TESOL KUWAIT JOURNAL

Volume 1 Issue 1

EDITORIAL BOARD

Published by TESOL Kuwait, Salmiyah, Kuwait

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Cultural Representation: Arab Women Writing the Self and the Other

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Abstract
How do Arab women image and imagine the Arab self and the Western other in their writings? The politically sensitive relationship between Arabs and the West, with a long history of imperialism and colonialism, makes any contact between the two a lot more complicated than a simple encounter between two topographies. These encounters are mostly affected by ideological preconceptions that have been constructed of both, thus generating what came to be known as the "Orient" and the "Occident."

Keywords: Arab women, cultural struggle, Arab identity

Cite as: Ashkanani, S. H. (2023). Cultural representation: Arab women writing the self and the other. *TESOL Kuwait Journal*, *1*(1), 4-14. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction
How do Arab women image and imagine the Arab self and the Western other in their writings? The politically sensitive relationship between Arabs and the West, with a long history of imperialism and colonialism, makes any contact between the two a lot more complicated than a simple encounter between two topographies. These encounters are mostly affected by ideological preconceptions that have been constructed of both, thus generating what came to be known as the "Orient" and the "Occident."

This study is divided into five chapters: two of which are the introductory chapter and conclusion, and the remaining three tackle different approaches Arab women seem to have been taking in their writings of the female-Arab self and the Western other. After this introductory first chapter, the second chapter will present and investigate one of the first Arab women to write about her encounter with the West: Radwa Ashour's *Al-Rihla* (*The Journey*). The third chapter of this study discusses gendered encounters. In this particular chapter, the East and West are compared in terms of their perception of the female body and sexuality. A notable admiration of emancipation granted to women in the West is clear in Hanan Al-Shaykh's *Innaha London Ya Azizi (Only in London)*, a novel that addresses critical issues facing Arab women in two different cultures. The fourth and final chapter will examine the contribution of female writers in the process of deconstructing the rigid East-West dichotomy. By offering a praise that is balanced with the same amount of criticism directed to both worlds; the line that superiorizes one over the other is blurred. To establish this rhetoric of representation Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage from Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* will be studied.

Politicized Representations
The escalating political tension in the Arab region particularly in the wake of the Arab Israeli war in the sixties left its imprints on the emerging female voices of the time. In this time period "the Arabs have witnessed and experienced a succession of major disasters... [such as] the dismemberment of the Arab nation...the

catastrophic Zionist theft of Palestine; the series of deadly Israeli wars; the brutal U.S imperial hegemony and exploitation over most of the Arab world" (Sindi 245). The Egyptian writer Radwa Ashour's journey created a new pattern of Arab representations of the West through a shift of focus not instantaneously generating gendered concerns as one would have expected but a mostly politicized one. The political upheaval between East and West in the sixties had an enormous impact on her encounter. This concern, however, did not create the denounced stereotype of a disappointing West.

Ashour's *Al Rihla: Ayyām Tāliba Misriyya fī Amrīkā* (1980) *(The Journey: Memoirs of an Egyptian Student in America*) is a non-fictional work, illustrating the authors' personal journey to America. Ashour delineates an ambivalent relationship with America where she strives to look beyond American exploitation of the Arab world, but fails to do so. Because her account "takes place against the backdrop of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war," which happened within weeks of her arrival to the US, her overview of America is mainly critical with minor and fleeting moments of appreciation. This overlap of events created a "politically motivated" account that was "not neutral" (El-Enany, *Arab Representations* 180). Therefore, studying Ashour's memoirs from a political perspective is a must because "in *Al-Rihla,* Ashour evokes history to mix the events of her life with the public events in the nation's life" (El-Sadda, *Arab Women* 136). In the memoir, she reveals how her perception of America is directly influenced by the six days war, which holds her back from a true objective representation:

I was not travelling with the neutrality of one who knew nothing about what he [Egyptian writer Rifaa Altahtawi] was heading towards. Nor was I like the many generations of students who followed in his footsteps and only returned enamored by the 'light' of imperialism (Ashour, *Al-Rihla* 6)

She suggests that the different image of the West that she represents is characterized by "bitterness" because she "belonged to a different generation with a different ideological stance (Ashour, *My Experience* 173). Ashour is not fooled by imperial lights and seems aware of the role played by Western media to polish its own image. She finds it mere manipulation of other people's conception of American reality. Such manipulation, she argues, manifested itself during the American-Vietnamese war when "the media praised beautiful America and its noble dream" (115). Through exposing the monstrosities committed by American soldiers in Vietnam, she offers a reversed portrait of the 'American dream' and the "imperial savior" that Western media is keen on putting on (115).

Ashour dwells on giving a negative image of the 'land of freedom,' by presenting her readers with instances of racist acts performed against African Americans which she detects during her visit to New York. Her visit to the statue of liberty is instantly followed by a discussion of the suffering of African-Americans in Harlem who endure a city that "doesn't like the mixture of colors…leaving Harlem entirely for the blacks" (133).

This is the grimmer side of Ashour's story with the United States. The silver lining was tied to some accounts of admiration and appreciation. If the political system is corrupt, Ashour finds American landscape and nature fascinating. She admires the vast greenness of the land, the beauty of shimmering colors and breath-taking flora (86). It was not nature alone that captured her heart, but the cultural life with which American cities throbbed. Galleries, museums, exhibits of all kinds turned her into a museum "maniac," paying them visits, sometimes three at a time, accompanied by her poet/novelist and Palestinian activist of a husband, Mourid

Barogouthi (128). But museums seem to stir different feelings in the hearts of the Arab sojourners. While the British museum awakened thoughts of stolen treasures in the mind of Leila Abouzeid, Picasso's *Guernica*, reminded Ashour's husband of many atrocities committed against Arabs that went unacknowledged unlike the Spanish civil war that got captured for people to see and remember throughout the ages. An Arab *Guernica* needed to be painted and remembered by one and all (145).

The Arab self in Ashour's account appears to be victimized by the West she is now encountering. The Western other is admired in several instances, however, the East/West political upheaval seems to make her reconsider a pre-constructed image of the 'Western civilization" and replace it to something more daunting. She is inclined to portray the Western other's flaws, namely racism.

Political events in the Arab world, from the loss of Palestine in 1948, to the Lebanese civil war, have left their mark on the minds of Arab writers, including women writers. When national identity itself was in danger, personal concerns seemed to diminish or to find expression in the collective struggle for existence (Zeidan 226).

Note: Quotations cited from Radwa Ashour's *The Journey* are my own translations.

The West as the Female Emancipator

With the growing popularity of female emancipation movements in the world, many female writers in the Arab World turned their attention from the political to the wider social issues, began to stage their rebellion against not the enemy without but the enemy within. Eyes had to turn outwards, more specifically to the West for both inspiration and encouragement. Arab female writers began exploring the West in a more personal manner, replacing the strictly socio-political representations discussed earlier. This desire to 'add' to the discourse, rather than to strictly offer an extension of what male writers have been writing before them, stems from female writers' need to escape male authority. Since "men write about women the way they know and think," there is urgency for a woman to write herself (El-Sadda, *Arab Women* 102). Writing the female self is one of the main concerns of French feminist, *Hélène Cixous*, who argues that writing the female self is (and must be) intertwined with writing the body. "Write yourself. Your body must be heard" (880).

The notion of writing the female self and body has been adopted by numerous Arab writers such as Hanan Al-Shaykh's in *Innaha London Ya Azizi (Only in London)*. In her novel the Arab self lacks freedom and begins to enjoy it in the land of the other. *Only in London* tells the story of Arab characters in London; one of which is Lamis from Iraq.

Through the several comparisons that Lamis makes between self and other, the differences in gender issues between East and West become clear. Because she divorces her Iraqi husband and engages in a relationship with an Englishman, her gender-based comparisons between East and West are manifested through comparisons between the Arab man and the Englishman. Lamis is forced by her mother to marry an older wealthy Iraqi man who could offer them all a better life. However, her marriage comes to an end after only a year because of the lack of sexual attraction towards her husband. The final decision of divorce is made when she begins to vomit after every sexual encounter between them. After having a son, she finds it impossible to tolerate both her husband and her mother-in-law and files for a divorce. In fact, Lamis's resentment is directed

at both husband and mother-in-law in equal measures. She expresses how “she hates life in her marital home” and remembers her mother-in-law’s “crude references to her marital duties” (11). What is interesting about this relationship is the fact that the patriarchal authority restricting Lamis to her ‘wifely role’ pertains to a female character. The male authority restricting a woman’s behavior is internalized within the mother-in-law’s consciousness, which reflects the Foucauldian concept of “panopticism.” In a patriarchal society, panopticism is exercised through “a constant supervision of individuals by someone who exercises a power over them,” a power that sustains “a knowledge characterized by supervision and examination, organized around the norm, through the supervisory control of individuals” (*Truth* 59). When this power is not in the hands of an individual, but exercised in almost all social institutions, the notion of discipline and surveillance becomes internalized; we act on the rules of the supervisory even without an actual act of supervision. In *Only in London*, patriarchal supervision becomes internalized by Lamis’s mother-in-law who projects a disciplined/‘accepted’ behavior without the necessity of the presence of a male authority figure.

Al-Shaykh breaks the image of the sexually restrained woman by presenting a character that is aware of both her body and sexuality. This awareness by Lamis seems to grow further after she meets her English love interest Nicolas. The Western man here is introduced by the writer as a route directing the Arab woman towards self-discovery (both sexual and cultural) that is in no way offered by the Arab man. After their first kiss, which she describes as her first kiss ever, she admits to herself that her life has just begun (128). Unlike her husband who is like an “eunuch who felt no sexual desire,” Nicolas treats her body like a musical instrument by touching “her strings one by one” (127). After her sexual deprivation in her marriage, she does not recognize herself sexually to a point where she doubts her own body during her first sexual encounter with Nicolas, so “when he entered her, she thanked God she was normal” (105). Her body is finally resurrected by an Englishman after years of being in a non-sexual state. The Western other here, as it is represented by the Western man, is the admired other, offering the Arab woman an emancipation that she has not experienced before.

The sexual awareness and sensitivity of the Western man is also represented through Lamis’s gynecologist, Mr. Collins. During her marriage he is the only one to know when she lost her virginity and how she resented sleeping with her husband. She feels a certain comfort with him; sharing discreet details of her sex life because of his sensitivity that she appreciates: "An English hand plunging inside her, acting as a mediator between her, her offspring, and her husband. He was very gentle and sensitive: ‘I'm heating up this instrument so it becomes warm and comfortable’" he says (Al-Shaykh 17). The English man once again seems to be superior to the Arab man.

Lamis’s discovery of her body is not only in sexual terms, but is also inclusive of an appreciation helping her to truly ‘see’ herself. She is “fascinated by this revealing of her body in its natural state, not wanting to arouse, or be aroused, but alive, moving, sitting, uncovered…Of course her ex-husband, or her son, or her mother and father, never saw her body” (194). Before she meets Nicolas, no one around her recognizes her body including herself. Such a portrayal of the Western male figure reflects the writer’s view of the West that is “no longer an oppressor but a savior, a place of refuge from the repression at home” (El-Enany, *Arab Representations* 186). The West to Lamis definitely plays the role of a ‘savior’ as El-Enany describes it; a role that is reflected

through Nicolas who helps Lamis to discover herself on different levels. He is not only her savior sexually but culturally as well. He reintroduces her to her body and ironically to her Arab culture. Before meeting Nicolas, she expresses a rejection of the East, which becomes a destination she never wants to revisit (81). Even when her parents moved to Dubai, she visits them once and never thinks of going back (270). It becomes clear how the East is completely rejected by Lamis. As a result of this rejection, and as soon as she arrives in London, she makes a check list of ways to basically 'de-Arabize' herself in the following order:

1) I've just arrived in London and this is a hotel.
2) Learn English properly.
3) Look for a job, any job.
4) Make friends with some English people.
5) Find somewhere else to live as soon as possible.
6) Stop eating Arab food (19).

She follows this list steadily to a point where acquiring the English culture becomes a higher priority than having a place to live in. Lamis even goes to the lengths of suppressing not only actions but also any emotions directed to her homeland. When she encounters an Iraqi protest demonstration against Saddam Husain's regime in the Hyde Park, she holds back her tears detaching herself from her Arab identity by attempting to become "a spectator, looking at the Iraqis just as the English did, and the tourists" (120). By obtaining such strong cultural and emotional detachments, she attempts to dismiss an entire culture from her consciousness.

Such strong reservations towards her Arab identity are dispelled by no one other than Nicolas, who restores to her a sense of appreciation of her Arab background. After trying to forget Arabic, she begins to remember its beauty as she sees Nicolas's research of Arabic manuscripts. As he looks through them, Lamis's eyes lay on one and her heart throbs with each Arabic letter. She "marveled at the fact that Arabic was still the same as when she'd left it thirteen years before, clear and familiar to the eye." The sound the letter س (S) makes is "like a wave of the sea, a carnation flower, a bird's wings," making her heart pound with "affection for her language" (124-125). At this point, she reconsiders every sentiment she has been harboring about the East. Her faith in her Arab heritage is now restored (183). This emotional reconnection evolves to be a physical presence in the East when Lamis joins Nicolas in Oman after she once swore never to go back to the Arab world. The Western man becomes the only reason behind bringing the Eastern woman in contact with her culture. It is thanks to Nicolas's appreciation of Arab culture that Lamis's belief in her heritage is restored.

Nonetheless, not all Western characters in the novel are equally appreciative of Arab culture as Nicolas. Nicolas's former girlfriend, Anita, offers a very narrow and perhaps Orientalist view of the East:

Listen Lisam. Sorry. Ah, Lamis. I like your name. I've been thinking about Arabia all this week, and then I meet you! Did you know that the harem is a sadomasochist institution? Nobody realized that before me, not even the Orientalists …I want to take some photos portraying the harem. I don't know how to do it but I've got an idea about how the sultan should look (158).

Anita's stereotype of the East reeks of condescendence and follows what Edward Said describes as Oriental clichés. These clichés reduce the entire 'Orient' to images of "harems…slaves, veils, dancing boys and girls,"

which are represented as 'natural' depictions rather than mere representations (Said, *Orientalism* 190). While Al-Shaykh acknowledges this European stereotype, Oriental ignorance is not represented as the 'norm' in *Only in London*. The Western other is more or less reincarnated mainly through Nicolas, who responds to Anita's racial stereotyping with laughter and mockery. The West here is well represented through a character whose cultural, intellectual and even sexual awareness seems to be striking. After all, the Western Other in Al-Shaykh's novel appears to be the better counterpart in the East-West dichotomy, as it offers more space to the Arab female. In fact, to all the characters in the novel, London is an escape from the social restrictions in the East.

Al-Shaykh treats the West as a destination granting them freedom that is not available in her Arab society, there are fractions in the novels that expose Western Oriental images of Arab women. Introducing characters like Anita in *Only in London* reveals the otherness imposed on Arab women. Such a discussion by the two writers is an integral part in their overview of the Arab woman's image in both East and West. It seems that Arab women can be "doubly inferior" by being "both women and Orientals" (Tibawi 161). In the Arab world she is othered as a woman who is inferior to the Arab man, and in the West she is othered as an Oriental woman inferiorized by both Western men and women. Therefore, in representing a gender-based appreciation of the West, the Arab woman writer can be placed in a problematic position. Indian writer Uma Narayan reflects this writing dilemma that Third World women face in writing their experiences and perceptions of First World countries. Narayan, as an Indian living in America, admits of being

torn between the desire to communicate with honesty the miseries and oppressions that [the writer's]…own culture confers on its own women, and the fear that this communication is going to reinforce—however unconsciously—western prejudices about the 'superiority of western culture (311).

By putting herself into text and writing her position as an Arab woman in both East and West and by addressing the consequent problems of this position, the Arab woman is creating her own version of "l'écriture féminine." This concept is introduced by French feminists, like Cixous, to encourage women to write. As argued by Trinh T. Minh-ha, "ecriture feminine" can be adapted by women all over the world "to render noisy and audible all that had been silenced in phallocentric discourse" (37). Thus, Arab women's attempts to write their experiences in the West are 'a must'

Attempting Balanced Representationa: Deconstructing the East-West Dichotomy

Because the Arab woman is othered by both imperialism and patriarchy, she stands in a more critical position than that of her male counterpart. Nonetheless, the process of writing their personal views and experiences in Europe and America paves the way for a more productive space where they can move forward and step out of the shadow. Many female writers are now rejecting the rigidity of patriarchal and political dualisms by adopting a non-essentialist approach to address their own and other cultures. According to Miriam Cooke, "the mystic boundaries that staked out a binary world" had begun to be represented and discussed in the '60's (11). Such rhetoric of writing, Aijaz Ahmad argues, contributes to dismantling the common world order where "difference between the first world and the third is absolutised as an Otherness" (10).

Examples of this style in writing the theme of encounter is the memoir *A Border Passage: From Cairo to*

America—A Woman's Journey by the Egyptian writer Leila Ahmed. Ahmad portrays a multi-dimensional overview of both self and other, which breaks away from reductionist representations. The West here is not solely the colonialist overpower that is portrayed through political dichotomies in early female encounters, and is not the idealized model of freedom that is represented in gender oriented encounters. Ahmad embarks on a quest for a 'true' representation in which "cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation to Self and Other" (Bhabha, *Cultural Diversity* 207).

In her memoir, *A Border Passage: from Cairo to America—A woman's Journey* (1999), Ahmed represents the shifts that occur to her constructed image of the West (and consequently the 'self' as well) starting from childhood to adulthood. She explains how the other is created and recreated in our minds through family, educational system and an actual physical contact with the 'other.' Ahmed started her memoir by discussing one of the first images she formulated of the West, namely, the culturally superior other. Growing up in Ain Shams, her family sent her to an English school where she was not allowed to speak any language other than English, something she did not resist out of fascination with everything Western. English was perceived as an "innately superior language," the language of "British teachers.

The 'superior West' and 'inferior East' dichotomy shaped her entire childhood that was modeled by mainly British figures (teachers, authors, and movie stars), while Arab figures were scrutinized to be only criticized. The figures who affected her the most were her Palestinian teacher who slapped her for refusing to read in Arabic, and her mother who she used to believe did "nothing" except being a housewife (21). The only Egyptian figure she related to in such early stages of her life was the Egyptian feminist Doria Shafik. However, even looking up to Shafik was in terms of a pro-Western connection. Like Ahmed, Shafik received a Western-based education (at the Sorbonne) and reflected a similar admiration of the West. "Shafik was someone who looked always to the West as the measure and source of good things, someone who seemed to be seeking always to escape, to flee" (154). At this stage, a non-Western comparison between 'us' and 'them' "is at one and the same time a discourse on the self and a discourse on the other, involving the process of 'negative self-definition, by which self is defined in terms of what is not, namely, the other" (Lindstorm 37).

The rigid dichotomy Ahmed found herself in began to crumble after the British bombing and subsequent invasion of Port Said in 1956, which evoked feelings of doubt and shock: "We English schoolers," were shocked "to see the British behaving in this way with such brazen injustice and to see them being immoral…I had believed in them and trusted them, and yet they had done this to us…My sense of having been betrayed was deep and personal" (170). After years of Western indoctrination, it was hard for the author to see Western/British values debased in such manner.

However, her feelings of betrayal did not entail a sudden and instantaneous reversal of her overview of the West. Ahmed's admiration of English culture was not replaced by despise; nor was the East automatically victimized. Despite her shock and dismay, Ahmed was aware that her 'constructed' other could not be simply overruled. She remained aware of Western merits, though from that point onwards, she would display a more conscious attitude when speaking of the Western other whose flaws she had become fully aware of:

I knew 'the enemy'—the imperialists—all too intimately. I was at home in English books…There was no way

I could reduce what I knew to some cardboard caricature called imperialism and come to hate and reject everything English, as the [nationalist] rhetoric around us enjoined us to do (171).

The invasion of Port Said, the geographical borders which Ahmad crosses, an education in Cambridge/England, a temporary job in Abu Dhabi, and her final settlement in America have all contributed to the process of the author's re-examination of her Arab identity vis-à-vis Western alterity. Ahmad's encounter in England, where she pursues her degree at Girton, Cambridge, typically starts with much appreciation of English life/culture. The first few pages of the chapter addressing her arrival in England amply speak of her fondness of the scenery and food, which make her instantly feel "like home" (180). However, this fascination does not go unharnessed, for she soon discovers that not all that shines is gold. When she, for example, had a medical problem and needed medical advice, the male doctor who examined her left her alone in the waiting room and invited the husband to his clinic to discuss results with him. This was not done in order to conceal a diagnosis, it was "a male-to-male" conversation, with the female subject excluded in a distant waiting space. This incident made her understand that there were "different patriarchies" (230).

In *A Border Passage*, Ahmed subverts the image of an emancipating West and instead exposes its failure to offer the perfect model for women's freedom. Her discussion of her relationship with her English husband, Allan, equally undermines any gender-based sense of superiority. When "she was no longer a student, he changed," Ahmed declares; she admits that he began to pressure her "to fit into the conventional role of wife, the person who would be there for him when he got back from his job" (230). The English man's reinforcement of strict gender roles reaffirms a common patriarchal overpower, which confines women to domesticity and financial dependency. Patriarchy here is represented as an issue common to both cultures, not restricted to the so-called 'backward East', nor to an alleged 'civilized West.' "

Along with patriarchy, Ahmed opens her eyes to another side of England that shatters her illusions of the culture she long admired. For the first time in her life, Ahmed was to experience racial discrimination in some of its ugliest forms. "I knew full well," she says, "that even civilized Cambridge did not regard us as equals" (225). The pinnacle act of racism she encountered was when she was spat on in a bus for simply being Arab (189). Ahmed's initial appreciation of freedom granted to her at Girton to write and express herself soon changes as she detects the sense of contempt towards her.

Whereas 'crossing' borders from Cairo to England reintroduced Ahmed to the flaws of the English that transformed her blind idealization, her time in Abu Dhabi reconstituted her Westernized identity altogether. From the point of her arrival onwards, sympathy with the Arab world grew sturdier. Her initial encounter with Emirati women was characterized by a sense of superiority towards them; they were dismissed as less privileged intellectually and socially, and victims of patriarchal oppression (a sense cultivated in the West). Soon she realized that her prejudices were entirely groundless. In her article *Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem,* Ahmed admitted her earlier adoption of prejudicial judgments of local women, specifically the first one she met, Moza, one of the wives of a local notable: "I, at the time still carrying my Mediterranean prejudices, (thoroughly reinforced by my Western training), naturally expected nothing of her" (529). This Westernized prejudice against Arab women shifted as she observed the level of intelligence those

Emirati ladies reflected. At this point of her memoir, the Arab woman begins to appear as a powerful figure that uses means at her disposal to fight for what she wants. The trip to the Emirates solidified Ahmed's sense of Arabness, something that continued to grow in her subsequent residence in the States.

The American experience proved to be quite different from its British counterpart. America seemed not to challenge nor fracture the self-esteem Ahmed cultivated while in the Emirates. If she had anything against the new host country, it was expressed in surprise at the "ignorance" of the average American of anything outside his/her continent, particularly when it pertained to Arabs or Arab culture. Nonetheless she particularly expressed her admiration of American feminism, which she found "exhilarating and exciting" (291). At conferences, which she and fellow female Arab speakers attended, they were constantly interrupted to be asked belligerently "'well, what about the veil?' or 'what about clitoridectomy?'" even when these matters were completely irrelevant to the topics proposed by Arab speakers (292). This Western focus on such issues that dismiss Arab women as inferior has been similarly raised by Nawal El-Saadawi who recounted similar stories of taking part in conferences abroad.

[El-Saadawi criticizes] western feminist attendees for their ignorance of third-world women's concerns…She denounces their treatment of clitoridectomy, making it clear that she resents the 'sensationalizing of marginal issues in Copenhagen' and the use of female circumcision to emphasize difference between first-world and third-world women (Amireh 220).

Ahmed's rejection of the American stereotypes of Arab women falls under her acquired anti-essentialist imaging of 'self' and 'other.'

A Border Passage ends with Ahmed taking an academic job and settling in the States. This marks the last leg in a journey of identity negotiation for an Arab woman who opts to settle in the West. It has been a troubled journey not immune to tumultuous weather oscillating between blind acceptance of the Western other coupled with self hatred and rejection of original culture, and an awakening of the merits of who she and her people were/are. This ends with a reconciliation and desire to mediate cultures and subvert the abominable binary of they/us. Wail Hassan confirms Ahmed's intention to dissolve all barriers that accentuate difference and widen cultural gaps: "she seems deliberately to conjure up stereotypical narratives in order to deviate from them, and to show the vacuity of their essentialist assumptions about the existence of discrete, separate, and opposed cultural identities" (19).

Conclusion

From mid-twentieth century onwards, the Arab literary scene has been witnessing a profusion of Arab women's writing, which reflected their authors' personal experiences in Europe and America. The works came to fill a gap in East-West encounter, as the latter had been chiefly projected through male eyes. It was interesting to see if the female Arab held different views while encountering the cultural other; the West, and whether the dialectic construction of the self versus the other was shaped up by any different sensibility. This study has been conducted to explore the representation of the West as projected through Arab female eyes.

As the literary texts analyzed in this study are merely case studies, further research can be conducted on the role and influence of the recent political events on the female outlook of the West. The Arab Spring, the

turmoil in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq can change and mutate to generate new images of the self and Western other. Such images that have been created over a long history of encounters can now be repurposed and reconstituted due to recent changes in the East-West relations.

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Writing Practices Post COVID-19: Exploring Third Grade Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract
This qualitative study explores third-grade English language teachers' perceptions of writing practices and challenges prior to, during, and post COVID-19 in the UAE. The findings show that post-Covid writing challenges have significantly increased. Pedagogical and remedial implications have been taken to bridge the gap between virtual and face-to-face writing instructions.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), Covid-19, writing practices, virtual learning, English Language teachers, third grade, the UAE

Cite as: Mahmoud, E. Y., & Alkatheeri, S. (2023). Writing practices post COVID-19: Exploring third grade teachers' perceptions. *TESOL Kuwait Journal*, *1*(1), 15-26. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

1. Introduction
The shocking news of Covid-19 invaded our lives like wildfire and infused unexpected changes all over the world. As "the global pandemic situation has generated a set of adjustments to educational systems worldwide" (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021, p. 437), educational practices are considered among the most affected issues (Korkmaz & Toraman, 2020; Tesar, 2021). Language education, in particular, has witnessed some concerning changes that favored receptive over productive skills due to the nature of virtual instruction and interaction (Syahrin & Salih, 2020). Fortunately, countries with strong economies and infrastructures, like the UAE, managed to provide students with virtual education. Although working within the circumstances of distance learning was challenging for teachers and students, education did not stop.

Students' physical return to school was much awaited after eighteen months of school closure. Third grade students received online learning and stopped going to school in the middle of grade one, which is a critical stage for improving basic skills. Educators around the world expressed their concerns after students' physical return to schools as instructions were still restricted by health considerations and protocols to evade the pandemic. Therefore, educators need to be aware that they need to carefully "approach the new normal in the post-COVID-19 era, [as] there is a need to consider education anew in light of emerging opportunities and challenges" (Cahapay, 2020, p. 1). Teachers also experienced differences between online and in-school

teaching regarding challenges, demands, strengths, and shortages (Neuwirth, 2020). Many students became competent in using technology, but the long period of distance learning has affected their readiness, foundations, and penmanship. Besides, the online teaching of writing as a skill was questionable. Before the pandemic, many studies reported that academic EFL/ESL writing is challenging, and that many students fail to match the elements and requirements of different writing tasks (e.g., Aajami, 2018; Lea & Stierer, 2000; Prior, 2006). By comparing students before and during Covid, students' writing scores, quality, fluency, and attitudes were negatively affected due to the pandemic (Skar et al., 2021). Thus, the effects of Covid-19 on EFL and particularly on writing instructions and practices need investigation to be addressed.

The purpose of this case study is to explore third grade English teachers' views on writing instructions and practices prior, during, and post Covid-19. In ordinary situations, grade three students are expected to start reading and writing independently, and they start gaining more autonomous skills. The reason for choosing the third grade to examine Covid-19 effects is because of the critical stage of students leaving school in the middle of first grade, being on distance learning for almost eighteen months, and resuming study physically in grade three. This case study is expected to contribute to EFL literature as it tackles a timely issue worldwide. It will also contribute to the literature in the UAE and the region. Besides, it hopes to raise educators' awareness of relevant problems and provide possible solutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

There is an increasing emphasis on how writing is taught in EFL contexts. Over decades, process and product writing approaches have been widely implemented, yet debated by advocates. First, product writing is a traditional approach that requires students to imitate an exemplary given text to produce a similar quality product (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Steele, 2004). Product writing is systematic and explicit, and it emphasizes writing mechanics. Until the 1970s, writing was taught separately, less frequently, not integrated with other subjects and skills, and used repetition, mimicking, drills, and exercises. Product writing stresses the final product and overlooks the writing process and the quality of ideas. In this approach, teachers prefer students to write individually, follow linear instructions, and move systematically from one stage to another (Pasand & Haghi 2013; Steele, 2004). Besides, product writing has several advantages: students can improve writing quality and accuracy with repeated instructions and mechanics; students in any grade level can imitate the model texts and produce high-quality writing with a few errors (Badger & White, 2000).

In reaction to traditional writing approaches, process writing shifted the emphasis to teaching functional writing in meaningful contexts. Process writing values classroom teaching activities and encourages language use through stages that include planning, discussing, pre-writing, and rewriting at students' pace (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Steele, 2004). Additionally, process writing is a non-linear method as students can go back and forth in writing stages until they complete their final draft (Charlton, 2015). Students can have multiple opportunities to edit each other's work, give continuous feedback and share writing in a collaborative classroom environment that encourages individualized instruction. Process writing is also used for communication and interaction with a real audience rather than transcribing or producing predictable pieces (Charlton, 2015; Graham & Sandmel, 2011). Thus, students write more than one draft, enhance their creativity,

use model texts for comparison rather than imitation, and focus on the content and purpose of writing (Pasand & Haghi, 2013; Steele, 2004). Besides, process writing tasks are short, simple, and direct to motivate students to be fully engaged in writing (Ariza-Martínez, 2005). Process writing makes students enjoy writing, learn different writing strategies, and have chances to interact with classmates.

Moreover, the Affordance Theory (AT) emphasizes facts of either behavior or environment, or both, which is known as the ecology of learning (Kordt, 2018). Considering the compulsory changes of Covid-19, AT sheds light on the behavior of teaching and learning, and how it is affected by environmental changes. To explain, psychological and social well-being as well as academic aspects are crucial to be afforded by learners during the pandemic to cope with the abrupt situation (Rivers, 2022). AT can also be situated between the individual and society as Kordt (2018) explains,

> Affordance theory with its focus on the individual, the environment and the emergent character of language learning opportunities is particularly well suited for dealing with the complexity of individual and societal multilingualism. As affordances are located between past experience and potential future action, affordance theory takes prior learning experiences, future learning opportunities as well as situational motivational factors into account (p. 135).

Thus, AT is linked to essential learning aspects such as learner autonomy, language transfer, and language learning (Kordt, 2018). Briefly, this study uses product and process writing as well as AT for its theoretical framework.

2.2 Education and Covid-19

Most educational practices around the world were impacted by Covid-19, which resulted in social and physical distances due to the forced lockdown and virtual learning (Hoofman & Secord, 2021; Maru et al., 2020). Teachers were forced to modify their teaching methods and instructions, find alternative practices to replace usual ones, and promote emotional well-being (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). During the pandemic, direct interaction among students and between the students and their teacher was limited if any, and this necessitated adapting classes, activities, and resources (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021). Although teachers found solutions by switching to technology, "the teacher must go beyond using technological tools to deliver their content; but rather, teachers must develop actions in educational contexts that permanently favor mental, emotional, social and physical well-being" (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021, p. 438).

Lukas and Yunus (2021) investigated the pandemic challenges that EFL teachers in Malaysia faced, and they reported that adapting to the complete e-learning system was the top issue along with low participation of students, difficulty of assessment, classroom management, and internet connection issues. Pelaez-Morales, (2020) reflected on the abrupt change explaining, "like all of my colleagues, I scrambled to redesign my courses to fit the on-line format… My institution scrambled to share resources via emails" (p. 2), so she reached for students' help who recommended the use of multimodality and linking pedagogy to contextual constraints with a more critical eye.

Otherwise, Iyengar (2021) found that parental and community involvement in children's education was useful

and recommended including flexible experiential learning projects more often. Online learning also provided opportunities especially for speech-based communication lessons, which asserts the need for blended learning that prepares students and teachers for further needs (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Teachers need to be prepared for regular and online teaching to respond to all sorts of troubles (Pelaez-Morales, 2020). This includes local, regional, or international crises that may happen, so "educators need to develop online learning contingency plans to mitigate anticipated educational challenges" (Bailey & Lee, 2020, p. 190). When Syahrin and Salih (2020) studied the educational online situation in Oman, they found that online skill-based pedagogies emphasize receptive language skills (listening and reading) and ignored productive skills (writing and speaking) in support of individual tasks that kept students passive during Covid-19.

2.3 Writing Instructional Practices

Students' mastery of a language is indicated by the ability to use its skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Klimova, 2014). Teaching writing is the most challenging skill, especially in EFL classrooms because learners are required to have competence in the writing process, characteristics, and elements (Aajami, 2018). If learners do not master the English language, writing becomes even more challenging. Other common challenges of writing are that students find difficulty to look for ideas, use relevant vocabulary to writing topics, and distinguish between idiomatic expressions, grammatical styles, correct mechanics and conventions, and appropriate language usage (Ansarimoghaddam & Tan, 2014; Novariana et al., 2018). Many studies also report that students end up writing fragment sentences, and they struggle to plan, organize ideas and write coherently (e.g., Afrin, 2016; Al Fadda, 2012; Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan & Wahid, 2020; Karim, Maasum & Latif, 2018).

Further, because grammar and writing are interrelated, learners face difficulty ordering words, using articles and tenses, prepositions, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, punctuation marks, and conjunctions as well as writing different sentence structures correctly (Abdulmajeed & Hameed, 2017; Al-Khairy, 2013; Al Fadda, 2012; Nasser, 2018). There are challenges that both teachers and students faced during the pandemic like the virtual learning competence and the availability of internet and different modes of learning (Maru et al., 2020). For instance, using videos in teaching EFL descriptive writing was examined prior Covid, and the same intervention was used as the pandemic emerged; thus, the intervention and students' achievement were affected as a result (Maru et al., 2020). However, the study concluded that using videos in teaching descriptive writing is helpful for low-ability students as they show noticeable progress during the pandemic.

Considering the above stated issues, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do third grade English language teachers view their students' writing experiences before, during, and post Covid-19?
2. What are the challenges of writing practices that third grade English language teachers deal with after students' physical return to school?
3. What are the repair strategies that third grade English language teachers use to mitigate the gap between online and face-to-face teaching of writing?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Context

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which aims to explore third grade English language teachers' views on writing instructions and practices prior, during, and after Covid-19 physical return to schools. The case study approach fits this research because it explores the views of certain English teachers within a particular time and school context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study took place in two Ministry of Education (MOE) schools, one public and one private, in Al Ain city, in the UAE, in October 2021. Most schools returned to physical attendance after Covid-19 lockdown in Term-1 of the academic year 2021-2022. Therefore, school life retrieved part of its features with precautions due to the pandemic persisting concerns.

3.2 Participants

The sample is convenient and purposeful as it is reachable by both researchers, and it meets the inclusion criteria to recruit English language teachers, currently teaching grade three, and have the experience of teaching writing practices in the three studied periods: before, during, and post Covid-19. It is significant to recruit participants who experienced the studied phenomenon, because sampling works well when the selected participants can represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study recruited five participants, who volunteered to take part in this research. Table (1) below summarizes with some demographic information.

Pseudonym	**Nationality**	**Age**	**Qualification**	**Teaching Experience**	**Current School**
Zainab	Jordan	43	Bachelor in Literature, Teaching Proficiency Diploma	14 years	private MOE school
Jade	South Africa	31	Bachelor in Education	10 years	public MOE school
Fatima	India	25	Master in Curriculum and Instruction	3 years	public MOE school
Ruth	South Africa	42	Bachelor in Early Childhood	14 years	public MOE school
Carol	USA	36	Master in Education	11 years	public MOE school

Table (1) Participants' Demographic Information

3.3 Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

This case study employed a semi-structured interview that was guided by the five-phase framework of Kallio et al. (2016). The interview included five main questions about describing students' Covid-19 writing experiences with a range of possible sub-questions. The instrument was validated by a jury of researchers and

piloted for trustworthiness. After gaining the ethical clearance (UAEU_2021_8385), data was physically collected in both schools through individual interviews. Participants signed an informed consent form through Google Forms that also included demographic information sections. For analysis, each interview was voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was represented narratively following a chronological order as per Creswell and Poth (2018). The responses were also coded and analyzed thematically. To collectively address the research questions, the findings were classified into five themes that are summarized below.

4. Findings

4.1 Natural Unfolding of Writing Experiences

All interviewees reported that the writing practices in most aspects were better prior Covid-19 than they are nowadays. Fatima described her students as "capable of independent writing," and Jade explained the systematic writing process saying, "before Covid, writing was taught in stages with adequate time and feedback…We worked with mind maps to plan, we did drafts, we edited, and peer checked, and thereafter proceeded with the final copy." To evaluate their abilities, Zainab said, "you know where the weakness in their writing is, and how to improve it, and how to give them extra exercises." Generally, Ruth mentioned that her students before covid were "good students; they could read and write; they could answer." She also referred to basic writing skills before Covid being "helpful because children actually could get a grip of a pencil… writing on the line and between the lines."

4.2 The Dilemma of Virtual Writing

During the lockdown and online experience of writing, teachers commented on parents' full, partial, or lack of support. For instance, Fatima reported that "students didn't get the desired amount of support at home during distance learning which led to lack of vocabulary, enhancement of spelling, and development in terms of learning English." In contrast, Zainab described home support that "most of the students did not do the task alone, their parents helped them, maybe the mothers wrote the writing task instead of the kids." Another participant said, "when the students were assigned a task, their parents would return the assessment or sometimes even answer for them. This hasn't led to the development of the child, rather hampered their understanding and knowledge overall." Besides, Jade noted that most students "faced many difficulties with writing due the fact that they were not supervised during writing activities; they slowly lost touch on simple aspects like letter formation and sentence structure." Further, Zainab and Carol pointed out that students struggle with recognizing or rectifying their grammatical, spelling, and punctuation mistakes. Ruth put it as "my online was a bit, um, they totally lost it. The writing process was just thrown out the window!" which indicates that the nature of writing instruction has drastically changed.

4.3 Writing Practices Post Covid-19: The New Normal

Teachers expressed their concerns regarding students' physical return to school. First, Zainab and Jade thought of health and safety procedures as restricting because they cannot move freely to assist students the way they used to. Jade asserted that "we are still following Covid protocols; it's difficult to physically help students. This was the biggest challenge." Second, Zainab noted that "now, after they came back to school, I find that most students do not have the ability to write, no patience to stay and write a paragraph…there are a lot of mistakes in their writing." Carol ended up writing answers for her students on the board, so they would copy

them simply because they could not write full sentences. She explained, “writing is an ongoing skill that will take time to develop. Students cannot write independently; guidance is required.” However, teachers highlighted the absence of basic writing skills as Jade labeled it with “a big red flag” that many students “do not know how to hold their pencils. They have forgotten how to form the alphabets and even differentiate between uppercase and lowercase.” For evaluation, Zainab thought that assessing students’ levels post covid is more challenging than before.

4.4 The Shocking New Reality of Writing

Teachers had different views on the challenges they currently face in the post Covid-19 phase. Teachers illustrated the fact that they could not move around students, touch their notebooks, and check their handwriting. Likewise, Fatima, Ruth, and Carol focused on the actual act of writing. For example, Fatima explained that “one of the major challenges that I faced was exposing them to the rules of writing. It felt like they were learning them for the first time.” Ruth faced other challenges since her students “cannot write out three letter words because they cannot sound out the words…They cannot even pronounce words properly; what they say that is what they write.” Ruth also commented that her students lack basic phonetic skills, so they struggle with letter sounds, and they cannot spell simple words. Finally, Fatima mentioned that “their return to physical learning has led the teachers to make them revise the basics such as punctuation markers, sentence formation, etc.”

4.5 Bridging the Gap: The Remedy Phase

Teachers are trying to bridge the gap regardless of the pessimistic situation they described. When they were asked to speak about their current methods to assist students with writing, they showed some enthusiasm. For instance, Carol asks each student to write a sentence and read it aloud to practice reading and writing skills. She knows that writing is an “ongoing practice for students to understand and grasp the writing techniques and conventions. Daily practice is key!” Ruth also practices daily phonetic and letter matching, writing simple words, and spelling exercises as a kind of remedy. Zainab mentioned brainstorming ideas, checking spelling mistakes, and supporting students with more exercises. This includes giving them extra worksheets on writing, forming simple sentences, and linking simple sentences to form a paragraph. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 precautions, Zainab uses “the data show to help them while they are writing and editing their tasks.” Jade said, “I have also been using sentence building as starter activities to remind students of when to use capital letters, to leave finger space and full stops.” In addition, Fatima asks students to write about their favorite things in order to make writing more appealing to them. She explained that “[making] writing activities interesting for them allows them to be creative; for example, creating their selfie where they are asked to draw a picture of themselves, and then write about themselves with the help of certain clues.”

5. Discussion

The study findings indicate that students face writing challenges in the absence of basic or advanced writing skills after their physical return post Covid-19. Third grade students still need help with holding pencils, tracing letters, writing simple words, matching letters with sounds, forming simple sentences, and writing full paragraphs. Initially, EFL writing is perceived as a challenging task because it requires learners to use many linguistic skills simultaneously, which is confirmed by many studies (e.g., Aajami, 2018; Majid & Stapa, 2017;

Maru et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the five participants described such challenges as way better than the status quo, so students' writing skills were negatively affected by Covid-19, which also aligns with Skar et al. (2021). Fatima described the current situation as "students felt crippled in terms of writing" which shows the increasing challenges. Ruth's comment, "my online was a bit… they totally lost it… The writing process was just thrown out the window!" confirms that students are not able to perform the simplest prerequisites of writing.

Further, considering the affordance theory, the environment, which is the new situation triggered by the Covid-19 lockdown and virtual learning, has affected the behavior, which is the norm of teaching L2 using recent methods (Kordt, 2018). For example, Fatima said, "In terms of spelling, copying the words ten times proves to be as one of the effective strategies for most of my young learners." Ruth added, "I mean it is a second language you must do a repetition of it. They will get tired of it, but it is going to be a lifelong lesson for them." Other participants focused on basic writing skills like penmanship. Ruth noted that her students "still cannot hold the pencil properly," and they spent a long time looking for letters while using laptops to type when they were studying from home during distance learning.

In light of product and process writing, teachers resorted to using product writing rather than process writing instructions. In other words, most participants used some traditional structural methods like drilling to accelerate the remedial stage and try to get students back on track. However, prior to Covid-19, writing followed process writing as Jade commented, "Before Covid, writing was taught in stages with adequate time and feedback." As more traditional methods were followed during virtual teaching, writing is no longer viewed as a creative skill. Fatima commented that "online answering mainly encouraged them to answer in one line or one word…which didn't allow learner to elaborate and express themselves profoundly." On the contrary, Fatima argued that "most of the students aren't keen on writing anymore whereas if we draw a comparison before Covid, they were exhilarated and enthusiastic to express their thoughts on a piece of paper." Consequently, teachers found it more convenient to make students copy responses and repeat words for spelling, which aligns with product writing principles (Badger & White, 2000; Steele, 2004).

According to the interviewees, there is a noticeable difference between students who got support at home during the online experience, and those who were not supervised at all. However, both cases did not help students at this critical stage. Zainab mentioned that "maybe the mothers wrote the writing task instead of the kids" and Fatima said, "when the students were assigned a task, their parents would return the assessment or sometimes even answer for them. This hasn't led to the development of the child, rather hampered their understanding and knowledge overall." This is similarly stated in post Covid-19 studies that showed writing as a passive skill and proved that it is negatively affected by the pandemic (Maru et al., 2020; Syahrin & Salih, 2020).

On a different note, most participants did not separate the online teaching experience during Covid-19 challenges from the current situation when students physically returned to school. This confusion emphasizes the significant effects of being disconnected for a long time, and it highlights the gap especially in a productive skill like writing. Remarkably, teachers did not clarify the virtual learning stage as needed, although they were

asked to, which could be due to one of two reasons, or both. First, teachers could be immersed in the current situation and its challenges that they did not see the value of bringing virtual practices up. Second, teachers could be unsure about whatever practices they used during that period, which was an emergency with unclear directions. This validates recommendations by many studies that teachers should be trained to master online/hybrid teaching and deal with any circumstances or emergencies that might occur (e.g., Bailey & Lee, 2020; Pelaez-Morales, 2020).

Conclusion

To conclude, the issues caused by the abrupt lockdown persist for teachers and students alike, especially for critical educational stages like the third grade, which is affirmed by all the participants. Being away for almost eighteen months yields serious consequences for early primary grades. Evidently, teachers' responses highlight a highly tangled situation in the lack of basic writing skills. Thus, teachers tend to resort to traditional writing instructions seeking final products rather than practicing process writing. Teachers cannot afford the time and effort for a full process writing cycle when they are required to complete the assigned curriculum and their students lack basic competencies. Putting such points in mind, the following implications are recommended:

1. EFL teachers need to implement remedial strategies and simplified instructions post-Covid to bridge the gap in writing practices.
2. English language curriculum should be modified to include remedial classes that assist students to compensate for what they have missed due to the forced distance learning.
3. Further research needs to carry out a similar study on a large scale to investigate Covid-19 effects across the UAE and the region.

Study Limitations

This study does not go without limitations, two of which are the most notable:

1. The study solely relies on semi-structured interviews for data collection. Triangulation of data sources through various tools might provide the research with more representative views of teachers on writing practices in relation to Covid-19.
2. Teachers' responses might not be comprehensive. Teachers did not elaborate on their responses as desired although they were assured that their input will only be used for research purposes.

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Using Etymology as a Deliberate Vocabulary Learning Approach: A Psycholinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

Whilst formal classrooms are inadequate to teach the needed amount of vocabulary due to time constraints, language learners are encouraged to take the vocabulary learning process outside the classroom domain. Additionally, vocabulary learning has always been accompanied by the problem of retention. The prominence of the etymological approach as a deliberate vocabulary learning technique is ascribed to two theoretical accounts in which language learners' vocabulary size and lexical retention are advanced, namely, the schema theory and the dual coding theory. Therefore, the etymological approach not only helps learners' retention, but also equips English language learners with a decoding tool in which unknown words can be deciphered and interpreted from their building blocks.

Keywords: Vocabulary, etymology, psycholinguistic, dual coding theory, schema theory, retention

Cite as: Alshatti, A. (2023). Using etymology as a deliberate vocabulary learning approach: A psycholinguistic analysis. *TESOL Kuwait Journal 1*(1). 27-40.
https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction

There is no doubt that vocabulary learning is a struggle of many English language learners (Al-Hosni, 2014; Zhang, 2011). This is because understanding a spoken discourse requires learners to know approximately 3000-word families (Rodgers & Webb, 2011), whereas understanding a written discourse requires knowing 8000 to 9000 word families (Nation, 2006). Yet, formal classrooms are inadequate to teach such amount of vocabulary due to time constraints (Webb & Nation, 2017). Therefore, language learners are encouraged to take the vocabulary learning process outside the classroom domain to acquire the needed vocabulary to develop their language proficiency. One of the effective techniques in learning vocabulary is studying the building blocks of a word (Nation, 2001). This technique encourages learners to study the bound morphemes and how they can change the word meaning, hence expanding vocabulary size and knowledge (Ibid). However, studying free morphemes, the stem or root, is under-researched in vocabulary studies (Hosseini et al., 2012). Although a small number of studies have examined the effectiveness of teaching word roots to English language learners (e.g., Soleimani & Azizmohammadi, 2015), using etymology as a deliberate vocabulary learning approach does not seem to have had ample consideration in the field of vocabulary learning research. Most English words are derived from Latin, Greek and French origins, and studying the origin of a word not only helps better word retention, but also leads to learning other words (Quigley, 2018). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the potential gains of adopting the etymological approach as a deliberate vocabulary learning technique to enhance learners' receptive vocabulary.

Literature Review

Incidental vs. Deliberate Vocabulary Learning

Incidental vocabulary learning refers to the process of learning new words as the by-product of an activity with the absence of deliberate intention to learn them (Gass, 1999; Hulstijn, 2001; Loewen, 2017). It is achieved indirectly as a result of information provided by context (Nation, 1982) through reading (Schmitt, 2008; Nation, 2015), listening (Elley, 1989; Nation, 2008) as well as viewing (Rodgers & Webb, 2011; Peters & Webb, 2018). This approach is highly effective as it provides learners with contextualised vocabulary learning opportunities (Webb, 2008; Malone, 2018). Ahmad (2012) mentions that it is best for second language learners to adopt this approach because words in contexts can, to a great extent, prevent word attrition. This speculation is supported by Laufer and Hulstijn's (2001) study which concludes that incidentally learned vocabulary are retained in the long-term memory with the learner's ability to use such vocabulary in different contexts. However, incidental vocabulary learning requires long time periods (Groot, 2000), especially in gaining semantic knowledge of the new words (Chen & Truscott, 2010). Although word knowledge can only be attained gradually through repeated encounters in context (Webb, 2017; Uchihara, Webb & Yanagisawa, 2019), Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus (1996) assert that even multiple encounters often fail to yield satisfactory impact on vocabulary acquisition from incidental learning.

A direct approach, where a deliberate effort is made to learn vocabulary (Nation, 1982), can augment the shortcomings of incidental vocabulary learning. Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (2010) reveal that deliberate attention to unknown words leads to higher gains in all aspects of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, deliberate vocabulary learning is time-saving and fairly more effective for long memory retention (Nation, 1982). To deliberately learn vocabulary, learners frequently use wordlists, word cards, studying word parts amongst others (Nation, 1982; Nation, 2001). Studying word parts, such as prefixes, stems and suffixes, is a valuable technique (Nation, 2008) because it is the basis of seeing connections between related words, guessing from context, strengthening from-meaning connection and working out the meaning of some words (Nation, 2001). Therefore, learning vocabulary from word parts is significant to receptive vocabulary because it facilitates incidental techniques, such as guessing from context, to decode the meaning of the unknown words (Wysocki & Jenkins, 1987; Nation, 2009). A great deal of research has proven the effectiveness of learning prefixes and suffixes in developing L2 vocabulary (Anglin, 1993; Nation, 2001; Nation, 2008; Quigley, 2018). Therefore, the direct approach complements the indirect approach to expedite vocabulary development (Nation, 1982).

The Etymological Approach in Vocabulary Learning

Etymology is the study of the origin and history of a word (Quigley, 2018). Since most English words are coined through a combination of Latin, Germanic, Greek and French morphemic elements, such as prefixes, suffixes and roots (Yule, 2017), such approach helps English learners enhance their receptive vocabulary by decoding the elements of an unknown word (Fekri, 2011 in Baleghizadeh & Naeim, 2011; Quigley, 2018), hence attaining the advantages of analysing word parts mentioned earlier. However, this approach is not apt for all learners. This is because it requires knowledge and skills on how affixes can alter words meaning (Baumann, Edwards, Font, Tereshinski, Kameenui, & Olejnik 2002; Zolfagharkhani & Moghadam, 2011) and moving along the word frequency continuum from high-frequency to low-frequency reveals an increased number of Greek and Latin

words that profoundly rely on affixes in their derivation (Bellemo, 1999). Therefore, intermediate and advanced learners can exploit this technique to enhance their receptive vocabulary (Pierson, 1989; Zolfagharkhani & Moghadam, 2011).

Etymology has two considerable impacts on vocabulary learning. First, it aids in analysing word parts leading to inferring the meaning of a word from its form. A study by Zolfagharkhani and Moghadam (2011) reveal that teaching vocabulary through the etymological approach has significant higher word knowledge gains than traditional vocabulary teaching methods (i.e., definitions, synonyms and antonyms) (P-value = 0.029> α =.05). The participants in the preceding study mentioned that by using this approach, they can understand thousands of unknown English words as they can break the building blocks of the word to reach its meaning (Ibid). Second, using etymology in teaching vocabulary has remarkable results in promoting word retention (Pierson; 1989; Soleimani & Azizmohammadi, 2015). This is because learning about etymology is learning about the origin and history of a word (Yule, 2017), and this enables learners to associate the target words with existing knowledge in the mind (Pierson, 1989). Thus, the word will be easily retainable if it has a story behind it (Baleghizadeh & Naeim, 2011). Another factor that helps learners' retention is the number of exposures to the target lexical items. Research suggests that multiple exposures to target items is crucial for maximizing word knowledge (Nation, 2008; Malone, 2018). Therefore, the two advantages of using etymology are supported by Nation's (2009, p. 100) conclusion that "paying attention to word parts helps learners to make full use of the word families they know, and also contributes to remembering new complex words". Therefore, the etymological approach can be a shortcut to vocabulary learning (Davoudi & Yousefi, 2009) where learners are equipped with a proxy to decipher most English vocabulary (Quigley, 2018).

Theoretical Grounds

The relation between etymology and word retention in the aforementioned studies can be attributed to two theoretical underpinnings, namely the schema theory and the dual coding theory (DCT). The former states that in language comprehension, people activate relevant schemata[1] to help them interpret new information quickly and effectively (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In reading and listening, relevant schemata is activated in relation to the topic in order to help understand the topic (Ibid). Nassaji (2007) states that, in many cases, failure to store a word effectively in the brain by connecting it to existing knowledge leads to failure to remember the meaning of that word in later encounters. The etymological approach tends to narrate a story about the word origin with a list of older versions and other derivatives of the word. This creates more word associations in the learner's mind, hence easier activation of the schemata when needed (Baleghizadeh & Naeim, 2011). Therefore, the etymological approach helps lexical retention in language learners through making several associations of the word in learners' schemata. However, some learners may lack the required existing knowledge with which the new word could associate, especially for abstract language (Sadoski, 2005). For instance, if learners are using the etymological approach to learn the word '*demagogue'* and they have never encountered such concept nor have stored relevant knowledge about it, there will be no schema to activate. In other words, the schema theory requires learners to have similar stories to the new word in order to be stored accordingly and becomes accessible

[1] "Schemata serves as a reference store from which a person can retrieve relevant existing knowledge and into which new information is assimilated" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 469).

for later activation.

Although stories that are relatable to existing knowledge are of great benefit to account for the schema theory, the absence of such stories does not make the etymological approach futile. For instance, in explaining the etymological roots of '*demagogue'* (demos = people + agogos = leading) with the different versions used across the history of the English language (Appendix 1), this may evoke a sort of feeling or reaction in the learner towards the word and/or create a mental image or an emotional reaction that represents the word in the learner's mind (Baleghizadeh & Naeim, 2011). This reaction is defined by the DCT as a nonverbal association to the word to which the brain can relate to retain the meaning of the word (Boers, 2001; Sadoski, 2005). Therefore, the etymological approach can either activate a relevant schema in the learner's mind (accounting for the schema theory) or create a nonverbal reaction towards the target word (accounting for DCT).

Methodology

This section will demonstrate how learners can use etymology to deliberately learn vocabulary to achieve both benefits of the etymological approach, namely better retention through learning about the history and origin of the word as well as studying the word parts which can potentially result in learning other related words. Each target word will be defined in a contextual story in which the meaning of the word is inferable from the conclusion of the story. The contextual story will include an event that concludes with a denotation to the target item. The reason for this method is twofold. Aside from the story of the origin of the word, the contextual story could be relatable to existing knowledge in which the schema of the learner will be activated. Second, in case the learner does not have a relevant story for the target word to account for the schema theory, the contextual story will stimulate a non-verbal reaction or feeling in the learners towards the target words to account for the DCT. The story of the word origin will help activate the relevant schemata and introduce other related words. Even if the contextual story suffices to activate the learner's schema, the story of the word origin will create an additional pathway for recall through storing the etymological information as a mental image (Boers, Demecheleer & Eyckmans, 2004). Next, the learner will read about the history and/or the origin of each target word. Finally, the target items will be analysed based on their parts and relate those parts to other potential target words to maximise the overall lexical gains.

Target Items

As mentioned earlier, this approach targets intermediate and advanced learners' receptive skills. Therefore, low-frequency words were chosen to minimise the likelihood of learners' familiarity with the target words. The target words and activities were adopted from Lewis (2006). The reason for choosing this book is because it includes a narration about each word history and explains how learning one root can lead to learning other new words. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was used to check the target words frequency (Appendix 2). The result is shown in the table below:

Word	Frequency	Per million
Disparaging	540	0.93
Equivocating	49	0.08
Proscribe	74	0.13
Obviate	207	0.36

Placate	523	0.91

Table 1: The frequency of the target words in COCA

As can be seen in Table 1, all target items are considered as low-frequency except for ‘disparage’ and ‘placate’ which are considered as mid-frequency. However, the table above shows that ‘disparage’ and ‘placate’ occur in 0.91 in a million. Hence, the chosen words are suitable for intermediate and advanced learners because the chances of the learner’s familiarisation with the target words are scarce.

Activities for Learners

Activity 1

From this activity, the learner will infer the meaning of the target words from the story and activate the schemata to which each word conveys. Presumably, partial knowledge of the words should be gained from the activity (Lewis, 2006). To further expand the words knowledge, the learner can use online dictionaries to look for the words' pronunciation and other related meanings and usages. Each word is contextualised in a short story in

1. Ready to go back thirty or more years? Consider some post-World War II American political history: Harry Truman couldn't win the 1948 election. The pollsters said so, the Republicans heartily agreed, even the Democrats, some in high places, believed it. Mr. Truman himself was perhaps the only voter in the country who was not entirely convinced. Came the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November—well, if you were one of those who stayed up most of the night listening to the returns, and then kept your ear to the radio most of the next day, you recall how you reacted to the unique Truman triumph. It was no mean accomplishment, though many people. Pure accident said others. If one out of twelve voters in a few key states had changed his ballot, Harry could have gone back to selling ties, one Republican apologist pointed out. It wasn't anything Truman did, said another; it was what Dewey didn't do. No credit to Truman, said a third; it was the farmers—or labour—or the Republicans who hadn't bothered to vote—or the ingenious miscounting of ballots. No credit to Truman, insisted a fourth; it was Wallace's candidacy—it was the Democrats—it was Republican overconfidence—it was sunspots—it was the Communists—it was the civil service workers who didn't want to lose their cushy jobs—it was really Roosevelt who won the election. Anyway, Harry didn't accomplish a thing—he was just a victim of good fortune. What were the apologists for Dewey's failure doing?
   - They were ***disparaging*** Truman's achievement.

2. Willing to look at some more history of the late 1940s? Of course, Dewey did campaign, in his own way, for the presidency. As the Republican aspirant, he had to take a stand on the controversial Taft-Hartley Act. Was he for it? He was for that part of it which was good. Naturally, he was against any of the provisions which were bad. Was he for it? The answer was yes —and also no. Take whichever answer you wanted most to hear. What was Dewey doing?
   - He was ***equivocating***.

3. What does the doctor say to you if you have low blood sugar? "No candy, no pastries, no chocolate marshmallow cookies, no ice cream!", your morale dropping lower and lower as each favourite goody is placed on the forbidden list. What, in one word, is the doctor doing?
   - The doctor is ***proscribing*** harmful items in your diet.

4. You are warm, friendly, enthusiastic, outgoing, easy to please; you are quick to show appreciation, yet accept, without judgment or criticism, the human weaknesses of others. You are a fascinating talker, an even better listener. You believe in, and practice, honest self-disclosure; you feel comfortable with yourself and therefore with everyone else; and you have a passionate interest in experiencing, in living, in relating to people. Need you have any fears about making friends?
   - Obviously not. Your characteristics and temperament ***obviate*** such fears.

5. Unwittingly you have done something that has aroused anger and resentment in your best friend. You had no desire to hurt him, yet he makes it obvious that he feels pretty bitter about the whole situation. (Perhaps you failed to invite him to a gathering he wanted to come to; or you neglected to consult him before making a decision on a matter in which he felt he should have some say.) His friendship is valuable to you and you wish to restore yourself in his good graces. What do you do?
   - You try to ***placate*** him.

order to either help the learner connect the word to an association in mind or create a reaction towards it. Therefore, the target words are as demonstrated in the following presentation:

Activity 2

The result of the preceding activity can be expanded to more than 5 new words. The next step incorporates analysing the word parts of each word. Each word analysis requires the learner to read about the word origin and learn the related word members. Stories about English word origins and related word members can be found either in books (i.e., Lewis, 2006; Forsyth, 2011; Sharma, 2018) or in the Online Etymology Dictionary*. If the learner analyses each target item, the outcome of will be as demonstrated below.

Analysis of '*Disparaging*'

Analysing the word 'disparaging' resulted in introducing 12 new words (Appendix 3). The below figure summarises the new vocabulary outcome of the analysis activity.

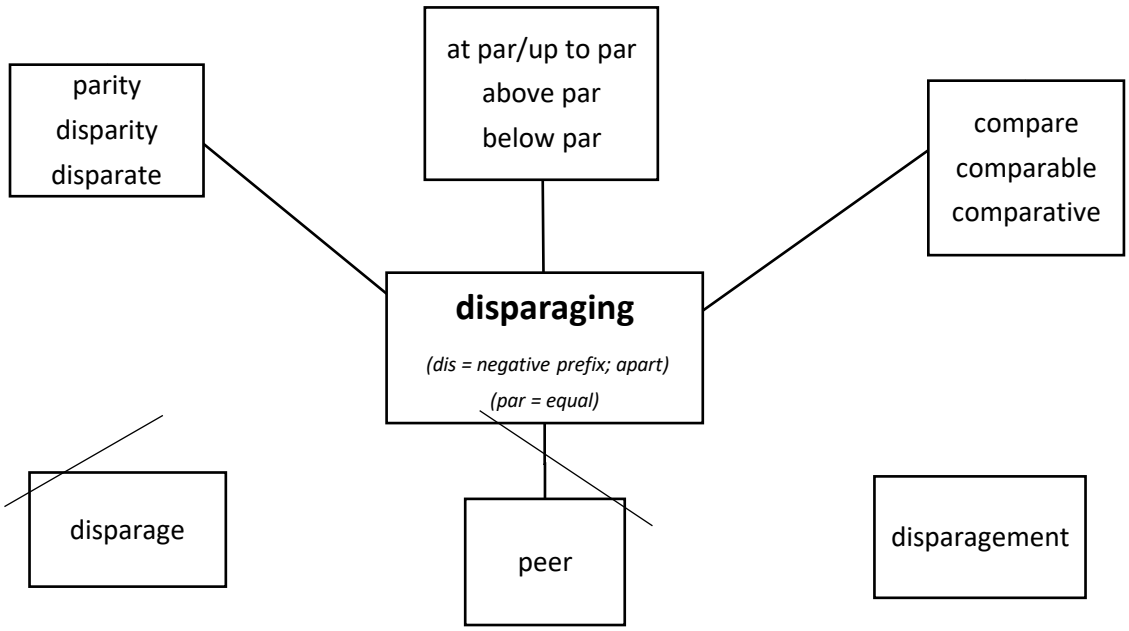

Figure 2: The result of analysing 'Disparage'

Figure 1: Contextual stories referring to the target words

* https://www.etymonline.com/

Analysis of '*Proscribe'*

Analysing 'proscribe' resulted in 6 new words (Appendix 4):

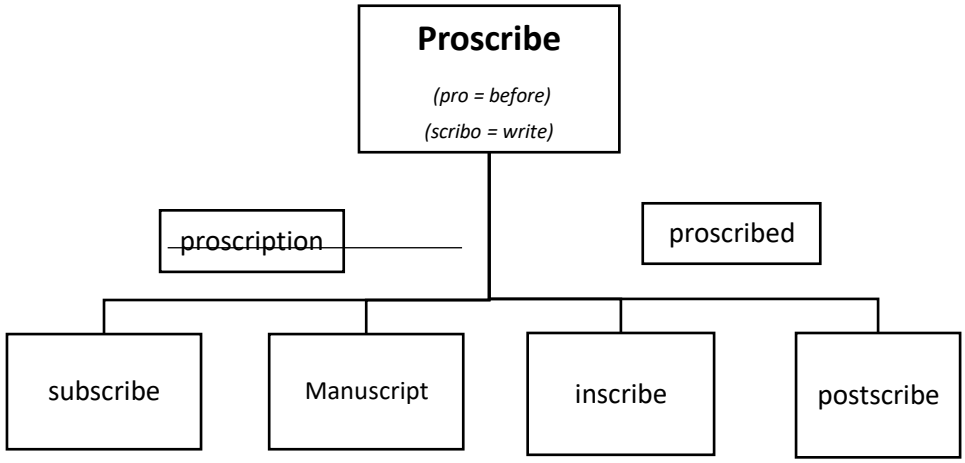

Figure 3: The result of analysing 'Proscribe'

Analysis of 'Obviate'

Analysing the word parts of 'obviate' resulted in 5 new words (Appendix 5):

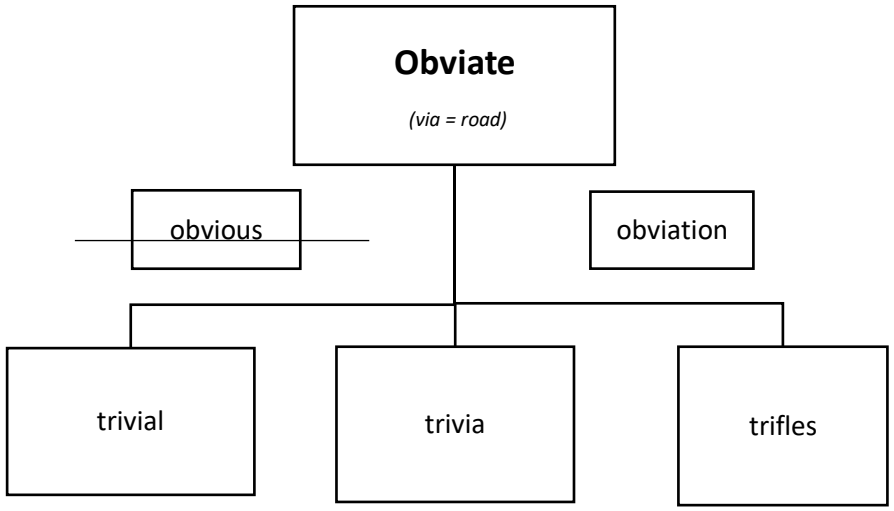

Figure 4: The result of analysing 'Obviate'

Analysis of 'Placate'

The analysis of 'placate' resulted in 9 words (Appendix 6):

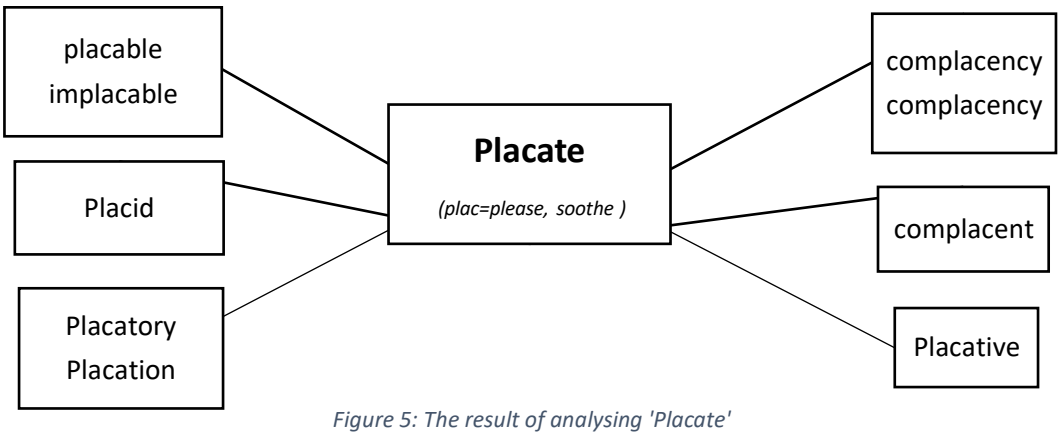

Figure 5: The result of analysing 'Placate'

Analysing '*Equivocate*'

The analysis of 'equivocate' resulted in more than 30 words (Appendix 7).

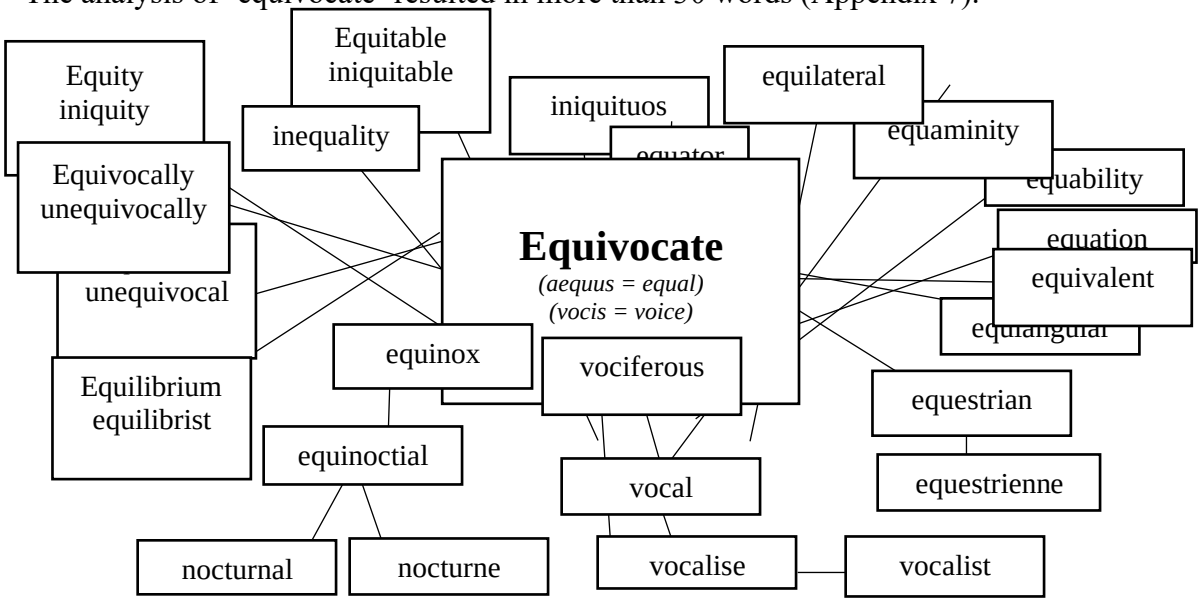

Figure 6: The result of analysing 'Equivocate'

Discussion

Unequivocally, the etymological approach can have two benefits in vocabulary learning. First, it can consolidate basic word knowledge (i.e. meaning) in the learner's schema through the story behind the origin, history and coinage process. Some words have interesting stories behind them. The analysis of the word 'proscribe', for instance, explains how the word was used in the past and how it came to its current meaning today (Appendix 4). These stories about the history of the word lead to better retention in language learners (e.g., Soleimani & Azizmohammadi, 2015). Even if the schema of the word is not present in the learner's mind, a non-verbal reaction towards the word will be evoked according to the DCT, hence easier to retain (Sadoski, 2005).

It could be argued that the first activity that involved introducing the target words in short stories can replace the etymological approach in accounting for the learner's schema. As mentioned earlier, the etymological approach provides an extra pathway to recall the meaning (Boers, 2001; Boers et al., 2004) because learners construct a better mental representation of the word if the history and root are explicitly explained than defining, explaining as well as giving examples of the word (Baleghizadeh & Naeim, 2011). Moreover, the story of the word origin and how one root is established to coin several other words conglomerate a sense of "perceptions, memories, and emotions [that are] held together by associations to serve symbolic functions in thought" (Sadoski, 2005, p. 229). Additionally, Fekri (2011) mentions that learning the origin of the word helps in faster lexical retention of related word members. This is because psycholinguistic research asserts that the brain stores words either separately (words stored with no connection to other words) or by grouping words according to semantic and orthographic similarities (words are stored with connection to other words) (Corson, 1997 in Schmitt, 2010; Yamazaki & Yamazaki, 2006). The former occurs in rote learning, which is highly prone to attrition due to lack of relevance of the information being learned (Soleimani & Azizmohammadi, 2015). The latter, however, does not only relate to existing knowledge, but also stores the words that share similar roots in the same category, hence faster access and retention (Zolfagharkhani & Moghadam, 2011). For example, if the learner is aware that the Greek root 'equus' means 'equal', the brain will store most of the 30 words in Figure 6 in the same category. This makes the words access easier to the learner than storing each word separately based on different schemata. Moreover, the story about the word origin includes a narration of previous versions and other derivatives of the word (Lewis, 2006). Since "the more associations the brain makes for a word, the easier it will be to store and retain it" (Zolfagharkhani & Moghadam, 2011, p. 113), the etymological approach provides the learner with more than a story to associate it in the brain. Therefore, it can enhance word retention.

The second advantage of this approach is related to analysing the origin or root of the word. As can be seen in the previous section, analysing word roots exposes the learner to a number of new related words. Analysing word roots has several benefits. First, it increases the number of exposures to the root and its meaning. As mentioned earlier, research suggests that multiple exposure to target items is crucial for maximizing word knowledge (Nation, 2008; Malone, 2018). Second, the word 'equivocate' has the potential to expose the learner to more than 30 new words (Appendix 7). Therefore, it can expand the vocabulary size of the learner. Third, this approach will develop word consciousness in the learner that may help in later exposures to other words from similar root (Quigley, 2018). For example, after being acquainted with the meaning of the root (equus=equal), the word 'equidistant' should not be a difficult word to infer from its building blocks, since 'distant' is a very

high-frequency word. Finally, Carter (1998) mentions that deliberate learning is a prerequisite to incidental learning. Research has established that the etymological approach leads learners to become autonomous in vocabulary learning by enabling them to decode a great deal of new words they may encounter (Boers, 2001; Hosseini et al, 2012; Soleimani & Azizmohammadi, 2015). Therefore, one of the reasons of requiring deliberate learning before incidental learning can be finding the proxy of decrypting English vocabulary (Quigley, 2018), which is etymology, to enhance word guessing (MacDonald, 2015).

Conclusion

The prominence of the etymological approach as a deliberate vocabulary learning technique is ascribed to two theoretical underpinnings in which language learners' vocabulary size and lexical retention are advanced. Learning vocabulary through etymology does not only have a mnemonic effect by creating a mental image of the target words (Boers, Eyckmans & Stengers, 2007) but also expands learners' receptive vocabulary through reading about other related words. The vocabulary acquired through analysing the target words will be easily retained when stimulated in later occasions because they will be stored in the same lexical category in the brain, hence faster access (Zolfagharkhani & Moghadam, 2011). Additionally, such approach raises word consciousness wherein language learners become autonomous in vocabulary learning by decoding the meaning from the building blocks of a word (Hosseini et al, 2012; Quigley, 2018). Therefore, intermediate and advanced English learners can expand their receptive vocabulary by analysing their existing vocabulary to add more related words to some lexical categories. Moreover, they can use the etymological approach to learn new vocabulary for easier and faster retention, which will potentially expose them to other related words. Finally, the etymological knowledge will provide them with a decoding tool in which unknown words can be deciphered and interpreted from their building blocks. However, empirical research to confirm the aforementioned outcome of using etymology as a deliberate vocabulary learning technique is needed.

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Strategies for Teaching Writing to Arab Learners in an ESL/EFL Context

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Abstract
Investigating the various aspects of teaching academic writing to Arab students in the ESL/ EFL classroom is crucial, as the key differences outnumber the similarities in terms of the linguistic features between both languages. The study examines how students can transfer and improve their academic writing skills by using the various writing techniques that should be employed and embedded within other basic skill areas, such as reading, speaking, listening and grammar. Questionnaire 1 includes closed questions distributed to 20 foundation students, studying in a university level in Kuwait. The findings show the importance of explicit rule teaching of grammar in writing tasks for EFL foundation students at an elementary, low- intermediate, and intermediate level. The findings also suggest that giving direct corrective feedback assists students immensely in improving their academic writing skills.

Keywords: Explicit, implicit teaching, patch writing, plagiarism, direct and indirect corrective feedback

Cite as: Alabdulaly, G. (2023). Strategies for teaching writing to Arab learners in an ESL/EFL context. *TESOL Kuwait Journal, 1*(1), 39-56. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction
An essential part of teaching L2 writing is being able to present ESL/ EFL students to the basic skill areas such as reading, listening, grammar and speaking. ESL/EFL students should be adequately exposed to receptive skills such as listening and reading. Exposing ESL/EFL students to the receptive skills will help them improve their productive skills, such as speaking and writing. The receptive skill of reading is vital to students in assisting them to identify the different written forms, sentence structures, and recognize how to spell words. The experience of reading also aids ESL/ EFL students to gain world knowledge and associate it to their own understanding. Hirvela and Belcher (2016), emphasize on how reading contributes to the input of writing. Thus, reading and writing include a process of parallel cognitive development.

In addition to reading, listening has a positive impact in developing L2 writing skills. For example, many Arab students tend to translate sentences when writing from Arabic-English or vice-versa. Ali, Khizar, Yaqub, Afzaal, & Shahid (2020) conducted a study in Pakistani schools and found that the trend of grammar translation was popular among students. Because of this trend, learners were unable to attain the language as a native English speaker would learn. As a result, students were exposed to learn how to listen because listening exposes students to the natural communicative environment as a native speaker. Listening helps students to learn vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Rintaningrum (2018) explains how active listening develops students' overall performance in attaining vocabulary, grammar, reading, spelling, writing, and

speaking.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent of cultural awareness among EFL Arab students' in understanding the different academic writing conventions in English. Another reason for conducting this study, is to prepare EFL Arab students to be independent learners and complete writing tasks in accordance with the required rhetorical mode of writing. Finally, to foster EFL students' cognitive ability when receiving corrective feedback on their writing.

Literature Review

The Similarities and Key Differences between Arabic and English

Educators should consider the similarities and differences on how their ESL/EFL learners process English as their second language. One major similarity between Arabic and English is that they both have an alphabet. Phonetically the sound of each letter in the alphabet in Arabic and English can be converted between the languages when translating each letter. Another similarity between the two languages is borrowing words. Langacker (1967) confirms that loaning words from other languages is much easier than creating new ones. Langacker argues that the reasons for borrowing words from one language to the other are based on the historical and cultural factors.

The differences between Arabic and English outweighs the similarities, and this can be very challenging for ESL/ EFL Arab learners. Grami and Alzughaibi (2012) recommend that teachers should explicitly teach the differences between Arabic and English to make students aware of their errors because of the L1 interference. The key differences between both languages include the following.

ARABIC	ENGLISH
Sematic language family	Germanic language family
Letters change based on their position in a sentence	Letters are fixed
Read from right to left	Read from left to right
Alphabet: 28 letters	Alphabet: 26 letters
No capitalization	Capitalization is used
Limited punctuation: Not strictly governed by punctuation	Punctuation is essential
Arabic assigns words to a gender	English rarely assigns gender to words

Table 1: Differences between Arabic and English

Another difference of Arabic writing is that Arabic script is cursive. This means that the letters are connected

and written in a flowing and connected manner; whereas English script is generally written where each letter is separate. Alqinai (2013) explains how in Arabic long sentences can be written in which it can be at a paragraph length with only one period at the end of the paragraph. In Arabic, readers will still find these sentences correct intersectional conjunctions, discourse markers, and lexical insertions to create unity and coherence. These challenges can be addressed from educators by providing ESL/ EFL Arab learners specific language instructions and practice in vocabulary, grammar, as well as exposing students to different reading texts and the use of conversation.

Teaching Grammar in Context

It is important to explicitly teach the grammatical rules for ESL/EFL students who are at a beginner, elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate level. As students' progress, grammar can be taught through the exposure of reading texts and speaking tasks. "In textbooks, grammar is very often presented out of context. Learners are given isolated sentences... These exercises are designed to provide learners with formal, declarative mastery, but they make the task of developing procedural skill- being able to use the language for communication- more difficult than it needs to be." (Nunan, 1998, p.102).

As L2 students master writing teachers should provide more advanced reading texts. Teachers who contextualized the study of grammar within the reading of literature and discussed real life texts reported a positive impact on pupils' writing and a deeper knowledge and understanding of language. (Myhill et al., 2013).

Lexical and Grammatical Collocation Errors

Lexical errors made by ESL/ EFL Arab learners are very common. Mahmoud (2005) conducted a study on Arabic-speaking university students majoring in English. He found that a total of 420 collocations were found in 42 essays and about two thirds of these collocations (64%) were incorrect. He also found that 80% of these were lexical collocations as opposed to grammatical ones.

Beneficial solutions that Mahmoud (2005) found after conducting his study is that education should include direct teaching tasks, as well as including a bilingual list of collocations that could be included in the course books. Another important method to assist students in learning grammatical and lexical collocations is offering bilingual English-Arabic and Arabic-English dictionaries of collocations.

ESL/ EFL students can take advantage of learning collocations while writing.

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1.What are some of the writing difficulties encountered by EFL foundation students?

2. What are the best strategies used to learn and improve EFL students' academic writing skills?

Methodology

Participants

The subject included a total of 20 foundation students attending university, in Kuwait. Table 2, shows that most of the participants were females who were enrolled in the English foundation course. They all took the KITE placement test, and the writing scores are A2 and B1 level of writing proficiency. In general, this indicates that the participants have a

good level of language proficiency.

Table 2: Participants data

Number and gender	15 females 5 males
Age	18-20 years old
Nationality	Kuwaiti
CEFR writing level	A2 and B1 Level of writing proficiency Elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate

4.2 Research Method

The detail of the proposed methodology includes a survey distributed to 20 students to collect data. This includes the following:

1. Qualitative phase: Gathering a total of 20 responses from participants at the elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate level. (Questionnaire 1) was used to gather the data. (See appendix-I, pp. 23-24). It includes four sections: Students' data (part 1), students' attitude and writing techniques (part 2), Patch writing and plagiarism (part 3), and finally receiving feedback to improve students academic writing skills (part 4). This questionnaire contains closed questions.

4.3 Procedure

Firstly, a total of 20 questionnaires (Questionnaire 1) were distributed in the beginning of the semester to English foundation students to complete. The 20 students already complete the first level of foundation (**Elementary, A2 to** low-intermediate/ intermediate, B1, levels of English language proficiency). Following this, the data was collected and eventually, the information was analyzed. The findings were discussed and support the literature, and recommendations were suggested.

5 Findings and Discussions

This section answers the research questions mentioned above and provides an in-depth insight of students' attitudes towards academic writing.

5.1 Attitude towards academic English writing

Figure 1 shows the different attitudes of participants towards academic writing. None of the participants found writing easy. Most of the respondents, 80% found writing is somewhat difficult. 10% found that writing is very difficult and another 10% of the respondents reported that writing is neither difficult nor easy.

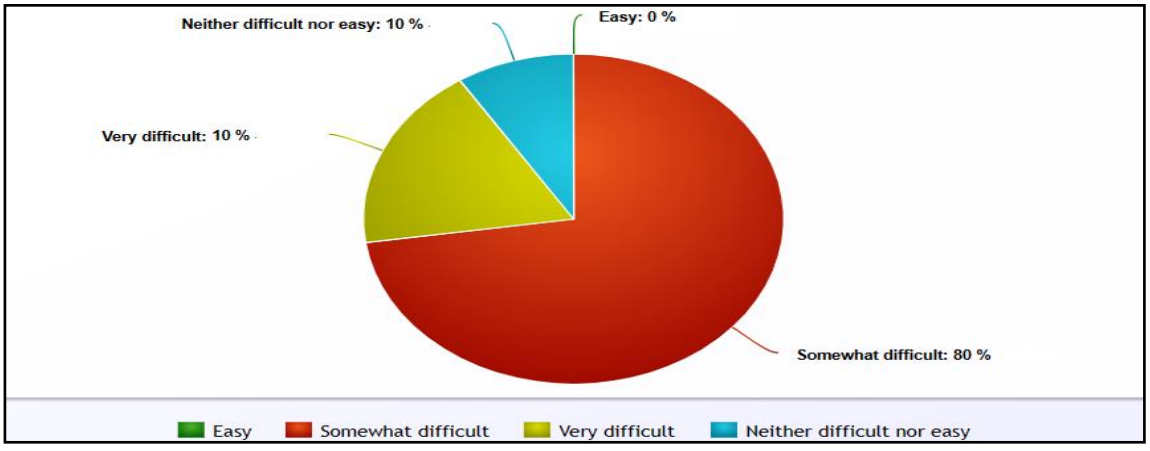


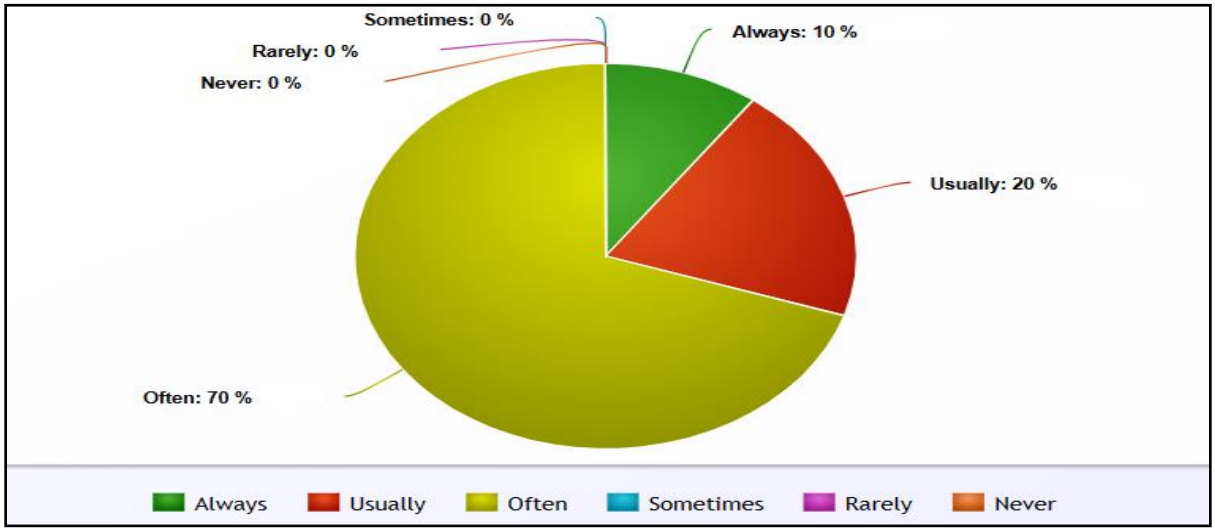
Figure 1: Attitudes towards academic writing

One of the reasons why EFL Arab students seem to somewhat struggle with writing is because of their errors related to structuring sentences and organizing paragraphs.

5.2 Brainstorming and outlining

Figure 2 demonstrates how the respondents feel about the pre-writing stage of brainstorming. Most of the respondents, 70%, found that they often brainstorm their ideas before writing. 20% found that they usually brainstorm their ideas, while 10% found that they always must brainstorm their ideas before writing.

Figure 2: Pre-writing stage: brainstorming



Brainstorming and clear sentence-by-sentence outline can be useful to ESL/EFL learners to generate organized ideas in the pre-writing or warm-up phase. Brainstorming assists EFL/ESL students to be critical thinkers, McCoy (1976) makes is in favor of brainstorming because it makes students learn problem-solving skills to reduce their anxiety before writing. Brainstorming can be done individually or by diving students into groups. Also, creating an outline in the pre-writing phase can be used.

Figure 3 shows how the respondents feel about the pre-writing stage of creating a structured outline. Half of the respondents, 50%, found that they never write an outline and organize their ideas before writing. 15% responded to sometimes they do outline and another 15% found that they rarely create an outline before writing. 10% always and usually found that it was necessary to create an outline before writing.

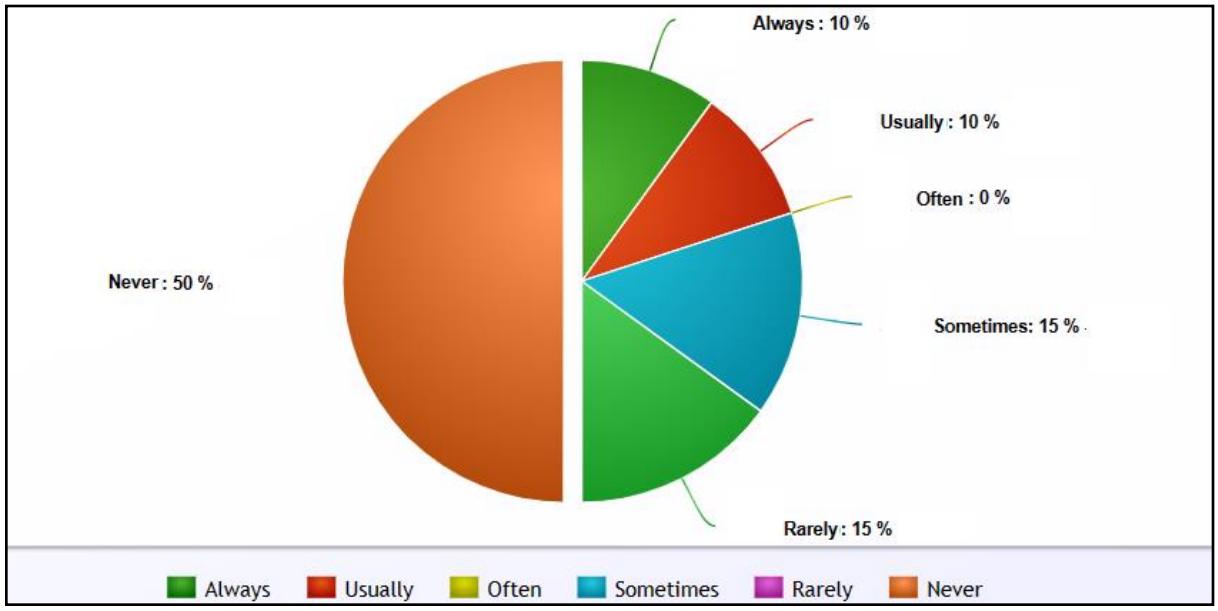


Figure 3: Pre-writing stage: outlining

Most of the participants from the elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate writing levels found that outlining was not that important. Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) explain how creating an outline creates a hierarchical structure and that outlines work best when planning more complex texts, such as business reports, research, novels and research articles. Creating an outline for complex text is therefore necessary. Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) refer to Sharples (1999) study by explaining how simple writing modes such as essays or summaries can make an outline or simply list ideas may be as successful as writing a paper. Sharples (1999) findings suggest how formal structured or informal outlines benefit students by organizing their ideas into producing a writing text.

5.3 Grammar correctness in writing

Explicit instruction is instructor lead where students receive clear and guided instructions with explanations of the rule being taught. Schimidt (1990) noticed the explicit grammar teaching raised awareness in conscious learning.

Figure 4 shows that 80 % of the respondents find that they usually understand the grammatical rule when taught explicitly, while 10% always felt that they always understand the grammatical rule when taught explicitly, and another 10% found that they often understood the grammatical rule. This suggests that EFL Arab students in the elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate level prefer explicit rule teaching of grammar.

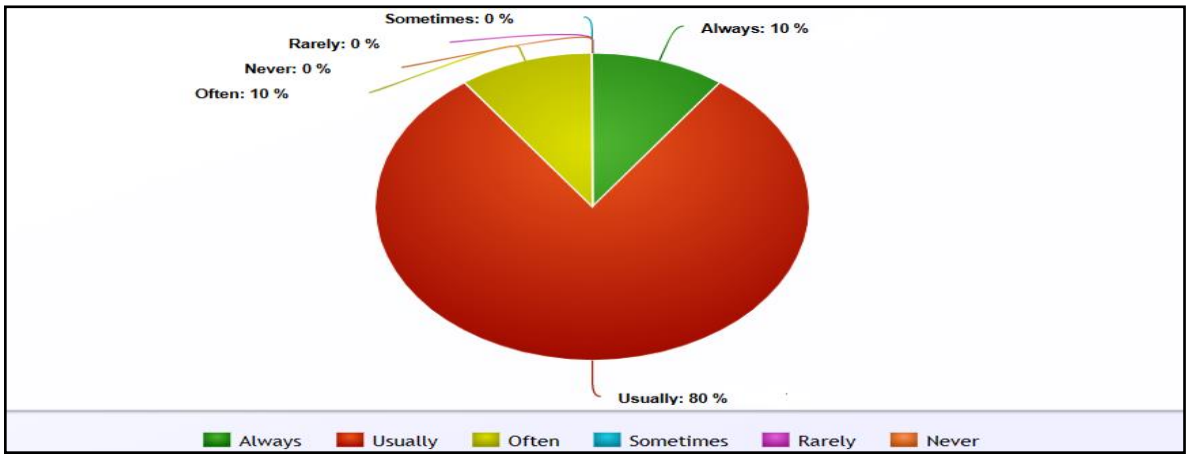


Figure 4: Ability to apply the grammatical rule in explicit teaching

Figure 5 shows that 80 % of the respondents usually found that they were able to apply the grammatical rule in writing when taught explicitly. 10% always found that they were always able to apply the grammatical rule, and the other 10% were sometimes able to apply the grammatical rule when taught explicitly in writing.

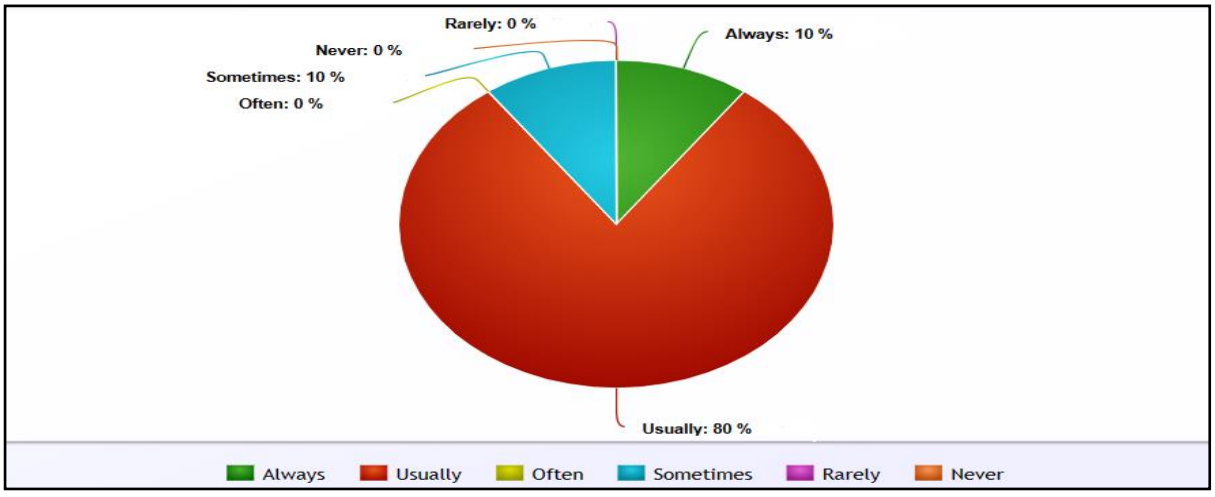


Figure 5: Understand and apply the grammar rule in explicit teaching when writing

In contrast, implicit teaching instruction the instructor expects students to infer the missing information. To explain, in implicit grammar teaching, teachers show examples of sentences to students from authentic texts. The learners would then deduce rules unconsciously (Andrews, 2007).

Figure 6 shows how 75% of the respondents sometimes understand the grammar rule when it is implicitly taught, while 20% found that they rarely understand the implicit grammar rule when taught indirectly. Only 5% responded that they often understand the grammar rules when taught implicitly.

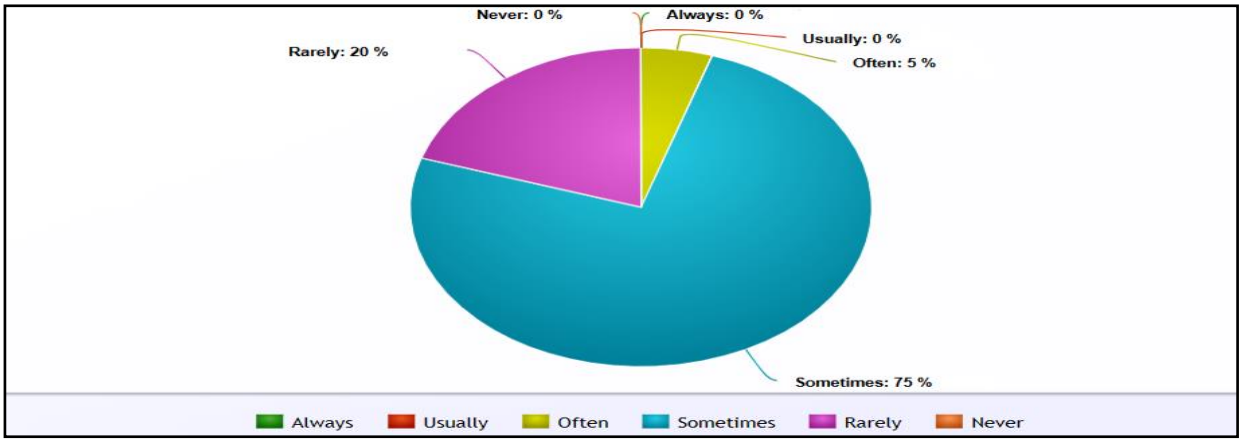


Figure 6: Understand the grammar rule in implicit teaching

Figure 7 shows that most of the respondents, 60%, feel that sometimes can apply the grammatical rule in writing when it was taught implicitly, while 20% often understood how to apply the grammatical rule in writing when taught implicitly. 15% found that they can rarely apply the correct grammatical rule. Finally, only 5% found that they usually can integrate the correct grammatical structure in writing when it was taught implicitly.

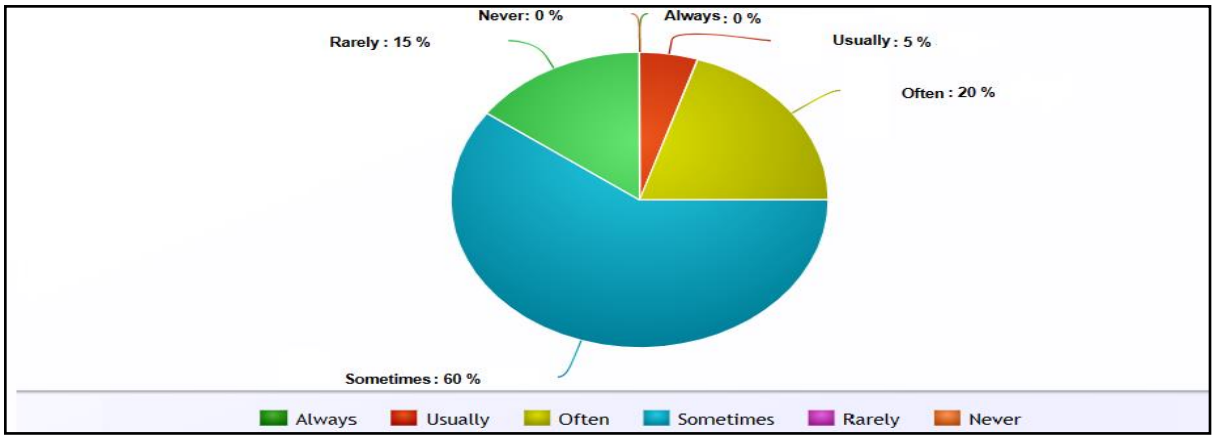


Figure 7: Ability to apply the grammatical rule in implicit teaching when writing

Therefore, most students found that explicit grammar teaching is more beneficial than the implicit approach as manifested in the results of the questionnaire. Celce-Murcia (1991) confirms that explicit teaching is better for adults, whereas implicit teaching fits best for teaching children. This is true since explicit teaching requires students to understand technical terminologies that can be viewed as difficult for children. Another study conducted by Seeink (2007) examined the effect of explicit instruction on developing six ESL students writing, by using questionnaire, observation, and journal writing. The results showed that explicit instruction of collocations greatly assisted students in

improving their writing quality and using different collocations.

5.4 Revising for correctness and content

90% of the respondents in figure 8 always revised their essay to correct their grammatical errors or edit their ideas, while 10% usually reviewed their final writing draft.

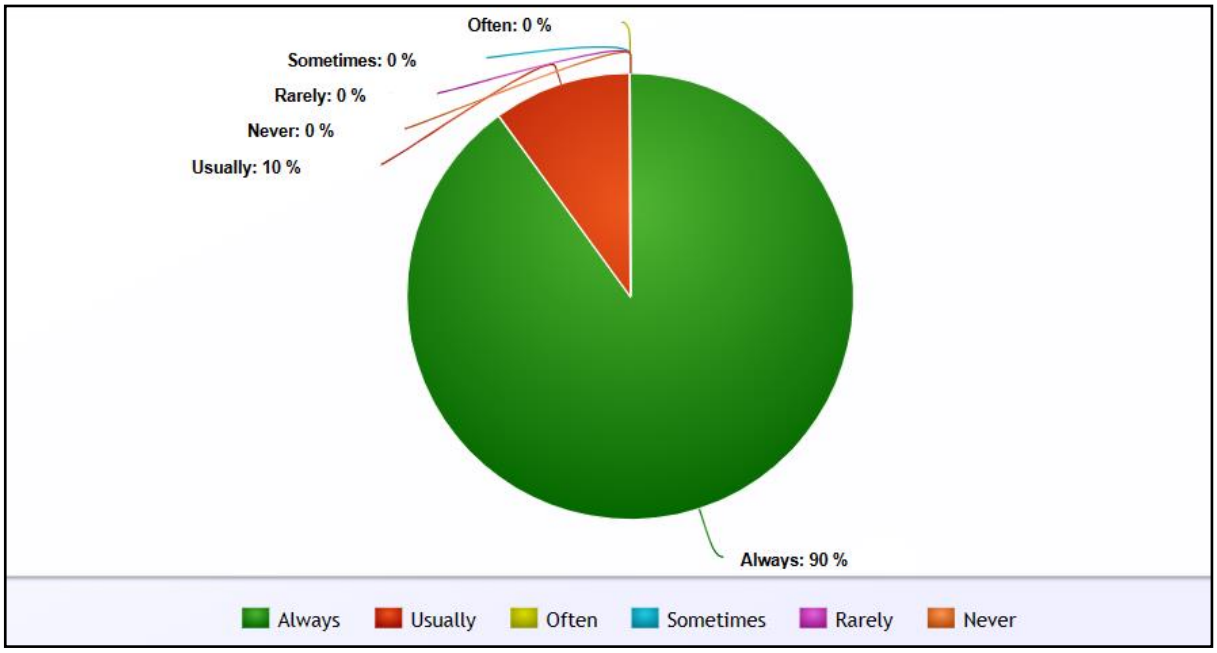


Figure 8: Revising students final drafts for accuracy and content

The importance of self-correctness by reviewing student's essay is essential in academic writing. To explain, lexical errors made by ESL/ EFL Arab learners is very common this is why it is important for EFL/ESL Arab learners need to review their final drafts. According to the results in figure 8, all respondents felt it was crucial to review their final drafts.

In fact, one of the main problems that Arab learners encounter is that they sometimes overuse the Arabic-English or English –Arabic dictionary through various applications, such as Google translator. This can lead to lexical errors, as well as incorrect sentence structures causing fragments or run-ons (see figure 9)

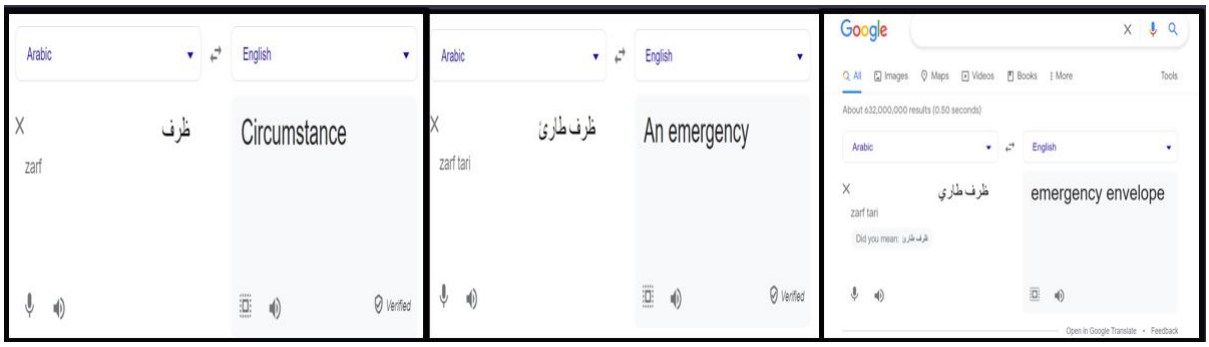


Figure 9: Errors from Google translation-Arabic to English

AbiSamra (2003) demonstrates how lexical errors were made by Lebanese students in their writing. Literal translation from Arabic leads to lexical errors. Abi Samara further explains how Arab students might use "stay on" instead of "continue" or "keep on" using the inappropriate equivalent can lead to confusion when writing. The following are some examples of lexical errors.

Incorrect	**Correct**
He has a right mindset.	He is mindful.
He has a strong disease.	He has a severe illness.

Table 3: Lexical errors

Also, Arab learners can often make collocation errors due to the differences in word combination between English and Arabic. There are two types of collocations, Al-Salmani (2002) and Emery (1991) classify the types of collocations as open collocations and restricted collocations. Al-Salmani (2002) and Emery (1991) further explain how open collocations include words that gather a wide range of other words; however restricted collections include idioms that are fixed. These word combinations can be challenging for Arab learners because open and closed collocations are also classified as grammatical and lexical collocations. To explain, grammatical collocations are combinations where a preposition is used in a sentence. Prepositions can be used with a noun, a verb, or an adjective.

Grammatical Collocation
Go with
Afraid of
By chance

Table 4: Grammatical collocations

Therefore, students acknowledge the importance of self-correction and editing before submitting their final writing draft.

5.5 Patch writing and plagiarism

Giving clear instructions on what plagiarized work means and providing examples is important for EFL/ESL students to understand. Aldohmi (2017) as cited in (Albanawi, 2017) explains that plagiarism amongst Saudi students to "ignorance about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it", "insufficient training about academic ethics and integrity and … the risks of academic misconduct". The education system in Saudi Arabia and in the Arab world do not have a clear guideline on what is to be considered as plagiarized work. This can be the influence of the cross-cultural barriers from the L1 culture on what plagiarism is. To explain, ESL/ EFL Arab students seem to find that they can use patch writing and imitate the sample essay by paraphrasing some words or sentences.

Figure 10 shows that 90% of the respondents sometimes copy sentences from the writing sample provided. Similarly, figure 11 shows that 95% of the respondents do not consider copying a few sentences from the sample essay as plagiarized work.

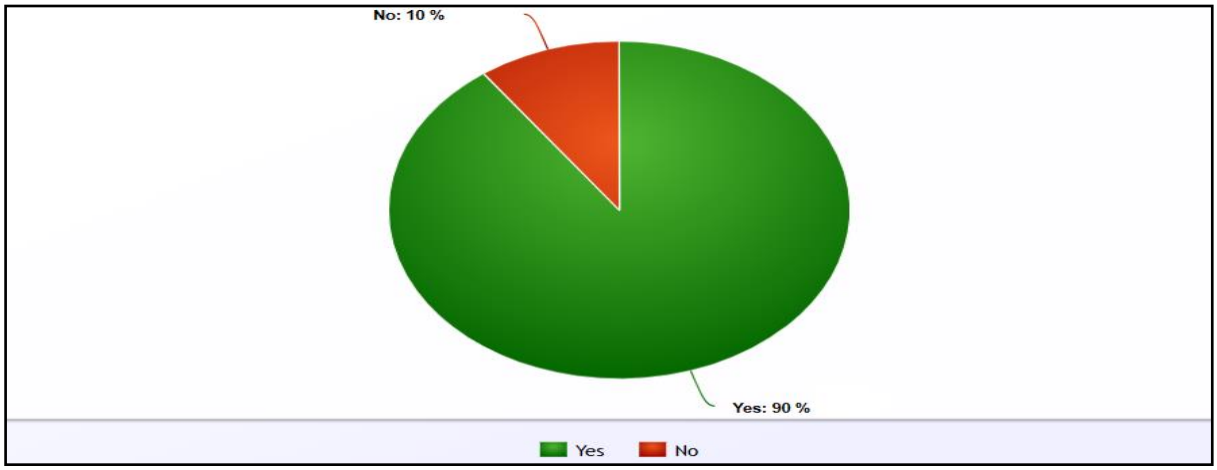


Figure 10: Sometimes copy sentences from the writing sample provided

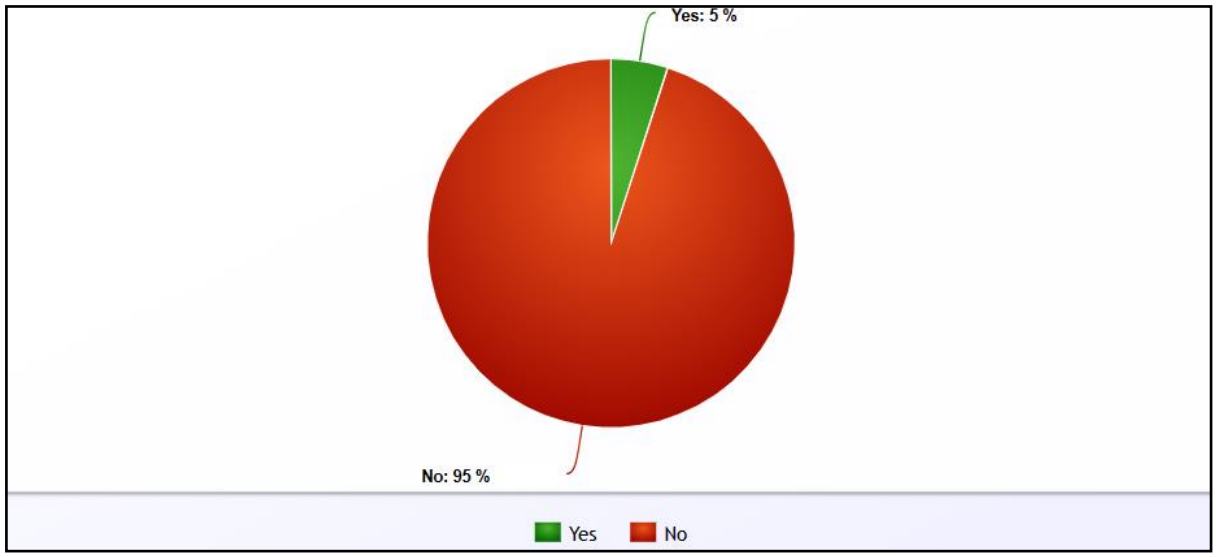


Figure 11: Copying sentences is plagiarized work

The cross-cultural differences can lead to ESL/EFL Arab students to copy from the model essay as shown in figure 12. The highlighted red part detected by TURNITIN, is an example of how a student copied the thesis statement and the topic sentence in the first body paragraph.

like an apartment or having a house. When choosing a place to live, parents should consider the main differences between living in an apartment and living in a house.

The main difference between Living in an apartment and in a house is the amount that people spend. Living in an apartment is cheaper to rent. For example, most of the apartments in Kuwait is between 400 and 600 KD. Also, if people want to buy an apartment is cheaper, it's between 200 and 300 thousand KD. Moreover, the monthly payments for needs is low. On the other hand, living in a house it has expensive rental, it's between 1500 and 2500.

Figure 12: Students imitate good essays

5.6 Corrective Feedback

There are two main types of corrective feedback, this includes direct feedback or indirect feedback. Direct feedback is formally known as correcting all the grammatical errors, including spelling mistakes and verb tense. Correcting mistakes includes crossing out unnecessary words, inserting missing words or writing the correct word form (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). On the other hand, indirect feedback is pointing out the areas of errors without directly correcting them. The student must identify the type of error and correct it. Indirect feedback allows students to develop their problem-solving skills in academic writing. (Ferris, 2003, p. 3)

Figure 13 shows that 90% (18 respondents) prefer to receive direct feedback from the instructor, by pointing out the errors and correcting them, while 10% (2 respondents) preferred indirect feedback to find the errors and acknowledge their areas of weaknesses. This shows that most of the elementary, low-intermediate and intermediate EFL Arab students prefer to directly view the errors with the corrections in place.

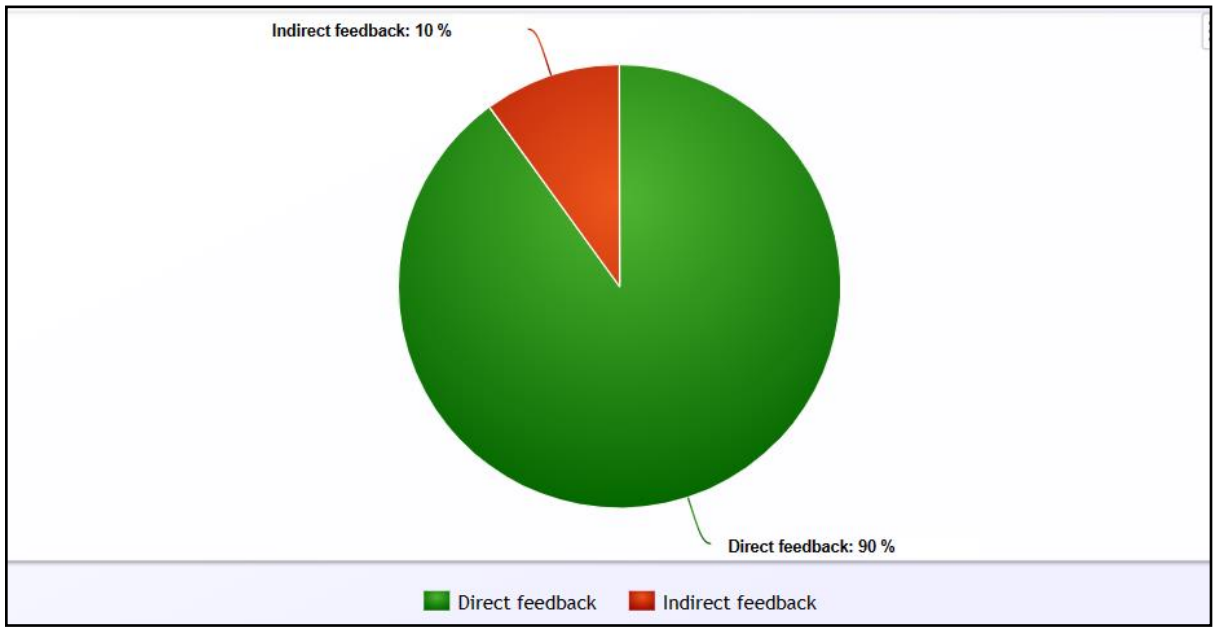


Figure 13: Students preference for receiving feedback

Figure 14 demonstrates the areas of weaknesses and difficulties when receiving corrective feedback on students' writing based on correctness and content. Regarding correctness and accuracy, 90% (18 respondents) found that they have a problem with verb tenses. In fact, Arabic does not have past participles. This leads to failure to use and misunderstanding of the usage of the present perfect tense. 75% of the respondents found that punctuation and sentence structure is another area of weakness. 60% found that they have capitalization errors.50% (10 respondents) found that they had errors related to spelling, while 15 % had problems related to vocabulary. The differences between the two languages from the literature review (refer to Table 1), demonstrate how the L1 interference affects students' correctness. To clarify, the absence of capitalization and lack of punctuation in Arabic can negatively impact on ESL/EFL Arab learners academic writing skills in English.

Also, Arabic and English can be seen in the sentence structure, as Arabic is a VSO (verb, subject, and object), English is an SVO (subject, verb, and object) Alkhateeb (2016). The influence from L1 is indeed present when learning L2. Alkhateeb (2016) continues to clarify how some problems can influence writing, such as the omission of the verb to be, substituting adjectives for adverbs, and misuse of past tense (p. 100).

Regarding content, 60% of the respondents found that paraphrasing was challenging when receiving corrective feedback, while 40% found that generating ideas was difficult.

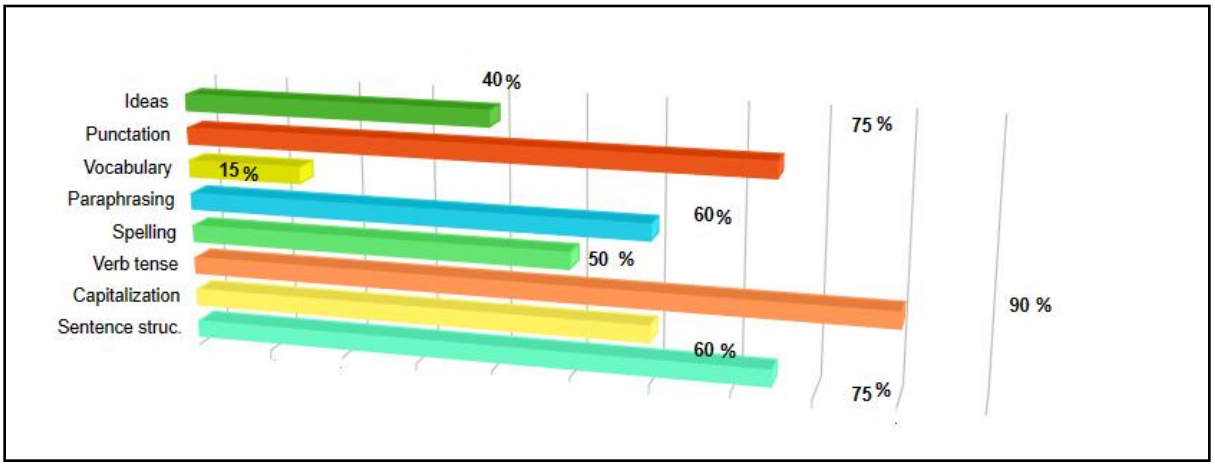


Figure 14: Areas of weaknesses or/ difficulties when receiving corrective feedback on students' writing

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The results of this study, and recommendations can be suggested to avoid difficulties that are present in writing to improve ESL/ EFL Arab students' writing proficiency. Various solutions should be taken into consideration when dealing with academic writing in an ESL/ EFL context.

For example, English rhetorical styles for content and grammar must be explicitly taught to elementary, low-intermediate, and intermediate level. Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) explain how writing should be practiced through the production of multiple drafts, and that students should be familiar with the common rhetorical styles of writing. The most common academic modes of writing according to Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) include the different genres of writing, such as descriptive, exposition, comparison, contrast, text analysis and argument. Adequate exposure of different modes of writing is crucial for students' writing progress.

Also, educators should consider showing sample essays, but they must also be aware that students may repeat ideas from the writing sample presented. Vicinus and Eisner (2009) explain how students who were engaged with patch writing by copying sentences, but this may lead to accidental plagiarism. could have accidentally plagiarized their work. Teachers must give clear instructions and explanations concerning the consequences of plagiarism.

Explicitly teaching grammar to Arab learners can deepen students understanding to the grammatical rule. Giving clear instructions to the grammar concepts assists students to be aware of the construction of the linguistic features in English. For example, to teach the past participle to ESL/ EFL Arab students, teachers can introduce semi-controlled writing activity games and hand-outs.

Other than providing direct corrective feedback or indirect corrective feedback, educators can introduce other types of feedback that can include marginal comments and endnotes to motivate students, and keep them engaged (Goldstein, 2004). Recorded comments, figure 15, and receiving one-to-one feedback from the instructor can be beneficial for students. Also, electronic comments with electronic platforms such as Moodle, figure 16, or Blackboard is another way for students to acknowledge their errors.

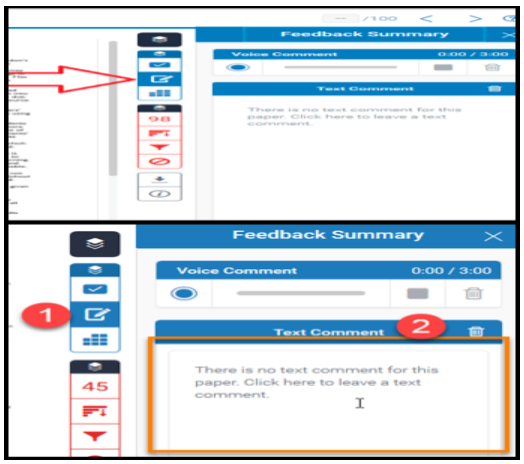


Figure 15: TURNITIN voice recorder

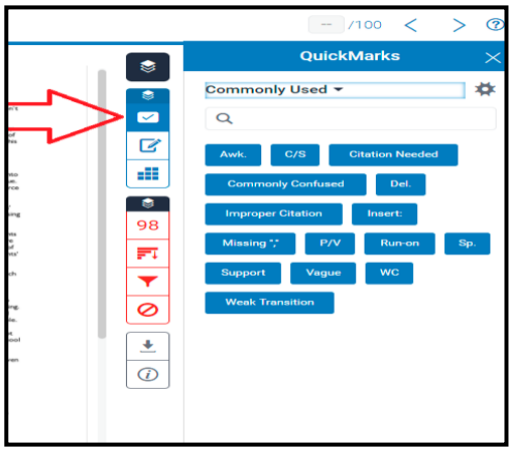


Figure 16: TURNITIN indirect corrective feedback

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Leading a School Transformation by Creating an Environment of Trust and Collaboration: An Autoethnography

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Abstract

School leadership is critical in ensuring the education system's effectiveness, both in quality and quantity. A leader in a school may play a significant role in creating a conducive environment for students, teachers, staff, parents, and other stakeholders. This paper reports a case of a school principal who, in her own words, recounts her experiences of leading the school's transformation from an ordinary public school to a nationally recognized one within three years of her tenure. We used autoethnography as a genre of writing personal, evocative narratives to portray the transformative leadership experience. The first author wrote the autobiographical vignettes, placing her personal experiences into the social, cultural, and historical context of the United Arab Emirates. Then, the second author interpreted these narrative experiential anecdotes, connecting the critical nodal moments with the theory of critical transformative leadership to make sense of personal experiences within the social, cultural, and historical context. The thematic interpretive portrayals reveal four key moments of transformative school leadership practices— Accepting Challenges amid Uncertainty: Experience as a Novice School Leader; Building Relationships, Gaining Trust, and Dealing with Challenges; Dreaming of a Model School and Exposure to the Environment; and Successful Keys to Leading Change and Vision for the Future. We have discussed some practical implications of these themes.

Keywords: School leadership, leading change, transformative leadership, public school, UAE

Cite as: Mohamed, A. (2023). Leading a school transformation by creating an environment of trust and collaboration: An autoethnography. *TESOL Kuwait Journal 1*(1). 57-73. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction

Leading the school change in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and all over the world seemed to be the main challenge in any educational system as it required a careful selection of the candidate (leader) who should prove a school reform in all aspects and to meet the goals of the educational system. Based on the scholarly literature, some researchers recognized that almost all Western countries witnessed various "reforms" to curricula, pedagogies, and leadership styles throughout the 1980s (Apple, 2006; Forssell, 2015; Snook et al., 1999; Wilkins, 2015). For instance, in the United States (US), the decision-makers had to rethink the status of education after the extremely influential US report "A Nation at Risk" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). They advocated for changes in educational offerings and critiqued the poor quality of school education in the US during that period. It highly emphasized reform in the educational system

to maintain and promote the essence of American society, culture, and its values beyond the material well-being of industry, commerce, and structural development. Mayer (1992) report issued by the Finn Committee in Australia, resulted in important reforms to vocational education programs and a determined focus on establishing graduate proficiencies to guarantee high skills and greater employability of graduates. Moreover, in the United Kingdom during the 1980s, there were widespread concerns about falling standards in schools and poor basic skills among young employees Hence, a number of market forces were implemented by the UK government into their education systems, including parental choice and encouraging their participation in governmental authorities, and connecting the school budget with the enrollment of students. The aim of these modifications was to increase student success (Machin & Vignoles, 2006).

Moreover, *Towards the Year 2000 report* was published by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 1984 which proposed changes to adapt to universal conditions, such as cultural and demographic changes, environmental changes, new employability skills, and the changing roles of women in society and suggested that these should reform the education policies of the province (O'Sullivan, 1999; Sattler, 2012).

Like many other countries, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the UAE has taken necessary steps to reevaluate the current educational system in the UAE. These steps are based on the UAE National Agenda and Vision 2021. The ministry initiated these steps to unify the inspection criteria by introducing schools' inspection framework 2016. This framework comprises six performance standards that include students' achievement, personal and social development and their innovation skills, teaching and assessment, curriculum, the protection, care, guidance, and support of students, and leadership and management (Ministry of Education, 2022). These six key elements in the inspection framework provide the school leaders a guideline for improving teaching-learning with best possible opportunity for students to learn, develop, and embrace human values. However, school leaders might have several challenges to stand on these six key pillars of education despite the policy in place.

A case study conducted by Tabassum (2018) investigated the role of school leaders in managing change through school transformation in the context of the school transformation process in the UAE. She investigated how school leaders navigate the challenges they face in the process of change. Through her qualitative and quantitative data analysis, she found that school leaders need a variety of leadership skills during the school transformation process depending on the situation. In addition, she suggested a continuous professional development program for all stakeholders that can overcome the challenges on the journey of leading towards the change. She insisted on the importance of collaborative learning that supports everyone to learn from others. Likewise, in another study, Zahran et al. (2016) examined the role educational leaders in the reform initiatives in the UAE. They outlined some leadership challenges at the school level (micro level) and at the policy level (macro-level). The micro level challenges at the school level has been critical to emanate the country's vision to develop a competitive foundation for sustainable economic development. These challenges include enhancing quality of public education to prepare students for the competitive future and collaborate effectively to widen the

scope of quality education with equity and justice (Al Suwaidi, 2011). There seems to be several initiatives introduced amid challenges in the schools to improve teaching and learning environment in the UAE. However, there is limited information on how school leaders embrace these initiatives and go through actual change management. In this context, this study aims to explore the personal journey of a school leader while leading the school change from an ordinary public school to an effective smart school.

Firstly, we discussed autoethnography as a method of this study. Then, we set a scenario for this study that explains the context and settings of Ameirah's current school. Third, we presented Ameirah's experiences in the form of narratives to represent experiences that portray the important instances of challenges and how changes took place. While making sense of Ameirah's school transformative leadership experiences, we present her autobiographies, experiences, and situations in her school at various times. We are aware of ethical issues, and we followed the norms as a researcher because ethics entitles a code of professional conduct or norms for conduct that highlights what is acceptable and what is not. Following appropriate citations and references to linking theory, we presented Ameirah's narratives and interpretations without any bias that we have elaborated in the quality criteria.

Autoethnography as a Method of Study

In the present study, we have used Ameirah's (the first author's) personal experience from her leading journey and thus we have chosen autoethnography as a method of research and drafting the story of leading change in her current school. Ellis (2004) described autoethnography as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Therefore, we have considered Ameirah a primary participant in the study to explore her experiences on the journey of leading the change and training her team members in different situations and categorize her experiences with instances in the form of narratives. The central questions in this study were:

1. How did Ameirah lead the change?
2. How did Ameirah groom herself as a leader being a novice leader in a tough school with key issues?
3. How did Ameirah's dream of school transformation come true?

In this study, Ameirah presented her experience as a leader, teacher, educator, and researcher. This new journey helped her to explore the leadership field, learn from scratch and grow up as a leader when she was young with zero experience in the field as she was promoted directly to a school principal without being a vice principal. She trained herself to put theory into practice and encouraged the team members to understand the situation and work towards the journey of leading the change. This autoethnography helped her change her conception of leading the change. Additionally, Ellis (2011) stated that autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist. We chose this

research methodology because we wish to deliver a message to all promising leaders across the world that leaders should believe in their strengths and convert their ideology into practice which impacts the growth of their educational organization. In this study, Ameirah reflected on her voices, feelings, beliefs, emotions, and values based on her experiences to make sense of her identity as a leader, being aware of all of the responsibilities assigned to a leader and accountable for every action in the school. According to Poulos, 2020 autoethnography is identified as a methodology to express any individual as a researcher and analyzed at the same moment bringing their experiences upfront in the social, cultural, and historical contexts of UAE linking the educational issues from past experiences which help to call for a change. Ameirah got an opportunity to work in many schools. As her aim was to be a leader in the future, she worked closely with the administration involved in all admin-related issues which helped her to analyze the decisions taken by the previous principal. It is always her strength in learning from others through observation by accepting their strengths and removing unacceptable leadership traits when she became a principal. As a result of her hard work, she was promoted to a lead principal in the sector within two years of her leadership career. Under her guidance, there are 13 schools in addition to her main school seeking her academic support to improve their respective school. She wrote reflective-narrative anecdotes of her lived experiences of leading the change in her current school. Then, we thematized the narratives based on the critical points of experiences.

Method of Writing and Interpreting Narratives

First, we both discussed how to proceed with the study process. We decided that Ameirah would write her narratives based on her experiences of going through transformative leadership practices in her school as a novice principal and taking different steps and having different critical nodal moments in the process. Ameirah wrote a few episodes of experiential anecdotes in narrative form. Then we discussed some potential themes coming from her narratives. The second author read these narratives several times to make sense of key ideas that would potentially emerge from them. He observed some preliminary themes based on the critical moments of Ameriah’s experiences and shared them with her. We agreed upon four major themes from the narratives and organized them in the form of four narrative passes to develop autoethnographic vignettes.

The second author interpreted these vignettes in the social, cultural, and historical context of the UAE and relevant theories of school and organizational leadership from the lens of transformative leadership praxis. We used personal narratives to critically present Ameirah's personal experiences. These experiences helped her break from traditional concepts and achieve the current positive change that has had a huge impact on educational organizations as a whole. According to Belbase (2006), applying the autoethnographic method helped us to make sense of personal experiences in different contexts, and that might possibly help the readers to make sense of their lived experiences. Hence, we have chosen Ameirah as a primary participant in this study to write about her lived experience as a promising leader that might help in stimulating the change that she and other leaders are looking forward to as professional practitioners.

Quality Criteria for the Study

We focused on the four quality criteria to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. First, we dealt with the ethics of privacy and protection of identity. For this, we did not reveal the actual name of the school and the persons associated. Even then, there is the possibility that anyone who knows the authors may find out their workplace history and relate the context of this study. However, we embraced positivity and ethics of no harm in this study without portraying any negative image of the institution and persons associated with it. Second, we adopted the principle of the authenticity of the data in this study by portraying the true experience of the first author. The truthfulness of data in the form of Ameirah's leadership practices resonates with the past and present school environment. Third, we applied the principle of contextualization of experiential anecdotes in the social, cultural, and historical context of the UAE. Ameirah placed herself in the big picture of the country's ambition to achieve high in the national and international tests at one side and social, cultural and historical values and traditions on the other side balance each other. Fourth, we embraced the principle of verisimilitude by writing the narratives in such a way that they present true experiences on one hand and the potential to generate an experience of being there in the moment while reading them.

Results and Discussion

Setting the Study Scenario

When I think of the school at the beginning and the positive change that happened now, I realized that it has undergone a huge transition from the traditional setup to a promising 21st century expected international standards although I was not informed of the exact challenges faced by the school at that time until I figure out the real situation. When I joined, I took a school tour to analyze the needed requirements for the better implementation of my vision of upgrading the school as one of the top schools in the area, but I was shocked to see the infrastructure with missing whiteboards, poor network connectivity, non-usage of science labs due to the size of the class, etc. as it is one of the oldest schools in the area which started 25 years ago. I researched many global best practices of leadership and how to lead the change and I was inspired by "turnaround schools" that are practiced by the majority of world-class schools which help to execute dramatic and rapid change in schools that has been instituted for those deemed to be "chronically failing" schools (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011). They highlighted that one of the keys to turning around schools is in the early identification of indicators of poor performance with the view to faster intervention. Also, according to Leithwood & Strauss (2009), the turnaround change consists of three main stages: declining performance, crisis stabilization, and sustaining and improving performance. Keeping these stages in my mind, I called for comprehensive maintenance in the whole school and as a result, it was upgraded to a very attractive learning environment provided with excellent advanced equipment that supports the learning process which saves the time and efforts of teachers as well as students. Allocating lab facilities for each STEM subject, a widespread library area with all types of books, safety-measured aligned playgrounds, a good medical room, etc. provides our learners feel safe and secure learning environment

The school which is used in this study is a government secondary school (Cycle3) which is located in one of the northern emirates in the United Arab Emirates. It consists of four grade levels starting from grade 9 and ending with grade 12. In each grade, there are two main branches: advanced and general branches. There are more than 600 students enrolled in this school and more than 40 staff members are working here, thus

compared to the other high school, it is considered one of the biggest schools in terms of size. The school started in 1993 with very few students and staff. Based on the previous administrator's report, a few maintenance like notable building cracks, and water and electricity maintenance took place and I understood that the school did not undergo any renovation which is a must to occupy all suitable facilities required for a productive 21st-century learning environment. When the previous school principal retired in January 2018 and the school was led by the academic affairs unit who were trying to run the school operations on a regular basis by only documenting attendance, students' entry and exit, communication with visitors and parents and any reports asked by the cluster manager. Even though she held huge responsibility, she lacks the necessary knowledge and skills in the leadership field. She did not even receive any guidance from the top leadership as she reported to me. She thought that leading a school is just about running a school operation but there are other important areas that need to be taken care of like action plans, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, data analysis, and documenting the schoolwork.

When I start leading the school, one of the main issues that I observed is the poor school network which was not accessible in most of the school areas like administration, teachers' rooms, library, and theatre, and even very poor network connection in important areas like classrooms and school computer labs. Additionally, more than 6 classrooms were using whiteboards whereas the rest of the classes used the new smartboard but due to lack of knowledge, teachers tent to use these smartboards as a traditional whiteboard. As the administration did not follow up on the usage of soft skills, they also did not exert any effort to activate and use their learning management system (LMS) which is considered the main school platform although they have gone through an intensive training program provided by the Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid smart learning team. In terms of communicating with parents, there was no official channel for the school, so if the parents need anything, he or she needs to come personally to the school. Also, most of the administrators were not qualified for their posts, and the majority of them sat and chat which affected their productivity. All staff enters and exit the school as they like without informing the administration and as a result, the school was in a pathetic situation on the path to being a good school. There was zero tracking system which affected the true functioning of a good school. They depend mainly on the academic affairs unit which uses the whole thing in the school as she reported whenever I asked them to do something, they said we don't know, or we don't have this document. She was very emotional, she had many personal relationships with most of the school members as they are coming from the same areas, that's why she was very careful when she asked them to do something and most of the time, she did the task required because she didn't want to bother them. Also, there were no communication tools used with stakeholders namely teachers, students, and parents to know the actual teaching-learning.

Since it is a government school, there were numerous school policies like behavior policy, absent policy, etc. which were circulated to all schools by the ministry in order to manage the learning process. However, due to the situation which is mentioned above no one including the social workers who are truly responsible to implement such policies is not bothered about the importance of these policies and did not take any effort to read and understand the core of the policies. They were not aware of the negative consequences which directly affect the students' academic achievement. As a result of this, the majority of the students exceeded the limit of behavioral issues like bunking, bullying, etc., and did not follow any rules and regulations expected by the school with overconfidence that no action will be taken for their unacceptable behavior. Also, they did not follow the school code of conduct and they did not wear school uniforms. The majority of the students and

teachers did not even attend the morning assembly instead they sit their own rooms which was not acceptable and that is the major cause behind the issues.

Regardless of all these issues, I realized that there were some strengths that help me to lead the change. For instance, I noticed that students' achievement is high when compared to the other schools. Also, the school is located in the heart of the city of Kalba and so it is easy to reach the local community which helps the school to pair up with external organizations to develop the student as a whole. In addition, we were able to initiate many projects that could be supported by partnerships with neighboring schools which will enhance holistic development. Additionally, many students were supported by their parents to participate in competitions, and they won prizes in different levels across the country and across the Gulf countries.

These instances made me alert but at the same time encouraged me to study the situations in detail and to use scientific tools before I take a wise decision. The school I chose as a part of the case study was established 29 years ago that strongly built a long-standing culture and so, leading the change is a very difficult task for me due to the nature of its culture. But still, I was confident that I can break the status-quo set already and motivate all stakeholders to keep moving forward with the goal of reaching the best school in the city.

Accepting Challenge Amid Uncertainty: Experience as a Novice School Leader

Initially, when it was announced that I am moved as a new principal to a school which is located in different Emirates without providing me any justification for this shift, I was shocked to hear the rumors from my colleagues as I was promoted at a very young age which cannot be accepted by many of my colleagues and senior teachers who were waiting for this chance. I am in a difficult situation to accept the promotion order but at the same time, I cannot deny it as opportunities come once. During the first three weeks, I was stressed because I was strange to the local community as I come from different Emirates and moreover, I was promoted directly to be a principal without any administration background in such a school that has no organized official documents. Hiding the truth about the current situation in the school was another dilemma that made my mission more complicated. But I was confident that I can bring a good change by creating a well conducive environment through which I can upgrade the school by following a number of strategies identified by Leithwood & Sun (2012) like school leaders need to adopt different trial and error strategies in order to be successful in turning around poor-performing schools. Moreover, Burke (2011) also suggests revolutionary change is "a significant makeover of the organization leading to a modified new mission, a shift in strategy, leadership, and culture" and occurs infrequently. In tune with these suggestions, by continuous hard work, dedication, and support from team members, I was able to keep improving the school in different areas in particular students' achievements and this was possible only by creating healthy relationships, setting high expectations, sharing the vision, and distributing roles and responsibilities to each individual. This was supported by Bandura, 1997; Snowman et al., 2012 that effective change agents will most likely be comfortable with approaching a change initiative due to the excitement that is experienced in being successful again with a new change.

Based on the excellent performance executed in the previous years and the huge trust that was developed among the leaders in the MOE, I was promoted as the School Principal in 2018. I was considered one of the youngest school principals in that period. I was assigned to one of the largest schools in Fujairah city. For me, it was a proud and privileged moment to be selected among all the candidates to work in such a top position

and at the same time, was an immense challenge because she did not have enough experience in the field of school administration. I just worked 6 months in the academic affairs unit and was directly promoted to the rank of School Principal, without being a Vice Principal. However, I accepted the challenge and promised myself as well as her heads in MOE that she will do her level best to reform the school positively and productively. They gave me an overview of the school which was led without a leader for one full academic year as the previous school principal resigned, and they did not find a suitable person to lead at that time.

During my first month, I studied all the aspects of the school including academic affairs, services affairs, and students' affairs using different tools such as school reports, results in analysis, observations, classroom visits, and available school documents. But for me, it was not enough to have a deep understanding of the real situation of the school. Whenever I inquired about certain official documents, it was not available, especially the inspection report which is considered one of the most important reports that will help her to have a clear idea about the school. I decided to start from scratch instead of waiting for a long time in getting the documents from other sources like the cluster manager or from the previous administration.

I believe in the saying of John Keats, "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced." If I was not challenged by the above-mentioned situation, I wouldn't have experienced the reality of leading the change. Two main causes of learning modes namely learning by committing mistakes and learning from others made me alert and strong to lead the positive change in my educational institution. This experience was supported by the experiential learning theory which explains the importance of learning through experience. According to Cherry, K. (2020), this theory was initially proposed by psychologist David Kolb in 1984 who emphasized how experiences influence the learning process. Kolb defined experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming the experience." This theory encouraged me to believe in the fact that experience is the best teacher. I followed a unique leadership style that suits the needs of the learning environment, and I considered all factors before I implemented the improvement plan.

Looking around me and being on the spot, I realized that the situation at the school will not change unless I take the initial step to transform the school. Thus, I used the benefits from the whole data that I collected in the first two months although they were not enough. Many important documents and reports like the last inspection report and students' achievement results for the last three years which was not available at that time. However, what I have collected from different resources helped me at least to figure out the areas of strengths and the areas which need improvements in the school. Another source of power that made me insist to go through this battle is the inspiring words and the huge trust that was put in me by the cluster manager, I remembered that the cluster manager from time to time say that *"You were selected among all of the candidates to lead this school and we believed in your capabilities to do that ".* Building a strong rapport among all stakeholders from the beginning of my journey toward leading the change help me to diminish my resilience and I discover the capabilities of each individual before I assign tasks or posts to them. No one is marginalized in the journey.

Building Relationship, Gaining Trust, and Dealing with Challenges

When I think of the moments of struggle, I went through a difficult mindset by hearing and seeing different attitudes of the people in accepting me as a young new principal who is coming from different Emirates. I was

confused about how to build a good relationship with students, teachers, and admin staff, especially with the head of the academic affairs unit who is already acting as a principal in the previous year and was deliberately expecting to be promoted as a principal. As Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory explained the importance of reinforcement in embedding positive behaviors, increasing the motivation to continue with a new behavior and raising self-efficacy, that is "how capable one feels to handle particular kinds of tasks" (Snowman, McCown, & Biehler, 2012). In addition, I was extended strength by the words of my mother, " *It is easy and better to work with unknown people than known*". Holding those words as my spirit, I decided to take up the challenge of establishing a good rapport with all team members and gaining their trust and I succeeded in achieving that perfect relationship. Because of this positive spread of happiness, I was able to assign roles that were taken up by everyone on a happy note and we worked as one family completing all tasks productively which gives me the confidence to achieve the goal of leading a change in the school. From the beginning of my journey as a school principal, I have been keen on creating a very positive school culture, a school culture may be defined as the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). Thus, I have started to establish a good relationship with all staff, especially those who used to work with ease and without guidance nor instruction. To put them on one track was very difficult at the early stage. Whatever she asked administrators, the answer she received was the following "*We never used to do this, or Nobody will check or ask about such documents, so why should we do this?* or simply *"This is not my job".* She also faced resistance from the teachers as well who also refused to do most of the work which is considered as a basic task in any school. She did not blame them but was completely able to understand the situation. I realized that I should deal with them in a different way and instead of giving them orders or instructions, she should use the strategic approach to convince and create a positive atmosphere on the school campus. She was aware to follow "Management with Love" as the core element in the school.

I studied job descriptions for all of the staff and organized individual meetings with the administrators because their roles and responsibilities vary from individual to individual whereas, I conducted general meetings with teachers whose job description was the same. I discussed and gave clear ideas on what is expected from them and at the end I asked them to sign on the conduct of acknowledgment. I did not force anyone to work rather I facilitated the work for them, and created many tools which help them to do the tasks required in a very easy way. I was also involved in all work that was assigned to them. After a certain period, they started to understand my leading personality, and they acquired many skills and experiences from the new system. The majority of the school's members admired my personality and the way I dealt with the parents, students, and staff. And that was the key factor that help me to develop a good rapport with all other members in the channel.

At the end of one academic year, I was successful in improving the important aspects of the school which was basically: staff commitment, students' behaviors, and students' performance. For me, those aspects were my top priority which will help her later to reform the school in other areas. The year after, I started to concentrate on the biggest issues in the school which had a great impact on the learning process. Although I spent great efforts in establishing a productive atmosphere, however, my passion and life mission were beyond that. I had only a vision in her mind that the school should be one of the best schools in the country and to fulfill this vision, lots of work need to be get completed.

One of the biggest challenges that I experienced was how can I transfer the school from being traditional into a smart school? And how this will affect positively on improving the learning process. Unfortunately, there were many factors that hindered her dreamlike: school infrastructure, lack of staff training, missing whiteboards in 5 classes and broken whiteboards in some other classes, and the inactive accounts for both teachers and students. Some of those factors can be addressed at the school level while others need urgent intervention from the heads of the smart learning teams and the cluster manager. I made a case study about the school, and I collected the data from different resources such as surveys, LMS reports, and interviews with teachers, parents, and students. Analysis of those data helps her to highlight the key elements which will help me later to design a well-thought plan to achieve her vision. I sent several emails to the smart learning teams and whenever the cluster manager visited the school, I took him for a school tour with the hope that he will approve of her thoughtful ideas to improve the situation.

Unfortunately, neither the smart teams respond, nor did the cluster manager approve her plans and instead gave her only promises. I did not give up and that made me more insisted to achieve my goal. I took the risk on this big mission to chase my vision, so I asked permission from the cluster manager to let me contact the Minister's Advisor who is the head of the smart learning department in the MOE. The cluster manager looked at me strangely. I expected a positive answer and so, before he replies anything, I said *"I promised you that I will make the school one of the top schools in the country*". Seeing my confidence, the cluster manager was convinced about my talk and said to be alert and careful when you draft an official letter to the highest rank officials as, everything is accounted being the School Principal. I replied, *"Don't worry, I will be very cautious and very selective of my words"*. After this hot discussion, I was extremely happy because I eventually found the key which will help me to transfer my school into a smart school. I wrote a well-organized letter to the Minister's Advisor, but he did not reply. Instead, the day after, a smart team was in the school, when I saw them, I said to myself *"YES…I did it"*. I took them for a tour around the school, showed them all the classes, and met with them at the end of the day to write a report including all school needs. Within one month, the smart team provided the school with a strong network and activated the teacher and students' accounts. In addition, they fixed the broken whiteboards and provided new whiteboards. I succeeded in achieving half of the plan, but the result must be positive under her wise guidance. I created ambassadors of smart learning who had excellent digital skills, I trained them, and give them roles and responsibilities to spread the smart learning culture in the school.

I practiced the motivational system, since my first step in the school, I highly appreciated the staff's efforts and that help me to create a very competitive learning community. I launched many healthy productive competitions in this area. I also made a tracking sheet to show me the progress or regress in using the smart learning tools. After two months, I received an appreciation letter from the smart learning team and it showed the level of the school across the country, I was placed on the 5 top schools using smart learning based on benchmarking.

Dreaming of a Model School and Exposure to the Environment

When I think of the school environment with many challenges, I strongly believe that I can change the environment into more productive by only changing the mentalities of the individual. Firstly, I analyzed their skills and capabilities and as a result, I came to the idea of modeling them the usage of the smart learning

portal. Every week, I sent the report of the usage, and I witnessed the huge progress as they start competing with each other. In case, if any face an issue in activating such smart portals, we take immediate action to fix up the issue. By allotting the school budget to bring external network connectivity to the areas that have a poor connection, I made sure there were no excuses for using the digital classrooms. Later, we extended the professional development courses to global platforms such as Microsoft platforms to enhance teachers' technical skills which is one of the must to be a model 21st century school. The majority of the teachers were recognized as certified MIE Experts which was a huge achievement when we compared the past history of the school and with the neighboring schools. Such achievements fulfill my dream of creating a model school in society.

According to the School Leadership Development Plan for Licensure in the U.A.E (2020), the Educational Leadership standards for the U.A.E. have been aligned to the Standards for Effective Educational Leadership Practice. These standards are as follows:1) Professional and ethical leadership, 2) Strategic leadership, 3) Educational leadership and 4) Operational leadership. Each of these standards includes many elements and indicators that fulfill all of the roles and responsibilities of the agent of change. Educational contexts are dynamic due to the evolving technological development and the impact of globalization which has reshaped our knowledge and understanding of "time, space, and ways of working" (Scott & Webber, 2008). I have followed all of these standards during my journey of change, for me strategic leadership has shed the light on the importance of promoting technology innovation by introducing new research- based techniques to enhance the teaching and learning process to provide more efficient opportunities for better results, empowering teachers to innovate and utilize new instructional practices that add value to the student use of technology and ensuring that information and communications technology is properly integrated within the curriculum and leading to an improved student learning and student-centered teaching method. Therefore, after my school was recognized as being one of the top five schools in the UAE in using smart learning tools, I was still not satisfied, I wanted my school to become a model school and get international accreditations in 2019, and I was looking for many external opportunities to achieve my goal. I transferred her knowledge and experience to be a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIEE) which she already received in 2015 when she was a teacher. Again, her staff was not fully convinced about that, and some considered it as extra work given to them. She did not force the teachers but was very smart in embedding this in the internal professional development programs held in the school. To convince them she prepared several workshops and explained how she went through this amazing learning experience and shared the challenges that she faced to become a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIEE), how they can prepare the nomination file, and more importantly how this will help them to improve the quality of their work. One of the biggest challenges was that the nomination for the MIEE is usually launched at the end of June which is usually the last week of the school in the UAE academic calendar and to get the MIEE the candidate should provide evidence of the use of Microsoft tools and show how they integrate the technology in the learning process. I aimed to launch the program and I selected a group of teachers including her to prepare their nomination file and upload it on the Microsoft platform. I wished to have at least two teachers to be MIEE because this will help her to nominate the school to be Microsoft Showcase School. After one month after submitting theteachers' files 4 were selected and got the MIEE. Their names were listed on the Microsoft teachers across the world.

In 2020, I continued the project, and during this period, I made a flexible plan using the benefit of the

Microsoft tools, especially Microsoft teams and OneNote. Those programs were the most powerful programs which help her to transfer all administrative paper works into electronic media. It also saved the budget of the school by saving the cost of paper, inks, and other stationery expenses. In the meantime, many teachers were very excited to learn and experience the same feeling as their 4 colleagues who were listed along with the world's best digital teachers on the Microsoft platform. More than 25 teachers participated in the Microsoft Virtual Hub and attended the full-fledged workshops, they uploaded their files, and eventually, 26 were chosen to be Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert teachers across the world.

Further, my dream is to have international accreditation after this tough winning battle on digital transformation. I decided to take the risk and nominate the school to be a showcase school, I worked with her smart learning ambassadors and prepared an electronic file to show the evidence of the eligibility of the school to be listed across the world as a showcase school. They succeed in collecting all the evidence and described how the school integrated the technology into the learning process. At the beginning of the new academic year 2020-2021, a report about the MIEE and Showcase Schools was sent by the training department from the MOE to the school. I was so excited and discovered that my school was the only government school that was selected as Showcase school and the school with the highest number of MIEE badge holders. I received a call from the head of the professional training department to congratulate her on this great achievement. I asked for permission to send a team to make a video describing the journey of the school to achieve this. I did not believe that a team is going to come and cover their digital success but still, she accepted the request. The video was uploaded on the learning curve which is considered the main training platform in MOE. I not only aimed to reform the school but also aimed at changing the mentality of the staff who was for some reason stopped on a certain level after going through all these experiences they become more loyal and active members of the school and always seek for the best.

I decided to create a conducive learning environment as the first step of my journey of implementing a new system as I am sure that setting the right behavior at the right time will help me to achieve the goal. Initially, I was put in a situation where I was unable to take any action against the violators because there was no evidence against them. From that tough stage, I made all behavioral policies into practice in various situations by documenting each and every minute of behavioral issues. All policies are transparent and accessible to each and every stakeholder which made the journey smoother. I reach out to the parents through their children who communicate what has happened in the school to their parents. I made sure that I create a good rapport with parents by conducting regular one-to-one sessions with constructive feedback about their children. This creates a positive change which made everyone in the society feel that this school is the best place for their children. These positive incidents increase the good reputation of the school and me, in particular. I started receiving messages and feedback positively about the new change that take place, especially regarding students' behavior and discipline in the school. Also, I made sure that I am available always on the spot especially at any difficult times for my stakeholders by listening to and considering their feedback to help them to overcome the situation. In addition, I have followed the official city social media channel which is followed by the public to celebrate the success of my students, teachers, administrators, and parents which creates a huge positive impact on the community to talk about our school in a positive way and they considered our school as the best school in the city.

Institutional Excellence

When I think of the school then and now reaching a level, I can see the difference in the mindset of all individuals in participating in external competitions and other extracurricular activities in and outside school. I have noticed that my team members participate in many outside events, but they were not trained to document such important works. So, I have decided to encourage them on the importance of documentation each and every moment of their hard work. I insisted all staff to monitor the ministry portal for any outside school activities and external competitions and take part in such prestigious events. Also, I implemented a motivational setup that encourages my team members to rethink about staying away from all external events other than teaching. Moreover, I worked along with them in documenting and aligning pieces of evidence to the expected standards. I led them not by words but by practice and as a result, I saw a tremendous change in the mindset of all and we witness the active participation by everyone which resulted in the goal of achieving institutional excellence.

After I made sure that my school is settled in most of the areas, I started to think about investing the individuals, their talents, and their creativity in various fields. In order to be recognized in school, local, and other levels, I was keen on participating in the educational and societal awards which I believed that such participations help the school in general and individuals, in particular, to work in a very competitive learning environment and as a result, they show their excellence to the optimum. This thought was highlighted by Murphy and Meyers (2009) as people in the organization are the essential ingredient in enhancing productivity towards leading the change.

My journey of excellence started in 2019 when I was awarded the best academic affairs unit across the country in the Founder award. In fact, it was the first educational award I have gained in my professional career. It was a privilege and honor to get an educational award in the same year when I was promoted as a principal of the school which was facing lots of issues that made me more challenging to survive and fulfill the expectations of my higher authorities. The top leaders and the society were very proud of me, and they set very high expectations of my capabilities of bringing up a positive change. Thus, I promised myself and top leaders that I will do my level best to improve my school. As a result, I started to spread the excellent culture in my learning environment and encourage my team members to participate in those awards as it helps them to show their

creativity and innovation in many areas.

At the same time, I was always seeking distinguished opportunities in getting global accreditations like Microsoft Showcase School. Burns, (2002) identified that it is more important to create opportunities for employees to learn rather than for leaders to invest in rigid structures in the environment and so, I started with those teachers who showed indicators and were willing to participate in small and later in big awards. I remembered when there was an announcement about competition across the country for the best school project, I selected some teachers to participate in this competition, for them it was their first experience, and they were very hesitant to continue, and at a certain point of time, they were about to drop from this competition. I realized that they need my guidance and support throughout the project, thus I worked with them shoulder by shoulder as one of the team members in all of the steps of the project and that made them feel very excited and trustworthy. In fact, they felt that I am one of their colleagues and we won this competition in first place across the country. For them, it was the first step toward institutional excellence.

"Social persuasion" (Woolfolk et al., 2012) states that when an individual is inspired as a role model by others that he/she will be successful in a new task, and that he/she has confidence in his/her own individual abilities. By seeing them, other teachers also started to be encouraged to participate in many awards in and outside the school. I followed the same procedures with the other teams. In fact, the school environment turned very competitive, and I wished to be a part of the team in order to encourage them to for the best for me and for my school. By that time, I was successful in creating excellence ambassadors who started to work in many areas and helped me to participate in the Emirates Award in the Best School category. During the pandemic, we won many awards, and the most important awards we won were the Best Government School and the Best School in Bullying Prevention in the country. Our records in the competitions and awards have been increased in the last four years and we became the top school winning in many areas compared to the other schools. We also started to share the excellence culture with the neighboring schools, we conducted a virtual forum about institutional excellence in different categories: best leader, teacher, family, etc., and shared our experience in these areas with others and provide them with the key to success. Even though we are recognized in society, we were excited and experienced to participate in competitions including all fields other than educational fields too.

One such challenge is to compete with leaders who were backed up by many financial and international partnerships including global field trips to know the best practices unlike our school that follows a traditional setup but still, we accept the opportunity of participating in the prime minister award His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai launched the Mohammed bin Rashid for two categories: best school principal and best teachers. This is the most prestigious award for corporate excellence in the UAE. The award encourages employees and federal government entities to serve and achieve happiness and well-being for all society segments and is considered the biggest government award. One of my teachers and I participated in this award, and we competed with more than fifty candidates in each category within two years. Eventually, we won this prestigious award, based on the organizers, they said, *" it's the first time that two candidates who won from the same school in the same year".* Of course, this award motivated us to be more responsible and promising to our society and the country and we promise that we will sustain the excellence in our professional career.



Successful Keys to Leading Change and Vision for the Future

When I dream of the future of the school and set the successful keys to leading the change, I decided to set the important roles and make their responsibilities transparent for each individual to achieve the goal of being the top school in society by being the 21st-century facilitator rather being the traditional teacher. One of the ways is to set professional development programs during each term and encourage the team members to participate actively in such programs. In case, if any feels hesitant, they can join with other team members and work collaboratively so that each and every individual will have their own ideas implemented as a reflection of the assigned roles and responsibilities. After establishing such a habit of getting involved in many areas, they extend their practice to the neighboring schools and local community as partnerships that expand their thoughts which will productively reflect in their classrooms. Such involvement triggers their hidden leadership traits and they raise to the level of promising leaders who lead many educational events in local, regional, and global compared to the previous years.

As per the thoughts of Siccone (2012): "communication has three dimensions: content , which is what you say; process, which is how you say it; and context, which is who you are, to whom you are speaking, where, when, and why ". Communication is linked with a leadership characteristics of building trust, being perceived as genuine and honest, and actually caring about the viewpoints by active listening; being transparent, demonstrating clear thinking and planning, and being able to explain a vision so that it is easy to understand (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bass, 2008; Klenke, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). According to these ideologies, I considered the most important key to a successful leadership trait is creating an administration by love where people are given full freedom of flexibility to express their opinions which helps them to work without any pressure and build mutual trust and respect among the management. According to Amanchukwu et al., (2015) democratic leaders consult the team in the decision-making process, but they also make the final decisions. They promote innovation, and team members frequently take a very active role in choices and initiatives. The advantages of democratic leadership are numerous. Because they are more involved, team members often have high levels of work satisfaction and are productive. Additionally, it promotes the skill development of individuals. As a result of being a democratic leader, the team start to accept me as a new promising leader, understand my leadership personality, adapt to new changes, and work towards achieving the vision and the common goals set by the management. Secondly, setting responsibilities and prioritizing the tasks is one of the major points that help us in achieving the goal and that automatically fix the parallel issues Another successful key is investing in productive resources and individuals based on their

capabilities and interests. Also, providing opportunities equally for all to exhibit their talents and I circulate all competition guidelines to all via a common official school mode of communication. According to the definitions of Robertson, Webber and Scott, by engaging consciously in development to overcome the weaknesses, and by drawing upon their staff whose strengths will overcome their own weakness, they will become more informed, competent, and confident change agents thereby ensuring their active presence in leading the change process. It is well supported by distributed leadership which is considered as an important concept that helps everyone to take up the leadership and we make sure that each team member gets a fair chance at various tasks. To accomplish all the above keys, motivation is highly essential in any working environment and as an inspiring leader, I appreciate every team member for their efforts. These keys help me to implement any innovative idea as a part of achieving the target.

As our school vision states, "Innovative education for knowledge, pioneering, and global society", I, as an inspiring leader with a broad vision, look with an optimistic view to achieving this goal. The purpose of this case study is itself to reach my experience with other leaders across the world to motivate and provide them with confidence to rethink their leadership practices and take positive steps to create a change in their educational institution. I strongly wish that all my team members upgrade their role from teachers to going beyond the classroom by participating in various educational events in and outside the school. I will mold them to take up the risks and hold the responsibility of leading the team on various occasions. I lead them as a role model in exploring innovative courses on various international platforms which support their daily lessons. I strongly believe that research skills enhance the capabilities of teachers to the next level in solving various educational issues. In addition, my case study explains well how we were at the beginning of the journey and the great position that we have gained in the local society now with dedication and proper planning. I wish to share our best practices with all other schools to feel assured that they can also bring a good change by shifting their traditional leadership style into a 21st-century style like distributed leadership, democratic leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership.

Practical Implications

In the first theme of accepting challenges and experiencing them as novice school leaders, I felt all leaders should be ready to take the risks of reality and equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for the reformation process as we live in a competitive field, especially in the educational sector. Secondly, in dealing with challenges, it is necessary to build a good healthy relationship among all stakeholders and as a leader, he or she should gain trust and express mutual respect that helps them to overcome the challenges which open up a door of hope toward leading the change. Also, leaders should accept the fact that distributed leadership is one of the best leadership styles to achieve the optimum goal of reaching its heights. According to Hallinger and Hammad. (2017), it is extremely important to be cautious when applying global best practices of school leadership to understand how leadership can affect school transformation in this region of the world because of the differences in how school leadership is conceptualized, selected, supported, and implemented. Any school leader should dream high of recreating their respective school as a model school in society and should spread the exposure of their achievements globally. Finally, all these will reflect as successful keys to leading change, and it is possible only with a promising vision for the future.

Conclusion

My journey of leading the change was full of adventures, I have learned a lot of lessons on leadership and at the same time, I have discovered myself in this valuable experience. In fact, I was a risk-taker, curious, conscious, and trustworthy. All these important skills have helped me to escalate my professional graph to the optimum more than I expected. What I narrated in this story was just a part of my journey and I have learned many morals and molded myself to be a wise leader at the same time. The most important lesson is to believe in myself by accepting the fact that there is nothing impossible in this life. The current study aimed at investigating the ways practiced by Ameirah to lead the change. Also, it is well explained about her dream of school transformation and how she made it true. Finally, the paper analyzed the difficult journey through which Ameirah prepared herself as an inspiring leader being a novice leader in a traditional school with various forms of issues.

Such reforms are developed to make a noticeable difference and to implement the new change among the different forms of schooling across the country. This case study helps all leaders to rethink their passive leadership style and understand the leadership styles and theories that help them to raise up to the level of the international standards. I believe that it is in the hands of a leader to accept the situation and mold herself as a decision-maker that leads positively toward the school improvement process in their respective schools and the driving seat should be held by the promising leader who takes up the challenges that would be faced in the tough journey of leading the change which should be evident and productively reflected in all UAE schools. It is the responsibility of the school leaders to respect the mentality of stakeholders and at the same time to motivate them to accept the new reformation wholeheartedly.

Limitations

Even though my leadership practice is a success that can be followed by the majority of the leaders in the society but still each school setup, community background, work profile, etc. are different from place to place which might stop those minority groups from following the same successful experience. School improvement plans cannot be generalized as unique even if it was highly appreciated and structured. But, I wish leaders should rethink their role and practices for the betterment of the next generation in molding them into the best citizens of the country.

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Investigation into Instructors' Perceptions of L1 Use in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Due to alterations in foreign language educational strategies, the utilization of the L1 has invariably been one of the most contentious topics in the field. The purpose of this research was to investigate instructors' perceptions about employing students' L1 in language classrooms and which specific methods they favor using L1.

This study included a sample of 262 instructors from various universities in Istanbul. An online questionnaire was administered to the participants in order to explore instructors' perceptions. The survey that was implemented in the research was qualitative in terms of open-ended questions and quantitative in terms of closed items. The gathered qualitative data were analyzed using grounded theory, while the gathered quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 22. In this regard, this research employs a mixed method design that includes both quantitative and qualitative data.

The results indicated that instructors had unfavorable perceptions despite their positive responses to the open-ended question about their views toward the use of L1. Furthermore, using learner's L1 served distinct purposes in the teaching and learning procedure, such as "assisting low proficiency students", "bonding with students", and so on. As a result, the current study found that using students' L1 might play an important role in language classrooms.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions, L1 use, Target language

Cite as: Al-Abed, A. (2023). Investigation into instructors' perceptions of L1 use in EFL classrooms. *TESOL Kuwait Journal 1*(1). 77-88. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction

Many individuals, and more specifically those that wish to obtain better professions or acquire a good education, believe that learning English is crucial (Ilyosovna, 2020). Because of this, several nations around the world have adopted English as the main language of instruction and the language of curriculum (Almoayidi, 2018). Due to the continuing discussions, the mother tongue's role in teaching English as a second language is being reviewed and reevaluated (Alshehri, 2017). There are two sides to this issue: those who believe that L1 by students should have some freedom in language lessons for a more productive educational environment (Öz & Karaazmak, 2019; Taşçı & Ataç, 2020; De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009), on the other hand, others who disagree with this connection, contending that speaking in one's native tongue inhibits

learning by limiting opportunities to speak the target language in class, interfering with other students, and reducing exposure (Cook, 2001; Fernández, 2015; Mahmutoglu & Kicir, 2013).

Briefly, perceptions of the importance of the native language in the English classroom have changed (Brown, 2000). The employment of the native language in the classroom might create relevant discussion and motivate learners to communicate in L2 in an EFL situation, despite some findings' suggestions to the contrary (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; İnal & Turhanlı, 2019).

Moreover, various research has been undertaken to determine the perceptions of the

instructors about using students' L1 or whether they think using the student's L1 is beneficial or

not (Çalisir Govenc & Kesli Dollar, 2016; Ulu, 2020; Cakir, 2020).

The use of L1 in the L2 classes is a contentious topic in the area of English language teaching, according to the background of language teaching approaches (Zulfikar, 2019; Almoayidi, 2018; Fernández, 2015). This topic is also up for discussion in EFL classes in Turkey. While some institutions in Turkey have tight rules that require instructors and students to communicate exclusively in the target language, others have more flexible rules and allow an appropriate degree of L1 in the classes (Sen, 2010).

As long as a foreign language is taught, debates about the same issue will inevitably continue, particularly in EFL classrooms where both the instructors and the students speak the same L1 (Shabir, 2017). Because of this, the main goal of this study is to address a gap in the literature on L1 use in the L2 classrooms and instructors' perceptions in higher education. While conducting the research, gender, age range, years of experience (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Asare, 2021; Joyce, Dietze, Dietze, & McMillan, 2021; Oflaz, 2009), teaching credentials (AlTarawneh & AlMithqal, 2019), type of universities, and L1 (Orfan & Noori, 2022; Nambisan, 2014; Yuvayapan, 2019; Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020) were all taken into account as these variables revealed various distinctions in instructors' perceptions on L1 implementation.

This study investigates English preparatory school instructors' perceptions of using L1 by

answering the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL preparatory school instructors towards using students' L1?
2. What are the perceptions of EFL preparatory school instructors towards the students' use of their L1?
3. Do the perceptions of EFL preparatory school instructors regarding using students' L1 differ according to their:
    a. Gender.
    b. Experience.
    c. Degree.
    d. Teaching certificate

e. Mother tongue.

f. Type of university.

4. Do the perceptions of EFL preparatory school instructors regarding the students' use of L1 differ according to their:

a. Gender.

b. Teaching experience.

c. Degree.

d. Teaching certificate.

e. Mother tongue.

f. Type of university.

Literature Review

The definition of multilingual is "An ability of an individual, or it can refer to the use of

languages in society" (Cenoz, 2013, p.5). As the background of foreign language learning EFL and instruction demonstrates, it satisfies the requirements and expectations of EFL students caused by life constant alterations (Therrell & Dunneback, 2015). Taking English in the Turkish context from a holistic perspective, Arslan and Kafes (2021) research on Turkish EFL students shows that the interaction of learner-related characteristics and language acquisition attitudes are complicated, context-sensitive, and with various facts. On an international basis, English medium of instruction has been implemented in various universities in different countries (Tejada-Sanchez & Molina-Naar, 2021; Karakas, 2019).

The position of the native language in bilingual education schools has long been a source of contention (Akbulut, Aslan, & Ezgi, 2021). Many scholars and experts believe that employing L1 discourages people from attempting to learn and utilize the target language (Cook, 2001; Fernández, 2015). They assume that utilizing L1 to teach L2 is an impediment to language learning and that it must be prohibited, and they advocate for an English-only classroom setting (Harmer, 2007). On the other hand, many educators and experts have debated its methodological worth (Mahmutoglu & Kicir, 2013). When the background of L1 use in foreign language classrooms is investigated, recurrent progress and transition in how it is perceived could be seen (Brown, 2000). Nevertheless, for several academics, the utilization of L1 in FL/L2 schools is the primary subject of conversation and argument. A variety of methodologies and strategies appeared to support or oppose it in FL/L2 classrooms (Fernández, 2015).

According to Corder (1967), an individual's first language serves as the opening stage for L2 learning, which progresses through the reform of the first language to generate processes more involved with L2 learning standards. When considering language transfer from L1 to L2, instructors must recognize students' stages of

growth in their native language to ensure not only second language learning, but furthermore full cognitive advancement (Durgunoglu & Öney, 2000). Even though some language skills could be transmitted and might aid in the development of related skills in another language, L1 should be fully established before exposure to the new language (Cummins, 2000). Several academics believe that learners who initiate preschool with elevated stages of proficiency in their native language will acquire the second language more easily (Öz & Karaazmak, 2019; Taşçı & Ataç, 2020). Learners with solid reading skills in their native language have been displayed to have stronger reading skills in English at the end of the year than learners with insufficient reading skills in their native language (Cárdenas-Hagán & Carlson, 2007). The link between the first and second languages remains in the heads of the students and can enhance the learning environment (Horst et al. 2010). Hitotuzi (2006) also contends that L1 is an effective resource that neither the language instructor nor the student can do without. In other words, a student's earlier language and awareness of language learning are not program files that instructors should remove throughout the language educational procedure (Hitotuzi, 2006). According to Prodromou (2012), the utilization of L1 in EFL classrooms is like a skeleton in the closet, because language instructors favor concealing students' L1 and never discussing it. This analogy seems appropriate given that the utilization of L1 in class has long been considered a taboo topic and a repository of shame.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are shifting away from addressing one language individually, as though it were contained in distinct boxes, and into concentrating on all of the individual languages within her/his social repertoire, as well as stressing the relationships among the languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011b). Translation, Code-mixing, Code-switching, and Translanguaging are the main methods of language shifting.

Some scholars have doubted the theoretical and practical foundations of the Monolingual Methodology, offering refute in accordance with the opinion of L1 use (Auerbach, 1993; Butzkamm, 2003; Wharton, 2007; DiCamilla & Anton, 2012; Liu, 2015). Although there is a strong desire to keep L1 as far away from language classes as conceivable, McMillan and Rivers (2011) and Nambisan (2014) argue that this is doubtful, particularly in settings where learners and instructors exchange the same native language. The limitations of an English-only strategy are highlighted by Pachler and Field (2001). According to Pachler and Field (2001), removing students' native language is not always beneficial in order to enhance target language utilization. Evidently, there is no indication that enhancing the target language directly adds to learning outcomes (Ganuza & Hedman, 2017). Another issue that L1 advocates are frequently misinterpreted and chastised for is that they encourage the uncontrollable and substantial use of native language in language lessons (Chen, Kao, & Tsou, 2020; Dafouz & Smit, 2014). On the other hand, Auerbach (1993), Cook (2001), and other promoters of the bilingual method state that while they assert the methodical and reasonable use of the native language, they do not assert the widely and uncontrollable use of L1. The purpose of this study was to understand how EFL

preparatory school instructors regarded using L1 as a teaching strategy in higher education.

Methodology

In the investigation of the perceptions of EFL instructors' L1 use in the preparatory school programs at the state and the foundation universities in Istanbul, the present study was designed and implemented as mixed-method research under the method of convergent parallel design. In this design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously before any analysis. In research by Doyle, Brady, and Byrne (2009), they describe mix-method as research that is regarded as the third methodological trend after quantitative and qualitative, and it has a lot to offer to social science studies as a methodology. In the research, an online survey was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Out of 44 items in the survey, 42 items were quantitative, which included the survey sub-scales, while the other 2 items were qualitative, which included questions about additional uses of L1 in L2 classroom.

The research was implemented online in 51 state and foundation universities in Istanbul during 2021-2022 academic year. The study consisted of a sample of 262 EFL preparatory school instructors working in both foundation and state universities. The participants in this research were chosen using a simple random sampling method, where each individual from the previously mentioned population has an equal chance of being selected to participate. In the following table, table 1, the distribution of participants by gender, age range, and mother tongue.

Table 1

Distribution Of Participants

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	95	36
Female	167	64
20-30 years old	63	24
31-40 years old	122	47
41-60 years old	77	29
Turkish	236	90
English	26	10

Considering the research design that was used in this research, which is a mixed-method convergent parallel design, one self-reporting survey with both quantitative and qualitative

components was used to collect data from participants. The researcher used the teachers' attitudes towards L1 use survey to collect data from participants. Initially, the survey was designed by McMillan and Rivers (2011) and adopted by Nambisan (2014) in the USA and Yuvayapan (2019) and Özyer (2021) in Turkey. The questionnaire that was used in the research comprised three sections with three questions and 4 sub-scales with 44 items in total.

The first part of the survey included three main questions about the language used in the school and classroom and two sub-scales which sought to investigate teachers' perceptions of using students' L1 and its importance. The second part of the survey had the third sub-scale which is about how instructors encourage or observe students using their L1 in the classroom with 7 items with 5-Likert scale. The third section of the survey was the demographical section.

The quantitative data that was collected using the survey was analyzed using computer software called Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22. normality test using Kurtosis and Skewness was conducted in order to achieve a normal distribution of the data and select further parametric analysis. The qualitative data that was collected in the survey was analyzed using grounded theory analysis.

Results

Simple percentage analysis, t-test, and ANOVA test were used to compare between the perceptions of the demographic groups to the survey sub-scales. For qualitative data, the grounded theory results are included. The purpose of the first sub-scale was to determine how often instructors in EFL preparatory schools utilize students' L1 for the specified uses.

Analysis related to Q1

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Use of Students' L1

	Mean	Std. D
5.1 To explain concepts	2.54	1.294
5.2 To describe vocabulary	2.55	1.300
5.3 To give directions	2.24	1.311
5.4 For classroom management	2.57	1.305
5.5 To give feedback to students	2.61	1.293
5.6 To praise students	2.41	1.309
5.7 To build bonds with students	3.08	1.315
5.8 To quickly clarify during activities	2.76	1.274
5.9 To help low proficiency students	3.02	1.256
Accumulated	2.64	1.020

According to the findings, the item that had the lowest mean was item 5.3 (M = 2.24), to give directions, and item 5.6, to praise students, which represents that instructors did not use students' L1 to give directions or to praise students in the classroom and they preferred to use English. However, item 5.7, to build bonds with students, and item 5.9, to help low proficiency

students, had the highest means (M = 3.08) and (M = 3.02) respectively.

Table 3
Descriptive Analysis of Importance of Teachers' Use of Students L1

	Mean	Std. D
7.1 To explain concepts	1.79	.747
7.2 To describe vocabulary	1.73	.712
7.3 To give directions	1.65	.781
7.4 For classroom management	1.75	.740
7.5 To give feedback to students	1.90	.743
7.6 To praise students	1.73	.769
7.7 To build bonds with students	2.15	.768
7.8 To quickly clarify during activities	1.97	.750
7.9 To help low proficiency students	2.15	.741
Accumulated	1.87	.522

The second sub-scale in the questionnaire asked instructors to rate how important they think it is to employ students' native languages. The use of L1 was largely rejected by the participants as being unimportant for the aforementioned targets according to the overall mean of the sub- scale (M = 1.87) which represents a negative perception. The results from table 2, teachers' use of students' L1 sub-scale, and table 3, how important of teachers' use students' L1 sub-scale, show that teachers' recognition of the importance of employing students' L1 in the classroom and their use of students' L1 in the classroom are in parallel.

Analysis related to Q2

Table 4
Descriptive Analysis of Teachers Observe or Encourage Students Using of their L1

	Mean	Std. D
4.1 To discuss content or activities in small groups	2.51	1.419
4.2 To provide assistance to peers during activities	2.92	1.138
4.3 To brainstorm during activities	2.52	1.355
4.4 To explain problems not related to the content	3.02	1.227
4.5 To enable participation by lower proficiency students	3.06	1.194
4.6 To respond to teacher's question	2.36	1.251
4.7 To ask permission	2.50	1.351
Accumulated	2.70	1.026

The third sub-scale aims to discover how frequently instructors observe or promote learners' adoption of their L1. The overall mean (M = 2.70) shows that instructors did not encourage

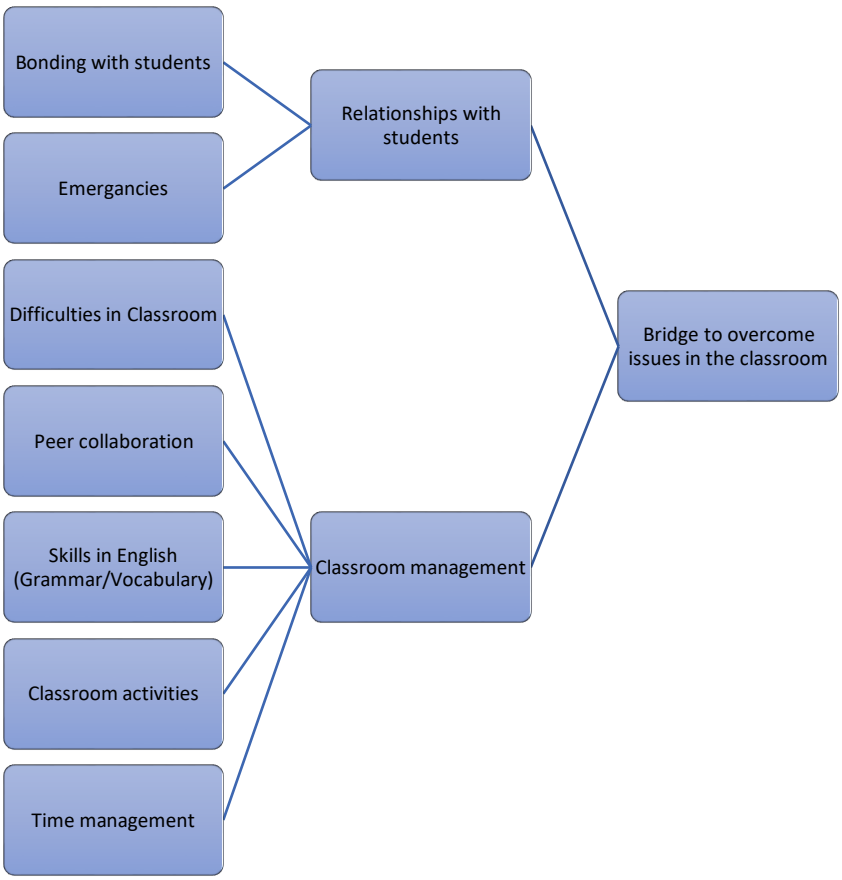
students to use their first language in the classroom. In general, they tended to discourage their learners from employing L1 in their classes. Instructors allow and encourage students to use their L1 to promote helping peers during tasks and to facilitate the participation of lower level learners.

Table 5
Descriptive Analysis of Importance of Teachers Observe or Encourage Students Using their L1

	Mean	Std. D
6.1 To discuss content or activities in small groups	1.74	.733
6.2 To provide assistance to peers during activities	2.07	.680
6.3 To brainstorm during activities	1.74	.764
6.4 To explain problems not related to the content	1.99	.722
6.5 To enable participation by lower proficiency students	2.14	.716
6.6 To respond to teacher's question	1.60	.719
6.7 To ask permission	1.56	.718
Accumulated	1.88	.497

The fourth and final sub-scale in the questionnaire asks teachers to express their views on the importance of students using their L1. The overall mean of the sub-scale (M = 1.88) reveals a negative response. The general tendency was to avoid the use of the L1 and believe that it is not necessary. The results of analysis of the open-ended questions using grounded theory analysis were in line with the results of the sub-scales. The results are shown in the following figure.

Figure 1
Grounded Theory Results



Analysis related to Q3

T-test was conducted to compare the means between the groups (Gender, teaching certificate, mother tongue, and type of university). ANOVA test was conducted to test groups with three or more variables (Educational level and years of experience). Finally, post-hoc test results for each group to locate the specific differences between the groups.

Firstly, there was not a significant difference between instructors' gender and English teaching certificates in terms of their use of students' L1 according to the results. Additionally, instructor's educational level, mother tongue, years of experience, and type of university might have influenced their use of students' L1 in the classroom.

Secondly, there was no significant difference between instructors' gender and English teaching certificates in terms of the importance of teachers' use of students' L1 in the classroom. On the

other hand, instructors' educational level, mother tongue, years of experience, and university type may influence the importance of using students' L1 in the classroom.

Analysis related to Q4

In accordance with the results, instructors' years of experience and type of university may influence the observation and encouragement of students to use their L1 in the classroom in the third sub-scale. On the contrary, it can be indicated that instructors' gender, English teaching certificates, Educational level, and mother tongue did not show any significant difference in terms of observing or encouraging students to use their L1. In the fourth sub- scale, importance for teachers to observe or encourage students using their L1. Instructors' years or experience and type of university might influence the importance of encouraging or observing students using their L1 in the classroom. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between instructors' gender, English teaching certificates, educational level, and mother tongue in terms of observing or encouraging students to use their L1.

Discussion and Recommendation

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of EFL preparatory school instructors of using L1 in state in foundation universities in Istanbul. The first research topic examined EFL prep-school instructors' perceptions toward L1 use using a questionnaire. Instructors' responses to the survey were analyzed, and the findings showed that they had generally negative opinions of their employment of students' L1. Instructors were completely aware that it is the ability of bi/multilingual learners to change or shift among languages, rather than only translation, through inquiry and explanations (Canagarajah, 2011).In addition, such as the majority of ELT scholars (Öz & Karaazmak, 2019; De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Kaynardağ, 2016; Cook, 2001), the research teachers largely favored the methodical and cautious adoption of the native language. In addition, the majority of the teachers concurred that students in lower levels required L1 the most because of the affective problems present in the classroom (Yuvayapan, 2019; McMillan & Rivers, 2011; Nambisan, 2014; Özyer, 2021). The present study results, on the other hand, reveal differences in instructors' perceptions toward diverse categories, such as gender, years of experience, etc. When comparing the group differences to the questions of the survey, novel findings were discovered which indicate that there are quite interesting differences between these groups.

With the globalization and its effects around the world, English as medium of instruction, has been a debating topic in a variety of fields. While delivering essential benefits to learners, it also boosts universities' global visibility and status. Prior research has demonstrated that instructors and learners in faculties where English is the medium of instruction have chosen three different perceptions towards L1 use in their instruction: positive, neutral, and negative. The primary goal of this research was to investigate EFL prep-school instructors' perceptions of L1 use in the classroom and how learners use L1. As well as the research investigates how these perceptions differed among categories, such as gender, years of experience, degree, teaching certificate,

mother tongue, and university type. Students' native language is commonly employed as an educational approach in state and foundation universities in Istanbul that provide all of their courses in EMI, according to the findings of this study. Many of the instructors said they employ this method to varying degrees.

Because using L1 in L2 classroom is a debatable research subject in Turkey, as well as the rest of the world, more in-depth and precise investigations are required. In light of the limitation, instructors' perceptions could be explored to a greater extent by conducting in-depth classroom observations or to have full or semi-interviews with the instructors to explore their perceptions about using L1 in the classroom. In light of the limitation, using the classroom observation technique to carry research will allow for new discoveries to determine a possible novel approach that may emerge and to comprehend the advantages it gives to the classroom context.

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Motivating Language Learning via Popular Culture in Arab Classrooms

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Abstract

Students often struggle to motivate themselves when it comes to foreign language acquisition. This presentation aims to highlight how students in the Arab world can feel motivated when practical teaching materials and exercises link popular culture to language; it additionally identifies areas of weakness in current widespread teaching materials. This presentation will offer pedagogical suggestions in line with recent research on the effects of popular culture in the language classroom.

Keywords: Foreign language acquisition, Arab classrooms, motivation

Cite as: Jafar, S. (2023). Motivating language learning via popular culture in Arab classrooms. *TESOL Kuwait Journal 1*(1). 93-103.
https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Background of the issue

In the field of ESL and L2 acquisition, as well as in education as a whole, motivation is seen as one of the most influential factors when it comes to students succeeding in the classroom. When we envision our students at their utmost highest level of performance in the classroom, we note that they would interested, engaged, and eager to learn. Motivation can be individualistic, but their impact on achievement is almost unanimous. In 1982, Stephen Krashen introduced the Affective Filter Hypothesis into theories of second language acquisition (SLA). Krashen stated that "much key factors of learners' success in language learning should be associated to the student's emotional condition. A language learner's passion of participating the class and confidence from teachers' encouragements can decide the accomplishment of their SLA" (Krashen, 1982).

When students are de-motivated or uninterested, a 'filter' keeps the information being taught to them from fully taking effect or manifesting itself in their understanding or academic performance. While students can have a hand in decreasing their own motivation, motivation can also be altered through teaching approaches, methods, and attitudes. Lockhart (1994) stated that "while learning is the goal of teaching, it is not necessarily the mirror image of teaching.

Learners, too, bring to learning their own beliefs, goals and attitudes, and decisions, which influence how they approach their learning." Therefore, motivation is a dual mechanism through which both the students and the teachers need to maximize their ability to motivate and feel

motivated.

During the era of COVID online learning, many students and teachers alike felt their levels of motivation diminishing. In an article published by Kyong-Jee Kim and Theodore Frick, they state that "learning styles have garnered attention from researchers of online learning because of the potential of the Internet to deliver instruction that meets the needs of students' different learning styles… Some studies indicate that learning styles have bearings on learners' motivation, thereby suggesting the importance of matching instructional strategies with the individual's preferred learning style or learning approaches in order to have a positive influence on the online student's motivation" (2011).

As some students became over reliant on technology and somewhat detached from the environment of the classroom, many teachers took this as a negative impact of widespread online learning. However, this presentation aims to examine the ways in which this penchant for technology, online communication, and overall feeling of being 'online' can actually work as a tool in the classroom instead of a crux. Through popular culture, which is defined in the next section, students can use technology and social media to feel engaged in the classroom, so long as the instructor is willing to incorporate these elements of popular culture. For students learning English, their motivations can vary from personal to academic. However, almost all students acknowedge English as a *lingua franca*, a way to connect and communicate with the world.

Fostering this feeling of connectivity by allowing the content and instruction to feel linked to students' interests outside of the classroom can be extremely beneficial in this regard. It can also serve as a tool for students to engage in more peer or group work through connecting common pop culture interests or discussing opinions on current events, art, music, television, and films.

In Arab students in particular, popular culture can feel overwhelming due to a lack of familiarity with Western media and news. Focusing the scope of popular culture on the Arab world, and then expanding it to include international elements or regions, is a great way for students to gauge the connectivity the English language provides. This presentation will focus on how these techniques can be pedagogically implemented in the classroom through assignments, games, group work, and writing tasks. These elements can also improve students' critical literacy and ability to decipher language through varying mediums, aside from the short articles or infographics present in their textbooks.

For Arab students, the task of motivation - on behalf of both students and teachers - can seem complex. Students usually motivate themselves to learn English for their futures, but may see that many people have reached their desired occupations or statuses with little knowledge of English. Furthermore, many students are not motivated at all, and are obliged to learn English to fulfill a language requirement put in place by their school or university. However, incorporating popular culture can address this gap in motivation to an extent. According to a study published by the American University of Kuwait, "overall, Arab youth, including samples from Kuwait, are well introduced to information and communication technologies. The First Arab Youth Survey (2008; age group of 18-24, N=1,500) reported that respondents spent their spare money

to buy mobile phones (40%), books and magazines (29%), watch movies and go to the cinema (13%), and listen to music (8%)" (Konokova, et. al, 2012). In the ever increasing digital age, we can only assume that students are more connected to technology and mass media than ever before.

This presentation will discuss the positive impact popular culture and mass media can have on L2 acquisition, motivation, and classroom performance, through the incorporation of pedagogical practices and techniques that can evoke students' interests and expose them to critical literacy.

Defining popular culture

To examine the impact of the incorporation of popular culture on L2 acquisition, it is best to define the parameters by which we refer to popular culture and examine it through this presentation. In a 2020 entry to the International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Klaus Dodds and Lisa Funnell defined popular culture as "a gamut of objects, practices, meanings, and cultural contexts usually produced and consumed by mass audiences around the world" (Dodds et. al, 2020). In a varying entry published in 2010, popular culture as a term was contextualized:

"Popular culture comes into existence as a contrast with the then-normatively superior high culture associated with the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Conversely, various social actors have increasingly deployed the idea of popular culture as a means of affiliating themselves with the masses, illustrating their disdain for cultural elitism. In either case, popular culture comes to be defined by the taste of the masses, inflected with either positive or negative connotations" (Dittmer, 2010).

By this definition, popular culture is a departure from the technicalities, rules, and high standards implemented through higher education and present in many ESL students' textbooks and curriculums. It lacks the formal aspect of education and instead allows students to focus more on their interests and aspects of their lives that would normally not be addressed in a formal, educational setting.

This definition gives scope to the meaning by including the practices and contexts that one might not associate with popular culture. For today's youth, and especially in Kuwait, youth familiarize themselves with going to the mall, playing popular sports, or listening to certain types of music. All of these elements can be included in our scope of popular culture throughout this presentation.

Furthermore, we can expand our understanding of popular culture to include current events, related to either celebrity, sports culture, local culture, or international news, as well as to books, movies, television shows, magazines, videos, and social media. Incorporating the scope of social media into our understanding of popular culture is key, especially because students in the COVID online learning era are more adept at social media and more influenced by technology.

Issues with current teaching materials

Many instructors struggle with finding perfectly suited teaching materials. Even with a breadth of exercises, tasks, and articles present in course books, teachers may find them limiting, or feel that they must turn to online resources or in-house materials to cover the skills that they would

like their students to practice or be exposed to. While this is a possible solution, many online materials are not culturally relevant, especially in the Arab world. To make learning materials culturally inclusive and engaging for students, the most practical solution is the development of in-house materials aimed to engage students with each other, the material, and the course itself on a more personal and passionate level.

According to an article by Peter Tze-Ming Chou, “there are a number of issues to consider when using ESL course books. First, most course books contain a lot of activities where students do "questions and answers". After a few lessons, many students may find the learning process boring and uninteresting” (2010). Chou adds that “the reading selections in the ESL course books are often quite short and they often fail to present appropriate and realistic language models as well as fostering cultural understanding” (2010).

Very significantly, an additional issue is that course books and standardized teaching materials fail to cultivate motivation among ESL/EFL students: “the similarities in the ESL course books may cause the students to feel bored due to the “sameness” or “repetitiveness” of the lessons and activities. This is a major problem because the English courses are designed around using a single course book for the whole academic year” (Chou, 2010). For extrensically motivated students, this might pose no issue; however, the problem intensifies when it comes to sustaining consistent motivation between the start of the academic term and its end. With the same books, materials, and standardized teaching processes, students can become de-motivated, which can pose additional issues for instructors.

While teaching materials can - and have been - altered and developed to improve content, variety, and practice, many of them still do not address variations in learning styles among students. For example, students who are motivated and learn through physical, sociological, or psychological learning styles may feel limited and restricted in terms of their learning when instruction is primarily conducted through course books or standardized teaching materials. In L2 acquisition, field-independence (FI)/field-dependence (FD) is an important phenomenon that refers to how students process and understand information. Chapelle (1995) outlines that field-independent (FI) learners learn best by accomplishing tasks alone, while field-dependent (FD) learners learn best with practical skills and group work. While FI learners can thrive based off of course books and standardized materials, FD students struggle to become motivated unless they are exposed to a dynamic or social setting.

The incorporation of popular culture learning mechanisms in the classroom can address the majority of these shortcomings in current teaching styles, practices, and materials. With the dynamic, unexpected nature of unique and creative tasks, FD learners can thrive. Additionally, pop culture tasks can build on students’ own cultures and allow them to feel a sense of interest, engagement, and intrinsic motivation to pursue something interesting to them within the classroom. For these reasons, we will discuss the benefits of pop culture and mass media incorporation in the EFL/ESL classroom.

Evidence for popular culture

Richard Hoggart argued that "to assume that popular culture can be explored with crude tools because it is assumed to be crude, uncomplex, easy to read is a serious mistake" (Corner, 1991). In his edited anthology, *Reading Pop Culture*, Jeff Ousbourne expands on this argument: "mass culture is only mindless if we approach it mindlessly" (2016). There is a misconception in education that popular culture and mass media is demeaning to intellect and higher education.

Actually, the opposite is true. Students feel more motivated when they can find common ground with the material presented to them, or when they can relate it to their everyday lives. Similarly, this is why Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is so significant; students want to feel that what they are learning is practical and functional on top of being academically stimulating.

There are a myriad of benefits to promoting pop culture understanding and mass media in the classroom. Dr. Jena Habberger-Conti discussed its benefits in her article on Critical Media Literacy, advocating for the use of popular culture in teaching and 'disrupting the commonplace':

"Critical literacy is a lens through which teachers and learners can investigate different types of media, and it offers rich possibilities for teaching both language and culture in ESL classrooms at all levels. The practice of critical literacy developed out of the social justice pedagogy of Paulo Freire, an educator in Brazil in the late 1960s. Since the turn of the millennium it has grown to become a popular approach to teaching English" (2016).

Pop culture can target many desirable skills in students. A 2011 study conducted by Rodgers and Webb found that 95% of Level 1 target ESL vocabulary was present in popular English TV dramas (2011). An article published by Liu and Lin (2017) discusses how through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), students can also gain exposure to vocabulary and pronunciation skills; through multi-layered practical games such as *Second Life*, students are exposed to expressions and target vocabulary. In an era where students, specifically Arab males, are extremely interested in online gaming culture, this knowledge can prove extremely beneficial in building on this passion and interest in the classroom.

While the pop culture approach is not new to ESL, it has yet to be adapted on a more widescale approach in the Arab world and Middle East. Due to cultural differences that may seem stark at times, it is normal to question how receptive students would be to instruction via mechanisms of popular culture. The key is not to diminish the culture of our Arab students in the process; instead of only teaching through Westernized mechanisms of popular culture, we can make our students feel more comfortable by drawing comparisons between Arab cultures and Western cultures. Several of the pedagogical practices we will discuss will draw on elements of both cultures.

Furthermore, Arab students may feel that their cultures and interests are not represented in current teaching materials. Many instructors are now turning to ESL textbooks that cater to the Middle East, where students can see Arab names, faces, and cultures represented. In the classroom, we can take this a step further and incorporate methods of Arabic popular culture to stimulate engagement. From there, we can expand our approach; how does popular Arabic music and films, for example, compare to Western media? What are the different styles and art forms

that we see represented? We can even venture into more specific areas, such as reality television. While in the West, reality television is very centered on parasocial relationships, Arab reality television is mostly very different. Comparing these two forms can draw intercultural communication on different customs and attitudes between regions. We are already very aware of how media and technology impacts our students; instead of treating it as separate or 'unacademic,' we should build on this relationship to facilitate learning and communication.

From here, we can discuss pedagogical practices in this presentation that would be helpful and beneficial.

Pedagogical practices and suggestions

Personally, many pedagogical practices implementing popular culture have been successful in the classroom among different student groups in gender, age, and proficiency. These practices were implemented with groups of A1-B2 learners between the ages of 17 and 44. Some of these practices and approaches incorporate elements of art and culture, while others focus on media literacy and social media to foster engagement.

Culturally relevant process paragraph

With writing skills, specifically, students can grow easily frustrated due to the complexity and difficulty level of tasks. Here, it is very beneficial to incorporate learning tasks that are fun, engaging, and culturally relevant. In a group of 35 Kuwaiti female students, aged 17 to 25, they were tasked with writing a process paragraph about getting ready for a wedding. The students were engaged the entire class session, and incorporated elements of their personal lives and online resources. In Kuwait, since weddings are very culturally significant, specifically for women, this can be an engaging task that promotes cross-cultural learning.

Students went online to find makeup artists, hair stylists, dresses, shoes, jewelry, music, and other elements they wanted to incorporate into their paragraphs. Every students' answer was unique and a reflection of their own personal understanding of the significance of weddings. This task was very engaging because afterwards, students were asked to compare the differences between Kuwaiti and Western weddings. This reflection prompted cultural awareness and even curiosity and questions, which is refreshing to see when students are easily frustrated at the technical and challenging aspects of writing a process paragraph. This was a great exercise to build students' use of ordering and transition words as well; students were asked to be as specific as possible about the order, and mark a change in steps with a transition word, such as *then* or *after*.

What was also very advantageous about this activity is how easily it can be adapted to suit other cultural processes or student groups. For a mixed-gender class or male-only class, for example, the process paragraph could be something more in tune with their cultural interests, such as how to play a soccer game or how to attend a men's wedding. Furthermore, after the exercise is completed and students' answers are reviewed, it is a valuable opportunity to draw on cross-cultural learning. For example, if students write about how to play a game of soccer, you could ask students to compare the most popular sports in the Middle East to the most popular sports in the United States or Europe. From here, one could also draw comparisons to current events, such

as through an interactive or group activity about the 2022 World Cup. The biggest advantage here is being able to take the task from very straightforward - writing a process paragraph - to a multi-faceted discussion or interactive activity centered around mass media that the whole class has knowledge about, so as to facilitate the utmost level of participation.

Arabic music translation and comparison

In pop culture teaching and mass media, music is perhaps the biggest ally of teachers wishing to incorporate elements of popular culture. Music is a cross-cultural phenomenon, and almost all students have at least some kind of familiarity with music styles, particularly in their L1.

However, according to a study published in the International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, "this useful resource appears to be underutilized by English language teachers which is attributable to the lack of understanding of its theoretical rationale and benefits" (Bokiev et. al, 2018). Additionally, Bokiev attributes many benefits to incorporating music in either the L1 or L2:

"Research findings suggest that the effective use of music and songs in language teaching has the potential to address multiple intelligences, reduce anxiety, increase motivation, facilitate memory retention and establish an affectively conducive learning environment. Moreover, music and songs can be utilized to enhance the learning of almost every aspect of the target language, to develop cultural awareness, and to foster students' creativity" (2018).

One of the biggest benefits of incorporating music into the classroom is its benefits in terms of memorization. Due to song and sound patterns, students can have an easier time of acquiring target vocabulary words and pronunciations. In many regards, the incorporation of music into the L2 classroom might be the most beneficial pedagogical pop culture practice, as "musical intelligence, which is the earliest to emerge of all, develops in parallel to linguistic intelligence. Moreover, both musical and linguistic competences rely on the oral-auditory system and are not dependent upon physical objects" (Gardner, 2011).

Furthermore, music can be helpful in promoting cross-cultural communication and discussions. Arabic and Western music is not only different in terms of its language, but also in terms of its pacing, beats, instrumental use, and subject matter. For this reason, a pedagogical activity involving translation and comparison could be beneficial. Students could be asked to choose a popular song in Arabic and another popular song in English. From here, students will be asked to translate the lyrics of the Arabic song into English and decipher the meanings of both based on their vocabulary and subject matter. Students will be asked to find differences and similarities between both songs, and pinpoint differences in vocabulary words used. This can be beneficial for discovering the meaning of a multitude of new words. Like with the previous process paragraph exercise, the comparison between songs can lead to a more thoughtful discussion on cultural differences between the United States or similar countries as they compare to the Middle East. This can be better for developing deeper understanding of cultural awareness and discussion.

TEDTalk presentations

In examining our students' learning and studying behaviors, we may notice that independently, they turn to forms of pop culture, such as Youtube videos or TED talks, as a mechanism for learning more about a specific subject. Murphy (2014) recommends YouTube videos and TED Talks as materials from which EFL/ESL teachers can introduce their students to meaningful vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as a breadth of material that may be relevant to their course of study or major. Drawing on these benefits, the incorporation of TED talk skills can also build their confidence in presenting, especially in regards to pacing, eye contact, and body language.

One useful in-class or out-of-class group activity would be to present a TED talk on a specific subject relevant to their course of study. In preparation, students should be asked to watch related TED talks and note down their pronunciation of specific words, any words they find unfamiliar, and how they are presenting the topic in regards to body language, tone, and other factors. Then, students should be instructed to work together to prepare a TED talk on a given or chosen topic. The benefit of this exercise is that it can be conducted fully in class, with students doing their research in their groups and then presenting in the same class session. This can also help build efficiency and time management skills. Students should be asked to be very specific on their delivery, including the set-up of the talk with background information or hypothetical questions to gain audience engagement.

This activity is very beneficial, especially for students who struggle with their presentation skills, output, vocabulary, or pronunciation. The element of group work facilitates communication and takes the pressure off of students who struggle with any or all of these aspects to perform independently. However, it is extremely important for each student to speak independently for a good portion of the talk for the instructor to gauge any areas where they need improvement.

Challenges to incorporating popular culture

When it comes to incorporating popular culture in SLA classrooms, there are some limitations to the arguments for its significance. These limitations consist primarily of relevance and cultural clashes. Firstly, instructors and researchers might believe that when it comes to ESL classrooms that are closer to ESP, specifically in colleges geared towards business or science majors utilizing pop culture in the classroom can be irrelevant or uninteresting to students due to a disconnect between the material and their general course of study. Primarily with certain pop culture elements, such as music, films, or television, this can hold true.

Furthermore, as with any cross-cultural communication, there is a risk of culture clash when it comes to incorporating pop culture into curriculum. Teachers are responsible for explaining culture, which can be a daunting task for an ever-changing phenomenon based on many complex norms and detailed experiences. There is a risk that something can come across as disrespectful, stereotyping, or inappropriate when introduced to students. It is important for instructors to be aware of the continuous and ever-developing adjustments students are making when faced with culturally unfamiliar material. According to Lina Harklou (1999), this experience can cause the adverse effects in students being exposed to culture in the classroom; they can shut down, ostracized and marginalized by daunting viewpoints they struggle to find common ground with.

The teacher here is faced with a difficult conundrum: while wanting to challenge students to step out of their comfort zones, they do not want to do so at a pace or method that might jeapordize their learning, comfort, or progress. Several solutions are posed to these serious concerns about the incorporation of pop culture into the classroom.

Overcoming the obstacles

In spite of these limitations, it is important to note that there is always ground for relevance or connection through the modification of tasks, or even a focus on more general skills that can be made relevant to the students' studies. Even if language teachers may not be interested in developing musical intelligence per se, they can still tap their students' musical intelligence and interest so as to help them achieve mastery in the target language (Bokiev et. al, 2018). If students are focusing on something related to technology, allowing pop culture activities to be integrated into CALL would be beneficial for learning to use certain websites, mediums, and software. Certain exercises, such as the TED talk exercise, can allow students to draw connections between vocabulary, pronunciation, presentation skills, and their chosen medium of study. For example, students studying science or math could choose videos to mirror that are in line with their interests, and students can even be grouped by major to keep the discussions relevant.

Another solution exists for facilitating or modulating respectful cultural communication through social inclusion or exclusion. Liu and Lin (2017) specify grounds for the selection of engaging materials:

"In engaging with popular culture in English teaching and learning, social inclusion or exclusion is a significant dimension. Due to the diversity of students, more attention over selection of pop culture materials is advocated to avoid marginalization of learners… teachers should know about the relevance of the popular culture resources in students' everyday life, especially when they come from different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds" (2017). Materials should be chosen that promote cultural communication and discourse and expose students to new ideas. Simultaneously, materials should be respectful of students' cultural differences and not ostracize certain beliefs. While English and Western culture as a whole can be incorrectly seen as a testament of Western prowess over other cultures, this attitude is not beneficial when dealing with students from a rich cultural background with their own norms and traditions. Thus, pop culture should not be ingrained in the classroom as a sole correct way of thinking or teaching, but rather as an open discussion on the types and impacts of mass media.

However, it is equally as important for instructors to express their agency in the classroom discourse. If material is deemed too uncomfortable for students as to the point where the classroom is no longer a safe space, then materials need to be modified or discussions need to be curbed to be ultimately respectful to the students' backgrounds, culture, and religions. Instructors can hold check-ins with their students over materials used in the classroom or distribute anonymous surveys after activities to gauge whether or not the students were uncomfortable with the material.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pop culture is a useful tool that can be utilized in a myriad of pedagogical fashions to advocate for cultural awareness, creativity, extrinsic motivation, and practical uses of the English language. In an era where students are still processing the impacts of online or hybrid learning, and the reliance on technology is more prevalent in the classroom than ever before, this reliance can be used as a tool rather than a crux, specifically while ESL/EFL students operate in a transitionary learning period. Standardized teaching materials and course books can have useful materials, activities, and practice, but exposing students to diversified materials that draw on their interests outside of the classroom can facilitate healthy cultural communication and fun that keeps them motivated throughout the semester.

Like all learning methods, incorporating popular culture can come with its limitations, primarily when it comes to relevance to students' courses of study and avoiding culture clashes. For these reasons, it is important to choose pedagogical materials like those suggested, where they can be easily modified to suit students' needs. Furthermore, it is important to maintain an element of respect in the classroom and for teachers to have jurisdiction and control over classroom discourse in order to avoid causing discomfort or adverse effects in terms of motivation, passion, and engagement.

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Activating and Motivating Students Through Gamification

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Abstract
Gamification has been significantly used in classes. Companies have already been applying it to break employees' boredom and motivate them. However, we find that it is often not fully understood and that many teachers are confused between gamification and game-based learning. Therefore, it's important to identify them and their uses to be applied effectively in classrooms with students.

Keywords: Gamification, game-based learning
Cite as: Matar, S. (2023). Activating and motivating students through gamification. *TESOL Kuwait Journal 1*(1). 104-109. https://tesolkuwait.net/resources/Documents/Volume_1_Issue_1.pdf

Introduction
Gamification is considered to be a long-standing term that has been used productively in communities such as companies and major commercial centres. Nevertheless, recently Gamification has been notably used in the educational community too. It is found that this term has already been applied in different sectors as a way to break the barrier of boredom among employees. Furthermore, it helps to motivate them to accomplish more achievements. It is recognized that the term Gamification in the educational community is not fully understood. Additionally, many people are confused between it and the term Game-based learning. Therefore, Gamification is mixed up with other skills leading to a change in its concept, or not to be extensively applied.

Thus, the responsibility of simplifying and clarifying the concept of Gamification falls upon educators and trainers who have successfully applied it. To do so effectively with learners in classrooms, the distinction between Gamification and Game-based learning terminologies is a must. With that being noted, this paper's goal is to simplify applications to better comprehend Gamification.

This paper is going to start by defining the term of Gamification. After that, it will discuss the reasons of its trendiness nowadays. After that, distinguishing between both Gamification and Game-based learning. Following that, exploring with minute details the key ingredients of Gamification. Then, discussing the implementation of Gamification in educational settings. Afterwards, the paper will analyse the benefits of employing Gamification in classrooms. Finally, presenting a list of Gamification tools that can be used in an educational environment.

What is Gamification?

Gamification is an intriguing terminology that scholars attempted to define over the years. The general consensus of the definition of Gamification is implementing game-play elements in a non-gaming setting in order to encourage active learning and motivation. Nick Pelling (2002), who is a well known video game designer defines Gamification as adding video game elements into a classroom setting that makes the atmosphere delightful and amusing. Another example, is leading gamification expert and author of 'Actionable Gamification', Yu-Kai Chou's definition, Gamification is defined as the skill of utilizing the addictive features of gaming in order to use them in practical settings.

In this paper, the definition that will be the main focus is the Oxford Dictionary's (n.d.) definition; "The application of typical elements of game playing (such as point scoring and competition) to other areas of activity". The reason behind emphasising on this definition consists of two aims. The first is concentrating on the elements of gamification. The second is that the Oxford dictionary definition is the most common and comprehensible.

Why has Gamification become so popular?

Recently, there has been an increase in interest in using game principles outside of gaming contexts to improve the fun factor of tasks that are seen as difficult, or dull. It is anticipated that adding gaming features might make the task more enjoyable. Thus, increasing learners' motivation to participate in the activity (Goh & Razikin, 2015).

Gamification holds learners' interest and gives them the chance to pursue a number of their basic human needs. These include socialization skills, education, and achievement. Gamification also uses game-like elements which are among the finest aspects of games. These elements engage learners in non-game contexts to influence their behaviour (Cheong, et. al., 2014).

Gamification offers the learners a sense of control; instead of being passive observers, they are able to direct their own experience. While levels and points validate learners and grant them a sense of challenge and competence, as well as a sense of worth in an activity that is influenced by the prospect of rewards (Zuckerman and Gal-Oz, 2014).

The difference between Gamification and Game-based learning:

Gamification applies game elements or a game framework to existing learning activities. On the contrary, Game-based learning designs educational activities that are intrinsically game-like.

Game-based learning is an educational or an instructional method that uses games to teach a specific skill or reach a learning outcome. It takes the content of a learning material and makes it fun (Plass, et. al., 2015).

Gamification is an application of game-like elements in a non-game context. This is done to promote a specific desired behaviour to drive learning outcomes. The most known forms of Gamification are: points, badges, and Leaderboards (Jackson, 2016).

The 3 Key Ingredients Of Gamification:

Motivation: The "Why?"

Motivation is the feeling that persuades a person to take certain actions in order to fulfil a goal. It is the desire to act or behave in a particular manner. Wherever there are people, there are people

to be motivated. No matter the circumstances or the community, Gamification can be applied to motivate people (Pink, 2009).

Mastery: The "How?"

Mastery is having the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish a specific task in a setting that has specific rules. Therefore, game mechanics should be based on efficiency and persistence, not just on random luck. As the game progresses, participants should feel that skills are being mastered. Thus, the path to mastery is an important concept of successful Gamification. Due to the human nature of seeking challenges, levels should show increasing difficulty as the game progresses. Conversely, if the Gamification strategy does not lead to a sense of mastery in a particular context, then it loses its desired outcome (Christians, 2018).

Triggers: The "When?" and "Where?"

Constructive and effective triggers are a crucial part of a successful gamification strategy. That being noted, the actual implementation of recurring opportunities for participants to win and fulfil their motivation. The actions that has been designate will act as triggers for a positive feedback mechanism. A habit is formed by the repetition of a certain action that leads to the positive outcome which is intended.

According to Fogg's Behavioural Model , a person has to be adequately motivated, capable of performing the action, and triggered. For the sake of conducting the activity that is intended to engage the participants. In other words, the behaviour can only take place if all three conditions are met at once (Dchiv, et. al., 2014).

Implementing Gamification in classrooms:

Investigating the behaviours an educator wishes to encourage. As well as the training goals and learning methodologies the educator aims for, are the crucial first steps. Once these are established, they can move on to create the game's mechanics within the classroom (Smiderle, et al., 2020).

An educator must clearly know the interests of their learners. Alongside their strengths and weaknesses in the subject matter, to be able to select the suitable game mechanism. Which could help reduce the negative behaviours towards learning and increase the positive ones.

In order for the approach to be successful, classroom management must be considered. Moreover, determining the effectiveness of gamification elements to achieve the goal should be evaluated. What is more, game design principles are advantageous in learning environments to create motivation and interest through the mechanics of the game (Barahona Mora, 2020).

Different methods of implementing Gamification within classrooms, has been mentioned in Kiryakova, et. al. (2014) study. Experimentations have shown that the following methods are the most effective and simple ones, that any educator can apply:

1. ***Points system:*** The completion of tasks is rewarded with points, which can provide students a sense of accomplishment and make them feel appreciated for their work.

2. ***Badges:*** They are an excellent tool to recognize achievement and act as benchmarks for the class.
3. ***Team work:*** A student is more likely to show up when working in a team environment because, in most circumstances, the fear of disappointing a teammate outweighs the risk of failing on their own.

The Benefits of Gamification

Applying game-like elements in a classroom setting and activities ensure that educators can select the best tools, design elements, and structures then combine them in a system that is appropriate. Additionally, it serves the lessons' objectives, learners' engagement and progression to the maximum effect. As an outcome, the lessons' goals are achieved, along with the learners engagement and satisfaction. As a consequence, failure to evaluate, improve and verify the combination of elements and structures may lead to the reduction of the systems' full potential (Rajanen and Rajanen, 2017).

Gamification tools improve learning and training content in a variety of ways, with the five advantages listed below being just a few of them (Shpakova et. al., 2016):

1. Enables enjoyable and engaging learning atmosphere.
2. Gamification makes learning addictive.
3. The chance to experience how learning content is applied in real life.
4. Friendly competition offers chances to be motivated extrinsically and intrinsically.
5. Instantaneous feedback.

Noticeably, utilizing Gamification helps educators present their lessons effectively in an enjoyable environment. That helps learners to master the objectives of the lessons faster and easier than a standard class setting. It also gives equal opportunities to learners with different levels to compete with their classmates in achieving the main goals that may be rewarding for them. Additionally, the objectives that the educator has set for the lessons may be attained too.

Gamification Tools

Gamification software technology now offers many tools for delivering the experiences. Teachers can easily choose which gamification tools are productive and suitable, as well as the kind of experiences they can provide for their students (Deterding, et. al., 2014).

1. ***ClassDojo:*** This is the perfect app to connect teachers with students and parents. The Class Dojo app is intended for children in elementary schools or younger.
2. ***Kahoot:*** The website that provide a game show environment to engage students in learning. Especially useful for school vocabulary, multiplication and basic Geography tests.
3. ***Minecraft:*** A gamification tool based on the award-winning video game Minecraft. Education Edition offers classroom functionality, pre-built lessons, and cross-curricular support.
4. ***Pear Deck:*** Where it is used to create interactive presentations in the classroom or remotely. It makes it easier for teachers to be connected with their students.

Conclusion

Games are a great way to gain students' attention and keep them engaged. When teaching

student-specific learning objectives, teachers may struggle to obtain the students attention. Furthermore, inspiring them to engage with the lessons motivating them and increasing their participation is a challenge constantly faced by educators. There are a set of artistry involved in making a student's virtual training experience enjoyable and motivational. Teachers can use gamification tools to establish a pleasant and intreguing learning environment. This makes acquiring new materials effortless. Especially by inserting game-like elements in a non-gaming settings to an educational context. Further enhancing the students engagement with the lesson. One of the biggest advantages in employing gamification in classrooms, is its capacity to engage students more successfully than regular coursework. What is more, it aims to maximize the fun and engagement of the learners by piquing their interests and motivating them to keep learning. Correspondingly, as games increase levels of gamers engagement and skills, Gamification in education helps learners develop certain skills too.

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