.
	Disgust	Disgust	AU9+AU15B+AU16B+AU44B (strand of AU4)	Indicates feeling of aversion towards self-efforts or interaction experience and incomprehension of speaker input.
Eye action	Eye closure	Eye closure	AU7+AU9 +AU12+AU43B +AU56B (slight tilt left)	May indicate listener's degree of self-belief or certainty and ongoing cognitive processes regarding their comprehension of instructions or appropriacy of task execution.
Micro-expressions	Basic hot spots	Anger	AUB4B +AU5+AU7B	Emotional leakages indicating true emotions depending on the context.
		Disgust	AU9B+AU15B+AU16	See C2 above with lesser intensity.

Table 4b Summary of spontaneous listener facial actions implying emotions and their communicative functions

Facial action family	Illustration			
	Child	Sibling buckets	Action units (AU)	Communicative function
Non-basic blends	Whuck!	Whuck! Moment	AU13+AU24+AU34+ AU55 (head tilt left)	Indicates a mix of surprise, astonishment, incredulity, shock (eye-action), confusion and difficulty in cognitive processing; disruption of cognitive processes as listener concentrates on instructor input (puffy pout) negative experiences.
Emotional attitudes/ Moods	Frown	Frown	AU44+AU46+AU24+ AU21+AU41+AU17 +AU15	May indicate concentration while processing instructions or assessing action taken but may also suggest difficulty with comprehension.
	Workman face	Work face	AU9+AU15+AU16	Indicates listener's exertion of force when under pressure during tasks. Has no impact on comprehension.
	Tense mouth and lip action	Compressed lips	AU8	May indicate concentration, challenging cognitive processing, anxiety, nervousness, mood shift.
	Emotional build-up	Frustration process		May indicate listener burden as their ability to deal with specific challenges diminishes due to increasing incomprehension during interaction.
	Nonverbal private talk	L-R-L Sideways Head nods	AU51+AU52+AU51	A sign of negation in all Nigerian cultures used here to suggest listener self-recognition of their incomprehension of instructions during interaction.
		Pouty face	AU17+AU25, AU21+AU22+AU23	May be used for concentration or self-comfort.

Following these findings, agents destined for L2 contexts should possess adaptable relational capabilities that would enable them to build and maintain long-term socio-emotional relationships with L2 users, as well as remember past communications and manage future expectations in their interactions. In addition, when integrating agents into TESOL classrooms in L2 contexts, consideration should be

Table 4c Summary of spontaneous listener assembly gestures and their communicative functions

Gesture family	Sub-group	Description	Function
Aligning hand	Basic aligning hand	Assembly bits are brought close, but they do not touch.	Enables listener to visually and mentally assess the fit of one or more assembly parts into others.
Picking hand	Knowing hand	A beat gesture executed without hesitation.	Enables listeners to select appropriate assembly piece and indicates correct comprehension of instruction.
	Searching hand	Executed with hands wavering. It is the opposite of the knowing hand.	Indicates that listeners are unable to select assembly kit due to incomprehension of instruction.
Joining hand	Concatenated joining hand	Executed with both hands placing, pushing, or sliding one piece into another with alignment built in between. Has inbuilt monologic communicative gestures.	Enables listener to fix assembly pieces together within a 3D location with the appropriate orientation. In built sub-gestures enable listeners to externalise their comprehension of speaker input.
Monologic communicative gestures	Self-initiated self-repairs	Proceeds in three stages: trouble source identification contains two full gesture phrases before repair initiation and actual repairs take place.	Used to correct picking and joining errors as well as testing of self-comprehension of assembly instructions.
	Presentation	Enacted as the participant places assembly pieces before their eyes for examination.	Used to assess correct interpretation of instructions by examining assembly piece selected or attachment done.

given to the ability of teachers and agents to collaboratively recognise subtle learner initiatives and expressions of comprehension or incomprehension of speaker input as this will enable them to devise appropriate L2 language learning support measures.

Although, this is a unidirectional instruction-giving context, the Gricean notion that speaker-information must be clear and adequately informative (Grice, 2006) remains relevant because, when this notion is flouted, listener communication expectations may not be met. To meet L2 communication expectations, enhance cognitive activities and use emotions positively, listeners should be encouraged to use strategic repeat sequences to manage interaction and reduce task difficulty in hybrid TESOL classrooms.

6 Conclusion and Further Research

This chapter presented a scoping study in which L2 English speakers took assembly instructions from L1 English speaking agents. The findings suggest that adaptable affect-aware relational agents (sentiment-aware, emotion-aware, courteousness-aware) with knowledgeability and multimodal understanding to develop an engaging response generation system will be most suitable for hybrid TESOL contexts, rather than those available, as no one size fits all. Such affect-aware relational agents are desirable to understand L2 listener sentiments and emotions while generating responses. This will make agents more user-friendly. L2 listeners showed that they understood human and human-like voices better than synthesised ones. However, they were able to devise self-regulatory strategies that enhanced their meaning-making in challenging comprehension contexts.

People interact and perceive their environment multimodally in real life and not as separate layers. For example, a listener in HHI sees and hears the speaker's utterances, gestures, posture, distance, and facial actions at the same time and uses these aspects of the interaction context to make meaning of utterances and interaction. This study analysed nonverbal listenership in two layers of facial actions and gestures following established procedures of applied linguistic research that focus on separate but combinable semiotic resources, such as gestures and facial actions in nonverbal listenership as espoused by Ekman (2016), McNeil (2005), and Kendon (2004).

Applying such research to TESOL aims to meaningfully reconcile these fragments into a coherent discourse at the level of analysis in order to devise multimodal corpus linguistics coding matrixes useful for annotating various co-occurring nonverbal listenership behaviours. These linguistic code matrixes may potentially be used to derive laws that drive agents' high emotive functionality for enhanced HAI in English language learning contexts. However, this process requires more understanding in order to enable researchers to knowledgeably perceive how smart agents integrate co-interlocutor's facial actions, gestures, voice, utterances and posture to arrive at a multimodal interpretation of information exchanged during interaction.

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