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Editorial

The Top 100 Cited Discourse Studies: An Update

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The editorial review of the top 100 most cited articles on discourse in the subject area of 'linguistics and language' aims to define the dominating trends and find out the prevailing article structures for JLE authors to follow as the best practice-based patterns and guidelines. The top 100 quoted articles were singled out from Scopus database, filtered through subject areas (social sciences; arts and humanities), language (English), years (2015-2019), document type (article) and keywords (discourse; discourse analysis; critical discourse analysis; semantics). The research finds out that educational discourses and news media coverage discourses are the most popular themes with 23 publications each; other prevailing topics cover media, policy-related, ecology discourses, metaphors, racism and religion in discourses. As the top 100 cited articles include mainly original articles (both theoretical and empirical), the study focused on the article structure, calling JLE authors' attention to the journal editors' stance on article formats.

Keywords: discourse, discourse studies, article structure, schema, moves and steps, discourse analysis

Introduction

Discourse studies actively started in the 20th century. The term 'discourse' appeared in 36,084 document titles indexed in Scopus (as of March 1, 2019), with the earliest of them published in 1838. On average, nearly 2,500-2,800 titles, incorporating the term, enter the Scopus database annually. The discourse field coverage ranges from humanities and social sciences to dentistry and geosciences. As discourses occur only in social and cultural settings, much of the focus in research is given to the relationships between discourse and community.

Most of discourse studies turn to discourse analysis or based on it, as it examines patterns of language within diverse frameworks and settings. The concept of discourse is studied across the fields and approaches. Many articles and books dwell upon such issues as pragmatics in discourse, discourse and conversation, discourse grammar. Extensive methods and approaches evolve and are applied in the field to cover corpus approaches, multimodal discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis, etc.

As discourse studies lie within the JLE scope, the JLE editors see the recent trends and most promising themes in this area as a benchmark for the journal authors. The review of the 100 most quoted articles published between 2015 and 2019 might extend the guidelines for authors, informing them of the trends. The goal of the review is twofold. In analysing the 100 articles, the review authors also set out to fix the prevailing structures in research

articles on discourse.

Scholarly publishing with research articles at the forefront are the most important means of scientific communication and knowledge dissemination. Articles form a weighty genre within the academia. Many components factor in the quality of scientific information in research articles. Schemas combining rhetoric moves and steps emerged as settled algorithms for writers to logically lay out their information contribution in the text and for readers to easily navigate through the text. In the world, over-flooded with heaps of unstructured and often low-quality information, schemas have become a helping hand in searching for relevant information and detecting its quality. It takes readers no time to grasp the research essentials from a move-patterned article: strong and weak points are all atop. John Swales started his research in the 1980-s and finally ‘combined rhetoric and linguistics to explain genre’ (Devitt, 2015), introducing rhetorical moves and steps applicable to scholarly writing for journals (Swales, 1990).

The scholarly publishing landscape is far from being uniform, with ‘similarities and differences arising mainly from the idiosyncratic nature of genre, place of presentation, and western versus non-western, center versus periphery, and theory-versus application-oriented cultures’ (Samar et al., 2014). The editorial review aims to examine the 100 most cited articles on discourse and discourse analysis and find out the major research directions in the field as well as prevailing structures or moves. The JLE Editors seek to consider the article sample based on Swales’s genre concept of moves and steps.

Materials and Methods

The editorial review thoroughly considers the 100 most quoted articles on discourse indexed with Scopus database for the period 2015-2019. The top 100 list was made up according to the criteria below.

Materials

The original search for ‘discourse’ documents in Scopus database brought 173,153 titles which were filtered to be limited to: subject areas ‘social sciences’ and ‘arts and humanities’; years 2015-2019; document types ‘article’ and ‘review’; language ‘English’; source type ‘journal’; keywords ‘discourse’, ‘semantics’, ‘discourse analysis’, and ‘critical discourse analysis’. The limitations decreased the number of the documents to 3,452.

Then the documents were filtered and limited to journals that have ‘discourse’, ‘linguistics’, ‘lingua’, and ‘semantics’ in their titles and ‘linguistics and language’ as their subject area. The selected documents ultimately decreased to 207. They were published in the following journals: Critical Discourse Studies, Discourse and Communication, Discourse, Discourse Context and Media, Discourse Studies, Journal of Pragmatics, Journal of Multicultural Discourses, Lingua, Linguistics, International Review of Pragmatics, Pragmatics and Society. The top 100 out of 207 by the highest citation made up the final list for further analysis.

The title ‘What is policy? 21 years later: reflections on the possibilities of policy research’ (Ball, 2015) brought the highest citation of 51 (as of March 1, 2019). Sixteen articles with 1 citation each bottomed the list.

Procedure

The top 100 most cited documents on discourse studies were sifted to outline the most popular themes in the research area. Both authors broke down the 100 articles into logically set directions, or ‘themes’. The results were compared to sum up the key directions in discourse studies. The differences between the authors regarding the thematic breakdown extended to 9 articles and were settled by mutual consent.

The 100 abstracts were analysed to determine their word count and wordings of the aim and findings. The average word count was calculated.

Then, the structure of the 100 articles was studied by canonical schemas (moves and steps) to identify the most common patterns for discourse studies.

In addition, the types of articles (original article – either empirical/analytical or theoretical; opinion and discussion articles; editorial) were fixed among the most quoted articles, judging by major features of each type.

Results and Discussion

The top 100 articles on discourse were published between 2015 and 2019, with 35 quoted articles in 2015; another 27 and 22 were cited in 2016 and 2017 respectively; 14 quoted articles came out in 2018; only 2 were published and quoted in 2019. The most cited article scores 51 citations (Ball, 2015). The lowest citation is one per article, with 16 documents out of the 100.

The articles came out in seven scholarly journals (28 articles in *Critical Discourse Studies*; 26 in *Discourse*; 26 in *Discourse and Communication*; 12 in *Discourse Context and Media*; 4 in *Lingua*; 3 in *Linguistics*; 1 article in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*). Out of the 100 documents, 94 are qualified as original articles by type including 15 theoretical and 79 empirical/ analytical publications. The remaining six cover one editorial serving as an introduction to a special issue and five articles (opinion or discussion articles).

The affiliations of the authors encompass 102 universities and organisations, with Tel Aviv University, Universidade de Macau, and University of Queensland totalling three authors each and another seven universities having two authors each. The geographical breakdown includes 29 countries; with 20 documents coming from the UK, 18 articles from Australia, 16 documents from the USA; China and Sweden gave 8 documents each. Fitzgerald (2015, 2016, 2018), Talib (2015, 2016, 2018), Molek-Kozakowska (2017, 2018), and Schnurr (2015, 2016) authored more than one article. The rest of 156 authors had one article co-authored or on their own. The mean authorship per article is 1.6.

Basic Directions and Methods in Discourse Studies

The 100 most quoted titles were sifted to find out what the major research directions were and what methods were implied. The niches produced most research are discourses in education (23 papers) and press/ media coverage of various events or phenomena (23 articles).

Educational discourses are approached in diverse aspects. Ledin and Manchin (2015) carried out a multimodal study of management language in Swedish universities. Kolleck (2017) examines how changes in social fields shape the concept of education triggered by normative and semantic shifts. The article 'Inequality as meritocracy' is sub-titled 'The use of the metaphor of diversity and the value of inequality within Singapore's meritocratic education system' (Talib & Fitzgerald, 2015) and examines the ways the metaphor brings about a moral background for inequality within an educational system.

Several papers focus on school discourses like e-safety policy discourse related to widespread school Internet access (Hope, 2015); a critical discourse analysis of school bullying (Horton, 2016); analyses of aspiration discourses in a British secondary school (Spohrer, 2016); neoliberal common sense and race as neutral discourses in school policing (Nolan, 2015); discourses of the good parent in attributing school success (Thomas, Keogh & Hay, 2015); a discourse analysis of teachers' body talk (Lester & Gabriel, 2017).

University discourses come under scrutiny in a few articles, with discourses of leadership and responsabilisation in the framework of deepening neoliberal administration (28) and country-related discourse analyses (Amsler & Shore, 2017; Stacey, 2017; Dalib, Harun & Yusof, 2017; Banda & Mafofo, 2016; Carden, 2018).

News coverage discourse analyses cover analyses of news discourses on masculinity (2); Israeli media coverage of public examinations (Yemini & Gordon, 2017); British television coverage of the Barclays case in 2012 (Thomas, 2016); a crucial role of the right-wing Brazilian media in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (Van Dijk, 2017); uses of 'you' in Guardian editorials (Breeze, 2015); historical analogies in the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bourdon, 2015); inquiry in the media context of TV cooking shows (Matwick & Matwick, 2015); empiricist discourse in the talk of broadcast journalists (Reardon, 2018) and others.

Discourses of economics /policies and Internet brought 8 and 9 publications respectively. Few publications

came out to analyse discourses of ecology (3 papers), metaphors (4 articles), discourses of racism (3 articles), religion (3 papers). The rest of articles aimed to cover various themes: semantics and pragmatics of marking temporal progression in an Australian language (Ritz & Schultze-Berndt, 2015); discursive formation of nuclear proliferation (MacDonald et al., 2015); a critical discourse analysis of Swedish public health campaigns (Törrönen & Tryggvesson, 2015); a decision-making discourse analysis (Du-Babcock & Chan, 2018); relevance of materialistic-semiotic approach to discourse analysis (Borrelli, 2018); effects of dominant scholarly publication practices on papers produced by authors worldwide (Larson, 2018); relevance in different types of dialogical contexts, pursuing both cognitive and non-cognitive goals (Macagno, 2018).

The prevailing methods in the articles covered critical discourse analysis (CDA) (over 90 %), corpus-based analysis (10 %). In addition to CDA, the remaining studies applied multi-modal discourse analysis, circumbounded analysis, macro-sociological analysis, social semiotic analysis, case studies.

Prevailing Structures in the Articles on Discourse

Abstracts. Abstracts serve as a stand-alone source of information and may draw readers' attention to the articles they are based on. 'Research article abstracts are the most effective means of sharing research results.' (Tankó, 2016).

The abstracts in the top 100 articles average 153.6 words, with the shortest abstract containing 62 words, and the longest numbering 275 words. No abstract includes any sub-titles. Most are one-paragraph pieces (98 out of 100).

The research aims in the abstracts are stated via set phrases which contain 'aim' – both noun or verb – in 9 abstracts; 'to analyse' (12 abstracts); 'to focus' (11 abstracts); 'to consider' (7 abstracts); 'to examine' (29 abstracts); to argue (16 abstracts); 'to explore' (25 abstracts); 'purpose' and 'hypothesis' (1 abstract each).

On the whole, the top 100 article abstracts tend to follow the move structure applicable in applied linguistics (Pho, 2008) and embracing:

- (1) Situating the Research;
- (2) Presenting the Research;
- (3) Methodology;
- (4) Results;
- (5) Discussing the Research.

The move 'Presenting the Research' (No.2 in the above list) is often enforced by 'Filling in the Knowledge Gap'.

Partly, methodology and discussion of the results were omitted in the abstracts to the empirical articles. The above moves are relevant to empirical or research articles, with theoretical articles sticking to a simpler structure, where methodology is rarely included. As for results and their discussion, these sections also aim to convey as a contribution to a knowledge field. The section titles below are headlined according to IMRAD simplified version (Introduction; Methods; Results and Discussion).

Section 'Introduction'. As 'the introduction is of prime importance in grabbing the reader's attention' (Ecarnot et al., 2015), we thoroughly compared the introductions to the top 100 articles with the canonical introduction schema for original theoretical and IMRAD-structured (empirical) papers. It implies that the relevance of the research is followed by a field or literature outlining the gap to be filled by the present research; the next step is the research aim (or in addition, hypothesis/ research questions may be included); on top of all, (for a theoretical paper only) a general description of the main body of the articles displays authors' logic at the end of the introduction. As most articles under discussion (88 out of 100) do not follow the standard IMRAD format, their introductions are often shorter with additional sub-titles for the steps which tend to be included into introductions to scholarly articles at large.

The following themed titles and sub-titles exemplify a kind of 'extensions' to the introductions:

- *Literature Review* (Ross & Rivers, 2017; Wu, 2018; Du-Babcock & Chan, 2018; Carden, 2018);
- *Review of literature on climate change discourses in the context of mobilization* (Molek-Kozakowska, 2018);
- *Aims; Literature Review* (Marlow, 2015);

- *Aims and outline of the article* (Remling, 2018);
- *Marketized Language in the University* (Ledin & Machin, 2015);
- *Background covering three sub-titles, i.e. The role of media in education discourse; Neoliberalism and the global–local nexus; Study context: the Israeli education system* (Yemini & Gordon, 2017); *Background* (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2016; Stacey, 2017);
- *News values, audience and ideology* (Branum & Charteris-Black, 2015);
- *Theoretical Approach* (Eriksson, 2015);
- *Theoretical framework: Making ‘frames’ ‘work’ in the business press* (O’Mara-Shimek et al., 2015);
- *Theoretical approach and sample* (Thomas, 2016);
- *Theoretical Section – journalism and the political* (Persson, 2016);
- *Theoretical and methodological perspectives* (Lester & Gabriel, 2017);
- *Limitations* (Van Dijk, 2017);
- *Conceptualising discourse in everyday context* (Spohrer, 2016);
- *Discursive contours in the New Zealand educational landscape* (Sandretto & Tilson, 2017);
- *An MSS (multimodal social semiotic) view of communication; Discourse: A critical perspective* (Michelson & Álvarez Valencia, 2016);
- *Selfies as an emerging visual genre* (Zappavigna & Zhao, 2017);
- *Our approach* (Breen, 2017);
- *State of the art and definitions* (Bourdon, 2015), etc.

‘Introduction’ as a set-apart and headlined part is missing from a few articles, with one being replaced with a themed title (Corbett & Forsey, 2017), other two starting without any (sub-)titles (Collin, 2016; Larson, 2018). The latter may be caused by APA style. Whitton and Maclure (2017) starts their article with the headline ‘Video games in education: a brief overview’; Noy (2017) introduces the research with ‘Morality, museums, and the public sphere’; Szabo (2016) begins her article with a quotation followed by untitled introduction; Borrelli (2018) introduces the article in the section entitled ‘Structure and purposes of the study’. Talib and Fitzgerald (2018) put a question to focus on the topic – ‘Critical Discourse Analysis?’

Section ‘Methods’. Twenty-five articles include the section headlined ‘Method(s)’, whereas 18 have ‘Methodology’. Methods are also described in other sections, often combined with other structural units, e.g. ‘Methods of Analysis’, ‘Design & Method’, ‘Theory and Method’, ‘The Study’, ‘About the Study’, ‘Data Source and Methods’, ‘Research Method’, ‘Design of the Study’, ‘Analytic Framework and Data’, ‘Materials and Method’, ‘Data Analysis’.

Section ‘Results and Discussion’. As the sample includes only 12 nearly IMRAD-structured articles (IMRAD structure in some of them is revised or updated), the section ‘Results’ is often replaced with ‘Findings’: 3 and 8 respectively. 28 articles incorporate ‘Discussion’ section. Three publications have ‘Findings and Discussion’. In 4 articles, ‘Discussion and Conclusions’ combine two sections. There are a few research-tailored sections headlined ‘Comparison of Findings’, ‘Research Findings’, and ‘Results and Illustration’.

As most empirical research articles in the sample are analysis-based, they followed the patterns best suited to the critical discourse analysis. Most articles include from 2 to 5 themed sub-titles covering the logic of the analysis. They range from background and theoretical issues to specially formed corpuses and databases.

Section ‘Conclusion’. The move to conclude the article implies remunerating the main findings and their contribution. 53 articles end with ‘Conclusion’, 10 publications have ‘Conclusions’. The section is missing from 14 articles where the section ‘Discussion’ or other themed sub-titles contain concluding statements.

There are 11 variations of section sub-titles in 23 articles, encompassing ‘Concluding remarks’, ‘Summary’, ‘In concluding...’, ‘Discussion and conclusions’, ‘Concluding thoughts’, ‘Conclusion and implication’, ‘Looking ahead’, ‘Summary and conclusion’, ‘Conclusion and wider implications’, ‘Contribution and concluding remarks’, and ‘Conclusion and future directions’.

Theoretical Studies and Other Publications. The theoretical articles do not show any generic approaches to sub-dividing. Most sub-titles are themed and logic-based. Functional headlines are limited to ‘Introduction’, ‘Conclusion’, and occasionally ‘Background’. There are five opinion papers and discussion articles in the sample. They are either unstructured essays, or divided into 2-3 sections.

Conclusion

The top 100 articles on discourse analysis showed that the original empirical or analytical articles accounted for 79 percent of the sample, with the theoretical articles amounting to 15 percent. Structurally, the empirical papers in the sample tended to multiple move variations. IMRAD with minor alterations was chosen only in 12 articles. The other articles in this group, as well as the bulk of the theoretical and opinion articles stick to research-tailored structures.

Though the sample covers the most quoted publications on discourse studies, not all findings relating to rhetorical moves can be considered as relevant to the JLE stance on article structuring. Occasionally, deviated or free structuring may be based on solid rhetorical foundations. But this approach may get elusive and distract readers' attention by irregular and unusual moves and steps. Established genre schemas make a research text accessible, transparent, and reader-friendly.

The JLE Editors opt for genre structures that best outline all research components and display their strong points together with research findings and contribution. As JLE is an international journal, its formats must fit in the global standards and best practices. Our authors represent dozens of countries, so IMRAD and other traditional schemas help them follow similar patterns and align their submissions with the benchmarks in the field.

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Appendix 1

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Decoding Encoded Yorùbá Nomenclature: An Exercise of Linguistic Competence and Performance

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The proficiency of Yorùbá users has influenced the formation of towns' names, which this study investigated, revealing their haphazard formation processes. Ten towns of Yorùbá-land in Nigeria functioned as exploratory samples. Ellipsis, serving as the analytical instrument, elucidated the effectiveness of competence and performance, being operational in the clipping of statements to nominal lexemes. The study exhibited flexibility in the development of Yorùbá names, influenced by users' needs. The historical facts of business, religion, hunting, war, and conquest supported the formations, without seemingly consistent linguistic principles. The study further revealed the deletion of linguistic components (*Ilè, tó ní fẹ*, = *Ilé-Ifẹ* – a piece of land that expands), twists in pronunciations with a meaningless derivative (*Ojà kò tà* – business is not picking up = *Ojóta*), manipulation of English words to Yorùbá (*Bad agric* = *bà dá gírì* [*Badagry*]), and the production of novel lexemes-cum-meanings (*Amùkòkò* – a person who catches a leopard = *Amùkòkò* – someone who smokes his pipe). Although, individuals might attempt to regulate ways that people employ language to formulate words, the study suggested that language communicators should be allowed to deploy language as pleased. As language analyses seem descriptive, utilizing language as one wishes, might yield novel items which can enhance unique language development.

Keywords: arbitrariness, competence, ellipsis, language dynamism, performance

Introduction

Various elements characterise the cosmic concept known as language. The universality of its features projects language to be different from other forms of animal communications. Chomsky (1972) rightly justifies and affirms that language is the essence of humanity. Perhaps, if language ceases to exist; human beings' existence might invariably be terminated from the Earth because it is a device that provides leeway for harmonious human existence. Among other variables that contribute to human existence, language seems a prime and significant device. Hence, Kuiper and Allan (1996) describe the properties of language in the form of a coded symbol, functional, arbitrarily creative, productively human, socio-cultural and culturally transmitted from one source to another. It is also a system of systems guided by rules and provides optional choices for its users (Dalamu, 2018c). Besides, one could further depict language as a unique phenomenon that is tense bound, substitutable with words, even with discrete phonemic substances. Language responds to changes any time as a response to its developments (Fromkin, Rodman & Hymas, 2003, p. 4–7; Adetugbo, 1997, p. 5–7). Similarly, Yorùbá responds to fulfill the needs of its users in that regard. Consequently, the concept of nomenclature is worthwhile among Yorùbá users (Adeoye, 1969). By nomenclature, the researcher refers to organised-cum-cultural manners in which Yorùbá interactants in Nigeria produce the names of towns and places (Yusuf, Olatunji & Issah, 2014).

Owing to human communicative demands, certain Yorùbá names and places have been modified from their original linguistic statuses to something novel (Oyelaran, 1987). In other words, those names have turned away from their initial appearances to assume new positions. The purpose of convenience, Oduyoye (1972) asserts, influences the changes that occur to the names and towns. First language speakers (L1) are at liberty to deploy

their language at will without a check from authorities or institutions.¹ Such freedom-cum-exercise informs the formations and applications of new lexemes in the language's word stock, while some lexicons might also go into extinction (Jones, 1982). The relevance of this study is located in the arbitrary creativity that Yorùbá speakers enjoy, producing universal acceptability. The product of such formative mechanisms demonstrates that the language is responding not only to changes but also to development (Pavlinov, 2015). Thus, this study analyses some modifications that occur to names of Yorùbá places and towns accompanied by linguistic competence and performance. The argument exhibits how the competence of Yorùbá speakers aids their performance to successfully recast referential and historical statements to their current situations. The literature review focuses on the Yorùbá sources, codification and development, and terminologies of competence and performance. Ellipsis functions as the device for the analysis.

Yorùbá's Source, Codification, and Development

Yorùbá might not have an exclusive written history. McLaughlin (1970) recognizes that fact to comment that the search for the beginnings of language development is an unrewarding enterprise. It is always difficult to talk about beginnings in any serious way; it is much easier to talk about evolution at least somewhere in the middle. As such, the Yorùbá linguistic history perhaps began somewhere in the middle of the 19th century. That refers to the changes that sparked its development. The study began late for a number of possible reasons. It could be that before the advent of Western traders there had been no reliable written records on Yorùbá. It seems that colonial masters and missionaries introduced the Western education that propels tangible written records. Farming seemed more prominent in those days than Western education. Few Yorùbá indigenes were able to cross the border of secondary education to obtain university degrees that could trigger research in the Yorùbá language matters. The few who attended universities might not be interested in research in Yorùbá with a formed-opinion that such might not be lucrative unlike their counterparts that studied English, Law, Medicine, Economics, Engineering, etc. Digging into Yorùbá data might be cumbersome because the data available might be in the form of folklore, myths, or historical literature that are not written documents per se. Most of the Yorùbá forefathers were not lettered in Western education before colonialism. However, ancient Yorùbá people had their own different ways of keeping records. Notwithstanding, the Yorùbá race has produced a number of scholars at home and abroad, who have been making significant marks on the development of the language. Beside Ajayi Crowther, who translated the English Bible into the Yorùbá version, notable scholars have been observing the language from different perspectives and contributing their opinions to its credit. Among other scholars are Bamgbose, Ayo Banjo, Adetugbo, Ojo, Mustapha, and Oyetade.

Historical records report Yorùbá as a Kwa language and one of the 12 Edekiri languages, which belongs to the Yoruboid group (Paul 2009) of Defoid languages of the Benue-Congo, Volta-Congo, and Atlantic-Congo under the Niger-Congo phylum.² The Niger-Congo is the 1419th most spoken language of both the Central and South Africa (UCLA, 2014). The hallmark of Yorùbá, in orthographical tones of three distinctions, forms high, mid, and low characteristic models. Adetugbo (1982) establishes that the high is marked with an acute accent (e.g. á), the low with a grave accent (e.g. à), and the mid tone usually left unmarked. These marks are usually placed on the vowels. In some circumstances the mid tone is indicated with a macron (UCLA, Language Materials Project, 2014). Furthermore, accounts specify that Yorùbá is a dialect continuum that accommodates numerous distinct dialects (Bamgbose, 1966). The inherent demarcations in the Yorùbá dialects, marked in the domains of its pronunciations, lexis, and grammar, Oyetade (1995) articulates, are designed after the Roman alphabet. The socio-cultural traditions of the Yorùbá in the Diaspora inform the differences observed in the available spoken 'Yorùbás.' The discovery of the Yorùbá speakers being located, apart from south-west Nigeria, in Benin, Togo, UK, USA, the Caribbean – Brazil, Cuba, etc (Awoyale, 2008), might not have happened without colonialism and slave trade.

Despite the vileness of colonialism, its positive effects on the Yorùbá language cannot be neglected. One of the gains of colonialism is the pioneering of the codification and studying of the Yorùbá language grammar, Aku, in Sierra Leonean territory in 1849 (African Studies Institute, 2010). Odejebi (2005) claims that for a period of about ten years, the Western Region Ministry of Education set up academic groups to examine the Yorùbá orthography in order to construct a worthwhile standard for the language. A significant outcome, Odejebi

¹ Bloomer, A., Griffiths, P., & Merrison, A. J. (2005). *Introducing language in use: A coursebook*. New York, NY: Routledge.

² Central Intelligence Agency. (2009). *The word fact book – Benin*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bn.html>

exemplifies, was achieved in 1966, which had a formidable impact. Since then, the effect has served as the hallmark of the standard form of Yorùbá that is taught in schools for official engagements (Bamgbose, 1966; Afolabi, Omidiora & Arulogun, 2013). The codified Yorùbá taught in schools today, Ojo (1977) argues, does not seem similar to any of the Yorùbá dialects. This is on the grounds that no one Yorùbá ethnic group could lay claim to its originality (Mustapha, 1987). The current Yorùbá status is neutral and somehow synthetic. It could also be mentioned that the standard Yorùbá does not totally depend on the popular Oyo dialect. The standard Yorùbá is scholar made, scholarship oriented, and scholarship endowed.

The African Studies Institute (2010) reported that in 1819 Bowdich published the first Yorùbá word list, which introduced the language to linguists. Nevertheless, a substantial Yorùbá vocabulary did not appear until 1828 when Hannah Kilham published a collection of vocabularies from 30 African languages, most of which was gathered in Sierra Leone. By around 1843-1849, Yorùbá had become one of the first West African languages to have a written grammar and a dictionary (UCLA, 2014). The ‘Vocabulary of the Yorùbá Language’ by Samuel Ajayi Crowther was published in 1843. Further accounts explained (Owolabi, 1995; Ogunremi & Adediran, 1998; Salawu, 2004) that by 1859, a Yorùbá newspaper appeared, and by 1875, an orthography for Yorùbá had been created by the Church Missionary Society in Lagos, Nigeria. The first written Yorùbá poetry was undertaken in 1905 by the prolific and popular writer Sobowale Sowande. By 1920, Yorùbá literacy witnessed a rapid spread; and that period served as a facilitator for a steady flow of original Yorùbá writing in both prose and verse. The movement to study Yorùbá in the United States began in the 1960s as part of U.S. foreign policy initiatives to spread awareness of previously untaught or rarely taught languages (African Studies Institute, 2010; UCLA, 2014).

In the current terrain, there are scholars who have contributed immensely to the development of Yorùbá. In sincerity, the study of Yorùbá has moved a step forward from its grammaticality and phonologicity to information technology applications. Current efforts of scholars are dominated by the cross-fertilisation of ideas especially where there is interplay between the Yorùbá language and computational domains. The plausibility of Yorùbá in(to) computational horizons is being investigated for possible applications. Of significance is the analysis of Kumolalo, Adagunodo, and Odejebi (2013) on the development of a syllabicator for Yorùbá. The quest was borne out of the claim that Yorùbá belongs to the cadre of under-resourced languages of the world (De Pauw, Wagacha, & De Schryver, 2007). The study shows Yorùbá as a tonal language and a tool for automatic data processing; such quality could be adapted for speech processing technology (Kumolalo, Adagunodo, & Odejebi, 2010). Afolabi, Omidiora and Arulogun (2013) make another innovative effort congruent to computer applications. The attempt is to certify Yorùbá as an apparatus for text-to-speech applications. Afolabi, Omidiora and Arulogun observe that Yorùbá acceptability and usability to participants are overwhelming. To this end, this study, as a contribution to earlier efforts, reveals word-formation procedures of Yorùbá towns and cities from a descriptive perspective, pinpointing ways that events such as war, business, etc. have influenced the formations.

Linguistic Competence and Performance

Noam Chomsky pioneered the concepts of linguistic competence and performance. Chomsky (1965) described linguistic competence as the perfect knowledge that the ideal native speaker-listener (e.g. a Yorùbá speaker-listener) possesses in his/her language in a completely homogeneous speech community. An innate and internalised system of language rules, Chomsky (1965, p. 4) stressed, makes possible the untainted knowledge of the language. This is because the L1 naturally understands the tenets of the language from birth, distinguishing well-formed features from deviant ones. Thus, competence is a person’s ability to create and understand sentences, including sentences that the individual has never heard before.³ Competence also includes the person’s knowledge of what are and what are not sentences of a particular language (Malmkjaer, 2004, p. 287; De Beaugrande, 1991, p. 150-151). An actual language user, in Chomsky’s (1965) discernment, might not be perfect in constructing the language structures although the individual may have perfect linguistic competence. The reason provided is that language performance is somehow inferior to the knowledge of the language; it is mediated by memory limitations and distractions.

A speaker often seems to speak faster than he/she thinks because the speech may not keep pace with his/her linguistic competence, hence, the making of mistakes. It is added that performance is the innate speaker’s actual deployment of the language. ‘A difference is made between a person’s knowledge of the language (competence)

³ Richards, J., Platt, J., & Weber, H. (1997). *Longman dictionary of applied linguistics*. London, UK: Longman.

and how a person uses the knowledge in producing and understanding sentences (performance)'.⁴ When two or more innate speakers-listeners of a particular language have recourse to debate on a particular subject, one could observe that there might be variations in the degree of performance. The variations provide room for labeling some people above-average public speakers. The linguistic performance of language users may fall short of competence because of random and characteristic blunders. Often, performance is a probable imperfect reflection of competence. Particularly, Radford (1988, p. 3) argues that the occasional slips of the tongue in people's everyday conversations do not mean that the individuals do not have a fuller understanding or fluency of their native language.

Theoretical Concept: Ellipsis

Modification of names (or words) can be realised through word formation processes. Word formation, in Yule's (1985) articulation, is a process where novel items are created from existing words through the processes of coinage, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym, derivation, and affixation (Okoro, 2006). Clipping, as a relevant term of this study, occurs in a word, multi-syllabic word or a clustering of linguistic contents so that the constructs can be reduced to a shorter form (Zapata, 2007). Some examples of clipping are: television = telly; brother = bro; professor = prof; Are you going tomorrow? = Going tomorrow?; You come = Come; Will you read in the night? = Read in the night?; I will be there in two hours = Two hours; You are silly = Silly. And Wálé = Wá sí ilé (return home), Şişé = Şe işé (work), and Rérin ín = Rín èrín (laugh) are illustrations of Yorùbá instances.

Ellipsis is the theoretical concept with which the clipping modifications in Yorùbá nomenclature – places and towns – are analyzed (e.g. Àwòrì = àwó ti rì = the portion where the dish/plate sinks). Pope (1998) explains that the omission of items implicitly understood by the audience is what is known as ellipsis, regularly operational in speeches. The basis is that fragmented structures, in Martin's (2002) manifestation, are effective when the listeners understand the structured text, and are capable of supplying the missing elements in order to link up the speaker's intended meaning. That position is a probable motivation for Pope (1998) to submit that ellipsis is common in about 95% of human interactions because it is much easier to communicate in speech than in writing for communication in speech is faster and immediate (Adetugbo, 1997).

Moreover, ellipsis is a punctuated cohesive device of several shapes in forming a structural unifying whole. Ellipsis, in Halliday and Hasan's (1976, p. 142) description, is substitution by zero. This term is a principle of brevity, economising textual structures (Cook, 2001, p. 171), a tool of sentential fragmentation (Carter & Nash, 2013, p. 260), a language user's fundamental power to punctuate a sentence (Myers, 1994, p. 54-5), and a kind of linguistic shorthand. Goddard (2002, p. 107) projects ellipsis as a deletion of core grammatical forms of subject, determiner, generic 'you' as well as the verbal content (Carter, 1997, p. 91). On that note, ellipsis is an act of removing parts of a linguistic substance of a word, a group, or a clause either of a simple appearance or a complex one for a convenient purpose. McGregor (1997, p. 328) argues that 'Ellipsis involves the omission of something which is actually there in a grammatical structure, presuming retrievable from the linguistic or extra-linguistic content. In my mind, two things are principal in ellipsis. The first is deletion. The second is recovery. Deletion is connected to the addresser's mission; while recovery is linked up to the addressee's goal. The interactant, for the purpose of familiarity, curbing time wastages, focusing the core value of the message, and avoiding textual superfluity, tends to remove parts of the statement.

The principle of ellipsis, Cook (2001) says, has some recognizable impacts on users, which are highlighted as the creation of conversational tones, the demonstration of shared knowledge, and the exhibition of social interest between the participants. The influence tends to build cordial relationships between the interlocutors, indicating an informal setting in the communication realm (p. 172–173).

The linguistic content of a sentence can be distributed into what is known as ranks.⁵ The rank scale is categorised into the following segments – morphemes, words, groups, group complexes, clauses, and clause complexes (p. 23). Owing to the sentential appreciation, Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) categorise the fragmentation into ellipsis dependent of linguistic content, ellipsis not dependent on linguistic content, ellipsis of auxiliaries and pro-forms, and ellipsis in coordinated clauses, etc. (p. 251-253, 261-267), whereas the classification of ellipsis, in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) sense, is a bit different from the former. This is because the categorisations

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ Thompson, G. (2004). *Introducing functional grammar*. London, UK: Hodder Arnold.

are based on the three submissions of nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis, and clausal ellipsis. Under the normal, verbal and clausal ellipsis the descriptions of the others are sub-categorised. Nominal ellipsis operates within the confinement of the nominal group (nouns, pronouns, numeratives, epithets, deictic elements, etc.). Verbal ellipsis occurs within the verbal group (operator, polarity, modality, verbal lexis). Clausal ellipsis takes place within modal and prepositional elements, yes/no and wh-questions, indirect responses, etc. (see Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 147-222). Such functional positions have inspired the author to ask the following questions: How do Yorùbá speakers naturally form words in the form of convenience? Can the innate formation processes be justified within the domain of word formation theorisation? Does the word formation processes follow a particular pattern or trend? What are the historical background(s) associated with the formation of Yorùbá town names? Significantly, these will assist in informing readers about some of the contextual trends and revelations of word formation processes of Yorùbá nomenclature.

Methodology

This study received inspiration from and was triggered by His Royal Majesty, Oba Enitan Adeyeye, Ojájá II, the *Oòni* of Ifè – *Oòniṣà* (a paramount Yorùbá ruler). This investigation is a product of a statement that the *Oba* uttered in a live telecast some time in December 2015, after his coronation. The *Oòni* made known that *Ilé-Ifè* means *ilè, tó n fè* (as exemplified latter). The statement energised the author to conduct a simple research project on the underlying meaning of the names of other Yorùbá places.

Participants

Forty-two individuals participated in the data collection exercise of the research. Thus, the participants could be classified into three distinct categories: the author, the guide/leader, and the narrators. Apart from the guide, who was just one person (Bonke), the narrators were 40 individuals, who preferred to remain anonymous. Bonke was about 36 years old, while the narrators' ages were between 70-80 years old in order to obtain accurate historical information about the towns. The choice of Bonke rested on her driving dexterity and impressive knowledge of the towns and cities of South West, Nigeria where the Yorùbá people live (Bamgbose, 1966; Adetugbo, 1982). To reiterate, the 40 narrators were responsible for the histories of the selected towns.

Research Design

Following Litosseliti (2010), Patton (2015), and Dalamu (2017b), the sampling procedure was adopted as a means of making a suitable choice for data analysis. The sampling method permitted me to select 10 relatively handy numbers of towns from a large defined population of 20 towns (Nwagugo & Anumnu, 2003). The sampling technique enhanced the reduction of costs, speed of analysis, and discourse accuracy. The decision to select 10 towns was based on the matter of appropriateness, the nature of the formation, and meaning derivatives of the names of the towns. In that regard, I stratified and delimited the population of 20 names of towns into 10 parts, where one town was chosen from each unit.

Measures

The ten preferred towns, which operated as the strata in the investigation, functioned as illustrations of the production of names' modus operandi in South West, Nigeria. Being a Yorùbá person, my knowledge of the language aided the choice of examining the word-formation processes of the towns. I already knew some information, though faint and unreliable, about the histories of the towns. Nonetheless, this research stimulated me to meet some elders, as a surveying exercise, in order to secure the true histories of the towns. I achieved my research goals through interviews, where writing materials such as notebooks and pens were utilised to jot down the information that the elders provided.

Procedure

In reference to the lexemic formation method as well as the meaning making potential, I categorised the names into 10 segments. As stated earlier, it was from each group that 10 names, according to their contents, served as the elements-cum-structures of analysis. The guide, who has been my 'partner in progress' in data collection,

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collected an average of ₦20,000.00 (‘₦’ is the sign of the Nigerian currency) from me as we travelled to places such as *Ìgbẹ̀sà*, *Ògbómòsò*, and *Ilésà*. However, the guide received only ₦10,000.00 as compensation for data collection within Lagos arenas. The funds were for car maintenance and meals. The 40 elders involved in the interviews donated their time to the project. Nevertheless, for reasons of comfort, appreciation, and pleasure, I spent about ₦12,000.00 to host a set of two elders in each town that we visited during the interviews. Seaman Schnapps®, classified as a drink for elders (Dalamu, 2017a), and other menu items were entertainment provisions for motivating the narrators. The need for concise histories necessitated the choice of two elders in each town. Truly, it was Bonke that located and organised the elders, who were community leaders and very versatile in the historical background of the selected towns.

After the presentation of data, as demonstrated in Table 1, below, in terms of ‘statement’, ‘translation’, and ‘end product’, the terminology of ellipsis (Napoli, 1996) negotiated through the linguistic notions of competence and performance (Chomsky, 1965; Malmkjaer, 2004) in an LI situation, was utilised to process the texts. I approached the results and discussions through word-formation patterns, theoretical connections, and viable historical contexts.⁶

Table 1
Transition of Yorùbá statements into compressed names

STATEMENT	TRANSLATION	END PRODUCT
Ilè <i>tó ñ fẹ̀</i>	A piece of land that expands	Ilé-Ifè
Ọjà kò tà	Business not picking up	Ọjọta
Ìgbo igi là	Gaining blessings while searching for firewood	Ìgbógilà.
ògbórí Èlémòsò	One who cuts <i>Èlémòsò</i> 's head	<i>Ògbómòsò</i>
ilè àwọn olórisà tí a sà s'òtò fún òrisà bíbọ	A place set aside for idol worshippers	Ilésà
amú ikokò, ajeegun jẹran.	One who catches a leopard	Amùkòkò
ègbé òsà,	Near the lagoon	Ìgbẹ̀sà
di òpè mú	Hold on to <i>òpèlè</i> (<i>Ifá</i> operational tool)	Dòpèmú
oní awùsá or alá wùsá.	A place where walnuts grow	Aláúsá
Bà dá gí rì	Bad agricultural area	Badagry

Results and Discussion

Yorùbá society influences, in many ways, the linguistic structures of the language that its speakers deploy to execute certain communicative projects. As mentioned earlier, one observes such functions in the manner that the names of Yorùbá villages, towns, and places are formed. Thus, these discussions follow after the ways that social concerns have informed the structural contents and organisations of the formation procedures of the selected names and towns (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). As one understands that traditional behaviours and language are interdependent (Kress, 1981), the notion of competence and performance has influenced the patterns of the Yorùbá word formation practices.⁷ The methods, as explicated below, utilise ellipsis as an explanatory paradigm, revealing to readers the formation systems in the form of elimination, twisting and replacement, as associated with some historical facts. In that course, a whole new name emerges after a long time of conversational usages.

Ilé-Ifè

*Ilè **tó ñ fẹ̀*** refers to “a piece of land that expands”. A Yorùbá cultural connotation impinges on a belief that a piece of land expands, which could be contrary to logic, philosophy, and natural sciences. The view could have a link with the thought of Yorùbá spiritual perception, seeing *Ilé-Ifè* as their origin from where the race migrated to several locations to establish some villages (that tend to become towns) for the purpose of expansion (Bamgbose, 1986). The Yorùbá nationality began to expand from the source, *Ilé-Ifè*, to many parts of the world. The structure, *ilè **tó ñ fẹ̀*** has been clipped by omitting certain linguistic elements to produce *Ilé-Ifè* (Booij, 2007). The choice is a

⁶ Zapata Becerra, A. A. (2000). *Handbook of general and applied linguistics*. Mérida, Venezuela: Trabajo de Ascenso sin publicar.

⁷ Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing functional grammar*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

result of removing *tó n* from the middle of the entire structure to form *Ilé ... Ifẹ*. For the reason of competence in the language, *i* is introduced to *’fẹ* to become *Ifẹ*. Then, the combination of the items *Ilé* and *Ifẹ* is what is popularly known as *Ilé-Ifẹ* nowadays.

Ilé-Ifẹ seems to be ambiguous in meaning. First, *Ilé-Ifẹ* could mean “home of expansion” and second, “home of love”, that is, *Ilé Ifẹ* (Yuzhannikova, 2015). Irrespective of one’s school of thought, two of the potential constructs are culturally meaningful and perhaps appropriate (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2008). On the one hand, “home of expansion” goes along with the explanation that the new *Ọ̀d̀ni* of *Ifẹ* gave after his coronation ceremony. That thought seems sacrosanct for the knowledge of His Royal Majesty on the tradition of *Ifẹ* (the short form of *Ilé-Ifẹ*). In fact, the Royal Father is the custodian of the *Ifẹ* traditional antiquities. On the other hand, an analyst could portray “home of love” as a strong feeling of caring that somebody has for another person. As much that there are no legislative principles that guide and protect the formation; it is not an understatement to say that *ilè tó n fẹ* has been clipped (Bauer, 1983; Nolda, 2014) to produce *Ilé-Ifẹ*, the Yorùbá cradle. Who knows whether in a couple of years, owing to the dynamic nature of language, *Ilé* will be removed from *Ilé-Ifẹ*, and only *Ifẹ* will be required for identifiable communication.

Ọjóta

Yorùbá naming methodology is quite amazing, especially if one digs into the history as a *para*-historian (Akinaso, 1980). An analyst might be led to believe that virtually every Yorùbá name is a statement. That is why, a Yorùbá person is first and foremost identified by his name. Nonetheless, Islam and Christianity have consistently influenced Yorùbá names. Every name is syllabically meaningful, and perhaps, connected to a certain event (Owolabi, 1995). *Ọjà kò tà* illustrates the argument for being unconsciously systematically converted to *Ọjóta*, a town in Lagos State. As displayed in Table 1, above, *ọjà kò tà* means “business is not picking up.” The historical background correlating to the statement might be that the place named *Ọjóta* was a market place in those days. However, farm produce and other invaluable items that were usually brought to be sold in the market could not be sold on time unlike other markets where similar goods were taken. In the course of time, while the language users employed *ọjà kò tà* in their daily conversations; it then turned to *Ọjóta*. Structural-wise, the clipping formation (Bauer, 2001) of the end product, *Ọjóta*, does not in any way follow any theoretical elliptical implement. Convenience dictates the process of formation.

In the statement, *ọjà kò tà*, *ọj* is retained from the lexeme, *ọjà* (market), and *kò* is totally removed from the statement (Ajiboye & Armoskaite, 2015). An intrusive *o* is introduced to fall within the norm of the desire of the language users. The collapsibility of *a* and *kò*, and the introduction of *o* between the remaining element *ọj’* and *tà* leaves us with *Ọjóta*. The structural formation goes thus: *ọj + ò + tà = Ọjóta*. The formation is a result of the vitality that one can expect from language. The product is trilling. Commendations go to both the language users and the characteristics of Yorùbá that permit listeners to observe competence and performance in this way.

Ìgbógílà

Ìgbo igi là is the next item in this discourse. The statement means “prosperity comes in search of firewood.” History has it that a hunter left a place where an individual had been sojourning for a long time in search of firewood. Fortunately for the hunter, the person came across a river, and then the individual decided to establish himself and family near the river. Thus the hunter abandoned his former domain where enough water was not available. That singular act was to the hunter remarkable and a blessing. The water that the hunter saw while in search of firewood became a source of comfort. The individual had no intention of looking for a river, but the search for firewood pushed him to gain an advantage. The activity *ìgbo igi* became a privilege, *là* (prosperity) for the individual. The clipping system (Arnoff, 1976) indicates that only *i* is deleted from the middle lexeme, *igi* and remains *’gi*. The lexeme *ìgbógílà*, is then produced from the combination of *ìgbo + ’gi + là*. *Ìgbógílà* is a town in Egbado North, Ogun State, Nigeria. In the final production of the name, the sound no longer reflects the meaning. It has become artificial (Okanlawon, 2017). Except for those who are enlightened regarding the historical details of the town, it is a great task to decode the real meaning from the pronunciation of the name. The meaning is (by tone mark) *ìgbogilà*, however, it is pronounced *Ìgbógílà*.

Ògbómòṣó

Ògbómòṣó, a renowned town in Oyo State, is produced from the clipping exercise that *ògbórí Èlémòṣó* underwent.

Ògbórí Elémòsò could be translated as someone who carries the head of *Elémòsò*. The profound meaning is perhaps somebody who succeeded in defeating the people’s enemy at war (as in the case of David and Goliath in the Holy Bible), cut off the head, and showed it to the fowls of the earth. In Yorùbá history, two warriors were engaged in a fight that lasted for some seasons. The more popular between the two was *Elémòsò*, a cunning warrior. Unfortunately, *Elémòsò* was defeated by his antagonist. The antagonist cut off *Elémòsò*’s head after the fight and showed it to the people (Chernow & Vallasi, 1993; Gecas & Burke, 1995). The place where *Elémòsò*’s head was shown to the people is called *ògbórí Elémòsò*. The name is in honour of the killer of *Elémòsò*. It is quite unfortunate that the name of the triumphant warrior is not renowned unlike his act of conquering the enemy, *Elémòsò*. *Ògbómòsò*’s word is produced by linguistic shorthand (Haspelmath, 2002) through the removal of *rí* from the first text, *ògbórí* and retaining *ògbó*; and *Elé* is also deleted from the textual element of *Elémòsò* to remain *’mòsò*. The addition of *ògbó + mòsò = Ògbómòsò*. In the onomastic outcome, the sound still reflects the earlier intended meaning of *ògbórí Elémòsò*.

Ilésà

What is known in Yorùbá land as *Ilésà* today was coined from *ilè àwọn olórìsà* and by extension, it was *ilè olórìsà*. That is *ilè àwọn olórìsà tí a sà s’òtò, fún órìsà bíbọ*. The two statements could be interpreted as “a piece of land separated for worshippers of deities.” The idol worshippers that numbered about seven, happened to be powerful people, that were not entitled to become kings (Rymes, 1996). Their sole function informed setting aside a piece of land for the priest, without the interruption of the people, to be conveniently performing spiritual rites. The situation of these idol worshippers in the Yorùbáland could be compared to the British Colony, Australia, where convicted criminals were kept and managed (Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2003, p. 124) that later turned into a country of fortune that accommodates responsible people and erudite intelligentsia such as: Halliday, Hasan, Matthiessen, Yallop, etc. Although *ilè àwọn olórìsà* is longer and more meaningful, courtesy demands that the convenience of the people should be fundamental. Therefore, the statement was clipped to *Ilésà*. The structural outcome of *Ilésà* is found in the brevity principle (Kelley, 2006) by the removal of *àwọn olórì* from the statement. However, the first word, *ilé* in connection with the last component *’sà* of the last word *olórìsà* is considered for the production of *Ilésà*. Meanwhile, the original *ilè* (land) has turned to *ilé* (house) in the current realization. The twist might serve as a means to achieve expediency.

Amùkòkò

Amùkòkò is the name of a town in Lagos State. By listening to the pronunciation of *Amùkòkò*, a different meaning is deducible from the way that the town is pronounced nowadays. The current pronunciation will sound like “someone who smokes his pipe”. Nevertheless, the true semantic derivation of the lexeme *Amùkòkò* is “a person who catches a leopard.” The Yorùbá original word is *amú ìkokò*. This investigation mirrored earlier findings that language is lively; as time goes on and human beings grow, language also grows and changes (Okoro, 2006). *Amú ìkokò* (hunter) is a good example of a language change that has been turned to *Amùkòkò* (smoker). The lexemic fragmentation is not too huge. Two things occurred in the word-formation process. One the *ì* in *ìkokò* is ellipted. Two, both *amú* and *ìkokò* are clipped together as a single word (Katamba & Stonham, 2006). What is known as *Amùkòkò* in Lagos today is a derivative of *amú ìkokò*, *ajeegun jeran*. A leopard is characterised as a special animal that eats both the bones and flesh of animals.

Ìgbèsà

Yorùbá seems to be a language that does not construct texts just for structure’s sake. Despite that normative quality, our forefathers were not well-lettered in Western education, meanings of phenomena seemed so important to ancient Yorùbá people. One observes such behaviours in several constructs of the language. For instance, names in Yorùbá are traditionally customised and socially conjectured (Akinnaso, 1981; DePaulo, Kenney, Hoover, Webb & Oliver, 1987). *Ìgbèsà* as an *Àwóri* town was fabricated along that line. *Ìgbèsà* was a product of *ègbé òsà*, which means ‘by the side of the lagoon.’ The implication of the name evolved because of a river that has been linked to the Lagos lagoon and by its side a dwelling was established. The tradition is embedded in the relationships between the river and settlement. The writer notices the social conjecture of *Ìgbèsà* in the arbitrary substitution of *è* in *ègbé* for an intruder *ì* (Blumer, 1969). The swap turns *ègbé* to *ìgbé*. One also observes that *ò* in *òsà* removed, leaving only *’sà*. The combination of the lexemes *ìgbé* and *’sà* obtains the morphological realization of *Ìgbèsà*. Arbitrariness of this creativity is in the manner in which words are haphazardly substituted, where one linguistic component gives way for another to replace it (Dalamu, 2018a; 2018e).

Dòpè mú

Di òpè mú is a statement that turns to *Dòpè mú* after a continuum, non-spatial usage among the Yorùbá speakers. This construction acknowledges an established fact in the linguistic domineering world that one cannot totally separate the culture of the people from their language. This is equivalent to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic determinism (Yule, 2016). One could only trace the recurring change from *di òpè mú* to *Dòpè mú*. However, its conversion validity might be difficult to formalise. The date people began to call it *Dòpè mú* might not be unravel-able, nonetheless, one is only sure that the novel lexeme emanated from *di òpè mú*. An analyst might posit that *di òpè mú* is an ambiguous statement (Denham & Lobeck, 2013). The ambiguity resides in the central word *òpè*. Two meanings evolve here. One, *òpè* in the Ègbá dialect means “palm tree.” If one goes by that, *di òpè mú* would mean “hold on to palm tree.” The second version that seems more relevant, meaningful, preferable, and practical is to consider *òpè* as a short form of *òpèlè*. Without being clipped, *òpèlè* relates to the *Ifá* oracle in Yorùbáland, which is a prophetic device in the custody of an *Ifá* priest (Pogson & Akande, 2011). *Òpèlè* is a nonliving device (but spiritually living) that assists to unknot future events to the people, who care to know about the future through *Ifá*. *Òpèlè* goes further to proffer solutions (remedies) to sorrowful, hardship situations, and unforeseen circumstances that traumatise the people (Adegbindin, 2014). In this vein, *di òpè mú* means “hold on to *Ifá* oracle” probably in terms of its prophetic truth, service or worship. Descendants of *Ifá* worshippers bear names such as this. This willy-nilly word-formation is simple because it is only the *i* that supports the lexeme *di*, which has been taken away, leaving the organ as *d'*. The *d' + òpè + mú* combinatory utility produced *Dòpè mú* as its result.

Aláúsá

The unpredictability of Yorùbá lexemic formation has also touched the statement *oní awùsá*. A native speaker can understand *Oní awùsá* as *alá wùsá*. Discussants have deduced and earmarked two potential meanings from *Aláúsá*. These forms are: (i) the owner (possessor) of walnuts; (ii) a place where walnut trees grow. Thus, the author will not considerably flex his muscles on either of these options because a number of debates have been held via the local electronic media on the matter and tangible corrections have been made several times that *Aláúsá* is a place where walnut trees grow and yield fruits. Still on the same line of thought, it is pertinent to state clearly that language is for the people to communicate with one another and not a reversal of it (Dalamu, 2018b). So, that persuasion allows people to dictate forcefully what language is, and operations that the language is meant to perform for interactants. The original meaning of *Aláúsá* – a place where walnut trees grow – has been hijacked and overturned through the pronunciation currency, which provides different meanings in its entirety (Okoro, 2006). Now, it is *Aláúsá*. This means as a place where the Hausas (a nationality in Nigeria) live or Hausa's abode.

The purpose of studying an event, one can quickly submit, is to have its understanding in order to see how it could positively affect the lives of the people (Swale, 1990). Language concerned institutions ought to let individuals utilise the language the way people want the language to be disseminated, most especially, when such communication contains neither grammatical infelicities nor syntactic errors (Sofola, 1970; Fayeye, 2006). Moreover, what those places are called today does not have a negative effect on the people or on the cities. Languages and discourse communities do not exist as such, as Halliday, Teubert, Yallop, and Čermáková (2004) remark, language and linguistic geography are social constructs. Interactants construe language to suit particular purposes (p. 114). People in authority should allow the liberty of ‘the freedom of speech’ to thrive in Yorùbá nomenclature. There is no amount of correction in the media that can change the people's will concerning their social discourse of interaction and relationship constructions. It is very significant to understand that there is no formula in the world that can compel people to agree on what a language is and what a language community is. It is up to language users to design formulas in agreement with their intentions, experiences, and what seems useful at a given time (ibid., p. 115). There is a need to learn from the challenge that the restrictive legislation of French and Italian languages has posed on their spread, especially when compared to the global spread of English (Jackson & Ze Amvela, 2003, p. 28). The global hegemony of English in world affairs (Dalamu, 2018d) could not have been achieved, perhaps, if not for the application of the Feyerabend Principle of ‘anything goes’ (Feyerabend, 1970, p. 10). There is wisdom in allowing people to do things in a naturally convenient way; such liberty of communication, in Yule's (1985) sense, could yield remarkable results.

Badagry

A historical report states that the place *Badagry* is neither an English nor Yorùbá token. *Badagry* is rather a grotesque formation emanated from the two languages (Liseli, 2012). During colonialism in Nigeria, the place was tagged as bad land for agricultural production and in short realised as “bad agric area.” The Yorùbá speakers, who might not have the English grammatical ethos and ability to realise the place as “bad agricultural area”, attempted to convert the same statement to *bà dá gírì*. There is elliptical fragmentation in the annihilation of “c area” from “bad agric area” to have *bad agri*. The nature of Yorùbá morphology pinpoints the constant romance of consonant with vowel (Olmsted, 1951). That is, VCV, CVCV, VVCV, CVV, CV, etc. except in situations of *m*, *n*, *gb* and *kp*, hence, the introduction of *i* between the consonants *g* and *r*, which produces *gírì* to listeners. The clipping of *bà dá gírì* together after the processes of substitution by zero (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) and the introduction of *i* produced *bàdágírì*, that is *bà + dá + gírì + ò = bàdágírì*. The continuum usages of *bàdágírì* in both spoken and written language emerged as *Badagry*, without relevant meaning to the lexicon’s employment today. The analyst could add that *Badagry* in its appearance is *undertoned* in both English and Yorùbá. *Bàdà* is Yorùbá, while *gry* is English. *Gry* cannot locate a functioning zone in Yorùbá phonology; the structure cannot take Yorùbá tone mark because three consonantal elements might not function in Yorùbá consonant cluster without an intrusive vowel sound. *Gry*, in relation to English, is graphologically possible and phonologically realisable. Looking at the lexeme’s phonology, there is *gry* as /gri:/ (Roach, 1991, p. 67-74; Clark & Yallop, 1995, p. 67-9; Adetugbo, 1998, p. 68-75). This comparative brevity shows that the construct, *Badagry*, seems to emanate from the Yorùbá-English distortion capability.

Conclusion

The study has discussed Yorùbá nomenclature as an arbitrary social phenomenon. Convenience informed the capricious principles witnessed, nonetheless, leading to language growth and development, as recapitulated in the following expressions. One, observations indicate a form of clipping exercises in the ten names examined. Clipping operates in the form of fragmentation and deletion of linguistic components from the middle. Examples are in *Ilé-Ifè* (*Ilé... Ifè*), *Ìgbógílà* (*Ìgbó ... gílà*), and *Ilésà* (*Ilé ... sà*). *Ìgbesà* is exceptional to this recurrent behaviour because clipping through punctuation occurs from the first linguistic facility and the middle. That is (...*gbẹ* ... *sà*). Two, as some linguistic structures are chopped up, others have attracted novel elements to the constituents in order to yield meaningful results. The instances are: *Ilé ... [i]fè* (with the introduction of letter *i*), *Oj ... [ó]ta* (with the introduction of letter *ó*) and *[i]gbẹ ... sà* (with the introduction of letter *i*).

Three, there are twists and zigzaggedness in the pronunciation of some of the formations as identified with tone marks, as observed in *Ìgbogílà* to *Ìgbógílà*, *ojà kò tà* to *Ojóta*, and *Aláúsá* to *Aláúsá*. Four, although, the historical undertone of *Ilé-Ifè* might be illogical for scientific evidence, the other analysed towns have historical records. Traditional beliefs project the historical content of *Ilé-Ifè*, *Ojóta*, and *Aláúsá* anchor on business transactions of agricultural produce. The analysis reveals hunting, war, and conquest as the historical reports of *Amùkòkò*, *Ìgbógílà*, and *Ògbómòsò*; religious undercurrents produce *Ilésà* and *Dòpèmú* respectively; whereas *Badagry* displays farming as its viable informative content. Given these observations, it is important to allow the formation exercises of Yorùbá users to prevail for proper analysis-cum-codification in order to promote descriptivism. However, further studies could be conducted in the domain of phonological appreciations of word-formation procedures in Yorùbá.

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The Younger, the Better? A Multi-Factorial Approach to Understanding Age Effects on EFL Phonological Attainment

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Second language (L2) phonological acquisition is constrained by a complex interplay of extra-linguistic factors, among which the age factor is frequently investigated. This study adopted a multi-factorial approach to examine the effects of the age of learning English (AoLE), along with ten other extra-linguistic factors, on the ultimate English phonological attainment of 318 university students in Chinese context for English as a foreign language (EFL) as a whole and across three cohorts: first-year non-English majors, first-year English majors, and third-year English majors. The participants were administered background questionnaires and receptive and productive EFL phonology tests. The results of regression analyses indicated that the AoLE was not a predictor for the whole sample, while English pronunciation self-concept (EPSC) turned out to be the most predictive. Predictors for each cohort varied in number and content. Whichever cohort the participants came from, EPSC remained a constant and potent predictor, whereas the AoLE could merely predict the phonological attainment of first-year non-English majors, accounting for 4% of its variance. The findings of the study contribute to the long-standing debate over the viability of the critical period hypothesis, provide methodological implications for age-related L2 phonology research, and inform early EFL educational decisions.

Keywords: age of learning English, multi-factorial approach, Chinese EFL context, phonological attainment, university students

Introduction

Second language (L2) phonological acquisition is constrained by a complex interplay of extra-linguistic factors, which refer to “personal, environmental, and instructional variables within the learner rather than those stemming from differences between two language systems” (Jacobsen & Imhoof, 1974, p. 329). Among these factors, age of acquisition has received considerable attention in the English as a second language (ESL) context. Generally, older learners initially acquire the L2 faster than younger ones (older is better for rate of acquisition), but younger starters will be superior in terms of ultimate attainment (younger is better in the long run) (Krashen et al., 1979). Over the past few decades, a sizable amount of age-related literature has highlighted ultimate attainment, whether it be native-like attainment or any other outcome, because evidence from the end state determines the upper limits of L2 attainment and the explanation of outcome differences is of fundamental importance for L2 theory construction (Birdsong, 2006; Long, 2007). Research findings consistently demonstrate a negative correlation between age of acquisition and L2 ultimate attainment, namely, younger onset is associated with better attainment, in particular for phonology (Abrahamsson, 2012; Birdsong, 2006; Moyer, 2014).

The notion of ‘younger is better’ relates to the critical period hypothesis (CPH). The strongest evidence for this hypothesis comes from the study of L2 phonology, where older learners seldom achieve the native-like accent that younger ones display due to their lost neural plasticity over the critical period, its cutoff roughly coinciding with puberty (Doughty & Long, 2003; Lenneberg, 1967). The worldwide advocacy for early foreign language (FL) courses is strongly influenced by the CPH and ‘younger is better’ notion. Polish publications for language teachers, for instance, usually recommend an early start in FL instruction, centering mostly on phonetic aspects of the CPH (Singleton & Leśniewska, 2012). A survey of over thirty countries in Europe and Asia revealed that almost all of the countries required children to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) subject at primary school with the aim of a higher level of proficiency (Yolero & Yatağanbaba, 2013).

Then is younger always better? Although accumulated evidence from immigrant research of naturalistic L2 acquisition has profiled a tendency for long-term benefits on the part of younger starters, studies conducted in formal instructional settings do not seem to testify to younger learners’ advantage over seniors in the long run (Singleton & Muñoz, 2011; Singleton & Skrzypek, 2014). Age effects may be moderated by the learning context. FL learning tends to favor older learners endowed with superior cognitive skills and better explicit learning, and places younger learners at a disadvantage, since the input-impooverished context impedes the implicit learning at which they may be superior (Muñoz, 2008). The FL learning context involves classroom-based learning without societal structures for the L2 use, thus explicit learning is emphasized—a strength for older learners, while implicit learning is disabled—the strength of younger learners.

Given that the age effects in FL settings partially differ from those in naturalistic settings, and that FL studies are far from adequate for unveiling how starting ages influence outcomes of FL learning, as noted by Muñoz (2008), the present study attempts to ascertain whether ‘the younger the better’ holds true in the Chinese EFL context. It examines the effects of age of learning English (AoLE) along with ten other extra-linguistic factors on the ultimate EFL phonological attainment (EPA) of university students in China via a multi-factorial approach, an approach necessary for studies of age-related effects to elucidate the dynamic interaction of multiple factors in L2 phonological acquisition (Gui, 2012; Moyer, 2014; Singleton & Muñoz, 2011).

The university students involved are classified according to their major and grade to see the age effects across three cohorts, i.e., first-year non-English majors, first-year English majors, and third-year English majors. The ten factors include gender (Gen), aptitude for oral mimicry (AOM), musical ability (MuAb), amount of oral English use (AOEU), amount of English phonological training (AEPT), experiences with other foreign languages (EoFL), personality (Pers), English pronunciation self-concept (EPSC), motivation for English phonology learning (MEPL), and strategies for English phonology learning (SEPL). These factors were selected because they are possible predictors of L2/FL phonology from previous studies as well as their applicability to the Chinese EFL context. For example, in their review study Piske et al. (2001) singled out the variables frequently claimed to influence the degree of L2 foreign accent. Apart from age of L2 learning, other variables are gender, motivation, language learning aptitude (musical ability, mimicry ability), amount of L2 use, length of residence in an L2-speaking country, and formal instruction in the L2. In explaining why some late learners exhibit exceptionally successful outcomes in L2 phonology, Moyer (2014) examined the cognitive, social, psychological and experiential factors that co-vary with age, such as strategies, personality, and self-concept. All of those variables were considered in the present study except for the length of residence due to its inapplicability to Chinese EFL learners. In Elliott (1995), the number of foreign languages other than the target language under study was surveyed to determine whether rich language learning experiences would play a facilitative role in mastering pronunciation of the target language. Given that EFL learners in China may have had contact with foreign languages other than English, this variable was also subsumed into the study.

Research Questions

Two research questions were addressed:

1. To what extent can age of learning English and ten other extra-linguistic factors predict the English phonological attainment of university students in the Chinese EFL context?
2. Does the predictability of these factors vary across three cohorts depending on students’ majors (non-English vs. English) and year in school (freshmen vs. juniors)?

English phonological attainment is operationalized as the performance of receptive and productive phonology in English, both on the segmental and suprasegmental levels.

Materials and Methods

Participants

A total of 318 undergraduates from three state-owned universities in Nanjing, China constituted the sample for this study. They all filled out questionnaires and completed tests on receptive and productive EFL phonology (see the next section for details). They came from 20 different classes and represented a sample of convenience. They had intact hearing and were between 18 and 23 years of age (mean = 19.7). Of the sample, 235 (73.9%) were female and 83 (26.1%) male, reflecting a preponderance of girls in most mainland Chinese universities. They were distributed across three cohorts: 134 (42.1%) first-year non-English majors specializing in finance, land management, computer science, clinical medicine, mathematics, etc., 97 (30.5%) first-year English majors, and 87 (27.4%) third-year English majors.

Our participants were at least 18. They started formal English education in Grade 3 of primary school, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) of China, and experienced about 10 years of English study. This time period should be long enough for advantages, if any, to emerge. That being said, the participants were continuing to study English at college and may not have reached their point of ultimate attainment.

Procedure and Instruments

The study was carried out with data collected over two sessions. In the first session, which lasted about 30 minutes, participants answered the background questionnaire and took the receptive EFL phonology test in a sound lab or multimedia room during class time. In the second session, they individually accomplished the productive EFL phonology test after class.

Background Questionnaire. The questionnaire, in addition to querying demographic information such as name, chronological age, major, grade, university, and hearing status, elicited data pertinent to the 11 surveyed factors. It was composed of five parts and given in Chinese. See Appendix One for Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire.

Part One is directed at seven factors encompassing AoLE, Gen, EoFL, AOM, MuAb, AOEU, and AEPT. The participants supplied their data on AoLE (the age at which they began to learn English), Gen, and EoEL (whether they had learned or picked up foreign languages other than English). Then they self-rated their AOM on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*extremely weak*) to 5 (*extremely strong*). Their self-ratings in musicality and singing on a similar scale were averaged to signify their degrees of MuAb. With regard to AOEU, participants estimated the total hours that they orally use English in and outside of English class per week at the time of taking part in this study. As for AEPT, they estimated how long they had received English phonological training from regular classes at school or/and extracurricular programs before they participated in the study.

Part Two tests personality (Pers) with a focus on the introversion-extroversion dimension. To this end, a Chinese version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, revised by Chen (1983) and shown to be of high validity and reliability for Chinese adults (Qian et al., 2000), was employed. This part comprises 21 *Yes/No* questions. For positively worded questions (e.g., Are you talkative?), one score was assigned to each *Yes* answer, whereas for reverse worded questions (e.g., Do you always keep silent when you are together with others?), one score was given to each *No* answer. The higher the total score, the more extroverted the participant was inclined to be. The part also subsumes seven distracting questions irrelevant to personality and intended for detecting response defensiveness and ensuring the validity of the given answers; a participant giving more than six *No* answers was excluded and their answers considered invalid.

Part Three concerns EPSC, which is defined as the learner's self-conception and assessment of his or her English pronunciation proficiency (Tang et al., 2013). Patterned after Mu's (2006) questionnaire for Chinese university students, it contains eight items, five of which are positively worded (e.g., My English pronunciation is pleasant

to others' ears.) and the rest negatively worded (e.g., My English pronunciation is poor.). After each item is a 5-point rating scale to choose from (1 = *never or almost never true of me*, 5 = *completely or almost completely true of me*). The negatively worded items were later reverse scored.

Parts Four and Five measure participants' MEPL and SEPL. Motivation refers to a combination of the learner's attitudes, aspirations, and effort with respect to L2 learning (Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001). The 15 motivation items are derived from Pei (2010) and grouped into four categories: attitude towards English phonology learning (e.g., A mastery of good pronunciation is important in English study.), concern for English pronunciation (e.g., I will study hard to perfect my English pronunciation.), integrative motivation (e.g., I take a keen interest in English and the cultures of English-speaking communities), and instrumental motivation (e.g., Being able to speak English helps with job hunting.). Pronunciation learning strategies are defined as the steps utilized by students to enhance their pronunciation learning (Peterson, 2000). The 37 strategy items are adapted from Peterson's questionnaire. They fall into five categories: meta-cognitive strategies (e.g., record oneself to listen to one's pronunciation), cognitive strategies (e.g., repeat aloud after a native speaker or teacher), memory strategies (e.g., make up songs or rhythms to remember how to pronounce words), affective strategies (e.g., use a sense of humor about mispronunciations), and social strategies (e.g., ask someone else to correct one's pronunciation). Each item, motivational or strategic, is followed with scalar ratings from 1 (*never or almost never true of me*) to 5 (*completely or almost completely true of me*).

The calculated Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for Parts Two, Three, Four and Five using SPSS 16.0 were respectively .836, .913, .905, and .890, indicative of satisfactory internal consistencies and the reliability of these parts.

Receptive EFL Phonology Test. Receptive phonology was tested on segmental (phoneme) and suprasegmental (rhythm and intonation) levels. Participants first heard a prerecorded list of 39 items targeting twenty-two consonants and sixteen vowels. Each item comprises word triplets *A-B-X* (not printed on the answer sheet to avoid phoneme-grapheme mapping cues). *A* and *B* make up a minimal pair, with *X* from the same phonemic category as either *A* or *B* (e.g., *teeth-teethe-breath*, *seal-zeal-zip*). *A*, *B*, and *X* contain an equal number of phonemes and the contrastive phoneme in them occupies the same initial, medial, or final place. Participants were asked to determine whether *X* was phonemically identical to *A* or *B*. Afterwards, they heard 11 rhythm items covering seven rhythmic patterns where *S* and *w* represent stressed and unstressed syllables (e.g., *SwS*, *wSwS*). While hearing paired phrases in each item, they determined whether the rhythmic patterns were identical (e.g., *WORD by WORD—HARD and FAST*) or not (e.g., *LOTS to be DONE—our TIME is UP*). The phrases are of the same number of monosyllabic words and in a declarative form. Finally, participants heard 10 intonation items in four simple (e.g., fall or rise) and six combined (e.g., fall + rise, fall + fall) intonation patterns. They decided whether paired sentences within each item were the same (e.g., *He was right,/nevertheless.[fall/rise]—You're wrong,/actually.[fall/rise]*) or different (e.g., *Have you time?[rise]—I am not sure. [fall]*).

The stimulus words, phrases, and sentences were taken from Zhang (1988); their matching audio files were extracted and spliced together with a seven-second pause inserted between every other item. The participants heard everything only one time before making their choices on the answer sheet.

Productive EFL Phonology Test. Productive phonology was assessed through a passage-reading task to reflect participants' segmental and suprasegmental abilities. The passage, used by Luo and Zhang (2006), is 141 words long with a wide coverage of twenty-one consonants and sixteen vowels, among which are challenging phonemes for Chinese students to articulate (e.g., /n/ vs. /l/, /v/ vs. /w/). It also contains words whose stress placement can easily confuse students (e.g., *excellent*), and sentences with varied intonations. For example, intonation should rise after *skin* and *rim* in the sentence 'you will see that the potato has a skin, an outside rim, and an inside part', but more than 2/3 of the university students Luo and Zhang (2006) tested took no notice of it.

Participants were each asked to read the passage at a normal speed after class, record their readings, and save in mp3 or wma format. Before submission, they checked the saved recordings to guarantee their clarity.

Scoring of EFL Phonology Tests

Participants' answer sheets to the receptive phonology test were manually scored by the first author, a correct

segmental or suprasegmental answer awarded 0.5 points or 1 point. Their readings on the productive phonology test were randomly mixed and then rated by two second-year MA graduate students of applied linguistics, both having taught non-English majors for one year, on a 5-point scale (3, 6, 9, 12, 15) for segmental precision and suprasegmental native-likeness. On the segmental level, the raters evaluated the accuracy with which the participant pronounced English sounds, assigning a rating in light of the number of mispronounced phonemes (3 = 7 or more than 7 phonemes mispronounced, 6 = 5-6 phonemes mispronounced, 9 = 3-4 phonemes mispronounced, 12 = 1-2 phonemes mispronounced, 15 = no phoneme mispronounced). On the suprasegmental level, they rated on a similar scale from 3 (*not at all native-like*) to 15 (*native-like*) based on how the participant was native-like in aspects of rhythm, stress, and intonation. After scoring, inter-rater reliability was calculated, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were .858 for segmental production and .854 for suprasegmental production, implying a substantial inter-rater agreement. Then the ratings from two raters were averaged; the resulting mean for productive phonology was combined with the score for receptive phonology to produce a composite score for each participant representing his or her EPA. Since the full marks for the receptive and productive phonology tests were 40.5 and 30, the maximum score was 70.5.

Statistical Analysis

First, a descriptive analysis was performed on the 11 factors (predictors) and EPA phonology test scores (dependent variable) (SPSS 16.0; See Table 1). Next, a correlational analysis was used to assess the relationships between each predictor and EPA. Finally, a series of regression analyses was run to identify which predictors could significantly influence EPA of the whole sample of students and to compare their predictive powers across the three cohorts. The results of the regressions were used to answer the research questions. Note that in answering the second question, we randomly selected an equal number ($n = 80$) of students from each cohort, but ensured the same percentage of males therein ($n = 9, 11.2\%$) to eliminate the possible disturbance of gender imbalance.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for 11 Predictors and the Dependent Variable

Predictors/ dependent variable	Mean	SD	Range		Data source
AoLE	8.92	2.30	3-14	in years	
Gen	1.74	.44	1-2	male: 1; female: 2	
EoFL	1.41	.49	1-2	no: 1; yes: 2	
AOM	3.19	.66	1-5	ratings on	Part 1
MuAb	3.03	.85	1-5	a 5-point scale	
AOEU	2.49	2.81	0-16.7	in hours	
AEPT	54.08	113.16	0-675		
Pers	10.39	4.84	1-20	scores	Part 2
EPSC	26.08	6.37	8-40		Part 3
MEPL	60.09	8.79	32-75	ratings on	Part 4
SEPL	119.53	17.73	54-181	a 5-point scale	Part 5
EPA	49.08	7.10	21-64.5	scores on receptive/productive phonology tests	

background questionnaire

Results

Predictors for EFL Phonological Attainment from the Whole Sample

The 11 predictors and dependent variable were divided into three types in accordance with their levels of measurement. Gen and EoFL were binary nominal variables; AOM, MuAb, EPSC, MEPL, and SEPL were ordinal; AoLE, AOEU, AEPT, Pers, and EPA were interval. As a preliminary check of data normality, skewness and kurtosis values were computed. All the values were within the accepted ranges (skewness: -1.094 to 2.325; kurtosis: -1.883 to 6.303) except those for AEPT (skewness: 3.277; kurtosis: 11.034), an absolute skew value greater than 3 or an absolute kurtosis larger than 8 having been used as reference values for determining substantial non-normality (Kline, 2005).

We then analyzed the bivariate associations between each predictor and EPA with Pearson's, Spearman's, and point-biserial correlations, depending on the types of variables involved and whether data were normally distributed. Pearson's correlation was performed between two interval variables or between an interval dependent variable and an ordinal predictor with more than two categories, and point-biserial correlation was performed between an interval dependent variable and a binary nominal predictor (De Vaus, 2002; Kline, 2005). The strength of association between EPA and AEPT was tested with Spearman's rank order correlation, because of the non-normal distribution of AEPT noted above. Appendix Two attaches the correlations among the predictors and EPA.

As reported in Table 2, except for Pers, other predictors were significantly correlated with EPA at the .01 or .001 level. Among the significant correlates, only AoLE produced a negative correlation ($r = -.146$), seemingly upholding the CPH for L2 phonological acquisition and the notion of 'younger is better'. The most noticeable correlation existed between EPSC and EPA ($r = .483$).

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations between the Predictors and EFL Phonological Attainment (EPA)

Predictors	Correlation with EPA	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age of learning English (AoLE)	-.146** a	.009
Aptitude for oral mimicry (AOM)	.224*** a	.000
Musical ability (MuAb)	.294*** a	.000
Amount of oral English use (AOEU)	.208*** a	.000
Personality (Pers)	.003 a	.962
English pronunciation self-concept (EPSC)	.483*** a	.000
Motivation for English phonology learning (MEPL)	.319*** a	.000
Strategies for English phonology learning (SEPL)	.263*** a	.000
Amount of English phonological training (AEPT)	.292*** b	.000
Gender (Gen)	.253*** c	.000
Experiences with other foreign languages (EoFL)	.240*** c	.000

Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Correlation computed as ^aPearson's r , ^bSpearman's ρ , ^c point-biserial r_{pb}

To test whether the correlated relations persisted when controlling for other variables, the ten significant correlates were submitted for stepwise regression analysis. Prior to that, we created dummy variables for Gen and EoFL so that 'male' and 'no' (without such experiences) were recoded as 0, whereas 'female' and 'yes' (with such experiences) were recoded as 1. For a regression we did not look at the distribution of individual variables but instead at the distribution of the residuals. Multivariate normality can be examined via a P-P plot (Larson-Hall, 2010). The P-P plot of the standardized residuals was essentially linear on the 45° line, revealing data to be normally distributed. No multicollinearity between predictors was detected judging from collinearity statistics of Tolerance and VIF (variance inflation factor). The assumptions for regression were met.

The order of entering the predictors into the regression depended on their statistical contribution in explaining the variation in the dependent variable. The criterion when entering predictors was a probability of F-change $< .05$. As a result, all but five predictors (EPSC, Gen, AOEU, EoFL, and MEPL) were excluded as they did not contribute significantly to the probability of F-change. These five predictors were able to jointly account for 31.4% of the variance in EPA (Table 3). Although AoLE was significantly correlated with the EPA of the whole sample of students, it failed to enter the model, and was unable to produce any effect.

EPSC was entered first into the model, significantly accounting for 23.3% of the variance. The other four predictors were entered in Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively, explaining the additional 4.2%, 2%, 1% and 0.9% of the variance. EPSC was by far the most important predictor, accounting for more variance than any other predictor. A comparison of the final (post-step 5) standardized beta weights further stressed its predictive power and unique contribution for explaining EFL phonological variance, with the largest beta weight ($\beta = .414$, $p = .000$). The beta coefficients for Gen and EoFL were both positive. Since we had chosen 'male' and 'no' as the comparison category, the beta coefficient for the female dummy variable was .115, suggesting that on

Table 3
Regression Model on EPA and Its Predictors

Step	Predictors	R	R square ^a	R square change ^b	F value ^c	Prob. ^d	Final Beta ^e
1	EPSC	.483	.233	.233	96.058***	.000	.414***
2	Gen	.524	.275	.042	59.632***	.000	.115*
3	AOEU	.543	.295	.020	43.801***	.000	.119*
4	EoFL	.552	.305	.010	34.298***	.000	.109*
5	MEPL	.560	.314	.009	28.516***	.000	.107*

Note. * p < .05, *** p < .001

^a Cumulative variance accounted for at each step

^b Increase in variance from the preceding step

^c F value testing the significance at each step

^d Probability that adding the last predictor accounted for significantly more variance

^e Standardized beta weight for each predictor when controlling all other predictors

average, being female, as compared with being male, increased a participant’s EFL phonological score by .115 points. Similarly, on average having learned or picked up other foreign languages, compared to its counterpart, increased a participant’s phonological score by .109.

Predictors for EFL Phonological Attainment across Three Cohorts

To have a complete comparison of the relative effects of AoLE and ten other factors on the EPA of different groups of university students, we followed the same procedure to perform regression analyses repeatedly across the three cohorts. The results (Table 4) indicated that the three models vary in the number and inclusion of predictors.

Table 4
Model Summaries of the Predictability of EPA Across Three Cohorts

Step	Predictors	R	R square ^a	R square change ^b	F value ^c	Prob. ^d	Final Beta ^e
For first-year non-English majors							
1	EPSC	.501	.251	.251	26.204***	.000	.362***
2	MEPL	.590	.348	.097	20.568***	.000	.335**
3	AoLE	.623	.388	.040	16.093***	.000	-.201*
For first-year English majors							
1	EPSC	.485	.235	.235	23.943***	.000	.455***
2	Gen	.543	.295	.060	16.126***	.000	.247*
For third-year English majors							
1	EPSC	.344	.118	.118	10.449**	.002	.349**
2	AOEU	.432	.186	.068	8.820***	.000	.261*

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

The model with the three predictors could explain about 39% of the variance in first-year non-English majors’ EFL phonology test scores. The two-predictor model for first-year English majors accounted for roughly 30% of the variance. For third-year English majors, two predictors explained about 19% of the variance. No matter which cohort the participants were from, EPSC turned out to be a constant and potent predictor. AoLE merely entered the model for first-year non-English majors, explaining 4% of the variance. Besides the age factor, MEPL was also explanatory. As the year in school of English majors went up from freshmen to juniors, AOEU replaced Gen as another predictor aside from EPSC.

Admittedly, there are many studies scrutinizing the effects of one or a couple of extra-linguistic factors on L2 phonology, but just a few have adopted a multi-factorial approach to investigate multiple factors in the ESL context. Even fewer studies have so far been conducted in the EFL context. An early study by Thompson (1991) examined the influence of 18 factors on 36 Russian immigrants’ ESL pronunciation. The resulting model

included age of arrival in the U.S., gender, ability to mimic, and global English speaking proficiency, explaining 67% of the variance in pronunciation accuracy. Other factors such as musical ability, L2 use, extroversion, and use of pronunciation strategies produced no apparent effect. Sheppard et al. (2007) assessed 26 factors in an attempt to decide which of them were responsible for variations in the EFL pronunciation of 67 Japanese university students. The predictive factors covered musical ability, attitudes towards pronunciation learning, length of time spent on English study, and strategy use; they combined to explain 32% of the variance.

The few available studies have determined the relative contributions of a variety of factors to English phonology by applying regression analysis, but they are restricted to productive phonology alone and their sample sizes are rather small. To advance this line of inquiry, we explored the impact of AoLE and ten other factors on the EFL phonological attainment of 318 university students via a multi-factorial approach, with phonology measured both receptively and productively. For a comparative purpose, three cohorts of students in different majors and grades were further selected to see whether their phonological attainments were affected by differing factors. It was found that for the whole sample, five predictors jointly accounted for 31.4% of the variance in EFL phonological scores. EPSC was most predictive, while AoLE was not a predictor. Across the three cohorts, EPSC was a constant and robust predictor, but AoLE could only predict the phonological attainment of first-year non-English majors.

Discussion

Our discussion will center around AoLE and EPSC on account of their thematic relevance and statistical significance.

On Age of Learning English

AoLE in this study was significantly and negatively correlated with the EPA of the whole sample, but could not predict it. It could predict the EPA of first-year non-English majors, explaining 4% of its variance; however, it accounted for less of the variance than two other predictors, namely, EPSC and MEPL.

This study is the first made in China, even in Asia, to inspect AoLE in conjunction with multiple factors by regression analysis, thus its findings are seemingly incomparable to that of any prior research. Two studies utilizing disparate statistical methods have surveyed the long-term age effect in Asian EFL contexts. To examine the age effect on ultimate EFL phonological attainment of Japanese college students, Larson-Hall (2008) compared those who started studying English between ages 3 and 12 ($n = 61$) with counterparts who began their studies at age 12 or 13 ($n = 139$). The earlier starters were found to score statistically higher on the receptive phonological measure, and this remained true in an ANCOVA analysis where total hours of input were controlled for. Pei (2012) looked at the impact of age of learning English on the EFL phonological performance of 155 first-year non-English majors in a Chinese university. A one-way ANOVA analysis demonstrates that an earlier start results in higher phonology scores. Her participants were freshmen non-English majors whose phonology was measured receptively and productively, analogous to the cohort of first-year non-English majors participating in the present study. In some ways, the findings of our study partially coincide with what the two studies reported. The age of learning English does play a role in predicting the EFL phonological attainment of freshmen non-English majors within the Chinese EFL context, but its explanatory power is relatively weak, and certainly not as strong as it has shown to be in an ESL context.

During the past three decades, one remarkable change in English education within China is the lowering of the starting age of English learning and the expansion of English education into primary schools (Zhang, 2012). English has been a compulsory subject from secondary schools to universities since 1978 and, spurred by the 'younger is better' belief, further expanded to primary schools in January 2001. That year, the MoE issued a FL educational policy mandating that primary schools located in cities and county seats start to offer English classes at primary school third graders from the autumn of 2001 and the rest began to do so in the following year (Hu, 2005). Although earlier English education is not enforced, preschoolers in socioeconomically advantaged regions are always sent by their parents to English courses given by kindergartens, nurseries, or out-of-school language institutions to gain a competitive edge. In Beijing, a renowned English educational school primarily

enrolling students aged between 3 and 14 witnessed an increase in enrollment of 30% every year.¹

The belief that an earlier start is more beneficial to English learning takes shape based on research findings in the L2 context that there is a critical period of FL learning. Its popularity may have influenced the decision making of the MoE. Starting English education at primary school is meant to satisfy China's need for proficient English users and parents' wishes for upward social, economic, and professional mobility for their children, however EFL educators, researchers, and teachers have questioned the feasibility of this early-start policy. Despite much improvement in the infrastructure for English language education in China, the implementation of the policy in primary schools nationwide is still fraught with problems and the major one is a shortage of qualified teachers (Hu, 2005; Zhang, 2012). The quality of primary school English teachers in China is by no means optimistic, not only in economically less-developed regions, but also in economically well-developed regions (cf. Zhang, 2012). As a prestigious EFL educationalist and linguist in China, Gui (2012) also notes the inadequacy of the professional English teaching force in the public school system and out-of-school private sectors, and warns against the frantic pursuit of learning English as early as possible. Unqualified local teachers or recruited foreign teachers may not provide standard pronunciation or be acquainted with English phonology teaching methods, thereby actually becoming detrimental to young learners' acquisition of EFL phonology. Effective early FL instruction is incredibly reliant on the availability of well-trained and professionally competent teachers. After reviewing recent advances in theories and practice concerning the age factor in English education, Gui (2012) called for age-related empirical studies conducted via a multi-factorial approach to inform our language educational decisions.

In this study, we took the initiative to investigate the age factor using a multi-factorial approach, and our findings seem to dispel the myth of the early start. 'The younger the better' does not completely hold true for the Chinese EFL context. Given the lack of qualified teaching faculty in China, EFL education earlier than the third grade of primary school is not so necessary and has to be approached with caution.

On English Pronunciation Self-Concept

As a hierarchical and multifaceted model, self-concept is categorized into academic and non-academic self-concept. English self-concept falls into the academic category and embraces specific dimensions, one of which is the English pronunciation self-concept.

Self-concept has been found to be positively linked to key psychological factors and learning outcomes, such as interest, motivation, persistence, strategy use, and self-regulated learning, and it plays a decisive role in successful learning (Mercer, 2012). Nonetheless, there remains little research into self-concept within L2 acquisition and FL learning and less exclusively into EPSC in the EFL context. To the best of our knowledge, two pertinent studies exist. Wang (2004) in China reports on an inquiry into the relationship between EPSC and the actual EFL pronunciation of 45 junior high school students, discovering that EPSC was significantly related to pronunciation (Pearson's $r = .54$, $p < .01$). In Poland, Jedynek (2013) investigated 30 undergraduates of the English Philology Department at Wrocław University on measures of EPSC, a self-concept questionnaire, and final attainment in EFL pronunciation, a five-sentence reading task. She classified participants into either positive, medium, or negative self-concept learners corresponding to the intensity of their self-concept development, obtaining a significant correlation between EPSC results and pronunciation ratings (Spearman's $\rho = .37$, $p = .046$). The present study resonates with the aforementioned studies and goes one step further by adopting a multi-factorial approach. Compared with the age factor, pronunciation self-concept is a much more robust predictor of the EFL phonological attainment of the whole sample as well as of the three cohorts of Chinese university students, regardless of their major and grade, explaining 11.8-25.1% of the variance in phonological scores.

Several pioneering studies explored the extent to which self-concept is stable or malleable; their results support research findings elsewhere, i.e., a learner's self-concept can at once be relatively stable and dynamic (Mercer, 2012). Mercer (2011; 2012) examined the nature and development of female university learners' self-concepts in the Austrian EFL context, with data generated within the framework of a longitudinal case study using journals and interviews. The findings point to both stable and dynamic elements in relation to the learners' self-concept.

¹ Jin, H. T., & Du, B. (2013, October 17). Four questions on the rush of children's English learning. *Guang Ming Daily*.

Likewise, King and McNerney's (2014) longitudinal study testifies to the dynamicness and malleability of self-concept. In their study, English self-concept was measured thrice across three years among 2618 students from 16 secondary schools in Hong Kong. The results indicated that students' English self-concept slightly increased over time. Students may become more confident about their ESL abilities as they progress through higher educational levels, thus the increase in English self-concept resulted.

Self-concept is formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment, especially influenced by evaluations from significant others (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, people use significant others in their environment as frames of reference in forming self-assessments. The influential factors contributing to the development of self-concept relate to home and school; parents, siblings, teachers, and peers naturally function as significant others (Alrajhi & Aldhafri, 2015). Significant others are also part of the language learning process. For social constructivists, learning takes place in a certain social context through interactions with others; language learning in classroom settings is primarily composed of interactions with language teachers and classmates. Accordingly, teachers and fellow students are the most important significant others in the formation of language learners' self-concepts. In school, teachers can greatly impact students' self-concepts through their teaching practices and close relationships with students; peers can also do this via peer scaffolding and establishing a rapport with one another.

EFL phonology learning not only involves the imitation of phonetic symbols or a sensitivity to prosodic variations, but also concerns learners' self-perceptions of their pronunciation abilities. Maintaining a positive English pronunciation self-concept is crucial in helping students to reduce anxiety, boost confidence and interest in orally using English, and therefore improve their EFL phonological performance. The present study demonstrates a non-negligible predictability of EPSC. Considering that certain aspects of self-concept are dynamic, English teachers can play a role in molding student self-concept, especially in Asian EFL contexts where learners nurtured by the traditional Confucian culture are liable to view their teachers as an authority figure. Teachers are advised to give positive comments on students' English pronunciation and oral performance. Once identifying students with negative pronunciation self-concepts, they should take actions to empower their students through external interventions, such as raising students' awareness of phonology learning strategies, which can improve their pronunciation, and later their higher levels of phonological achievement can facilitate subsequent development of their self-concepts. In this way, improved self-concepts will lead to better achievement and improved achievement will lead to better self-concepts. With self-concepts and achievement mutually reinforcing each other, a virtuous cycle is created. On the other hand, students can be organized to share personal experiences and offer mutual assistance on English phonology learning. Alrajhi and Aldhafri (2015) investigated a peer tutoring program implemented with 125 Omani university students, and attested to its positive influence on English self-concept. The close tutor-tutee relationship was characterized by sharing the same English learning experiences, being of a similar age, and offering encouragement. This enabled students to develop a positive self-concept related to their English learning.

In addition to AoLE and EPSC, Gen, AOEU, EoFL and MEPL were also identified as significant predictors. They could, to some extent, predict the EPA of the whole sample of university students in the Chinese EFL context. Gen and AOEU were found to predict the EPA of first-year and third-year English majors. Conversely, MEPL played an explanatory role in the case of first-year non-English majors. Since this study is the first to examine the impact of age and other extra-linguistic factors on the EPA of Chinese university students, whether Gen, AOEU, EoFL and MEPL are persistent predictors of EFL phonological attainment needs to be verified by follow-up studies.

Conclusion

Major Findings

This study examines the effects of age of learning English together with ten other extra-linguistic factors on the ultimate English phonological attainment of 318 university students as a whole and across three cohorts in the Chinese EFL context. To recap, the age of learning English could only predict the phonological attainment of first-year non-English majors, explaining 4% of its variance. Compared with the age factor, English pronunciation self-concept is a much more robust predictor for the whole sample and across the three cohorts, explaining

11.8-25.1% of the variance in their EFL phonological scores. Additionally, gender, amount of oral English use, experiences with other foreign languages, and motivation for English phonology learning can be predictive to a certain degree, either for the whole sample or for different cohorts of students.

The question of what age is optimal to start EFL learning has vast significance. With evidence of the effect of an earlier start on the EFL phonological attainment of university non-English majors being quite weak, adding in the unavailability of adequately trained English teachers in most regions of China, EFL education earlier than the third grade of primary school seems unnecessary, and the role of the age factor should not be exaggerated.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for ESL/EFL educators, researchers and teachers alike. Theoretically, the study contributes to the long-standing debate over the viability of the CPH as a physiological threshold beyond which mastery of a new phonological system is usually impossible by adding empirical evidence from the EFL context of China, which boasts the largest number of EFL learners, to the existing age-related literature. Prior studies have predominantly been carried out with immigrant populations, so it is unclear whether findings from naturalistic ESL contexts can apply to instructional EFL settings. This study assesses the age effect on Chinese EFL learners' ultimate phonological attainment, its findings are conducive to enriching the theory of L2 phonological acquisition.

Methodologically speaking, this study investigates age and ten other factors via a multi-factorial approach, an approach rarely used in age-related L2 phonology research. As the age factor may co-vary with other factors likely to affect L2 phonology, research into multiple factors can compare the individual contribution and relative importance of every factor so as to explore the systemic complexity of phonology learning. Following this approach, the study finds that the effect of age of learning English in the EFL context is not as great as in the ESL context, while English pronunciation self-concept is a more constant and potent predictor. For EFL phonological attainment to grow, it makes more sense to cultivate EFL learners' positive English pronunciation self-concepts than to lower their ages of learning English.

At the practical level, a deeper understanding of the age factor in relation to EFL phonology can inform decisions on early language educational planning. The main obstacle to implementing early English education in China is the lack of qualified teachers at the primary school and preschool levels. The English proficiency of many teachers is insufficient to provide learners with rich input in the form of standard pronunciation needed for successful EFL phonology learning. To overcome this obstacle, launching pre-service and in-service educational programs to train primary school English teachers in phonology and familiar with phonology teaching methods needs to be put on the agenda. The government should make systematic efforts to enhance English teachers' professional skills and mandate their benchmarking. In China, teaching English has become a private business outside regular schools. Parents who can afford the tuition are arranging for private out-of-school English classes for their children. Judging from our study, the myth of 'younger is better' seems inapplicable to formal EFL instructional contexts; there is actually no need to plan children's English study before the third grade of primary school. Early English educational planning should be cautiously made within families, especially in regions where an absence of qualified teachers is more of a problem and language resources are less accessible.

Suggestions for Future Research

Motivated by the popular view of 'younger is better', EFL education has been implemented at primary school across Europe, but the long-term effects of an early start have not received ample scientific scrutiny in Europe (Jaekel et al., 2017). Likewise, the superiority of English in Asian countries has manifested itself in language policy and national curricula, yet the reasonability of early English education is calling for empirical experimentation rather than blind implementation. The present study takes the first step to examine the age effect in the Chinese EFL context by adopting a multi-factorial approach, thereby gaining some important findings never reported before. Undeniably, its sample was on of convenience, which may be seen as a limitation of the study. It is thus recommended to conduct further research where larger numbers of participants randomly sampled from different majors and grades are involved. Additionally, several other extra-linguistic factors surrounding L2 phonological acquisition including learning styles and amount of input, among others, also merit consideration in the future. Regarding the generalizability of our findings, it is advisable to undertake further research using the identical research design but implemented in other EFL contexts, which will benefit from a comprehensive

multi-factorial approach, combining age with other relevant factors in the way the present study did.

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Appendix 1

Chinese and English Versions of the Questionnaire

英语语音学习调查问卷

姓名_____ 性别_____ 年龄_____ 专业_____ 年级_____ 学校_____

本问卷旨在了解高校大学生英语语音学习的相关情况，请根据自身实际情况作答。您提供的信息是一项研究的重要依据，调查组会予以保密，感谢合作！

第一部分：请将回答填写在横线上或勾选相应的答案。

1. 你目前的听力状况： 1) 正常 2) 不正常
2. 你从几岁开始接触并学习英语？（请填写足年龄）_____ 岁
3. 你目前每周讲英语的总时间大约为：_____ 小时
4. 参加本研究前，你在校内外接受英语语音训练的时间大约为（请将小学、中学和大学阶段都估算在内）：_____ 小时
5. 除英语外，你还学过其他外语吗？ 1) 是 2) 否
6. 你模仿不熟悉语音（如外语、其他方言）的能力怎样？ 1) 很差 2) 较差 3) 一般 4) 较强 5) 很强
7. 你的乐感怎样？ 1) 很差 2) 较差 3) 一般 4) 较强 5) 很强
8. 你的歌唱能力怎样？ 1) 很差 2) 较差 3) 一般 4) 较强 5) 很强

第二部分：请仔细阅读题项，根据你的实际情况勾选答案，肯定回答选Y，否定回答选N。

1. 你是否有许多不同的业余爱好？ Y N
2. 你是否健谈？ Y N
3. 你曾经贪图过分外之物吗？ Y N
4. 你是否比较活跃？ Y N
5. 你喜欢降落伞吗？ Y N
6. 通常你能在热闹的联欢会中尽情玩吗？ Y N
7. 你喜欢会见陌生人吗？ Y N
8. 你曾经将自己的过错推给别人吗？ Y N
9. 在社交场合你是否总不愿意露头？ Y N
10. 你是否常爱外出？ Y N
11. 你是否宁愿去看书而不愿去多见人？ Y N
12. 你有许多朋友吗？ Y N
13. 你曾经损坏或遗失过别人的东西吗？ Y N
14. 你认为你是一个乐天派吗？ Y N
15. 交新朋友时一般是你采取主动吗？ Y N
16. 当你和别人在一起时，你是否言语不多？ Y N
17. 你是否很容易将一个沉寂的聚会搞得活跃起来？ Y N
18. 你是否喜欢对朋友讲笑话和有趣的故事？ Y N
19. 你是否喜欢与人混在一起？ Y N
20. 你是否喜欢从事一些动作迅速的工作？ Y N
21. 和别人玩游戏时，你有过欺骗行为吗？ Y N
22. 你是否常常参加许多活动，超过你的时间所允许？ Y N
23. 你能使一个集会顺利进行吗？ Y N
24. 你喜欢忙忙碌碌、热热闹闹地过日子吗？ Y N
25. 你有时把今天应做的事拖到明天去做吗？ Y N
26. 别人认为你是生机勃勃的吗？ Y N
27. 你赴约或上班曾迟到过吗？ Y N
28. 你是否有时候有点自夸？ Y N

ZHENGWEI PEI, KERONG QIN

11. 独自不出声地练习说英语。 1 2 3 4 5
12. 发音时注意自己的唇型。 1 2 3 4 5
13. 听别人说英语时关注单词的发音。 1 2 3 4 5
14. 说英语时有意识地避免汉语发音的影响, 如n, l不分。 1 2 3 4 5
15. 为好玩用汉语发音模仿英语的单词发音, 如thank you发成“三克油”。 1 2 3 4 5
16. 不停地重复难发音的单词。 1 2 3 4 5
17. 用单词抽认卡来练习发音。 1 2 3 4 5
18. 一开始慢速练习发音, 熟悉后加快语速。 1 2 3 4 5
19. 记忆并练习英语词组的发音。 1 2 3 4 5
20. 跟读本族语者或教师来练习发音。 1 2 3 4 5
21. 跟读英语磁带、英文电视节目或电影来练习发音。 1 2 3 4 5
22. 默读或大声朗读以操练发音。 1 2 3 4 5
23. 通过做相关练习来学习英语发音。 1 2 3 4 5
24. 先单独练习单词发音, 然后将单词置于语境中练习。 1 2 3 4 5
25. 自己总结发音规则, 并加以运用。 1 2 3 4 5
26. 注意汉语和英语发音的不同之处。 1 2 3 4 5
27. 系统地学习英语语音知识。 1 2 3 4 5
28. 阅读英语语音方面的书籍。 1 2 3 4 5
29. 设立目标集中听取和练习某些发音。 1 2 3 4 5
30. 按照确立的发音目标循序渐进, 逐渐改变、纠正发音。 1 2 3 4 5
31. 准备英语口头汇报时将难发的音用记号笔或画线等方法突显表示。 1 2 3 4 5
32. 录下自己的发音重复听。 1 2 3 4 5
33. 用幽默的方式掩饰发错音时的尴尬。 1 2 3 4 5
34. 请求他人帮助纠正自己的发音。 1 2 3 4 5
35. 请求他人示范发音。 1 2 3 4 5
36. 与其他人一起学习英语发音。 1 2 3 4 5
37. 指导其他人的英语发音。 1 2 3 4 5

Questionnaire on English Phonology Learning

Name _____ Gender _____ Age _____ Major _____ Grade _____ University _____

This questionnaire is administered for the purpose of understanding how university students in China learn English phonology. Please respond to it according to your own situation. The information you provide serves as crucial data of a study, and will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation!

Part One: Give your answers or select the choices that best represent yourself.

1. How is your hearing status? 1) normal 2) abnormal
2. When did you begin to learn English? At the age of _____.
3. About how many hours do you spend in orally using English in and outside of English class per week at the time of taking part in this study? _____hours.
4. Roughly how long have you received English phonological training from regular classes at school or/and extracurricular programs before participating in the study? _____hours.
5. Have you learned or picked up foreign languages other than English? 1) Yes 2) No
6. How is your aptitude for orally mimicking unfamiliar sounds (e.g., foreign languages or dialects)?
1) extremely weak 2) relatively weak 3) average 4) relatively strong 5) extremely strong
7. How is your sense of music? 1) extremely weak 2) relatively weak 3) average 4) relatively strong 5) extremely strong
8. How is your singing ability? 1) extremely weak 2) relatively weak 3) average 4) relatively strong 5) extremely strong

Part Two: Read the items below carefully. Put a tick on Y (Yes) if the item is applicable to you and on N (No) if not.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Do you have many hobbies? | Y N |
| 2. Are you talkative? | Y N |
| 3. Have you ever coveted anything belonging to someone else? | Y N |
| 4. Are you socially active? | Y N |
| 5. Do you like parachutes? | Y N |
| 6. Can you usually enjoy yourself at a noisy get-together? | Y N |
| 7. Do you like meeting strangers? | Y N |
| 8. Have you ever blamed others for your mistakes? | Y N |
| 9. Do you always avoid showing up in social situations? | Y N |
| 10. Do you like going out a lot? | Y N |
| 11. Would you rather read books than meet people? | Y N |
| 12. Do you have many friends? | Y N |
| 13. Have you ever damaged or lost anything belonging to some else? | Y N |
| 14. Do you think of yourself as an optimist? | Y N |
| 15. Do you usually take the initiative when making new friends? | Y N |
| 16. Do you always keep silent when you are together with others? | Y N |
| 17. Can you easily liven up a quiet party? | Y N |
| 18. Do you like telling jokes and funny stories to your friends? | Y N |
| 19. Do you like hanging out with others? | Y N |
| 20. Do you enjoy doing some jobs requiring quick movements? | Y N |
| 21. Have you ever cheated while playing games with others? | Y N |
| 22. Do you often take part in more activities than your time allows? | Y N |
| 23. Can you make a meeting go smoothly? | Y N |
| 24. Do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of life? | Y N |
| 25. Do you sometimes put off till tomorrow what you should do today? | Y N |
| 26. Do other people think you are vigorous? | Y N |
| 27. Have you ever been late for an appointment or work? | Y N |
| 28. Do you sometimes brag a little bit? | Y N |

THE YOUNGER, THE BETTER? A MULTI-FACTORIAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING AGE EFFECTS

3.	I recall how a teacher pronounced something.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	I recall and imitate a teacher's mouth movements.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	I concentrate on word pronunciation while speaking English.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	I speak slowly to get the pronunciation right.	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I notice or try out different English accents, e.g., British English, Indian English.	1 2 3 4 5
8.	I mentally rehearse how to say every word before speaking English.	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I imitate a native speaker or an English teacher.	1 2 3 4 5
10.	I practise pronunciation aloud in English.	1 2 3 4 5
11.	I practise speaking English silently by myself.	1 2 3 4 5
12.	I notice my lips while pronouncing something.	1 2 3 4 5
13.	I notice how words are pronounced while listening to others speak English.	1 2 3 4 5
14.	I avoid the influence of Chinese pronunciation when speaking English.	1 2 3 4 5
15.	I imitate English words in Chinese for fun.	1 2 3 4 5
16.	I pronounce a difficult word over and again.	1 2 3 4 5
17.	I practise word pronunciation using flash cards.	1 2 3 4 5
18.	I practise saying words slowly at first and then faster.	1 2 3 4 5
19.	I memorize and practise how to pronounce English phrases.	1 2 3 4 5
20.	I repeat aloud after a native speaker or teacher.	1 2 3 4 5
21.	I repeat English from tapes, TV programs or movies aloud.	1 2 3 4 5
22.	I read silently or aloud to practise pronunciation.	1 2 3 4 5
23.	I do exercises to acquire English sounds.	1 2 3 4 5
24.	I practise sounds first in isolation and then in context.	1 2 3 4 5
25.	I summarize pronunciation rules and apply them.	1 2 3 4 5
26.	I notice the contrasts between Chinese and English pronunciations.	1 2 3 4 5
27.	I acquire a systematic knowledge of English phonetics.	1 2 3 4 5
28.	I read reference books about English phonology.	1 2 3 4 5
29.	I set goals to listen to and practise certain English sounds.	1 2 3 4 5
30.	I improve pronunciation step by step according to established goals.	1 2 3 4 5
31.	I prepare for an oral presentation by highlighting hard-to-pronounce words.	1 2 3 4 5
32.	I record and listen to my own pronunciation.	1 2 3 4 5
33.	I use a sense of humor about mispronunciations.	1 2 3 4 5
34.	I ask someone else to correct my pronunciation.	1 2 3 4 5
35.	I ask someone else to pronounce something.	1 2 3 4 5
36.	I study pronunciation with someone else.	1 2 3 4 5
37.	I teach someone else to pronounce something.	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 2

Correlation matrix for regression modeling (n = 318)

Table 1

Coefficients indicating the interrelationships among Predictors and EPA

	AoLE	AOM	MuAb	AOEU	Pers	EPSC	MEPL	SEPL	AEPT	Gen	EoFL	EPA
AoLE	1											
AOM	-.047 ^a	1										
MuAb	-.216 ^{***a}	.362 ^{***a}	1									
AOEU	-.128 ^a	.084 ^a	.114 ^a	1								
Pers	-.085 ^a	.050 ^a	.108 ^a	-.020 ^a	1							
EPSC	-.121 ^a	.433 ^{***a}	.427 ^{***a}	.033 ^a	.124 ^a	1						
MEPL	-.018 ^a	.147 ^{**a}	.173 ^{**a}	.251 ^{***a}	-.015 ^a	.324 ^{***a}	1					
SEPL	-.033 ^a	.079 ^a	.257 ^{***a}	.212 ^{***a}	.096 ^a	.307 ^{***a}	.466 ^{***a}	1				
AEPT	-.141 ^b	.047 ^b	.127 ^b	.400 ^{***b}	.063 ^b	.194 ^{***b}	.201 ^{***b}	.255 ^{***b}	1			
Gen	-.123 ^c	.001 ^d	.006 ^d	.266 ^{***c}	.008 ^c	.003 ^d	.004 ^d	.003 ^d	.161 ^{**c}	1		
EoFL	.061 ^c	.001 ^d	.002 ^d	.159 ^{**c}	-.020 ^c	.007 ^{***d}	.002 ^d	.003 ^d	.077 ^c	.070 ^{***d}	1	
EPA	-.146 ^{**a}	.224 ^{***a}	.294 ^{***a}	.208 ^{***a}	.003 ^a	.483 ^{***a}	.319 ^{***a}	.263 ^{***a}	.292 ^{***b}	.253 ^{***c}	.240 ^{***c}	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed). Correlation computed as ^a Pearson's r , ^b Spearman's ρ , ^c point-biserial r_{pb} , ^d Goodman and Kruskal's τ

AoLE = age of learning English, AOM = aptitude for oral mimicry, MuAb = musical ability, AOEU = amount of oral English use, Pers = personality, EPSC = English pronunciation self-concept, MEPL = motivation for English phonology learning, SEPL = strategies for English phonology learning, AEPT = amount of English phonological training, Gen = gender, EoFL = experiences with other foreign languages, EPA = EFL phonological attainment

The Arabic Aspectual Marker *Qad* from the Perspective of the Two-Component Theory of Aspect

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The study examined the Arabic aspectual particle *qad* within the framework of Smith's Two-Component Theory of Aspect, which views aspectual meaning as a combination of covert situation types and overt viewpoint markers. The analysis, which was conducted on Modern Standard Arabic, revealed that the Arabic aspectual marker *qad* has a tendency to be used perfectly, but it also has imperfective uses. However, as far as situation types are concerned, the analysis found some variation when it comes to the use of imperfective and perfective *qad*. The findings were also correlated to different constructions in which *qad* typically occurs.

Keywords: aspect in modern standard Arabic, aspectual meaning, aspectual particle *qad*, translation, two-component theory of aspect, verb semantics

Introduction

Languages usually have a system to indicate tense, which is a means for relating the time of an event to another time (Comrie, 1976). They also have a means to indicate aspect (Hamm & Bott, 2016), which expresses information about how an event unfolds over time (Cruse, 2011). Some languages formally distinguish between three tenses: the present, past, and future (Comrie, 1976), while others only distinguish between past and non-past tenses (Gadalla, 2006).

Further, aspect is viewed as a two-fold notion; namely, lexical aspect and grammatical aspect. Anderson (1991) has indicated that lexical aspect is related to the inherent sense of the verb or situation, while grammatical aspect depends on grammatical marking. Cruse (2011) has also made a distinction between semantic aspect and aspect markers. The distinction proposed by Cruse (2011) roughly corresponds to Anderson's (1991). Anderson's (1991) lexical or inherent aspect resembles Cruse's (2011) semantic aspect; both view aspect from the perspective of the senses contributed by the verb or situation. Moreover, Anderson's (1991) grammatical aspect is similar to Cruse's (2011) aspect markers since they both refer to the grammatical markers languages use to indicate aspectual meaning (e.g., inflections, auxiliaries, particles).

This article is composed of four main sections. After this brief introduction, the purpose of the study is outlined. Section 1 is devoted to discussing relevant literature including the tense and aspect system of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the Arabic particle *qad*, and the notion of aspectual meaning with a focus on Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect. The procedures of the study are presented in Section 2. Finally, the paper is concluded with a discussion of the findings in Section 3 followed by the conclusion in Section 4.

This study is situated within the sub-field of semantics that is concerned with examining grammatical meaning. More specifically, it deals with aspectual meaning, which is linked to verbal notions (Cruse, 2011). The purpose of the study was to investigate the behavior of the Arabic aspectual marker *qad* within the framework of Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect. The aspectual system of Arabic is mainly realised by the use of grammatical devices such as auxiliaries, particles, and affixes. The particle *qad* was selected as the focus of the current study because it is involved in creating compound tenses in Arabic (Ryding, 2005). These compound tenses include both perfective and imperfective constructions that express temporal meanings similar to those conveyed by some English tenses.

The Two-Component Theory of Aspect was selected as the theoretical framework of the present study because of its “explanatory power” (Shirai, 2000, p. 333). Smith (1997) herself has applied the theory to the aspectual systems of English, French, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, and Navajo. It has also been used to investigate elements of the aspectual systems of Japanese (Shirai, 2000) and Hungarian (Csirmaz, 2008).

In addition to contributing to the area of verb semantics by addressing the Arabic aspectual marker *qad*, the analysis itself could have pedagogical implications to those in the field of translator training. Translation students face difficulties in translating from English into Arabic and vice versa. It is challenging on several levels, especially when it comes to the translation of tense and aspect, due to the big difference between the tense/aspect systems of English and Arabic (Gadalla, 2017; Sieny, 1986). This is mainly because of the highly structured tense/aspect system in English as opposed to Arabic, as Gadalla explained, “whereas the Arabic verb has two aspectual forms, the English verb has sixteen tenses” (2017, p. 10). Translators usually overcome this challenge by using lexical and grammatical devices (e.g., particles, affixes, auxiliaries). Investigating the senses associated with the use of the particle *qad* may help identify the English constructions that are more compatible with Arabic.

It is worth noting at this point that the researcher adopted the transcription system employed by the Library of Congress.¹

Literature Review

This section is introduced with a general discussion of tense and aspect. Then it addresses the tense and aspect system of MSA, which is followed by a more detailed overview of the Arabic particle *qad*. The literature review is concluded by a discussion of the literature relevant to aspectual meaning, with an emphasis on Smith’s (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect.

Tense and Aspect

The study of tense and aspect systems has been of interest to researchers for many years. Different scholars have addressed the two notions from a variety of perspectives (e.g., Comrie, 1976; Dragoy, Virfel, Yurchenko & Bastiaanse, 2019; González & Hernández, 2018; Izquierdo & Kihlstedt, 2019; Kanwit, 2017; Smith, 1997). Since tense and aspect are two intertwined notions, a discussion of tense is appropriate when any discussion of aspect is attempted. For this reason, this section addresses tense before turning to aspect.

As mentioned earlier, tense is a means of relating the time of an event to another point in time, which is usually the time of speaking or utterance time (Comrie, 1976; Cruse, 2011). Within the notion of tense (Comrie, 1976; Cruse, 2011), a distinction has been made between absolute tense and relative tense. Absolute tense relates a point in time to the time of speaking (e.g., English present, past, and future), while relative tense relates a point in time to another event or time (e.g., English past perfect). In this sense, relative tense does not directly relate an event to time of speaking, while absolute tense does.

The notions of tense and aspect are intertwined, as noted above. Cruse has emphasised the difference explaining, “aspect says nothing about when an event occurred [...], but either encodes a particular way of conceptualising an event or conveys information about the way the event unrolls through time” (2011, p. 299). Comrie (1976) has also indicated that aspect deals with the internal temporal make-up of an event, while tense deals with its external temporal location. Accordingly, he defined aspect as “the different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie, 1976, p. 3).

A difference in aspect, for instance, can be detected in the English examples *I studied* and *I was studying*. Even though both examples convey absolute past tense, the difference is clear in describing the activity of *studying* in each example. The first example *I studied* describes an action that is viewed as a complete whole without considering its different stages. The second example, on the other hand, emphasises the duration of the event and entails looking at the event from within. The two examples illustrate a basic distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect. Thus, perfective aspect views an event as a single unit. Conversely, imperfective aspect conceptualises events as having occurred over a period of time, and it allows participants to view them from within (Comrie, 1976).

¹ The Library of Congress. (2012). ALA-LC Romanization tables. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cps/roman.html>

In his discussion of aspect, Dahl addressed what he referred to as “the perfective: imperfective opposition” (1985, p. 69) claiming that investigations in this area have mainly attempted to identify the mutual characteristics of the notion of *perfectivity* in different languages from a semantic point of view. Accordingly, he explained that variation exists in the underlying meanings expressed by the notion of perfectivity although there are shared features. Nevertheless, Dahl (1985) argues that perfective aspect prototypically conflates with past time.

Another distinction in aspect or aspectual meaning has been made between semantic meaning and the formal or grammatical markers of aspect that vary from one language to another. This is discussed in further detail under Smith’s (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect below. The Two-Component Theory of Aspect theory is one of the approaches that consider both semantic meaning and formal aspectual markers, and it is the theoretical framework within which the present investigation was conducted.

Tense and Aspect in MSA

MSA, which has also been referred to as *Modern Literary Arabic* (Haywood & Nahmad, 1965) and *Modern Written Arabic* (Badawi, Carter, & Gully, 2016), is the variety of Arabic currently used across the Arab world in writing as well as public speaking, the media, and education (Ryding, 2005). The present study deals with aspect in MSA, but not in the regional or other variations that exist across the Arab world. Thus, different varieties may employ different means for expressing the notions of tense and aspect even though they are all varieties of the Arabic language.

As far as verb forms are concerned, native speakers of Arabic are formally taught to distinguish between past, present, and imperative verb forms in line with Sibawayh’s tradition (Gadalla, 2006). However, since the imperative is not a temporal notion, it shall not be dealt with in the present discussion. In Arabic, temporal meaning is conveyed by past and present—or more precisely, past and non-past verb forms, which are referred to in Arabic as *al-māḍī* and *al-mudāri*’, respectively. The two terms *past* and *non-past* will be used throughout this paper to refer to the Arabic verb forms *al-māḍī* and *al-mudāri*’, respectively. The non-past form of the verb is also used to indicate future tense in MSA. It may occur with temporal adverbials that carry a future reference. Otherwise it may be combined with particles and affixes such as the particle *sawfa* and the prefix *sa-*, which are used to convey future time in MSA. In their discussion of the grammar of Arabic, Badawi, Carter, and Gully (2016) commented:

There is not an elaborate system of sequences of tenses, and the underlying principle remains basically aspectual, that is, an event which is regarded as having ceased before another will be in the perfect, while an event regarded as still going on will be in the imperfect. The head verb will determine the time and aspect frame of the whole discourse unit. (p. 419)

Different scholars have argued that Arabic past and non-past correspond to perfective/perfect and imperfective/imperfect aspect, respectively (Comrie, 1976; Gadalla, 2006; Gadalla, 2017; Haywood & Nahmad, 1965; Ryding, 2005). Haywood and Nahmad (1965) and Caspari (1898) have agreed that the perfect form is used to denote finished or completed acts, while the imperfect form is used to indicate incomplete acts. Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that the notions of perfective and imperfective combine both tense and aspect (Bahloul, 2008; Comrie, 1976). This means that past and non-past Arabic verb forms are used to express aspectual differences in meaning as well as temporal information. This has been echoed by Ryding as she explained that tense and aspect overlap in MSA, which is emphasised by the tendency of teachers “to describe Arabic verbs in terms of tense” (2005, p. 52). However, Gadalla stated, “in Arabic, the fundamental differences between verbs are based on aspect rather than tense” (2017, p. 9). Bahloul (2008) has even proposed that Arabic does not have a detailed system of aspect or tense. Conversely, Badawi, Carter, and Gully (2016) maintain that Arabic has an aspect system composed of perfect and imperfect, in addition to a tense system comparable to the tense systems of Western languages. They explained that the complex tenses of Western languages are expressed in Arabic when perfect and imperfect forms are combined with other elements.

Examples (1) to (8)² below present Arabic constructions equivalent to some English tense constructions.

² Examples (1) to (7) are adapted from Fassi Fehri (2012). Example (8) is adapted from Comrie (1976).

- (1) *ya 'rifu* *al-jawāb*
 knows he the-answer
 He knows the answer. (simple present)
- (2) *yaktubu* *al-risālata*
 writes he the-letter
 He is writing the letter. (present progressive)
- (3) *kataba* *al-risālata*
 wrote he the-letter
 He wrote the letter. (simple past)
- (4) *kāna* *yaktubu* *al-risālata*
 was he writes he the-letter
 He was writing the letter. (past progressive)
- (5) *yaqta 'u* *al-rajulu* *al-masāfata* *ghadan* *fī* *sā'atin*
 crosses he the-man the-distance tomorrow in an-hour
 The man will cross the distance tomorrow in an hour. (simple present)
- (6) *ad* *atā*
qad came he
 He has (just) come. (present perfect)
- (7) *kāna* *qad kataba* *al-risālata*
 crosses he qad wrote he the-letter
 He had (already/just) written the letter. (past perfect)
- (8) *sa-yakūnu* *qad atā*
 will be he qad came he
 He will have (already) come. (future perfect)

Temporal notions that are comparable to English simple and progressive present forms are formulated in Arabic using the non-past form of the verb as in examples (1) and (2) without the addition of any particles, auxiliaries, or affixes. However, it is worth noting that the differences in aspect in examples (1) and (2) above are due to the senses contributed by the verbs in both examples; they are not structural. The past form of the Arabic verb is used to express the meaning of simple past as in example (3), while the non-past form is used along with the past form of the auxiliary *kāna*—the Arabic equivalent of the English auxiliary *be*—as illustrated in example (4), to indicate imperfective past (i.e., English past progressive). The non-past verb form is used in the construction expressing future time as in example (5). However, the presence of a supporting context (i.e., the adverbial *ghadan*, which means ‘tomorrow’) is responsible for future time reference in this case. Examples (6), (7), and (8) represent perfect constructions otherwise referred to by Ryding (2005) as *compound tenses*. Some of the temporal and aspectual notions that are similar—but not equivalent—to those expressed by English perfect constructions (e.g., present, past, and future perfect) are conveyed in MSA using constructions that typically include the particle *qad* and/or a form of the auxiliary *kāna*.

It is worth noting that due to the absence of context, some of the examples may be translated differently. For instance, example (6), translated here as *He has (just) come*, may also be translated as *He (just) came*. This variation in translating constructions that include *qad* has been addressed by Gadalla (2017) in a corpus-based study. His analysis confirmed that there is no one-to-one correspondence between *qad* constructions and specific English constructions. According to his investigation, such constructions are translated using a variety of English tenses to perform different functions. For instance, based on his data, the Arabic construction *qad* + *past form of verb* was translated using—in order of frequency—English past simple, present simple, present perfect, past perfect, and past progressive, while the construction *kāna* + *qad* + *past form of verb* was typically translated using English past perfect (i.e., 80%). The past simple and the present perfect were also used but at much lower frequencies. Further, Gadalla (2017) explained that the construction *sa-/sawfa* + *non-past form of kāna* + *qad* + *past form of verb* is usually translated using the English future perfect or future perfect progressive.

Another construction discussed by Gadalla (2017), which is relevant to the present study, is the construction *qad + kāna + non-past form of verb*. He equates it to the English past progressive. Nevertheless, Gadalla (2017) only addresses this construction based on a single occurrence in the data. However, due to the variation in the translation of other constructions that contain *qad* in Gadalla's (2017) data, it may be safe to assume that the same type of variation would be detected if more instances of this construction were to be analysed.

The Arabic Particle Qad

The Arabic particle *qad* is associated with several meanings. According to Bahloul (2008), Arabic language scholars have considered it from three different angles. He elaborated that the particle *qad* has been examined from temporal, aspectual, and modal perspectives. He discussed each of these approaches—or hypotheses, as he referred to them—illustrating different cases under each. In the temporal hypothesis, when the particle *qad* occurs with the past form of the verb, an additional meaning of recent past is portrayed as opposed to the verb's use without *qad*, in which case the temporal information conveyed is *before the time of utterance* without any reference to whether the event was recent or otherwise. In his presentation of the aspectual hypothesis of *qad*, he explained that its use with the past form of the verb indicates completed actions. Finally, he touched upon the emphatic hypothesis—or modal function—of *qad* equating it with the functions of the English auxiliary *do*, which carries the meaning of certainty. He also commented that this last hypothesis has received the most attention among Arabic language scholars.

The discussion presented by Bahloul (2008) was also presented and extended by Michalski (2011). Although the main purpose of Michalski (2011) was to distinguish the functions of the compound particle *la-qad* from those of *qad*, he reviewed the three hypotheses proposed by Bahloul (2008) adding to them an informational hypothesis and a multifunctional hypothesis. The informational hypothesis is concerned with occurrences that introduce either conflicting or background information. The multifunctional hypothesis, on the other hand, deals with the functions of *qad* in Classical Arabic and MSA. Under this hypothesis, Michalski (2011) addressed a discourse analysis approach to *la-qad* as a discourse marker.

Qad has also been explored by Fassi Fehri (2012) who categorised its uses broadly into temporal and modal. According to Fassi Fehri (2012), when *qad* is used as a temporal marker, it prefers the perfect interpretation, typically carrying the meaning of precedence or immediate precedence. As a modal, *qad* indicates certainty when combined with a past verb form and possibility or probability when combined with a non-past verb form.

In sum, the particle *qad* occurs with both past and non-past forms of Arabic verbs to perform functions that may be temporal/aspectual or modal. Under its temporal/aspectual functions, *qad* typically prefers the perfect interpretation of completed actions when occurring with past verb forms. The modal functions of *qad* portray varying degrees of certainty which are also determined by the verb form with which it occurs. Modal *qad* typically conveys certainty when combined with past verb forms, and probability or possibility when combined with non-past verb forms. Nevertheless, indicating certainty with modal *qad* and the past form of the verb entails conveying a perfect interpretation as well. Of course, the presence of context also plays a crucial role in determining the functions and the senses expressed by *qad*. In fact, in a corpus-based study of the functions of *qad*, Farghal (2019) claims that the discourse dictates whether the past form of the Arabic verb is used with or without *qad*. It is worth noting at this point that no distinction will be made in the present study between *qad/la-qad* in line with Gadalla's approach (2017). Further, the modal function of *qad* will not be addressed since it is not the focus of the current study.

Aspectual Meaning and Smith's Two-Component Theory of Aspect

In the literature on aspectual meaning, many researchers have distinguished between semantic aspect and formal or grammatical aspect. For instance, Dahl (1985) distinguished between *Aktionsart*, or inherent aspectual meaning, and morphological forms. Anderson (1991) referred to the two notions as *inherent aspect* and *grammatical aspect*, Smith (1997) as *situation types* and *viewpoints*, and Li and Shirai (2000) as *lexical aspect* and *grammatical aspect*. Even though different terminology has been used, Xiao and McEnery maintain that “the distinction between situation aspect and viewpoint aspect is recognised by many authors” (2004, p. 18).

From a semantic perspective, aspect has been the focus of several researchers as well (e.g., Hay, Kennedy, &

Levin, 1999; Peck, Lin, & Sun, 2013; Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010; Xiao & McEnery, 2004). Nevertheless, such studies mainly set out to describe particular dimensions of aspectual use, or else they aimed at describing the aspectual system of a particular language. In fact, some of them have drawn on Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect in one way or another. For example, Peck, Lin, and Sun (2013) elaborated on Smith (1997) by adding the aspectual feature [+/- scale] to describe aspect in Mandarin Chinese. Xiao and McEnery (2004), also adopting Smith (1997), attempted to refine the Two-Component Theory of Aspect to account for some of the idiosyncrasies of Mandarin Chinese using a corpus-based approach. Some other researchers have tapped into certain problematic categories of verbs (e.g., Hay, Kennedy, & Levin, 1999; Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010) without attempting a comprehensive description of any aspectual system.

In her discussion of aspect, Smith (1997) argued that the cognitive abilities of humans are the basis for aspectual categories. In other words, they are not language dependent. She believes that "aspect is a semantic domain which is expressed in linguistic categories. Aspectual meanings are grammaticised through viewpoint and situation type categories" (1997, p. 5). She divided the aspectual system into two components: overt viewpoint aspect and covert situation aspect. Overtly expressed viewpoint aspect is manifested through verbal forms, auxiliaries, inflections, and particles, while covert situation categories involve semantic aspects of the situation at hand, which is controlled by the verb and its arguments. Situation types are described in terms of the three parameters of *dynamicity*, *telicity*, and *instantaneity*. The Two-Component Theory of Aspect is based on finding a correlation between a situation type on the one hand and a viewpoint on the other (Smith, 1997).

Situation Type. Aspectual meaning applies to sentences, and it is conveyed by the verb along with its arguments. Verbs and the arguments related to them have been referred to by Smith as *verb constellations* (1997, p. 2). These verb constellations express different situation types. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that adverbials, which are typically adjuncts, also play a role in the interpretation of situation types (Smith, 1997).

The situation types employed in Smith's Two-Component Theory of Aspect were derived from Vendler's (1957) semantic classification of verbs. Vendler (1957) proposed a categorisation of the *time schemata* of verbs, or in other words, a temporal semantic classification of verbs and the situations they describe. Accordingly, he classified verbs into *activities*, *accomplishments*, *states*, and *achievements*. Activity verbs are continuous in nature without a clear end or beginning point, while accomplishment verbs are continuous but with a natural ending point. State verbs, on the other hand, exist for some time, and achievement verbs happen instantaneously (Vendler, 1957). Smith (1997) adopted and adapted Vendler's (1957) taxonomy classifying verbs into five categories by adding the category of *semelfactives* to Vendler's verb types in reference to verbs that are instantaneous and occur only once (e.g., knock).

The five situation types are described using the features [+/-dynamic], [+/-telic], and [+/-instantaneous]. The two features *dynamic* and *instantaneous* are poles on two different graded scales. The feature *dynamic* is at the opposite end of the feature *static*, and the feature *instantaneous* is at the opposite end of the feature *durative*. Some scholars prefer to use *static* instead of *dynamic*, and *durative* instead of *instantaneous* with opposite values (Smith, 1997). In this paper, however, the researcher maintains the features *dynamic*, *instantaneous*, and *telic* as indicated in Table 1 below partly adopting the convention followed by Anderson (1991) and Shirai (2000).

Dynamic situations are those that involve motion, telic events are situations that have natural endpoints, and instantaneous situations are those that are not durative in nature and occur instantaneously (Smith, 1997). Accordingly, States are [-dynamic, -instantaneous, -telic]; Activities are [+dynamic, -instantaneous, -telic]; Accomplishments are [+dynamic, -instantaneous, +telic]; Achievements are [+dynamic, +instantaneous, +telic], and Semelfactives are [+dynamic, +instantaneous, -telic].

Further, Smith (1997) has detailed the semantic characteristics and temporal schemata of each situation type. States are situation types that hold for a period of time (e.g., love), while activities are mental or physical processes that do not have inherent endpoints (e.g., swim). Accomplishments are processes that have outcomes or end in the completion of the process by a change of state (e.g., write a letter). Achievements, on the other hand, are instantaneous, and they also entail a change of state (e.g., win). Finally, semelfactives are instantaneous "single-stage events" (Smith, 1997, p. 29), in other words, they occur only once (e.g., blink). However, since aspectual meaning applies to sentences/utterances, the context within which each situation occurs plays a

Table 1

Smith's (1997) situation types described using the features [+/-dynamic], [+/- telic], and [+/-instantaneous]

Situation Types	Dynamic	Instantaneous	Telic	Examples
States	-	-	-	Know, like, love
Activities	+	-	-	Play, read, walk
Accomplishments	+	-	+	Make a chair, watch the movie
Achievements	+	+	+	Drop, die, win the race
Semelfactives	+	+	-	Jump, knock

crucial role in determining its situation type.

Viewpoint Aspect. The second component of Smith's (1997) theory is viewpoint aspect. She drew an analogy between viewpoint aspect and a camera lens explaining that "situations are the objects on which viewpoint lenses are trained" (1997, p. 61). Thus, as Smith (1997) claimed, viewpoints are essential to detecting situation types. They are typically encoded morphologically (Smith, 1997). This may involve using auxiliaries, inflections, or particles (Anderson, 1991; Comrie, 1976).

Further, Smith (1997) has classified viewpoint aspect into perfective, imperfective, and neutral. Typically, perfective aspect has an outside viewpoint to a situation including its beginning and end without considering its internal structure, while imperfective aspect has an internal viewpoint to the situation and considers its internal structure excluding its beginning and end. Neutral viewpoint, on the other hand, focuses on the beginning of the event and some of its stages.

Perfective viewpoint aspect, as mentioned above, views a situation including its beginning and end. It encompasses the situation as a whole without considering its internal stages. Perfective situation types are completed events. Smith (1997) has distinguished between marked and unmarked perfective viewpoint. In this sense, unmarked perfective viewpoint sees situations as closed, which means that it includes their beginning and end points. Marked perfective viewpoint aspect; on the other hand, involves cases in which the situation aspect is a state. In this case, the end of the event is not clear.

Imperfective viewpoint aspect only considers a portion of the situation. It does not view situations as completed events. Unlike perfective viewpoint, imperfective viewpoint does not consider the beginning and end points of a situation. A distinction between marked and unmarked imperfective viewpoints has also been made by Smith (1997). Unmarked imperfective viewpoint considers situations from within by focusing on their internal stages. Conversely, marked imperfective viewpoint views "preliminary stages of events or the resultant stages of telic events" (Smith, 1997, p. 73). In this case, the imperfective views a situation externally.

The third type of viewpoint aspect, referred to as neutral viewpoint, was proposed and argued for by Smith (1997) to describe sentences that accept both open and closed interpretations. She proposed the category of neutral viewpoint to account for some sentences she came across in her description of the aspectual system of Mandarin Chinese. However, Xiao and McEnery (2004), who conducted a corpus-based study on the aspectual system of Mandarin Chinese, have argued that such a category is not necessary since all the instances they came across in the data were either perfective or imperfective. For this reason, neutral viewpoint will not be addressed in the current study.

Materials and Methods

The study was a descriptive study that relied on the analysis of data within a selected framework (i.e., Smith, 1997). This section addresses the data and the procedures of the study.

Data

Since the study investigated aspectual meanings associated with the particle *qad* in MSA, the data consisted of

examples in which *qad* constructions were used. The examples were based on examples obtained from existing literature relevant to the topic at hand, in addition to some typical examples that were selected by the researcher, who is a native speaker of Arabic. The items that were analysed may be used in both spoken and written forms of MSA. However, they are more likely to occur in the written variety, since—as explained above—MSA is the variety of Arabic currently used in the Arab world in writing, public speaking, the media, and education (Ryding, 2005). Even though MSA is used in spoken form to perform certain functions, everyday communication in the Arab world is typically carried out using spoken varieties that may vary greatly from one geographical location to another (Ryding, 2005).

After the examples were selected by the researcher, several faculty members specialised in linguistics and/or translation were consulted to render the English translations of the Arabic examples. The purpose of providing the English translation of each example was two-fold; the translations served to explain the meanings of the Arabic examples to non-native speakers of Arabic, however they mainly served the purpose of helping the researcher gauge the differences in meaning in the analysis of viewpoint and situation type. It is worth noting at this point that the translations provided below, which are based on the translations proposed by the faculty members who were consulted, are supported by the discussion of Gadalla (2017) above.

Moreover, the examples were also categorised under the following four construction patterns following Gadalla (2017):

1. *qad* + *kāna* + non-past form of verb
2. *qad* + past form of verb
3. *kāna* + *qad* + past form of verb
4. *sa-/sawfa* + non-past form of *kāna* + *qad* + past form of verb

Procedure

To investigate the semantics of the Arabic aspectual marker *qad*, examples that contain *qad* were analysed in terms of the components of the Two-Component Theory of Aspect (Smith, 1997), namely viewpoint and situation type. Viewpoint aspect was looked into first followed by further analysis of perfective and imperfective viewpoint combinations with the five situation types identified by Smith (1997).

Results and Discussion

In this section, the occurrence of the Arabic aspectual marker *qad* in different constructions is discussed in light of Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect. The two viewpoint distinctions are examined first, followed by an analysis of the situation types conveyed by different examples in the data.

It is worth noting at this point that the tense/aspect system in Arabic is not as fixed as that of other languages like English since a degree of overlap between the two systems exists (Ryding, 2005). Furthermore, "there is no one to one relationship between forms expressing tense and aspect in English and Arabic" (Sieny, 1986, p. 50).

Viewpoint

As far as viewpoint is concerned, Smith (1997) distinguished between imperfective and perfective viewpoints within her Two-Component Theory of Aspect. As presented above, the functions of *qad* are either temporal/aspectual or modal. *Qad* typically prefers the temporal/aspectual function when it occurs with past verb forms. On the other hand, when it combines with non-past verb forms, it typically indicates modality (i.e., possibility or probability). Consider the following examples:

- (9) *qad* *ya 'rifu* *al-jawāb*
 may/migh knows he the-answer
 He may/might know the answer.

- (10) *la-qad* *akmaltu* *qira'ata* *al-kitāb*
 la-qad completed-I reading the-book
 I have completed reading the book.
- (11) *sa-yakūnu* *qad* *kataba* *al-risālata* *ghadan*
 will be he qad wrote he the-letter tomorrow
 He will have (already) written the letter tomorrow.

Example (9) includes *qad* with the non-past verb *ya'rifu* 'he knows'. In this example, the particle *qad* performs the function of modality indicating possibility. Examples (10) and (11), on the other hand, include instances of *qad* as an aspectual marker. Both examples portray events in terms of perfective aspect since the events are viewed externally as complete units. In example (10), the past form of the Arabic verb *akmaltu* 'I completed' is used with *qad*. In (11), *qad* is used in the construction that follows the pattern *sa- + non-past form of kāna + qad + past form of verb* in a construction that is comparable to the English future perfect tense.

However, as mentioned above, *qad* also occurs in constructions that follow the pattern *qad + kāna + non-past form of verb*. In such cases, the imperfective viewpoint may be expressed. For example:

- (12) *la-qad* *kānat* *tal'abu* *bil-kurati*
 la-qad was she plays she with the-ball
 She was playing with the ball.

In example (12), the construction *qad + kāna + non-past form of verb* is used expressing the imperfective viewpoint with the verb *tal'abu* 'she plays'.

Situation Types

Smith's (1997) five-way verb classification was applied to different situations to determine typical viewpoint-situation type combinations. Consider the following constructions, which follow the pattern *qad + kāna + non-past verb form*:

- (13) *la-qad* *kānat* *ta'rifu* *al-ḥaqīqata*
 la-qad was she knows she the-truth
 She has/had known the truth. OR She knew the truth. (state)
- (14) *la-qad* *kānat* *tal'abu* *bil-dumyati*
 la-qad was she plays she with the-doll
 She was playing with the doll. (activity)
- (15) *la-qad* *kānat* *tuḥaqqiru* *al-ḥaqībata*
 la-qad was she prepares she the-bag
 She was preparing her bag. (accomplishment)
- (16) **la-qad kānat* *tafūzu* *fī* *al-sibāq*
 la-qad was she wins she in the-race
 *She has/had been winning the race. (achievement)
- (17) *la-qad* *kānat* *taqfizu*
 la-qad was she jumps she
 She was jumping. (semelfactive)

Example (13) conveys the perfective viewpoint with the state situation type expressed by the verb *ta'rifu* 'she knows'. Example (14), on the other hand, conveys the imperfective viewpoint with the activity situation type represented by the verb *tal'abu* 'she plays'. The same applies to example (15), which also conveys imperfectivity

in the accomplishment situation type expressed by the situation *tuḥaḍḍiru al-ḥaqībata* ‘she prepares the bag’. Example (16) is unsuccessful as indicated by the asterisks. The Arabic non-past form of the achievement situation type *tafūzu fī al-sibāq* ‘she wins the race’ is not successful when combined with *qad + kāna*. The example fails to convey the sense of *winning a race* since it anomalously conveys progression with a situation that is inherently [+dynamic, +instantaneous, +telic]. Finally, example (17) is unsuccessful in portraying the semelfactive situation type conveyed by the verb *taqfizu* ‘she jumps’ since it conveys an imperfective sense of activity instead (i.e., repeated jumping).

Therefore, in constructions that follow the pattern *qad + kāna + non-past verb form*, aspectual *qad* conveys the perfective viewpoint with states, while it conveys the imperfective viewpoint with activities and accomplishments. As for achievements and semelfactives, the analysis indicated that they are unsuccessful in this particular *qad* construction. Achievements are anomalous, while semelfactives transform into activities.

Now consider the following examples grouped according to situation types, which follow the three construction patterns *qad + past form of verb*, *kāna + qad + past form of verb*, and *sa-/sawfa + non-past form of kāna + qad + past form of verb*:

A. Situation type: States

- (18) *la-qad* *a ‘jabahu* *manẓaru* *al-baḥr*
 la-qad liked he view the-sea
 She was jumping.
- (19) *kāna* *qad* *a ‘jabahu* *manẓaru* *al-baḥr*
 was he qad liked he view the-sea
 He had liked the view of the sea. OR He liked the view of the sea.
- (20) **sa-yakūnu* *qad* *a ‘jabahu* *manẓaru* *al-baḥr*
 will be he qad liked he view the-sea
 *He will have liked the view of the sea.

Examples (18)-(20) contain the state situation type expressed by the past form of the verb *a ‘jabahu* ‘he liked’. In examples (18) and (19), which follow the patterns *qad + past form of verb* and *kāna + qad + past form of verb* respectively, the viewpoint is perfective indicating completed situations that are viewed as closed events. The two examples maintain the typical feature matrix of states [-dynamic, -instantaneous, -telic]. Example (20), on the other hand, is unsuccessful since the state was not properly conveyed in the future time reference entailed by the construction pattern *sa-/sawfa + non-past form of kāna + qad + past form of verb*.

B. Situation type: Activities

- (21) *la-qad* *la ‘iba* *fī* *al-ḥadiqati*
 la-qad played he in the-park
 He has played in the park. OR He played in the park.
- (22) *kāna* *qad* *la ‘iba* *fī* *al-ḥadiqati*
 was he qad played he in the-park
 He had played in the park.
- (23) *sa-yakūnu* *qad* *la ‘iba* *fī* *al-ḥadiqati*
 will be qad played he in the-park
 He will have played in the park.

Examples (21)-(23) contain the activity situation type expressed by the past form of the verb *la ‘iba* ‘he played’. All the examples successfully convey the perfective viewpoint dealing with the activity as a completed event and preserving the features of activities [+dynamic, -instantaneous, -telic].

C. Situation type: Accomplishments

- (24) *la-qad* *ḥaḍḍarat* *al-ḥaqībata*
 la-qad packed she the-bag
 She has prepared her bag. OR She prepared her bag.
- (25) *kānat* *qad* *ḥaḍḍarat* *al-ḥaqībata*
 was she qad packed she the-bag
 She had prepared her bag.
- (26) *sa-takūnu* *qad* *ḥaḍḍarat* *al-ḥaqībata*
 will be she qad packed she the-bag
 She will have prepared her bag.

Examples (24)-(26) contain the accomplishment situation type expressed by the verb constellation *ḥaḍḍarat al-ḥaqībata* ‘she packed the bag’. According to Smith (1997), accomplishments carry the features [+dynamic, -instantaneous, +telic], which is supported by the three examples above since they convey the situation as a complete event within a perfective viewpoint.

D. Situation type: Achievements

- (27) *la-qad* *fāzat* *fī* *al-sibāq*
 la-qad won she in the-race
 She has won the race. OR She won the race.
- (28) *kānat* *qad* *fāzat* *fī* *al-sibāq*
 was she qad won she in the-race
 She had won the race.
- (29) *sa-takūnu* *qad* *fāzat* *fī* *al-sibāq*
 will be she qad won she in the-race
 She will have won the race.

Examples (27)-(29) contain the achievement situation type expressed by the verb constellation *fāzat fī al-sibāq* ‘she won the race’. The situation is inherently [+dynamic, +instantaneous, +telic], which is supported by the perfective viewpoint that is conveyed in the three examples.

E. Situation type: Semelfactives

- (30) *la-qad* *qafaza* *al-walad*
 la-qad jumped he the-boy
 The boy jumped.
- (31) *kāna* *qad* *qafaza* *al-walad*
 was-he qad jumped he the-boy
 The boy jumped.
- (32) *sa-yakūnu* *qad* *qafaza* *al-walad*
 will be he qad jumped he the-boy
 The boy will have jumped.

Examples (30)-(32) contain the semelfactive situation type expressed by the verb constellation *qafaza al-walad* ‘the boy jumped’. The three examples convey the perfective viewpoint with semelfactive situations that are characterised by the feature matrix [+dynamic, +instantaneous, -telic].

Based on the discussion and examples above, it was noted that the imperfective viewpoint was more typical with the construction *qad + kāna + non-past verb form* (See Table 2), while the perfective viewpoint prevailed with the two construction patterns *qad + past form of verb* and *kāna + qad + past form of verb* (See Table 3). However, although the perfective viewpoint was successfully realised with all five situation types in the latter two construction patterns, the imperfective viewpoint in the construction *qad + kāna + non-past verb form* was only realised in two situation types; namely, activities and accomplishments. When states were used in the construction *qad + kāna + non-past verb form*, a perfective viewpoint was conveyed. As for achievements, they were unsuccessful in the construction *qad + kāna + non-past verb form*, while semelfactives were transformed into activities because they conveyed the meaning of dynamicity.

Table 2

Summary of the combinations of viewpoint aspect and situation types in the construction qad + kāna + non-past verb form

Situation Type	Perfective Viewpoint	Imperfective Viewpoint
States	√	
Activities		√
Accomplishments		√
Achievements	-	-
Semelfactives	-	-

Table 3

Summary of the combinations of viewpoint aspect and situation types in the constructions qad + past form of verb and kāna + qad + past form of verb

Situation Type	Perfective Viewpoint	Imperfective Viewpoint
States	√	
Activities	√	
Accomplishments	√	
Achievements	√	
Semelfactives	√	

As for the fourth construction addressed in this study, which follows the pattern *sa-/sawfa + non-past form of kāna + qad + past form of verb*, the analysis found that it conveyed the perfective viewpoint with activities, accomplishments, achievements, and semelfactives. It was not successful with states (See Table 4), which may be due to the future reference entailed by this particular construction pattern.

Table 4

Summary of the combinations of viewpoint aspect and situation types in the construction sa-/sawfa + non-past form of kāna + qad + past form of verb

Situation Type	Perfective Viewpoint	Imperfective Viewpoint
States	-	-
Activities	√	
Accomplishments	√	
Achievements	√	
Semelfactives	√	

Conclusion

This paper set out to investigate the Arabic aspectual particle *qad* within the framework of Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect. The Two-Component Theory accounts for situation types as well as viewpoint

aspects in the interpretation of aspectual meaning. The particle was analysed in four different construction patterns in terms of both situation types and viewpoints. It was found to convey perfective as well as imperfective viewpoints in MSA. Some situation types were found to behave consistently, irrespective of the viewpoint, while others varied. States were found to be typically perfective with *qad* constructions with the exception of constructions that entail future reference. Activities and accomplishments were both successfully conveyed by perfective and imperfective *qad*, while achievements were only realised perfectly. This is probably due to the nature of achievement verbs which are [+dynamic, +instantaneous, +telic] conveying instantaneous meaning, thereby forcing us to view them as completed events. As for semelfactives, they were only conveyed perfectly since they were transformed into imperfective activities with imperfective *qad*. Nevertheless, the verb constellation, as well as other adjuncts that may be present in the sentence, play a significant role in determining viewpoint since the semantics of the verb contributes to temporal and aspectual meanings.

I believe that the findings have pedagogical implications that are relevant to the teaching of translation and training of translators. If translation students are made aware of the differences between the aspectual meanings of English and Arabic, and realise the different viewpoints Arabic can express using the particle *qad*, their performance on translation tasks will probably improve because they will be able to choose better structural equivalents to convey the senses expressed in the source text.

Further, a complete corpus-based description of the aspectual system of Arabic can be conducted in light of Smith's (1997) Two-Component Theory of Aspect, since none have been carried out to the best of the author's knowledge. The findings of such a description will contribute to enriching previous research in the field in addition to enhancing further understanding of aspectual meaning in MSA.

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Examining Undergraduate Students' and In-Service Graduates' Perceptions of Their Professionally Oriented Foreign Language Needs

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Increasing workplace demands on foreign languages skills in professional settings call for a number of considerable changes in the university learning context regarding foreign language teaching. The present study aimed to assess the language needs within and across employed university graduates, first, third, and fourth-year students of non-language majors to further inform such changes. All four language skills, the context of both current foreign language education programs and the use of a foreign language at the workplace were considered. Questionnaires including Likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended items were distributed among 110 students and 35 currently employed graduates. Descriptive statistics and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey HSD and Holm-Bonferroni tests were used to analyze the data. The results indicated several areas of agreement among the participants: A clear need for all four language skills to be developed as high as C2 level and the consistent need to improve speaking. However, several noticeable discrepancies between the perceptions of the target groups regarding the context of workplace language use, such as how often, where, and with whom they expect to communicate, and need for professionally oriented foreign language were revealed. Overall, students may need to be more informed about the challenges regarding the workplace context for language use.

Keywords: foreign language curriculum, foreign language teaching, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), needs analysis, workplace communication

Introduction

In a globalized workspace, a good command of a foreign language is instrumental for achieving professional goals. The trend is expected to gain momentum, especially for the English language, given that “English continues to

be the lingua franca in many contexts worldwide” (Serafini, Lake, & Long, 2015, p.16). The necessity of foreign language skills in addressing the actual needs of future professionals has been widely discussed in numerous research studies on teaching English as a Foreign Language published as individual papers (e.g., Basturkmen & Wette, 2016, Belcher, 2009; Hyland, 2007; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) as well as collections of articles by various prominent researches united around this topical issue (Kirkgöz & Kenan Dikilitaş (Eds., 2018).

With the growth of cross-cultural economic and political contacts, having a good command of a foreign language for achieving professional goals is becoming of great practical importance for university graduates in the Russian Federation. The modern Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) for Higher Education in the Russian Federation not only set out learning outcomes and curricula structure for professionally oriented foreign language (LSP) courses¹, but also allow substantial academic freedom in ensuring curriculums content compliance with labor market requirements. Moreover, the revised FSES for Bachelor programs (2017) further stress the need for curriculums informed by the analysis of professional needs in multicultural professional environments. In view of these changing educational and societal requirements, it becomes obvious that curriculum design for teaching English in Russian universities should be reconsidered, with labor market demands in mind.

However, the process of introducing modified LSP courses into university curriculums has turned out to be a complicated issue. At the moment, the debate in the Russian community among foreign language teachers as to what to teach in LSP is as heated as ever (Kazakova, 2011; Solovova, 2009). The current debate concerns the focus in teaching LSP: general language issues, business vocabulary or mostly professional content, and the proportion of attention that should be paid to the four language skills. The issue lies not only in selecting some of the methodological concepts of teaching English to be implemented in teaching LSP courses, but rather in assessing the teaching context and aligning it with the students’ practical needs, the range of which depends on their future professional demands.

Developing models of effective LSP courses that prepare students for their future professional environments has been a challenging task not specific only to the Russian context. US Higher education institutions offering LSPs have been monitoring the curricular options since 1990, noting that the courses are striving to become “more focused in response to broader needs” (Long & Uscinski, 2012, p.173). At the same time, challenges of implementing LSP programs (Lear, 2012) and raising students’ awareness of their goals as a factor of success (Stevens, 2017) have been noted.

The tasks are equally relevant for the School of World Economy and International Affairs of the National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE). Students of NRU HSE study two foreign languages; they have an option of choosing one out of eight world languages (German, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, or Arabic), with English being the mandatory foreign language for every student. However, limitations on institutional language learning organization, such as the recent cut in the number of foreign language class hours by one third in the four recent years, as well as the rapidly changing landscape in the working environment, pose challenges that should be addressed effectively and in a timely manner to meet the students’ needs.

The present research aims to compare the perceived language needs of LSP first, third, and fourth-year students at the School of World Economy and International Affairs (NRU HSE) and the perceived language needs of the employed graduates in order to determine the effectiveness of the learning context in developing the expectations and perceived language needs of LSP students in relation to their future professional requirements. To this end, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are LSP students’ perceived foreign language needs with regard to their future professional contexts?
2. What are employed graduates’ perceptions of their current language needs in their professional context?
3. How do the LSP students’ and in-service graduates’ perceptions of their language needs differ?

¹ The Federal State Educational Standards in the Russian Federation for Bachelor programs. (2017). Retrieved from <http://fgosvo.ru/fgosvo/92/91/4>

Literature Review

The needs analysis has become a necessary part of curriculum development in general foreign language teaching (Brown, 2001; Hutchinson & Waters, 2002; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Yalden, 2000) and later English for specific/academic purposes (ESP/EAP) (Basturkmen & Wette, 2016) to define the courses' goals and objectives. Currently, a needs analysis is a feature that provides "one of the strongest links between EAP and ESP" (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p.5). Although the authors' research deals with teaching various foreign languages (LSP) rather than only English for specific purposes, the background of the research in ESP is used as the theoretical ground for the present paper for a few reasons. ESP seems to be more widely explored, it informs LSP, and it is mostly cited (Lafford, 2012). The terms LSP/ESP are used intermittently in some studies to discuss common grounds and shared issues (Howard & Brown, 1997).

Recent studies define the current experience in LSP/ESP as increasingly difficult to summarize or present, describing it as "a single stop-action frame" (Belcher, 2006, p.135), and give the current view of the ESP context as "dynamic, continually changing" (Douglas, 2000), socially constructed by multiple stakeholders rather than only learners (Canagarajah, 2002). A number of studies have focused on different stakeholders' needs-related concepts. Among them are numerous studies on the workplace requirements for foreign languages use (Ching Hei, David, & Su Kia, 2013; Crosling & Ward, 2002; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Nur, 2011; Spence & Liu, 2013; Talib, 2018) that overwhelmingly state the need for improvement in teaching relevant professional communication skills to be implemented in various industries. The role of "work-related factors" (Shooshtari, 2018, 193) in higher ESP education is often considered important for students to see "a practical applicability" in what students learn (Marza, 2012). Research on the perceived needs of ESP learners focuses on developing methodological approaches both to alleviate the problems of students first entering an ESP course (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Marza, 2012) and to customize curricula design to enhance graduates' employability (Kavaliauskien & Uzpaliene, 2003; Kazar & Mede, 2015; Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011; Tan, Teoh, & Tan, 2016; Varghese, 2012). There is a body of research that compares the perceived needs of ESP learners to those of the instructors (Zohren, 2010), the ESP-learning context versus learners' future discourse community needs (Garcia, 2002), business communication versus reality (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996), as well as multiple stakeholders' views (Taillefer, 2007) in recognition of the impact that the subjective needs that learners have on the learning process in ESP contexts (Tudor, 1977).

Similar studies by Russian researchers in the field of LSP/ESP in the analogue contexts of Russian universities mostly outline the LSP/ESP aims and syllabi of professionally oriented courses. For instance, Komarova and Oks (2016) give a comprehensive description of the structure and content of a specialized ESP course in tourism at Lomonosov Moscow State University; Orlyanskaya (2012) outlines a syllabus for introducing future FL teachers to major issues of teaching LSP/ESP. Although both of the papers contain valuable insights into the principles of LSP/ESP courses design, they do not provide any empirical data for their conclusions. The study by Sarsenbayeva and Kulakhmetova (2015) employs a needs assessment in order to design an ESP course for students in thermal engineering. It offers a discussion of the target situation, present situation, and context analysis based on the data that was collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews of students and instructors at Kemerovo State University. Still, the focus is on the recommendations for a particular course while the research procedure, the empirical data, and the data analysis stay outside the framework of the article.

The existing studies present a clear picture of the learning and target needs in various professional areas and their interrelations; however, they still give rise to some points of interest. First, all of them give the stop-action frame of the learning needs, thus questions arise regarding the dynamics shaping those needs and interrelations. Also, reformulating the question "Is what I need what I want?" (Liu et al., 2011, p. 271), there may be a need to answer to the question if students want to learn about what they really need.

The present research builds on the insights that are drawn from previous studies in an attempt to assess the needs of LSP students at the School of World Economy and International Affairs (NRU HSE). Similar to the studies mentioned above, the present research follows Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in investigating the three categories of needs in terms of necessities, lacks, and wants. The three components of the needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 54) regard the target situation as their focal point either as the estimation of its communicative demands (for necessities), or gaps between the existing proficiency and the proficiency requirements of the target situation (for lacks), or learners' perceptions about their needs in the target situation (for wants). For the

present research, the learning needs as perceived by LSP students of NRU HSE are compared with the perceptions of LSP needs provided by employed graduates of the university. Thus, for LSP students, the needs are defined by their perceptions of a possible future target situation, while the graduates assess their needs against the real-life workplace communication context. To follow Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), the study's focus was on investigating the specific needs of learners regarding language skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to their future professional activities to inform the choice of the underlying methodology and activities in the context of the relevant discipline.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were 110 non-linguistic major LSP students of the School of World Economy and International Affairs (NRU HSE): 40 first-year students, 31 students from the third year, and 39 students in their fourth year of study in the spring term of 2015. Responses were also collected from 35 graduates of the School of World Economy and International Affairs (NRU HSE) from the years 2007-2012. Female participants slightly outnumbered males in all groups: 23 females (57.5%) and 17 males (42.5%) in the first-year group; 18 females (58.1%) and 13 males (41.9%) in the third-year group; 22 females (56.4%) and 17 males (43.6%) in the fourth-year group; 20 female (57.1%) and 15 male (42.9%) graduates. The age of the responding students was in the range of 17-23 years with the mean of 17.45, 19.41, and 20.9 for the first, third, and fourth-year student groups respectively. The graduates were in the 28-30 age group with 16% of the respondents defining their age as being over 30. Only two participants (graduates) were non-Russian native speakers (Armenian).

The students and graduates involved in the research studied for two majors offered by the NRU HSE School: World Economy (WE) and International Relations (IR). As language classes are mixed groups of the two majors, all responding groups included both students majoring in WE and IR in the proportions of 57.5/42.5%, 54.9/45.1% and 48.7/51.3% for the first, third, and fourth-year groups respectively. Among the graduates, 59% of the respondents majored in WE and 41% of the responded majored in IR. The inclusion of students at different educational stages expands the scope of the analysis to investigate possible dynamics in the possible divergences of students' needs perceptions according to the stage of students. The students in their first year of studies were particularly chosen to collect the entry stage data for comparison.

Materials

The questionnaire as the data collection instrument was used to identify the perceptions of language needs within the groups of participants: students and graduates. The students and the graduates were asked about their perceptions regarding *any* of the two languages they were studying or studied in the university and either expected them to be their main future working language or the most used one for their current work. Therefore, the research covers data collected for German, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and English languages mentioned in this paper as foreign languages (FLs). The questionnaire items were adopted from the questionnaires in Taillefer's (2007) study² with an adaptation (questions 6, 7, 17) in line with the researcher's suggestion for the questionnaire improvement (Taillefer, 2007, p.14); for this, the QALSPELL questionnaire items were adopted from Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages III (2005)³, a part of the European Commission Leonardo program that is aimed at improving the quality of vocational teaching and training. The QALSPELL questionnaire provides items on the rhetorical context of reading, writing, listening, and speaking for specific purposes.

The six-level CEFR framework (Council of Europe, 2001)⁴ was adopted to assess the students' perceptions of levels of language competence *in any language* they regarded as most operational in their future or current professional context. The languages in questions are the ones on the students' curriculum or studied by the graduates of School of World Economy and International Affairs at NRU HSE: Arabic, Chinese, English, French,

² Permission to use the questionnaire for the publication was obtained from the researcher, Gail Taillefer, on August 23, 2016 via email.

³ European Commission. (2005). Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages III. SuProject Two: Languages for enhanced opportunities on the European labour market. Synthesis report. Retrieved from <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

⁴ Council of Europe. (2001). Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge, UK: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge. Retrieved from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

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German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. Although CEFR is perceived as being applied mostly to the English language teaching and testing, the framework has been widely used as the basis for designing such international tests for European languages as the DELF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) diploma or the Goethe-Zertifikat. Moreover, CEFR has been used as a framework to align with for a few non-European language tests such as the 2010 Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT (Bucar, Ryu, Skof & Sangawa, 2014) and the new standardized Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) HSK for non-native speakers (Teng, 2017). CEFR is also being implemented in the higher education teaching and learning of Arabic as a second language (Soliman, 2017). Thus, the validity of the questionnaire for the range of languages relies on the cited studies.

The uniformity of the instrument for greater reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005), was a particular concern. The two versions of the questionnaire (for students and graduates) were parallel but varied somewhat to include items that were relevant to each of the target groups. The questionnaire consisted of 28 multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert scale items for graduates and 25 items for students. Only the graduates were asked about their in-service professional training. Some question items were reworded: for example, future tenses were used in workplace-related questions that were addressed to students, while the present tense was used in question items for the graduates. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the questionnaire items according to their focus. Appendix A presents the graduates' version of the questionnaire.

Table 1
Breakdown of questionnaire items

Eliciting:	Question N
Participants' background	1-9 (q-s 8-9 only for graduates)
Perceived future or current context of language use for professional purposes	10-14, 17
Perceived requirements for professional language use	16, 24, 25
Perceived needs in professional language use	15,22
Perceived level of language competence at the current stage vs. the level required in professional contexts	18-21
Participants' perceptions of their language learning experiences at the university.	23, 26-28

Procedure

For the students' questionnaire response groups, a random cluster sampling procedure was employed to choose a group from every major language specialization, which constituted approximately 30% of the overall number of students per year of study. For the graduates, snowball sampling was employed. Prior to the data collection procedure, the Chair for the Department addressed the students and instructors, and also contacted former students through the alumni network to inform them of the research purpose and its procedure to obtain their consent.

The review of the questionnaire was performed by two department researchers, and the pilot study included one representative from each group of the research population, whose suggestions following their questionnaire response experience were considered. Those reviewers were later excluded from the data collection process.

Pen-and-paper responses were collected simultaneously on one day with the cooperation of the department instructors to prevent sharing information among the responding students. The graduates were reached by distributing an electronic version of the questionnaire through the HSE Alumni Association center. The raw data were transferred into an electronic format and grouped into categories. The SPSS for Windows, version 16.0, was employed for all statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as the percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze the demographic information of the participants and their perceived levels of language competence. As the research design required comparisons of more than two groups, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was chosen to clarify whether the value of variables differed significantly among the groups. To determine the location of any possible differences, ANOVA was followed by post-hoc Tukey HSD and Holm-Bonferroni tests.

Results

Participants' Background

The analysis presented a foreign language (FL) user profile for the students and graduates. In addition to English as a compulsory foreign language, for enrolling in their classes of the languages of choice the students favored Chinese and Spanish (29% for each), German and Italian (14% for each), with French and Portuguese to follow. As for the in-service graduates, our findings revealed that the overwhelming majority of them (60%) use English as the main foreign language in their professional contexts, followed by Japanese (9%), Chinese (9%), and other languages.

The graduates mostly worked in Russia (68.6%) but roughly one-third (31.4%) were employed abroad, with only 5.7% employed in an English-speaking country (the USA). At the time of the survey the graduates were engaged primarily in domestic and international trade (34.3%), followed by finance (14.3%), logistics and academia (both 11.4%), consulting (8.6%), insurance (5.7%), IT (5.7%), and marketing (2.9%). Most graduates worked as specialists in their respective fields (48.6%); others worked as managers (22.9%), administrators (14%), and in other unspecified positions (17.1%). Two of the respondents did not report their employment status.

Context of FL Use for Professional Purposes

The graduates reported (q-s 10-14, 17) that they predominantly use their foreign languages (FLs) in their country of study (Russia = 45%), followed by non-native countries for the FLs (28%), and native countries for the FLs (24%). Only half of the former graduates (52%) mostly use FLs with native speakers more often than with non-native speakers (42%). Most of the former graduates need to use direct contact, including telephone contact (28%), followed by formal contact including meetings and presentations (24%), informal contact (21%), and virtual contact (21%), respectively.

In contrast to responses from graduates, students reported expectations to use foreign languages outside their own country, mostly in the countries where the FLs are the mother tongue (73% for first year, 82% for third year, and 65% for fourth-year students versus 24% for the graduates). Moreover, the students overestimated the future opportunity of the interactions involving native speakers to a considerable degree (up to 89% of the students).

When asked to assess the frequency of using the four language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) at their workplace, nearly all of the former graduates reported that they have to read in a foreign language very often (93%). The texts encountered most frequently were emails (29%), contracts (14%), instructions (13%), and specialized literature (13%).

Writing was considered the second most regular activity in the workplace by 79% of the graduates. The graduates often use this skill for writing business letters (81%), followed by emails (78%), translation into foreign and native languages equally (41% each type of activity), as well as writing memoranda (19%), professional literature reviews (15%), and reports (11%), respectively.

In terms of listening, 66% of the graduates reported their listening skills as being required "very often" or "fairly often" in tasks such as listening to presentations (52%), explanations of professional issues (48%), and instructions (37%), respectively.

Speaking was noted to be required "very often" (59%) and "fairly often" (19%), declining slightly in frequency compared to the three other modalities. Approximately half of the speaking situations involve phone conversations (53%); moreover, approximately 59% of the graduates described their conversations as mostly asking and answering questions.

Overall, the fourth-year students proved to be most realistic in their assessment of the frequency of using the four language modalities in the workplace. Similar to the graduates' assessment, the use of reading (58%) was rated as rather frequent by the fourth-year students, preceded only by listening (60%), while speaking, though marginally, was reported as the second-least used skill for future workplaces (56%) after writing (33%). On the other hand, the first and third-year students expected speaking to be the most used skill (80% and 74%

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respectively), followed by listening (66% and 67%), and writing (40% and 57%), with reading being the least expected (40% and 29%). Thus, neither group of students expected reading, and especially writing, to be of as much importance as the graduates reported.

All in all, the three groups of students revealed realistic expectations regarding the specificities of the context for the language use for separate skills. Minor deviations were observed between the students' and the graduates' responses concerning speaking. For example, the students expected more active participation at meetings and when making presentations. Moreover, the students' opinions differed from those of the graduates' with regard to how often, where, and with whom they expected to be using their language.

Perceived Requirements for Professional FL Use for Employment

The graduates perceived the level of their language competence to be of rather low importance for obtaining their first job (q-n 25). Out of the requested language skills, writing (39%) and speaking (29%) were more often called upon in the job search process, which is not surprising when taking into account the need for applicants to write resumes and take part in interviews with potential employers (See Figure 1). Interestingly, speaking skills were cited by half of the respondents (55%) as having contributed to their failure in their first attempt to get hired compared to both writing and reading (both 18%) and only reading (9%), respectively (q-n 24).

Unlike the graduates, the students graded all four skills as highly important for their employment success (overall, more than 63% per skill), with both the third-year students rating speaking first and the fourth-year students expecting to make more use of reading and writing.

Regarding the importance of foreign language skills for professional communication (q-n 16), the majority in all the groups (61% and higher) ascribed considerable importance to all four skills. Nevertheless, there are some discrepancies in the perceptions of the importance of particular language skills among the four groups of respondents (see Figure 2).

On the one hand, all of the groups of students may have undervalued the importance of reading skills, and the third and fourth-year students considered writing less important than graduates did. On the other hand, all of the students gave priority to listening and speaking skills, which may be valuable, however these were not the primary skills cited by employed graduates.

Thus, only a partial alignment was observed with the graduates' experience at the different stages of employment. Graduates viewed writing and speaking skills as the most necessary skills for obtaining a job, and valued reading over the other skills for further communication at workplace.

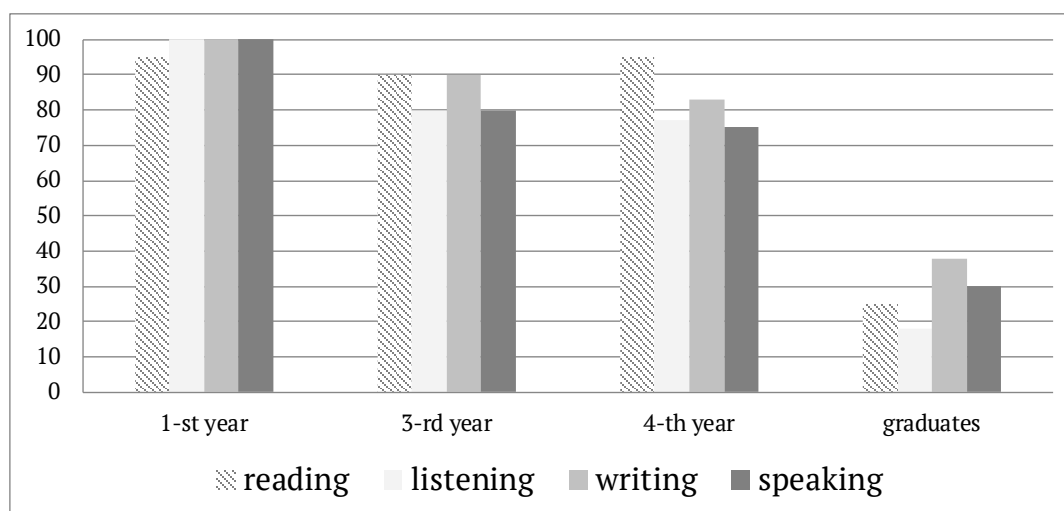


Figure 1. Perceived level of foreign language skills needed for entering the job market (% of participants).*

Note: *All figures report on the percentage of respondents who regarded the skills as "important" instead of "rather important" or "hardly important".

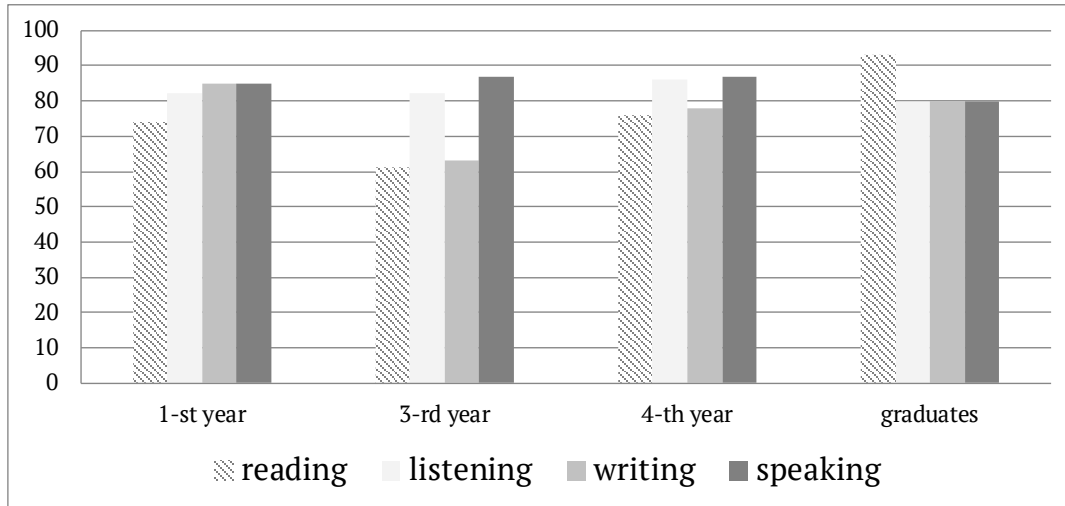


Figure 2. The perceived importance of foreign language skills for professional communication.

Perceived Needs in Professional FL Use

Although on average 77% of the graduates assessed their overall foreign language ability as sufficient for entering the job market, they still mentioned oral communications skills as their weakest ones (q-s 15, 22). Approximately 90% of the graduates indicated that they felt equally confident about their reading and listening skills, with approximately 80% of the respondents reporting feeling at ease with writing, while only 60% of the graduates mentioned that they regard their speaking skills as sufficient. Perception of difficulties in language use and the skills they felt needed the most development for further professional purposes is the area where the most noticeable discrepancies between the graduates and the students were observed.

Figure 3 below echoes our earlier findings on language needs. The results (q-n 15) show that most of the respondents find reading to be the least problematic skill, with writing rated as the second-least problematic skill. The perception of difficulties in listening and speaking is not as uniform. Listening skills appear to present the biggest difficulties for the first and the third-year students whereas the fourth-year students perceive speaking as their weakest skill. For the graduates speaking and listening skills present equal difficulty. Interestingly, the fourth-year students underestimate the challenges they may face at their workplace regarding reading skills.

The responses of the graduates to the question regarding the necessity to improve particular language skills (q-n 22) reveal a similar pattern. Most of the former graduates think that it is necessary to improve speaking

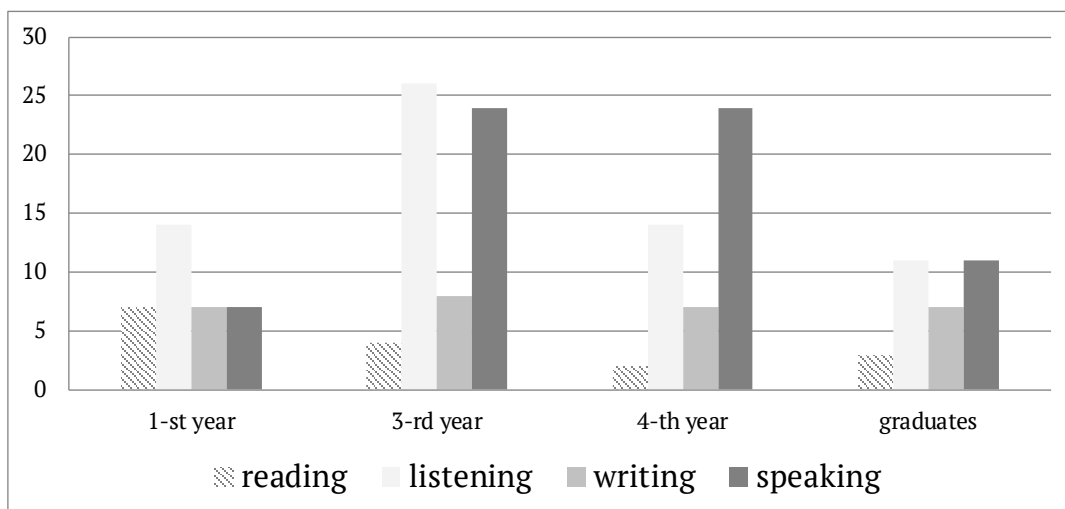


Figure 3. Reported difficulties in using specific language skills.

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skills (38%), followed by listening (34%), and writing skills (31%), respectively (see Figure 4 below). Reading skills were reported to be the least in need of improvement (21%). The data appear to support the previous conclusions drawn for the graduates; speaking is one of the most required but least developed skills for employment purposes. Still, reading skills, which the graduates reported as being the most needed, were also reported as least needing improvement.

The perception of speaking as the skill which requires the most improvement is shared by the first and fourth-year students. Overall, the fourth-year students were the most realistic in prioritizing their goals on skills development.

In sum, the results in this section appear consistent in indicating that students felt they needed to improve their speaking skills, the need supported by the graduates' responses. Nevertheless, our analysis revealed a gap between the perceived target needs for professionally oriented foreign language use as reported by the graduates and those by the students.

Graduates' and Students' Perceived Levels of FL Competence to Meet Professional Demands

In assessing their own levels of language competence against the six-level CEFR framework (q-s 18-21), both the graduates and the students expressed a clear need for *all four* language skills to be developed as high as the C2 level (see Appendix 2). A special focus was on speaking needs as 62% of the graduates and students reported a need for C2-level skills, which surpassed their current competence. The collective percentages of C1 to C2 levels accounted for 82-93% of the sample. A closer look reveals a number of differences in the students' perceptions of their needs in language competence development from those of the graduates.

Most graduates indicated that they were quite satisfied with the overall level of their language development regarding reading skills. Nevertheless, they reported a slight need for improvement at the proficiency level (C2) of reading skills. The first-year students report a need for improvement from every level of competence and a complete lack of C2 skills, which they deemed to be required. The third and fourth-year students appeared to formulate their needs in reading with a focus on more complex and advanced skills (C2) than the workplace reality required according to the graduates. At the same time, the students greatly underestimated their ability to use these skills (35% and 12%, respectively, against 65% for graduates).

The data are supported by a descriptive statistical analysis (see Table 2) showing the means for the groups of respondents.

Both the third and fourth-year students agreed on being generally satisfied with what they could do in writing to meet their needs, while the first-year students reported an expressive need for improvement. Still, the graduates

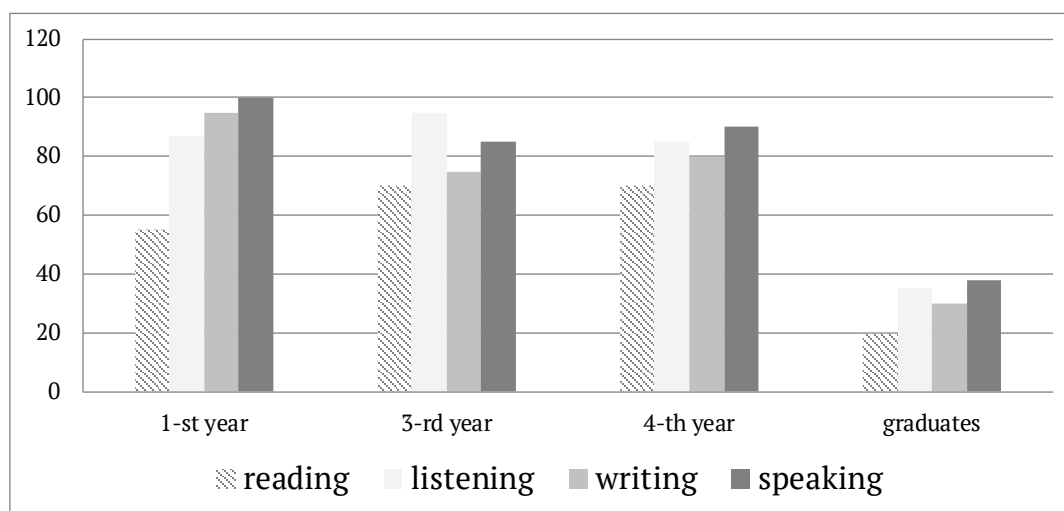


Figure 4. Foreign language skills in need of improvement.

Table 2

Representation of the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) for the levels of graduates' and students' perceived (% of total) levels of language competence*

CERF levels	Reading				Writing				Listening				Speaking			
	I need		I can		I need		I can		I need		I can		I need		I can	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
first year (n=30)	5.5	0.42	4.3	0.45	4.2	0.43	5.55	0.78	5.55	0.34	4.16	0.78	4.16	0.27	4.16	0.36
third year (n=31)	5.71	0.69	4.88	1.03	5.80	0.52	5.80	0.52	5.70	0.76	5.70	0.76	5.84	0.47	4.38	1.13
fourth year (n=49)	5.86	0.46	4.66	0.75	5.85	0.42	5.85	0.42	5.68	0.64	5.70	0.63	5.85	0.41	4.72	0.95
Graduates (n=35)	5.46	0.76	5.42	1.03	5.42	0.95	5.38	0.94	5.40	0.76	5.40	0.76	5.50	0.76	5.12	0.95

Note: * Stated in terms of 'I need' vs. 'I can', according to CEFR; ($p < 0.0001$)

also pointed at the need for further development of their writing skills, mostly at the advanced C2 level, beyond what they had mastered. The fourth-year students perceived their need for developing writing skills at the advanced level in an even more dramatic way than the graduates. They reported their needs as exceeding their perceptions of their current writing ability by fourfold.

Regarding listening skills, the results of the statistical analysis in Table 2 reveal a balance of needs and abilities for students, with the exception of the first year of study and the graduates. The major difference lies in the level of satisfaction: overall, the graduates were less satisfied with their listening skills than the students were.

The responses for speaking skills present a different picture. The descriptive data of the mean reveal an overall need for most groups to improve their speaking skills compared to what they could already do at that stage. The percentage breakdown (Appendix B) shows that this holds true for the C2 speaking skills: the graduates and the students were satisfied with their speaking ability being below the mastery level. One striking finding was that the first-year students were more confident about their speaking skills at levels below mastery levels than the third and fourth-year students. Interestingly, the fourth-year students were also the second-least confident about their ability to speak at the level of mastery.

In sum, our findings suggest that students set their goals at achieving C1-C2 levels in all four skills while being quite confident at lower levels. The respondents also agreed about speaking in the workplace demanding greatest mastery levels. The findings are in line with both the graduates' satisfaction and the reported difficulties regarding their ability to use the four language skills at their workplaces. This fact raises a question concerning the frequency of using the four language skills, of which speaking was not the most frequently cited activity. The question is whether the graduates do not speak as often because there are fewer opportunities for oral communication or because the graduates feel less confident in their ability.

Comparative Statistical Analysis Across the Groups of Respondents

A statistical analysis of the respondents' answers by groups revealed the magnitude of the convergence/divergence of their views on the needs of foreign-language communication in a professional environment (see Table 3). The calculated value of F (6.0311) significantly exceeds 1 (one) at $p = 0.0002$, which indicates more significant variations between the groups than within the groups. The p -value corresponding to the F -statistic of one-way ANOVA is lower than 0.05, suggesting that the groups are significantly different in their views. The analysis may suggest that the grouping variable (year of studies) plays a role in shaping the students' views. Significant differences are traced between the graduates and the groups of students.

With regard to the average assessment of the perception of foreign language practice by graduates, the greatest deviation from the views of graduates was revealed among the first-year students. The views of the third-year students showed a lower coefficient of deviation from the views of graduates in the Tukey HSD and Bonferroni tests. In these tests, the only insignificant deviation was revealed in the views of the graduates and the fourth-year students.

Table 3

Tukey HSD, Bonferroni and Holm results (only pairs relative to graduates simultaneously compared)

Compared groups	Tukey HSD		Tukey HSD inference	Bonferroni and Holm t-statistic	Bonferroni p-value	Bonferroni inference	Holm p-value	Holm inference
	Q statistic	p-value						
first-year students/ graduates	5.7963	0.0010053	** p<0.01	4.0986	0.0008755	**p<0.01	0.0007879	**p<0.01
third-year students/ graduates	4.7088	0.0106250	* p<0.05	3.3296	0.0123898	*p<0.05	0.0099119	**p<0.01
fourth-year students/ graduates	1.4246	0.8331633	insignificant	4.2908	0.0143593	*p<0.05	0.0100515	*p<0.05

Note: (* significant differences ** more significant differences)

Perceptions of the Learning Context by Students and Graduates

In terms of the pedagogical organization (q-s 23, 26-28), the results show that the third-year students and graduates favored the pedagogical setup that presupposes groups by level of competence. There are two findings regarding the fourth-year students that appear worth noting. First, they prefer to do more teamwork than the other respondents. Second, they are not very supportive of guided autonomous learning (e.g. online). Students were more responsive than graduates to the questions on pedagogical setup, which may be explained by their current engagement in the educational process.

Considering the content of the studies, most of the students and graduates (86%) responded that language teaching should be more oriented towards specific professional language. Generally, all of the participants (including students, graduates) believed that the ratios of *specific FL (economics/politics)* teaching time to *general FL* teaching time on the scale 20/80 to 80/20 are as follows: 60/40 = 28%; 70/30 = 22%; 50/50 = 20%; 40/60 = 18%; other ratios: = 12%. Most of the third and fourth-year students (74.2% and 87.8%, respectively) were highly motivated to continue with their language learning to improve their language skills or to maintain their skill level, while less than a half of the graduates (31.4%) did not continue language learning. More than half of the graduates (58%) said that they were self-motivated to take further steps to improve linguistically, as was the case with Taillefer's (2007) findings. Interestingly, 12.9% of the third-year students and 17.1% of the graduates left the response slot blank, while everyone from the fourth-year sample group gave responses to this question.

Discussion

This study set out to examine the perceptions of language learning needs as shared by non-English major FL students and graduates. The findings suggest that in the course of studying the students may be generally getting more realistic in their expectations of how important foreign languages may be at their future workplace and in which contexts the use of foreign languages will prevail. However, the percentage of graduates reporting satisfaction with the level of their language training in school (q-n 26), though encouraging (54%), is far from being the target result of the language program. The research findings may lead to some considerations for adjusting the learning process.

First, the perceptions of the students in the professional context for language use deviate from those of the graduates in terms of frequency and cultural environment. The students expected to communicate in the FL native speakers' environment more often than the graduates did. The deviations concerning the expectations for the context of using separate skills mostly concern speaking. The students expected to speak more often and have more active participation at meetings and make more presentations than the graduates. This fact is consistent with the study of Grosling and Ward (2002), who found that workplace presentations and meeting participation for the responding graduates of Monash University, Australia, were limited. Moreover, the students may be unaware of how much reading and writing are required in the workplace.

Second, the research findings may indicate the difference in weight that each of the four foreign language

skills carries at the employment threshold and workplace. Although the majority of participants in all four groups ascribed considerable importance to all four skills, the graduates overwhelmingly cited reading as most frequently required for the work context, while writing and speaking were more valued at the employment stage compared to the students' expectations. The conclusion regarding the order of skill importance for the workplace may not ring true for all industries, as is the case with engineering graduates (Kassim & Ali, 2010). Their analysis of the data collected from 65 engineers at 10 multinational chemical companies in Malaysia depicted an emphasis on oral workplace communication skills while networking for contacts and presenting new ideas as a means of professional advancement. Still, the recruitment stage requirements confirm reports from previous studies that found the impact of oral communication skills the most pronounced on recruitment compared to job success or promotion (Crosling & Ward, 2002) or "essential" for both recruitment and promotion as compared to "daily tasks" (Kassim & Ali, 2010, p. 176). Moreover, a number of findings are in concordance with the conclusions in Taillefer's (2007) research of the professional needs of economics graduates in France, which stated that language competence was not the decisive employment factor for a large proportion of graduates; still, all language skills were reported by graduates as highly important for further professional communication in the workplace.

Third, whatever the preferences of the participants may be in assessing their own levels of language competence, both the graduates and the students expressed a clear need for all four language skills to be developed at a level as high as C2, with an emphasis on mastery in speaking. In summary, speaking appears to be perceived as the most required but least developed skill for workplace use. Speaking skills were also regarded as insufficient at all stages of employment. The need to improve speaking is consistent with a number of other studies in the field (Marza, 2012; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Li & Lu, 2011; Stevens, 2017; Talib, 2018). The other three language skills in which the students were quite confident were viewed by the graduates as being in need of considerable improvement, up to the level of mastery. It should be noted that the differences discussed above, though noticeable, are still far from being drastic.

The results of the research may be important for the design of efficient curricula as well as defining vectors of possible further research. As already stated in Liu et al. (2011), first and foremost, informing instructors on the complexities of the students' needs and the challenges that the students may face in their future workplaces appear to be imperative. A systematic collection of students' needs and their analysis might help to design a "defensible curriculum" (Brown, 2016, p.102). To complement "subject area knowledge relationships with content-area specialists and specialized texts" (Starfield, 2016, p. 157), scheduling timely and regular workplace context updates from former graduates may allow for the timely adjustment of syllabi/curricula as well as instructors' personal approaches to teaching. Researchers themselves, as Brown (2016) notes, may have an obligation to disseminate the findings among those who may benefit from them.

Language-wise, one possible way to provide quality teaching at an advanced level with a limited number of class instructional hours appears to be the incorporation of training on different language skills with the most applicable context for their use. For example, listening difficulties reported by our respondents revealed the need to use authentic interviews revolving around essential subjects. Within such a framework, language activities for situations of heightened professional problematicity (Marina & Rajprasis, 2016) involving situation-specific factors (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010) for speaking and negotiation training, including phone conversations, appear logical and may also be offered. Reading may be enhanced by tasks for critical reading based on a selection of relevant professional texts. Efficient follow-up activities in this case could include those engaging students in writing to reflect specific workplace requirements. Moreover, the participants in the study preferred traditional forms of pedagogical organization over "new technologies," which mirrors Taillefer's (2007, p.11) research results. This fact may point to shared tendencies in culturally different learning contexts of French and Russian universities.

The decline of the deviation coefficient for the perceptions of foreign language practice by the students as their move from the first to the fourth year and then graduate raises a question about the factors that may be shaping students' views on their language needs throughout their university years. For instance, further research could look into the role of instructors and graduates in influencing students' perceptions of their need to learn foreign languages for professional use in general, and specifically in all four skills - reading, writing, speaking, and listening - across different communication settings. Graduates may communicate their views on their need to learn and use foreign languages through personal contacts with their student friends, which instructors rarely maintain. The fourth-year students may also adjust their perceptions about their future

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language learning needs through their recruitment and workplace experiences as they start looking for a paid job while studying. For instance, 50% of students in Russian universities actively did this in the years of 2013-2014 (Roshchin & Rudakov, 2014).

There are some limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, the research referred overwhelmingly to ESP and ESAP, rather than incorporating other languages into the framework of LSP. The authors are aware that such a focus may blur possible language-dependent variations in terms of the participants' needs perceptions, even though all of the research participants were involved in ESP along with LSP, thus sharing the ESP experience. Moreover, the discussion on the necessity of foreign language skills to address the actual needs of future professionals appeared in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) and, since then, has spread widely through numerous research studies on teaching other languages. Still, conducting cross-FL analyses on the data may help to overcome limitations regarding conflation of ESP with LSP.

Second, despite adjusting the questionnaire regarding jobs, which was performed with the use of FL, the questions regarding the learning context also should have been adjusted because they failed to provide enough opportunities for the respondents to offer more alternatives to the suggested multiple choices. In hindsight, more open-ended questions may be advisable because some responses may have benefitted from being justified: the reason why guided autonomous learning was nearly unanimously downgraded by the students in response to question 27; the factors that contribute most to highly motivated former fourth-year students not continuing their language studies (q-n 23a) as graduates, and the actions taken by the graduates who did report taking action to improve their language skills as described by 'personal motivation' (q-n 23b). Thus, more qualitative data are needed. Post-questionnaire structured interviews to support selected questions are being planned in coming research projects to add proper qualitative data.

Conclusion

This empirical study of needs analyses in the context of ESP/LSP in a Russian university has revealed potentially useful findings with the implications drawn for research, curriculums, and pedagogy. The analysis supports conclusions shared by a number of research papers in the field across different subject areas of FL application, with some information that may add new insights into not only the Russian educational context but also the international research area. One of the major implications of the study that may contribute to improving the learning process points at a divergence of students' expectations and working graduates' views on language needs in the workplace. The finding may stress the need for updating both students and instructors on the real-life FL requirements needed to become a part of an institutional routine.

Despite the limitations regarding the scope and the materials design, the current research may suggest several vectors to follow, such as expanding the research by number of participants, scope (including a cross-FL needs analysis on the data), stakeholders that may shape the perception of students (e.g., instructors, higher institution administration, employers), and/or geography. Whereas the findings of this study cannot be generalized to many contexts due to the limited scale and specificity of the context, the authors hope that the study can contribute to raising the awareness of university instructors regarding their students' perceptions of language learning needs and actual workplace demands, which would inform their instructional approaches and practices.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Graduates of the School of World Economics and International Affairs (NRU HSE)

Please answer the questions below. Your cooperation is INVALUABLE for the research aiming to improving foreign language teaching in our school.
Any extra comments are most welcome!

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Year of graduation:

before 2008 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

2. Specialization:

3. Did you continue your studies after graduation from the university?

Yes No

4. Sex:

F M

5. Age:

26 27 28 29 30 other

6. How would you define your occupational field?

7. Your current job position can be described as:

manager administrator specialist other

8. Mother tongue(s):

Russian Other _____

9. On which foreign language did you concentrate at the university?

English German Spanish French Chinese other _____

10. Do you use one or more foreign languages professionally?

If yes, which one(s)? Please list them in decreasing order.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

II. YOUR NEEDS (in the function of the foreign language indicated in question 10. Please tick all that are applicable):

IN GENERAL...

11. *In what context* do you currently use your main foreign language?

- mostly formal situations (meetings, presentations)
- mostly informal situations (social, everyday communication...)
- direct contact (including telephone...)
- virtual contact (e-mail...)

12. *Where* do you use your main foreign language?

- in Russia

in the native countries of this language (e.g., Japanese in Japan)
 in the non-native countries of this language

13. *With whom* do you use your foreign language?

native speakers
 non-native speakers

14. *How often* do you use these different competences in your foreign language?

		Very often	Fairly often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Understanding:	Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating:	Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. *Do you have difficulties* using these different competences in your foreign language?

		Very often	Fairly often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Understanding:	Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating:	Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. *How important*, in your mind, is the professional use of these different competences in foreign language?

		Important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Understanding:	Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating:	Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. For what activities do you use your main foreign language in your job? Circle the appropriate letter.

A-often; B-sometimes; C-seldom; D-never

Reading

- 1. Manuals A B C D
- 2. Instructions A B C D
- 3. Emails A B C D
- 4. Contracts A B C D
- 5. Product specifications A B C D
- 6. Price lists A B C D
- 7. Specialist literature A B C D
- 8. Legal documents A B C D
- Other..... A B C D

Speaking

- 1. Speaking to foreign visitors A B C D
- 2. Speaking to foreign colleagues A B C D
- 3. Speaking on the phone A B C D

Writing

- 1. Business letters A B C D
- 2. Emails A B C D
- 3. Memorandums A B C D
- 4. Reports A B C D
- 5. Articles A B C D
- 6. Summaries of articles A B C D
- 7. Notes A B C D
- 8. Translations into foreign language A B C D
- 9. Translations into native language A B C D
- 10. Legal papers A B C D
- 11. Price lists A B C D
- 12. Product specifications A B C D
- Other..... A B C D

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4. Taking part in meetings	A B C D	<i>Listening</i>	
5. Taking part in conferences	A B C D	1. Instructions	A B C D
6. Chairing meetings	A B C D	2. Lectures	A B C D
7. Giving presentations	A B C D	3. Presentations	A B C D
8. Giving instructions	A B C D	4. Reports	A B C D
9. Asking questions	A B C D	Other	A B C D
Other.....	A B C D		

III. MORE PRECISELY about language...

Levels of competence in foreign languages, as described by the Council of Europe and given below, are ranked from weakest (---) to strongest (+++).

In column A, please tick the level which, according to you, is necessary to perform efficiently at work. In column B, please tick the level corresponding to your present competence.

Please tick only *one* level of competence in *each* column.

18. UNDERSTANDING: Reading		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can
---	read simple words and phrases in everyday life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	read short and simple texts for the gist or for specific information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	Slowly read texts written in everyday language or related to my studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+	read articles or reports expressing a particular point of view, assuming that there is adequate time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
++	read longer, complex, specialized texts and appreciate differences in style in a reasonable time frame	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+++	read any type of text easily, even abstract or complex documents, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. UNDERSTANDING: <i>Listening</i>		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can
---	understand words and basic or familiar expressions in a limited context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	understand expressions and common vocabulary related to my immediate environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	understand key points in clear and standard speech when people speak slowly on familiar topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+	understand longer discussions and follow complex lines of argument on familiar topics; understand most news programs in the standard dialect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
++	understand extended speech, even when it is not clearly structured, and TV programs with relative ease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+++	understand any type of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, as long as I have time to become familiar with a particular accent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. COMMUNICATING: <i>Writing</i>		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can
---	write short, specific pieces of information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	write short, simple notes and messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	write coherent texts or notes on familiar subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+	write clear and detailed texts, reports and essays on topics in my field	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
++	write clear, well-structured texts and develop my point of view on complex subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+++	write clear, smooth, stylistically appropriate texts; write summaries or critical reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. COMMUNICATING: <i>Listening</i>		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can
---	use basic expressions and phrases and ask simple questions on familiar subjects, as long as my interlocutor is willing to help me understand and	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	express myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	respond with familiar topics and describe my university course in simple terms; carry on a very limited conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+	generally explain my opinions or projects; spontaneously participate in conversations on familiar topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
++	express myself clearly and in detail, actively participate in conversations on topics related to my interests; spontaneously communicate with a native speaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+++	describe complex subjects clearly and in an appropriate manner; express myself spontaneously, clearly and easily in professional or social contexts describe or argue about complex subjects clearly and easily in an appropriate manner; express myself in any situation in standard, idiomatic language with appropriate nuances; correct myself in a natural way that draws little notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. *Presently, in your work*, is it necessary for you to improve your....

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - reading comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - listening comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - writing skills? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - speaking skills? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 23. a. <i>Are you taking action</i> to improve your language skills or to maintain your level? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. If yes, is it ... | | |
| - out of personal motivation? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - out of professional obligation? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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III. WHEN YOU OBTAINED YOUR FIRST JOB...

24. Did you feel that your foreign language skills were sufficiently developed upon entering the job market in...:

- reading comprehension? Yes No
- listening comprehension? Yes No
- writing skills? Yes No
- speaking skills? Yes No

25. Were you hired especially due to your level in foreign language....

- reading comprehension? Yes No
- listening comprehension? Yes No
- writing skills? Yes No
- speaking skills? Yes No

IV. WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY
(In light of your answers to the preceding questions)?

26. Do you feel that *the foreign language training you received* at the School of World Economy and International Affairs at the NRU HSE *was useful*? Yes No

Concerning the *pedagogical organization* of language teaching...

27. do you feel that *language teaching should be organized in the form of* (you may tick several answers)...

- regular classes/seminars? Yes No
- guided autonomous learning (possibly online)? Yes No
- teamwork (projects)? Yes No
- groups by level of competence? Yes No
- other: _____

28. a. Should language teaching be oriented...

- more towards specific *economic and professional language*? Yes No
- more towards *general language*? Yes No

6. What ratio of economic and professional language to general language would you prefer?

20/80 30/70 40/60 50/50 60/40 70/30 80/20

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX B

Participants' perceived (% of total) levels of main foreign language competence.*

CERF levels	Reading		Writing		Listening		Speaking	
	I need (%)	I can (%)	I need (%)	I can (%)	I need (%)	I can (%)	I need (%)	I can (%)
first year (n=30)								
C2	100	-	100	-	100	-	100	-
C1	40	47	53	27	47	53	66	14
B2	33	66	27	60	33	33	47	40
B1	14	93	20	78	7	54	20	80
A2	14	93	14	86	14	86	14	86
A1	14	100	14	86	14	86	14	86
third year (n=31)								
C2	83	35	85	44	83	42	88	27
C1	4	31	10	36	9	8	8	8
B2	13	23	5	12	4	23	4	42
B1	-	12	-	8	4	4	-	23
A2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
fourth year (n=49)								
C2	90	12	87	22	77	30	88	8
C1	6	46	11	40	14	20	10	28
B2	4	38	2	26	9	26	2	44
B1	-	4	-	12	-	22	-	16
A2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
A1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Graduates(n=35)								
C2	62	65	62	87	56	44	62	38
C1	23	23	23	11	28	32	31	46
B2	15	4	8	2	16	16	4	12
B1	-	4	8	-	-	8	4	4
A2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: * Stated in terms of 'I need' vs. 'I can', according to CEFR; ($p < 0.0001$)

Fairness and Ethics in Multiple Choice (MC) Scoring: An Empirical Study

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Various simple and more complicated types of assessment and thereon scoring procedures and statistical tests have been suggested to measure the main dependent variable (language in our case). In entry tests in particular, method of scoring and test impact are two possible areas where the ethical intentions and predisposition of the tester or the test can be revealed more clearly. This is another study challenging the typical 1-0 method of scoring in Multiple Choice Tests (MCT) and implements, for experimental purposes, a simple polychotomous partial-credit scoring system on official tests administered for the National Foreign Language Exam System in Greece (NFLES-Gr). The study comes in support of earlier findings on the subject by the same authors in analogous smaller-scale studies. The MCT items chosen were completed by a total of 1,922 subjects at different levels of the NFLES-Gr test for Italian as an L2 in Greece. Although this option weighting does not settle ethics and fairness in language testing by itself, it provides clear advantages on improved reliability and higher precision gains to other scoring methods; it is more testee-friendly and the findings in this study, from a large authentic sample, coincide to the above claims and add to the issue.

Keywords: fairness, ethics, multiple-choice items, scoring procedure, language testing

Introduction

In language, or any other type of testing situation, it is always better to be on the side of the tester. Almost everyone has experienced that bitter aftertaste that comes with assessment in some form. The adjective *fair* or the noun *fairness* are then used to describe this familiar feeling, and in many cases, the relationship between fairness and ethics of assessment is discussed, as there seems to be a common ground in the minds of the testees. The two notions are receiving substantial attention in recent testing scholarly discourse and are being considered profoundly. As a result, the related bibliography is increasing considerably: a) from a theoretical consideration of the issue (Hamp-Lyons, 1997; Farhady, 1999; McCoubrie, 2004; Kunnan, 2014), b) to suggestions for fairness integration in practice (Xi, 2010; Davis, 2010), or c) to suggestions for testing fairness statistically (Kunnan, 2010). This development is welcomed by both testers and testees alike.

The problem couldn't have been better phrased than it was in the words of Spolsky (1981), who expressed his reservations on 'whether language testers have enough evidence to be sure of the decisions made based on test scores' (as referred to in Bachman, 1990, p. 280). In this statement, Spolsky not only questions the ethics and fairness in testing but also focusses on the adequacy of the evidence collected, and thereupon on the

scoring methods implemented as possible sources of the problem. Evidence refers to the quantity and quality of information collected and evaluated (scored) to determine the level and depth of language knowledge of the testee and thereupon reach political decisions or offer advice for further learning, depending on the type of test (e.g. if the test is diagnostic it gives information for the testee to use and improve his/her learning, but if it is an entrance test then decisions are made as to who gets what). There seem to be three (not exhaustively) major problem areas in language testing:

- a) The first relates to the construct *language*, which is defined to be very complex since language ability has not been clearly defined (Farhady, 1999). Language ability has been depicted as growing in a continuum from the L1 towards the L2 with the learner being found at an intermedium stage at any point in this development. The term InterLanguage (IL) was suggested by Selinker in 1972 to describe this process and in agreement, quite recently, Lau, Lau, Hong, and Usop (2011, p. 101) further stated that “the recognition of partial knowledge leads to the belief that a student’s level of knowledge falls on a continuum ranging from full knowledge to full misconception.”. Accepting that there is an IL stage in the language continuum, one would need to question *why this partial knowledge has not been commonly awarded any credit in language testing?*
- b) The next issue lies with the *scoring method* adopted to calculate the results. This issue has been the subject of a great deal of research and discussion in the related literature, a selection of which is presented in more detail in the following chapter.
- c) The third problem may be related with other *intervening independent variables* involved, which may affect final test scores, testee attitudes to a test or procedures of test implementation.

Two scoring systems (independent variables) with two values, were examined: a) a traditional dichotomous, which is the standard scoring method, and b) an experimental polychotomous, which is the proposed system under investigation.

There are three hypotheses under investigation: a) H_1 there are differences in the final scores between the two scoring procedures, the *partial credit polychotomous option weighting* scoring method (experimental) and its dichotomous (traditional) scoring counterpart, b) H_0 the experimental scoring method does not affect test reliability, c) H_1 the experimental scoring method provides a more comprehensive outcome as to the interlanguage level of the learner (alternative hypothesis). Clearly the alternative hypotheses in (a) and (c) are aimed for in the study as well as the null hypothesis in (b). Previous empirical studies challenging the 1-0 scoring procedure in MCT have been conducted by the same authors (Mouti, Tsopanoglou, & Ypsilandis, 2012; Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis & Mouti, 2014; Ypsilandis & Mouti, 2017), while it should be noted that a preliminary small-scale study (Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis and Mouti, 2014), following the same scoring procedure, supported the alternative hypothesis in (a) and (c) as well as the null hypothesis for (b). These previous studies were preliminary and small scale in addressing the same topic more qualitatively while this study is a large-scale study involving almost 2,000 participants. Furthermore, it approaches such a process in a non-language-specific manner as earlier studies were conducted with English as an L2 language tests while this study involves language tests with Italian as an L2. Lastly, the experimental negative scoring procedure used in these preliminary studies was not included in this research design as it was found to be disadvantageous for the participants.

MC Weighted Scoring

The introduction of psychometrics in testing has brought about several mathematical equations and statistical tests to transform the linguistic, often nominal, variables measured with ratio score calculations. Naturally the focus was on *scoring systems*. Various simple and more complicated types of assessment and thereon scoring procedures and statistical tests have been suggested to measure the main dependent variable (language in our case). Some of these related to MC scoring are presented in short below.

While the MCT is probably the most common tool widely used to perform the act of language testing, it presents a major problem for fair scoring. Whereas the correct answer is clearly awarded a given prescribed mark, it is also clear that distractors do not equally vary in relation to the correct/expected answer. Weighted scoring is a proposed answer to the problem and two possible scenarios have been discussed: a) item weighting, and b) option weighting. The first rewards different grades for correct answers to each test item (Frary, 1989, p.80), while the second grants different credit for choosing each MC option/answer/distractor. Weights on the option-weighting procedure may be determined by judgments of: a) a panel of experts, or b) a single individual or

examinee judgement methods (e.g. examinees evaluate their confidence as to the correctness of the options, known as *confidence testing/weighting*), or even c) an empirical option weighting (Frary,1989) based on item analysis; selected distractors “by a large number of students could be given higher weights than distractors that are selected by a small number of students” (Parkens & Zimmaro (2016, p. 65). The two scholars (Parkens & Zimmaro, 2016, p.65) suggest that weights could be determined according to an item difficulty index and more specifically according to distractors analysis; while more recently, Hameed (2016) proposed a method to automatically evaluate MCQs considering the importance and complexity of each question and providing a fairer way to discriminating between students with equal total scores. It should be added here that Parkens & Zimmaro’s (2016) suggestion may be accepted provided that the most popular option is the one closer to the expected answer and that the testees who select it are the ones who score higher and pass the test.

Several other scholars investigated this issue, such as Claudy (1978 and the references within) who examined test reliability with option weighting scoring. In this procedure every option was awarded different points (including negative points for totally irrelevant selections). Haladyna (1990) also presented several reviews on option weighting with clear advantages for improved reliability and higher precision gains on the lower third of score distribution. More recently, Lau, Lau, Hong, and Usop (2011) tried a *Number Right Elimination Testing* (NRET) scoring method that worked through the elimination of incorrect options in MCTs, and the selection of the correct one. Each correct elimination was offered one point while three points were deducted if the correct option was eliminated (a kind of negative marking). The authors claimed that scores were more reliable, and that the scoring method was able to diagnose misconceptions. In Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis and Mouti (2014), a polychotomous pattern of correct/very-plausible/plausible/totally irrelevant was identified in 27.5% of 80 items extracted from a well-known TOEFL computer adoptive test. In their article, the authors argued that the selection of a highly relevant/suitable to the correct answer distractor is a knowledge marker that shows partial knowledge and thus a person’s higher interlanguage stage when compared with those who selected the totally irrelevant option. Their hypothesis was supported by evidence from statistically significant correlations in that those who scored higher on a test also selected the very relevant/suitable option when they did not find the correct answer, while those who selected the totally irrelevant option were those who scored lower. In this light, it was suggested that the selection of very plausible options needed to be awarded partial credit. Negative marking, which was also tested in the above-mentioned study, proved to be particularly disadvantageous for the student-testee and thus it was recommended to be abandoned in language testing. Following the same reasoning, Sočan (2015) maintained that, applying empirically determined weights to the chosen options of a multiple-choice test should produce more valid test scores by providing more information on examinees’ knowledge and further concluded that the relative performance of scoring methods strongly depends on the instructions provided and on distractors’ properties, and only to a lesser extent on sample size and test length. In favour of polychotomous scoring is also the study of Diederhofen & Musch (2017) who found that in comparison to dichotomous scoring, empirical option weighting employing polychotomous scoring increases both the reliability and validity of multiple-choice knowledge tests. In addition, the authors suggest the computation of empirical option weights for existing multiple-choice knowledge tests that have previously been scored dichotomously as a potential application of their proposal. Yoo et al (2018), addressed validity and fairness by exploring other independent variables of test-taker characteristics such as gender, age, educational background, language exposure, and previous experience with assessment. The authors explored and provided evidence in support of the use of score equity assessment to promote the validity and fairness of reported comparable scores for various groups of test takers across the various subgroups examined.

The solution of offering different weights to distractors in MC testing is not totally new. It has been discussed in related literature and several scoring procedures have been offered to tackle the problem. Weighting suggestions could be divided into two major categories: a) those which require a very basic knowledge of arithmetic and no statistics, frequently used by language teachers and b) those involving a considerable knowledge of statistics. A list of five scoring procedures examined by Claudy (1978) under these two broad categories are offered below very briefly.

a) *Commonly used scoring procedures with no option weighting.*

1. The most known dichotomous scoring system is the one in which the correct option receives one (1) point while all the other options receive no (0) credit. Claudy (1978) refers to this as *number right scoring* system, while it is commonly called the 1-0 scoring procedure.
2. Another widely spread (at least for a period) trichotomous scoring practice is Claudy’s (1978) *correction*

for *guessing scoring* (also known as negative scoring), in which the correct answer receives one (1) point while all the other options receive minus one (-1) point. This scoring procedure was suggested and implemented to address lucky selections by the testees. The term “guessing” that was used, revealed the belief of many language teachers that learners select options by chance when they do not know the correct answer. Consequently, this attitude was unwelcome and therefore incorrect guesses were to be punished with a negative mark. The NRET by Lau, Lau, Hong, and Usop, (2011) was also in this direction. Sočan (2009) refers to several articles addressing this issue with an equal number of solutions. Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis and Mouti (2014) have argued for a different understanding over the guessing or inferencing problem. They claimed that MC inferencing in option selection tests is activated automatically in the human brain when the individual does not possess the correct answer and it is made by actuating relevant knowledge of the target language or a general knowledge of languages. In that respect the authors claimed that this brain procedure cannot be totally blind (unless the testee does not read at all the stem and the options) and in that respect a very plausible selection by inferencing would also need to be rewarded ‘through partial credit scoring’ (Bachman and Palmer, 1996, p. 205).

b) Option weighting practices

Claudy (1978, pp. 26-27), presents the following three weighted scoring methods:

1. Guttman Weights scoring, “in which the weight assigned to each option, including ‘omit,’ the z-score corresponding to the mean score on the other test items for examinees who select the option. Theoretically, the weights can take any value a z-score can assume”.
2. Biserial Weights scoring, “in which the weight assigned to each option, including ‘omit,’ is the Brogden Biserial (Brogden, 1944) or Clemans Lambda (Clemans, 1958) correlation coefficient between selecting the option (scored 1 or 0) and the score on the other items in the test. In effect, this is a discrimination index for the option. Theoretically, the weights can take any value between minus one and plus one inclusive”.
3. Proportion Weights scoring, “in which the weight assigned to each option including ‘omit,’ is the proportion of examinees in an upper score subgroup of examinees who select the option. Theoretically, the weights can take any value between zero and one inclusive, and sum to one for each item. Two overlapping subgroups were used in this study: the upper 25% and the upper 50% of examinees on the basis of total score”.

These option-weighting practices have not been widely implemented as they are complex and thus costly and non-time-effective while they require a computer and a solid knowledge of statistics from the part of the teacher-tester and the testee alike. In this respect these marking systems violate a significant recommendation for ethical testing implementation, i.e. for the testees to be aware of how the marking is implemented.

Sočan (2009, p. 79), also presents several different weighting options, which can be based on the following criteria: 1. subjective judgment of the test constructor on the degree of “falseness” of each alternative, 2. correlation with an external criterion, also by other ‘judges’, or 3. relation to an internal criterion. Other scoring methods to credit partial knowledge proposed by Lau, Lau, Hong, and Usop (2011) are the following:

“confidence weighting (CW), elimination testing (ET), subset selection testing (SST), probability measurement (PM), answer-until-correct (AUC), option weighting, item weighting, rank ordering the option, and partial ordering. All these scoring methods aim to extract information from the examinees that can provide better estimates of their abilities.”

Weight in some of the methods is decided before test implementation while in other cases it is decided after a test is implemented. One more after-test-implementation approach is Haladyna’s (2004, p.224) *choice mean* described as a “differential distractor functioning”. Haladyna (2004) proposes that:

“for any option, we can calculate the mean of all examinees who chose that option. For the right answer, this mean will typically be higher than the means of any wrong answer. We can analyze the relationship of the choice mean to total score or the choice of the option to total score”.

Based on the above analysis, Haladyna (2004) recommends two different statistical strata: a) the product-moment correlation between the choice mean and total score, where the choice mean is substituted for the distractor choice, and b) the eta coefficient; the independent variable is option choice and the dependent variable is total score.

Following this line of argumentation, the present paper supports that the correct answers and various distractors could be differentially weighted according to their approximate correctness and further, implement a polychotomous *weighting* scoring method without the use of negative marking for totally irrelevant selections. In agreement with Haladyna (2004, p. 253), it is believed that “the use of distractor information for test scoring” may “increase the reliability of test scores, which in turn should lead to more accurate decisions in high-stakes pass-fail testing”. Arguably, this decision would need to be made before test implementation and further be made known to the testees to increase ethics and fairness in testing. The problem here then becomes finding the right distractors to deliver the task, a process that is expected to be demanding particularly before a test is implemented and an item analysis could be employed.

In order to tackle this problem, Hsu et al. (2018) proposed an estimation model for item difficulty as an alternative for pretesting procedures. Their findings suggest that the semantic similarity between a stem and the options have the strongest impact on item difficulty, which they claim is the most challenging part of the multiple-choice item-writing process, i.e. to develop plausible distractors. Susanti et al. (2018) also offered their proposal to the problem through a novel method that automatically generated distractors for multiple-choice English vocabulary questions. Their suggestion unfolded in two phases: a) by utilizing initially semantic similarity and collocation information, and b) by consulting an expert to judge the quality of the distractors generated (which is the traditional method). The results in their study showed that their proposed method ensured the validity of the items and produced fewer problematic distractors than the baseline method, being also comparable with that of human-made distractors. Their findings coincided to a similar earlier study, where Susanti et al. (2015) attempted to construct English vocabulary automatic tests in which human evaluation indicated that 45% of the responses from English teachers mistakenly judged the automatically generated questions to be human-generated questions. Finally, Ha and Yaneva (2018) proposed their fully automatic method for generating distractor suggestions for multiple-choice questions used in high-stakes medical exams by using a question stem and the correct answer as an input. Last, El Masri et al (2016, p. 62) distinguished item difficulty and item demands by adopting Pollitt et al.'s (2007) measurement of phenomena for both terms, and stated, “Item difficulty is the empirical location of an item on a scale. Item demands designate the set of knowledge, comprehension, skills and processes required for a student to respond fully or partially correctly to an item (Ferrara & Duncan, 2011; Ferrara et al., 2011)”. Both Ferrara et al. (2011) and Pollitt et al. (2007) agree that the relationship between the notions of *demands* and *difficulty* is not as straightforward since more demanding questions present by definition greater difficulty, while the reverse relationship is not necessarily applicable (Pollitt et al., 2007) as cited by El Masri et al (2016, p. 62).

Ethics in Language Testing

Method of scoring and test impact are two possible areas where the ethical intentions and predisposition of the tester or the test can be revealed more clearly, in addition to his/her beliefs and knowledge on language pedagogy. Thus, the term ‘ethics’ may be considered to describe a stance or rather the testers’ predisposition towards the notion of assessment while attempts are made for ethics to be applied in practice. This is (or should be) the concern of testers and test-takers alike and it is the responsibility of both. While the former is being discussed, the latter has not received equal attention. More than 30 years ago the Educational Testing Service (ETS) started to review its materials to ensure fairness for all participants and thereupon issued a first report of fairness guidelines. However, it was Spolsky in 1981 (as referred in Bachman 1990 & Hughes 1989) who was the only language testing researcher up to that point to address the ethical considerations of testing impact by questioning ‘whether language testers have enough evidence to be sure of the decisions made on the basis of test scores’ (Bachman 1990, p. 280). This ethical problem becomes crucial in situations where language proficiency tests such as TOEFL or GMAT are used as a mechanism ‘for making college admission decisions’ (Bachman 1990, p. 282). Since then, ‘ethical issues’ in language testing practices have been raised (Canale, 1988, p. 77) and the topic has received considerable attention among test developers and test users, while researchers have begun to focus directly and indirectly on this subject. Further, awareness has been raised as to the responsibility of the individual language testing practitioner (Hamp Lyons, 2000) for the professional standards by which language testing as professional practice are to be held and ‘... the responsibility of test users to ensure that language

tests are valuable experiences and yield positive consequences for all involved' (Douglas & Chapelle, 1993, p. 4). The issue of responsibility was also discussed by Bachman & Palmer (2010, p. 191) who argued that 'identifying who is responsible for making sure that the consequences are beneficial is surely a complicated issue without easy, all-purpose answers'.

Hamp-Lyons (1997) raised ethical questions about washback impact (washback is a term used to describe the effect on teaching by the application of a test) and validity, while Shohamy (1998) examined possible benefits from language testing to second language acquisition and vice versa. In 1997, the *Language Testing* special issue (Vol. 14 Num. 3), was dedicated to ethics in language testing and contained a collection of papers discussing ethical matters relevant to the field, while Kunnan (1999) focused on the most significant theoretical developments in the field of language testing in the 1990s and paid considerable attention to the role of ethics among testers as well as the role of fairness in test validation. Continuing the discussion on ethics and validity, Davies (2003, p. 361) specified, 'If a valid test is by definition ethical, that frees up the tester to concentrate on validity. If, however, ethics is a separate add-on, then the demands on the tester may be too great.' Despite the fact that the discussion on ethics continues, the issue has not been defined nor has it been very clear as to how this applies to language testing.

Fairness in Language Testing. Ethics is a term used to describe the field of moral philosophy which 'involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour' (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Three areas of study are registered metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. Applied ethics is a fairly recent and quite straightforward development as it attempts to apply ethical theory of specific moral issues to different situations, e.g. business ethics. It is thus possible to add ethics in testing as one possible branch of applied ethics that may contribute to the analysis and discussion of certain moral issues in the field. In modern ethics one may also find the term consequential ethics in which the end (the outcome or the consequence) of an action justifies the means (moral right or wrong) to achieve it. If consequences are good then the action is morally ethical. The exact opposite is deontological ethics, which argues that it is the approach to ethics that determines the goodness or rightness of acts or intentions, e.g. if a person seeks to do what is right (has good intentions) then it is the act that determines it and not its consequences. Ideally, both are required in testing practice since the good will of test developers needs to be witnessed in the consequences to the test-takers, test developers, and testing philosophy as well. The above discussion also implies the existence of ethical and non-ethical acts which may relate as follows: when the consequences are dear, good intentions are considered ethical (although this may have little to offer for consolidation to those who have to suffer from the effects - impact), but when the intentions are bad, any good consequences resulting from that may still be considered unethical (and coincidental).

Metaethics involves the study of ethics from a theoretical point of view, that is, creating awareness on the topic similar to other areas of study where the prefix meta- is used. In particular, the focus is on the origin of ethics (how this is understood), the meaning of ethical concepts such as right and wrong, e.g. discussing what could be considered right and wrong behaviour in this specific field of study and how this would affect the notion of assessment in general.

Normative ethics may be seen as the ultimate target in ethics and it involves finding moral standards that could determine a moral 'course of action' with practical value, in our case for language testing. These moral principles of right and wrong practice (actions) in language testing could be set and used as a guide for moral decisions in the field; a code of ethics for testing. The CoE argued for '... ethical behaviour by all language testers' (ILTA 2000, CoE p. 1). The Code of Practice which came along later identified 'the minimum requirements for practice in the profession...' and focused '... on the clarification of professional misconduct and unprofessional conduct' (ibid.). Following the above discussion, one may conclude that ethics in language testing is more of an abstract notion and should not be treated as a separate value per se but rather as a construct value composed of certain qualities which may find application in different stages of assessment, at a preparation stage more deontological and at the impact stage more consequential.

Neither fairness nor ethics can be applied to a test by a simple yes/no answer. It is not an absolute situation and it could be better understood in the form of a value on a scale that increases or decreases depending on certain qualities and is different in each assessment stage from test preparation and administration to test scoring method and impact. It is clear, however, that despite the considerable attention on fairness, as Zieky (2002, p. 2) argued, not much has been accomplished as 'there is no statistic that you can use to prove that the items in

a test are fair, and there is no statistic that you can use to prove that the test as a whole is fair. The best way to ensure test fairness is to build fairness into the development, administration, and scoring processes’.

In this light, Figure 1 attempts to depict schematically the relation between the two (ethics and fairness) and possible areas of operation, in three major stages of assessment. Clearly, the qualities presented in the diagram are merely suggestive and not exhaustive, but it is our view that these could be used to continue the discussion on this topic. In particular: (a) Test preparation stage. During planning, it may be possible to discuss matters related to the audience, purpose, and rationale (deontological ethics) of a test, while during development, the focus should be on the selection of an appropriate instrument, the content, the item type, and the scoring method. Bachman (2010, p. 2) suggests the term ‘assessment use argument’ which can ‘guide the design and development of assessments and can also lead to a focused, efficient program for collecting the most critical evidence in support of the interpretations and uses for which the assessment is intended.’ It should be noted here that it is the purpose of a test to create the most appropriate environment in which test-takers could bring out the best of their linguistic abilities. (b) Test administration stage. Here, there are topics that should be discussed *before the test*: access of test-takers to the test location; *during the test*: the class environment, the test process, and vigilance; and finally *after the test*: correction method and method of presenting results or even advice for further preparation for those who failed the test. (c) Test impact stage. This is the final stage in which discussions are related to the decisions taken at a macro or a micro level (terms suggested by Bachman & Palmer, 1996) upon the results of a test (consequential ethics). Needless to say, the test-taker is to be made aware of the above.

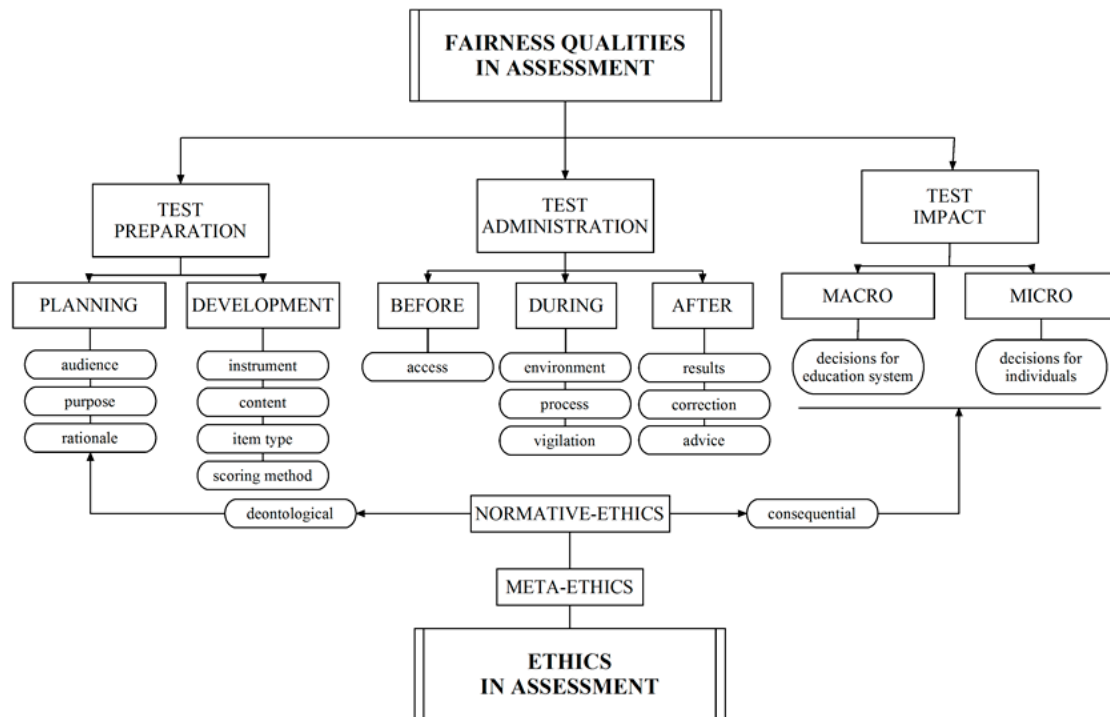


Figure 1. Fairness typology in relation to ethics in assessment.

Materials and Methods

The study’s research design follows Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis & Mouti’s (2014), and Mouti, Ypsilandis & Tsopanoglou’s (2013) studies where “option weighting” was used by awarding scalable points for choosing each MC option/answer/distractor. The option weighting approach may be implemented where MCQs contain distractors that are somewhat correct but are not the best choice. This “weighting approach” is examined empirically by rewarding with partial credit scoring the test-takers who avoid selecting the totally irrelevant options in (polychotomous) MC items and choose a wrong although plausible option.

Participants

Two groups of participants were engaged. The first group consisted of four native speakers/teachers and two proficient and experienced teachers of Italian (judges, from here on) who classified the options according to the four stances Likert scale (correct/very-plausible/plausible/totally irrelevant). Results from these judgements are presented below. The second group involved 1,922 test-takers who completed three Italian language tests in official settings (400 test-takers at the A1-A2, 1,294 at the B1-B2, and 228 at the C1 levels). The L1 of the test-takers was Greek.

Design, Procedure, and Scoring System

Data were collected from the Greek State Language Examinations for the Italian language (official tests in official authentic settings). The entire official test for each level included four papers (one for each macro skill): Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading and Language Awareness. The study examined tests from Reading Comprehension and Language Awareness papers, from where a total of 53 dichotomously scored MC items (study sample) were extracted with three possible answers (one correct and two wrong): 10 at the A1-A2, 16 at the B1-B2, and 27 at the C1 levels. The SPSS statistical package was used for test analysis.

In the study sample, polychotomous patterns and option weights were determined by the judges, who ranked choices in a Likert scale i.e. correct, very plausible/plausible and totally irrelevant/wrong. The polychotomous items were corrected with two modes of scoring: a) a traditional Dichotomous Scoring Method (DSM) where one (1) point is assigned for the selection of the correct answer and zero (0) points for all other choices, and b) a polychotomous scoring proposal (herewith Experimental Scoring Method, ESM) where one (1) point is provided for the correct answer, half a point (0,5) for the selection of a very plausible/plausible alternative and zero (0) points for the selection of a totally irrelevant/wrong answer. An example of the polychotomous pattern examined and scored is as follows:

Oltre mille persone sono arrivate da tutta la Sicilia (e non solo) per _____ (A. provare B. tentare C. cercare) a entrare nella casa più famosa della TV.

In this example the first alternative was presented by the Scoring Key as the correct answer while B was identified by the judges as a very plausible option.

Data Analysis - Scoring Procedures

The longer completed tests were administered in official settings and completed on paper by the participants in an authentic environment. The three Protocol Tests (PTs, the study sample), resulting from extracted items, consisted of 53 language awareness items in a multiple choice format. The analysis of the data was deployed in two basic stages. During the first stage, an initial investigation was conducted to ensure that the sample contained items could be evaluated according to the aforementioned polychotomous Likert pattern. In the 53 items that were examined and divided into five testlets (sets of items), 67% (36 items/ Facility Index=0.65) followed a dichotomous pattern and 32% (17 items/ Facility Index=0.37) a polychotomous one. Table 1 shows the exact figures of dichotomous and polychotomous items at each level.

Table 1
Dichotomous and Polychotomous Patterns Investigated

	Dichotomous Pattern	Polychotomous Pattern
A/ 10 items	9	1
B1/7 items	7	0
B2/9 items	4	5
C1/12 items	6	6
C1/15 items	10	5
Total 53 items	36 (68%)	17 (32%)

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Table 2
Distractor Analysis of Polychotomous Items

Item	Correct Answer	Very Plausible answer	Option/highest %	Judgments & Item Analysis
A/1	B (0.47)	A (0.48)	A	+
B2/2	A (0.59)	B (0.25)	A	+
B2/4	A (0.17)	B (0.31)	C (0.52)	?
B2/6	A (0.33)	B (0.57)	B	+
B2/7	A (0.17)	C (0.67)	C	+
B2/8	B (0.4)	A (0.43)	A	+
C1.1/3	C (0.5)	A (0.44)	C	+
C1.1/4	C (0.21)	B (0.55)	B	+
C1.1/7	A (0.54)	B (0.08)	A	+
C1.1/8	B (0.97)	B (0.01)	B	+
C1.1/11	C (0.18)	B (0.45)	B	+
C1.1/12	B (0.71)	A (0.26)	B	+
C1.2/5	B (0.39)	C (0.59)	C	+
C1.2/9	B (0.31)	A (0.45)	A	+
C1.2/10	A (0.36)	B (0.61)	B	+
C1.2/12	C (0.38)	B (0.39)	B	+
C1.2/13	A (0.39)	C (0.43)	C	+

Decisions as to the polychotomous pattern of these 17 items were based on the conscious judgment and unconscious judgment of the judges. For 11 items (25%), the polychotomous pattern was confirmed by the judges while for six items not all the expert judges were able to trace the correct answer, being distracted themselves, and therefore these items were also examined and included in this polychotomous category.

These judgments were examined and verified empirically in relation to an *item* and *distractor analysis*. For 11 out of the 17 polychotomous items (marked with bold and italics in the above table), the *very plausible* answer/option was the one with a slightly higher choice mean/percentage compared to the *correct answer* (as presented in the second and third columns). In only five cases, was the mean of the *correct answer* was higher than the mean of the *very plausible* option. Note also that in one (1) case (line 3 of Table 2), indicated with a question mark in the fifth column, the results showed that the highest mean was found in a third option. This demonstrates that the distractors in most cases performed their job and that the correct and the very plausible options were indeed very close. This indicates that the subjects who selected it were on route to the learning of the phenomenon tested and clearly at a higher level than those who selected a totally irrelevant option.

At a second stage the polychotomous pattern items were scored with both the DSM and the ESM scoring procedures, while the ones where no polychotomous pattern was identified by the experts were only scored in the traditional DSM. Results from the different scoring procedures are initially presented as mean, standard deviation and alpha level (α), which is the probability of error, rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true. Means are then statistically compared through the SPSS statistical package (paired samples t-test) in relation to the first hypothesis [H(a)] stated at the introduction to investigate whether the differences are statistically significant. Finally, the relationship between the two scoring methods (ESM and DSM) was examined at each level separately through the correlation coefficient Pearson r (second hypothesis) to offer insights regarding possible associations between the scoring procedures (testing the reliability of the ESM) [H(b)]. The third hypothesis [H(c)] was examined by the variation of the observed differences (random or linear). The three hypotheses were tested in three levels of language proficiency, namely A, B2, and C1.

Results at A and B levels were not examined with the ESM as items were single-correct answer in agreement with the judges, who did not trace polychotomous patterns in them. Therefore, they are not presented. It may be argued, however, that at lower levels degrees of incorrectness and polychotomous patterns cannot be easily applied as this would increase test difficulty significantly.

B Level: 2nd Set of Items-9 MC Questions

(Mean=3.39, SD=1.54, Alpha=0.22)

Experts recognized a polychotomous pattern in five items, which included a semi-correct/plausible answer. These polychotomous items proved to be more difficult to answer than the dichotomous items as indicated by the Facility Index (Dichotomous FI =0.47> Polychotomous FI=0.32). The statistical analysis revealed that in four items the plausible distractor was chosen by more test-takers instead of the correct answer. In three of those items the selection coincided with the one provided by the expert judges as correct. This was the case in which the selection distracted the judges as well.

The scores were altered when the ESM was implemented. In particular, the *facility indexes* increased and the differences were statistically significant: Mean DSM=3.38, Mean ESM=4.5. Further, a paired samples t-test showed statistically significant differences between the two scores $t=72.941$, $df=1293$ (.000) which supported the alternative first hypothesis [H(a)]. In order to investigate reliability of the ESM [H(b)] the Pearson r correlation coefficient was employed (examines the relationship among variables) to compare the independent variables in pairs. Bachman (2004) proposes this test to investigate relationships among different sets of test scores. This revealed that the two scoring procedures do indeed exist in a strong linear relationship to each other. In more detail, the value between the DSM and the ESM is $r=.937$ (.000) and correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Thus, test results are not jeopardized [H(b)]. Observable differences were not explained by random variation and thus it may be suggested that the ESM offers more sensitive scoring, statistically different from the DSM [H(c)].

C1 Level: 1st Set of Items-12 MC Questions

(Mean=7.36, SD=1.84, Alpha=0.41)

A polychotomous pattern for six items was identified by the expert judges at this level. These also proved to be more difficult to answer than the dichotomous items as indicated by the *facility index* (Dichotomous FI =0.67> Polychotomous FI=0.39). In three items the distractor was chosen by most test-takers instead of the expected/correct answer. In two of these three cases the subjects' erroneous selection again coincided with the one selected by the experts' judgments. Apparently, the distractors were too good; good enough to mislead the native judges as well. Implementing the ESM exhibited alterations in the scores, the Facility Indexes were increased: Mean DSM=7.36, Mean ESM=8.20. A paired sample t-test [H(a)] showed that these differences were statistically significant: $t=26.215$, $df=228$ (.000). A Pearson r correlation analysis that followed [H(b)], between the DSM and the ESM, was at $r=0.966$ (.000) with a 0.01 level of significance (two-tailed), which supports that reliability was not jeopardized. This confirmed again that the two scoring procedures indeed exist in a strong linear relationship to each other. Once more, observable differences were not explained by random variation and thus it is confirmed at this level as well that the ESM offers a more sensitive scoring statistically different from the DSM [H(c)].

C1 Level: 2nd Set of Items-15 MC Questions

(Mean=8.41, SD=2.41, Alpha=0.49)

Experts recognized a polychotomous pattern in five items, which again proved to be more difficult to complete than the dichotomous items, as indicated by the *facility index* (Dichotomous FI =0.73> Polychotomous FI=0.40). The statistical analysis revealed that for all five items, the plausible distractor was chosen by most test-takers than the correct answer and once again their selection coincided with the experts' judgments. Implementing the ESM once again altered the scores, the *facility indexes* were increased and the differences were statistically significant: Mean DSM=8.22, Mean ESM=9.46. Similarly to the B level results above, a paired samples t-test showed statistically significant differences: t-test: $t=29.509$, $df=228$ (.000) which again supported the alternative hypothesis. Once again the two scoring procedures proved to exist in a strong linear relationship to each other, as the Pearson r value between the DSM and the ESM was $r=0.967$ (.000) and correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Again, observable differences were not explained by random variation in support of the third hypothesis.

Discussion

The three initial hypotheses under investigation have been adequately supported by the evidence for the three test levels used for the study. More specifically, it was shown that: a) there was a statistically significant difference between the two tested scoring procedures [H(a)] with the ESM presenting significantly higher results, b) the two final scores were proved to exist in a strong linear relationship to each other, which demonstrates that test reliability was not affected [H(b)], similar to the findings in Claudy (1978 and the citations within) and Haladyna (1990), and c) any observable differences in the scores were not explained by a random variation, which can be interpreted as an indication that the polychotomous scoring method tested provides more refined information, a more comprehensive outcome, and thus a more sensitive final scoring to mirror the interlanguage stage of the learner [H(c)], similarly to claims in Haladyna (1990) concerning weighted scoring. These findings from an authentic language test in an authentic testing setup concur with earlier results found in previous small-scale experimental studies by Mouti, Tsopanoglou and Ypsilandis (2012), and Tsopanoglou, Ypsilandis, & Mouti (2014).

An additional finding is that dichotomous items proved to be easier to answer as the correct option stands out and becomes transparent. On the other hand, polychotomous items can be traced to a greater degree at the higher B2-C1 levels and not at the lower A1-B1 (the higher the level the more polychotomous items identified). These findings come in agreement to earlier claims by Bachman and Palmer (1996: 202) who indicated that: “an item would be significantly more difficult if the options were closer in meaning because that would make identifying the correct answer more demanding for the test-taker”. In support, Andrich & Marais (2018), declared that the more difficult the item, the greater the degree of guessing and that persons with greater proficiency tended to correctly answer the more difficult items at a greater rate than the less proficient.

Subsequently, it is possible to claim that polychotomous items form a paradox. On the one hand they cannot be avoided in language testing, particularly at the higher levels of language testing as they are more demanding, while on the other they increase the mean in the final score when a polychotomous scoring method is adopted, despite the registered increase in difficulty. The evident and subsequent increase of score levels from the adoption of the ESM would not affect norm-referenced testing situations as the test-takers’ ranking remains the same (without affecting test reliability), although in criterion-referenced situations “where there exists a predetermined criterion for the students to meet, low scores would hurt those at the borderline” (Farhady, 1996, p. 222). It is precisely here that polychotomous scoring would have a significant impact and would need to be implemented. It is thus possible to argue that the ESM adopted in this study may indeed provide a more complete view of the interlanguage stage of an individual by offering a more detailed, in-depth, and precise analysis of results as well as enhance sensitivity and thus contribute to fairness and score accuracy, particularly for those test-takers who show high level of target language awareness by choosing a plausible answer and not a totally irrelevant option through successful inferencing. In support of this claim, Bachman & Palmer (1996, p. 205) recommended that test-takers should be encouraged to make informed guesses and that ‘this should be rewarded, preferably through partial credit scoring’. Subsequently, it is possible to argue that hypothesis [H(c)] has also been supported by the evidence. Although Zieky (2002, p. 11) finds that “there is no magic bullet to guarantee fairness” this ESM increased sensitivity and precision in test scoring by providing more refined insights of student interlanguage levels and therefore becomes more reflective of student knowledge. It may be possible to conclude that if polychotomous items are used in a test, polychotomous scoring would increase the quality of results and *fairness* in scoring would be served. The construct of *ethics* in language testing may also be increased by the increased sensitivity of the scoring method and by notifying test-takers about it. Thereon, testees would be expected to become more engaged in answering a MC item, even when the expected answer is not known to them at a first glance.

Limitations in this work lay predominantly with the levels examined to explore the hypotheses and thus more research of the same type would need to follow in this direction in authentic testing situations. Also, a second control-scoring-method to examine student interlanguage level would support claims of sensitivity of the ESM tested here. Other hypotheses that would need to be investigated further may compare testee attitudes, engagement, responsibilities, and performance in answering polychotomous items when the testees know that polychotomous scoring has been implemented with their attitudes and performance when this knowledge is lacking.

Conclusion

This study developed naturally as a comprehensive test of experimental findings from earlier studies of the same authors, mentioned above, to address ethics and fairness in selected response types of tests, which were explored initially in an experimental setup. It is possible to conclude, by the exploration of the three hypotheses in a combined interpretative fashion, that selection items which use polychotomous patterns would also need to implement a polychotomous scoring method, such as the one suggested in this study.

The ESM method of weighted scoring in the suggested polychotomous fashion tested here performed equally well with the same statistical results at all three language levels examined in the experimental and authentic studies, which clearly demonstrates that it can be safely used with all selected response items irrespective of level, and thus serve the notions of ethics and fairness in language test results are used to determine political decisions. The suggested option-weighted scoring (1-0.5-0) can be easily implemented in language tests as it is easy and straightforward to apply, it is not time consuming and does not need the involvement of a computer, nor does it require high expertise in mathematics or item analysis, even in the case of manual correction.

Although this option weighting does not settle ethics and fairness in language testing by itself, it provides clear advantages on improved reliability and higher precision gains to other scoring methods; it is more testee-friendly and the findings in this study, from a large authentic sample, coincide to the above claims and add to the issue.

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Meaningful Learning and Its Implications for Language Education in Vietnam

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This paper attempts to make an argument for meaningful learning as an essential factor in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Meaningful learning rests its theories against cognitive processing. While contemporary literature shows knowledge of language in general is essential for second language use, this research is mainly concerned with ways of improving students' language use. It has proved that meaningful learning facilitates the retention of knowledge as it makes learners organize their knowledge logically. In the classroom, the teacher should offer activities that relate the new input to learners' existing knowledge, for which cognitive engagement is required. In English language teaching, it is important for teachers to know that learner-centeredness should be applied because they are the ones who process knowledge. This paper begins with an overview of different approaches of foreign language teaching, then presents theories in which meaningful learning is grounded and rooted. The discussion of how one's knowledge of a first language is essential for foreign language learning is given prior to giving implications of meaningful learning in the Vietnamese context.

Keywords: meaningful learning, English language teaching, cognitive processing, neuroscience, Vietnamese context

Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) has been influenced by different approaches, including the four main theories: behaviorist, cognitive, humanistic, and socio-cultural theories (Cooper, 2009). Behaviorism places an emphasis on observable behavior in that it operates as an unconscious stimulus-response process. In particular, learners respond to stimuli and disregard the meanings of their utterances. Cognitivism, by contrast, regards learning purely as an active inner mental process in which cognitivists argue that the human mind is essential for information processing. Knowledge is a consequence of how information is received, organized, and memorized by the learner. The central assumption of the humanistic approach is that learning is a personal act used to fulfill the learner's potential. Thus, it focuses on self-motivation and goals as particular issues of interest. The socio-cultural approach, advocated by Vygotsky, distinctively describes learning as a social process in which interactions play a pivotal role in learning and acquiring language (Currie, 2008).

It is obvious that behaviorism rests mainly against the assumption that learning a language should be based on repetition as a response to stimuli. In other words, it does not place an emphasis on the meanings of the target items. However, the other three theories of ELT are based on meaningful learning. At this point, it can be said that meaningful learning is involved in most of the main theories of ELT (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Meaningful learning is a principle of language teaching and learning. In fact, teachers are advised to teach for meaningful learning and learners are advised to systematically and cognitively relate the new input with their existing knowledge so that they can build a cognitive structure (Brown, 2000). Teachers are advised to teach for meaningful learning, where relevant, providing that it engages students emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Thornbury (2002) believes that any teaching activity that fails to engage learners cannot be considered effective. That is, meaningful learning is relatively vital.

This paper aims to clarify the notion of meaningful learning, compared with rote learning, as a recommendation

to EFL teachers and learners. It consists of three main parts. This current part, as Part 1, introduces the place of meaningful learning in ELT as well as the significance of this principle. Part 2 demonstrates the main concepts and characteristics of meaningful learning compared with rote learning and related studies on meaningful learning. Part 3 makes recommendations on how meaningful learning should be applied in Vietnamese contexts.

Meaningful Learning

The key scholars of the cognitive approach, Long (2009) and Ellis (2010), are not sure about how relevant the findings on second language acquisition research can be to practicing teachers since the cognitive paradigm has offered little that teachers can use directly in a classroom of English as an additional language. These two scholars argue for a balanced mix of implicit and explicit instruction, with teachers paying attention to students' meaningful learning through the cognitive process. Accordingly, a lesson design where students are expected to use specific conversational strategies, such as the native speaker's corrections, questions, modifications, and requests were proposed and then modified to facilitate the acquisition of grammar in the hope that these communicative strategies could improve learners' awareness of grammatical problems and offer opportunities for self-correction. This cognitive awareness strategy has been thought to increase students' knowledge and retention of the target items.

It has been widely accepted among linguists and language educators that the cognitive process plays a key role in learners' language use, especially for adult language learners. Knowing how the brain tells things apart is a significant question since language presents learners with the problem of discerning between the elements that matter and those that do not. Supporting this process requires an understanding of the processes, elements, and pathways that participate in this process. The findings show that in-depth engagement with the literature from different fields of research, not only neuroscience, can assist language and educational researchers with new insights into the process of learning and new sources of questions that can lead to more research and more developments in foreign language teaching. The key points demonstrate a large number of neurons respond to very simple visual object. Cognitive networks, as a foundation for meaningful learning, are constructed throughout the lifetime of an individual and their disturbed, multi-level structure provides people with sufficient support recognition (Kendrick, 2010).

It is now significant to clarify what meaningful learning is in comparison with rote learning. According to Ausubel (2000), learning can be either rote learning or meaningful learning. They may both assist the learning process with different functions and levels of effectiveness. Rote learning is simple memorization as it leads to "acquiring discrete and relatively isolated entities that can be related to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion" (Novak & Canãs, 2009). This process fails to build a cognitive structure since learners do not make endeavors to integrate new knowledge with relevant existing knowledge in cognitive structures. The learning of new knowledge requires cognitive processes to make sense of new input involving the mental storage of target items in association with existing cognitive structures. Meaningful learning, on the other hand, is "created through some form of representational equivalence between language and mental contexts (Cooper, 2009). During meaningful learning, learners should "seek a way to connect or integrate new concepts or ideas with related ideas in the cognitive structure", which facilitates adding existing knowledge from prior experiences to cognitive structures as well as refine the existing ideas (Novak, 2002). That is to say, meaningful learning is the way of acquiring input by applying prior knowledge to new situations by the construction of a mental model (Mayer & Moreno, 2003). The process of meaningful learning generally includes selecting the information, organizing the information, activating related prior knowledge and constructing coherence formation by integrating information from different sources. This process reflects the characteristics of constructivist thinking and enables learners to present their thinking in concrete ways and visualize and test the consequences of their reasoning (Jonassen & Land, 2000).

Novak (2002) made a presentation on concept maps as instruments for representing knowledge visually, which is based on Ausubel's (2000) work. His research garnered a great deal of interest from educators because visual aids are relatively helpful. His study explored how learners' concepts are linked. Ballester (2011) also confirmed the applicability of meaningful learning in education. Accordingly, classroom activities should center on the learners as they are the agents who must learn. The teacher-centered approach is not really effective as learners are passive in the learning process. Secondly, the learner is the one who must construct knowledge; as a result, listening and note taking do not really help the learner absorb a lot of knowledge from the lecturer. It

is significant to apply experiential learning. That is, experience facilitates effective learning. Also, meaningful learning takes place when learners experience the real world. Any learning activity that does not relate the input to things in real life does not help learners retain the knowledge for a relatively long period. If the classroom activity does not engage the learners cognitively, that classroom fails to be considered effective as retention does not take place.

Continuing the discussion on meaningful learning, Ausubel (2000) provides a specific model with three main phases: using an advanced organizer, presenting the learning tasks or materials, and strengthening cognitive organization. In the first phase, it is important that the teacher clarify the objectives of the lesson, present the lesson, and relate the learner's existing knowledge to the new input. Secondly, task-based activities should be utilized to cognitively engage the learner. It is also pivotal to note that meaningful learning is for explicit instruction so that learners can logically organize their knowledge, examples, and new discoveries. Finally, learners can advance their active learning by promoting mental processes.

Previously, there were some psycholinguists who believed that some language items were meaningless and so-called "functional class" (Chomsky, 1981). However, modern schools of linguistics believe that all language items have meanings. Grammatical items, such as tense and articles, are also found to have meanings and it is possible to use symbolic images to present the meanings of language items (Evans, 2007; Nguyen Thu Huong, 2005; Langacker, 2008). Schnotz (2005) also believes that learners may retain language items longer and are then able to use them when they learn meanings rather than forms of the target items.

A discussion of a principle or practice would be insufficient without a review of related studies. Hung (2017) did a quasi-experimental study applying meaningful learning and rote-learning to teaching English prepositions in Vietnam. Before the study, the participants received a pre-questionnaire and a pre-test to diagnose their knowledge of the meanings of prepositions and investigate what types of the instruction they had previously received. After the treatment, the participants did the post-test and answer a post-questionnaire. The experimental evidence revealed that the participants who learn meaningfully outperformed those who did rote learning. They also responded that they preferred meaningful learning to rote learning.

Valadares (2013) carried out a study using concept maps as a tool of meaningful learning to relate different concepts in a hierarchical diagram so that learners could conceptually organize both their prior and new knowledge bodies. His conclusion is that concept maps can be used to facilitate meaningful learning. However, it is essential to know the perspectives that allow for the use of these maps properly. Otherwise, the teacher has to face the risk that memory learning (rote learning) would be stimulated. Also motivated by meaningful learning, Song (2013) conducted his study on assisting students' meaningful learning (ML) of English prepositions. The study included two groups: an experimental group (ML-inspired treatment) and a control group (rote learning). The findings illustrated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test whereas their mean scores were comparable in the pre-test. Haywood, Walker, O'Toole, Hewitson, Pugh, and Sundaram (2009) reported their research on engaging young people in meaningful learning and finally made several conclusions and implications. First, it was hard to engage young college students in meaningful learning as they had their own learning strategies gained from their previous experiences and education as well as other barriers. However, the findings showed that meaningful learning helped longer-term retention of knowledge.

It is crucial to know that meaningful learning is in line with learners' cognitive engagement (Hung, Truong & Nguyen 2018; Hung, Vien & Vu 2018). That is, in the field of language education, it is for learning a language, not language acquisition because language learning requires a cognitive processes of language input, but language acquisition takes place in the environment in which the target language is used. Nevertheless, learning and acquisition processes are in a dichotomous continuum in adults. That is, adults first learn a language, which later enables them to use it during communicative activities and these activities help modify their language naturally (Gass & Selinder, 2008). The abovementioned review shows that meaningful learning was essential for language learning and development.

How to Achieve Meaningful Learning in the Vietnamese Context

It is important for EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers to facilitate meaningful learning, and language learners should apply meaningful learning in acquiring the target items. It is also crucial to note that meaningful

learning is a principle of ELT. In other words, it is advised by experts in English language teaching and learning.

Regarding the Vietnamese context, where rote learning has been long applied (Canh, 2011, 2014), meaningful learning should be considered as a facilitative tool. In secondary and the tertiary levels of education, learners have existing knowledge from prior education as Vietnamese education is usage-based. Existing knowledge is a critical element for achieving meaningful learning. However, it may be hard to apply this principle in primary schools since Vietnamese parents are widely believed to have lower education than their peers in many other countries. Vietnamese education is not free of charge but compulsory at present. How can meaningful learning be applied in primary schools when many children do not receive sufficient knowledge to prepare for primary education?

The government should bear in mind appropriate policies for education in order to facilitate adult education. In other words, education should be free to minorities and people who cannot afford tuition fees. This may be time consuming and costly, but it should be done as soon as possible.

EFL teachers in places where locals are assumed to have lower levels of education need to provide students with some basic relevant knowledge prior to performing an intended lesson. For instance, before performing a listening activity, the teacher can let his or her students discuss related issues without expecting them to give good answers as unrealistic expectations can destroy the class atmosphere. The teacher should be the one who makes additions to the students' answers in order to prepare the students for the main task in the hope that the students can make sense of the listening passages without undue effort. In English language teaching, before giving the target input, teachers can offer studies opportunities to review the knowledge that they have already learned. EFL teachers can also offer pre-teaching tasks to prepare students for the cognitive processing of the target input (Hung & Van, 2018).

Last but not least, it is important to carry out studies on the applications of meaningful learning in Vietnamese contexts, such as in mountainous, rural, and urban areas to figure out the extent to which this principle has been applied and understood by EFL teachers in Vietnam. The findings should be used to modify further in-service training courses for EFL teachers.

With a limited amount of research interested in exploring the applications of meaningful learning in English language teaching, especially in the Vietnamese context, it is hard for this paper to have a more profound discussion and provision of the empirical results from previous studies. However, it is obvious that meaningful learning should be applied to education in general and ELT in particular. Educators, policy makers, and parents should all be aware of this principle and take responsibility of facilitating its applications.

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English as a Lingua Franca in a Multilingual India

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In this opinion article, we highlight that the cultural policy of language in India has resulted in an impasse in regard to determining and deciding upon a national language policy. We then summarize how English use across India has been elevated to the status of a *lingua franca* (amidst the language policy impasse), making it an indispensable part of the system and the economy. In that context, this opinion article presents the various tenets of the language policy issue with recommendations for educators in India on how to utilize best practices from literacy, culture, and language education (LCLE) literature to improve and maintain the quality of education whilst operating within the confines of the language policy impasse.

Keywords: cultural literacy, cultural politics of language in India, language policy, linguicism, multilingual India

Introduction

Language policy is and has been one of the most deliberated issues in India (Bhattacharya, 2017). India is a democratic, multilingual, omnistic, multiethnic, and a multicultural country, and so a perplexing and nagging issue bothering Indian educators and education policy makers is arriving at the decision on what basal language to settle on (amicably) as the elemental medium of pedagogy within the public school system (Shin, 2013). The complexity of the issue can be realized from the notes taken (quoted below) by Dr. Ambedkar, who chaired the committee that drafted the constitution of the country following the country's independence from the British colonists in 1947. The notes quoted below are from the session when a single national language was being considered.

“...There was no article which proved more controversial than Article 115 which deals with the question. No article produced more opposition. No article more heat. After a prolonged discussion when the question was put, the vote was 78 against 78. The tie could not be resolved. After a long time when the question was put to the party meeting the result was 77 against 78 for Hindi. Hindi won its place as a national language by one vote. I am stating these facts from my personal knowledge.” (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 148)

Logic would suggest that the national language would be the natural choice as the primary medium of instruction in the country's public school system. However, that was not to be the case.

India consists of 29 states (and 7 union territories) with each state having its own linguistic identity¹. Naturally,

¹ Source: National Portal of India: <https://india.gov.in/> (Accessed on November, 1, 2017)

the political priority (and need) for each state was to safeguard and develop its own regional language and thus its cultural literacy. Thence, national language planning suffered because the “linguistic consciousness and ethno-nationality on a territorial basis” resulted in an immediate “erosion of a national consensus for Hindi” (Dua, 1993, p.295). So, while ‘Hindi’ was posited as the national language of India on the policy document, it was undermined by a work-around that allowed for the continued use of English until a consensus was reached on Hindi (or any other language) as its replacement (Shin, 2013). No specific date (or deadline) was set for this replacement to take effect, and so the use of English in India prevailed (Dua, 1993).

It is also worth noting that the various commissions and committees appointed over the years by the Government of India could not agree on a language policy to be enforced across the public schools of India (Bhattacharya, 2017). The first such committee (called the Tara-Chand committee) that convened in 1948, ‘suggested replacing English in educational institutions with the local language instead’ (Dua, 1993). However, the University Education Commission’s (UEC) Report of 1949 advocated the need for high school graduates and university graduates to be familiar with at least three languages - the local language, the national language, and English (Devi, 2017). The need for the knowledge of English for graduating students stemmed from the need to grant them access to a wider pool of literature written in English, thus helping them go beyond the local literature that was only available in the local language. Thereafter, in 1953, the Secondary Education Commission expanded upon the UEC Report of 1949 by adding a fourth language requirement called the ‘classical language’ requirement. This referred to the ancient languages of India that had a rich literature repository (Jayalakshmi & Kothari, 2017). In 1956, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) offered a language formula called the “Three Language Formula” (TLF) (Dua, 1993, p.303). According to the TLF, a student would study three languages, i.e. – the state’s language, Hindi in states or regions that do not use Hindi or a non-Hindi language where Hindi is the local language, and English or a comparable world/modern language (Shin, 2013). The TLF was further refined by the Education Commission in 1966 and the modified TLF (mTLF) recommended that the three languages be – the state’s language or the native language of the learner, Hindi or English, and a modern/classical Indian language or a comparable world/modern language (Devi, 2017). As a result, English continued to find a unique and indispensable position of status in the Indian K-12 system and beyond.

The Three Language Formula

The mTLF was not an official policy and emerged as a strategy out of a political reconciliation on language use for pedagogy across schools in India (Pattanayak, 1990). It gained popularity amongst educators and is the one currently used across India because it supports the common consensus that an Indian would need to be multilingual in order to communicate, interact, socialize, and conduct business with fellow citizens belonging to different regions of the country (Devi, 2017). According to the mTLF, the three recommended language learning options are (ref: Kochhar, 2000):

- The state’s language (e.g. The state language is ‘Tamil’ in the state Tamilnadu) or the native language of the learner (e.g. ‘Punjabi’ language when the learner is from the Punjab state and speaks Punjabi at home but the learner is now settled in Tamilnadu) (L1);
- India’s official languages (Hindi or English) since the national language is ‘Hindi’ but the use of English is officially allowed until a consensus is reached on the national language’s status (L2);
- A modern/classical Indian language or a comparable world/modern language (L3).

The First Language (L1): The aim of the mTLF was to encourage the use of the mother/native tongue language as a medium of instruction in at least the elementary school grade levels with the aim to idealistically continue its use from K-12 and beyond (Devi, 2017).

The Second Language (L2): The second language is recommended to be introduced after the learner has already demonstrated some mastery over the first language (at the start of middle school onwards). The aim of the L2 was to help the learner associate and understand one of the official languages of the country as they prepare to become productive future citizens (Pattanayak, 1990).

The Third Language (L3): The third language is encouraged to be introduced at a later stage in the child’s education (preferably at the end of the middle school) with the aim of providing the learner with an additional language to expand their learning experience and communication opportunities (Dua, 1993).

Thus, in spirit, the mTLF allows for a student from a Hindi speaking region to be able to learn the English language and a non-Hindi Indian language while a student from a non-Hindi speaking region to be able to learn the English language and the Hindi language (Devi, 2017). Hence, the appeal of the mTLF strategy was that it encouraged the multilingualism that is representative of the true quality of India. Also, a crucial element of the formula is that it seeks to “promote languages of wider communication at three different levels: regional, national and international” (Orman, 2008, p. 57).

Since the mTLF is a strategy and not a policy, it has been open to interpretation and so has been adapted differently across the various Indian states and school systems. While some states accepted the mTLF in principle, others made some adjustments and changed it to match their social, cultural, and political needs. For example, the southern states did not want to teach Hindi to their learners and several northern Hindi speaking regions never included any south Indian language into their school syllabus (Annamalai, 2004). This meant that the only common language implemented across all the states in India was English since it remained uncontested and universally accepted. So, the language which was initially accepted and allowed as a medium of instruction at the higher education system level in a very limited scope was now being used not only as a medium of instruction in the grade schools but also for official and unofficial communication and correspondence between states, thus unifying people and establishments all across the country (Omidvar & Ravindranath, 2017). This functional expansion of the English language to a language widely spoken in the Indian sociocultural context is what promoted it to a *lingua franca* in a multilingual India (Ramanathan, 2008).

A Policy Experiment that Backfired

As each Indian State was adapting and implementing the mTLF in its own way, the state of West Bengal ordained its own state education policy in 1982 that removed the English language from its primary school system and instead replaced it with Bangla, the native language (Acharya, 1982). The substitution was followed by “major interventions in Bangla language-teaching” (Sen, 2015, p. 269). People who supported the policy argued that Bangla language use will make school more appealing to poor and rural learners and thus increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation/completion rates which would help improve the literacy percentage of the state of West Bengal (Chakrabortya & Bakshic, 2015). They believed that the policy would be instrumental in improving the quality of living and thus promote equality by making education accessible to all. Twenty-four years later, in 2007, the state government decided “to reverse the decision and re-introduce English into primary schools” (Sen, 2015, p.269). Research literature on this policy suggests that several factors were responsible for the failure of the policy. Some significant ones include:

- No positive trends were observed in the recruitment, retention, and graduation/completion rates amongst the rural and urban population (Scrase, 2002).
- When the cohorts affected by the policy were compared with cohorts (with comparable levels of education and experience) from other Indian states where English was not abolished, “a 68% reduction in wages” for those that were affected by the language policy was recorded, indicating “a remarkably high English skill premium in the labor market” (Chakrabortya & Bakshic, 2015, p. 1).

Interpreting the fate of the policy, it can be understood that upon graduation, the children from West Bengal who were not introduced to English in elementary school, because of the policy, now had to compete in the labor market (that spans nationwide across India) with people from other Indian states who were not affected by the policy and so had English introduced to them in elementary school. The competition also existed in-state because there were older workers who had English introduced to them in elementary school because they had started their schooling before the policy was implemented. Taken together, because of the English language’s value in the labor market across India, denying English education to elementary school children was widening the rich-poor gap, rendering the language policy ineffective (since its original purpose was to remove inequality) (Chakrabortya & Bakshic, 2015).

English in India: Linguicism and Indian English

English not only maintained its unusual and indispensable status within the Indian primary and secondary school system, it also made it all the way into higher education as well (Omidvar & Ravindranath, 2017) and was being used across the nation to help meet the social, administrative, and literacy needs of the population (Devi,

2017). Moreover, knowledge of English provided nationwide mobility for Indian citizens (Shin, 2013). Somehow, the nation had unified under this one language and this allowed for socioeconomic progress (Pal, 2016). While the knowledge of a common language (English) was facilitating communication within the multilingual framework of India, it was also very useful for international trade as India opened its doors to globalization (Chakrabortya & Bakshic, 2015).

English in a globalized India has now become essential not just in academia, but in other areas like popular media, pop and corporate culture, entertainment, and business, to name a few (Omidvar & Ravindranath, 2017). Thus, English is enjoying a prestigious position within the multitude of Indian languages, and many educators and sociolinguists believe that English is disempowering local vernaculars languages, especially the ones that lack a script. For example, Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998) argued that English effaced the language traditions of the rural majority of India by constraining their speech within the public sphere. They wrote:

“Thus, English-education and print-capitalism created a new urban-class of Indians thereby culling out the rural masses, their oral traditions, and the Indian languages and their literature from the mainstream. It serves as a powerful tool which turns the vast majority into illiterates-into a ‘silent majority’ which is marginalized while the English-educated minority from the urban areas is centralized” (p. 67).

Krishnaswami and Burde’s fears were not unfounded since English has and is dominating the public dialogue in India, rendering the native languages powerless. This peculiar relationship between English and the native languages of India could be labelled as ‘linguicism.’ Phillipson (2003) defines linguicism as “the structural and cultural inequalities that ensure the continued allocation of more material resources to English than to other languages and benefit those who are proficient in English” (p. 47). However, it must also be acknowledged that not all theorists present a negative view on the English language’s place in an Indian’s life. Although some view English as a foreign language that recolonizes native language, others see English as a peculiarly Indian language pointing to examples of how Indians use English and make it their own. For example, D’Souza (2001) writes, “To view English as a module is to see it as independent and self-contained, but English in India is neither, as it interacts both with the other local languages and with world Englishes to give a synthesis that is unique and Indian” (p. 148). These types of debates, concerning the “Indian-ness” of English have given rise to a new literacy, culture, and language education (LCLE) issue² and raise the question of whether English language education in India should be treated as a foreign, second, or native language.

Observations and Critical Remarks

The English language as a *lingua franca* in a multilingual India seems to have currently settled the need for a national language for India because the wide acceptance of English has obviated the need for selecting an Indian language as a national language (Shin, 2013). The English language is now essentially a mandatory language all over India and Indian society in general perceives the language as an instrument for inclusiveness and progress (Devi, 2017). However, if the society’s growing reliance on English is to be coped with in a meaningful way, schools around the country will need to establish a ‘language across the curriculum’ perspective and a strategy of multilingualism (Omidvar & Ravindranath, 2017). Therefore, English language curriculum development is one major area³ that needs attention if the quality of education is to be upheld. To that effect, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) occasionally responds to common problems that the Indian education system encounters by publishing a reference document called the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). In the most recent⁴ NCF, the document’s authors state:

“The present NCF proposes five guiding principles for curriculum development: (i) connecting knowledge to life outside the school; (ii) ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods; (iii) enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks; (iv) making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; and (v) nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country” (p. 7).

² This issue is beyond the scope of this paper but is introduced to show what a follow-up paper can discuss.

³ There are several other areas like teacher education and training, English proficiency and preparedness, etc., but curriculum development is vital and fundamental to all other areas and so a ‘major’ issue worth considering.

⁴ Retrieved November 01, 2017, from <http://www.ncert.nic.in/rightside/links/pdf/framework/english/nf2005.pdf>

Since the NCF's suggestions are a direct response to common inherent problems that have been observed and recorded across public schools in India, it can be inferred that in many Indian classrooms the learning was observed to be disjointed from the lives of the learners and the structure was becoming over-dependent on rote learning with exams being inflexible and disconnected from the many identities of the participants. Most of these problems can be resolved using best practices from LCLE research literature. Here are our observations:

“Connecting Knowledge to Life Outside the School” We believe that the resolution to this rests on taking a sociocultural approach to literacy didactics. To that effect, we would urge that the various public schools across India investigate and utilize the home and community resources of their learners to then establish a two-way connection. A good starting point for this enterprise would be to replicate the successful experiment presented in the article “Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms” by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992). In the research article, Moll et al., conduct an ethnographic investigation by interacting with the family members of the children in an effort to gather information about the work and skill history of the family (that they refer to as ‘Funds of Knowledge’), which they then use to inform their curriculum design. Their aim was to help bilingual students take the maximum advantage of their first language capabilities to overcome the limitations imposed by a restricted knowledge of the second language. We believe that when teachers and schools in India seek out and use the available funds of knowledge in their community they will be able to increase the likelihood of achieving genuine multilingual literacy while fostering a sense of community belonging and bestowing a more fertile education that connects knowledge and meaning-making to the learner’s life beyond the school’s boundaries.

“Ensuring that Learning Shifts away from Rote Methods” We believe that one possible solution is to approach it from a social semiotic perspective. Given that most students in an Indian classroom are multilingual, a shift from a focus on language to a focus on mode will be very helpful. A good resource to find workable models to use and replicate from is the book “Multimodal pedagogies in diverse classrooms: Representation, rights and resources” authored by Pippa Stein (2008). The solutions presented in the book are from successful curriculum experiments in South African classrooms, which share similar cultural policies on language as India (Phillipson, 2003), and so can be easily reinterpreted for use in an Indian classroom. In her book, Stein “challenges the idea of the dominance of a single form of representation” and explores how “different knowledges and cultural forms can be represented through multiple forms of representation” by remixing the diverse forms to “create new forms, new meanings, and new possibilities for learning” (2008, p. 3). We strongly believe that incorporating the use of multimodality into the curriculum in schools across India will enable a shift from a memory-based pedagogy (that is over-reliant on language) to a one that enhances learners’ creativity and rational thought, which in turn will serve to improve the quality of pedagogy across the nation.

“Enriching the Curriculum so that it Goes beyond Textbooks” We believe that the solution rests on taking a “critical literacy” (CL) approach to curriculum design. Inspiration can be sought from the article “Critical literacy in teaching and research” by Hillary Janks (2013). Janks emphasizes that “critical literacy is about enabling children to read both the word and the world in relation to power, identity, differences and access to knowledge, skills, tools and resources” (p. 227). In many of the case studies that she discusses, she emphasizes that a reliance on scripted textbooks alone can limit critical literacy. She adds that “because texts are always positioned and positioning, it is impossible to give a neutral account of any case” (p. 231), and so an effective curriculum that aims to promote critical literacy should be enriched with opportunities for students to also critically analyze the textbooks. We firmly believe that designing a curriculum with a deep understanding of critical literacy will encourage reflective didactics and a cyclical nature to syllabus design that goes beyond decreed textbooks and meets the needs of the community while also minimizing unequal access.

“Making Examinations more Flexible and Integrating them with Classroom Life” We believe that to address this issue, educators will have to embrace “multiliteracies” and “new literacy” pedagogy in the classroom. A common problem is that the current examinations’ structure is congruous with traditional literacy practices in the classroom where the students are not engaged in multiliteracies (e.g. searching online for information etc.). Scholarly LCLE literature also recognizes this issue as current and common⁵. For example, sociolinguists that study high-stakes testing in education, Campano, Ghiso, and Welch (2016), report that there has been “less attention to the literate practices of members of different cultural and linguistic groups” (p. 9). Even Stein

⁵ A detailed discussion on current literature about this issue is available in Kiramba (2017).

(2008), highlights that examinations need to be enhanced with “a multiliteracies pedagogy, and in so doing can encourage innovation and change” (p. 51). Janks (2013) also shares her observations in regard to classroom-based examinations, saying that “there is clear evidence that children do not read for meaning and are unable to assume the role of a participant” (p. 235). If examinations are inflexible and nonintegrated with classroom life, they can adversely affect “the teacher’s driving motivation or desire - an aspect of her subjectivity” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 35). Taken together, we believe that once new literacy practices and multiliteracies are adapted as part of the curriculum it will inevitably change the structure of examinations, rendering them flexible and integrative.

“Nurturing an Overriding Identity Informed by Caring Concerns within the Democratic Polity of the Country” We believe that to adequately understand and tackle this issue, educators will have to rethink their curriculum within a critical cosmopolitan framework (CCF). A good resource to borrow ideas regarding the CCF is the article “Ontologies of place, creative meaning making and critical cosmopolitan education” by Margret Hawkins (2014). In her article, Hawkins talks about how looking at curriculum design and classroom composition through “ecological” models can be helpful because “these models tend to take into account the players in interactions, local contexts in which interactions occur, broader national discourses, ideologies and policies, as well as global factors” (Hawkins, 2013, p. 96). Two interesting ideas that can be found in the article include (1) using digital storytelling and sharing the stories with other schools in an effort to encourage students to become literate on global issues while at the same time maintaining focus on the local community, and (2) sharing ‘a day in the life’ to encourage the students to think about their own community while also building a local identity, and putting it into a digital story (thus engaging in technological literacy) and then sharing the story and viewing the story, allowing the students to make comparisons and experience new facets of life, thus building global connections. We firmly believe that CCF-inspired curriculum design will help Indian teachers “bridge perspectives between the ever-increasing global shifts and movements and situated human interactions through a theorization of the mediational nature of place” (Hawkins, 2013, p. 90).

Conclusion

In this opinion article, we have discussed the cultural policy of language in India and how it has resulted in an impasse in regard to determining and deciding upon a national language policy. We discussed how English language use in independent India was allowed with the understanding that it would be replaced with an Indian language once a consensus was reached regarding the national language of choice. As educators, policymakers and politicians debated about which of the Indian languages would be universally accepted as the national language, English use across the country elevated it to the status of *a lingua franca*. Moreover, English had also become integral and universally accepted across the country, making it an indispensable part of the system and the economy. Since avoiding English was not an option anymore, the Indian education system adapted a three language strategy that includes English language instruction along with Indian language instruction. We concluded our discussion of the language policy issue with recommendations for educators in India on how to utilize best practices from LCLE literature to improve and maintain the quality of education whilst operating within the confines of the three language strategy.

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**Pictorial Framing in Moral Politics: A
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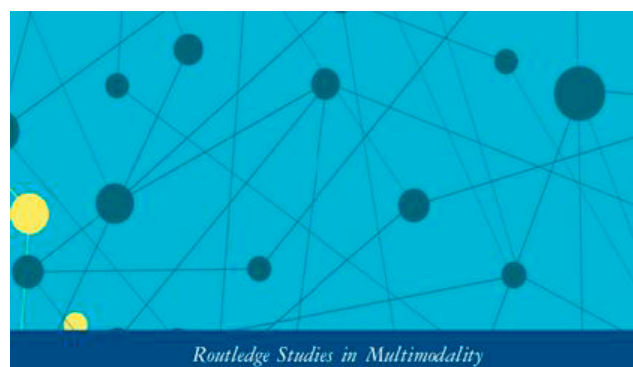
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Lakoff and Johnson's dictum that 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (1980, p. 5, emphasis in original) graciously captures a few of this trope's most important characteristics. The convenient vagueness of the word 'thing' allows for a wide range of phenomena to be metaphorizable; the choice of verbs favours a dynamic conceptualization of the trope; and the definition covers multimodal manifestations no less than purely verbal ones.

Over the past years, another characteristic of metaphorizing is beginning to be more conspicuously discussed: metaphors embody strong emotional and evaluative dimensions. Particularly more or less novel or 'creative' metaphors (Black, 1979) make this clear. 'Football is war' (attributed to Dutch football coach Rinus Michels); 'marriage is a zero-sum game' (Black, 1979); and 'The Qu'oran is *Mein Kampf*' (Dutch extreme right-wing politician Geert Wilders – see Forceville and Van de Laar, 2019) emphatically suggest that the moral judgments accruing to their source domains are to be co-mapped onto the target domain (see e.g., Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2016). Put differently, the metaphors adopted provide an ethical perspective through which football, marriage, and the Qu'oran are *framed*.

Ahmed Abdel-Raheem makes this the core issue of *Pictorial Framing in Moral Politics*. I should acknowledge straightaway that I have been in regular e-mail contact



**PICTORIAL FRAMING IN
MORAL POLITICS**

A CORPUS-BASED EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Ahmed Abdel-Raheem



with the author for quite a few years and that he liberally quotes my work, mostly positively. So while I like to think that my appreciation for his work is rooted in the fact that we are fellow travellers in the young field of visual and multimodal metaphor studies, I cannot claim that I am unbiased.

The broader model within which the author analyses cartoons and op-ed illustrations is frame semantics and conceptual metaphor theory, as theorized by Fillmore (e.g., Fillmore, 1985), Lakoff (e.g., Lakoff, 1993, 2014; see also Wehling, 2013, 2018), combined with insights from blending theory (e.g., Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) and relevance theory (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Wilson & Sperber, 2012). The most important goals of the book are ‘to develop a theory of pictorial frames that is new, although grounded in familiar principles in cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and moral psychology, among others,’ and ‘to show how the theory can be applied in the analysis of specific images’ (p. 2).

Abdel-Raheem begins by discussing several dimensions of ‘pictorial framing.’ To stand a chance of being accepted, frames need first of all to be *available* to a given person (or group of persons): self-evidently one needs to know and recognize things and persons to interpret anything. Secondly, the frame must be *accessible*: it is one thing to have the appropriate knowledge and beliefs; it is another to evoke the pertinent frame at the moment one is confronted by, for instance, a political cartoon. Thirdly, the frame must be *morally relevant*. In practice this means that the perspective offered should be in line with what the person thinks and believes, or at least not deviate too much from these ideas. And finally, the issue is whether addressees actually will *apply* the frame, thereby letting themselves be influenced by the moral implications of the frame.

Although political cartoons and op-ed illustrations have obvious similarities, Abdel-Raheem distinguishes between the two. The crucial difference is that whereas ‘illustrations are always subservient to the copy, and they are not captioned’ (p. 32) – ‘the copy’ in this case being the op-ed texts within which the illustrations are embedded – cartoons are autonomous visuals, usually accompanied by captions. The cartoonist thus is responsible for the entire contents. In both cases the result may be a visual or multimodal metaphor.

The author devotes an interesting paragraph to ‘visual recycling’: prominent visual elements from earlier images are copied, enabling recognition of the original scenario (Musolff, 2016), but these are combined with crucial visual and / or verbal differences pertaining to a new political situation. This is often theorized, as Abdel-Raheem points out, in terms of cultural memes (see also Dominguez, 2015a, 2015b). Clearly, in political cartoons the relation between word and image is crucial, a situation the author roots in Barthes’ (1986 [1964]) distinction between text ‘anchoring’ and ‘relaying’ images – old concepts that have not lost their usefulness (cf. Bateman, 2014). Chapter 3 ends with a section in which the author reports fragments of interviews he conducted with six makers of op-ed illustrations. This yields noteworthy insights in creators’ views on the differences between these latter and cartoons (which they also often produce), reflections on the process of creating them, as well as on the negotiations between newspaper editors and illustrators about the latter’s work.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the analysis of 90 editorial cartoons published between 2013 and 2016 in two Egyptian state newspapers, *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akhbar*. But before embarking on this, the author reflects on principles informing these analyses, which he proposes to collect under the label MCA, which stands for ‘moral-cognitive approach.’ The overall principle adopted is relevance theory. Given my own appreciation of its importance (Forceville, 1996, 2005, 2014, in prep.; Forceville & Clark, 2014), this of course can only make me happy. Relevance theory provides a framework to help answer crucial questions such as: which persons and events are referred to visually and/or verbally, and how?; what value(s) are invoked?; which contextual information is cued?; what argument can be teased out of visuals and/or verbal information?; what is the intended audience? (p. 66). But relevance theory must be complemented and fleshed out by procedures developed in metaphor theory and blending theory. The moral frame dimension is inspired by Lakoff’s strict-parent versus nurturant-parent belief systems. The former favours the conservative idea that individuals have a strong responsibility to solve their own problems and to take care of themselves; the latter favours the liberal idea that people must show empathy for, and solidarity with, others.

Abdel-Raheem concentrates on four ‘frame systems’ (which are similar to ‘Idealized Cognitive Models’ – see for instance Kövecses, 2010, p. 173 *et passim*) that, he claims, pervade Egyptian media when America’s political relations are at stake: with ISIS; with the Muslim Brotherhood; with Israel; and with the Middle East. In table 4.1 on p. 71 he presents the metaphors found in the 90 cartoons, and the frequency with which they could be said to pertain to the four ‘frame systems’ described. He discusses a few Egyptian cartoons that all portray the US as

some kind of villain. Depictions often tap into universal metaphors, but may also cue cultural specific ones, such as KILLING SOMEONE/ENDING THEIR CAREER IS CUTTING THEIR HAIR OR BEARD (p. 77).

In Chapter 5 the author analyses moral dimensions in the ‘journey’ frame, as found in about 1,000 illustrated op-ed articles on the Eurozone crisis in the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* between 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2012. These newspapers were chosen as representative reliable Western news sources. The ‘journey’ metaphor can be formulated as PURPOSIVE ACTIVITY IS SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENT TOWARD A DESTINATION (e.g., Johnson, 1987), and lends itself very well to visualization in cartoons (see also Forceville & Van de Laar, 2019). Unsurprisingly, given that the target domain relates to the Eurozone’s stalling economy, the ‘vehicle’ used on the metaphorical journey (whether a cart, a lifeboat, a plane, a snail, or the bull into which Zeus transforms himself to seduce ‘Europa’) faces serious difficulties in attempting to make progress. Examining the illustrations, the author comments on some pertinent regularities. For one thing, while the written op-ed in which the illustration is embedded may nuance the interpretation of the visual metaphor, the illustration usually provides the article’s key idea in simplified form. For another, the ‘journey’ metaphor is frequently complemented by other metaphors (such as NATION IS PERSON). And correct interpretation of the illustration in addition requires substantial cultural background knowledge (cf. Forceville, 2017).

The next (50+ page) chapter continues the focus on op-ed illustrations in English-language media pertaining to the Eurozone crisis. Abdel-Raheem detects a privileged moral frame in them: they undermine the Euro and thereby fuel rather than abate the crisis. He argues that people who have not yet decided between the Lakoffian nurturant and strict parent belief systems – the so-called ‘biconceptuals’ – are influenced toward endorsing the latter (p. 111). He goes on to examine illustrations that represent the various “frames,” such as the *firefighting* frame, the *fiscal cliff* frame, the *tying-Europe-together* frame, and the *catastrophe* frame. Metaphors drawing on these frames are discussed, as are image schemas on which these metaphors in turn depend. The analyses are insightful and thorough, although sometimes perhaps overly detailed.

The final full chapter puts the idea of the impact of cartoons on viewers’ moral frames to the test. The author first let the experiments’ US participants (n=648) respond to lists with political statements in order to be able to characterize them as strict-parent thinkers, nurturant-parent thinkers, or biconceptuals. Subsequently he exposed them to two varieties of the same illustration, one favouring the strict, the other the nurturant angle. The results confirm the author’s hypotheses:

strict-father and nurturant-parent framings of political issues can exert a causal effect on people’s attitudes. Specifically, the attitudes of both biconceptuals and strict-fathers, but not of nurturant-parents [...], were affected by the pictorial framings in terms of the two moralities (p. 183).

Abdel-Raheem concludes by sketching future avenues for research: investigating *moving* images; testing the long-term (rather than short-term) impact of discourses on people’s moral frames; paying more attention to intertextuality; and further exploring the role played by background knowledge and beliefs (that is, addressees’ cognitive environment) on the moral interpretation of messages.

The novelty and appeal of this cognitivist-oriented monograph resides in several aspects. In the first place Abdel-Raheem analyses not verbal metaphors but visual and multimodal ones, thereby making a significant contribution to this young branch of metaphor studies. Secondly, whereas his familiarity with Western culture enables him to analyse British and American visuals, as a native from Egypt he also brings in a rare, and refreshing, Arabic perspective on political issues. Thirdly, his data do not only cover political cartoons (cf. El Refaie, 2003, 2009; Schilperoord & Maes, 2009; Teng, 2009; Bounegru & Forceville, 2011; Dominguez, 2015a, 2015b; Forceville & Van de Laar, 2019), but also the hitherto untheorized genre of op-ed illustrations, and thus he corroborates the importance of “genre” as meaning-steering factor. Fourthly, he complements his own analyses with experimental research, which in the realm of visual and multimodal tropes is hitherto scarce (but cf. Pérez-Sobrino, 2017). Like Pérez-Sobrino, the author moreover is no dogmatic follower of a single model. Whereas conceptual metaphor theory constitutes the basis of his work, he is not shy to draw on relevance theory, blending theory, and semiotics wherever this is pertinent. His monograph thus exemplifies the kind of problem-oriented (rather than model-oriented) approach that will enormously benefit visual and multimodality studies, and indeed humanities studies more generally.

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